PUCCINI

His International Art

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To the memory of those who contributed so greatly to my love of Puccini's music:

Mosco Carner
Herbert von Karajan
Renz Lebowitz
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FOREWORD

There was a time not too terribly long ago when Italians writing about musical subjects were all too apt to be anecdotal or impressionistic, but following the leadership of musicologists like Pietro Ghezzi, Lorenzo Bianconi, Federico D'Amico, and Giorgio Fabbrielli, the level of discourse has improved markedly. This prize-winning discussion of Puccini’s career by Michele Girardi is excellent proof of that.

One would be hard put to find a composer of serious music who has been treated as contemptuously as Puccini was for many years. Less successful rivals scorned him, while envying him his success. German and Germanized critics considered themselves above cialpine triviality. Opera, so the theorists maintained, was a bastard form, inferior to absolute music. Puccini’s popularity with audiences was interpreted as a sure sign of his lack of principle and all too willing a public’s susceptibility to being short-changed. He was even accused of specifically tailoring his arias to fit on ten-inch records, a foolish charge because he had composed his works up through Turandot before recording on disc became financially viable.

In the three-quarters of a century since Puccini’s death, this sense that he was at some level a dubious figure has gradually diminished but has not entirely disappeared. It is refreshing to encounter him as Michele Girardi envisions him: as a major artist. Girardi highlights the composer’s keen dramatic sense as a practical man of the theater, but, more than that, as one who shaped his materials for valid aesthetic reasons. The discussion of the dramatic elements is especially perceptive. Girardi’s acute scrutiny of the music betrays no hint of the apologetic tone all too frequently encountered in discussions of Puccini. The balance and reasonableness of this survey of the works from La Fille au Panier to Turandot is stimulating.

I have learned from reading it. Now I understand what I had failed to appreciate before: the purpose behind the median of the first half of Suor Angelica is to heighten tension for the release of suppressed emotion in the second half and to help create a sense of genuine catharsis at the end. Again,
the discussions of the revisions and changes introduced into scores after their first performances is both stimulating and precise. It is illuminating to see how the altered ending of Act I of Manon Lescaut fits into the overall symphonic structure of the score—one of the opera's aspects most appreciatively recognized by George Bernard Shaw when he received its English premiere in May 1894. It is noteworthy, too, to observe how the impulse behind a barely assimilated feature of Le VillE—the symphonic interludes that made Verdi uneasy—becomes integrated in the numino-dramatic structure of Manon Lescaut.

The chronological discussion of the operas is lent further coherence by biographical connections that illuminate the ambience within which Puccini worked. Particularly helpful is the account of Puccini's sometimes complicated relationships with his librettists. Following the finally unsalvagable Fiducia, the composer himself assumed the dominant role in choosing his subjects and in adapting librettos to serve his purposes. In this light, it is instructive to contrast Giacomo and Illica's libretto for Le VillE with that which Leoncavallo exhibited together for his own treatment of the MarfE subject. In Leoncavallo's Le VillE the comic episodes fill the first two acts, while unrelieved tragedy occupies the last two, in Puccini's score the lighthearted and tragic episodes are intermingled in the last two acts so as to heighten the poignancy of the drama.

Girard is right in stressing the importance of Giulio Ricordi's recognition that Puccini possessed talents far superior to those of his Italian contemporaries. The publisher saw from the first stages of the composer's career, right from the time of Le VillE (a score that the rival house of Sonzogno had rejected), that the young man was well worth encouraging and supporting with a stipend until he produced a genuine success. It was, of course, Puccini's ability to continue to produce highly successful operas back to back that led Sonzogno and his stable of less consistently successful composers (including Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano, and Cilea) to help orchestrate the fiasco of Butterfly at La Scala in February 1904. And that was the only Puccini premiere in that opera house until the posthumous launching of Turandot in 1926.

There is considerable justice now in seeing Puccini recognized as the master composer he undoubtedly was.

William Ashbrook

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

It is a great pleasure to see the English version of my monograph on Giacomo Puccini. The original Italian edition was published in 1955, and a year later was awarded the 1956 Massimo Mila International Prize for musicology. I mention this prize, made in honor of one of the greatest Italian musicologists, as an indication of how Italy is fast making up the ground once left to scholars from Germany, the United States, and elsewhere, who have long since given serious critical consideration to the work of this great Italian composer, whose creations live on in opera houses all over the world.

In light of the continuing progress of Puccini studies (see the comprehensive bibliography in Studi pucciniani 1, 1968), I have updated the book, revising and correcting various oversights and inaccuracies. In particular I have added a substantial section to the chapter on Le VillE, which was the first to be written. For his help in the various stages of reworking I should like to thank my friend and colleague Dieter Schiling.

My discussion is arranged around a central framework of music examples, and the fact that the dramatic analysis is closely related to the musical—indeed, the thematic—analysis allows for a kind of double reading on the one hand, that of the enthusiast who wants to appreciate the parts of the opera he loves; on the other, that of the scholar and musician capable of following the technical arguments. I have a fond hope that many will not feel the need to separate passion and critical sensibilities; both are, after all, necessary for a deeper understanding and love for Puccini's operas.

I am grateful to Laura Basini, who besides carrying out her task as translator suggested numerous small improvements to Bonnie Blackburn, for copying the volumes with the patience of Job, and to Kathleen Heinel, who frequently placed her expert editorial skills at my disposal. I wish in addition to give particular thanks to Roger Parker for having super-
vised the entire edition and weighed the pertinence of the Italian discussions for English readers.

For their support and help in various ways, I should like to thank Gabriella Baggi Ravanni, Sylwia Bossozini, Gabrielle Deaton, Arthur Grono, Maurizio Pera, and Mercedes Violu Ferraro. Special thanks are due to Julian Budden, whose intellectual curiosity, fired by a discerning love for Italian opera, has allowed me to correct and refine much of my work through a continuing exchange of ideas, both large and small, about Puccini's music.

**NOTE ON EDITIONS**

Place numbers in parentheses refer to editions only available for hire. Numbers in boxes in the text refer to the rehearsal numbers in the following scores:

*Capriccio serafino.* Milan: Ricordi, Ø1975 (P.R. no. 132241).
*Edgar.* Milan: Ricordi, Ø1905 (P.R. no. 126765).
*Musetta Zaccaria.* Milan: Ricordi, Ø1915, P.R. 113 (repr. 1980).
*Mercè a quatro volti.* Milan: Ricordi, Ø1951 (P.R. no. 121184).
*La rondine.* Milan: Sonzogno, Ø1917; new edition Ø1945 (Casa musicale Sonzogno, P.R. 3022; Universal Edition 9613 E).
*La Fritt.* Milan: Ricordi, Ø1944 (P.R. no. 120707).

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I wish to thank the publishers Ricordi and Sonzogno for allowing publication of musical examples drawn from scores under their copyright.
NOTE ON THE
MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Musical notes are cited according to the following system:

Piccolo and double bass are cited at their written pitch.
In the vocal text of the musical examples, italics denote citations, or "stage music" (music within the music).

ABBREVIATIONS

Adami

Bagni-Giusti

Carner

CP
Crítica Provinciana. Lucca: Provincia di Lucca / Nuova Grafica Lucchese, 1975

ENQ

Eumenes

Gara
Carte giovanne. Edited by Enrico Gara. Milan: Ricordi, 1958

GPCN

IL-Li
Biblioteca dell'Istituto Musicale Pareggiato "L. Bocherini," Lucca

Kaye

LS
La Scala

Marchetti

MO
Manuscript

MS
Manuscript

NMx
Nuova rivista musicale italiana
A Dynasty of Composers

The impressive musical lineage of the Puccini family is surpassed only by that of the Bachs: in the great Johann Sebastian's line, the musician's trade passed from father to son through seven generations over nearly three centuries, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth. The Puccinis come a close second, with five generations of musicians in two centuries (eighteenth and nineteenth). But there is an interesting difference between the two composers' positions in their family history. While Bach's three illustrious sons continued in the profession, indeed achieved great distinction, Puccini was the last of the line started by Giacomo Puccini (1772–1851) and continued by Antonio Benedetto Maria (1734–1812), Domenico Vincenzo Maria (1772–1852), and Michele (1813–64). The latter was the father of Giacomo, born in Lucca on 22 December 1858, and of another composer, the unfortunate Michele (b. 1864), who died prematurely in 1891; and so the dynasty ended with Giacomo just when it had reached its artistic height and world fame. His full baptismal name (Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria) was a clear tribute to his ancestors, fitting for a couple's first male heir; but it also seems to reflect his parents' aspirations for him, their prediction of a bright artistic future under his ancestors' protection.

Musicians' blood also ran in Puccini's maternal line. His mother Albina's brother, Fortunato Magi, was "Maestro Organista e di Cappella" at Lucca, succeeding his brother-in-law as head of the Istituto Musicale "Giovanni Pacini" (now "Boccherini"), and progressing to the directorship of

7. See Karl Gustav Fellerer, "Die Musikerfamilie Piacenzi (1771–1944)," Archiv für Musikforschung 6 (1952): 235–37; Alfredo Bonaccorsi, Giacomo Puccini e i suoi amanti musicali (Milano: Cucci, 1910); and Le figure di Puccini, exhibition catalog by Simone Piacentini (Milano: Istituto di Studi Porcellati, 1993). Of all the four Puccinis only Domenico Maria, a pupil of Padre Martini and Pianello, became important in any way as an opera composer.
the luce musicale in Venice, where he was also—though only for the Carnival season 1828–29—maestro concertatore and conductor at the Grand Teatro La Fenice.

To complete the picture of Puccini's musical heritage, we need not include the musical tradition of Lucca, into which so many composers were born. Lucca was never a primary operatic center, but it had an important role in sacred and instrumental music, and the Puccinis were not the only family to become famous. The Guarnieri family also won acclaim, particularly Giuseppe (1742–1812); Francesco Saverio (1697–1762), violinist and distinguished composer, and Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805) were among the leading figures in eighteenth-century European musical life. And just before Puccini, another Lisbeter, Alfredo Catalani, aroused great expectations in the world of Italian opera during his short and unhappy life (he died of hemoptysis in 1890 before reaching forty), keeping alive audiences' hopes for a successor to Giuseppe Verdi.

APPRENTICESHIP IN LUCCA

Apart from the inevitable anecdotes, we know little about Puccini's adolescence. He was brought up in a world of women: after her husband's death, Alexandra Magi raised her family of five daughters and two sons alone. But the temptation to seek the origins of Puccini's dramatic world in this background should be resisted. Marco Corelli, who was powerfully influenced by psychoanalytic theory, found the hermeneutic key to Puccini's works in his relationship with his mother, dramatizing the composer's marriage to Elvira Bocchi Giorni in a way that is often cited as the search for a relationship "with socially obscure and inferior women."² Carner read all of Puccini's operas and periods of his life through this lens, proceeding from the fixed conviction that the composer was prepared "to inflict suffering and torture on his heroines," a trait origin in a "darker ambivalence in his character that forced him to love and hate at the same time." Or women were, in his unconsolable, "rivals of the malevolent monster" (Corelli, 100). It is an interesting thesis, coherently argued (Carner was brought up in Vienna and was a student there when Freud's first books appeared), but in light of current criticism and analysis it seems dated and reductive.

It might be better, then, to note the first of several important similarities between the careers of Puccini and Verdi. In both cases, after their first precocious displays of talent, their families and communities sought to put them to work in local musical life. Busseto was more provincial than Lucca, but both men were earmarked to be organists in their respective towns. The post in Lucca was temporarily filled by Fortunato Magi, who was to surrender it to his nephew as soon as the latter was capable of taking over; in the meantime, after having completed his classical education with some reluctance, Puccini began musical training. In 1824 he entered the Istituto Musicale "Pacinii," where he took his first steps under his uncle's guidance. The teacher very soon proved unequal to the task, and the clash between his inexperience and the boy's natural laziness prompted Alberti to send her son instead to Carlo Ariento (1834–1903), a teacher of singing and composition with whom both Catalani and Gaetano Guadagni had studied. The change of teacher immediately had a positive effect: Puccini's technique improved, he became able to cope with operatic scores at the piano, including many of Verdi's most famous works. Perhaps the revelation of his natural vocation for opera dates from that period; or perhaps it was encouraged by a performance of Aida at Pis in March 1876. To attend this production, Puccini made the thirty-mile round-trip journey on foot—no small distance. For the first time the potential of a large-scale form, so different from the familiar patterns that had until then been his only models, became apparent to him.³

In 1877, under pressure from his mother, Puccini took part in a local arts competition in Lucca. The subject was a canzona for solo voice and accompaniment in "Puccini's" style. Puccini submitted an entry, which was praised by the judges. The competition was won by Fortunato Magi, but Puccini's piece was considered to be the best. Puccini's piece was praised for its "inventive and original" quality. It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his age." Puccini's piece was also praised for its "expressive" power, which was described as "very strong and dramatic." It was also noted that Puccini had "a good ear for melody" and showed "a talent for writing" that was "unusual at his
CHAPTER ONE

Verdi had been helped by Antonio Barezzi. Ceri proved less generous than Barezzi, granting only a modest income for Puccini's final two years on condition that he pay back from his nephew's first earnings.19

While Verdi had not been accepted by the Conservatory (although it should be remembered that he had applied for entry as a pianist), Puccini had no difficulty in passing the exams, as he wrote to his mother in November 1880:

Tell Carignani that the exam I took was ridiculously simple; they had to harmonize a bass of only one line, unfigured and very easy, and then they made us complete a melody in D major, which didn't come out too well . . . I go to Catalani's very often; she's very kind . . . I went to hear L'Elisir d'Amore [by Meyerbeer] with Damiani and Ascher's 'Prima' Diada with the famous tenor Nudani.20

Puccini's desire to hear all the music he could was apparent from the very beginning; he regularly visited the large number of minor theaters in Milan, such as the Teatro Lirico and the Carcano, where he saw the operas mentioned in his letter on 20 and 27 November 1880 respectively. He was able to get into these more easily than into La Scala (which he frequently described in elevated terms, as a Mecca conquered only with difficulty), thanks to cheaper ticket prices and—at times—the help of various scholars. From letters home the picture emerges of a dedicated young man who spent his days at his books or at the keyboard, in rather restricted economic circumstances, nostalgic for the Tuscan olive oil he considered indispensable for properly dressing his favorite white beans. After a frugal meal around five o'clock, he would walk about in the Galleria until nine. Whenever possible, he saw Alfredo Catalani, who was becoming an important figure in Milan. Catalani behaved with great kindness and availability toward his younger companion, helping him in many ways. Thus Puccini came into contact with the Milanese Scapigliatura movement, with Arrigo Boito, Francesco Puccio, Marco Frago, and many other prominent personalities in contemporary cultural life.

Meanwhile, Puccini was admitted to the Conservatory with a score of 52½ and began to attend Antonio Bazzini's classes. Bazzini was mainly a composer of symphonic works, and an acclaimed violinist, little inclined toward opera. La Trianda, performed at La Scala in 1867, is his only opera,

19. See Arrigo, “Catalano Esporgenzi.” 20. After the success of Le Filii, Nicolò Ceri expected repayment of his loan with interest by date; and he says that if from Le Filii I have earned 60 thousand lire! (to Michele Puccini, 30 April 1890, Gen, no. 38, 40). Ceri's ghost appears in Gianni Schicchi, in the character of the notary Svevo Amoretti di Nicolai.21

Advanced Study in Milan

Given the standard Puccini had reached in his final examination, it was not difficult to see that his gifts were exceptional. Thus they had to be put to profit, taking him out of his provincial environment into a world in which he could make himself felt. No place was better for this than Milan, the theatrical capital of Italy, nor a school more famous than its Conservatory, in which Catalani had taken his diploma in 1852. Under the tutelage of Francesco Bazzini, Puccini's mother Albina was unable to take on the severe financial commitment for the three-year program of hard work before the final qualification; but she succeeded, by means of a petition supported by the duchess Carafa and by the marquis Paravicini, in obtaining a scholarship of 100 lire a month from Queen Margherita.22 Lazer, Puccini found a patron in his uncle, the wealthy and powerful notary Nicola Ceri, just as

17. The only copy of the existence of a Preludio sinfonia in E minor, today was supplied by Orlando Galli's article "Gli anni giovanili di Giacomo Puccini," Zapparelli musicale 1, no. 6 (1953): 26-30. This also included the first page of the work, dated 1 August 1876 (p. 25). For many years, attempts to find the manuscript, which belonged to Galli's dispersed collection, were unsuccessful. But in June 1993, when the present volume was already in production, research undertaken by the antiquarian dealer Luigi Delia Scala of Lecco on the manuscript finally bore fruit. The manuscript of the Preludio sinfonia (in its current form, that is, with an added overture) has now been acquired by the City of Lecco and will be housed at the Museo Casa Nicolli. An edition of the work and an introduction into the compositional procedures in his compositions remain to be undertaken. A critical essay by the present author is being prepared for publication in Small Puccinis, vol. 2. For a description of the manuscript of the Preludio, see the list of works. See also the brief commentary below in this chapter, p. 14.

18. Many catalogues mistakenly claim that the Messa in B minor, astringed choir, and orchestra was also used in the Man.

and is remembered primarily because his most famous student set the same subject to music at the end of his career. In fact, the association with Boccherini lasted little more than a month, since the latter was called on to become director of the Conservatory in place of Stefano Ronchetti-Monteviti, and ceded his own post temporarily to Amilcare Panchioli, an arrangement that became permanent in 1885. Puccini could certainly not have found a teacher more suitable for encouraging his natural inclinations. In Panchioli’s works, especially La Gioconda (1876), the lack of stylistic restraint is compensated by a sense of dramatic effect that earned him enormous popular success. Puccini had mastered counterpoint, and perhaps even then had little more to learn of a technical nature, what he really needed were the secrets of the stage, which only an experienced man of the theater could pass on to him.

Although his scholarly record was consistently brilliant in his main subject (he kept the very high term average of 9.31, passing the first year with distinction), Puccini got into trouble for his poor attendance in other subjects, such as piano and poetic and dramatic literature. He was, however, a model student in the history and philosophy of music, taught by Amilcare Galli. This is significant: Galli was one of the most important figures in music criticism at the time. A specialist in French music and an advisor to the publishers Sonzogno, he was probably the leading Italian expert on Wagner’s aesthetics and musical system. Although his teaching training allowed him to address in some detail his work on Parsifal, which he bought at the beginning of 1885 in joint ownership with Mascagni, a student at the Conservatory and his roommate for some months. The first hints of his curiosity about Wagner’s harmonic language can be found in the margins of a sketch of the song “Ad una morte” for baritone and piano, which probably dates back to 1882. Even if the exact meaning of his indication “alla Wagner” is unclear, the unequivocal modulation from G minor to D (considering the F as a simple delay of Eb, which would produce a dominant seventh in third inversion) demonstrates a harmonic imagination unusual for an Italian composer.

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Example 1.1

Contact with the French operatic world, which immediately attracted his interest, is simply proven by the operas and concerts he attended, and his passing remarks about them: Carmen at the Teatro Dal Verme in December 1880 ("beautiful opera"); Marchetti, no. 2, 17, Thomas’s Mignon at the Teatro Massimo (March 1881), and Franck’s “poème-symphonique” Béatrice et Bénédict at the Scala on 24 March 1883 ("I was rather bored"). By this period the taste for French opera and the "opera-ballo," as grand opera was called in Italy, was already established. Puccini was in repertory at the Scala, where, between 1880 and 1881, Meyerbeer’s Les Huguenots, Malibran’s La Juive, and Massenet’s Héroïde were also staged. There were frequent revivals of older masterpieces such as Ernani, Der Freischütz, Don Giovanni, La commedie, Semiramide, and Guillaume Tell, as well as more recent ones like Gounod’s Roi Caron and Boito’s Mefistofele. Besides attending the revised version of Simon Boccanegra, Puccini was also at the premiere of Sauer’s Bianca di Castiglia (February 1881) and Catalani’s Dampier in March 1881 ("cattivissimo, speaking it was extremely good, and if it’s done again I’ll go back").

From this brief picture we can see the importance of the first three years in Milan for Puccini’s development. Before setting to work on Manon Lescaut, he had intently gathered together the elements he would need in the future, albeit apparently without a precise plan. From Panchioli he strove above all to learn the art of sketches, an accomplishment he would later display on numerous occasions. From Amilcare Galli he learned the fundamental principles of Wagnerian aesthetics in relation to harmonic technique, a pragmatic approach far removed from literary dispute that allowed him to cultivate his natural propensity toward thematic reminiscence and complex chords in relation to the drama. Through the performances he...
attended, Puccini immediately established the direct link with the French theatrical world that would become one of his distinctive traits, manifest in his use of harmony and tone color, and in his natural inclination to subjects set in France or by French authors.

From the very outset Puccini attempted, as had Verdi, to make contact with the theatrical world in which he aspired to play a leading role. Just a few days after taking the admission test to the Conservatory, he made efforts to meet Wagner's Italian publisher, Giovanni Luca, probably through Carlini. But soon he was persuaded that

From Luca (the publisher) there is nothing to hope for as far as the Theater is concerned, because Ricordi has a stronghold on it and the Luca is in direct competition with him. (To Romualdo Puccini, 9 December 1880; Marchetti, no. 2, 16)

In the meantime he had started an activity that would keep him busy throughout his life.

Tell Michele to look for Cappellini Medri and to ask him whether he has found out anything for me yet about that little libretto he promised. I need it very quickly because then I could get ready to do something. (To Niccolo Ceri, 6 December 1882; Marchetti, no. 8, 31)

Puccini's compositions of this period were produced to satisfy his student requirements. In July 1882 he wrote a Preghiera sinfonica in A major,14 and in the following year he produced a Capriccio sinfonico as a diploma exercise after completing the other compulsory tests (he scored 169/200), which earned him the "diploma honoring students of distinction." Both pieces show outstanding flair. During this period, a previously nonexistent orchestral tradition was emerging in Italy, and in Milan it found its most ardent proponents in Boito and Francesco Faccio; the latter was permanent director of the Società Orchestrale at La Scala from 1880. Naturally the tradition was in its very early stages, and the Milanese were rarely able to

14. A copy of the autograph score is in the library of the Milan Conservatory (MS 13 12 198), and it is dated by Puccini "luglio (July) 1882 Milan" on the first page. Many biographers have rather naively attributed some of Puccini's symphonic compositions to the Luca period, where the genre was not practiced and there was no available orchestra capable of taking this responsibility; the manuscript parts demand over fifty performers. The erroneous date of 1879 could have been recorded when Puccini himself gave the printed parts to the Istmo Musicali at Luca in 1879, together with the parts and other works of his student period (for the date of this donation, see Arrigo, "Cabellotepia," 95 for an inventory; see Cavalli, "tascini giovani," 105). Further confirmation of this date is found in the fragmentary autographs acquired by the Museo Pucciniano at Cello (see Alberio Cavalli, "Il frammento perduto di Cello," CQ 20). For a careful reconstruction of all the events relevant to the period, see Michael Elsasser, "Le prime musiche sinfoniche di Puccini: Quando ne appaiono," QF (1929) 432–52.

ear an entire symphony. A typical program of the time would juxtapose a famous opera overture, in which a symphonic descriptive style was suitably prominent (such as Giacomo Torelli), with movements from one of Beethoven's masterpieces. Besides the two concerts given by the famous violinist Sarasate in March 1882, a performance of the whole of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, together with Brahms's three Hungarian Dances, in a concert conducted by Faccio on 15 April 1883, was without doubt an outstanding event.16 This conductor took Puccini's Capriccio to his heart; he conducted its premiere with the Conservatory orchestra on 14 July 1883 and revived the piece twice in Turin the following year (6 July and 24 October). This piece achieved considerable success, especially pleasing the famous music critic Filippo Filippi, who was, with Boito and Faccio, among the most ardent Italian supporters of German Romantic symphony and opera. In the newspaper La prerogativa of 15 July 1883 Filippi praised Puccini's musicianship and predicted a bright future for him as a symphonist, noting in his work a "stylistic unity enlivened by real character and personality. Fortunately, these words of encouragement did not distract the young man from his firm resolution to devote himself to opera. Indeed, at that time Puccini was seeking an introduction to Giovanni Ricordi and a renewal of contact with Giovanni Luca.17 He needed a libretto.

A Reservoir of Inspiration

Apart from the Mass and the "symphonic" works, Puccini wrote few non-operatic compositions that are significant from a critical point of view. The pieces for piano solo are negligible, the fugues for quartet have the air of academic exercises, even if one conceives their well-controlled four-part writing. The vocal pieces, recently collected, transcribed, and commented on exhaustively by Michael Kaye, are more important.18 Half of them date from the composer's early years in Luca and Milan (1875–83); the rest are scattered throughout the course of his career and were mostly written for special occasions, like the launching of Marzio Gionovi Luci's yacht, for which Puccini contributed the hymn "Ave!" Umani!" All of these pieces illustrate Puccini's obvious melodic gifts. The first song, "A te" (1875), exhibits striking harmonic progressions and a tuneful melody à la Paolo Toschi; but as early as his short Sarete regina on a text by Giovanni Zanetti (1882) we can see aspects of Puccini's mature style, such as the descending leap of a sixth.
the many chromatic inflections, and the elaborate accompaniment rich in secondary thirds.

A glance at this music is sufficient to establish that even before obtaining his diploma Puccini had developed a well-defined style of vocal writing, in particular in relation to the harmonic underpinning. This is not to say that his talent was precocious (he was almost twenty-five, an age at which other composers had already written masterpieces), but it does explain the systematic use in his operas, for example, of the phrase "Le Villi di Le reali", of ideas originating in pieces not written for the theater. The question was raised by Fausto Torrefranca in his famous pamphlet of 1912:

Puccini is lazy: an insolent schoolboy, Epicurean bohemian... even as a man he reveals himself to be lazy. And as an artist too: one opera on average every four years, with the help of repetitions within the opera and relays of preceding works, can certainly count as laziness. The subversive opinion speaks for itself, but Torrefranca tried to belittle his enemy merely by accusing him of lack of inspiration even while not realizing the extent and significance of Puccini's self-borrowings (aside from the Capanesi, he hardly could have known compositions that were unpublished or had appeared only in obscure journals). There is no need to dwell on this subject, since others have done so very thoroughly, nor to confirm that borrowing, beginning with Sinfonia, has been practiced extensively by all the great composers of the past. But a brief sketch of what stimulates Puccini in these circumstances might serve to clarify some of his stylistic habits.

The most cogent reason for renewing existing music was the relevance of the dramatic context into which it was to be placed, particularly if it was "stage music," as with the Tre novelle for string quartet, used as dance music in the second act of Manon Lescaut, or the Kyrie of the Mass, which reappears in Edgar as an offstage Preghiera for chorus. Puccini

12. Fausto Torrefranca, Giacomo Puccini e l'opera internazionale (Turin: Bocca, 1912), 41.

13. See Giuseppe Migni, "Una ricerca di Puccini..." (E. Torrefranca), CL 1961-71. The problem is also discussed by Marzocchi in Giacomo Pannelli, ed., "Il monologo di Manon Lescaut di Puccini," in il melodramma italiano all'opera (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), 251-60. He points out how "in all, about all or almost all of Puccini's vocal chamber works have operatic potential" (1969). See also the Catalogue of Works below for a list of "self-borrowings." During the course of the book, only those cases of direct quotations in relation to the context will be pointed out.

14. See the chapters devoted to separate operas for more precise details about eighteenth-century style in connection with the preceding music. In Mozart, the arias are used as "music at opera" (stage music) while they accompany the speaker as if inserted into the action but not played by the pit orchestra. "Music in opera," on the other hand, required the use of sound different from that of orchestra or from solo singing, with the choirs behind the scenes in Edgar. For a careful examination of the context of stage music, see Carl Dahlhaus, "Drammatizzazione dell'opera italiana," in Lorenzo Bianconi and Giacomo Pannelli, ed., storia

even reworked pieces written twenty years earlier by his younger brother Michele, such as the Giovine for piano (1885–87) that supplies the background for Scarpia's summations before his interrogation of Cavaradossi in Turandot. "E stringevi il gancio..." (And they strung the ginetto) says the harry, and Puccini picks up the libretto's suggestion. Whatever the situation, there is nearly always a logical connection. In the aria "Torri si falcia d'oro," added to the revised version of Le Villi, Roberto's melancholy nostalgia (Ex. 3.2a) is expressed in a melodic idea from the fragment "Ad una morte" (Ex. 3.2b), the words of which evoke a similar sentiment:

Example 3.2

a. "Ad una morte," mm. 15-17

b. Le Villi, III. 5 before 48

Puccini always knew how to insert the recycled passages at the most suitable place, so that they echoed in the new context they do not jar stylistically with their surroundings. The most obvious case is that of the Capanesi sinfonica, which provides the second and third themes of the Andante moderato in Edgar's funeral music—the latter idea echoed in the next movement ("L'addio" in Act IV)—of the overture to La Fanciulla del West—while the motive of the following Allegro vivace becomes the main theme of La Bohème. At the beginning of 1880 Puccini wrote Orissenti, an inspired elegy for string quartet: "to the memory of Arnele di Savoia, duke of Aosta,"
who had died on 18 January. Two of its themes were to play a fundamental role in the fourth act of *Mason Lecanii*:

Example 3.5

a. *Cinatone*, VI, mm. 2–10

They lend a threnodic character to this youthful work, which is in a three-part form of choric nature, but seem to come from the very core of a tragic event enacted on the stage—indeed it is with Mason's physical decline that they will be associated.

Other cases pose no less interesting problems, for instance the dramatic scene "Menta l'aveni" (1882), which provided the idea for Des Grieux's aria "Donna non vidi mai," and the Agnus Dei of the Mass, on which the Madrigal in the second act of *Mason Lecanii* (again "stage music") is based. These examples reveal the "refreshing" process in far from being the product of laziness, but demonstrates the unrestricted nature of Puccini's imagination, which was capable of inventing a dramatic world before having a libretto to which to adapt it. Moreover, they confirm the primacy of melody even in his early years, and explain why he had no difficulty in

23. "Cinatone", composition for string quartet performed with great success by Campanari at the Conservatory and in Santeria [I wrote it in late 1882 on the death of Vincenzo Di Scrota" (Giannini to Michele Puccini, 6 February 1893; Gia, vol. 36, 37). The performance took place on 18 January 1892.

adopting leitmotivic techniques: in his mind the dense interweaving of melodic ideas was governed by clear typological criteria, which allowed him to choose the most suitable themes to characterize the drama organically, in both orchestral and vocal terms. Having reached the threshold of his first opera with a sure command of his materials, including control of the constituent elements of melody, Puccini had plenty of time to consider how he could best use his resources in the vast and difficult context of the theater. In the course of his career, the habit of reusing material lessened somewhat, but never ceased entirely, as the following example demonstrates:

Example 3.4

a. "Segno e fin," mm. 1–4

It is not difficult to recognize the *brindisi* from *La rondine* (Ex. 1.4b) in the first melody (Ex. 1.4b), a libbre composed in March 1912. Again, the similarity of situation—the childlike innocence and the ingenuousness of Ruggiero, who sings the piece—makes the rewriting of material logical. The next step would be the obvious quotation of Mimì's aria in the song-vendor episode of *Il tabarro*, a demonstration of the change that had taken place in Puccini's musical conception, now definitively in its twentieth-century phase.

The Orchestral Compositions and the Mass

Puccini's two symphonic works illustrate the standard he had reached during the course of his studies, and help us to understand better statements such as Filippo's. Both works demonstrate a formal innovation and an inventive use of tone color unknown to other opera composers who worked in the descriptive genre—for example, the symphonic poem *Eno e Lando*.

13. "Segno e fin," with words by Carlo Macelli, was recently found by Julian Budden in the Christmas and New Year issue of *Musi* e *il mondo* (1913), and is reproduced in *La rondine* (Milan: Einaudi, 1966), vol. 1, nos. 68–69.
(1885) by Catalani. They show that Puccini was capable of competing with composers then active in the flourishing quartet societies.

The Capriccio sinfónico is of sizable proportions, and makes use of a large orchestra (double woodwind, four horns, trumpets, and three trombones plus ophicleide, timpani, harp, and strings, with the addition of cornet, triangle, and cymbals) and fluent melodic invention. It would be wrong, however, to think of this work as outside the Italian tradition, and expect internal synaesthetic connections typical of the German masters. Rather, Puccini, perhaps unconsciously, came close to the form of a symphonic poem, since the themes—of a cantabile quality that is often brought out by the orchestration—are not "loosely strung together like beads on a string" (Carrer, 391), but connected in an implied narrative in a solid ternary structure (A–B–A).

The first section (Andante moderato in F major) begins with a timpani roll that subsequently acts as a cadenza between three themes: the first, in the brass, has a heroic character; it is followed by a despairing cantabile in B-flat minor and an expansive lyric melody that moves from A-flat to E-flat major, then blends with the opening theme before being restored in the home key in the coda. The motive that opens the Allegro vivace, in F major, supplies a lively contrast, and intertwines first with an extrovert melody in waltz time (but in G), and then with a new and spirited contrasting idea, before finally rejoicing the dance theme. Up to this point in the piece Puccini has established links within sections, but in the expanded recapitulation of the Tempo I a cyclic form emerges. The material is repeated again, starting with the despairing lament (theme 2) orchestrated differently; the lyric melody then follows as expected. A rapid progression leads to a section in which the two themes are set against each other: the major mode casts everything in a new light, and provides the necessary setting for a further mood change caused by the return of the expansive Allegro melody, now no longer a waltz but a chorale. It appears first in the violins, and then taken up very broadly, by the strings, before the piece finally dies away gently. Even though it lacks a "program," the Capriccio's formal organization communicates the sense of life's vicissitudes: of tragic starkly evolving toward a serene conclusion.

The idea underlying the Preludio sinfónico in A major is completely different: it is based on an extreme density of material. Puccini constructed this piece on a single theme, which is stated at the beginning in a diatonic version that ends on a dominant seventh (Ex. 1.5c: a–b). This is immediately restated with a chromatic codetta that resolves onto a half-diminished seventh (Ex. 1.5d: a–f). The diatonic–chromatic opposition is reinforced by two further variants in the initial part of the theme. In the first, the rising sixth (Ex. 1.5e: a) is developed to give forward impetus; in the second the addition of a chromatic interval (Ex. 1.5f: g) makes the melody more anguish.

Example 1.5
A. Preludio sinfónico, mm. 1–4

B. Preludio sinfónico, mm. 9–12

The lack of low-pitched sounds gives it an ethereal sonority, as does the opposition of heterogeneous groups of timbres—first woodwinds (Ex. 1.5e), then strings (Ex. 1.5f)—which, although occurring in reverse order, recalls the prelude to La bohème, also in A major. The voice-leading of the
choir also gestures toward Wagner, and the beginning of Puccini's theme was not unknown to Mascagni, who echoed it in the final part of the duet between Santuzza and Turiddu in his Cavalleria rusticana ("No, Turiddu, rimani ascutta."). Puccini skillfully interwove various of the themes, providing them with a lyric codetta, changing both the tempo—from Andante mosso to Animato (m. 50) and Un poco più animato (m. 75)—and the blocks of sonority up to the climax. The theme explodes con forza forte (m. 110) in its more chromatic guise, given to horns and trombones over a trombone and ophicleide pedal, under ostinato sixteenth-note figures in the strings. The piece then dies down gradually until the coda, which develops in a broad harmonic arch that shrewdly departs on a circle of fifths, reaching as far as F before returning to the home key of A major.

Let us now step back for a moment to 5 August 1876, the date that Puccini himself entered on the last page of his manuscript of the Predisio a orchestra in E minor/major. Until recently, it was only the one composer's more valuable autographed missa, but its recovery (see above, n. 7) makes possible a brief consideration of this short piece.

The ten remaining manuscript pages of the Predisio (out of an apparent 12; pages 5 and 6 are missing) contain just sixty-seven measures in all. It is by no means a masterpiece, but one would scarcely be expected from a composer at the beginning of his career (Puccini was not even eighteen), who had showed no precocious signs of talent. Nonetheless, the work's formal scheme does exhibit a certain ingenuity, with its playful return of thematic material weaving together the two sections into which the Predisio is divided in an A–B–A′–B′–B–A′ plan (E: E minor, theme I; B: E major, theme II; A′: C-sharp minor, I: B: E major, II). The quality of the principal melodies is noteworthy; we can already recognize the composer of Misa Lengen in the sad, meandering first theme in the minor. Orchestration and harmony, often full of pungent chromaticism, also provide more than one delightful surprise. This work, the first that can be dated with certainty, demonstrates that although Puccini still lacked theoretical and practical contact with great Italian and European music, he had extraordinary natural gifts for form and orchestration.

Aside from the operas, Puccini's best composition is undoubtedly the...
The exposition of the first verse moves from C through E-flat major to B-flat major before returning to the home key; the “Gloria” in D-flat major offers an expansive lyrical opportunity to the solo tenor, rising expressively to the limits of his tessitura. The solemn character of the “Quoniam” is depicted by homophonic choral blocks, with brass fanfares driving through the texture, while the concluding section, “Cuncta Sanctora Spiritum,” is an accompanied fugue. In the stretto, Puccini brilliantly combined the first part of the fugue subject (Ex. 1.68) with the initial theme (Ex. 1.66) in a double canon (basses and sopranos, tenors and altos), with an effect that transcends the usual expectations of such “academic” writing (Ex. 1.66):

Example 1.6
a. Gloria, mm. 1–4

b. Glória, 8 after 111

c. Gloria, 3 before 111

This passage brings out the cyclic unity of the section, but, in contrast to Verdi (who in the “Libera me” of the Requiem interrupted the fugue to repeat the initial theme), Puccini achieves dramatic effectiveness while preserving a more orthodox attitude to strict form.

The Mass reveals the virtuosity of the imagination of a talented young man, who, with a long and vital family tradition behind him, managed to overcome its provinciality and laid the necessary groundwork on which to develop his natural instinct for opera. The considerable technique on display here is the first glimpse of a future in which Puccini’s reworking and refining of his individual language would play a fundamental role in the achievement of theatrical effect.
Scapigliatura Interlude

Success

It was July 1883. Returning to the station at Lucca I ran into the community of artists who spent their summers at Maggiano; they were on their way home. There were conservative professors and young masters: Ponzelli, Dominichi, Salamin, and others. Puccini was among them. I got into the same railroad car as Ponzelli, who told me about his pupil's intention to enter the Sonzogno competition, and suggested that I prepare a libretto for him. Then and there, vividly remembering his Capriccio sinfónico, I felt that a fantastic subject was needed for the young composer, and I explained to him the plot of Le Villi. Puccini accepted.1

I spoke to Fontana, the poet, who was taking a holiday near Ponzelli, and we almost made a deal for a libretto. Better still, he told me that he liked my music, etc. etc. Ponzelli intervened and recommended me warmly. There was a nice little subject that somebody else had been thinking about, but Fontana would prefer to give it to me, especially since I liked it so much. There's ample scope for symphonic descriptive work in it, which appeals to me because I think I could do it well. If it comes off I'll be able to take part in the Sonzogno competition. (Puccini to his mother, n.d. [ca. 20 July 1883]; Gatti, no. 6, 6.)2

Thus Puccini's theatrical adventure began. Announced on 1 April 1883, the Sonzogno competition for a one-act opera was open almost exclusively to the 1888 winners: Mascagni's Cavalleria rusticana. Puccini had

1. The context is taken from Marchetti, op. cit., pp. 37 to 38, no source is indicated. Fontana's assistant is slightly different; see “Giovanni Puccini,” Gazzetta musicale di Milano 39, no. 42 (19 October 1883), 381–2, which dates the meeting to August. But on 17 July Puccini had sent a letter to his mother in order to visit Ponzelli as soon as possible (Marchetti, op. cit., p. 38).

2. For more detailed information on the libretto, see Sergio Marchetti, “Il problema di Puccini” in “Il melodramma: Puccini” (1909), 57–61. Fontana wrote a total of twenty-five libretti between 1873 and 1891: La Fiesola was the eighth, Edgar the fifteenth. Among the most important are Pina Boncompagni’s due Spine (1885) and Il Signor de la Touche for Alberto Franchetti (1887).
by Fontana stating that Puccini had submitted the score in the nick of time, "without having been able to make a fair copy of it." But one has only to open the score, in the Ricordi archives in Milan, to realize that this is an inaccurate, if not downright false, statement. After all, Puccini, who had corrected his father's exercises, knew his pupil's hand, and had encouraged him to enter the competition despite grave difficulties because of lack of time. Did the student's teachers and mentors want to avoid accusations of favoritism?

The story continues if we were a parable. Early in April 1884 Puccini played the score to a gathering hosted by Marco Sala, composer, music critic, and one of the leading figures of the Scapigliature. Those present—including Boito in the front row—were so won over that they started a collection to stage the opera. Boito, for one, would have been attracted by his friend Fontana's subject, and probably also by the presence of an innovation in symphonic-expressive style. But a glance at the artistic environment developing in those years, the battles between publishers acting as impresarios, where practical and economic necessities lurked behind aesthetic disputes, perhaps supplies a more convincing explanation of the events. Puccini had written to his mother on 16 February 1884:

At the end of the month the result of the competition will be announced, but I am not very hopeful... I went to Ricordi with manuscript Puccinelli, who recommended me, but for now there's not much to hope for. (Marchetti, no. 29, 41)

Thus the composer met the prince of Italian publishers before the competition was over, and what is more had done so in the company of his judge who, even while introducing him to this most prestigious of acquirers, was preparing to fail his entry in the competition! Giulio Ricordi had long been looking for a new talent to reinvigorate his firm; he was himself a composer, and loved to hear and appreciate music personally. Is it possible that he did not want to hear even one note of Puccini's score? Had be done so, he would immediately have realized the unusual quality of this first opera, and the composer's potential. But had Le Villi won the competition, it would have been published by Sonzogno; if it failed, it would have the advantage of much greater publicity; turned down by the rival publisher, who would thus have made apparent his own incapacity to identify real talent, the opera would triumphantly vindicate itself a few months later, ending up in the hands of a truly enlightened publisher—Giulio Ricordi.

Whatever went on (and according to the hypothesis suggested here, silence was obligatory for everyone, even close relatives: "I am not very hopeful... there's not much to hope for"), Le Villi met with a clamorous success from both audience and critics at the Teatro Dal Verme on 31 May, receiving enthusiastic reviews from Filippo in La perimetaria and Gramola in the Carriera della Sera. On 8 June the Giornale musicale di Milano, Ricordi's house organ, announced that Ricordi had acquired the opera and had immediately commissioned another work from the young composer, also with words by Fontana. Already on 3 June the opera was rumored to be planned for performance at Turin. The publisher's state of mind is aptly described by Verdi's former student and friend Emmanuele Minguzzi, who on 27 June sent Giulio Ricordi a letter from Paris:

I congratulate you since Verdi wrote to me some weeks ago that at last you have found what you have been looking for these thirty years, a real composer: one Puccini, who truly seems to have exceptional qualities. For my part, I wish him clear ideas in the key of G and simple harmonies in the key of E flat.

Ricordi deemed it necessary to expand the rather brief opera, extending it to two acts. Puccini composed a large part of the new music for Le Villi for the revival at Turin (20 December 1884), which was widely pronounced before the opera's triumphant return to Milan at La Scala (24 January 1885). Franco Faccio again took the podium, proving as conductor to be the very best judge of the work. Despite the fact that the tenor Anton and the baritone Menotti were not up to the opera's demands, Romilda
Chapter Two

Ponentei, the future Desdemona in Otello, achieved great success, comparable to that of the young composer, who was called on stage repeatedly. For Ricordi it was time to draw conclusions:

This opera of the young composer from Lucca, which has once more achieved great success in an auditorium as large as our La Scala, equal to the success it had last spring at the Dal Verme, has persuaded me that we were not wrong in judging it unnecessarily to be quite out of the ordinary... Puccini, it seems to me, has something new, and this something is perhaps the most precious of gifts, in the search for which many a misundertood genius toils and strives, its importance disguised under the spectaculous name of the future! This precious quality, in our Puccini, is that of having ideas in his head (as dans les soueurs, as the French say); and, as Colombi would rightly say, these one either has or one hasn't, nor can they be acquired by analysing and re-creating the dots, counterpoint, harmony, dissonance, 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, prove it by letting his fertile imagination run free of every shackles, he will gain glory from it, and it will be Italian glory!  

G. Ricordi

Le Villi

Until a few years ago the source of Le Villi was thought to be a German myth retold by Heine in Über Deutschland II. Elementargrave und Dämmerung (1834), from which the ballet Giardino, as Le Villi by Théophile Gautier and Henri Verrhy de Saintes Georges (1841), with music by Adolphe Adam, was derived. The great popularity of this romantic ballet, written for Caroline Grisi, made an opera on the same subject sound very promising. Unlike Fontana’s libretto, in which the girl and her companions, transformed into Villi, cause the man’s death, in the ballet Prince Albrecht is stultified by Grisielle until dawn, when the spell breaks. The salvation of the man is a metaphor for the beneficial power of dance, and as much is extremely well suited to the requirements of one of the greatest pa di danza ever to end a ballet.

According to an age-old operatic tradition, a self-respecting Italian librettist would typically look for subjects in recent literature; if he decided on a remote subject, he did so after another opera had brought it into cor-

Scapegliatura Interlude

rency, as in the case of Menen. Fontana was no exception when he took up Alphonse Karr’s French tale Le Villi, published in 1872. He was faithful to the plot both in general theme and in detail, from the Black Forest setting to two of the three protagonists’ names (Wilhelm Wolf and his daughter Anna), and the city of Mann, to which the girl’s fiancé travels to claim her inheritance. The idea of opening the opera with a dance scene also comes from Karr, as does the father’s invocation of divine retribution on the person responsible for his daughter’s death. The changes the librettist made indicate his way of thinking, although it should be remembered that in the first version plot development was obviously more elliptical. Whereas in Karr’s tale Heinrich marries his rich cousin at the request of his uncle and mother, in the opera Robert becomes attracted to a sinful siren who robs him of everything he has; exhausted and full of remorse he returns to the place of his lost happiness. Heinrich, on the other hand, arrives there by chance and the legend of the Villi occurs to him too late: Anna’s spirit reappears and draws him to the fatal dance.

Puccini accepted the subject without demurral. Aside from the lack of both time and cash, it is well to remember that at this time he was intent on developing a connection with the composer Alfredo Catalani, and had no reason to doubt that the latter enjoyed a certain reputation in musical circles. The famous Locatelli legend narrated by Heine had already inspired Catalani’s opera Elisa (Turin, 1880), and Puccini thus had an opportunuity to continue this poetic trend, which was still quite capable of further development. That he was familiar with Elisa is shown by the idea of the funeral cortège (a similar episode was set by Catalani), which Puccini had thought of immediately after the premiere performances of Le Villi at the Teatro Dal Verme, while he was working hard on the two-act version. The episode needed some verses to be sung by an off-stage chorus during the “soliloquies” (the first part of the intermezzi, now entitled “L’abbandono,” so called on the model of the prelude to Boito’s Mefistofele), which he requested from Fontana on 18 August 1884 together with a new passage. 12

The concept would be this: “Pa! Pa! alla morta d’amore Requiret! Ermone au.” As for the scene, the reminiscence of the Pergolesi “O

9. Gazzetta musicale di Milione 40, no. 5 (5 November 1872), 44-46. To understand Ricordi’s statement better, one should remember that in July Wagner was still being published by Giuseppina Luco, and that Ricordi’s notice was changed immediately once he bought out the rival firm in 1888.

10. See Julian Budden, “TheGenesis and Literary Sources of Giacomo Puccini’s First Opera,” Cambridge Opera Journal 1, no. 1 (1986), 74-85. References to the plot are taken from Budden’s clearly accurate “Le Villi Alphonse Karr” in a written notice that was written in Latin in 1872. Puc-

11. In trying to demonstrate the originality of Le Villi, Montioli gets himself into difficulties when he challenges the notion that Catalani’s opera was a model by stating that Lenzi has stated only in 1860 (Montioli, Giacomo Puccini, 18): Lenzi in fact a reworking of Elisa.

12. The idea suggested by Gaffur for this intermezzo, is one of the many errors littering his edition of Puccini’s correspondence. Fontana’s response allows us to date the letter correctly.
sommono l'Idolo") would be in the middle or almost at the end. It must be quite a dramatic scene; in fact, very much so, with "tormenta" expressions, but quite short as usual. (Cossa, no. 8, 52.)

These are the first hints in Paccini's letters of a strong-willed dramatist, a person that from this point on will gradually become more familiar. Fontana replied immediately:

"As for the words to be sung when they carry the body away, you need to tell me whether you want one, two, or four lines. In my opinion it would be enough to have them say a couple of times merely "Regnumus in pace!" after all, the procession only passes by, and the importance of the description is in the orchestra... The reminiscence will be in the tenor piece. You'll see!" (25 August 1884, Marchetti, nos. 81, 83.)

The opera took on its definitive form between September and October. At the end of September Paccini had Ricciarielli loan Anna Scenna e Roma; the publisher was enthusiastic (Marchetti, no. 88, 3). By the beginning of November the score was ready, through "Torna all felici di!", added for the revival at La Scala, was still absent. A synoptic table of the three phases clarifies the opera's journey to its present form.11

Le Vili

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<td>&quot;Se non c'è più gioia&quot;</td>
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11. The structure performed at the "Terzo Dal Verme" has been deduced from the original autoscript, from which it is dated the original manuscript, preserved in the collection of the Paccini archives. A precise performance belongs to the collection of the Puccini archives, and now in the Mary Flagler Cary Music Collection (Fordham University Library, New York City), allows us to hypothesize about the period of the score, after the Milan premiere. With the title page Le Vili (Musicale del Mi Piatto - Viaggi / Giornali Luminosi di Scena e Scena 3), it is a bound text containing a large part of the opera, partly vocal score forming, partly orchestral, and partly instrumental and fragments. At the bottom of the first page the composer wrote "Terzo Dal Verme - Giorgio Puccini," and the performance, from the singing to the orchestration. On the final page, in Guiti Ricciari's privilege to the Publisher, dated 15 June 1884, to put the score under copyright protection. Although lacking the preface, the manuscript contains about a piano reduction, dated "October 1884," and an orchestral version of the first movement. The description of the symphonic introduction shows the definitive score, but without the chord pairs. From the second movement it contains only the piano version, entitled Ter-

The revisions were intended to perfect an already logical structure. Filippi, present at the two Milanese premières, provided an important commentary:

Le Vili, as presented for the first time at the Dal Verme, was in only one act; and rather than an opera, it was understood by some, it had the form, proportions, and character of a type of symphonic cantata, suited to stage performance and with the fantastic element dominant. The revision, or better the current amplification, does not much change this special character, in which the symphonic abounds and which gives Le Vili a new aspect—one that I like—far distant from the usual, conventional melodrama: ... In the second act instrumental passages entitled "L'abbandono" and "La tragedia" became integral and scenic parts of the work; at the Dal Verme they functioned merely as symphonic in
termezzi. (La perennità., 28 January 1888.)

The critic is, as usual, perceptive. The first version was much closer to the Songhiateria aesthetic, exalting the role of poetry in musical expression.14 And the point about the intermezzi acquiring a dramatic function is

14. The review of Le Vili in the Corriere della Sera (14 January 1888) involved special editing to meet Fontana's tastes; in "Il libretto is about a miraculous play into poetry, just as melodrama is shown to change into a grand symphony shaped by music. This expression brings us back to Rein's choice that a new libretto-foil figure would be born, when our words will be more isolated, more colored, more elevated and...," see "Mandolini in Italia," Giornale della Scuola di (l'antratt), 1884, cited in Pierre Salvi, Vio e Arte (Milano: Mandolini, 1969), 106.
also important. Fontana wrote a sort of program, in two quatrains for "L’abbandono" and two octaves for "La tregenda," which was positioned at the bottom of the relevant page in both the score and libretto. Some have said that these verses were recited by a narrator;15 but on 3 September 1864 Fontana wrote to Pacini:

In a week I will write both the description of the first-act dance and the one for the second part of the symphonic piece, La Tregenda. But this solely concerns the libretto. (Marchetti, no. 84, 87)

The text helps the audience understand the drama behind the choreography, and also supplies a basis for the action of the ballet; its presence led to the definition of Le Villi as an "opera-ballet." The term suggests an adaptation of grand opera, an enormous influence in Italy after 1850, in which the ballet typically functioned as a spectacle within the operatic action. The genre then developed into an independent Italian type, with operas such as Mefistofele (1868; second version in 1875), Aiuto (1873), and La Giustizia (1875). The dances in these works had a reduced dramatic function, but in Le Villi they were the nucleus of the action (in the score, waltz music is almost ubiquitous), and contributed vitally to the denouement.

The opera’s symphonic unity, noted by Filippi, is strengthened by the three prominent sections for orchestra. The Gran Scena e Duetto Finale is broadly based on "L’abbandono" (Adagio Lento ed espressivo, E♭) — in which there is an interpolated reference to the duet "Tu dell’infinita mila" — and on "La tregenda," which accompanies the Willis’s appearance and exhausting concluding dance. The third section is the prelude, apparently constructed on the model of a passacaglia piece, in which the principal melodies are given a firm bearing. By a method Puccini would refine over the years, while thematic ideas emerge during the very first measures (Ex. 2.15), the opening and part of the duet No. 4 (Ex. 2.16) derive from them.

The four-note figure that completes the theme (Ex. 2.16 and B) takes on a life of its own, becoming the motive with which Roberto, with a hint of blasphemy, repeatedly states his unshakable love for Azucena (Ex. 2.17). The harmonic progression of the prelude (Ex. 2.16) should be noted; the combination of the upper part (resolution of the fifth degree of the scale, ninth and seventh chords, then on the secondary dominant ninth chord) with the

Lower pedal (dominant ninth) generates the sense of more complex superimpositions (eleventh and thirteenth chords). Such combinations are sustained by the clarity of the orchestration, with the first bassoon moving toward the ninth of the pedal (B♭), and the exchange between clarinet and oboes in the upper part.

Example 2.7

b. Le Villi, No. 4, Duet, beginning

c. Le Villi, No. 4, Duet, 12 after [2]

Other elements contribute to the opera’s cohesion. Puccini made use of the smallest details to recall a situation: the Willis are characterized, from "La tregenda" onwards, by rhythm and orchestral color. Their music relies above all on the "natural" intervals of the fifth (♭ and the fourth (♭), and the timbre of clarinet, triangle, cymbals, and harp (Ex. 2.17 and 2):
Puccini used these elements skillfully in the new music he composed after the premiere. Thus the reminiscence sounds meaningful at the beginning of Roberto's "dramatic scene" (Ex. 2.2d), and creeps like an omen into the introduction to Anna's aria (Ex. 2.1e).

The relation between the phrase that rounds off the prelude (Ex. 2.2b) and one that appears in the Preghiera at the end of the first act (Ex. 2.3b) is even more emphatic; this then becomes "the reminiscence of the Preghiera" at the end of Roberto's scene (Ex. 2.3c).
The relationship to the Abbandon-Matino is clear, as is the similarity between Puccini's theme and the famous passage from Otello that accompanies the Moor's entrance into Desdemona's bedchamber in Act IV (Ex. 2.4d). One should perhaps not exclude the possibility that Le Foll was the connecting link between these similarities; Verdi had read Puccini's score while composing his opera.17

The opera's modest proportions did not allow Puccini to develop the personalities of his characters to any significant degree. His prima donna already has some of the traits of her successors, being utterly devoted to love, even to the point of self-sacrifice; but she was too ingenuous to fire the composer's imagination. Nevertheless, her aria and her contribution to the ensembles are representative of Puccini at his best. In the melody of “Se come voi piacete” (No. 1), ascending scale passages alternate with wide leaps in a formal structure that has some of the symmetries of the preceding chorus. Changes of meter and tempo follow the inflections of the text and heighten the dramatic resonances, which in themselves are rather faint. The concluding repetition of “Non ti scordar di me” reaches dramatic heights that make one forget the rather formal metrical address to the little bunch of flowers she holds in her hands. In the finale Puccini seemed to feel some uncertainty about a woman who carries out her mission of vengeance, and did not emphasize this aspect except in the first measures of No. 10, which Anna attacks with vehemence leaps of octaves. But the central part of the final meeting with her lover is permeated by a melancholy and nostalgic re-creation of their lost happiness, expressed by a reminiscence of the duet “Tu dell’infanzia m’as” The Willi enacts Roberto into the trap by means of this remembrance—nostalgia for a time past that seems for a moment to have returned—and shelegates her vengeance to the spirits of her unhappy companion.

The character of Guglielmo Wall is more anomalous, being Puccini's only father figure on the Verdi model. One of the most obvious signs of Puccini's growing detachment from the Verdi world is his gradual avoidance of familiar stage types, which coincides with a distinct distancing from themes of a moral nature. In the Preghiera that ends the first act, Anna's father blesses his daughter's union with Roberto at the latter's request, and authoritatively invokes the “Angiolo di Dio.” But it is Anna who continues, out of dramatic necessity, singing lines then repeated by Roberto and Guglielmo that culminate in a grand concertato—a true central finale in which the ultimate end of the drama is anticipated (“Sia propizio il matrimo ad ogni pellegrina, o amor, invia i sacri spiriti, siano i sacri spiriti inviati dal tuo amore”); “May the path be good for every pilgrim, let every dream of love be free of disillusionment.”

The baritone Guglielmo reappears after the two symphonic movements, and his Fidelio e Scena (No. 8) has the purpose of clarifying the dramatic events, linking Roberto's betrayal with his daughter's death and the Wills' vengeance. A few measures of orchestral prelude introduce a brief horn theme in C minor, which descends sadly by chromatic step in a Largo doloroso.18 The baritone's recitative is forceful, on the heroic model of a Verdi father. The most recent example dated from 1851: Jacopo Fiesco in the prologue to the revised Simon Boccanegra. Guglielmo, like Fiesco, also mourns the death of his daughter, with a further similarity being the addition of a chorus of mourning. Guglielmo thinks of the innocence of his daughter, who is dead because of her seducer; but while the Verdi father rails against Simon, who has committed an act against the morals of aristocratic society (a daughter born out of wedlock), in Puccini the fault is purely that of abandoning love. After a few measures of recitativo rigoroso the first theme introduces the true aria (Andante lenso) in E-flat major. Verdi also moved to the major in the second section of Fiesco's aria, but while this procedure illustrated a change in the character's psychological state (the invocation for the daughter of a “corso... dal marito” (“murderous wrath”), the Puccinian father articulates his desire for divine vengeance with a melody that descends and ascends through a vast range in unison with the cellos and in octaves with the windwoods, evoking the Willi as divine instruments of vengeance. Seen in reverse, he asks God's pardon, as Fiesco had done after having killed at the Virgin's bequest, but Puccini, by using the same melody that had served to invoke justice, missed out on a valuable dramatic opportunity.

The bassy close of the piece is justified, however, by the urgency of the next moment, which provided a stronger stimulus for the composer's imagination. Roberto's “Scena drammatica-Romanza” hinges on his resolve to having abandoned Anna, and above all on the remembrance of a past love that has forced him to return. Of all the characters the tenor shows the most obvious dramatic and musical signs of real originality. His scene was inserted after the performances at the Dal Verme, but it was the first alteration to be conceived and the last to be completed—a sign of the importance Puccini attached to it. As we have seen, it contains numerous refer-
Chorus and dance blend in the concluding finale: at the sound of the offstage choir of Willis and Spiritus, the “Tregenda” music accompanies the dancers, who draw the traitor into the final, exhausting G minor tarantella. Their “Osanna” closes the opera with a mild touch of blasphemy, Fontana's final tribute to the spirit of the Scapigliatura movement.

Le Vià was a successful initial effort that, while making some concessions to the taste of the environment in which Puccini had grown up, displayed gifts that he would develop fully within a few years: melodic originality, harmonic adventurousness, and dramatic intuition. Moreover, his gifts for orchestral writing can be seen not only in the symphonic portions but also in very small details. His next step would be to choose an operatic subject for himself, but first he had to honor his commitment to Ricordi and Fontana for Edgar. In 1885 Puccini was to complain that “Le Vià iniciò il tipo today called ‘MSCagnini, and nobody gives me due credit” (Carri, no. 127, 117). He was probably referring both to the recent Guglielmo Ruffini, an opera about spirits and magic, and to Cavalleria Rusticana, which like Puccini’s first work is based on a plot in two parts linked by an orchestral intermezzo, and uses melodic doubling, thematic permutation at the end of the opera, and skillful manipulation of the traditional “number” structure. But his complaint lends itself to reinterpretation: the examples we have examined demonstrate the originality of the thematic and narrative links present in Le Vià. One therefore has to agree with Carneri:

Neither Catalani nor Franceschi nor Manzini nor any other Italian composer of Puccini’s generation, treading under the twin flags of Verdi and the German romantism, achieved in their early operas the imaginative level that characterizes the last pages of Le Vià. (Carri, 349)

The instinct that prompted Giulio Ricordi to sign up the young composer for his firm was therefore laudable, and the success that the opera achieved from its first appearance fully justified.

20. Based on “Il Concilia” Storia: the first scene of Le Vià “is a caricature of carmines” almost unrecognizable to “Nisso del Sodalo” [Witches’ Sabbath] that chose the second act of Rossini’s original.
Difficult Years?

Albina Magi, Puccini's mother, had been in poor health for some time. In May 1884, with preparations for Le Villi at her height, her condition worsened; she held on until she heard of Giacomo's triumph from his brother Michele (4 June; Marchetti, no. 57, 69). Then, a precipitate decline ended in her death on 27 July. For Puccini the loss was certainly serious, even though his letters take on a rather melodramatic tone:

I think of her always and last night I even dreamed of her. Therefore I'm sadder than usual today. Whatever triumphs art can give me, I will never be really happy without my dear mother. (To Rambaldo Puccini, August 1884; Gara, no. 14, 14)

In support of his psychoanalytical theory that Puccini's relationship with his mother was perpetuated in that with his future wife, Mosso Carner stated that Puccini 'fell in love with Elvira Geminiani (his fiancée), the wife of a wealthy grocer,' immediately after the death of his mother.\(^{16}\) The flight, however, actually took place two years later.\(^{17}\) Although the relationship probably started in October 1884, when Puccini returned to his hometown for the first time since his mother's death, if we can trust a letter Michele sent to him at Luca on 5 June 1885.\(^{18}\) Given the circumstances, one can understand the broth's ironic phrasing in charging her surname to Duchigiani:

Ramazzini has written to you to offer you a discount. What will you do?

He says that you are not going away because you're too interested in Duchigiani and are doing what you did in November when you wanted to go away but didn't. (Marchetti, no. 96, 108)

Giorgio Magi's attempt to argue with Carner's thesis begins with the assertion that Elvira's marriage was not working because she had stopped


\(^{17}\) Puccini recounted the incident to his sister Rambaldo: 'You don't know how the business started. When we left Luca, '96 was a provisional departure because her belly was at such a point that it could be held no longer. She refused to be at Perugia and then fell into the water after Tosio was born and the mischief began...she took her own life' (end of April 1901; Marchetti, no. 147, 156).

\(^{18}\) A valuable documentary chronicle of Puccini's life has been compiled by Dieter Schöllkopf; see his Chronologische Verzeichnis von Puccinis Aufenthäften, Reisen und Theaterauftritten, in Giacomo Puccini: Biografie (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1989), 493-96. Certain details, however, can be corrected on the basis of information supplied in Simoni/Pavesi, ed., Lettere di Federico Fenaroli a Giacomo Puccini: 1884-1917, QP 4 (1999). This valuable correspondence has allowed us to explain fully events in the composer's life between 1884 and 1885, and provides vital new information about the genesis of Musica Lament and Trittico.

SACRIGIULTE INTRALUDE

loving her older husband, and continues with a romanticized version of the situation:

Elvira, above all, was hopelessly in love (as was said at the time) with Giacomo, so much so that for him she renounced husband, son [the second-born Renato], her good reputation, a comfortable economic situation, and the pleasures of a quiet [although perhaps rather boring] life.\(^{19}\)

In reality the family's reputation was anything but good, and Elvira's life cannot have been all that boring, given that Narciso Geminiani enjoyed a reputation as an unperturbed womanizer, whose exploits were the talk of the town. A letter from Fontana to Puccini on 27 July 1886 informs us how turbulent Elvira's household could be:

Among other things, it seems to me that, after all that magician [Geminiani] has put his family through and given his character, she can perfectly well leave him with nothing but a letter...Goodness me, if he were a saint, an admirable husband...But a character like that = You understand me.\(^{20}\)

The implication is that Geminiani, albeit against his will, was obliged to come to an agreement, and consent tacitly to his wife's taking her daughter Forca with her. Yet it was only thanks to the fury of another betrayed husband, who badly wounded Geminiani at Visello (he died, after months of suffering, on 26 February 1905) that Puccini and Elvira were able to marry and legally recognize Renato (born on 13 December 1886) in 1904.\(^{21}\)

And so Elvira leapt from the frying pan into the fire. Whatever conclusions one might draw from this, there is no denying that Puccini, an elegant man of handsome appearance, always had great success with the opposite sex, and spent much of his time with the ladies—for which he was generously rewarded. As we shall see, after the first few years the couple's life became tormented by Elvira's blind jealousy, an emotion that was far from unmotivated. A list of Puccini's extramarital relationships shows a predilection for singers, from Cesare Ferrari (the first Manon), Haride Decelle (the first Toso), Maria Jeritza, Enrico Destinn, and finally the light-soprano Rose Adler, the last love of his life (the affair ended in 1905).\(^{22}\)

\(^{19}\) Giorgio Magi, L'opera Puccini (Milan: Merid., 1993), 159.

\(^{20}\) Pavesi, ed., Lettere di Federico Fenaroli, no. 15, 150-4

\(^{21}\) Geminiani's death coincided with Puccini's car accident. His obituary appeared in the local papers, but it does not specify the cause of death—a subject of understandable embarrassment. Some families in Luca clearly remembers Elvira's husband as an imperious liberal, and have given exact information about the real cause of his premature death.

\(^{22}\) This information is taken from the chapter entitled "Puccini e le donne" in Magi's biography (L'opera Puccini, 139-140). The author compiled an invaluable, detailed list of the composer's women (among whom were also Giulia Manzoni, the mysterious Comtesse, ...
Puccini sought an equilibrium with Elvia that he never quite succeeded in achieving, partly because of her inferior intellect. She was to remain, however, as present in his personal life as she was absent from his artistic existence.

Meanwhile, La Fanciulla was revived under the composer’s watchful eye at Bologna in November 1885, and a little later, in January 1886, at Venice’s La Fenice. During this period Fontana contended many impresarios with little success, while Ricordi, after having guaranteed Puccini a small monthly salary in addition to author’s rights, did not try too hard to see that the work circulated. Probably he was waiting for Puccini’s second opera, but it was slow in coming. The first obstacle was undoubtedly Musset’s play, chosen as the basis for the libretto by Fontana and approved by the publisher, which did nothing to inspire Puccini’s imagination. Nor did Fontana have clear ideas about the libretto after having sketched the plot outline probably at the end of September 1884, he had still not decided on the number of acts, or even the hero’s name (and thus the title), in March of the following year. Up until the completion of the libretto around November 1885, Fontana constantly changed his mind about the structure of the plot, veering between hints of exaltation and depression.28

But the genius of Edgar was undoubtedly made more difficult by the travails of Puccini’s private life. In March 1886 Elvia became pregnant; leaving Lucca then became inevitable. This happened in August, thanks to the good offices of Fontana (he himself took care of the expectant mother while Puccini remained in Lucca for a few days in order not to arouse suspicion). The librettist behaved as a true friend, even finding a house in Monza to which the couple could move in mid-November, to remain there until the following June. The birth of a son must have calmed Puccini, who finished composing Edgar during the summer of 1887, although the orchestration was not completed until the following year.29 His correspondent suggests that he was not convinced of the quality of his work, and that the publisher, having seen the possibility of a premiere at Rome in the

29. See Fontana, La Fanciulla di Giovanni Puccini, 1956, 111, 60. The area of completion on the music score was 14 May 1888 (Act II) and 13 July 1888 (Act III). The last act was delivered on 12 November 1888.
30. Giovanni e la Fanciulla. The fourth act has turned me better than all the others. (Talea di Giovanni Puccini, 19 July 1887).
31. See Puccini, ed. Libretto di Puccini, 1967, 246. The area of completion on the music score was 14 May 1888 (Act II) and 13 July 1888 (Act III). The last act was delivered on 12 November 1888.
32. Ricordi had probably realized some time earlier that the principal obstacle in the way of Puccini’s development was the librettist, who himself had no
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desire to dissolve the partnership and continued to propose new subjects (not all of them uninteresting, as we shall see). Perhaps the publisher’s opinion was not unrelated to a sudden cooling of relations between the two artists, starting in the fall of 1887. Forza was not able to grasp the situation, realizing only after the opera’s premiere.

You must remember that evening at Ricordi’s when the famous Signora Gattinoni (Giulio’s wife) was saying loudly that anything good in Edgar came from the composer, and in spite of me! The maestro, alas, was even then unwilling to defend me, of course, because first he loved the subject and then washed his hands of it! What a world we live in! [August 1889].

"E Dio ti Guardi da que’l’opera" (Puccini)
The title of this section ("May God guard you from this opera") is taken from an autograph note inserted by Puccini into a score he gave Sybil Selwyn in 1905 (Casner, 57). It was the third time the composer reworked the opera in an attempt to make it stageworthy, but in the complex case of Edgar he would not achieve the same success as with Madame Butterfly, which, after its failure at La Scala in 1904, was continually reworked over the following three years.

After the premiere of the four-act Edgar, Puccini immediately began to adjust the score, although there was no firm prospect that the opera would be revived, as he had once hoped. A carefully-ordered series of changes

37. On 15 September 1887, Forza wrote to Puccini: "Having happened my door I can only suppose that you want to begin a period in which you do not see live in my lessons... Naturally I am the guilty one in all this, since I have never been good in helping you in anything" (Puccini, ed., "Lettere di Francesco Forza," vol. 2, 123, 129). At the end of October 1887, (and 1889) his submissions correspondence abruptly ceased, although relations between the two were not entirely severed. To facilitate matters, Forza’s wife also became involved. "The lady Palazzes is waving a letter and a terrible war against me. I’ll tell you all about it later on. Do you remember Cancano? Now, as a token of my love, I’d like to give you a bouquet of five beans and fish" (Puccini to Rubeldey, 9 September 1889, Manzoni, vol. 122, 127–128.)

38. Puccini, ed., "Lettere di Francesco Forza," vol. 1, 131, 127. The piece is the preface to a letter, and perhaps was never sent.

39. See n. 31. The present reconstruction of the revisions is based on letters, and on the comparison between the first printed piano-vocal score (Edgar / donne vulnere in quarte ore / di Francesco Puccini / musica di Giacomo Puccini... Nino, Ricordi, n.d. [1892]), Pl. no. 55756, the recent vocal score (1965), and the orchestral score. To reconstruct the form in which the opera was given at the premiere one must rely on the short summary of changes to the newly-printed vocal score published in the Garanzia musicale di Natale 44, no. 1 (5 February 1892) on "La proposta della quarta Edgar". For a thorough examination of the differences between the various drafts, see the appendix of Marinoni’s essay ("Travaglia: Avanti...")

was made between March 1889 and the following October; these were mostly cuts, including some important sections that were then restored in later versions (for example the chorus "Splendidissima note," which opens the current second act), and some important additions. The first edition of the vocal score came out in January 1890, with Tigrana cast as a soprano, but as Ricordi explained to Mancinelli, with whom he was trying to arrange a staging of the opera in Madrid.

The part was pushed up, here and there, for this artist [Rosalba Fantoni], who sang it very well. Originally it was written for mezzo-soprano. (25 August 1890, Garz, no. 44, 40)

At this point everything seemed fixed for a Madrid performance of the opera during the winter. In September 1890 Puccini made further alterations—mainly to the orchestration—and was enthusiastically preparing to leave:

O excellent Maestro Mancinelli!, in a little while I hope to speak to you; greet you under the blue Italian sky, and, whipped by the winds of the nearby Atlantic, I trust in a kind welcome from Calderón’s countrymen. (11 December 1890, Garz, no. 40, 41)

It would have been the first of innumerable trips abroad to supervise the staging of one of his operas, but suddenly there was a postponement to the Carnival season of the following year, about which Ricordi, seeing the interests of his firm threatened, energetically protested to Mancinelli. In the end, the revised, four-act version of Edgar was performed at the Teatro de la Giglio in Lucca on 3 September 1891, where it was greeted with notable success, giving the lie to the saying some prophet is in patria.

This reception convinced neither publisher nor composer. Mancinelli, who was preparing the Madrid performance—now definitely fixed for March 1892—received new instructions from both. Ricordi wrote him on 27 November 1891:

I have sent you the few variants necessary to finish Edgar after the third act. I am sure that with these the opera not only gains in conciseness, but also finishes with a completely new scene of great dramatic effect. This I verified at Lucca. (Garza, no. 35, 60–61)

Fussarò, p. 92, which compares the short piano-vocal score published in 1892, 1893, and 1905, and lists numerous numbers, cuts, and variants.

40. He were so far as to dictate the introduction of the Teatro Real as "one of the usual Edgar arrangements from which, in order to speak, we must also protect our pockets (Le sonor desse..." to Mancinelli, 1 January 1891, Garza, no. 50, 51).
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Puccini also agreed about the need for greater brevity:

I've heard that rehearsals for Edgar are beginning. Poor Gigli! Because of the size you'll have to battle with the huge number of cuts and compromises, and the patching up of mistakes I made at Lucera last September...I'd like to be there with you in order to save you work at the piano rehearsals, but I doubt that I can...And yet I also think that it would be useful for me, because I'd like to make some corrections, for example to the end of Act III, now the last act...Also, in the second finale I'd like to take out the Flemish hymn, and thus get to the end more quickly...I'd have a choral recapit after Edgar's recitative: "Flammeam non persequam" and then I'd send the entire act to 4131 as quickly as possible. (December 1892, Gara, no. 57, 61-65).

It was at Lucera, then, that the opera was reduced from four acts to three, although this was not the end of its tortuous genesis. While hasty preparations were being made for the final revisions, Puccini had to beg the tenor Tamagno to replace Durst in the title role; and the famous creator of Chello made him ask many times before agreeing. The revised version of Edgar was given in three cities within a short time: first at Ferrara's Teatro Comunale on 28 January 1892, directed by Carlo Carignani; then at Turin's Teatro Regio on 5 March, and lastly at the Teatro Real in Madrid on 19 March, with a splendid "Verdian" cast: Giuseppina Faglia (Tigrana), later the first Quickly in Falstaff, Eva Tardozzini (Fidelia), and Francesco Tamagno (Edgar) were conducted by Mascellini. Puccini made use of preludes that were suppressed in the fourth act; but even this new version did not merely conform to the opera's fragility, despite some very flattering accounts of the Ferrara performances ("In the course of the performance maestro Puccini took twenty-one calls"; Gazzetta musicale di Milano, 17, no. 5, 31 January 1892, p. 8b).

Meanwhile, work on Manon Lescaut was beginning, and for many years Puccini had much else to occupy him. But the tinker with Edgar continued. Puccini took up the score again in March 1892, but quickly abandoned it. In 1905 he had the chance to revise the opera, in a long season organized in his honor at the Teatro de la Opera in Buenos Aires, which lasted from 34 May until July (Manon Lescaut, Madama Butterfly, and Tosca were staged). In March 1905 he delivered the vocal score to Ricordi, with further revisions. It was published in April ("I will dispatch Edgar, revised with tomatoes and new figs, brodo"), according to a letter from Rameau on 8 May 1903; Marchetti, 310, 316). Puccini went to the Argentinean capital for the occasion, where the premiere was conducted by Maguanne on 8 July, with Gianna Ruzz (Tigrana), Rina Giachetti (Fidelia), and Giovanni Zena-tello (Edgar). But yet again the opera was found wanting by the audience, who afforded it only a success d'estime. This time Edgar's career was truly over.

Comparing the original score with the final version, one can see Puccini's attempts to pare the opera down, above all reducing the number and size of the crowd scenes that gave the feeling of grand opéra. The character who suffered the most was the evil Tigrana, downgraded from protagonist to secondary donor. In the move from the first version (1890) to the second (1892), her part in the duet with Edgar, "Oh se spezzerai dali morte," sung before Edgar's coffin, and a piece of particular dramatic intensity—was removed. In compensation she was given a brief solo in the duet with Edgar ("Dal labbro mi suggi l'ombra"); II, II) which had been sung in Act IV by Fidelia ("'O' cara abbinata a 290"), etc.). The gentleness of this music makes her figure less menacing, attenuating a character type very clearly defined in the original: the opposition between Fidelia and Tigrana mirrors that between Micella and Carmen in Bizet's masterpiece.

It is likely that Puccini, seeing the opera again, wanted to eliminate this point of comparison. He was certainly not able to remedy it completely, because of the plot and the words. In Le Villon fromo had demonstrated so special dramatic talent, committing poor linguistic and musical sins, but its concise, clear dramatic shape allowed the music to prevail. In choosing Alfred de Musset's poème dramatique, La Comédie et les Larmes (1833) as the basis for his opera, and in shifting the setting from the Tyrol in Flanders in 1802, he revealed his lack of understanding for the composer's true dramatic inclinations. The French drama is dominated by the romantic Frank (Puccini's Edgar), intolerant of social rules, who finds in his chaste love for Deidamia redemption from his corrupt liaison with Madame Beam-Courte.

57. Copilanzo will give you all that relates of Edgar and tell you about the hard work done that month. It seems to me that the opera, as it stands, is not going to be well. (Puccini to Rossetti, 14 March 1905; Gara, no. 408, 410).
58. An obscure piece on "Scappiatura" by Puccini, "Figlio al Toscana and magazzino" (1890), with the old sheets of "Fill" [Chora] and replaced by "peaks" [Voici] (Traxel).
59. Messiaen's opera was published in 1935, together with the play Les quatre sons in four parts, the volume Un symphonie in the score. The title suggests that the two works were meant to be read "in an armchairWM.}
CHAPTER TWO

Fontana strove to retain the allegorical foundation of Mascetti's plot, but at the same time he was obliged to create opportunities for those spectacular scenes so beloved of Scapigliatura's adherents. The result was an incoherent libretto in which the symbolic opposition between sin and purity, virtue and vice, were clumsily inserted into an action-based plot, losing their original sense without acquiring anything else. And so arose the unsustainable opposition between good, embodied by Fidelia, and evil, embodied by Tigrana. In the knitting with which Tigrana kills her rival we can glimpse a crude reference to the sacrifice that many heroines make in order that their lovers may be redeemed, from Elisabeth in Tannhüser to Marguerite in Faust.

Puccini did not realize in time what a mess he had got himself into; he attempted to act a ready-made libretto and, worse, had to do battle with his collaborator's presumptuousness. When Fontana was obliged to reply in writing to problems raised by the composer, he abandoned his usual joviality; his tone became haughty and brusque, and every line was defended to the last. At the beginning of their eccentric relationship (13–24 March 1887) Fontana described to Puccini his dramatic ideas about the subject:

The way I imagine the first act, it seems like a single number, of which the scenes are nothing but episodes; obvious and separate, yes—well defined as far as is needed—but not independent from the whole, rather subjugated by it and especially to a concentration of developments, of musical levels leading to an explosion, toward resolution in the so-called terza delle spade [sword strettas].

After having delivered this confused lesson in dramaturgy to the composer, its tone vaguely reminding of that of D'Annaunzio many years later, Fontana proceeded to supply authoritative and "valuative" musical suggestions:

Act I = A solo piece, high C, hard and resistant, compact, moving from a slender thread of idyllic mood and gradually becoming complicated, broadening out until the tragedy. It could be represented graphically like this.

Act II = Three pieces of which the first is a new-like March and recitative for baritone with a recitative of the March, the second a Funeral March; the third a Duet for tenor and female voice, and then a grand coda.

Act III = Four pieces: The first a full chorus on stage with children's choir; they await the married couple from the church. The second a love duet. The third: Tarò's [Fidelia's] murder. The fourth: festive dance on stage with the dead body. A figure like this.

SCAPPIGLIATURA INTERLUDE

Tell me I'm mad, you'd have good reason.43

In 1894, after Puccini and Ricordi had distanced themselves from Fontana, the poet obediently made the changes they required of him in order to close the opera after the third act. No alterations were necessary to the last finale, since it was only a matter of adding some choral words of condemnation on the stabbing by Tigrana (an event taken from the fourth act), but Fontana did need to rewrite the lines, with which Fidelia took leave of the crowd:

I then also changed the words of Or al matto villaggio ai fuori in the third act, but I tried, with the melody in my ear, to replace them with others that would fit without forcing. I needed this change to grant Fidelia's going to church and to eliminate her departure for the village, given our absolute need to keep her there, in order to finish the opera with the third act, as you, Giulio, and many others want. I also approve wholeheartedly the idea: you see that I'm not one of those who would, as they'd have you believe, it is an extremely logical, artistic, and theatrical idea. If only it had come into our minds of mine.44

The experience with Fontana, however, was beneficial to Puccini at least inasmuch as it obliged him to test his strength within the form of vast proportions, and to attempt the impossible in making up for plot deficiencies with music. One cannot dismiss out of hand the idea that Giulio Ricordi supported the subject so strongly precisely in order to sharpen his pupil's technique—to make Puccini better understand his personal inclinations.

Constrained as he was to follow the complex, heterogeneous plot and the outrush of verism, crammed with traditional forms (especially in the ensembles) and meters little suited to music, Puccini did not succeed in achieving a true formal unity based on thematic interconnection; with the exception of the first part of the concluding act, he merely managed to link some passages through thematic reminiscence. The current version, under consideration here, also lacks this unity: the suppression of certain passages, in a commendable attempt to make the course of events more fluent.

44. Ibid., no. 140, 214.
and less complex, renders certain situations even less logical. In spite of this, several passages from the opera deserve consideration from a strictly musical point of view. Their effectiveness further emphasizes the contrast between Puccini's emerging personality and the moose forced around his neck by the libretto.

Fidelio's opening canto in is a first example of the discrepancy between text and music. The gentle melody of the first strophe, sung offstage, loses its innocence when repeated, acquiring a passionate impetus, unleashed as she catches sight of her lover:

Example 2-6: Edgar, L. 7 after 13

On the other hand, the subsequent meeting between Tigrana and Edgar works very well. The offstage organ prelude, playing music that comes from the Kyrie of Puccini's Mass, invites the villagers to the ceremony and supplies an appropriate background to the temptress's affected speech, which reveals her true nature to Edgar (Ex. 2.7).

The suitability of the sacred material in this new context is unarguable. The subsequent sequence, beginning from the clash of a minor second between C and D-flat (a typical attribute of the stile serioso) which in the Kyrie initiated the third repetition of "Christo eleison", now serves to emphasize Tigrana's growing emotional excitement, contrasting the purity of the religious remembrance with her demonic nature. But the balance is upset when Frank arrives and bars Tigrana's way, after which a little Spanish theme (with the eloquent tempo indication Allegro sostenuto) establishes in eight measures of bolero rhythm a sort of gypsy calling card for the woman.

This fragment is justified by Tigrana's origin: she was abandoned as a baby fifteen years earlier by a "homing band of Moors" and grew up "like a viper in the villagers' bosom." Frank's love for her is unrequited, as he recounts in the conventional solo "Quanto amor, vergogna mia": the baritone's emotions are granted no credible space, although his role in the events should hardly be secondary.

In the events immediately following Tigrana's wickedness is further underlined. After the devotional chorus "Ave Signor" (another borrowing from the Kyrie), she provokes the people coming out of church by singing a vulgar song. As the villagers cluster around she whisperingly addresses herself to colonelata, a style highly unusual in Puccini (Ex. 2.8). The same

47 In the four-six piano-ranged score the eight measures of Allegro sostenuto serve as introduction to the remembrance of the Canzona that Tigrana sings after her meeting with Edgar. In the final version, however, Faccio eliminated the first strophe, making the passage seem like a reminiscence or rather than an introduction to the aria, and he cut the central episode from the repeat, whose words modify the previous outrage: "Ogliando il mio core / Con auri armadi / Spero nel mio lieto / Con te voglio eterno / (This is what the Lord willed)." Marini later defined the text as "un'agghiaccia" ("I shudder through excitement," 446).
concerto. The events are string together with scant logic, and are governed only by a search for spectacular effect. Tigrana withdraws toward Edgar's house, chased by the crowd, but the hero emerges and defends her heroically: "Indietro, turba idiota!" ("Back, foolish mob!"). Incomprehensible changing his initial attitude toward her. After an orgy of diminished sentients, he exclaims, "Ed ora da voi men vo', stolido Gregge!" ("And I will now leave you, stupid herd!") and, cursing her "paterno tetto" ("paternal roof"), he sets fire to the house. The gesture would be utterly gratuitous were it not for the following metaphor: "Tigrana, vieni... / Noi pure accorda / di nuova via la volerti" ("Come, Tigrana! Let but fire a new life in us too"); and that this invitation signals his intention to degrade himself with a corrupt being is none too clear. Next there is a double snap de dichten: Frank's jealousy spurs him to bar the couple's way; in turn, old Guiltierio intercedes between the rivals. The pacifying gestures of Frank's and Fidelia's father provide the static moment necessary for a grand concerto, rapidly concluded with Frank's wounding and the lovers' flight. The principal melody of this vast piece in C minor, given to a quartet of soloists and the five-part chorus (Ex. 2.9b) in extremely effective, but the dramatic relationships it establishes are difficult to follow. The different attitudes of those present are merely fixed in a traditional manner: Edgar's presence, Frank's indignation, Fidelia's impotent amazement (her voice dominating the others in the high register), and Tigrana's perplexity, which has incited the men against each other.

After the duet the melody is triumphantly and mostly repeated by the brass to close the act, as in the first finale of Le Villi, though without creating a logical connection between the two similar dramatic situations. The same could be said of its reappearance a little after the beginning of the following act (Ex. 2.16).

Example 2.6
a. Edgar, I, 2 after [3]

Concerto...
funeral, staged by the hero in order to test the devotion of those who knew him. Puccini portrayed this in a wholly realistic manner, since at this stage his imagination could deal only abstractly with the idea of death, something that he in the future would inspire some of his best moments (such as the fourth act of Manon, the end of La Bohème, Cavaradossi’s execution in Tosca, or Liu’s suicide in Turandot). Given its high level of inspiration, and the destruction that prevails throughout, Toscanini’s decision to perform the piece at the composer’s funeral in the cathedral of Milan is fully understandable.

Precisely because the situation released him from dramatic exigencies, Puccini succeeded in making a logical connection between music and action, at least from the prelude until the moment when the soldiers move off and Fidélia enters the church (a before 1). The structure of the scene can be outlined as follows.

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<tr>
<td>(a–B–A–B)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>(A–B)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
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<td>G-flat</td>
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<tr>
<td>flat</td>
<td>on second theme of the Capretti</td>
<td>on third theme of the Capretti</td>
<td>recurring melody (a)</td>
<td>on E in codas</td>
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The fanfare (a), which in the previous act announced the arrival of troops headed by Frank (Ex. 2.100), here symbolizes the hero’s desire for redemption, and appears several times, creating a cyclic connection between the various sections. The Requiem is sung over this (from 7 after 1) and joins it to the subsequent section (Ex. 2.100). The motive also appears in Frank’s and Fidélia’s solos and concludes the scene (Ex. 2.100).

Example 2.10

### ABERGAMMA INTERLUDE

The reminiscence of the concerto lacks logic. Edgar leaves, disgusted by the orgy, and it is not clear whether the clarinet’s anguished melody alludes to the disturbances following the old father’s gesture, or to nostalgia for Fidélia. And the charming introductory chorus, “Splendidissima, notte fiorita, ecco...”[59] gives no hint of an orgy, being a piece of refined harmonic color and French-influenced orchestral touches, articulated over static ninth and eleventh chords, a passage defined in the stage directions as “the echoes of languorous songs of an orgy nearly over.”[60] It is unfortunate that Puccini flattered his talent away on the infamous gessi dipinti with which Edgar begins the recitative (“Orgia, chiamata dall’occhio vittorioso, dal soffio ardente, che si festa incinta”), with its chronic chain of descending sevenths. But the mood of this passage, the reminiscence of and nostalgia for lost innocence, was evidently more congruous to him, and is well depicted in the short aria “O soave vision,” which is enlivened by echoes of Fidélia’s music in the first act. The subsequent duet is much less convincing: a strangely tender “Auguri, o Fidélia,” which remembers her dreams (“auguri e di baci” (“of orgies and kisses”) while a brief reference to the Kyrie is heard, is called “deumle” in the tenor’s agitated phrases. The mezzo-soprano knowingly replies that he is unable to escape her influence, since he would become a “mentecato” (“beggar”), a statement that exceeds in pragmatism even those “ege solgli” (“threshold of sickness”) Alferiocrosses in Violetta’s Racconto in La traviata.

But Edgar’s redemption arrives amid the trumpet blasts and drum rolls that announce the arrival of the military. The event provides a means of concluding the act quickly and without excessive damage, as the regiment, by coincidence, is headed by Frank, the only person capable of understanding his rival’s torment. Edgar enters in order to free himself from Tigrana and to sublimate his desires in the glory of battle, and he departs to the sound of a patriotic hymn in D major sung by the soldiers.

The opera finally takes wing in the first part of Act III with Edgar’s thematic

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[59] The chorus is absent in the first vocal score (1892), and the connection between Edgar’s melody and the concerto has a greater immediacy because they are closer together.

[60] The sequence of two chords (then repeated in sequence) occurs in the dominant of D major, where, notwithstanding that the D in the key has the function of a dominant, we hear the first chord as a ninth on the fourth degree (D) in fourth inversion (E, F, G, A, B, D, E) after (27). In the succeeding chord the role of the E as dominant pedal is clarified (G, F, B, D, A = E, G, B, D, F, A).
CHAPTER TWO

Example 2.10 (continued)

k. Edgar, III, 1 before (10)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Example 2.11. Edgar, III, 3 after (10)}
\end{align*}
\]

After the sorrowful Requiem, with its skillful management of the closely-woven voice-leading, Puccini effects a touching emotional crescendo—from despair to hope—through the sequence of two themes taken from the Capriccio infante. The neutral color of the children’s voices increases the anguish of the final melody (Ex. 2.11a) and heightens the contrast with the serenity of the second (Ex. 2.11b):

Example 2.11

a. Edgar, III, 1 after (10)

b. Edgar, III, 3 after (10)

Fidelia achieves the stature of a real Puccini heroine from the first measures of her solo. The aria begins quietly and is sung without love nor sub-
dudef orch,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Example 2.13. Edgar, III, II}
\end{align*}
\]

In the Requiem, the initial chorus is split into six parts, with added choral chorus. The dramatic inhibitions of the subject (“In pace fuisse est locus aep”) are confounded mostly in sores in three parts.

SCAPIGLIATURA INTERLUDE

when her passion is unleashed especially effective, accompanied as it is by the most beautiful melodic idea in the opera. The long phrase expresses a yearning for the ideal, thus giving the heartfelt farewell to Edgar maxi-
mum impact.

Example 2.12. Edgar, III, 3 after (10)

This passage also has a central function in the formal structure, since it develops a theme from the second section of the prelude that returns at the end of the score, thus creating an arc between the beginning and end of the funeral.

But when the drama resumes this balance is upset. During the funeral oration Edgar, disguised as a monk, begins to denigrate the “deceased,” inciting the soldiers, who eventually launch themselves in an angry union against the catafalque (“Ah corvi il suo cadavere!”, “To the crow with his carcass”). Their barbaric wrath ends when Fidelia sings her final solo (Ex. 2.18). Here Puccini makes use of the melody with which the monk evoked Edgar’s wrongdoing (Ex. 2.19b):

Example 2.13

a. Edgar, III, II

b. Edgar, III, II

3. The melody comes from an adagio for orchestra composed in 1880 (Ligeti, “Una riconna di Puccini,” 79). The complete score is lost, but a lengthy excerpt is preserved at the Institute Musical “Torcència” of Lucca.
Although the connection has its own logic (Edgar had exposed facts to which Fidelia was a witness), it lays bare the artificiality of the drama. Obliged to thrust the heroine with a second aria, so that she could defend the hero and her purity could be juxtaposed with Tigrana's perversion, Puccini found himself in a basal situation after having let his inspiration take flight in the preceding solo.

In the second part of the set things fall apart, and Fontana's responsibility looms large. In Musset's play the protagonist, like a true romantic, "faigns his death to 'draw up an account' of his experiences." But deprived of its true motivation, Edgar's gesture in the opera becomes a rash joke, instigated by a demitasse, against the people and Tigrana herself, who unconsciously becomes an active part in his plan of redemption. "Nella mia coppa rimarrà la feceata" ("Only dirt remained in my cup"), the hero explains when the woman reappears onstage; but the clumsy metaphor does not convince us that poor Tigrana could assume the role of "double" to an aging human soul.

In the concluding passages Edgar approaches Tigrana with a gallantry ill suited to the role he now wears. Although Puccini succeeded in treating the short Canzona "Bella signora, il piu calma gli occhi" with irony, dramatic coherence has already been irretrievably lost. Tigrana yields to the allure of a sparkling necklace that glitters in Edgar's hands, while the gypsy theme from the first act (III, 439) reappears to remind us of her innately evil nature. But would a symbol of perversion really surrender like a puppet to the vulgar motivations of a monk who, in order to induce her to yield, murmurs in her ear that he loves her?

To the last, the action unfolds in a series of sgrassi accompagnati supported by Tigrana's spontaneous confession, the monk persuades the people to knock down the catafalque, and again we hear Pochiellian unisons ("Ai curvi il suo cadavere"). Finally Edgar can remove his habit and display his military garb, yet another coup de théâtre, this one crowned by the predictable reunion with Fidelia.

The final measures are devoted to Edgar's rejection of Tigrana, a powerful inventive in B minor3504 without a trace of the spurious elan and zest in a monotonous succession of dactyls, observing:

| O l'elisir, aurora del mondo | O plague, kindred of the world |
| di bronzo e di fango | of bronze and rust |
| tormenta e goccio gocciolando va... fuggi, o infrangilo! | torment and useless plaything go... run away, you! |

54. Marainoni, "Torna a felice di..." 63.

55. Caretto almost seems to intimate the author's intention to connect the conclusion when he writes the "considerable enlargement of the harmonic vocabulary. The opera begins in D major and ends in B minor" (Current, 153).

56. This mention holds for most of the current versions of the score, thick of Music Library, which Puccini revised in 1913 for the revival at La Scala conducted by Toscanini.
Manon Lescaut
Wagner and the Eighteenth Century

A GREAT PUBLISHER AND A WELL-DESERVED SUCCESS

Puccini's biography up to this point indicates that Giaclo Ricordi's role both in the composer's career and in the general theatrical milieu of the period requires further comment. After hearing Le Villi, the publisher knew that his long search for Verdi's successor was over, but he also realized that he would have to be patient, that Puccini would need time to find his own way forward, and Ricordi helped construct the most suitable environment for this development during the decade that followed 1884.

Ricordi's continual efforts to encourage Verdi to write for the theater again were a sign both of his patience and his far-sighted planning for the future of Italian music. In the brief vogue for the Scapigliatura movement that followed the triumph of Attila in 1871, Ponchielli represented continuity and the young Ildebrando a break with tradition. Ricordi contributed to the unequivocal success of the revised version of Boito's Mefistofele in 1875, and created the conditions in which the Verdi-Boito collaboration, and friendship, could begin. It was a relationship that saw a synthesis between the solidity and prestige of the patron saint of Italian opera on one hand, and modern aesthetics on the other. Even though Ricordi had no firm knowledge of Verdi's intentions after the triumph of Otello in 1887, he probably sensed that a comic opera—at which he had already been talk in 1859—was in the air, and he badgered the composer with requests about when he should prepare La Scala for his great return. In the overlap between the first performances of Falstaff (February 1893) and Manon Lescaut (1 February of the same year) one might posit a handing over of the mantle from Verdi to Puccini. But even more significant is the coincidence in their choices of Prévost and Shakespeare as the bases for their librettos, both datable to June 1889. These facts were obviously known to the publisher, who by good luck was in exactly the right place at the right time.

Manon Lescaut

Ricordi's ideas were already clear on the day after the shaky debut of Falstaff:

All composers who later became great were dealt with harshly, their first works criticized ferociously. In saying this, we do not mean to place Puccini with composers either great or small, but Falstaff is certainly his first opera.1

After this unsuccessful attempt, in fact, Ricordi gave Puccini extraordinary responsibilities that made his position as Verdi's successor quite clear. Two weeks after taking over Giuseppe Luzio's firm, from which he inherited the Italian editions of Wagner's works (the contract was signed on 1 June 1888), Ricordi sent Puccini once more to Bayreuth for the first time, with Fontana. The purpose of the trip was probably to obtain a reliable account of staging traditions in that temple of Wagnerian art.2 Under the circumstances, Ricordi thought it more important that the composer undergo a new experience than finish Falstaff. And while still urging revisions to the problematic score, he sent Puccini once more to Bayreuth in July 1889, this time with Adolf Hofenstein, director of the firm's graphic department and the future scenographer of Falstaff and Il Trovatore. The purpose was to assist the staging of Die Meistersinger in order to prepare for its Italian premiere at La Scala (conducted by Francesco Faccio), scheduled to open the coming Carnival season. On this occasion Puccini again saw his beloved Parsifal, noting down the cast on a vocal score and giving a brief judgment on the two performances, the first conducted by Felix Mendelssohn in Bayreuth on 3 July 1889, the second by Hermann Levi.3 Bayreuth 3 July 1889, mediocrity performance—15 July 1889, splendid performance, great experience.4

Puccini was entrusted with the task of cutting Die Meistersinger—"worthless, anything that is repetition or useless drawing out"—and news of this caused an uproar in Italian musical circles. Catalani regretted it not only out of respect for Wagner's art but because he realized that Puccini's

2. Schindling (Giacomo Puccini, 354) found the sources "Puccini, Giacomo e Malsini" and "Fontana Ferminiano" in the register of those at Bayreuth (3 August 1888). The identification seems obscure without the dimensions of the names. Although Fontana added Puccini for further ornament for a "Germain Opus 1088-1013" (Puccini, ed., "Lacerca di Ferdinandino Fontana," 10 September 1889, No. 132, 134), Schindling is right in mentioning that it was Ricordi who financed the occasion, advancing the necessary money.
3. See the autographed annotation on the first page of a score of Parsifal published by Ricordi. It is reproduced in Abbiati, Giuseppe Verdi, 447-9.
4. Ibid., 378. The publisher's letter to Puccini of July 1889 continues: "I am about to leave for Lecco and on 17 August we will be at Bayreuth as agreed: we will arrange everything on the spot. Tomorrow the Curtis leaves Puccini and Hofenstein left this morning, charged with the same mission, since the end of August would be too late to see it. We can then work on the costume designs."
rise was unstoppable and would automatically involve his demotion from probable first-rate composer to also-ran. He disclosed as much to his friend Giuseppe Pernias in a letter of 20 August 1886. Not everyone has the luck to travel at his publisher’s expense like Puccini, who, provided with a good pair of scissors, has been charged by the publishers to make the necessary cuts in Die Meistersinger. . . . It is therefore not surprising if (between ourselves) the same pair of scissors which served to cut Wagner, will, instead, serve to cut “web of publicity” which the publisher has woven around his favorite composer. . . . I am frightened at the thought of what my future will be, now that there is only one publisher and that publisher won’t hear mention of anybody else but Puccini. Do you know that Verdi himself—I was told this by Pantaleoni—intervened so that Edgar should be given again this year at La Scala and that Verdi himself begged Pandolfini to sing again the part of Tigrane in it? All this seems absurd to me, but it is only right that it should be left to me, because the “dramatists” reign also in the realm of art and I know that Puccini must be the successor of Verdi, who, like a good king, often invites the “Crown Prince” to dinner! Oh! what a comedy the world is and what an ugly comedy! And how sick I am of it all (Carneri, 30).

Verdi probably had frequent contact with Puccini, but there is not much evidence of the cordial relations mentioned by Carneri. Correspondence reveals, however, that Puccini’s opinions were largely valued by Ricordi and were discussed by Verdi, a case in point being that of Giuseppina Pasqua, who was being considered for the role of Quickly in Falstaff, and of whom Puccini had a very low opinion. Indeed, until the completion of Manon Lescaut, Puccini had a function akin to that of artistic advisor to the Ricordi firm, and in this role he had given his attention to Carriera’s acquisition of Toscanini before it won the Somnogna competition. Deciding to

5. In April 1884 Ponchielli told his wife about one of his visits to Verdi: “We often spoke about Puccini’s work. We do not take this type of music, because it follows in the footsteps of Wagner, etc.” (Annie, Giuseppe Verdi, 1, 342-43). These words shatter the image of Ponchielli as faithful mentor to his ex-appellate, but are true to Ponchielli’s strong desire to confirm a negative judgment on the part of Verdi, whose admiration for Wagner is well documented. Later, Verdi wrote to Giuseppe Verdi (29 March 1895): “I have seen Falstaff and Manon unannounced in Brescia. Thus is a mistake! One cannot wet the other’s! I know it well. I have no need to go through my career and I’ll be pleased that others may benefit from it.” (ibid, 391).

6. “Puccini, at least so far as Puccini is concerned, gives great care to clothing,” Verdi wrote boldly in a letter to Ricordi of 17 June 1891 (Annie, Giuseppe Verdi, 4, 344-45). Ricordi continued to promote relations between the two composers, and was even to some Puccini from Paris that “on Tuesday, 6 October Verdi will be here. If you want to telegraph him with congratulations, I am sure that he would greatly appreciate it, since, in spite of having such a lot to do, he has already spoken to me twice about you, what you are doing, etc.” (29 September 1891, Carra, nos. 119, 111).

let matters take their course, Giulio Ricordi lost some very good business in this affair, Puccini, on the other hand, had demonstrated impartiality to his friend and collaborator Mascagni, as well as a good nose for business. When the opera triumphed at the Teatro Costanzo in Rome on 17 May 1890, Puccini showed no jealousy at the success of his fellow student and sent him a sincere telegram of congratulations.

Just when everything seemed to be going so well, poor Michele Puccini, Giacomo’s brother, who had emigrated to Argentina, was struck down on 11 March 1891 by yellow fever. Puccini once again adopted a melodramatic tone:

Oh my God, what torture, I am almost a dead man! I would go as far as to say that I didn’t feel such great sadness even for our poor mother, and that was terrible! What a tragedy! I too cannot wait to die: what should I do now in the world? Poor Michele! Anything that happens to me in the future—glory, honor, pleasure—will be a matter of complete indifference.

(Torinese, April 1891, Marchetti, no. 143, 139)

Such words should not surprise us, being so similar to those written on Albani’s death; but they confirm Puccini’s tendency to retreat into a fictitious world to take shelter from the sad moments in life. Now in the grip of powerful creative impulses, however, Puccini absorbed the blow rapidly enough. He wrote the greater part of Manon Lescaut between July and the end of November 1891 in the small Swiss town of Vauclo, where Leoncavallo was simultaneously working on Pagliacci. Despite a long hiatus caused by revisions to Edgar, and the constant switching of collaborators, Puccini finished Manon well ahead of its scheduled premiere, 7. Indeed, early enough for him to attend the first performance in Germany of Le Fils, which met with great success in Hamburg on 20 November 1892. There the composer had a chance to meet the young director of the Stadttheater, Gustav Mahler. Traces of this event remain in Puccini’s comment on the orchestra, which he considered “very good,” and a photograph of Mahler bearing a dedication to the composer of Le Fils, preserved at Torre di Lago. 8

The premiere of Manon Lescaut was carefully rehearsed, and Puccini thus spent the whole of January 1893 in Turin. Ricordi had excellent reasons for wanting Manon to have its first performance in the Piedmontese capital he was avoiding La Scala, first out of respect for Verdi, and second because the Milanese had such bad memories of Edgar. The reason Manon

7. On 11 November 1891 Puccini wrote from Vauclo, where he had returned to finish Manon: “I am very much finished and almost done” (to Sofiodiana, Gar, no. 76, 78).

8. See Gar, nos. 38, 36 (Puccini in Cairo, 25 November 1893). On 4 November 1893 Mahler programmed the German premiere of Manon Lescaut, with Puccini present, but relations between the two were never cordial, when Mahler became Generalmusikdirektor of Vienna, he was openly hostile toward Puccini’s music.
was given before Faust; was equally sound: only in this way could Puccini's opera expect to receive due attention.

Cesira Ferrati, of whom Puccini was particularly fond, played the heroine opposite Giuseppe Crescenzi (Des Grieux), Achille Moro (Lescaut), and Alessandro Polonini (Geronimo); Alessandro Polonini conducted. The triumphal reception surprised neither publisher nor composer, both of whom were sure of the opera's quality. All of the leading critics were present, and wrote enthusiastic accounts of the performance. The most intelligent discussion of the new work was by Alfredo Colombani in the Corriere della Sera.10

Although expectations had been high, the opera still surprised us with its great artistic merit, its powerful musical conception, its thematicity, . . . Between Edgar and Manon Puccini has kept a golf . . . If any of our young composers has understood the famous motto "Let us return to the past," it is Puccini . . . Manon, in a sense, an opera of classic character. Its music has the developmental character and style of the great symphonies, without sacrificing the expression needed by the drama, and without giving up what might be called an "Italianità" of melody. Puccini is a true Italian genius. His lyricism is born of our paganism, our artistic sentimentalism . . . But Manon is a musical drama as simple as it is spontaneous, intertwined with melodies free of artistic over-sophistication, which follow each other and recur as naturally as is required by the action, the overall concept, or symmetry of the piece. Certainly, the contribution of finely-wrought instrumental color is very important in the work: this is required by modern art, and so is singularity. The orchestra cannot merely be a simple accompaniment of the voices without losing its raison d'être.

The comment cited by Colombani, "Let us return to the past and it will be a step forward," was of course Verdi's. In that February of 1883 the idea that Italian art was fashioned through a continuity with tradition became fixed. Given the success of Manon, credit for having assured the future of Italian opera should undoubtedly be given to Giulio Ricordi. Certainly, Puccini could enjoy the premiere of Faust; with a light heart.

A Multi-Authoried Libretto

In Catalani's lengthy obituary, cited earlier, the phrase "web of publicity" offers a first clue to an accurate dating of the moment Puccini decided to

9. On 25 July 1892, Puccini congratulated Fantini on having needed engagements in the autumn, so that he could rest and prepare himself for my trionfo battaglia" (Gates, 190, 74, 75).
10. Alfredo Colombani (1862–1910) died too young to fulfill the potential displayed in his book L'opera italiana del teatro XIX (1906), which is full of brilliant critical insights and invaluable analyses.

set Manon to music. Catalani was referring to a brief announcement that appeared in the official Ricordi periodical on 9 June 1889, at the end of a list of their scores for hire and purchase: "In addition, the firm of G. Ricordi and Co. has commissioned Maestro Giacomo Puccini to compose two operas.

11. It is often said that the publishing house announced new works purely in order to catch the public's attention. But in this case the two works actually existed. The first suggestion dates as far back as four years earlier (25–26 March 1885).

Together with this junk I am sending you that play about Manon Lescaut. It's good for you to see how I am thinking of the future; that is, keeping some subjects ready for you. Read this play at your leisure. If you have read the book about Manon that I gave you in Milan (and which I want back) you will get an idea of the mixture of elegance and tragedy that the breath of passion can inspire morally.

The writer was Ferdinando Fontana, who in spring 1889 had also been the first to draw Puccini’s attention to Sardou's Tartu, probably the second opera mentioned in the brief Ricordi notice. One cannot but admire the librettist’s temerity in approaching the composer again, on 30 September 1889:

"Three weeks ago, having been in Milan, I heard that you were all set with the libretto. Good. I am delighted about it. I am only a little sorry that you have chosen Manon, a subject that I offered you a good while ago and that you did not accept. If now you had said to me: ‘I want this one’—I, who already had worked on it, etc., etc., perhaps you would have decided to reach an agreement with you."

The first letter illustrates Puccini’s tendency to choose subjects many years after first thinking about them, and implies that he had at least glanced at a prose drama based on Prévost’s novel. Besides vindicating the dramatic

11. It is possible that Puccini had begun Manon Lescaut in spring 1888, when he wrote to his same friend: "I am working on my third opera" (Marchesini, no. 150, 113). At this time he was slowly putting the finishing touches on the orchestration of Edgar, and had no other projects to occupy him.
12. Puccini, ed., "Lettere di Ferdinando Fontana," no. 8. no. Fontana’s offer was not known before publication of these letters.
13. The offer was made twice in 1888. In the same list of subjects for which he asked reimbursement from Ricordi (see above, n. 2) there is "Given to you at Turin (Twelfth of October) 20 lire / year plus yearly royalty on the Turin trial print 3.5 lire" (Puccini, ed., "Lettere di Ferdinando Fontana," 100: September 1888, nos. 151, 152). An editor’s note indicates that the two were probably present at a performance by Sarah Bernhardt on 25 March 1889. If Ricordi intended to fulfill himself of Fontana, regarding him as unsuited to the task, he had every reason to do so, since he was fairly able to claim the rights for those two librettists.
In this particular case, his fickleness is shown in the decision to conspire against the lovers, perhaps to polish some of the verses, look over the plot structure, and contribute some ideas. Around July 1889, Leoncavallo, thanks to baritone Victor Mancini’s recommendation, had signed a contract with Ricordi to compose Le lieto, the libretto of which he had already completed. The publisher had the idea of testing his dramatic talent, perhaps in the hope of finding a second Boito for Puccini, but the relationship was not idyllic, and probably jeopardized his future as one of the firm’s librettists. Relations began to break down at the end of 1891. It is thus understandable that as little as possible was said about Leoncavallo, the only information about his participation in the work on Manon Lescaut is found in two sentences Puccini wrote to his publisher in 1890 and 1891, and many years later, in comments by his biographer and librettist Giuseppe Adami.

Puccini and Oliva worked on the basis of Prévert’s L’Histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut, but changed the libretto with an act set in the desert of the American west:

Act I - Amorous meeting of the two lovers.

Act II - Manon’s and Des Grieux’s appointment in Paris, the gamboling sonata, Manon’s flight.

Act III - Gérard’s execution, Manon’s arrest.

Act IV - Manon’s death in the desert of the Louisiana territory.

Puccini began composing in March 1890 after having received the first act of the libretto, but he was not satisfied with the manuscript sent by Oliva in a letter to Manon Lescaut, and Oliva sent a new draft of the following September (Gara, no. 46, 194). He also demanded that the general outline be broadened, with the addition of the scene set at Le Havre. Praga promptly made this request.

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Here is the second part of Act III. I have made two small changes in the plot. The officer has become the Commandant of the Shores. . . . The prostitutes' off-stage song was to have been a drinking song, almost obscene: instead . . . I've put in here a Fragment of a sad song; I entrust my work to your good for completion. . . . But I quite like the overall effect, except for two serious objections. . . . Everything that Lescaut does in this act is illogical: why does a rogue like him, a cynic, a man without honor, come all the way to Le Havre? To reunite Manon and Des Grieux? What does he care about either one of them? . . . The other song is the ship. Big warships are anchored on the high seas, never near the shore.21

Judging by these objections, Oliva seems to have been anything but unqualified, especially in stressing the inconstant behavior of Manon's brother, a problem left unresolved in the final version. But the new scene was already fixed in broad terms, and Oliva finished writing Act IV and rewriting Act II by the end of the year.22

Puccini must have considered the ending of the tragedy satisfactory, since he completed it before the other parts, but there remained the problem of the second and third acts. The difficulties he posed prompted Ricordi to turn again to Giacosa in search of a solution. Thanks to the playwright's prestige, Praga and Oliva formally agreed that the libretto, now the work of too many hands for respectability, would remain anonymous.

The necessary corrections were left to Luigi Illica, who was called in for this purpose. This collaboration between Puccini, Illica, and Giacosa was the first in a relationship that would become long-standing. But in Manon Lescaut, Giacosa remained to one side; it was Illica who conducted those parts of the libretto Puccini considered weak, without upsetting the balance between the various parts of the opera that had already been composed (the first, fourth, and a good part of the third act). Illica introduced the dancing master and the lamplighter, and made the beginning of the scene at Le Havre more lyrical. He also suggested for its conclusion a "sort of premonition, or, better, a very short adagio episode to mark the ship's departure" (letter to Ricordi, 14 April 1892; Gara, no. 66, 73). But his most important contribution was in solving the problem of theconcerto with the prostitutes' roll call. He outlined the form of the scene to Puccini in detail:23

To begin the roll call—the commander hands over the prisoners (accompanied by the sergeant) to the captain. First, the roll call is loud, and should achieve the characteristic effect of a real roll call. Meanwhile Des Grieux has drawn near Manon, who has lost her last hope—escape—and who is in anguish not only because of the violent separation from Des Grieux, but is also embittered by somber premonitions. Manon here makes her last farewell to her lover. There needs to be an episode of profound and intense sadness, a wave of real melody (Manon has no reminiscences in the entire opera). In the background the soldiers murmur. Des Grieux, disheartened, weeps and cannot utter a word from emotion. But when the name "Manon" is called out and threatens to wrench her from him, he turns to the final hope still before him: to move the captain to pity. And so he entrains him. (Illica to Ricordi, 1 May 1892; Gara, no. 71, 72)

With this idea, which Puccini at first found difficult to envision, Illica solved the opera's last real difficulty with a masterly stroke. The cumbersome second act still remained, but it was removed probably in the summer of 1892, after which there was a long period of discussion about various decisions suggested by both Illica and Puccini.24 The excessive length of the second act, so feared by Puccini after the experience of Edgar, would also have made his Manon too similar to Massenet's.

**Manon and Manon Lescaut**

Puccini was now ready to face comparison with Massenet's masterpiece, and especially because he was dealing with a typically French subject. Prévost's novel dated back to 1731, and had come to the attention of the Romantics in 1820 in the form of Etienne Gosses's dramatic adaptation _Manon Lescaut et le Chevalier Des Grieux_. The subject's topical interest lay in its main theme: the eternal clash between vice and virtue, which takes place in an atmosphere of romantic passion and drama. No small factor in Puccini's decision must have been the fact that the real hero, with whom he fully identified, was Des Grieux. Indeed, Prévost had pretended—as Mérimee later would in _Carmen_—that the tale had been told him by the unfortunate young man who had personally experienced it. Yet it was the
female protagonist who had dominated the story ever since its first important operatic adaptation, Schiller’s opéra comique for Auber in 1836.24 Massenet’s Manon belonged to the same genre, and even Puccini said to Prætsch that “he meant to write a comic opera in the classic sense of the term”. (Adami, 42–43)

The differences between Manon and Manon Lescaut are vast. Absent from Puccini’s opera is the key figure of Renato’s father Count Des Grieux, who puts an end to the couple’s happiness by forcibly taking his son back. And it is only as a result of this action, to which she is forced to be party, that Manon accepts—with little enthusiasm—the offer of becoming Brétigny’s lover. Massenet continually interposes a screen of gallantry between reality and the passions, giving more emphasis to the noble and courtly environment in which Manon lives. Puccini, relying less on social niceties, makes the distressed Manon directly responsible for the temporary ending of her relationship with Des Grieux, thus accentuating her cynicism and making her a character of contradictions, and so more appealing.

In Act I, which reveals the wealthy old Treasurer General Geronte de Ravoir’s plan to kidnap the girl, Puccini emphasizes the link between the heroine’s beauty and her amorality. Manon would probably not have fled to Paris with her young lover had she not been able to take advantage of the carriage ridden by the older suitor for his own flight with her. Thus a quirky atmosphere, quite independent from her desire, surrounds the young girl, and is generated by the price men pay on her beauty—even her own brother, who fantasizes about gaining his own comfortable lodgings in Paris.

Massenet’s Manon is gallantly courted by Guillot de Mémoire and Brétigny, who wait with their mistresses at the post-stop in Amiens. Despite her bewilderment at the journey, the greedy eyes the ladies’ jewelry; but she nonetheless chooses flight with the young Des Grieux in order to avoid the chateau. All this is certainly more exhausting than Puccini’s version, but Massenet’s title character lacks the more exhausting features emphasized by Puccini.

The gap between the two works widens in the later acts. Elimination of the father figure from the Italian work led to the absence of the scene in which Des Grieux is about to take his vows to become an abbot but, seduced once again by the girl, returns to the secular world and wastes his life away gambling. His complex, tormented spiritual development in Massenet’s Manon, which is very close to Prévert’s original conception, is lacking in Puccini, where the tension loves Manon unreservedly and their relationship is largely based on intense eroticism. Lescaut’s few words at the beginning of Puccini’s Act II are enough to clarify how we get from the flight from Amiens to Géronde’s mansion in Paris; but eliminating any happy coincidences in poor surroundings—the lovers’ humble retreat disappears, as does the little white house and the entire context of petit-bourgeois nostalgia—means that in Manon Lescaut love is motivated almost entirely by physical attraction. Puccini directed all his energies to this aspect of the work, and in the second-act duet it is passion that determines the development of the plot, becoming a symbolic element of such significance that a reference to Tristan and Isolde does not seem out of place. In the end, avoiding the same finale as Manon (in which the girl dies at Le Havre in Des Grieux’s arms), Puccini’s opera extends harrowingly into the American desert, where the protagonist ends her journey by dying in poverty like Prévert’s heroine.

The competitive stimulus of Massenet’s opera greatly encouraged Puccini’s creative work (although he knew Manon only through reading the vocal score),25 and to differentiate himself he called his opera Manon Lescaut. According to Carner, “Massenet’s Manon is a masterpiece, which Puccini’s is not” (Carner, 350). Anyone inclined to disagree can find a clue in the words Puccini used to explain to Prætsch why he did not fear such comparisons on the basis of the plot: “Manon will feel as a Frenchman, with powder and minstrels. I will feel it as an Italian, with desperate passion.”26 Puccini’s music makes this passion the true unifying idea of the opera.

“Manon Lescaut mi chiamo”:
Puccini Interprets Wagner

Every great artist sooner or later produces a work that seems to show awareness of having emerged, with a first masterpiece, from the development period (one thinks of Mozart’s Idomeneo or Verdi’s Nabucco). Puccini’s genius emerged with Manon Lescaut. There is an unceasing stream of invention, and overwhelming inspiration; its careful formal design is not immediately perceptible to the ear, and becomes obvious only through study of the score. But it is a design that extends even to small details, and guarantees the opera’s enormous emotional impact.

After the near-failure of Edgar Puccini confronted head on the problem of Wagnerian operatic aesthetics. In the prelude to Le Villi the young composer, who was already well educated and shrewd, had paid homage to Parsifal with a quotation of the Amfortas-Motif (see Ex. 2.44). Had things
remained at that level, Puccini would not have advanced a single step toward the acquisition of new and more advanced musical and dramatic techniques. Like Wagner’s “young Italian friar,” he would have remained a Wagnerian in name only. Puccini, however, succeeded in reconciling his native tradition and its melodic legacy with Wagnerian procedures that presupposed a different balance among the constituent elements of theater. This was the inheritance Wagner left to European opera: respousing its benefits meant that the connections between action, music, and stage had to be tightened, producing an indissoluble alliance in a still coherent formal structure.

In cultured literary circles in Italy, from Milan to Bologna, Wagner had been received as an innovator with a sacred mission, by terms exalted and despised. But in general both critics and adherents neglected to examine the work seriously in relation to their mise-en-scène. Thus the relationship between Italian intellectuals and composers and Wagnerian opera was based on misinterpretations arising from a lack of real knowledge about the technical problems posed by his work. For example, they considered Wagner’s influence responsible for the late-nineteenth-century practice of inserting symphonic-descriptive passages into Italian operas, but they did not take into account the style of such pieces; here one thinks of Mascagni’s *L’Amico Fritz* (1891) or Cagliostro *Ricciotti* (1892) rather than the third-act intermezzo of *Manon Lescaut*. Yet if one excludes the operas of second-rank composers such as Antonio Smaraglia (La Finta, 1897–1898) and Alberto Franchetti (Germania, 1902), in which the attempt to revive a Wagnerian idiom is obvious, the most representative works produced in fin-de-siècle Italy still rely on either a sequence of set pieces, as in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890), or a sense of formal unity, as in *Pagliacci* (1891).22


Puccini went much further. By reviving in an original way the stimuli that his study of Wagner’s scores had provided, he was able to develop his craft both as a composer and man of the theater. “Opera in opera: symphony in symphony,” Verdi had written to Count Arrabissi in 1884, criticizing *Le Villi*.23 His remark was, however, aimed merely at the insertion of descriptive orchestral passages. But in Act I of *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini surpassed the boundaries of that genre, and skillfully adapted symphonic structures to the requirements of the plot. René Lehnartz asserted that “the first act reveals, on many levels, the principles of Wagnerian through-composition,24 and attempted to describe it as a symphony in four movements.25 His stimulating analysis of the “first movement” may be outlined as follows:

**Exposition** (A–f-sharp), mm. 1–179

**First theme group in the tonic, orchestra, mm. 1–53**

* A, mm. 1–11 (up to 13); B, mm. 12–18 (up to 2 after 17), transition, mm. 19–28, A, mm. 29–35 (up to 18), E, mm. 31–41 (up to 28), E, mm. 42–53 (up to 23)

**Second theme group in the relative minor, mm. 54–180**

* “Sve sì!” (Eden-endo) and concertato (up to 4 before 53)

**Development, mm. 180–250**

* “Fire, Fire, Fire, Fire!” (students, up to 129)

**Allegretto and varied recapitulation (f-sharp–A), mm. 251–302**

**Second theme group, mm. 257–71**

* “Dance, dance, dance, and so on” (up to 33)

**Finale, mm. 272–302**

* “E splendidissimo ed irruente,” mm. 271–77, exposition, “Tutto vino,” mm. 278–89 (up to 33); A, mm. 294–302 (up to 13 after 33)

Lehnhart then pointed out a “slow movement,” starting from the entrance of the carriage (from after 18), a “scherzo” in the exchange between Lescaut...
and Geronte (from 171) and a finale from Manon's reappearance (173). Despite some inevitable strain, his remarks can be verified objectively. The scene as a whole has a very obvious motivic coherence, but the four sections are nonetheless strongly differentiated. Some themes recur cyclically, often varied: this happens with section A and the offstage cornet fanfares (q after 173), which first announces the carriage and then, with other melodies, recall Des Grisart's falling in love. The sense of organism is also produced by the orchestral style. Leibowitz again:

"The task of thematic development in this scene (for the first movement of the symphony), except in the arietta ("Tra voi belle"), is directed as much to the vocal parts as to the orchestra. It is clear that the composer had no intention of threatening the purely lyrical structure with symphonism."

Structures obviously related to "instrumental" practice become more frequent in Puccini's late style: he would resort to them in his last experimental phase, engaging even more closely with early twentieth-century European trends. But their unequivocal presence even in this closing first act already demonstrates his tendency to search for new formal frameworks, ones capable of imbuing the dramatic events with a different rhythm from that of traditional forms.

But Puccini's engagement with Wagner, which is much more explicit in Manon Lescaut than in his other works, goes far beyond the use of similar formal schemes, and is particularly clear in the rigor and consistency with which he made use of leitmotivic technique, combining it with an Italian conception of musical drama whose mainstay was melody. The thematic material employed in the opera is set out as a clear system of rela-

31. Ashbrook has shown that Puccini himself wrote the title "Scena" on the manuscript at the top of the page corresponding to no. 17 in Act I, starting from the string theme in D minor (The Opera of Puccini, 56). He specifies that the scene's review of the London premiere of Manon Lescaut in 1899, where the famous dramatic arietta "Va pensiero" (see below, Ex. 3.12) comes from the final part of a quartet dating back to his student years in Leipzig, and transcribed by his teacher Michele as a piano duet for four hands. Giacomo Puccini / Scena per archi (D-minor theme Ad-Quartetto in D) / Sinfonia per piano a 4 mani / Michel Puccini / Lucia Capitolin — Novara 1967 (monograph at the Puccini Museum in Lucca). See also Schillinger, Giacomo Meyerbeer, 82 and Julius Bieden, "Manon Lescaut: Dal seminario all'opera", in Manon Lescaut (Milan: Vitali alla Scala—RCS, 1986, program book).

32. Leibowitz, Storia dell'opera, 954.

33. In addition to melodio-crescendos connecting various movements in the plot, Puccini often made use of leitmotifs, giving a very precise identity to a musical idea associated with a character or situation, as in Wagner, whose leitmotifs are varied in rhythm, harmony, and orchestration to produce a musical analogy to the development of the action.

gionships, one that ties characters to the situations they experience and their relative status in said. The music, liberated from simple narrative necessities, serves to create sophisticated symbolic associations. One example is the brief passage in which a brooding chromatic theme in the orchestra identifies the Treasurer General Geronte de Ravois as an unquenchable (Ex. 3.12). When he surprises the two lovers in an embrace in Act II, Manon places a mirror in front of him to make him aware that only money, not his appearance, has guaranteed him the love of a young and beautiful woman. The theme reappears in an agitated variant in which the chromaticism is absorbed into the major mode as passing notes (Ex. 3.18), but it nevertheless emphasizes the girl's instinctive cynicism.

Example 3.1
a. Manon Lescaut, I, 171

b. Manon Lescaut, II, 6 after 173

34. For a further demonstration of the organic nature of Puccini's imagination see the events prompted by Manon's request in his death with her brother "Je danse" II, 14 after 175, a sequence of chords in which the upper part descends by a trichord (with a chromatic interpolation).
Such passages clearly show how the entire opera gravitates around the heroine, who is depicted with almost embarrassing nudity: in these two excerpts the monstrous power of money is linked to the fascination of youth for sensual pleasures, to one who has been bought, but not yet used. This further reinforces the principal interpretive key to the plot: everything happens because Manon can control neither her love of luxury nor her erotic compulsions.

In the extensive gallery of Puccini's heroines, Manon is the one who binds herself most closely to the destiny of other characters. The composer was particularly careful to exploit all the compositional possibilities suited to depicting this aspect, beginning with the moment the carriage stops for a break at Aix-en-Provence:

Example 5.2. Manon Lescaut, I, from 13 after 11.

Manon's theme (Ex. 5.44) springs from the sequence of chords heard in Example 3.2 (X: woodwinds and chorus). Her theme lends itself to citation and variation through its flexible melodic shape (the combination of two successive major seconds, the generative cell, A, the interval of a perfect fourth) and through the harmonies that underpin it. The simple descending phrase seems to express a bashful, modest character, but it also denotes the students' expressions of curiosity ("vediamoci!": "let's see!") and appreciation of luxury ("Viaaggiatori eleganti... Gallantì", "Elegant travelers' Gallant gentlemen"). Puccini extracts the ideas for numerous key moments in the plot from this sequence, almost as if the potential of the heroine's future and that of her lover were contained in the music.

At the sight of Manon, Des Grieux is struck as if by a thunderbolt. To produce the maximum effect Puccini molded the tenor line from the heroine's thematic material. The melody on which Des Grieux makes his entrance (Ex. 5.36), and the pulsating phrase with which he addresses the girl (Ex. 5.39, which from now on represents his romantic love), are both based on the motive associated with Manon's name (Ex. 5.40):

Example 5.3

a. Manon Lescaut, I, 3 before 11.

b. Manon Lescaut, I. 11.

On the other hand, what seems merely a quotation of the "Manon" theme at the lyrical climax of the aria "Donna non vidi mai" (Ex. 5.46) secretly binds the two young lovers indissolubly from their first meeting, in a sign of destiny and the illusory hope of a better future:

37. This melody returns in the lines at the words "E in voi l'apriete" (vivace, 1, before 11). Carries suggests that insufficient differentiation between the two voices is "one of the chief weaknesses of the opera" (Carrie, 351), but this aspect might also be interpreted in the opposite sense, as the true force of the drama.

38. Puccini actually derived the idea for both themes from Giacomo Puccini's recitative and aria "Mentre l'apriete," in his setting of a version of Romani's libretto La caitra delle Amore (1848), which he had written in June 1899 as a diploma piece for the Milan Conservatory. The melody comes from the aperitivo of the A-flat cantabile, "E in voi l'apriete" (Cavalleria, 2), and is the same as Des Grieux's solo, with notes removed to the syllabilization required. In this way Puccini closely intended to emphasize the instrumental motive rather than the vocal phrase, in order to stress the relationship to Manon's theme.
Example 3.6a. It moves from the voices to the orchestra in the intermezzo (Ex. 3.6a), and reappears in the concluding passage of Act III as the two embrace before boarding the ship for America (III, 31). Finally, it returns like a mirage (Ex. 3.6a) just before those isolated chords introduce despair, lonely awareness in the aria “Sola, pietrita, abbandonata”:

Example 3.6
a. Manon Lescaut, II, 6 before 33

Example 3.6b
a. Manon Lescaut, III, 9 before 33

Example 3.6c
a. Manon Lescaut, IV, 11 before 33

Puccini also extracted ideas both frivolous and sensuous from the same thematic material in order to characterize Manon as willful courtesan in Act II. Look again at Ex. 3.2a, the theme's generative cell (4) occurs in inversion in the bassoons, as a descending minor seventh (9). During the course of the eighteenth-century scene, Puccini employs this interval several times, giving it a prominent position in Manon's music (Ex. 3.7a), in that of the countess (Ex. 3.7b), and in the melodic profile of the minuets (compare Ex. 3.16a and 3.19):

Example 3.7
a. Manon Lescaut, II, 16 after 33

Later, B functions as a link between love and destiny when Des Grieux, at the end of the duet, sees his own fate as he looks into Manon's eyes (Ex.
A little later the theme resurfaces briefly (violins and clarinets, II, E) with a brilliant arpeggio accompaniment of strings and woodwinds, an allusive moment of guilt for Manon who believes herself free and rich. But after Geronte has had her arrested, the initial section of the intermezzo (Ex. 3.10)\(^{40}\) presents a chromatic, tormented variant of her melody, in which the part-writing, the sequence of seventh chords, and the use of instruments at the extremes of their register openly declare a stylistic debt to Wagner. The cello phrase further reinforces the bond between the two lovers, since it clearly refers to Des Grieux's theme (compare Ex. 3.48).\(^{41}\)

Example 3.10. Manon Lescaut, intermezzo Act III, beginning

In Act IV, Puccini uses the motive symbolizing Manon to increase the desperate foreboding of death. The beginning and the end of the act are punctuated by cell A, which almost physically conveys the sense of a blast of humid wind sweeping "the vast plains of New Orleans" (Ex. 3.11b) by way of the two-octave leap upwards and the intense dynamic level of the whole orchestra, which moves from pianissimo to fortissimo in this dense harmonic space. The chords are in minor and descend from the tonic to the flattened leading tone, as at the start of the duet. Pessimism has become reality: the tragedy has reached its goal. But the theme still has a prominent role in two anguished passages when Manon laments her weakness ("la se è mi devò"); "thirst consumes me," 4 after (E), and in her last moments of life (Ex. 3.11b), where its most chromatic variant makes us understand that nothing remains of the heroine's "luminosa giovinezza" ("bright youth") but a final, faint gleam.

40. Furthermore, the opening wind phrase has a life of its own, since it has already appeared in the first act duet (A after \(\text{III}^2\)) as Des Grieux warns Manon of the danger of being abandoned, and in the scene when sheBind the lover ("beatitude, e il dolor") after (E).

41. The generation cell is from Manon's theme (E, major second), while the melodic profile and the dotted figure recall Des Grieux's theme. The stage direction in the score, taken from Puccini's novel and directly functioning as a program, reads: "Una svolta del dramma; seguito: Ed è la regola Domenica, celi veto... Possa pur in capo al mondo..." ("A sudden path, turn in it, to follow her! And I will follow her! No matter where she goes! Perhaps even to the ends of the earth...").
Finally, consider how dramatic coherence is reinforced by the tonal plan of the whole opera, which begins in A major. The eighteenth-century scene gravitates around the tonalities of D and A major and is linked to the intermezzi through B minor, while Manon's theme passes through various tonalities (B-flat, G major, etc.) before being absorbed in the final set by E-sharp minor, the relative minor of the initial key. In recent years, such relationships have often been overvalued, or sought out where none exists in the name of "compositional coherence." But the precision with which Puccini arranges keys in Manon Lescaut in relation to themes and recurring melodies reveals precise dramatic intentions, which are neither more nor less effective than those of Wagner in Lohengrin. 24

Despite their different aesthetic positions—Wagner's more bound to an allegorical world, Puccini's to the narrative continuity of Italian drama—the latter's approach to Wagner is made clear in the treatment of Manon's theme and in the complex system of relationships used to create a semantic web that corresponds to the musical structure (Ex. 3.11). Puccini's choice of the story of Manon and Des Grieux was perhaps influenced by his admiration for a score in which looms large another love destined to be defeated—that between Tristan and Isolde. His admiration is also evident in the harmonic language of Manon Lescaut and in the almost literal quotation of the famous Tristan chord (Ex. 3.12a) in Act II (Ex. 3.12b), while the minuet is being danced. 25

4. Puccini frequently used the half-diminished seventh in Manon, but here the reference to the Tristan chord is more direct than in other places in the opera, through the melodic inflections of the violin and the disposition of the parts. Moreover, the quotation has a clear dramatic role in Ex. 3.13. The music is heard before Des Grieux begins the comments "Tristan boils," and earns him on his unsound self-confidence. As Sirrico Nuñez has pointed out, Manon's belief is formed differently in Elizabeth; see "Manon," and Wagner: Unraveling the Influence," Cambridge Opera Journal 5, no. 2 (1993): 186–90. In Wettstein, however, the French composer took a step backwards when he interpreted the melodic "Pourtant elle ronronne" right up to the end of the act: the expressive writing forms a musical point of view, but not from a dramatic one. Contrasting knowledge of the Tristan chord in Italy, see Porchio's "la spiagge famose del lago" (translation by Michael L. Stein).
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Example 3.12 (continued)

c. Monza Lessaun, II, i after [18]

These measures infallitate the eighteenth-century scene to announce the imminent arrival of Des Grieux, the moment in which desperate, sensual love will sweep the two young lovers away.

Our analysis so far has demonstrated the high quality of Puccini's achievement even while he was still developing his craft, as well as the distance that lay between him and other Italian composers then considered greater. Monza Lessaun is a masterpiece because Wagner's influence has already been absorbed into compositional method, as Lobowitz affirms:

An interest in pure symphonic elaboration is what distinguishes it from Wagnerian leitmotif technique. And in this we see how Wagner's influence was felt "passively," but was truly creative; the sense that Wagner is assimilated and built on, thus opening the door to new possibilities.

No other Italian composer had such innate abilities. Consider, for instance, the two operas in which a single theme develops in a similar way, Giordano's Andrea Chénier (1896) the melody of the hero's "improvised" song ("Oh di sì! sì! sì! sì! spazio") in Act I has an important role. Furthermore, the scene is the central figure of the plot, and Giordano felt that he should be represented by a prominent theme. But he did not succeed in communicating any sense of dramatic evolution through it:

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A Romantic Opera

When setting dramatic subjects to music, Puccini adhered to a fixed working principle: to depict from the very first measures of an opera the atmosphere in which the action was to develop. In Manon Lescaut his analyses are that of the eighteenth century, particularly its sentimental and affected side, perhaps because the more this aspect was emphasized—and it reaches a climax in the first part of the second act—the more effective the force of sensual love between the two characters would be.

To recreate the eighteenth century musically, Puccini turned to some of his previous works, among them the Tre minuti per quaranta d'archi, published in 1884. He derived the opera's opening theme in (Ex. 3.12b) from the second of these pieces (Ex. 3.12a). The theme then returns cyclically during the act as a sign of youth, sometimes in its entirety, sometimes merely as a generative cell (Ex. 3.12c), often overlapping with other melodies. The brilliant orchestral writing, embellished by touches of caccia and frequent accelerandi, makes it difficult to receive the origins of this lively opening section; although reference to the original minuet gradually

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[45] The correct dating was suggested to me by Julian Budden, who has published an advertisement of the collection edited by Figura in the 1885 issue of Annales de music: see Budden, "La fonti melodiche di Manon Lescaut," OR 5 (1966): 126.
The symphonic structure outlined by Leibowitz develops powerfully, allowing for flexible articulation of the dramatic material. The chorus of young people plays an important role, as does their poet, Emanuele, whose effervescent moods find an outlet in the stage music. The two melodies "Ave, cara genio" and "Giovinezza è il nostro nome" establish in a brief but inspired passage the luminous longing of young people yearning to meet an object for their passion, as will soon happen to Des Grieux. Puccini's choral writing, especially at the beginning and during the gambling scene, is extremely varied and vocally demanding. The chorus is divided into three groups: male (middle-class men), female (young girls), and mixed students. Despite technical demands greater than in any other Italian opera of the period, the chorus also has to provide a mobile visual background for the soloists. The directions in the *disposizione scenica* (leading manual), although borrowed from general usage, are peremptory.

The stage director must continue to insist until he has persuaded the chorus that they must not seem an insignificant, static mass, but that, on the contrary, each member represents a character and must behave as such, moving in an individual manner, responding to the unfolding action, maintaining with the others just that unity of movement needed to assure the musical exigency.65

Although Des Grieux takes the spotlight with his ironic F major aria, directed at the girls ("Fra voi siete");71 he is just a student like all the others. His first encounter with Manon lasts only a few measures, and the students' ironic music (Ex. 3.13b) 25 as they observe at a distance, makes frequent incursions into the lyrical scene. Manon responds to the young man hesitantly, but when she asks his name an expansive chronological progression unfolds—seventh and eleventh chords resolving to a dominant ninth—bringing out her full sensual charm. The brief farewell takes few measures, and is followed by "Donna non vidi mai."72 The entire sequence might be seen as a two-part aria, since the solo matches almost exactly the proportions of the duet, transposed from G to B-flat major. Manon's theme is quoted by the tenor (see Ex. 3.49), and then, extended from three to nine measures, is used as a coda to the aria. Des Grieux's passion unfolds through a very natural melodic progression that encourages the listener to forget the precise links between sections, while the orchestral doublings, sometimes as many as five octaves, increase the emotional impact. Manon has entered the young man's heart: the dense network of melodic references within the two-part form with reprise immediately allows the emotions to seem like a crystallized memory—almost an eternal presence—and at the same time heightens the sensual appeal of the protagonist's image.

Action resumes in the following scene, after which the students, in a brief coda, show that they are not taking their colleague too seriously. Again following Leibowitz, one can see a symphonic scherzo here. The anticipated, rather virtuoso, discussion between Lescaut and Geronio takes place while the men and students are busy playing cards. Employing the nineteenth-century technique of *parlando,* this conversation takes place

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67. The scene was originally in F-sharp major (Leibowitz, *The Opera, 457*) that key fits better with the mood of the scene, in which a major and its relative minor prevail; moreover, it guaranteed balance in the vocal line. On this transcription are Julius Baker, "Puccini's Transposition," 6–7.

71. *Parlando* involves giving the same melody to the continuo while the voices are engaged in dialogue.
over a busy string theme in D minor (Ex. 3.148)—which recurs in various guises during the soloists' dialogue (Ex. 3.149) and in the card scene—and on a second theme in the relative major (Ex. 3.151).

Example 3.14

a. Manon Lescaut, I, [28]

Allegro vivo

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Viola, Vc., Dr. at lower register} \\
\text{Vio, Vc, Dr., at lower register}
\end{array} \]

b. Manon Lescaut, I, 16 before \[ \text{[6]} \]

PL.

Rc.

The dramatic situations constantly overlap, but the clarifying action of the scenes prevents any doubt from being lost. Thus Lescaut emerges as an ambiguous figure, a man of the world reduced by the demon of gambling and always on the lookout for profit. The chromatic theme that is suddenly heard in the orchestra (see Ex. 3.148) underpins preparations for the abduction, which Edmond overhears, and characterizes Geronte briefly but very effectively. The cyclical of these two is increased by contrast with the light-hearted music sung by the young people.

Everything is now prepared for a full duel between Monon and Des Grieux, one promised in their preceding encounter. Edmond rushes his friend and goes to prepare the deception. As the sun sets and the lights gradually dim, Puccini depicts the young man's agitated state of mind; Des Grieux waits for Manon through a brief interlude in which a minor version of her theme intertwines with his own, on which a reminiscence of the opening theme is superimposed, as if the audience were in some way implicated in the fate of individuals.

This time the duet is constructed in a more traditional manner. Manon approaches Des Grieux in a "tempo d'attacco," then re-enters in the cantabile the life she leads in her "caserta" ("little home": Andante amoroso, [35]). The tone is subdued, the orchestration extremely delicate: the flute plays the aphetic melody, while violin and viola thirty-second-note figures shimmer in the background, sharpened by mallet strokes on the cymbals. Manon's melancholy regret contrasts with Des Grieux's intense passion: he takes up the principal melody and transforms it from nostalgia for lost innocence into a sensual invitation to love.

The transition to the finale is very brief after the concluding high note and a restatement of the principal theme, Geronte reappears accompanied by his chromatic syncopations—which give the impression of lecherous panting—just in time to see the carriage leaving in great haste.

The end of the act is very important. In the version performed at Turin it took the form of an elaborate concerto in which Geronte expressed his vexation over the events. But Illica was of the opinion that Manon's headlong flight to the boudoir in Act II needed more motivation, and wrote to Ricordi:

But from hearing Massenet's Manon an idea came to me: thus what if for La Scala we use a radical cut in the first finale and replace it with something for Lescaut and Geronte that would make the second act a bit clearer? (Around 20 October 1893, Gara, nos. 94, 95)

Puccini understood his collaborator's reasoning perfectly, and prepared the finale we know today for the revival at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples on 21 January 1894. Considering its obvious functionality, both dramatic and musical terms, it is hard to imagine a different conclusion. Puccini had already connected the various situations by musical means, having decided to omit any depiction of the couple's romantic happiness and to concentrate instead on a cynical Mannon and a despondent Des Grieux. Therefore, from the central part of the tenor's aria (Ex. 3.150) he derived the duet theme on which the curtain rises in the next act (Ex. 3.150), and also an important phrase of Edmond's (Ex. 3.150).

Example 3.15

a. Manon Lescaut, 12 after [13]

Des Grieux

49. For terminology concerning the formal structure of set pieces, see Harold Powers, "La sonata form" and the "Vistas of Cimarron", J. Am. musicologists, 55, no. 2 (1972): 65—90; particularly table 2 (p. 66). Puccini's attention to the sonata form, partly derived fromAbbiamo bisogno Le spore di Giuseppe Verdi (Florence, 1899), is adopted at a point of reference here and elsewhere.
have been considered by some commentators as “unusually redundant”\(^\text{30}\) as “eighteenth-century parasites ... abnormally cumbersome in the economy of an opera that involves large gaps in the chronological development of the plot.”\(^\text{31}\) In fact, they play a fundamental role, allowing the audience to experience Manon’s interior world, the one that motivates her reactions.

From the first entrance heard at the beginning (see Ex. 3.15d) Puccini develops a four-measure phrase that perfectly characterizes the naivety of Manon’s environment as it traces idle mazes over the veiled string and harp accompaniment, overlaid with other delicate orchestral details, in which the triangle, caisson, and celeste sound like tinkling jewelry. The melody further communicates a sense of inevitability about Manon’s destiny (Ex. 3.15f-g); she is a prisoner of the luxury she so desires and of the social rites to which she will all too soon become victim.

Lescuit’s entrance—in the codas of the B-minor episode—causes a momentary break in the archaic atmosphere. The subsequent duet has multiple dramatic motivations. In the first place it reveals the fulfillment of the brother’s prophecies and the case with which he moves in this highly refined world, while at the same time explaining what has happened in the meantime to Des Grieux.\(^\text{32}\) But it also helps us understand the true nature of Manon’s feelings, swirling in her sprightly clothing. Puccini weaves thematic reminiscences into a closed form that harks back to earlier nineteenth-century tradition. The table below, excluding the sections involving Lescaut (2, 4), shows how Manon’s feelings acquire greater prominence:

\[\begin{array}{cccc}
0. & \text{Sema} & A & \text{"Sei splendida e innocente"} \\
1. & \text{Tempo di menuet} & B & \text{"Un’ambra amorosa"} \\
2. & \text{Moderato con amore} & C & \text{"In quelle trine morbide"} \\
3. & \text{Tempo di menuet} & D & \text{"Poshè tu vada ignara... Lescaut"} \\
4. & \text{Cadenza} & E & \text{"Far si un premio... Manon/Lescaut"} \\
\end{array}\]

The little theme that had previously accompanied the question “Geronte, evvii” reappears when Lescaut describes the magnificence of Geronte’s "palazzo aurato" ("golden palace") (C), initiating a section dominated by Manon’s solo. "In quelle trine morbide" ("In those soft hangings") is constructed from compact musical material and linked to previous thematic

\[\text{from Classicism to Passion}\]

The first part of Act II depicts boudoir life. The courtiers’ gallantry, their simpering and affectation, wearies Manon and creates great contrast with the love duet that follows, which is dominated by real passion, but at the same time contaminated by Manon’s evident moral corruption. The madrigal, minuet, and pastoral song that ring through Geronte’s drawing room

\[\text{\textcopyright Carlo Santini, Puccini (Milan: Nuova Aritmedica, 1979, 243.}
\]

\[\text{\textcopyright Carlo Cazzini, Giacomo Puccini (Turin: UTET, 1979), 138.}
\]

\[\text{\textcopyright The music from Puccini’s Manon is a fleeting reference to an event in the novel, it also occurs in the fourth act of Massenet’s Manon.}\]
CHAPTER THREE

ideas (compare Exx. 3.44-8 and 3.48-8), but Manon’s expression of regret for Des Grieux’s lost love gradually becomes purely emotional through a melody that requires perfect mensural notation on the performer’s part, from the quieter beginning on G-flat (almost a thrill of pleasure) to the word “Edi che ero svezzatasi una carizia volutamente.” (And I who had grown accustomed to a voluptuous caress: the voice rises through flux to high B-flat, Ex. 3.56). In the second part of the aria (B’), oboe and piccolo reprise in G-flat the melody with which the violins had begun, evoking the humble house where Manon had lived with her lover (B), increasing the nostalgia that has gripped her. This mood is expanded in the concluding lyrical da capo, in which the baritone’s counter-melody places Manon’s vocal line in relief. Excited by her memories, she appeals to Des Grieux to return to her arms (compare Ex. 3.18), as she reaches high C. In the coda a final flame of passion—the sudden modulation from F to E major—is followed by a truncated, enharmonic return to F minor, starting with a diminished seventh (a before B-flat) a resigned return to everyday tedium.23

The flute melody returns as Manon once again stands before the mirror, and as the harmony arrives at a perfect cadence in B-flat major, the powdered musicians enter to sing a madrigal.24 Puccini borrowed this music from the Agnus Dei of his youthful Mass (1880), lowering it by a tone and shortening it for the opera.25 The choice of performers—all women en travestit—is an inspired one: the mezzo-soprano soloist is accompanied by a small chamber choir, which interpolates in a style reminiscent of the late sixteenth century, repeating the final two lines of the strophe in the manner of a refrain. The text, also dating back to the poetry of Cinquecento madrigals, is full of quasini and rezarteri with vice lati, and is based on obvious erotic metaphors (“Piangi, Madon, / Cogito non hai Gloria in seno” / “Ve… gia il Finis vien merto…” / “Tieni seco / Che Ch’io a dimora il posaio?”). At certain points, Puccini had fun coloring it ironically with “madrigalisms” (the lover’s imitation of the bagpipes, the sighing lament on ascending and descending minor seconds, the rests imitating the erotic gaps of “Finis”). The music that had been written more than twenty years earlier for the Agnus Dei proved to suit the operatic situation perfectly, as if a proof of the composer’s introspection.

23. The cadence is interpolated on an F-major tonic chord in second inversion (c before F), which moves down a half step to an E-major chord, also in second inversion, the latter descending from C to B. The sudden modulation from F to G is a sharp key is obvious both in the orchestra and the voice, and punchy is an effect of brevity.

24. The name “madrigal” is clearly used here in the sense of a vocal piece on a mythological or pastoral subject.

25. He decided to make use of the piece at the last minute, in 1891, given that in his monograph of the Mass, which was dedicated to the librettist Mascagni’s Dolcissimo to this year, the title “Agnus Dei” was erased and replaced with “Madrigali” (see Masa 6/14: rename next /e/ /archives / P. Pugnet, fol. 172).

Greeted by Geronte, the characters who will bring the next scene to life—dancing master, quarter players, gentlemen, and abbés—make their entrance to the accompaniment of open fifths in the strings as the players take up. The choice of a refrain as the emblem of a rich Parisian house in the eighteenth century was all but obligatory, and Puccini here employs a formal structure that follows the traditional tripartite scheme, but adapted to the dramatic requirements.26 The first section in D major, for solo strings, is in four phrases, of which only the opening one (Ex. 3.16a) functions as an antecedent, while the remaining three (Exx. 3.16b and d) are variants of the consequent (Ex. 3.16b). In the second section, which contrasts with the first by virtue of the predominantly descending melodic intervals (Ex. 3.16c and f), Manon begins to dance. In the meantime, the stringing tutor gives her advice, and Geronte, seized with enthusiasm, is admonished by those present to “adulare in silenzio” (“adulare in silence”). The melodic material is developed from a few cells, as if to give the idea of an improvisation, and one has the impression of hearing a single melody punctuated by cadences.

Example 3.16
After the reprise of the first section comes an A minor "trio" (Ex. 3.17g). A reminiscence of this will be heard in the final moments of Manon's agony (Ex. 3.17h), as if to establish the equation love = sin = death:

Example 3.17
a. Manon Lescaut, II, 4 after [1]

b. Manon Lescaut, IV, [1]

Tempo del Minuetto dell'Alto 2, più piano

The lesson over, the dancing master asks, "con impazienza" ("with impatience"), for a partner for Manon. Geronte comes forward and the couple, to the adoring admiration of the onlookers, dance a reprise of the minuet.

Everything is now ready for Puccini to place his seal on the scene. The pastoral song's melody represents a pinnacle of compositional finesse in a passage based on sophisticated formal elaboration at the service of the drama. Let us return for a moment to the melody Manon sings in the duet (Ex. 3.18), the incipit of which (A) was repeated, slightly varied, by the flute (Ex. 3.19: A') before the guests entered. In combining this phrase with fragments of the minuets (compare Ex. 3.10, X with 3.16c and 3.16, Y with 3.16'), Puccini puts into play a subtle exchange of semantic references that confirms Manon's contradictions: she is intent on deflecting her lover's physical desire with a touch of coquetry:

Example 3.18. Manon Lescaut, II, 3 after [2]


Example 3.20. Manon Lescaut, II, 3 after [2]
This musical description of the dramatic event is extremely effective: Manon has already been depicted as capable of instigating the old, affected libertine Geronte in the name of sensual love. The turning point in the action, announced by these musical signals (the most explicit of which is the Tristan chord—Ex. 3.124—at the end of the reprise of the minuet), has been evocatively described by Fedele D'Antonio, who points out that at the center of Manon Lescaut lies:

the love theme, which is like a curse in and of itself, independent of who uses it. ... The decisive moment, which explains everything, occurs in Act II when Des Grieux breaks into his tutelage's drawing room, which until that moment has echoed with minuets. She is by now satisfied with false love. It should have been an outburst of true love, with features of happiness. Instead the orchestral basses play loud, heavy repeated notes, and this anguished pedal supports the two parallel chords of Manon's theme [see Ex. 3.9], darkened by the minor mode: fraco, erotic. And a gloomy chromatic scale opens out into the frenetic vortex of the duet. The appearance of "true" love is in reality the opening up of an abyss.14

"Ti, tu, amore? Tu?" these words sweep away all the affectionate, and begin the most inspired passage of the opera.25 The moment Manon's Manon most closely approaches a similar situation is when the heroine meets the Abbé Des Grieux at Saint-Sulpice in the third act, and wins his love again. But despite the intensifying element—a woman reducing a priest—the two lovers in the French opera lack the passionate impact of Puccini's couple.

An incessant stream of melody dominates Puccini's duet. Kisses and seduction are evoked by the heroine's persuasive melody, which is laced with chromaticism; Des Grieux appeals of revenge, Manon of guilt and love; their sensual attraction is founded on these ideas. Manon confesses to her lover that she has betrayed him, and offers him luxury and riches. "E fanciullo d'amor; eroi, son raro!" ("It is the bewitchment of love; yield, I am yours!"); their embrace is depicted in a duet (Ex. 3.12), the voices joining in the melody of Des Grieux's aria (compare Ex. 3.18). After reaching high B at the climactic moment, Des Grieux gently lowers Manon onto the

57. When the guests disperse, echoes of the material and a reprise of the melody of the pastoral in F major are still heard. The use of the same transfer to the duet is certainly not fortuitous; there are at least two unmediated passages for Puccini in modulations from G to F major, but there were excellent dramatic reasons to offer through tracity to a sentiment of acute nostalgia.


59. See Guido Pabst's comparison of Puccini's novel and the opera of this act, as well as the duet, beginning from this point in the dramatic action, in "Tu, tu, amore tuo," in Il giro di sfor (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1992), 187-208.

sola, while a half-diminished seventh (enharmonically altered; Ex. 3.123) again alludes to the Tristan chord:


Example 3.22. Manon Lescaut, II, [25]

But Puccini was not content to depict the couple's sensuality merely symbolically; he transferred it to the music, giving life to the desperate passion that from this point on will dominate the opera.

"SOLA, PERDUTA E ABANDONATA"

The finale of the second act is the beginning of Manon's journey toward death. The situation starts to deteriorate as soon as Geronte reappears on stage, surprising her in her lover's arms; Des Grieux thereafter becomes an important spectator of an inexorable sequence of events. Manon continues to act according to her instincts, on the wrong side of morality: with the help of a mirror she impiously humiliates the old bourgeois, comparing his society to that of youth. Then she helps herself to the gold she has accumulated, prompting a desperate reaction from her lover ("Ah, Manon"); a frenetic A minor tarantella (Ex. 3.19), based on a brief theme developed in fuga-style begins in the orchestra and accompanies Manon's arrest.26

60. Franz Schubert used a similar form of the duet in I to commemorate a sense of urgency in the finale of his opera in D minor, "Death and the Maiden" (D. 876) and the pezzo mescolato in C minor (D. 848).
The intermezzo introduces the desolation of the third act. A stage direction in the score functions as a program for the intermezzo, quoting the words in Proust's novel with which Des Grieux recalls the unhappy events following the arrest, and the music depicts his desperate yearning to be reunited with her. The twelve introductory measures, with their harmonic digressions and chromaticism (see Ex. 3.50), express her suffering; but suddenly the tension is released in the principal theme, as if finding relief in desperate tears (and indeed recalled as such in the following act).

Example 3.33. Manon Lescaut, III, 1

The “narration” continues in the next section of the intermezzo, which is based on a reminiscence of the duet (“Io voglio il tuo perdono,” II, 6 after 29) and in which the luminous string doublings contrast with the preceding dark orchestral texture. Finally, however, the music breaks out into the motive of hope (see Ex. 3.66) as if to reunite the destinies of the two lovers.

From the beginning of the third act through to the end of the opera, Puccini’s use of reminiscence technique, combined with that of leitmotiv, is extensive. A good example occurs in the brief meeting between Manon and Des Grieux, when she appears behind prison bars on the square at Le Havre. A few tender moments seem to offer a ray of hope, but the reminiscence of their first meeting which underpins their music acquires a contradictory meaning in light of all that has happened since. The lighthouse’s song increases the tension, heightening expectation of an impossible escape, but a gun shot tells us of the failure of Lescaut’s plan; people rush into the square, unsure to know what has happened.

The concluding part of the act hinges on the great embellishment scene. Thanks to Ida Fuxa, Puccini had solved the problem of transforming a static concertante into an action piece, as Verdi had unsuccessfully tried to do in Act III of Otello. The Manon finale might be described as follows:

1. Scena Allegro vivo
   “All’improvviso” (obert 32)  
   Largo assai
   “Che amaro” (bass 19)  
   Sciaradino
   “Alli gradi il celo e vidi” (Des Grieux, 3 before 31)
   Tempo I
   “Vedrò” (Alt.) (Serg., chorus 25)
   3. Tempi di mezzo Allegro deciso
   Fresco in il cielo” (Serg., 5 after 25)
   4. Stretta Largo sostenuto
   “Guarda, poco son” (Des Grieux, 27)

64. In the Act III concertante initiated by Delbenedetti (“All’improvviso... sei fidato i tuoi”) the supreme quality of the music prevails, as do the demands of the close counterpoint of

Example 3.44 a. Manon Lescaut, III, 1

After the spirited tempo di marcia, the central section of the ensemble—the sergeant’s roll call, declaimed over an orchestral theme in E-flat minor (Ex. 3.24d)—functions as a pivot for the melodies of the protagonists and secondary roles, each one of which has a particular shape. The various situations thus develop simultaneously, but not a single detail is lost. Lescaut incites the people of Le Havre, making them sympathise with the heroine’s fate, and while there are preparatory comments on the beauties of the others crossing the stage, Manon’s hesitant appearance incurs pitying comments from the people. As the roll call continues she is reunited with her lover, so they can interweave anguished aside; Lescaut continues trying to persuade, the prostitutes continue to pass. On the repeat of the Tempo I, the theme is heard, a sign of the lovers’ desperate resignation (Ex. 3.24b).

Example 3.44 b. Manon Lescaut, III, 1

After the spirited tempo di marcia, the central section of the ensemble—the sergeant’s roll call, declaimed over an orchestral theme in E-flat minor (Ex. 3.24d)—functions as a pivot for the melodies of the protagonists and secondary roles, each one of which has a particular shape. The various situations thus develop simultaneously, but not a single detail is lost. Lescaut incites the people of Le Havre, making them sympathise with the heroine’s fate, and while there are preparatory comments on the beauties of the others crossing the stage, Manon’s hesitant appearance incurs pitying comments from the people. As the roll call continues she is reunited with her lover, so they can interweave anguished aside; Lescaut continues trying to persuade, the prostitutes continue to pass. On the repeat of the Tempo I, the theme is heard, a sign of the lovers’ desperate resignation (Ex. 3.24b).
A resolution is supplied by the tenor's cri de cœur ("No!... Pazzo sono!... Guardatela!"), sword in hand, he delivers Musée. The A-flat solo, accompanied by full orchestra, in a piece of extreme vocal invention, and heightens a concession to verismo style. But in fact the explosive violence undercuts Des Grieux's state of mind credibly, and is resolved by the tenor's meaning by his cry pottery of a half-diminished seventh chord, notoriously unstable (here it belongs to G major) and uncertain, like the response of the young man awaits the ship's captain. At last he is allowed to get on board.

The impressive scale of this finale, with its orchestral recapitulation of the theme expressing hope of a better future (see Exx. 3.4b, 3.5a, 3.6a~c), does not lead to a Resolution but instead constitutes a prelude to the harrowing fourth act, a conclusion that Carner summarized as "a lament in fast form, lasting as long as eighteen minutes and thus fading on the dramatic plane" (Carner, 353). It is actually one of the most representative moments in Puccini's musical poetics, and essential for reconceiving the opera's central theme: intense love as a "cursè" and desperate passion.

In the fourth act the composer achieved the first example of "renunciation music," as he would use in equally unforgettable ways for the deaths of Mimì, Butterfly, and Angelica. Themes already heard appear in sequence, causing the past to intersect with the present, and the absence of new ideas welds material from the entire opera into a poetic unity. The music does not have to describe anything, as nothing happens that is not the logical effect of what we have already witnessed. Musée's death is the inevitable consequence of her way of life; it is raised to a metaphorical level because it is not merely a character who dies, but a symbol of love, just as the desperation is not merely that of Des Grieux, but of the audience who witnesses her death.

As the curtain rises, the second theme of the elegy Crisantemi (IV, 8 before [3]), see Ex. 2.1b) accompanies the two lovers as they drag themselves across the desert. Musée, doubled by a viola, sings an anguished threnody—a moment of final, loving intimacy (IV, 5 before [5]), then the orchestra sustains her with funeral timpani rolls, punctuated by bass drum, tam-tam, and snare drum rolls. Musée's entire character is condensed in this passage: at the moment of death she asks her lover for a last kiss. And, finally, life slips away almost gently, with an evocation of her now spent "juvemine giovinezza" ("flamboyant youth"; see Ex. 3.11b): the music that accompanied her dances in Geronte's salon returns to bring her back to mind (see Exx. 3.17b).

But the cornerstone of this finale is Musée's aria, sung after she has seen Des Grieux in a vain search for help. "Sola, perdua, abbandonata" reaches the frightening dramatic intensity of a very real confession. As the heroine dictates the first words "con la massima espressione e con angoscia" ("with maximum expression and with anguish"), the oboe's lament is echoed by an offstage flute. For a moment death seems like the only solution, and it makes it severely in an "aula di pace" ("refuge of peace"); then her voice moves up to the higher range, surrounded by string tremolo.

A masterpiece of late romanticism, the fourth act of Manon Lescaut brings to mind the closing moments of Don Carlo and Aida. Yet there is clearly an enormous distance between Musée and Latilla, for in the latter death is the only possibility for individually oppressed by power to
realize their legitimate earthly aspirations. "Ma lascì ci vedremo in un mondo migliore" ("But there up above we will know a better world") sings Carlo and Elisabetta in *Don Carlo*. "O terra abisso, addio, valle di piangenti..." ("Oh farewell, earth; farewell, vale of tears") is the final melody of Aida and Radames, the one that "si schiude il cielo" ("opens the heavens"). But Manon, left all alone, cries out "Non voglio morire!" ("I do not want to die!"). The Puccinian lovers continue to stagger through the desert sand, trying to the last to find an impossible salvation, because their only certainty is life. These are the anguished, fervent values of a restless fin de siècle; here begins modern perception, in which "il cielo" disappears, and a woman spends her last breath whispering:

Le mie colpe... (avvocato)...
mi l'amor mio... non muore...

My sins (avvocato) will be swept away by oblivion, but my love will not die.

La Bohème:
The Poetic Reality

Em bien, je dois avouer que je ne me sauve pas ici l'usure avec l'usure contre un enfant) que nous avons pas été créés en mort au monde une fois pour garantir notre extension à ces Marnes vulgaires, et que le chevalier Désiré qui est si beau, et vrai et si poétique, ne saurai plus répandre que par sa jambe en le longeant qu'il avait au consèrve. A l'avenir, il peut naître une inoffensive vie sans cesse d'être intéressé; mais à jeun-ci-dans il serait ni Mauce à la pêche, et il aurait du mouvement.

Illica, Giacosa, and Puccini

The end of spring 1881 brought the first contact between two men of letters who were destined to form one of the most famous pairs of libertines a composer ever had at his disposal. Libertines pairs were common in France (Barbier and Carrel for *Faust* and *Comtesse d'Hoffmann*, Meillac with Halévy for *Carmen* and with Gélie for Massenet's *Manon*, to name just a few) but only Illica and Giacosa regularly collaborated with such partnerships in Italy. Puccini's three best libertinos—*La Bohème*, *Thaïs*, and *Madama Butterfly*—were provided by Illica and Giacosa, and after the latter's death in 1906 the composer tried to recapture the successful creative collaboration by finding a replacement.1

1. From the letter of August 1895 written to Puccini by Illica, in *La Bohème*, *Thaïs*, and *Madama Butterfly*—were provided by Illica and Giacosa, and after the latter's death in 1906 the composer tried to recapture the successful creative collaboration by finding a replacement.1

2. From the letter of August 1895 written to Puccini by Illica, in *La Bohème*, *Thaïs*, and *Madama Butterfly*—were provided by Illica and Giacosa, and after the latter's death in 1906 the composer tried to recapture the successful creative collaboration by finding a replacement.1

3. From the letter of August 1895 written to Puccini by Illica, in *La Bohème*, *Thaïs*, and *Madama Butterfly*—were provided by Illica and Giacosa, and after the latter's death in 1906 the composer tried to recapture the successful creative collaboration by finding a replacement.1
Scribe's in grand opera. Before devoting himself exclusively to librettos he wrote about ten prose works, some in conjunction with Ferdinando Fontana. He produced thirty-five librettos in total, including some of the greatest successes by Cimarosa (La Wally, 1823), Cimarosa and Cherubini (Cristina di Svezia, 1802; Germania, 1805), Cimarosa (Nel mezzanotto, 1793, Giuditta, 1794, and Speroni, 1795; Le maschere, 1801; Fabio, 1811). While making a fundamental contribution to the development of "naturalistic" taste in drama, his eclecticism allowed him to treat a wide range of subjects, from exoticism to science fiction.

But Scribe's predilections, in particular his skill in creating powerful drama, led to a taste for bel canto that found its match in that of Giuseppe Giacona (1847–1906). One of the most important Italian poets and dramatists of his time, Giacona had already displayed his elegant Decadent style in Fantasia in unisono (1875) and Tragedia di dame (1875), medieval dramas in verismo style. He enjoyed stardom in the prose comedy Travi a indovini (1880) and in the drama Le regine di Chaldea (written in 1881 in Italian for Eleonora Duse, and revived in French by Sarah Bernhardt). In these works, which were joined in 1900 by the masterpiece Come fuggi, Giacomo raised the theater of social criticism in Italy to a new level, propelling it into the orbit of contemporary European Decadent drama.²

Poetic elegance and refined control of meter were Giacomo's particular contributions to the partnership. Scribe brought formidable dramatic instinct and a rich flood of ideas. This combination was ideal for Puccini, who himself possessed these qualities in equal measure. And so an extremely successful working method was developed. Priority was given to the dramatic outline on which Puccini based his first musical ideas (and which then supplied a basis for versification), according to an unchanging sequence:

1. adaptation of the drama  
   Nicola Puccini
2. musical sketches, with directions for the poetry  
   Puccini
3. versification  
   Giacomo

3. Verne form corresponding to the French alexandrine, a pair of iambic pentameter syllables with the accent falling on the penultimate syllable of the first word. Natural after Pasquale Mazzini (1875-1875), who brought it back into vogue at the end of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century. The verse structure lends itself to concise setting, and Giacomo employed it frequently in his works. (Trans.)

4. Scribe defined a libretto set in fact, but it was never set to music. For discussions of the two librettists, see Gino Nenci, Vita e tempi di Gioacchino Forlani (Milan: Mondadori, 1940); Maria Orsini, Luigi Bricci (Firenze: Enzo Giunti, 1965); Beatrice Serbelloni, "Giacomo et liberté," in CT, 1:17-21; Anna Barucci, Giacomo Giacona (Firenze: Le nuove storie italiane, 1980); Box, A. Zanobazzi, "Giacomo e Enrico Felice D'Avenzino e la sensibilità," in J. Maltese, ed., Oper Opere Operosità (Heidelberg: Winter, 1943), 151-66; and Susanna Fratini, "Teatro e attori nei libretti di Luigi Bricci" (Roma: Università degli studi di Torino, 1985-86).

Puccini attached great importance to poetic meter and frequently asked his collaborators to adjust a line to fit his requirements, which differed from those of a traditional nineteenth-century opera composer. Dallapiccola has demonstrated brilliantly that a Verdi arioso tends to make an emotional crescendo to the third line, or the third pair of lines. Verdi—despite the fact that he participated actively in the adaptation of subjects, discussing the dramatic articulation in minute detail—developed his idea of the form of a musical passage on the basis of the poetic drafts, and normally requested a fixed meter before starting to compose. Rassegna, in which an obvious move away from "number opera" is due in part to the versification, was the result of his full sympathy with the ideas of Boito, who prepared a dramatic and musical structure capable of stimulating the composer (a debt Verdi acknowledged after finishing the first act, which he noted had been composed "without any change in the poetry").³

For Puccini, however, the musical idea determined the verse meter. This attitude was motivated both by his natural inclination to create a musical image of the plot and setting, and by his tendency to move progressively away from formal structures of the past, which appear derailed from their original function, like frames to be filled with new contents. The different role of verse in this changed context has been captured well by Daniela Goldin:

Illica himself used to say that the verse was no longer the criterion by which a libretto was to be judged, or at least, was no longer the most significant element. Even the famous "co-cocirlicito-historico" that Puccini sketched for Messa's version of "(Quando men vo..."
seems to me to demonstrate that in Puccini's music the value of the verse lies not so much in the number of syllables as in the series of accents and rhythms.⁴

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Puccini's correspondence is full of examples demonstrating how meter took a subordinate role to compositional invention. During work on Manon he supplied Illica with a macaronic model for "six averti tranchi," since he had "a rhythmic theme I can't change, because it's effective" (Gara, no. 60, 64).

This small aside for Des Grieux in the second-act finale is based on a theme; Puccini had no trouble in fitting the guaiuri tranchi into two averse per measure.

Albeit not as fanatic a defender of the rights of poetry as Rosanna, Illica did not always accept this situation without argument, and at least in the beginning attempted to assert his rights via Ricordi. But in vain. A huge number of requests similar to the following landed on his desk (Gara, no. 126, 116):

Since I'm having Musetta sing inside the inn [at the beginning of the third act], I need some lines (in response to Musetta's song) for the chorus, which is nothing having fun in there. Musetta sings the lyrics from Act II. The chorus must be in this meter: guaiuri tranchi. Four lines. For example:

? Non si dormi, Non si dormi, [We don't sleep]
? Scopre la bea?, Scopri la bea?, [we drink constantly]
? Fasciano l'amor, Fasciano l'amor, [make love]
? Ammosi, insieme.] [aooy, insieme.]

Later on, both librettists grew accustomed to the composer's whims, resigning themselves to his sudden changes of mind. While verifying Tonio, for example, Giacosa wrote to Ricordi:

I renew my solemn promise to give you a fair copy of the completed work either this evening or tomorrow morning. Except for the alterations Puccini will suggest! On account of which we will start again from scratch. (4 July 1896, Gara, no. 166, 149)

Whereas Illica was an extremely quick worker, Giacosa liked to take his time, publishing every detail. He often vented his frustration on Ricordi at being obliged "to re-do, revise, add, correct, cut, reinaume, expand here only to condense there!" (Gara, no. 113, 115), and threatened three times to withdraw from the project. To convince him that his labor was not in vain, the publisher went so far as to play him a good part of the vocal score of La Bohème in preview. On hearing the music to whose birth he had contributed, the first-time librettist's bitterness vanished: "Puccini has surpassed all my expectations, and I now understand the reason for his tyranny over verses and averse!" (Giacosa to Ricordi, 23 June 1895, Carrier, 96).

8. In the source this becomes "Toller, toller... / Toller, toller... / Ets a Nut."
This last letter, signed by Puccini on 23 March, demonstrates better than any other document the climate of artistic competition in which *La Bohème* was born. It would take many volumes to catalog all the operas and plays of this period that shared subjects, often in a context of open aesthetic and professional rivalry between their respective authors. Thus it is not in the least surprising that Puccini and Leoncavallo thought at exactly the same time of Henri Murger’s *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*. At the height of “verismo” opera, such a subject boded particularly well for success. Among other things, it would be an up-to-date topic for the Italian stage, which as usual lagged behind other countries artificially.

At the same time, however, there are good reasons for believing the main points of Leoncavallo’s account of events in *Il Sogno*, the house journal of his publisher Sonzogno, when he sought to establish his priority in the choice of subject: namely that, during a chance meeting between the two composers in Milan’s Galleria, probably on 19 or 20 March, Leoncavallo described the project to Puccini, who, finding such an opportunity to state his own, similar intentions. It is perfectly plausible that Puccini, an envious reader, had already considered Murger’s work; but he had certainly not yet made the decision, as Leoncavallo had, to set it to music. Once again, as had happened with Mosenini’s *Manon*, and as we shall see occur later, the situation provided a strong competitive impulse in Puccini.

A battle between the composers and their supporters suddenly flared. Thanks to the skill of Eduardo Sonzogno, his firm had become highly competitive, publishing the vocal scores and promoting productions of a large number of French operas as well as those of most of the verismo composers. A real war was thus launched between the publishers, one that lasted until *Butterfly*, the last Puccini opera to have its premiere in an Italian theater during the composer’s lifetime. Neither Puccini nor Ricordi refrained from underhanded methods. While occupied with coordinating denials in the newspapers, Ricordi already made inquiries about Murger’s author’s rights and how they might be obtained exclusively in order to impede Leoncavallo. Puccini himself informs us of this ploy in a letter to Illica, from which source we also learn that the librettist had already prepared a reply—most likely the communiqué that appeared in the *Gazzetta*—which Puccini merely signed. Although undated, the letter was probably written on 22 March.

Carissimo,

Giulio thinks it better not to respond. I would have struck back. But he thinks that when we have a reply from Paris, and if it is favorable,

9. For more detailed discussion of the battles between opposing factions, see the chapter on *Madama Butterfly*.

10. This letter, along with many other previously unpublished documents, can be found in Sigfrido Motta, "Il romanzo musicale di Henri Murger nelle opere di Puccini e Leoncavallo," *Nouvelles Annales Italiennes* 24, nos. 3–4 (1994): 451–66. This study contains further information on the genesis of the two works, their relationship with the sources, and a discussion of the music of Leoncavallo’s opera. For the exact date of the preceding extracts from the Milan newspapers, see Angelo Fois, "La guerra degli editori: Le Riveni, un caso significativo di concorrenza," in *La Bohème* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1990), 23–47 (Teatro Comunale di Bologna program book, 1903–1904).

11. The date suggested by the editor, February 1895, is a printing error that should be corrected to March 1894. That month, Sonzogno managed two theaters for the Lenten season in Venice: La Fenice and San Benedetto. Leoncavallo was probably there to supervise the effective lines in Leoncavallo’s letter, notwithstanding their inanity, demonstrating that private relations between him and Puccini had remained cordial.

we will respond and make a big splash. Tell me what you think right away.

If you go for the immediate strike, come to me tomorrow morning as soon as you receive this letter and we will go together to Ricordi and the Carriera—for publication.

I believe that to stay silent is to appear defeated—at least, they and the public will think so. Your response is very noble; and after the reply from Paris it might seem to be based on bad will and resentment.

It is probable that by this time Illica had finished a full dramatic sketch of the opera, since Giacosa, who had immediately been invited to collaborate on the project, was able to compliment him on it, also on 22 March.

Carissimo Illica,

I have read it and admire you. You know how to extract dramatic action from a novel that always seemed to me exquisite but little suited to the stage. The early acts are marvelously formed. I don’t think the last act is quite right yet; it seems too similar to many others. But you will manage it. The idea of working with you, nimble and generous spirit, pleases me immensely. (G. no. 83, 82–83)

Leoncavallo’s behavior was undoubtedly more sincere; and he did not hold a grudge for long. A few days after the controversy broke out, Puccini informed Illica that,

The telegram about Abbado arrived from Paris. But unfortunately the novel is free and available, since Murger died without heirs. The play is still under the copyright of the author. Have you read the novel? Send for the French version. I urge you: the curtain has been thrown down and the challenge taken up. Leoncavallo writes to me from Venice that he will have to battle against two colossi now and Giacosa, and that now he is going to study the background of the "Late Quartet". (G. no. 83, 83)

11. The date suggested by the editor, February 1895, is a printing error that should be corrected to March 1894. That month, Sonzogno managed two theaters for the Lenten season in Venice: La Fenice and San Benedetto. Leoncavallo was probably there to supervise.
chapter four

Thus there was no way of avoiding the competition; but Leoncavallo completed his work only after much delay, more than a year behind his rival.

Although his Bohème also contains some powerful moments, it exists today only as an example of contemporary taste, while Puccini's has dominated the internationalrepertoire ever since its debut. Just as Puccini wrote and tactically predicted, the public, when called upon to judge, brought the controversy to a permanent close by deciding in his favor.

For La Bohème, Puccini returned for the third time running to a French literary source. Henri Murger's Scènes de la Bohème first came out as a serial story, published in installments in the Parisian magazine Le Caractère Satirique between March 1855 and April 1856. It was successful enough to prompt the author, together with the dramatist Théodore Barrière, to link some of the brief episodes in a five-act play, La Vie de Bohème. The play was first performed on 12 November 1859 at the Théâtre des Variétés, in the presence of Louis Napoleon and all the most celebrated Parisian literati, from Armand Rouart to Théophile Gautier. For Murger, barely twenty-seven, the reception rescued him from poverty—that same tedious companion of the heroes in his little stories—and his success was increased by a contract he signed with the distinguished publisher Lévy to shape his work in the form of a novel. Published in 1851 as Scènes de la Bohème, it was this source, not subject to copyright, that Puccini and his librettist declared as their basis.

The particular difficulty of the work lay in extracting a concise, coherent operatic plot faithful to the spirit of the lightly traced impressions outlaid in the novel, which had no fewer than twenty-three episodes. Murger's Scènes de la Bohème has five male principals—Illa, also a Limonaria with the aspiring bohemian Carolus Barœnumche—and two female, not counting Schinner's fiancée (Phœbo), and Colline's and Rodolphe's many lovers (worrying girl Louise, actress Sabline, milliner Laure, and mistresses Séraphine and Juliet). III's most radical departure was in

12. Leoncavallo's Le Bohème was staged with some success at La Piccola, Venice, on 6 March 1857. Informed of the success of the work, Puccini promptly gave voice to his joy in a letter to his friend: "I love the romance / Il Cavaliere in amor / a Bohème in (to translate: / there is no love in the tragedy) / "The Lévy was thwarted / there is only one Bohème / all the rest is a lusette." 23 March, 1857; Marchesi, no. 314, 273.

13. The first edition of the novel by Murger (Scènes de la Bohème / Paris: Michel Lévy, 1851) comprised 800 (the Scène de la vie de Bohème with its third edition, 1857), and an Italian translation by Felix Camac was published in 1852 by Steiner and reprised in 1859 (an earlier, defective Italian edition had appeared in 1852 under the title Scena della vita d'artista). Leoncavallo, after having lived for some time in Paris and marrying Berthe Raslaud (to whom his dedication is dedicated), dedicated his Le Bohème, which proved so contrived in the grace of his publisher. He therefore must have been more familiar with the subject. Moreover, his knowledge of the language allowed him to work from the original text.


15. "Il Romiti," TEATRO REGIO / TORINO / Camerata / Guarnerius / 1890-6 / (Milan: Ricordi, nd [1890]). 51. The reading is different in the first version of the same "Gavone," as in the "Il Romiti," (II, after 1900), it was a decisive version because it made the subject of the "Gavone" (my youth) instead of Musetta.

16. Taddei Goldoni ("Le dopegenti / a l'ingegno / racconta e linguaggio," 156) is right in maintaining that Il Romiti's and Guarnerius's works are not based primarily on the novel, her note in suggesting that the similarities between the conclusion of the libretto and the opera are simple coincidences. La Vie de Bohème, (1885) in five acts interpolated with song, was written on Le Théâtre contemporain (Paris: Lévy, 1853), 1-118.
Amer's, had helped Murger attain success in *La Vie de Bohème* by eliminating all rough edges of the work, creating a dramatic structure on the model of the novel *La Dame aux camélias*, which had come out in 1848 and was adapted in a matter of months into a "piece en cinq acts moitié de chansons." Alexandre Dumas fils's episodes—from which Pierre drew Verdi's *La traviata*—had been considered immoral, and were blocked by the censors; although not published until 1852, they circulated in the meantime throughout Parisian literary society. Barrière's model is thus so evident as to be uncontrollable. Mimi, a kind-hearted countess consumed by illness, sacrifices her love for Rodolfo and goes to live with a viscount in order to allow her lover to marry Césarine de Ronveuze, a young and respectable widow. It is a union greatly advantageous to Rodolfo's uncle, the businessman Durandil, the "violo milionario" mentioned by Rodolfo in the opera. Like Germont père, he is the cause of the separation of his nephew and the young povera. Everything is resolved in the last act, but only in the final measures does Durandil try to remedy the harm he has done Mimi, giving the marriage his blessing just as the girl dies.

Barrière and Murger could copy Dumas, living as they were in an environment where topical plots were widely explored, but Puccini neither was able nor wanted to be in competition with *La traviata*. In the operatic world obvious models had to be avoided, as did the kind of theatrical success often achieved by adhering to such stereotypical dramatic formulas (one thinks of the earlier example, Alfred de Musset and his Mimi Pinson). What is more, in adaptation from the complex world of the novel, a feature of the original was necessarily lost—the precise references in its short character portraits to well-known personalities of contemporary Parisian art and culture, including Charles Baudelaire and the painter Chassériau. This loss meant that Puccini's opera was less bound to historical fact, and because more a type of symbolic expression. His university would eventually fascinate audiences the world over, allowing them to identify fully with Puccini's characters: Murger would never have been able to achieve a similar impact. In the novel, the characters—like their creator—eventually attain a better standard of living, which leads them to voice bitter observations on their immediate past, coldly and baldly identifying *La Bohème* with their recent youth.

The merit of deiving the operatic plot from the *Scènes de la Bohème* lies with Ilicia, who was immediately charged by Ricordi with adapting the novel for the stage. He worked skillfully and to pressing deadlines. Then the two librettists began a second collaboration. The original plan envisioned a structure different from that of the definitive version. The first act was divided into two scenes, entitled "in sufflet:" [In the still] and "Al quartile interno" [In the Latin Quarter] respectively, the second act, "La barriere d'Enfer" [The tollgate at the boulevard d'Enfer], then became what is now the third act; the fourth act, again "in suffлет, concluded the opera as we now know it. Between these last two, an episode entitled "Il castello della casa via di* La Brayère* 8*" [The courtyard of no. 8, La Brayère Street] constituted Act III. Here, in order to justify the final farewell scene between Mimi and Rodolfo, the librettists developed an idea from chapter 6 of the novel—"Macinauette Musette"—depicting a great party hosted by Musette (enticed by her lover) in the courtyard of her house. In this scene the viscount Paul—whose only remaining trace in the opera is Rodolfo's phrase in Act III, "Un monello di / Vi cincontino / tu fa l'occhio di triplo" ("A foppish viscount makes eyes at her") and Musetta's in the following, "Io ti dirò che Mami, fuggita / dal Viscontino era in fin di vita" ("I heard it said that Mimi, having fled from the viscount, was dying")—acrosses Rodolfo's furious jealousy by attracting the attention of the fickle Mimi. But this kind of scene, one actually set by Leoncavallo, offended Puccini's implacable sense of form, and he eliminated it despite his librettist's advocacy. In his opinion, a party at this point would have duplicated the outline of the scene in the Latin Quarter, creating a repetition intolerable in terms of the operatic structure. Against the librettists' wishes, the two first scenes were separated, creating a symmetrical balance between the first light-hearted pair of episodes and the two anguished final scenes.

The creation of the opera was the work of four pairs of hands, with Giacomo Ricordi often intervening with useful advice. He suggested, for example, that in Act III Musetta's frequent offstage cries be heard from the tables in front of Café Momus; moreover, he insisted that Ilicia, who had a passion for accumulating theatrical detritus, eliminate the excess of detail and realistic directions that he had crammed into the original, thus allowing the opera to assume its mood-pruned conciseness. Ilicia, in his turn, also played a vital role in dramatic decision-making. Given the difficulties of the Latin Quarter act, he went so far as to prepare a diagram

17. *La Bohème* was originally entitled "20 April 1896—Il castello della casa via di La Brayère.* As well as adopting different vocal registers for his characters, Leoncavallo chose a different second scene from Puccini's, at the time of the other acts shown in, 3, 12 December 1897, evening—Christmas Eve obligation. — The first scene of the Cafe Momus. ID, "Oprel 1896—La Bohème's guerrin." IV, December 1897, evening—Christmas Eve obligation. — Rodolfo's guerrin." The published act was published by Mario Morana, "La Bohème Opera in quattro atti (cinque episode)." I acto, offerta di vi volsi La Brayère S. ' di Ilicia and Giraudon," in 1251, no. v, vols. December 1997, 57, 606 this is now more conveniently available in Puccini *La Bohème. *Ed, Arthur Grothus and Roger Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 147–81. The idea of this version Paolo who wrote Ilicia comes from Murger's novel chapter, "Una recuperazione della Bohème," which he plays footnote with the girl under the table.

the stage, which he sent to Ricordi together with the redrafted libretto requested by Puccini "in order to separate the bohemians" (5 February 1884; Gar, ii, 98, 96). The staging problems were not easily solved, since the significant events experienced by the individual characters had to be thrown into relief against the background of the dramatic web.

It was all meant to be believable, but Illica became aware of a final impossibility in the work once it was finished. In Act II, the friends happily sit down at tables outside the Café, cheerfully bantering despite the chill of Christmas Eve. He remedied this lapse in realism by adding the following stage direction to the libretto:

(Marcella, Schunard and Colline enter the Café Minuet; but come out quite quickly; irritated by the great wind swirling outside. They carry out a table and a waiter follow them, not in the least incredulous at their wanting to dine outside . . . .)

This anomaly has never bothered audiences unfamiliar with the libretto, but it is interesting to note the reason for Illica's scruples:

Given the current climate of bad faith among our enemies and critics, our satisfaction is a little too naive, believe me! And to leave the bohemians sitting at a table for an entire act, dining like this without even a slight wind in the libretto to justify it, is—believe me again—too good a weapon for such gentlemen not to take it up. (To Giusto Ricordi, 7 December 1885; Gar, ii, 124, 134)

But the librettist was decisive in his insistence on modifying Puccini's first idea for beginning the final scene:

Mimi in bed, Rodolfo at the little table writing, and a stump of candle to light up the stage. That is, with no separation (after the third act) between Rodolfo and Mimi! Like this it is, truly, not only no longer La Bohème, but not Muter's Mimi either! (February 1884; Gar, ii, 101, 99–100)

Illica's unavoidable motivation is clarified in the continuation of this letter, also addressed to Ricordi:

Now I would say that it is already a mistake not to have Rodolfo and Mimi's separation take place in view of the audience (since the Rue La Bruyère act had been suppressed), so just imagine if it were not to happen at all! Indeed, the very essence of Muter's is precisely that

---

Great freedom in love (Illica's supreme characteristic) with which all the characters behave. Think how much greater, how much more moving, would be a Mimi who—although she can by this time live with a lover (the vicissient Paolo) who keeps her in silks and velvets—when she feels that tuberculosis is killing her to go to die in the desolate, cold attic, just to die in Rodolfo's arms. It seems impossible that Puccini would not see the greatness of this.

Puccini, a born dramatist, had no difficulty in understanding Illica's reason; and accepted the suggestion. Meanwhile, in April 1884 he was assisted by d'Oro and once again adapted a opera from Verdi's short story La baba, perhaps the idea of writing with the recent success of Mascagni (whose Cavalleria rusticana is based on Verdi and set in Sicily) and Leoncavallo (whose Pagliacci is set in Calabria). He went so far as to visit Sicily in order to talk to Verdi and study the setting. His infatuation lasted until the following July, when he became convinced that "the 'disorganization' of the libretto, which is pushed to the ultimate degree, and the unpleasant characters, without any single luminous, sympathetic figure," 26 did not suit his capabilities or ideas. To understand his lack of involvement in the ideals of realism see only need know that the lyric melody introduc-

ing Rodolfo ("Nel caldo lusso") derives from the Largo sketches, where it ex-
toiled Sicily's enchanting skies and the marvels of Mount Etna.

Finally, at the beginning of 1885, after numerous drafts and much rewriting, Puccini declared himself satisfied with the libretto's dramatic framework. Giacosa saw to the final poetic revisions while Puccini started to orchestrate those parts of the opera that were already completed. A large number of these final alterations were finished in October 1885. In order to emphasize further the contrast between the bohemians' emilotheria and the imminent tragedy in the last act, Puccini had long been keen on including a "brando," in the form of an ensemble for the friends, immediately before the arrival of Musetta and Mimi. But he eventually realized that the idea was superfluous, since, as he wrote to Ricordi, the scene was created solely for the sake of a conclusion . . . does not help the action, since it doesn't take it one step further. I'm putting the greatest importance into

26. Puccini to Ricordi, 17 July 1884; Gar, ii, 108. The notice of seeing La baba was based back to the preceding year (see Puccini's note of 8 April 1884 to Verga, published in Margherita Alimont, "L'averio di Giacosa Puccini," OP 5 (1969), 23: "Now I'm working on La baba—but I hope that it will go quickly—later, or simultaneously, I want to have a scene at the cafe—which has been thinking about for some time already."); On this topic, see MYRNA SNOW, "Verga, Puccini, and La Bohème," Italian Studies 29 (1969) 53–76, and Luciano Giorsetti, "Puccini, Verga e La Bohème: Convenzioni di una collaborazione musicale," in Nuova ante-
the barking lurch scene and the dance where Musetta appears amid the greatest uproar, and the aim is achieved. I know well enough from experience that making beautiful academic music in the final act is requisite.

(October 1895) Gara, 139, 216-17

Puccini’s music reveals some of this complex, tortuous dramatic genius. His masterpiece flows smoothly, passing in a flash like the youth of his characters. A group of friends living in close symbiosis. For this, the composer did not want star singers for the world premiere at Turin’s Teatro Regio, 1 February 1896; but rather a cast that would work well together on stage, from Cesare Peyroni (Mimi) to Camilla Pacini (Musetta), Emanuele Gnocchi (Rodolfo), Tristano Vidal (Marsentiche), Michele Mazzara (Colline), and Antonio Pini-Corsi (Schunard). With the twenty-six-year-old Toscanini as conductor, Puccini had an unexpected guarantee that the whole production would be coordinated in the best possible way, as well as the opportunity to verify that some alterations were needed in the score. Most important among these were a brief scene added to Act II (no. 15 in the current score), and an adjustment to the subsequent concertante finale, revisions carried out during performances in Italy and abroad. Now that the opera is recognized as one of the most popular of all time, it is difficult to understand the resistance of the critics at the Turin premiere. Among them, Carlo Beseo (Gazzetta Ferramatese) went so far as to predict that “La Bohème . . . will not make a big mark on the history of opera.”

A CABIN AT TORRE DEL LAGO

To find “realistic” background ideas for his new opera, Puccini, unlike Leoncavallo, did not need to go to Paris, a city with which he had a kind of love-hate relationship. The word “Bohème,” notwithstanding its French origins, is technically defined in Italian dictionaries as “the hand-to-mouth existence of individuals who are ill-fated to society, and especially of poor, non-conformist artists.” Puccini had experienced this non-conformist poverty personally during his student years at the Milan Conservatory (1880-83), at the height of the Scapigliatura movement, and in the years immediately following.22 He evoked this situation in a letter to his "La Bohème: The Poetic Reality"

milionario," Niccolò Cervi, with an indirect plea for an increase in his small private allowance:

My studies are going well and I am working. The cold up here is extraordinary, worse than in previous years; therefore beg my favor that I hope you will find just. I have to study, and as you know I study in the evenings and far into the night, and having a cold room, I need a bit of fire. I don’t have money because, as you know, what you give me is purely for necessities, and thus I need some help to buy myself one of those cheap charcoal stoves that gets very hot.

The cost of the stove is not much, but what worries me is that coal is expensive, and over the month would amount to quite a sum. I have written to my mother about this, and so perhaps something can be arranged between the two of you, because time is passing and it is getting colder. In past years I have almost done without heating: the first year without any at all, because the winter was very mild; and in the second year I had a fireplace which I sometimes used, but also that year it wasn’t as cold as it is now at the beginning of winter. (December 1888) Marchetti, no. 8, 35)

In 1891 Puccini had sufficient means to rent a cabin on the banks of Lake Massaciuccoli near Torre del Lago. This place was to become his private refuge from the worldly obligations imposed on him by success, somewhere he could withdraw to write music during the hours he preferred, from ten at night to four in the morning and beyond, and where he could indulge his passions, from hunting to storms on the beach and marshland.

As soon as he arrived there he plunged into a social milieu that was to have a significant influence on the conception of La Bohème. On the lakeside, at the foot of the Apuan Alps, lived a group of painters of the Massaciuccoli school. Their artistic credo was, in the words of Ferruccio Pagani, that art must reflect “the infinite beauty of nature.” Among these painters, Pagani was closest to Puccini, and he wrote one of the first biographies of the composer to appear after his death.21 To those familiar with this area

21. Pagani gives one of the most valuable testimonies regarding Puccini’s life in these years, which he acquired in his new friend, Guido Marconi. The book, entitled Gasone Puccini (Torino, was first published under both authors names in 1906 by Valchelli in Florence. In the first reptit (1924), Pagani’s name disappeared. Such an unjust omission created confusion among critics, since the first part of the work, attributed to the painter, narrates biographical facts up to 1903 in the first person. This section is of more interest than the second part, written entirely by Marconi, which aspires to criticism rather than biography, but is often erratic and disorganized. The book releases an episode concerning the controversy between Puccini and Leoncavallo regarding priority over the subject of La Bohème (pp. 50-51). The brief passage confirms Leoncavallo’s precedence, but his transmission is compromised somewhat.

22. Claudine Saccari’s observations about the provenance of the opera’s opening theme (see p. 4, 210) make Pacini’s 1891 diplomas text piece expressively sufficient on “a falling back on his own expression, the only expression possible for him of a similar emotional climate” (Puccini, 170), an assumption.

"La Bohème: The Poetic Reality", 1893

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only as it is today, talk of its natural beauty may seem obscure. At that time, however, the countryside around Massaiaccoli was almost pristine. Even Puccini’s villa, built at the end of the century, did not exist; on the waterfront there were only wooden cabins with thatched roofs in which fishermen lived. It is thus understandable that not only the early Masaccio- 

Pagni and Puccini quickly became friends, and, despite the composer’s natural reserve, he began to join the painter in visiting Giovanni Graziano’s “sewed cabin, with thatched roof.” He used this abode in many ways; in the evenings it changed from shoemaker’s workshop to tavern for his friends, patronised mainly by the little group of artists. After hunting and fishing with them, Puccini would inflict punishment on the painters in the form of the day’s most popular card games, and in settlement of their debts he would receive pictures and sketches. In the early days, with his many professional obligations, Puccini was often far from Torre, but he remained in contact with Pagni, writing him letters in which nostalgia hides behind a screen of colorful Tuscan phrases:

The season’s greetings to you, to all you Torre people—to Vernanzio, Lippore, Diego, Bocci, Sinchi, to the coos, to the large ladies, good Lord, don’t let me think about it. To Signor Ugozzi and Sig.ra Isa, if they are also still there. We’re all very well indeed. I hope to visit in March. Cecchi ai tuoi non passano alla montagna.14 (22 December 1871; Marchetti, no. 153, 177)

It would not be far-fetched to suggest that this environment exerted a strong influence on Puccini’s choice of La Bohème as a subject, at least encouraged his enthusiasm for it. The correspondences between a Tuscan reality and the finished artistic product are striking, beginning with the circumstances of the operatic character: none of the Masaccio’s at Torre del Lago was really successful or prosperous, but all were ready for love at any time, and to transform it into romantic postures. For Puccini, the well-to-do artist still susceptible to memories of his immediate past, it was like

by a number of circumstances. Another first-hand biographical source is Dandin Coriandri’s smaller volume, La Fête de Torre del Lago, published by Vallardi (1871) on the second anniversary of Puccini’s death, and reprinted for 1910 Puccini celebration under the title La Bohème est morte des lois. On this occasion the opera was conducted by Mascagni. Many reconstructions of the artistic milieu of Torre del Lago are based on these sources, as is the present one.


having a love model for his drama, a slice of life ready to be wrapped in music.

When poor Graziano had to emigrate to South America in 1854 (like many Italians during this unhappy period—a few years later Pagni was forced to do the same), it was Puccini who proposed purchasing his cabin- 

tavern to form a private club, christening the “Club La Bohème” in an act of homage to the novel and to the opera then in gestation. Pagni himself made an important observation: “That opera was also a little bit about us. Cecchi was ‘Marcello,’ I was ‘Colline,’ Giacomo—needless to say—‘Roodolo,’ and the others ‘the merry company.’”

The “Cecchi” whom Pagni mentions here was the painter Francesco Fanelli, who lived at Torre del Lago with a young widow. They argued continually, exchanging insults such as “crisp” (“crispaut”), “viper” (“viper”), “ambushino” (“boussiasseur”)—all of which we find at the end of Act III of the opera. Certainly the opera’s success influenced Pagni’s memories; but Fanelli’s love affair would, in all probability, have stimulated Puccini’s imagination when shaping some of Musetta’s and Marcello’s characteristic traits. Similarly, even the bohemians’ little staged reunions against bourgeois society—represented by the landlord Benoit and by Musetta’s lover Alcindoro—have their origin in the horseplay and jokes of the club members, among whom was the count Eugenio Ortolani, a pedant as ostentatious as the philosopher Colline, who is prone to Latinizing even at the Café Momus.

As a mark of respect for Murgor’s work, Ilicas and Giacosa called the opera’s four parts “quarti” (“pictures”) rather than acts. The obvious reference to pictorial art in Murgor’s work lives on in this formal denomination, which also emphasizes Puccini’s real-life relationship with the painter. In imaginatively reproducing details from the novel, Puccini made a poetic link with reality, a link constituting one of the characteristics that brings his art closer to the public of any era, and one that allows us to sense the immediate importance of his contact with the Torre bohemians. Take the example of the musician Schumado, who at the beginning of the novel is composing a piano with an out-of-tune D and exclamates, “II est faux comme je l’ai ecrit!” (“It is as false as I have written!”). In the second act of the opera, Schumado utters an analogous phrase—“Falso questo Re!” (“This D is false!”)—while trying to be a horn he wants to buy. Here Puccini arranges the orchestral parts to produce a dissonance of a minor seventh (also arranged as a major second) between E and D, to give a touch of realism to the sound picture (II, from 3 after 15).

Pagni recalls for us the moment La Bohème was finished:

25. Morici and Pagni, Giacomo Puccini, 61. This excerpt contains a good deal of truth, which to some extent transcends the easy badinage and inevitable hyperbole.

26. Murgor, Sera da la vie de Bohème, 16.
That night, while we were playing cards, 27 Giacomo was at the final measures. "Silence, boys," he said suddenly. "I've finished." We left the cards, drawing around him. "Now, I'll let you hear, start again at—oh! This finale is good." He began at Mimi's final song, "Some ensoleil." As Puccini played and sang this music made up of pauses, suspensions, of light strokes, sighs, and breathlessness, gradually a subtle melancholy and profound dramatic intensity captured us, and we saw the scene, felt that human torment completely, since here, truly, expression returned to its origin, to its eternal essence: Pain. When the piercing chords of Mimi's death struck, a shiver ran through us and we knew of all we could hold back tears. That delicate girl, our Mimi, was lying cold on the hard little bed, and we would not hear her good and tender voice. The vision then appeared to us: "Rodolfo," "Marcello," "Schunard," "Colline" were images of us, or we their reincarnations. "Mimi" was our love of some time or some dream, and all this agony our very own agony.

This way of hearing, albeit embellished with the inevitable dose of rhetoric, testifies to a real connection between the imaginary and the real, and claims for the group of painters a certain amount of paternity of the opera. Puccini had already experienced its success in his Bohemian existence in the Milan years, and was now rekindling it once more, with the detached gaze of the artist, in the company of his painter friends. After a masquerade party to celebrate the end of his work, Puccini left for Turin in December 1895 to prepare the mise-en-scène for the premiere. Fanelli and Pagni desperately wanted to attend rehearsals or a performance, but the composer, although courteous, would not allow it.

As for your coming to Turin. There are problems! How could it be done? Among other things, I would certainly have to neglect you, since I am so busy. Come later, to Naples or better still Rome. I will be awaiting you there, and able to be with you. (January 1896; Garra, no. 154, 155)

After leaving Italy, Le Bohème in an indelible artistic image, Puccini was drawing away from it in order to turn his attention to the operas Tosca, and the wicked environment of papal Rome at the start of the nineteenth century.

The "Club Le Bohème" was over.

Toward the Achievement of a New Style

The poetry and dramatic peculiarities of La Bohème's libretto demand that the music adhere with greater naturalness to a plot that, except for the passionate effusions of Rodolfo and Mimi, and their deathbed duet, is mostly devoid of static episodes. Finding a new relationship between rapid dramatic articulation and traditional lyric expansiveness was a problem faced by all Puccini's contemporaries, from Mascagni to Leoncavallo and Giordano. In Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, rigid boundaries no longer existed between comedy, farce, and tragedy; successful blends could already be found in some of Verdi's operas, from Un ballo in maschera (with the glittering Riccardo-Oscar elements) to La forza del destino, that vast fresco animated by caricatures such as Preziosilla, the grotesque Fra Melitone and the mendicant Trabuco.

Verdi's La traviata, unique in opera until that time, had revealed to Puccini how topical, everyday elements could be translated without damage to the basic tenets of opera. But it was from Falstaff that Puccini drew the idea that enabled him to realize his poetic vision of reality in Le Bohème. The music of Verdi's last masterpiece traces the action in minute detail, avoiding any suggestion of naturalism, but lending a human dimension even to a magical moment like the fairy scene.

The response to Verdi's overwhelming legacy among composers of the so-called "Giulio Scarda" was born of a misunderstanding. Believing that they were distancing themselves from old opera, they in fact reinscribed its essence on various levels—individual musical numbers now became the occasion for melodic writing of great originality. Their ideals merely resulted in bombast, since there was no melodic freshness, only the desire to be realistic, and to plumb the depths of excessive sentiment. At the same time, the melody in the "nunnery" became completely detached from the supportive tissue of the opera, while, whatever the composer's ability, the recitative—always identifiable as such—was modeled ever more closely on the rhythms of speech. Falstaff, on the other hand, presents fast, uninterrupted action, and the words suggest musical invention that often breaks the bonds of verse structure (although retaining some attention to rhyme) in order to follow the rapidly evolving drama. One passes from dialogue to monologue, to ensembles that contrast men and women, to brief love duets, all rising past at lightning speed, or rather at the speed of real events, never falling back into the safe haven of set pieces. 28

Verdi's final masterpiece, which is in essence no more than a rapid succession of recitatives and arias, probably confirmed to Puccini the best way of evading the restrictions of opera divided into arias, duets, and concerted, while remaining within the Italian tradition and creating a unified and coherent organism. In Le Bohème he was dealing with a topical, everyday plot in which every gesture reflected the commonplace of life. At the
same time, and through the juxtaposition of situations, he had to forge a higher narrative level, communicating through metaphor the idea of a world in which time flies by, and in which youth itself is the protagonist. (A perspective clearly indicated in Murger's novel, if resolved there with some degree of cynicism). In *La Bohème* ironic disenchantment is always present, even in the most poetic moments. The passionate phrase "O dolce viso di mezzo circondato da luna" ("O sweet face, surrounded by the gentle light of the rising moon") precedes an explicit invitation to love ("Sarebbe così dolce restar qui"). "It would be so nice to stay here"). But the two moments are fused in a single inspiration. Similarly, when in Act II Rodolfo flambouyantly introduces Mimi to the company, he is not met with banter in Latin. The sentimental aspect emerges, without any disruption to the continuity, from a mechanism based on concrete detail, and returned to it transformed into symbol.

The comic element and its consistency with the sentimental in the first two acts of *La Bohème* has never been sufficiently stressed. Puccini's opera again resembles Falstaff in this juxtaposition, as well as in certain detailed examples of word painting: the little "magic flute music" (I, [1]) and the light sprinkle of water with which Rodolfo bathes Mimì's face (pizzicato violins with flutes and a major second apart, five before [26]) produce an almost physical sensation, similar to the diminishing of Falstaff's belly (cellos and piccolo at four octaves' distance) and "'Tis a mock move" evoked in the subsequent "O scoto" monologue (flutes, piccolo, cello). Even the little dotted theme at the very beginning of *La Bohème*, which in the course of the opera often returns to recall how love is just one among the many moments in life, is treated similarly to the initial first three bars of Falstaff, the distinctive group of four staccato sixteenth notes that recur continually through the first part of the opening act.

While division into set pieces is still perceptible in *Manon Lescaut*, despite the coordination of entire sections of the score by means of hidden symphonic devices, this next opera Puccini relied on a different dramatic style, one based on a musical continuum modeled on the subject's specific dramatic requirements. It was a possibility that Falstaff had unveiled.

**A Conversation in Music**

The entire opening act of *La Bohème* illustrates the new path on which Puccini had set out. To achieve an image of a group of penniless artists that was at once individual and collective, Puccini coordinated various parameters with great flexibility—broad lyrical melodies, subtle motivic cells, synchrony with a semantic function, and bright and varied orchestral colors. The framework of the action, however, is supported by themes that animate the various episodes in which the characters reveal their personalities. In

*Manon Lescaut*, as we have seen, Puccini used a narrative technique that skillfully fused the Italian tradition of reminiscence motives with lemmatistic technique (the latter particularly important in *Manon*). Likewise, the beginning of *La Bohème* shows that Puccini was keeping a certain distance from Wagner, depicting his own particular world. He often avoided giving a melody an unequivocal notation, in order to obtain further dramatic effects through multiple references, frequently using interpolative structures or motival schemes to bring together seemingly unrelated motives. Consider, for example, the relationship between the following melodic profiles:

**Example 4.1**

*a. La Bohème, I, 7 after [1] (P)*

![Music notation](image)

*b. La Bohème, I, 11 (t)*

![Music notation](image)

The first, passionate melody begins Rodolfo's rhetorical declaration of love (Ex. 4.10), and when it reappears at the beginning of the duet with Mimì (I, [1]), it establishes their emotional contact with even greater immediacy. But compare it with the motive that dominated the scene in which the friends receive the landlord (Ex. 4.11), which happened earlier in the act. Even though the phrase structure differs, the similarity is unmistakable, and it is unlikely that Puccini was unaware of this, or of other analogous cases (the melody of Rodolfo's and Marcello's duet at the start of Act IV also resembles Ex. 4.10). Ambivalence on the semantic level, however, does not mean a lack of justification in terms of dramatic logic; the stile connection between one theme and another reinforces the impression that a common aura surrounds the characters and their actions, all of them part of a single *Bohème*. We might also consider Examples 4.30 and 4.30, which relate to Colline and Schaunard; both phrases are in B (like 4.19), and show further similarities (4.30: z and 4.32: x’ return on many other occasions).

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Let us now turn to the structure of the first part of this act, briefly sketched in the following outline: \[\text{Act 1 (mm. 1-767, up to 110)}\]

- Sec. 1, 1-333
- Sec. 2, 334-520
- Sec. 3, 521-677
- Sec. 4, 678-762

**Example 2.1**

a. *La Bohème*, I, beginning (4)

In this opening section, every character except Marcello is identified by a theme; there is even a little motive for Marcello (4). Bar the initial motive (A, Ex. 2.2a), which begins in the bassoons, cellos, and basses and is then tossed between all sections of the orchestra, climbing rapidly through five octaves in ten measures, is linked to the Bohemian lifestyle, as the following overview of the opera shows:

- *La Bohème*, II, 12 after (1)

Its conciseness renders it particularly suitable for use in the most varied circumstances, since it allows for variation and development while maintaining its recognizability. It is thus an efficient vehicle for generating meanings. The inversion (7) is derived from the cell (c), as if one part of the orchestra asks a question and the other responds, like two friends in conversation. Puccini infected the motive into recitative passages (the tremble down the stairs at I, 110), but used it primarily to relate distant moments.

No appearance of the motive ever lacks significance: the pink bonnet is a precious token, we will see, but did not cost much (Ex. 2.2b); Marcello’s and Mimi’s meeting outside the Cabaret (III, 6 before 110) and Rodolfo’s awakening (III, 2 after 113) are short fragments of that hand-to-mouth existence, regrett for the past is encoded in Mimi’s desire as she separates from Rodolfo (Ex. 2.2c), and also in Marcello’s and Rodolfo’s feelings at the beginning of the final act, where the motive returns several times during the friends’ will antics preceding Mimi’s return to the act.

Rodolfo’s exuberant melody “Nei cieli baci” (Ex. 2.3a) characterizes well both his passionate vitality and his tenderness. It is heard in the flutes (I, 1 after 111) when he sacrifices the pages of his pompous drama to revive
the fire in the stove. Finally, two horn themes accompany the entrances of Colline (C, Ex. 4.3b) and Schaunard (E, Ex. 4.3c):

Example 4.3

a. La Bohème, I, 18 before [300] (E)

b. La Bohème, I, 13 (C)

The first part of the act ends with the friends' exit to the Latin Quarter; the structure shown in the diagram is clearly partitioned into four sections determined by a musical logic faithful to dramatic events, but almost completely free from traditional structures. All the themes except Rodolfo's melody (D) originate in the orchestra. In musical terms, the free dialectic between the "cieli lenti" ("gray skies") (D) evoked by the poet and the Bohême motive (A) already brings about a fluctuating exchange between the ideal and the real, and the alternation of subsections in the opening segment is governed by a rigorous formal logic that serves the narrative. The orchestral colors and harmonic palette make decisive contributions to this scheme; for example, when the manuscript is set a little in Act I, the flute comments on the action with the poet's melody while the harp creates an illusion of the flickering flames. After this passage in C major, themes C and A take us to G-flat. Immediately afterwards, two fortissimo measures give us the sensation of the second part of the manuscript hitting the flames (D): bright, arresting chords (trills with added sixth: G-flat and C-flat major, trumpets and woodwinds, strings and horns) that disperse into the thin glow of a shifting and variegated ostinato accompaniment. Themes and melodies almost completely give way to timbre and harmony—light, staccato figures in the upper winds and harp, absent violin trills without bass support, and touches of triangle and cymbal. This delicate fabric, broken only briefly by the intrusion of the Bohême motive, forms a backdrop for

the aristo and recitative comments of the three friends, who chat as anyone would in front of a stove. The illusion of real conversation before the crackling flames could not be stronger.

The impression of a continuum, and the same kinds of techniques, also characterize the second section (mm. 334–520), which is devoted to Schaunard's tale. Its orchestral melody sustains the highly spiced narrative in the style of a traditional parlante. The musician's theme (E) alternates regularly with a secondary idea (F'), the whole segment being built on this smooth mechanism. The point of this passage is not to express particular feelings, but merely to coordinate the actions of the hungry little group who, unheeding of Schaunard, arrange themselves around the table and the fire. The game is interrupted by a simple motive of parallel trills in F major, imitating the sound of a harmonica, an accompaniment over which Schaunard ruefully exults the merits of the Latin Quarter (P):
This is an important anticipation: the same music will return, in the same key but as a joyous fanfare (Ex. 4.4.4) during the festive climax of the crowd at the start of the next act. The effect of characterization is increased by the reworking, almost as if the music has anticipated the passing of time. Moreover, the extended fanfare provides Puccini with another element through which to sustain the long development of the ensemble, and its echoes in the following act (see Ex. 4.4.5, recalled in the aria "Dante lieta esce," Ex. 4.1.10).

The Benevent episode that follows (mm. 521–677) finds the four friends all together, trying to resolve an annoying side-effect of poverty—the payment of rent in arrears. Again, two themes alternate; the "Iliad"-like melody (G) with which the friends invite the landlord to a feast (Ex. 4.4.6), and the landlord's own motive in the minor, little more than a melodious cell characterized by its dotted figure (G, m. 521). The phrase in C-sharp minor with which Marcello begins to lead the unwary guest into his trap ("Dica quant'ansia ha," G, m. 522), although heavy with irony, has a sense of real melancholy, the bitter taste of naturalistic modulation on the passing of years.

Up to this point each section has boasted its own themes, but in the fourth and concluding section Puccini adopts the technique of reminiscence. The Latin Quartet theme (F) recalls the friends' ultimate goal, thus kick-starting the action immediately after the "cieli bili" melody (E) has drawn attention to Rodolfo and anticipates the unexpectedly sentimental outcome of his remaining in the house. The symmetrical construction of this first part of the act arrives with the cheerful reprieve of the dynamic Bolero theme (A) as the three friends go down the stairs. The coordination between the episodes is thus fully articulated through formal parameters: a principal theme provides extremely dense connective tissue between three two-themes episodes, and a coda offers a type of summary or recapitulation. However, such artifice does not impede the effect of spontaneity on the listener—rather, it brings out the naturalness of the narrative that animates this impromptu opening.

Mimi's and Rodolfo's amorous meeting—the subject of the second part of the act—does not emerge from the preceding atmosphere. The overarching musical structure is divided into sections, each corresponding to a state of mind. The following outline indicates the large degree of ambiguity in this structure: formal divisions are indicated on the left, as in the preceding diagram, in the right-hand column shows their relationship to the larger contours of a traditional nineteenth-century scene structure.

Puccini, an experienced man of the theater, kept the needs of the audience in mind: it was always necessary to create an outlet for literary expansion. When Giacosa received Ilia's first sketch for the two planned solo pieces, he dubbed them "autodidattici" ("self-taught"). Gara, no. 104, 105; their function was obviously to "temere di morire," but Puccini imbued these sections with a sense of evolving narrative—a conversational tone. The underlying traditional structure functioned as a stimulus to Puccini's fluent thematic invention: as many as seven motives and melodies are employed here, with related variants, in the process setting up material for the subsequent acts.

"Che gelida manina" is divided into four parts (mm. 912–83). In the short recitative-like section ("Chi sono?" Schaumaker's first melody (E) reappears at the words "In povertà mi ha scelto da gran signore" ("In my happy poverty I squander like a fine gentleman"), an elevated simile referring to his recent burned literary effort. This return to a previous event may be read symbolically, again fusing cyclic formal logic with narrative technique by the reappearance of a theme. The concluding part (F) is the most lyrical (Ex. 4.4.10), with all the traditional elements, including a high C for the tenor—almost a madrigalism since it coincides with the word "spenzer" ("hope").

Mimi's aria has a more complex structure. Its opening phrase (L, see Ex. 4.1.10) is anticipated by the clarinet (L) as the heroine knocks at the door; to this significant melody also originates in the orchestra, only later becoming the connective tissue between different sections in a rondino-like manner. Puccini always begins Mimi's theme on the dominant ninths of F, closing on the dominant of the house key, D major. It is a peculiarity that distinguishes the lieto with sufficient to isolate it from the context of those sadistic feelings quietly expressed in the various sections. "Gennovagia in un vaso una rosa" is similar to "Mi piaccion quella cose," and has the same melody; "Sola sai fo" is similar to "Mi piaccion quelle cose," and has the same

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31. The music that is in this passage describes Mimi's brief illness will be hinted at, then heard in full, in the third ("Dante lieta esce") III, Ex. 4.1.10 and fourth acts.

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32. A children's song, with many verses.
“Ma quando vien lo sguardo,” the voice breaks out in a contrasting, unforgettable lyric passage. Each section of the aria identifies a particular aspect of Mimì’s character will be repeated in the third and fourth acts, with the simple function of softly recalling daily life; the leitmotif has the grim task of illustrating gradual change caused by the implacable progress of Mimì’s illness (see Ex. 4.43b).

The party outside has a good laugh at the “poetry” with which their friend is surrounding himself: in the short concluding duet, unfolding over the most passionate melody of Rodolfo’s aria (Ex. 4.7a), romantic love is sovereign, absorbing every tiny feeling into longing for an ideal they both desire.

It is thus clear how the traditional arrangement of set pieces is no more than the vehicle Puccini used to ensure comprehensibility and emphasize the universality of the message, and how delicate a formal structure governs this first act. The sense of a psychological expansion of time, typical of falling in love, is produced via this skillful ordering of musical events, and thus acquires such realistic features.

One legacy of the original layout of the opera, in which the first two acts were joined together, is that the second act is a direct continuation of the first, so much so that were one able to overcome the technical difficulties of the scene change, and skip the intermission, the sequence of events would be depicted in real time. Puccini had already confronted and skillfully resolved the formal problems of a grand action concurrere, at the end of the third act of Manon Lescaut, but this point in La Bohème presents even greater difficulties, given that about twenty minutes of music is required. Before the curtain rises, the action is preceded by a fanfare of trumpets (Ex. 4.44a) playing the parallel tris axial heard when Schumann sang the praises of the Latin Quarter, a device that also underlines the continuity with the preceding act. The chorus, divided into various groups, takes the form of a swarming crowd—a sight that usually elicits immediate applause from the audience.

Puccini’s scenic and formal model was undoubtedly the first part of Act IV of Carmen, an influence betrayed not only by the use of mixed choir and children, with parlando solo passages over orchestral themes, but also by the poetry, which is crammed with references to everyday objects. Compare the two beginnings, both sung by groups of reveling peddlers:

### Carmen

- A deux quartes! A deux quartes! (Aranci, datteri! Caldi i marroni!)
- Des événements pour s’événérer!
- Des oranges pour grignoter!
- Du vin! De l’œuf! Des cigarettes!

### La Bohème

- À deux quartes! Voyez! À deux quartes!
- Seillons et calèches!
- Two quartes! two quartes!
- Fans to cool yourselves!
- Oranges to nibble!
- Program with full details!
- Wine! Water! Cigarettes!
- Just two quartes! Look! Two quartes!
- Ladies and gentlemen!

Puccini succeeded in coordinating a larger number of events than Bizet, dividing them between small choral groups and soloists. The simultaneity of the events, all of which occur at lightning speed, almost gives the impression of brief film shots. The friends, shopping at the stalls, have independent musical spaces, as if each were under a spotlight; and so do Rodolfo and Mimì, who talk of love as they push their way through the crowds, with children scurrying here and there, running away from their mothers, and the peddlers’ cries rising above them all. Not a single episode in this complex concerto is lost in the surroundings: Schumann buys a pipe and an on-bell horn; Colline crams his recently acquired coat, newly unbuttoned, with books; Marcello fights with the women; Rodolfo presents Mimì with a pink bonnet, asking “Sei felice?” (“Are you happy?”) as the love theme (F) promptly reappears. Finally the group sets down outside the Café and begins to suffer. The first brief lyric pause allows Rodolfo to present Mimì passionately to his friends (U–Q), singing a variant of his theme (B): “O dio corvèl fiammante i cani!”, an intense outpouring that allows Colline and Schumann to show off their Latin in jest to the whole Café. The toy seller Parpignol’s brief interlude (I, D) adds another touch of refined orchestral color: duve violin accompagnement, using the backs of the bows as the word “tambour,” rapid staccati on the xylophone, side drums, and triangle, muted horns and trumpets. “O bella et f igncani ed utopie!” (“O beautiful age of illusions and utopias!”), as Marcello describes the scene when the dialogue resumes: a realistic note that warns against hyperbolic love, but which at the same time betrays a nostalgia that he will shortly have every reason to feel.

Following a diagram similar to that of the previous act, the musical outline so far reveals a structure divided into sequences (as in the first part of Act I), dominated by the fanfare symbolizing the Latin Quarter (F) often heard in varied form) and by the easy-going melody used to throw the characters’ dialogue into relief (F). Furthermore, the Bohème theme (D) becomes part of the section dedicated to the bonnet, at the moment Marcello reacts literally to the romantic note of love (“Sei corto il palato o miele o fiele,” “It’s honey or pull, according to one’s palate”).
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Act 2 (mm. 1-899)

F

"Falso quasi Re," Schumann, 88-103

T

"E un poco usato," Collini (83), 114-21, A

P

"Ninimò, epilèsi," choirs and soloists,

122-39, E

T

"Sono voi mio monarca," Rodolfo, 140-47, A

P, T

"Ah, ah, ah," choirs, 148-65, mod. - F

T, P

"Che guardi," Rodolfo, 156-62, A

U, Q, B

"Due posti," Rodolfo, 184-217, A-B

P, T

"Parigi, Parigi!" choirs and soloists,

218-87, F-D-A

V, C

"Una colletta a piena," Mimi, 299-349, A

P

"Odi, Enzio!" Masetta, choirs and soloists (t. 14),

170-98, 68

X, W

"Il tuo nome è Masetta," Marcello (t. 13), 399-415

W

"Ehi amica!" Masetta, 416-26, 67

X

"Voglio far il mio piacere," Masetta, 427-11

W

"Guarda, guarda chi si vede," choirs, 432-52,

A-mod.

"Sappi per tuo governo," Rodolfo, 453-69, mod.

Y

"Questo m'en vo," Masetta (t. 16), 470-516, E

F-H, T

"Marcello am di l'amo," Rodolfo, 517-49

F

"Giovannina!" Marcello, 540-65

Z

"Marcello—Simina!" Masetta, Marcello, 563-618

Military march (B, F, F, F-7, F), choirs and soloists,

619-39, B

strette di Faudo

 Unlike the meeting of Rodolfo and Mimì, the episode involving Masetta and her reconciliation with Marcello does not divide the act into two halves, but fits quite flexibly into the general context of the crowd scene. Puccini skillfully manipulates the rather limited melodic material to perform various functions. The capricious melody that characterizes frivolity (X, Ex. 4.50), and is destined to recur with Masetta's words ("Voglio far il mio piacere"); "I want to do what pleases me"); is derived from the lively theme heard at her first entrance (W; Ex. 4.50). A variant of this features the panting Alcindoro, who forms almost an appendix to her character (Ex. 4.59).

Example 4.5

a. La Bohème, I, (W)

Paccini based the dialogue sections on these two themes, which are juxtaposed abruptly, and then brings the action to a halt by interposing at the center the sensual, tripartite slow waltz in E major, "Quando m'en vo" 

"si on' de," which functions as stage music: a "real" song sung to seduce
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Marcello. Finding it impossible to resist such wiles for very long, Marcello takes up the girl's melody ("Giovvinta mia") after the ironic concerto, his response doubled by the orchestra at full volume. And then a sudden drop to below pianissimo allows Schumann's disenchanted comment ("Siamo all'ultima scena!" - "We've reached the final scene!"). The sound of a hand coming in from stage right is grafted onto this climax: the sudden incursion of the brass crossing the stage, a "French retreat," momentarily stirs the onlookers from the static enchantment of the idyll. As usual, in the final moment Puccini applies the technique of reminiscence, the hand's principal theme being superimposed on and juxtaposed with themes recalling various preceding actions: if when Schaunard turns out his pockets in vain to find money to pay the bill, Musetta's entrance theme (IV), the main transformation of the Latin Quarter theme (F), the noisy rehearsal of the trumpet fanfare (F), a sound that symbolizes the entire act. It is hard to imagine that Stravinsky did not have this scene in mind when writing much of the first part of Petrushka.

Everyday Objects

Nineteenth-century opera is littered with objects; they belong to the theatrical staging practice still imprinted in the aura of Romanticism, and they function - in some cases just as importantly as a famous aria - as outward indicators of the plot. In La Bohème, such objects signal, and are signs of, the everyday nature of the plot.

Glancing through librettos and mise-en-scène it is difficult to find precedents for Puccini's masterpiece. Part of the great ensemble scene in Act III of La forza del destino involves the peddler Trabuco's merchandise, with "Farina, spille, supera perfetto" ("matches, pins, perfect soap") and various "oggetti di manifattura" ("objects of little value") offered to whoever passes. The wares are not characterized, since what counts is the sale, part of a more general picture of a society at war. The similarity to what happens in the Latin Quarter of Puccini's Paris is more apparent than real. Verdi focuses on a character who manages as best he can by speculating on the bad luck of those who suffer; this is merely one novelistic episode among many. Puccini, by contrast, devotes a whole act to depicting a modern metropolitan world, one in which everyone is buying, prey to the surrounding frenzy.

As mentioned earlier, the fourth act of Madame Butterfly brings into the limelight a crowd of merchants, intent on hawking their wares. But the piatta di farina, with its abundance of colore locale, is part of a common dramatic technique in which collective mnemonic functions as an active background that becomes a catalyst of the tragic event, in this case the murder committed by Don José. The frequent recourse to La Bohème to elements that both belong to and symbolize everyday life, on the other hand, must be framed in the general context of greater artistic attention to the representation of reality. It will be helpful in this context to recall the boundaries suggested by Carl Dahlhaus.

As a category of art history realism means, not the presentation of one reality or another, but an attempt to elevate a part of reality previously considered "unworthy of art" into an object presentable in painting, literature, or music.

35. This "reality" permeates La Bohème, particularly in the fresco coloring of the second act, in which objects help to define a canvas of everyday events that almost absorbs the characters. The Latin Quarter requires a dramatic and musical articulation different from the traditional frame, a single concerted block with small soliloquy episodes, and the surroundings are not limited merely to providing colore locale, as with Mascagni's fragrant orange groves or the bells that sound Vespris in Leoncavallo's I pesci Calabrisi, but take an active part in the drama. This feature, and the skill with which it is realized, makes La Bohème unique in Italy, although in France Charpentier, who was working along similar lines, completed Léon in this time. Dahlhaus notes that:

Essentially, the protagonist of Leon— and even of La Bohème—is not the "heroine" whose sad fate the opera recounts for the city of Paris itself, to whom Charpentier and Puccini give a musical presence. The fact that a "dramatist" becomes involved in a tragedy... is one of the associated aspects of dramaturgy in which the location— specifically the familiarity of a large city—is not simply the "setting" but one of the "actors"... In the
street scenes in Lohengrin and La Bohème, the scenery is less a function of the cast of human characters than the characters a function of the scenery.\footnote{Carl Dahlhaus, Revolutions in Nineteenth-Century Music, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 53.}

The array of objects in La Bohème is vast; they appear on stage, are evoked in the characters' conversation, or are identified by the crowd in the store windows or on the peddlers' stalls in the sort of bazaar that spreads out in the square in front of the Café Momus. Each object acquires an identity governed by particular circumstances, but subservient part of that identity to the character or situation in a reciprocal relationship. To begin with, objects identify characters with their profession, from Colline's books to Marcello's paintings and paintbrush, Schaunard's horn, and Rodolfo's inkwell and pen. Food, in many manifestations, acts as a measure of the coming and goings of good and bad fortune in the four friends' lives, arriving as an unexpected gift from Schaunard in the first act, a sign of their temporary prosperity. It is replaced by the money earned by the musician, which allows the little group to come to a richer table in the second act but is insufficient to cover the bill. Its return in the last act-stage sets the scenery of poverty, which takes a vivid new form in the salad herring provided by Colline. Then the philosopher's top hat becomes a bucket to hold water that changes into "Champagne," while pokers and bongs are transformed into swords drawn for a duel, noble implements that bring to life the only possession they have left: fantasy. This is a small capital, but the last useful in warding off the tragedy.

Discussion might continue at length along these lines; one can see, at any rate, that the objects outline a world of feelings, affections that are in turn redirected toward the objects, loading them with new emotional significance. This sense of exchange is one of the traits that characterizes the narrative technique of La Bohème.

Puccini adopted a detailed technique of musical narration in order to imbue objects with life, transfiguring them in poetic reality. In La Bohème the composer deliberately returned to reminiscences, using melodic and harmonic sequences that would immediately be recognized (because unvaried or undeveloped) and applying them, like labels, to situations, people, and objects. They have the function of bringing to mind a recent past that, with its barrage of memories and experiences, reappears constantly in the present. The strategy has a particular dramatic logic, since Puccini does not depict evolving characters, but merely a multi-colored reality—and at the same time a concept, that of bohemianism—within which the characters seem like emblems. The four artists are identified as part of the precipitate

action of everyday life, where love is nothing but a brief biological interlude: the opera's four acts are a metaphor for a period of life experienced as a group. Murger called the final chapter of his novel "La jeunesse oû qu'un temps" ("Youth has but one season"); and the network of motives with which the opera is laced has the sole aim of making perceivable that time passes, never to return. Objects share with the characters the flux of this life, and serve to bind them to the reality of the everyday, be it prosaic or poetic.

When Musetta speaks about herself and her likes to Rodolfo in the first-act aria, she makes immediate reference to objects: "che tei e a sette" ("in cloth and silk") she embroidery "in casa e fiore" ("at home and elsewhere"); in order to amuse herself she makes "gigli e rose" ("gilly flowers"); and above all she likes "quella cosa che ha il dolce malizia" ("those things that have such sweet enchantement"). This melody (Ex. 4.6a) recalls her tendency to turn reality into fantasy, raising it to the level of the ideal. The melody is retained at the end of the solo, and recurs many times during the opera, most notably a few moments after her death, as if to give a secular sign of the end, a serene return to the world of inanimate objects.

In her second aria, "Donde lieto uscir," which signals her temporary farewell to Rodolfo at the end of Act III, Musetta intones the things she will take with her, as lovers do when they separate. Her little list begins with a "cerchietto d'oro e il libro di preghiere" ("gold bracelets and prayer book"), both metaphorically wrapped up "in un grumbiolino" ("in an apron"), and in the melody of the first aria which, like a flash of lightning (violins and flutes, Ex. 4.6b), becomes attached to these objects:

Example 4.6

a. La Bohème, I, \[Ex.4.6a\]

\[M:\begin{align*}
\text{Mio occhio \qquad Q} \\
\text{ponte \qquad q} \\
\text{mel \qquad r} \\
\text{che \qquad s} \\
\text{tua \qquad t} \\
\text{è \qquad u} \\
\text{io \qquad v} \\
\text{questo \qquad w} \\
\text{con \qquad x} \\
\text{che \qquad y} \\
\text{tuo \qquad z} \\
\end{align*}\]

b. La Bohème, III, \[Ex.4.6b\]

\[M:\begin{align*}
\text{E \qquad Q} \\
\text{sara \qquad q} \\
\text{io \qquad r} \\
\text{tua \qquad s} \\
\text{e \qquad t} \\
\text{questo \qquad u} \\
\text{del \qquad v} \\
\text{te \qquad w} \\
\text{e \qquad x} \\
\text{i \qquad y} \\
\text{ci \qquad z} \\
\end{align*}\]
Immediately after this, Mimi mentions the bonnet, the most important object in the whole opera since it symbolizes the period of romantic happiness—a time gone by that the two devotees themselves are able to hold on to. The bonnet is sketched out at the start of Act II by Mimì’s little phrase—seven notes in all: see Ex. 4.7a—when she asks her lover for the coveted gift, as the two forces a musical opening among the crowds. A little later, the music establishes a clear relationship between the bonnet and its wearer: Rodolfo praises the perfect harmony between the brown of her hair and the bonnet’s pink, and the same accompaniment (violins, Ex. 4.7b) returns in the last act, to cast the listener back to that moment of light-heartedness. The vein of sentimentality that links the bonnet to her lover’s compliment (woodwinds, Ex. 4.7c) intensifies the bitter regret for Mimì’s lost beauty.

Example 4.7

a. La Bohème, II, 2 after \[E\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Ah, diam per la cui falsa?}
\end{array}\]

b. La Bohème, II, 6 before \[E\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Sei me, o vero...}
\end{array}\]

c. La Bohème, IV, \[E\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Tu non sai? No! No!}
\end{array}\]

Let us now look more closely at the moment when the bonnet appears in the second aria, after having discovered one of the many provocative emotional plots that lie just beneath the surface of the music. Puccini slams enharmonically from D-flat major, the key in which the preceding objects were recalled, to A major; the break is slight, but suggests a sense of a hesitation, as if something is suddenly remembered. Mimì mentions the bonnet with a phrase used in the preceding act (Ex. 4.8, X; cf. Ex. 4.7b); the motive turns back on itself sinuously, a perfect musical translation of everyday language, and prepares and amplifies the melodic outburst toward the soprano’s upper register. It is a gesture of pure lyricism that marks a momentary break with the everyday:

Example 4.8. La Bohème, III. 3 after \[E\]

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Sei me, o vero...}
\end{array}\]

From this moment on, the object, together with the emotion that recalling it has generated, is indelibly imprinted on our memory; we cannot see it, but we hear what passion can be unleashed through a simple phrase of seven notes, equal in inspiration to the broad, emotional lyric melody. The bonnet reappears in Rodolfo’s hands at the beginning of the fourth act, and he clasps it to his breast as though it were his beloved, dedicating to it a rousing cantabile, one of the melodic high points of the opera. And then he passes the bonnet back into his coat pocket, pulling it out again in the finale to show it to Mimì, now collapsed on the sofa. The passage is given a musical commentary in the form of a reminiscence, the “bonnet” phrase repeated by the violins and flutes (Ex. 4.9, X and Y). It is this gesture that awakens the memory of their first meeting, with the repeat of the music that accompanied Mimì’s entrance into the attic. Bitter lament of happy times, emotion bound to a moment of ephemeral joy, a fragment of everyday existence: the bonnet represents all this. The continuity is broken by the null that is given her; it is a comfortable object, but one that lacks a pair, and at the very moment it satisfies a need, it also heralds Mimì’s death.
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Example 4.9. La Bohème, IV, 2 after [3]

**MEMORY AND PAIN**

Adieu, va-t’en, entre solitaire,
Bien mère avec l’amour dernier,
Notre jeunesse est enlevée
Au fond de vos calendriers.
Ce n’est plus qu’un funambule
Des beaux jours qu’il a consommés,
Qu’au souvenir pourra nous rendre
La clé des paradis perdus.

If in the first two acts of *La Bohème* light-heartedness reigns supreme, the last two speak only of nostalgia, pain, and death. The musical division into thematic sections, and the melodic inclination to recitative-arising, however, is similar. Mimi, desperately searching for Rodolfo, appears after the music has described dawn over the wintry landscape of a customs post outside Paris, near the Barrière d’Enfer; a masterpiece of time in which the orchestra simulates falling snowflakes. The effect is achieved by a descending stepwise phrase, staccato in the flutes and harp, with open parallel fifths over a resonant cello pedal, to which the other strings are then added. The same outline is maintained with changing timbres.

Inside the cabaret, Musetta’s voice, singing the melody of the slow Waltz (Y, 17 after [3]), raises the spirits of the last night out; the guests inside as the dawn workers pass by. Mimi’s theme, which accompanies her entrance, takes us back to the moment she first came into the attic (L) and to her temporary happiness, the first time the music suggested her physical vitality. Puccini ably casts it off in well-phrased, saving a full quotation for the next act, in which illness will finally overcome the heroine. In the meantime, less than five minutes of music has definitively dispelled any light-hearted echo of lost happiness. A few key gestures establish the new atmosphere. The *Bohème* theme (A) is heard, and Marcello invites Mimi into the cabaret. Her reply is a question—"Is Rodolfo there?"; only four notes measured gently, a B-flat major triad immediately broken by the first, desperate lyric outburst ("Mimi, si tu dors?"); then a passage in minor, like a noise tightening around her throat.

Rodolfo’s realization is announced by his melodies (B and R, III, [13]) combined in counterpoint, followed by the *Bohème* theme (A); this sequence, concentrated as it is in a few measures, begins to prepare for the ensuing mood of reminiscence, separation, and detachment from love. But a little later, love returns: "In van, in van nascondo" ("In vain, in vain I hide"), a tragic phrase (Ex. 4.10a) which belies the casualness with which Rodolfo had tried, a little earlier and with the same melody (Ex. 4.10b), to justify his desertion to Marcello:

Example 4.10

a. La Bohème, III

b. La Bohème, III, 1 before [9]

In this altered interval (from minor second, 13 to fourth, 13), a small detail, lies the infinite ability of music to create an emotional atmosphere, to narrate a feeling beyond words. The subsequent section in A-flat major, "Una terribile tosse" ("A terrible cough"), heightens the sense of desolation, which then becomes acute as Marcello and Mimi’s voices mingle with Rodolfo’s song, with its ultimate, tragic metaphor ("Mimi di serra, si in
dove"); "Mimi is a mountain flower"). Only at this point do her sobs and coughing reveal her presence. Marcello is called back into the cabaret by Musetta’s laughter, providing a brief, counterbalancing passage of humor; Mimi then tries to take leave of Rodolfo with her second aria. "Donde heta uscii" is the
first complete essay in reminiscence music in La Bohème: in the first section the vocal line unfolds Mimì’s theme (I, from 52), while in the second (“Ascolta, ascolta”) the melody is counterpointed by echoes of the Latin Quarter (I, Ex. 4.1; see Ex. 4.4, 3) and the first aria, two sections that evoke the simpler aspects of her personality (I, 4 before 25 and Q, Ex. 4.6b, an idea we will hear again at a key moment in the finale).

Example 4.11. La Bohème, III, 60

The three themes recalled in these few measures show us how Mimì is already living in memory. Only in the final section does her voice rise in a passionate lyric outburst (“Se vuol saper chi son”); but the revival dies away in a manner foreboding the end; the bonnet, that everyday token of love, is like the medallion in La traviata that Violetta gives Alfredo before dying.

The melancholy of the concluding passage follows the same path: Rodolfo and Mimì begin the piece as a duet, “Addio dolce sogno” (“Farewell, sweet morning awakenings”), with an intensively lyrical melody. It is useful to know the original, the second maestoso “Sole e amore” (1888) another example of how Puccini always realized the best moment to use a melodic idea, regardless of the original circumstances of composition:

Example 4.12. La Bohème, III, 2 after 52

Mussetta’s and Marcello’s return on stage transforms the ensemble into a quartet, with an effective juxtaposition between their volatile exchange of insults and the amorous rapport of Mimì and Rodolfo. Mussetta and Marcello speak very plainly: “Che mi gridi, che mi canti?” (“What are you shouting about, what are you harping on about?”), exclaims Mussetta, “Al-fatez non siamo uniti” (“We’re not married”), “Bada sottto il mio capello...”

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non ci star c’oramento” (“Look under my hat; you won’t see those particular ornaments”), replies Marcello. Their words can pass unnoticed, so strong is the memory radiating from the other two, immersed in their idyll.

The four voices join in the same melody only when Mimì and Rodolfo decide to wait until spring before separating from each other. The farewell between Mussetta and Marcello, however, is prosaic and shouted: “Fattore di bottiglie!” (“House painter!”), “Viperazz!” (“Viper!”), “Rospo!” (“Toad!”), “Sereggia!” (“Witch!”). The Bohème theme peeps through in the orchestra (d, Ex. 4.1b), a codetta to the piece, confirming the connections between love, youth, and ecstatic poverty, and it forms the link to the following episode: four notes like the delicate strokes of a clock marking the course of time that the two are unable to halt. Details such as this greatly intensify the melancholy and nostalgia.

It has taken me a bit of work, this wish of mine to keep to reality and then to strive all these little fragments (pianissimo). And I’ve managed it, because I want as much singing, as much melodizing as possible. The act is made up almost entirely of logical reserves, except for the little duet “Sono andrai” and Colline’s Zianetti and a very few other things (Puccini to Ricordi, November 1893, Garz. no. 146, 13-14).

The formal structure of the final act is symmetrical with the first (and the setting is the same cold attic). The dimensions are smaller but the division into two contrasting halves is similar; the first half is merry (in this case only superficially), the second dramatic. The time of the events is not specified, and it would be tempting to say that none has passed since the start of the opera, or that they are already living in an eternal spring of immortals. The sharp impression of déjà vu is confirmed by the repeat of the theme with which the opera began; but there is none of the orchestral fragmentations we heard earlier, rather an instrumental ensemble that breezily introduces a conversation already under way. The similarity between the acts can be seen as a moment of recapitulation in a cyclic form; but it is also clear that the heightened dynamic produces a sense of strain, if there is a need to hide nostalgia, the dominant emotion of this scene.

Rodolfo and Marcello are trying to work, but are hindered by memories of their lovers, evoked by the women’s respective melodies (46-7, 1). Puccini is rather careful in his use of quotation here, only quoting, for example, the initial phrase of “Mi chiamo Mimì,” thus avoiding the theme as it occurred at the heroine’s entrance into the attic; here Marcello is evoking the image of a Mimì far from illness, who goes about “in carrozza, vestita come una regina” (“in a carriage, dressed like a queen”). The flute theme finally returns to express their inability to work (k, from 52), as happened to Rodolfo in the first act, but this time nobody will cross the threshold of the attic. After this introduction, the duet “O Mimì tu piú non torni!” begins.
As the music progresses, we gradually become aware that Rodolfo's words encapsulate the essence of the opera. "Oh Minnì, mi brave giovine ..." Then, addressing the bonnet, which he has taken out of his pocket: "Ah! vien mi noia cuor; poiché è morto amor..." ("Oh Minnì, my brief youth. ... Ah! come to my heart; since love is dead!""). The end of love is also the end of youth, which can never return.

Before the finale, Puccini wrote another ensemble scene, one that fits into the form as if to function as a Scherzo, the aim being to create maximum contrast with the ending by reuniting the four friends in a last gesture of merriment. Again Schumann and Colline enter, but this time the single ingredient for this meal is a bering. There is no option but to make light of it, and to improvise some toasts: a short private performance to avoid thinking about material needs. After commenting on the action with themes from Act I, the orchestra engages in a graceful little dance suite: gavotte (minuet) and a little pavane are merely hinted at, and valse, and finally a quadrille for Rodolfo and Marcello that finishes with the fortissimo duet between Schumaard and Colline, armed with the poker and togs from the stove (obviously long cold). The action is still at full tilt, in extremely lively tempo, when the door suddenly bursts open and Musetta appears: an E-minor chord, held tremolando by the full orchestra, abruptly interrupts the B-flat major tonality. Minnì has returned, as Illica wanted, to the near Rodolfo, and now she rises to the first aria (Ex. 4:13). It is as if the melodic line and accompaniment are telling us that illness has possessed her entirely, and forever.

Example 4:13

a. La Bohème, 1, [37]

39. William德拉（"The Musical Language," p. 39）rightly sees this recurrence as "the only instance of truly Wagnerian development... The reference to a triad of three notes at the end of this phrase and half-diminished seventh-chords (and a prominent English horn) are unmistakable.

b. La Bohème, IV, 18 before [39]

The leitmotif thus reveals that the only real event of the opera is the progressive conquest of the heroine's body by consummation. Of all the characters, Minnì is symbolic of love and youth, as such can only pass, only die.

All the emotions that the death of a loved one can provoke are arranged in such a way as to arouse the deepest response from the broadest possible audience. Such universality is not solely due to the evocative power of the music, but also to the expert formal strategy that governs the work: the return at just the right moment of the themes that depict Minnì's character and emotions makes her both familiar and unforgettable. Furthermore, the music, in recapitulating the recent past, suggests the passing of real time, gathering together every semantic nuance of the text and reconstituting a new entity—a collective memory—on the basis of the order in which the themes are restored. While Minnì is eased on to the bed, the music that accompanied her slight lapse during the first meeting with Rodolfo is heard (Ex. 4:14). Then comes the second section of her first aria, as accompaniment to Musetta's narration (G, from Ex. 4:1, "Dove stai?"). This gives way, with tragic effect, to the love theme (P, 7 after Ex. 4:1, "Non sento la vita qui?").

Puccini does not omit a single detail at the phrase "Ho un po' di tineo" ("I have a bit of a cough", Ex. 4:14b) a slurred cadence takes us back to the moment in Act I when Minnì confessed to Marcello that Rodolfo had left her (Ex. 4:14a). And the implacable logic continues after she offers her message of reconciliation to Marcello and Musetta, with tiny echoes of the second act (see Ex. 4:14c), and a very subtle reference, almost directed to the unconscious regretful longing for her beautiful brown hair.

The first new music is Colline's "Vedrò zinarla," an arietta that is both moving and essential: this object has a primary role in the ending of the opera, because it represents the emotion and the compassion of all. The
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Example 4.14

a. La Bohème, III, 3 after [23]

Example 4.15

b. La Bohème, IV, 3 after [35]

La Bohème, III, 3 after [23]

La Bohème, IV, 3 after [35]

earrings that Mimi is about to sell in order to obtain some cordial to satisfy Mimi’s last wish does not have the same importance as that of the great coat which Colline has in the meantime taken off. The object has a past in our aural memory because we were present when the philosopher purchased it, and above all because the garment does not serve solely to protect Schumann from the cold. His gruit physique seems to emerge from the coat, which welcomes within its large folds the books that symbolize his passion for culture. The relationship between the philosopher and the coat, now destined to cross the threshold of a pawn shop, might well be defined as friendship; and the affection makes this parting very sad. With the garment, another aspect of the group's youth disappears, and since Colline does not have romantic adventures, his love for culture is the most real sentiment he experiences. It is a feeling that binds him in friendship to philosophers and poets, and gives him the strength to face more powerful adversaries.

The bohemians having left, Mimi sings her swan song “Sono andando” (“Have they gone?”). This desperate melody in C minor (3 after [23]) is the last theme in the opera. The phrases descend by step, as if to depict her tiredness, but there is a final, unexpected lyric burst upward. “Sei il mio amato e tutta la mia vita” (“You are my love and my whole life”). Here Mimi’s journey through life comes to a close; and by this stage it has already become a panacea of romantic love, lost, eternally regretted. Only sentimental recollections remain: the music of that first meeting remains once more when Rodolfo draws the pink bonnet bought in the Latin Quarter from under a cushion—“Te lo rammentai quando sono entrata la prima volta, hi?” (“Do you remember when I came in the first time, there?”)—from [23], Ex. 4 (a) again the tragic opposition between past happiness and present sorrows. Mimi sings “Che gelida manina” (N: reference to the lost liberty of existence), before she falls back. Everyone rushes to the bedside, and Musetta gives her the muff she wanted; Mimi slips her hands into it and says her last, Shakespearean words before death: “To sleep.” The end is all suffering, Mimi’s little prayer, Rodolfo’s vain agitation; only Schmendr perceives death, and signals it to the others.

Rodolfo is the last to understand; four first violins create a hushed atmosphere of monastic peace, playing a few measures from Mimi’s aria (Q. 7 after [35])—with an inevitable reminiscence of Viozzi, Mimi’s sister in Il Barbiere. Then all that remains is a pedal on A in the clarinet and double bass. Some brief moments of spoken dialogue—hope is the last thing to die—and then, finally, Mimi’s threnody is played by the full orchestra, with Rodolfo’s final high G flat desperately calling out her name. Carrer saw this passage as Puccini’s capitulation to verismo (Carrer, 377), but it follows a logic that will also be applied to the finale of Tosca: one significant theme is connected with the gesture that expresses the completion of the tragedy.

The opera ends with the same bass progression as Colline’s “Vecchio Anniversario” (I–II–V–VII–I), with the lowered seventh leading a touch of the archaic to the key of C-sharp minor; it is a way of writing “frescos” in music, recalling the moving farewell the philosopher gave to the coat. Even this repetition transmits a message, communicating a sense of material passing beyond the fact that it concerns an object or person. These are the elements of the “joyous and terrible life” conceived by Murger. The musical reminiscence reinforces the metaphor of death as a metaphor for the end of a stage in life, a musical gesture that awakens an affect rather than suggesting a cause-and-effect relationship. The cadence is the most poignant leave-taking from a world made of persons and things, a world whose transiency is measured by the love and the loss of the bohemians.

43. Correctly or not, Puccini also referred to La Bohème with his use of reduced orchestration to imply Viozzi’s presence. See L. Massari, the end of the prelude to Act III, the opening of the letter, right up to the heroine’s final prayer, in all of which the symphonic use of a small group of strings evokes the progressive grip of the dream on her.

44. William Douglas (“The Musical Language,” 83) maintains that this should be seen as a linear elaboration of the final trio. He likewise notes how the same progression is present in the end of Mimi’s aria (I–II–III–II–I). Although persuasive, the convergence is challenged by the fact that the chorale is built on the name of the scale in Puccini’s score,functional harmony does not have many followers.

45. Carrer (377, n. 15) suggests that the ripresa of the cadence from Colline’s aria is used “for the sake of music that is suited to the climate of the musical country,” while Arrigo Boito stresses much more sensitive to Puccini’s dramatic meaning when he remarks on “the final moments of the opera, the music of Mimi’s ‘Sono andando’ will blend with his ‘Vecchio Anniversario,’ emphasizing the eternal associations of love and youth, and their tragic part” (“Del Libretto,” in Paesi e Le Bohèmes, 75).
matic end has been marked by Mimi’s death. Liberated from the con-
straints of conventional narrative, we can see the metaphorical weight of a
tragic event that interrupts the flow of time so sharply.

Rereading the Murger quote that introduced this chapter, words spoken by
Marcello toward the end of the novel, a level of cynical detachment comes
to the fore. Puccini’s Rodolfo, and all those sharing his emotions, are al-
lowed no time for reflection: the tragedy holds the action and fixes their
sadness in the infinity of art, allowing Le Rêve to live eternally. After this
perfect masterpiece, in which not one note is insignificant, Puccini set off
on a continuously ascending path, always looking to the future. But with
Mimi’s death he too had finally, permanently, taken leave of his youth.

Tosca:
Rome between Faith and Power

Sadistic cruelty has been given a license by many modern political regimes,
and fascism, specifically, provided it with a justification. Puccini antici-
pated this sophisticated, obsessive cruelty and pleasure in cruelty that were
the conspicuous features of fascism. And this, it can be argued, is what
makes “Tosca” a more modern and prophetic work than it could ever have
been in the hands of Verdi.

Early Genesis

The play of Floria Tosca, written by Victorien Sardou in 1887, first en-
tered Puccini’s life two years later, when Manon Lescaut had been lying
dormant for some time. It took the composer at least four years to
decide on Puccini’s heroine; a further six would go by before he made a
final decision about Tosca. He would never lose the habit of working on dif-
ferent subjects at the same time, nor of returning to plots or concepts that
had been mooted many years before.

Judging from the tone of a letter to Ricordi on 7 May 1889, less than a
month after the premiere of Edgar, Sardou’s play should have taken abso-
late precedence over all the rest:

I’m thinking about Tosca! I implore you to do everything necessary to ob-
tain Sardou’s permission before abandoning the idea—that would drive
me terribly, since I can see that Tosca is the opera that is just right for me
one without excessive proportions, neither of decorative spectacle, nor
such as occasion the usual musical excesses. (Gastra, no. 31, 31–32)

Ricordi wasted no time in contacting Emmanuel Miozio, the firm’s represen-
tative in Paris, asking him to consult Sardou. By 29 May he had received
a prompt response. The best way of making the acquaintance of Sardou,
whose headstrong, capricious personality was to play an important role in

2. Anthony Ashton, State and Liberty: Politics in Opera (London and New York: Verso,
1992), 249.
the genesis of Tosca, is through this circumstantial account from Verdi’s only pupil:

I saw him [Roger] and he read me a letter from Sardou, full of complaints about the bad reception of his Tosca in Italy, particularly in Milan, where the press mirrored him quite disgracefully. Sardou is above all a business man, a real operator. He is not very keen on allowing Tosca to be made into an Italian libretto, because sooner or later a French composer would make a French operetta of it.2 But he would like to know what else Puccini suggested; he doesn’t want to lay down terms, but will entertain an offer, which ought to be a cash sum plus a share of the receipts or of the hiring out of the score for Italian theaters, while he would retain author’s rights in France. Mario Costa has also asked for Tosca; Sardou hasn’t replied to him. Another Neapolitan composer, whose name he said he didn’t recall, had also asked for it, having made inquires with Sardou’s agent in Italy. I assure myself that he will give Puccini a free hand, but be aware that he will not give it up for a few thousand francs; he will want to be paid handsomely. The Bern Troya has secured him ownership of Tosca in Italy. Since I had read in L’Environment that Musset’s heirs already intend to sue over Puccini’s Edgardo, I asked Roger; and he told me that, in Italy, Musset is public property. I will give Roger, who is Sardou’s agent, your reply, and if necessary I will go to Marly-le-Roi.3

Sardou’s skilful handling of the deal—taking his time in order to increase his fee, not turning up to the meeting with Mario—meant that the contract was not settled immediately. But from then on, Ricordi at least had first refusal of the adaptation.4 Puccini, meanwhile, opted for Manon Lescaut, shelving Tosca in spite of the fact that between February and March 1899 he had seen two performances of Sardou’s play (in Milan and Turin) with Sarah Bernhardt, the creator of the role. Strangely, these perfor-

2. Laura Romi had already taken his Gustave di Mon (1874) from the pie Paric (1875), a subject that Sardou had suggested in 1873 to Verdi. Later, two of Giordano’s greatest successes (1891, 1913) were operas derived from Mon (1887) and Maddalena Settembre (1893).5
3. Abbado, Giacomo Puccini, p. 497. Sardou lived at Marly-le-Roi, just outside Paris.4
4. Ricordi eventually signed the agreement with Sardou on 28 November 1891, but as early as 18 September he informed the composer that the contract was not (as Sardou claimed) for two operas (see Giordano mannacchi di Mon, 45, ca. 12 June 1890).6 Music was at the time seeking to obtain Sardou’s permission to adapt his libretto from Théand, a play that came to nothing (see Music and D’Ory (1889) by the impresario di Male Verdiello, n. 378). The play was later set to music by Xeraci Verdiello in 1897. On the genesis of Tosca see the fully documented reconstruction by Deborah Burton, “The Genesis of Tosca, with New Documentation,” in her “An Analysis of Puccini’s Tosca: A Historical Approach to the Unifying Elements of the Opera” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1995). My thanks to the author for supplying me with a copy of her work, which provided much useful information.
5. Fantasia congressionale Puccini on 14 June 1897. “I am delighted at your new creation: Heavenly night. With Human and Tosca, that makes three!” Puccini ed. “Lettere di Federico Fontana,” nos. 121, 227. The identity of this new opera is unknown, but it was certainly not La Boheme, as suggested in an erroneous fashion.
6. Meaning both “perfect agreement” and “perfect time.” (Trans.)
7. See Acte du Francquetti, Le vie di Giovanni Puccini (Milano, Ricordi, 1939), 205–6, and Enrico Monaldi, Giovanni Puccini, (1949).
regretted having given Tosca to Franchetti (Carner, 109–10), and did everything he could to make Puccini change his mind. Meanwhile, on 22 January 1895 Illica wrote to inform Ricordi of the state of play:

I am also working to satisfy the other one. But how difficult this Signora Tosca is! The drama imposes itself too much and invades the liberetto: this means that the second act, at court, becomes more and more crucial. Still—just to satisfy Franchetti—I am trying to do without it. Because (this is also worth knowing) Franchetti no longer wants the scene between Spoletta and Scarpia, with Tosca’s offer of castrato, which Sardou liked so much. So we struggle on with these wrenched duet scenes that are truly Tosca’s curse. I have succeeded in doing a quarter and am putting together a quintet. Spoletta is becoming a very curious character.

Please say nothing for the moment to Franchetti, because he would immediately ascend on me here, and perhaps—as he did for Act II—throw everything up in the air; not only that, but worse, he would dampen my enthusiasm. Let’s wait just a little longer for the finished act, since Franchetti has not been seen for four days, and I think he might be working. So let him!

I have a sure way of making Franchetti work. I talk to him about Le Rondine. So to make Puccini work it should be enough to talk about Tosca! The second act of Tosca is one of the most difficult acts I have ever had to deal with. (Gara, no. 129, 213)

The letter illustrates Illica’s fine perception; he realized the danger of an excessive number of duets, sensing also that Franchetti was not really inspired by the subject. Indeed, it was at this point that the composer willingly backed out of the project. And thus, albeit briefly, Fontana reappeared in Puccini’s life. It was Fontana who had in the meantime suggested Zorawar as a subject to Franchetti, to keep him busy so that Puccini—and, of course, he himself—might reclaim Tosca. His letter of 20 January 1895 leaves no doubt as to his (train) hopes:

First of all there is the so-called legal question, and for this, we could go together to the lawyer Valdés for a consultation. . . . You could bring Franchetti’s cession and we could find out all the facts, and whether

8. According to Franchetti, Illica “took on the task of convincing Franchetti” to aban-
on the idea of this opera, normally without telling him that Puccini wanted it again. The attempt succeeded more easily than he thought: Franchetti began to have doubts about the possibility of Tosca as a subject to be set to music. . . . Illica did his best to strengthen the idea of abandon-
ning it, and, on one day, Franchetti definitively gave Tosca up. The following day, Puccini signed the contract that committed him to set it to music” (Franchetti, Le vite, 169–70). The commis-
sion, however, was primarily due to the differences between Illica and Franchetti, and was notified in May 1895 (see Borrani, “Il Genio,” 14–15).


FROM PLAY TO OPERA

In order to see Berahadit play Tosca again, Puccini interrupted work on La Bohème and went to Florence in October 1895. He also wanted to compare Illica’s adaptation with the original play. The performances dispelled his last doubts, and immediately spurred him to voice his enthusiasm to the librettist:

I was in Florence at Tosca, which I found very much inferior to yours. The element of pathetic love (lyric) abounds in the Italian adaptation, but is lacking in the French. I didn’t like Sarah very much. Is fatigue getting to her? Neither did it make much impression on the audience. But in Milan, eh? (Gara, no. 143, 113)

It is generally assumed that Puccini decided to set Tosca in order to align himself with the current aesthetic trend toward verismo opera. But many of the principal tenets of verismo are missing: the main characters do not belong to the lower classes, or even to the bourgeoisie, and the tragedy is caused not by their social condition but by their personalities and ideal-

one can or cannot, etc. etc. As far as agreement between us is con-
cerned, I am certain that you, as you indicated last time we met, would not feel infeasible, as for me, I’m very keen on an agreement because, as you will understand, it’s in my material benefit, and (as I firmly believe) also to my moral one.”

This makes much clearer the reasons for Fontana’s fury at Illica when he found out that, despite his diplomatic efforts, his plans had yet again been foiled:

When I knew that you were to work on Tosca, I hoped that you would turn to me, since—as everyone knows, and Puccini most of all—it was I who pointed out the subject in the first place, and I was already corresponding with Sardou. Instead, you chose Giacosa!”

But yet again, as with Memmi Lirico, it was too late. On 9 August 1895 Puccini had already told Carlo Cazzonetti that “I will do Tosca, an extraordinary three-act librettto by Illica. Sarlo is enthusiastic about the librettto. Ciao. Tell up this moronic” (Gara, no. 127, 127).
play, which were rich in detail but strayed from the main plot. After the opening act in Sant'Andrea della Valle, the librettist jumped straight to the fourth act of the play, set in Scarpia's rooms, keeping a reference to the festivities hosted by Queen Maria Carolina of Naples (from Act II of the original) by way of "Tosca's offstage cantatas," the scene Franchetti had disliked. He also removed the act set in Cavaradossi's villa, and fused the two scenes of Act V into a final act on the battlegrounds of the Casal Sant'Angelo. The number of characters was decreased considerably (from twenty-three to nine), and significant space was carved out for two character actors, the Sacristan (bass) and Spoletta (tenor), active participants in the plot. The greatest novelty for Puccini was in writing a principal role for bariitone, a situation that recreated the traditional triangle of nineteenth-century Italian opera, but with a completely different psychological basis. No longer was the baritone simply an antagonist; he was now the bearer of an utterly negative force, similar to Rigoletto in "La Traviata" and Barnaba in "La Cenerentola."

This time, Giacomo expressed serious doubts about the outline of the opera to Ricordi right from the outset:

"All right, I will get started on the opera right away. But it seems to me that to finish the first act with a monologue ("I tre siri, una carezza") and to begin the second with a monologue ("Tosca è un buco falso"), both by the same character, is a bit monotonous. Not to mention the absurdity of Scarpia wearing a tunic describing himself. Characters like Scarpia act, they don't express themselves in words. (14 December 1885)" (Gara, no. 149, 136)

Later, after verifying Act I with great diligence but little conviction, the poet reacted with unusual vehemence to a letter from Ricordi:

For two months I have worked on nothing but "Tosca," and I assure you that your words fill me with surprise and bitterness. As I have already asked through to tell you, I am deeply convinced that Tosca is not a good subject for an opera. At first reading I thought it was, given the rapidity and the clarity of the dramatic action. And, on first reading, Scarpia's murder plot seems a little better. But the more one gets inside the scene and penetrates into each scene, trying to extract lyric and poetic passages, the more one is persuaded of its absolute unadaptability to musical theater. . . . The first act is all rhymes. Nothing but rhymes in the second act (except the brief torture scene, in which only the two characters are on stage)."

11. Edmondo in "Messa" is a second actor, while the first actor is simply a canto in "La Bohème". The real character actor is the bass who plays Rigoletto and Alcindoro.
12. Puccini uses arias as a first act to "L'Amor" with the preliminary demand "Still, serene, and helpless." (1 August 1884). (Gara, no. 149, 146).
The third act is one interminable duet. One doesn't notice this in the spoken theater, because there the drama is based around a leading character, designed to display the virtuosity of an actress. . . . But in music this external succession of duet scenes can only result in monotony at best, and this is not the worst problem. The most serious issue is the predominance of what I would call the theatrical aspect—that is, the workings of the events that form the plot—over the poetry, which suffers. It is a drama of great emotional events, but without poetry. (3 August 1896; Gara, no. 195, 158–59)

Needless to say, Giacosa yet again tried to hand in his resignation, but it was refused, and Puccini had his libretto, practically in its definitive form, by November 1896. However, after scribbling a few sketches, his desire to compose faded, encouraged by the fact that now his two operas had begun to circle the world, and he wrote them. In 1897, after its premiere at La Scala (15 March), La Bohème was staged for the first time in Great Britain (Manchester, 24 April), Germany (Berlin, Kroll-Oper, 22 June), and Vienna (Theater an der Wien, 5 October), as well as in numerous other cities in Italy.

Puccini's interest in Tosca receded toward the end of 1897. One of his major concerns was to reproduce in a realistic way the Roman atmosphere that pervades so much of the opera. He turned for help to the Dominican friar Pietro Paunelli, whom he had met during a recent visit to Rome. A good musical amateur, Paunelli (with the help of the composer Pietro Menotti) supplied Puccini with the exact pitch of the great bell of St. Peter's (E), and sent him a transcription of the Te Deum melody used in the Roman liturgy, which Puccini received in January 1898 (Gara, no. 195, 157). The composer turned to the priest again when he had a clearer vision of the music and staging needed for the first finale:

Now I want a favor: it concerns the first act (finale), when a solemn Te Deum is sung in Sant'Andrea della Valle to celebrate the military victory. Here is the scene: the minor abbot, the Chapter, etc., emerge from the sanctuary and pass through the people who gather on each side and watch them. At the front of the stage there is a character (the basso) who sings a monologue almost independent of what is happening at the back.

For sound effect, I need to have prayers recited during the procession of the abbot and Chapter. Either the Chapter or the people, then, need to utter some prayers very softly, in natural voices, without pitch, just as in real life. The “Exce sacroedum” is too impressive to be mumbled. Now I know that it isn't the custom to say or sing anything before the solemn Te Deum, which is sung just as they reach the high altar, but I repeat (whether it's the right thing or not), I want something to

marinate as they move from the sanctuary to the altar. (August 1898; Gara, no. 195, 168–69)

Paunelli found nothing suitable, and Puccini solved the problem himself by using some antiphon verses. He amassed a vast amount of information about the Roman liturgy, and was also concerned about the staging of this spectacular scene. After much searching through antique shops and art dealers in Rome, he found eighteen hand-painted pictures (preserved in the Ricordi archives), from which the costumes of all the participants in the ceremony were drawn, as well as a plan showing the order in which the celebrants should process.

Work on Tosca was interrupted again by the French premiere of La Bohème at the Opéra-Comique (15 June 1898), with mise-en-scène by Albert Carré, who had replaced Léon Carvalho as the theater's director some months earlier. Puccini took advantage of this trip to meet the seventy-year-old Sardou, who impressed him with his youthful physical and intellectual energy. It was an opportunity to play some of the score, and to discuss, in Illica's presence, some practical issues. The following January, Puccini returned to Paris to try and persuade Sardou to accept a less bloody ending, attempting in vain to save poor Tosca's life by proposing that she be overcome by madness as a result of Cavaradossi's death (a reminiscence, perhaps, of the finale of La Noces). He was surprised by the dramaturg's superficiality and excessive desire for effect at all costs:

This morning I spent an hour at Sardou's, and he told me various things about the finale that won't work. He wants that poor woman dead at all costs. Now that Dalibar the last executer of the guillotine has had his day, the Magus (Sardou) wants to take his place! He accepts the madness, but would have her faint away, die exhausted like a bird. In the revival that Sarah is giving on the thirtieth, Sardou has introduced a great fog on the Castle, which, floating proudly in the wind (the air), will have a great effect; he really goes for the fog (it's more important than the play itself at the moment) . . . . In sketching the panoramas, Sardou wanted the Tower to pass between St. Peter's and the Castle! I reminded that the river passes on the other side, lower down. And he, cool as cucumber, said: "Oh, that's nothing!"

A fine character, full of life, flint, and historicaco-topo-panoramic inaccurate! . . . On Tuesday morning I return to Sardou's—the Magus

15. Carré was perhaps the first director, in the modern sense of the word, with whom Puccini dealt. In those circumstances their relationship, which we shall see was important for Madama Butterfly, was not always amicable. "With Carré, there is no way of doing anything. He wants to do everything himself, and has staged the opera very well, it is true, familiarizing himself with it as we went along, wasting a lot of my time" (Puccini to Ricordi, 25 May 1898; Gara, no. 195, 161).
commands it—perhaps he'll want Spoleto to die too. (To Giulio Ricordi, 5 January 1899, Addini, no. 64, 86–86.)

Part of Tosca was composed in the total solitude of Marquis Manzi’s villa near Montegrida, where the first act was finished in August 1893. The second act was written between 23 February and 9 July 1899; the last, save for the opening passage, was ready on 29 September. By 4 October, Puccini had received scores from the poet Gigi Zanazzo for a masque in Roman dialect, which he wanted sung by “a shepherd boy who passes by the castle with his sheep (one does not see them, but imagines them) and sings a sad, sentimental peasant song.”

At this point, one of the few serious disagreements between Puccini and Giulio Ricordi flared up. After having received the final act, Ricordi wrote a long letter to the composer (10 October 1899, Gara, no. 218, 176–78), and with extreme vehemence cautiously expressed his disapproval of the tenor–soprano duet:

What is the real luminous center of this act?...the Tosca–Cavaradossi duet. And what do I find...a fragmentary duet, of narrow proportions, which diminishes the characters; I find one of the most beautiful passages of lyric poetry. The “dolce marzii,” understood merely by a fragmentary, melodic melody, and then, to cap it all, a piece more or less banal from Edgar!! Scandalous if sung by a Tyrolean peasant woman!...but out of place in the month of Tosca or a Cavaradossi. In short, what

15. Letter to Alfredo Vendris, 27 September 1899 (Gara, no. 202, 27). In this case, too, the music was already composed, and Puccini dictated the required letter to his componi-

dante. After having received a sequence of arrangements, he apologized to Zanazzo through Vendris, because he had to add a syllable (“plai,” but it has to be this way). (Gara, no. 421, 52.)

16. The Ambiente animato, which is at the core of the duet “C’è de’ bei mai mossamente e

parte,” is in the style of a masque, the two quotations given to Cavaradossi (“Amore, ombra, o luce l’ho...” Tosca, III, 149) and the two recitatives to Tosca (“Amore, che spero a te vivi ser-

bici”), Ricordi is referring to the passage borrowed from Edgar (IV, pp. 155). Puccini in fact used only the accompaniment, and part of the melody:

TOSCA: ROME BETWEEN FAITH AND POWER

Mongers wrote that "there is no close fusion, no exact correspondence between the action and the music." Alfredo Colombini, in his last review of a world premiere (he died on 1 May), grasped the main point about the work:

Tosca is called a "melodrama," but it is not really one. In melodrama . . . music is much less confined by the rapid, frenetic, precipitous action; the hearty poetry of "melodrama" loses a broader space in which to pour out its exquisite fragrance. Here, however, the musical setting is inevitably restrained, since the libretto allows the conventional decorations only in a few places. (Curtain della sera, 15–16 January 1900)

Despite doubts and dissent (there was even a small group vociferously extolling Mascagni before the curtain rose), Tosca ran for twenty performances, and the Costanzi always sold out. The opera was staged in many other Italian cities in the five months before the first foreign premiere, which took place at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, followed immediately by the London premiere in July, at Covent Garden. Puccini's international success was by now fully established, and in the previous November he had already begun to search for a new subject.

HISTORICAL "REALISM"

The broad structure of Tosca is the same as that of the original play: an intricate intertwining of historical and fictional events. The action is set in Rome on 17 June 1800, three days after the battle of Marengo, in which Napoleon triumphed over the Austrian general Mö� and reestablished the Cisalpine Republic. This political backdrop is crucial to the tragedy of Tosca and Cavaradossi. In September 1799, after abruptly ending the Parthenopean Republic, Bourbon troops entered Rome, cutting off the brief Roman Republic that had been established on 15 February 1798. The occupation of the city by part of Ferdinand IV's army allowed Bona Parte Cisalpino, elected Pope Pius VII on 14 March 1800, to regain his Seat. Harsh repression of patriots was widespread. Among them the doctor Liborio Angelucci was one of the most prominent targets, having on 20 March 1798 been declared Consul of the Roman Republic. He was probably Sadoul's model for Cesare Angelucci.20 Sadoul excelled in setting history as a frame in which to set fictional plots, creating a believable amalgam of history and fiction. The historical figures in Tosca gave authenticity to the invented characters, whose destiny was supplied by real-life biography.

18. The shepherd boy was sung by a boy soprano (Angelo Riggio), a voice type preferable to a mezzo-soprano.

19. The engineer Tito Ricordi had begun to involve himself in the affairs of the firm in 1847, accompanying Puccini (who nicknamed him "Saraceno") to Great Britain for the local premieres of Le Sibylle, and in Paris the following year. Tosca was his first important experience as a stage director, and the choice of Hottstatt as melodramaturge increased his real feeling in Roman artistic circles, since it was seen as a novel approach to their theatrical life.

Giovanni Paisiello, for example, "maestro of the Royal chamber" at the Neapolitan court, appeared in Queen Caroline's celebratory festivities. A Jacobin sympathizer during the brief Parthenopean Republic, in 1802 he went to France, and Napoleon's service, after very difficult times during the Bourbon restoration. Sardou made Paisiello the composer of the canzona celebrating the permitted Austrian victory at Marengo, and Flora Tosca's mentor. "Tosca, prima donna of the company then at the Teatro Argentina, had already established a good reputation through successes at Naples and Venice, after making her debut at La Scala as the lead in Nizza per amor. The opera made Paisiello's fortune and, after the premiere at the Royal Palace at Caserta in 1789, remained in the repertory for decades.

In that fateful year, 1789, the mother of all modern revolutions broke out in France; and it was the motto "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" that inspired the painter Mario Cavarozzoni, a Roman aristocrat educated in Paris in the principles of the Enlightenment. His pre-French stance was well known in Rome, and justifies the title "Voltairean" added by Puccini's librettist. It was in order to allay the suspicions of the police state while remaining in Rome to enjoy his pension for his picture that he agreed to paint the apsetzaito in Sant'Andrea depicting Mary Magdalene.

Both play and opera find their focal point in the complex portrait of the Sicilian baron, Vittorio Scarpia, undoubtedly the character whose psychology is most clearly delineated. The realism of his psyche is rooted in the universal historical paradigm, where men who strive for power for personal advantage have never been, nor ever will be, lacking. But his public role is merely the outward face of his personality; the motivating force behind his actions lies hidden deep within his tortured psychology. The monologues that Giacomo is so unfortunately are revealed to be the secret of perception mixed with sadism. Sardou may also have been influenced by Victor Hugo's Hernani, the tragic hero in "Esquire, tyrant by Fatima" (1833), and he would almost certainly have been aware of Boi's libretto adaptation for Ponchielli. 7

La Gioconda also gave Eliza a clear model for the presentation of characters in the opera. The relationship between soprano and baritone in Tosca closely resembles the standby connection between Gioconda and Barnaba.

6) On the relationship between Tosca and Scarpia, see the excellent commentary of Susan VanDyck-Nicolosi, Tosca's Scarpia, "The Play and the Opera in Historical Perspective" (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1999).

7) The final scene of La Gioconda was Boi's creation. In Hugo's drama, Hernani is killed by walking through the curtain of the opera at the end of the second act, (5). But it is probable that this was the source of Scarpia's fundamental idea in Tosca: the fact that Scapa's evil deeds are carried out just in time of his death. The point of ending, however, is more to demonstrate the bearing of Constanza Brandois (Laura in Ponchielli) to her husband, the Podesta Marco Malaperti (Abbay Badott), that her husband will end his own life. The play had been written and adapted by Marie-Catherine de Joffre (1873).
Are truly the clerical ones.

Puccini, who is an artist, a good friend,
Has had to return to the past
To arouse everyone's enthusiasm!
Which parts made the greatest impression,
In fact, my soul!!
Three: Bells, Te Deum, and Procession!!

The anonymous author of this sonnet in Roman dialect, published in La corri Romă on 31 January 1900, quite clearly points to some central themes in Tosca just a week after its first performance. Puccini had already evoked an enchanting artist's Paris in La Bohëme, and on numerous occasions in the future—from the Japan of Madama Butterfly to the legendary China of Turandot—he would demonstrate an ever-increasing ability to use music to paint a setting with dramatic purpose. But the ambience and the fates of the characters were never more intrinsically linked than in Tosca. Early nineteenth-century papal Rome, recreated artistically, is not merely a backdrop for the characters' actions, but plays a part in motivating their decisions and ideologies.

The prominent role of musica locale in Tosca is, among other things, the result of omitting from the libretto those acts of the play that disturbed the unities of action and place. This assured the powerful emphasis on the three locations where events unfold: the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, the Palazzo Farnese, and the battlegrounds of the Castel Sant'Angelo. If on the one hand these omissions blur some details of the plot, on the other they forced the composer to bind the political aspect of the drama tightly to the image of Rome as the capital of Christianity, a place dominated by pious-minded and cruel forces that challenge the happiness of Mario Cavaradossi and Floria Tosca. He brought about a complete interaction of character and environment, at the center of which sits Baron Scarpia.

Puccini focused above all on two extended passages: the solemn ceremony that ends Act I, and the dawn scene that opens Act III. To raise these moments to a symbolic level, he had first to illustrate Scarpia's evil, and then connect it with the Church. This is achieved at the beginning of the opera, with the curtain still down, through the strange progression of three descending major triads: tonic B♭, flattened leading tone, A (the first of the many "sacred" references with which the opera abounds); and then a massive tritonic on the altered fourth note of the scale, E (a journey through three notes of the whole-tone scale).22 This extremely violent progression (Ex. 5.16) creates, even before the text establishes a relationship with Scarpia, an atmosphere of foreboding and terror, emphasized by the interval of

22. During the opera, the whole-tone scale, mostly in fragmentary form, will be used dramatically as a musical sign for Scarpia. Many critics have noted this function, sometimes overstating its importance. The most exciting commonplace, Allan Atlas (Puccini's Tosca: A New
To grasp the connection between this theme and the “ambiental” or descriptive scenes, one should note how Puccini employs it extensively throughout the opera, at times with different scoring or varying the rhythm slightly but, save in a few cases (Ex. 5.2c, Ex. 5.2b, X), always maintaining the harmonic identity of the three chords and the extension of the last chord across the bar line. Perhaps the composer was not aiming solely at depicting “the innumerable cruelty of Scarpia” (Carreri, 194-95), but also at evoking, in an organic way, the symbol of Scarpia with the surroundings of which he is so maligned in expression. Ex. 5.3b demonstrates how his specter becomes part of the atmosphere preceding the messe and dawn scene in the last act, while Cavadarosti’s furious invective (Ex. 5.2) demonstrates Scarpia’s connection with the Church.

Example 5.3, Tosa, I. [9]

This link is emphasized in the finale of Act I, which is the climax of a dramatic progression that sets out to integrate the concepts of Roman identity, sanctimonious faith, hypocrisy, power, and corruption within one semantic field. The mise-en-scène of a solemn Church rite has obvious theatrical effectiveness, but commentators have always emphasized how, in

13. The theme returns twenty-seven times in all, in three cases transposed by an augmented fourth (E, D; B-flat major; see Ex. 5.1c, X), and once at the lower pitch. In the brief finale of the second act, after Scarpia’s death, the B theme appears three consecutive times in the minor mode, so it does for the last time in Ex. 5.10. We will see later how further independent ideas are drawn from this theme.

... order to be as authentic as possible, Puccini used the chant melody of the Te Deum sung in Rome, “there being a number of variants of this melody used in Italy” (Carreri, 216). Had this been motivated exclusively by a desire for realism, he would have used the exact intonation of the melody, something he carefully avoided, since it is common (apart from minor variants) to all Te Deums, both in the tonsor solmizensis and in the tonsor simplex; moreover, all are in the third (Phrygian) mode. Puccini, however, created his own melody (Ex. 5.3b and c) by making the last note of the second verse the first of the next (see Ex. 5.3d).

Example 5.3

a. Te Deum, a-bshipping, Insert Monos Romanum

b. Tosa, I. [9]

c. Tosa, I. [9]

The first reason for doing this may have been to differentiate himself from other composers, not least Verdi, whose recent Te Deum (would premiere in Paris, 5 April 1868) began with an exact intonation of the tonsor solmizensis at the correct pitch. But interpreting the scene in view of its musical context yields a better explanation: the entire harmonic structure of this scene is dictated by the need to begin the closing statement of Scarpia’s theme—a type of cyclic closure of the motion begun in the first three measures of the act—on a chord of B-flat.

As the chorus arranges to meet Spolato at the Palazzio Farnese, the ostinato begins on the bells ("Te tristis... Una carrozza," I, 4 after [9]), and continues through the whole of the subsequent monologue ("Va", Tosca"). This is the first touch of liturgical color, not only timbral, but also because

the bell pitches are subsequently heard as the final (B♭) and reciting tone (F) of the Gregorian chant. The simuoius violin and cello melody unwind over this bass movement, Largo religioso, while sevenths and ninths doused the tunality, establishing a mood suitable for Scarpia's erotic schema. The baron gradually moves to the front of the stage, his reflections directed at the audience, as the bishop reaches the high altar accompanied by antiphon verses recited by the faithful and supported by organ and orchestra. The situation in the foreground and background progresses in parallel toward a climax, reached when Scarpia finally reveals his intentions for Tosca and Cavaradossi ("Li, sono al cappello, / Fatva fra le man braccia"); "One to the scaffold, / the other in my arms," singing a chromatic melody ("A doppia mira e decide il voler," "I aim any desire at a double goal") sensually harmonized with ornamented triads. For a moment he stands facing the audience, motionless, staring into space, while the assembly sings an\footnote{This is nearly certain to be the final, rise to the reciting tone, and end on the final. It is now clear why he chose the fragment shown in Ex. 5.32 (demonstrating, among other things, an excellent knowledge of Gregorian chant). The melody, read continuously, is now in the eighth mode (Aypomodolidian, octave d–d, final g, reciting tone c). Puccini transposed it up by a minor third in order to have the F of the bell as the lower limit of the plagal mode, B♭ as the final, and c at the reciting tone. Thus the melody of the Te Deum ends powerfully on the first of the three chords with which the opera begins, graphed onto the Scarpia theme without any break or transitional material.}

The entire episode is therefore based on a modal framework enriched by chromaticism and modal connections, confirming Puccini's ability to

\footnotetext[15]{The orchestral instruments are four horns and three trombones, whose timbres intensify the impressionistic reference. Further reinforcement of the already impressive instrumental ensemble comes from the low drums and the organ, previously used in Gluck's Iphigenia in Tauris (1787) and in the opening of Gods.}

\footnotetext[16]{The intentional linking of the two passages to the final is confirmed by the fact that Puccini returned to Faust for the ending (see Ex. 1.9).}

\footnotetext[17]{The whole score is read as Puccini's own, "Sei giunto presso la compagna, / Tosi ed il duca si recano." This music is not merely a brief passage but a complete theme that can be heard twice in the opera.}

\footnotetext[18]{Giacomo Carissimi, "La Terza sera compone accogliendo una proposizione," C.P. 60. As the conductor rightly notes, the passaggio in fact is not "aconceous" in anything, but it is a statement of its own, independent of the preceding music.}

\footnotetext[19]{The lower voices are placed in the back, behind the painted screen of St. Peter's. Puccini began the music more precisely later, for example when he specified the arrangement of instruments in the "Marcha" of Zadig.}
of three church bells is repeatedly stated at the end of the prelude. The Lydian mode gives a folk-like feeling to the dialect song, but also instantaneous hints of Scarpia's presence from the first phrase sung by the shepherd (A pleas Be), G[then A]], E, Ex. 5.5). A few measures later the melody is supplied with harmonies that make the reference quite clear (Ex. 5.5). X.

Example 5.5
a. Tosca, III, 11

b. Tosca, III, 15 after X

c. Tosca, III, 6 before X

For this sinorllo Puccini asked Zanazzo for verses unrelated to the plot (Carner, 117), the music alone is responsible for making Scarpia's presence inescapable. The whole of this and the subsequent passage emphasize the relationship between Scarpia and Rome. The Eternal City is symbolized by the sacred concert of its bells, a long passage where depiction of the atmosphere is again shaped by dramatic logic. Note how Puccini prepares for Cavaradossi's entrance in the end of Act I. moving through a deceptive cadence from the dominant of E to that of A (Ex. 5.6). Scarpia's theme reappears ultimately out of this chord, transposed as in Act I, by an augmented fourth. (see Ex. 5.2, X), before the bass clarinet and low strings announce the B, dominant of E minor. Even though Puccini had found out the true pitch of the great bell, had the note been different he would probably have used E anyway: as we saw earlier, the coincidence of the fundamental with the last of Scarpia's triads could not have been fortuitous. In this double resolution—the transposed theme accompanied by the funeral strike of the bell, heard as the strings play the despairing melody from Cavaradossi's aria—there is the clearest musical sign of how the story will end.

Music in the Service of Action

As mentioned earlier, Tosca differs from Puccini's earlier operas in that it adheres strictly to the unities of time, place, and action. The events take place in the Caffo Thursday concert, just after the opening, to the "oca quinta" ("four o'clock") set by Scarpia as the lovers' final meeting. Moreover, the three locations are only a few hundred yards apart, so that the daybreak of Act III and Cavaradossi's attic last little longer than the real period of time necessary to get from the Palazzo Farnese to the Castel Sant'Angelo, were the heroine crossing Rome instead of a stage. Unity of action is the foundation of the plot, governed by rigid logic; every premise has a consequence, and there is no deviation from the path of events, from Angelotti's escape to Tosca's suicide.

Such a narrative foundation required a musical technique different from Puccini's two preceding operas, in which lyricism was much more important. The harmonic palette in Tosca is more dissonant, orchestration, tempo, and dynamics are often pushed to extremes, loaded with unbearable expressive tension throughout a plot that, in little more than an hour and a half, involves an escape, torture, news of a suicide, an attempt at sexual assault that ends in the murder of the attacker, an execution, and the heroine's suicide.

This extreme concentration of events obliged Puccini to adhere to a compact, swiftly tempo, and thereby to a narrative technique based on recurring themes and reminiscences that identify figures and situations in no particular hierarchical order. Instead, in Tosca Puccini wove a dense musical material capable of providing a flexible commentary on the frenetic action.
sequence of events. Scarpia's chords, with the related whole-tone scale, is the axis on which the opera turns. Besides being intricately connected with the setting and its atmosphere, the baron's theme also establishes the nature of his relationships with other characters—when, for example, the chord progression overlaps in counterpoint with the Sacristan's motive (II, 38), as Scarpia enters Sant'Andrea, almost suggesting a musical twitch of the police interrogation that is in progress.

Scarpia already hovers around the music that accompanies Angelotti's entrance, after the first three chords. A concise theme, made up of a simple tetrad chord sounded violently by full orchestra (Ex. 5.6a: Y'), is followed by a complete chromatic scale descending from D to D in duplet fragments (Ex. 5.6a: Z). In the continuation the texture diminishes (Ex. 5.6b) to two clarinets over a low bassoon pedal, while the motive takes the form of a viola lament (minor second, Ex. 5.6b: Z') and the thirds of cell Z become diminished fifths (Ex. 5.6c: Z').

Example 5.6

Example 5.7

Thus the passage is not simply a label applied to Angelotti, nor do the diminished fifths simply create a reference to the diluters in music already sketched by Scarpia's chords in the whole-tone scale. Rather, the entire sequence represents in real time the terror of the escaped man, while simultaneously alluding to the circumstances that have caused such anguish, as though Scarpia himself were hounding the fugitive. The recurrences of this motto (Ex. 5.6c: Y') generate polyvalent references: we hear it as the love duet as Cavaradossi tries to make Tosca leave because "Urge Poppe" ("Work calls me", I, 5 after (38), when in reality he needs to be alone to help his friend; and again when the soprano, talking to Scarpia, is amazed by jealousy at the thought of her "bel nido innonzato di fango" ("lovely nest be- fondled with filth"). In both cases the theme provides dramatic information, in the first case conveying imminent danger, in the second depicting the effect of Scarpia's plan, which is to make Tosca jealous in order to uncover the hiding place of his prey.

When the Sacristan enters, Angelotti's tetrad chord, this time with a different ending, now alludes to his sister, the Marchesa Attavanti (Ex. 5.7a: Y'). In this form it underlines Cavaradossi's first entrance, reappearing during his conversation with Angelotti. In Act II, the motive emphasizes Spoleto's suspicions, his conviction that the painter knows Angelotti's hiding place (II, 39); finally, it opens Cavaradossi's futile, heroic outburst when news arrives of the French victory at Marengo (Ex. 5.7b: Y').

Example 5.8

Example 5.9

The whole-tone scale has an important role in this network of cross-references, and in the course of the opera it becomes an important dramatic and musical influence, affecting the structure of other themes. For example, the motive with which Angelotti explains that he escaped from the

30. Unlike Angelotti's motive, from which it derives, the second tetrad chord traces a modulatory progression. According to Carné, the latter theme belongs to Cavaradossi ("Symphonic," in Giovanni Pianissimo Favor, 24); according to Roger Parker, it belongs to Attavanti ("Notes: Act I in Perspectives," Older: 146). In relation to the word, both are right, given that the Sacristan sings the motive when he states "Era gia girato / il foco rimonto / Giovanni Cavaradossi" ("I could have sworn that Giovanni Cavaradossi had returned"), and the painter raises Atavanti when Scarpia reveals to him the identity of the woman in the portrait. But the application of labels at all costs ignores the fact that the theme does not or much identify a character as a mixture of feelings and circumstances, from flight to terror to conspiracy.
Castel Sant'Angelo (Ex. 5.8c) is repeated in identical form when Scarpia orders the search of the Atravanti chapel (I, 5 after 16); but when the baron hands Tosca Atravanti's fan, the same motive develops in a whole-tone scale (I, 3 after 17), instilling in her the suspicion that her presumed rival is at the villa. The extremity of pitches and instrumental timbre subtly depict the effect of Scarpia's insinuations (Ex. 5.8d):

Example 5.9
a. Tosca, I, 3 after 16

b. Tosca, I, 17

So far we have seen how Scarpia's motto interacts with the music of other characters, creating a sense of his continual underlying presence. But the chord sequence also generates a separate theme, which appears for the first time when Cavaradossi suggests the "rifugio impenetrabile e sicuro" ("impenetrable and safe refuge") (Ex. 5.9a): a triad of C is added at the beginning, and one of G before the resolution onto F, thus using all but one of the notes of the whole-tone scale. The full scale then occurs during the interrogation, in the bass descent from D to E (Ex. 5.9b), reappearing in its original form when Tosca reveals Angelotti's hiding place (Ex. 5.9c), and again when Scarpia settles the question by revealing to Cavaradossi his lover's betrayal (II, 43). Through this expansion and contraction of the steps of the scale, the music suggests the idea of an omniscient and sadistic man, who interrogates and tortures merely for pleasure.
Although analysis can reveal a system of relationships based on Scarpia's theme, musical continuity is achieved through different means. Carter points out a "cadential figure" that appears when Tosca conjures up for her lover the image of the house "as she'd seen it in her dreams," during their first-act duet (Ex. 5.10a, b). In Carter's view, the motive represents Cavalli's themes in the country, and it does in fact reappear when the house is mentioned both by Mario and Angelotti (Ex. 5.10b, c), and by Spedalieri and Scarpia (in their report on the painter's arrest: II, 7 after Ex. 5.10b). It first appears, however, when Tosca sees the house, accompanied by the German motive (Ex. 5.10c), showing that even this theme is flexible, linking aspects of the plot without being connected precisely to a concept or fact. To obtain continuity, Puccini constructed themes and melodies on a common pattern. The crux of this particular motive is a grappetta, a turn-like figure (Ex. 5.10d, e). Similar figures decorate the melodies at many points in the drama, from the music that accompanies Scarpia as he writes the note (Ex. 5.10e), to the funeral march as the soldiers form their execution squad (Ex. 5.10f), to cite just a few.

Example 5.10
a. 

b. Tosca, III, 1 after Ex. 5.10b

32. Carter notes that "aesthetic characteristics of the melodic style in Puccini's production for grappetta-like figures either for a decorative purpose or in the manner of expression" ("Style and Technique," in Giacomo Puccini: Tosca, 97).
Cell Q thus creates a broad system of relations, and does not merely identify the painter's affections for Attavanti; it also heightens the unfortunate corollary of the singer's passion, given that Mario introduces her as a jealous woman, a woman who, itself, recognizes a little later (Ex. 5.11b). But when Cavaradossi passionately takes up the love melody, his words are all too clear: "Mi fa Tosca dolcissima ("My sad Tosca, dear Tosca") and later "Mi fa, amore, insieme / e dirai sempre: "Floria, t'amo!" ("My life, my troubled beloved I'll always say: 'Floria, I love you!'"), I. III. Love also triumphs in its physical form, and the cell seals the duet (Ex. 5.12a) as Tosca reacts with a touch of pious cloying to her lover's caresses.

The reference to jealousy returns when Scarpia sees Tosca suddenly disappear onstage (I. 4 after I.3); he swiftly seize the chance to take advantage of her anxiety, showing her the fan left behind by Attavanti (Ex. 5.13c); compare Cavaradossi's melody, Ex. 5.12b: Q. Cell Q alludes to the development of his plot, penetrating the second theme, which accompanies Scarpia's subsequent monologue (Ex. 5.13b). When the curtain rises on Act II, the cell is heard again, together with other motives, during Scarpia's reflections, as he looks forward to the success of his plan (see below, Ex. 5.16). Later, the theme adheres even more tightly to the action, and when Q is heard after Cavaradossi's torture it loses any specific connotation, becoming part of the musical fabric that accompanies the decisive confrontation between Tosca and Scarpia (5.13b). However, themes and drama once again establish a semantic relationship in the opening section of the next act.

33. Certainly, the motive does not exclusively much itself to Attavanti. Parker writes: "Cavaradossi's comparison of Attavanti and Tosca in "Rondellia amorosa," etc., with the words"...Il man di lui -...Tosca sei tu," the instrumental solo in the aria features a reprise of the "Attavanti" theme (Ex. 5.13b). Are we to assume that Cavaradossi has changed his mind? Clearly, such innovations are desirable. The motive is placed here for a musical reason, namely that its harmonic tendency is appropriate as a guide post niche in which, while the tonal structure is required" ("A Study of Act I in La Boheme," p. 36). While certainly not wishing to ignore musical reasons for ending the aria with the most important lyrical melody, we should not fail to acknowledge the way this ending functions in relationship to subsequent repetitions of the theme, in particular to the music accompanying Tosca's entrance.
For the first time, Puccini had to confront the problem of depicting a constantly evolving action, and had, therefore, to create a musical commentary in which themes were put into play thanks to their similarity of construction, adaptable as they were to the opera’s many changes of mood and frequent changes of direction. To search for the techniques used in Le Roi David and Manon, and those that would also dominate Madama Butterfly, would be pointless.

**Rome, 17-18 June 1860**

*Act I: Church of Sant’Andrea delle Valle, Angelus*

The formal structure of *Act I* of *Tosca* is based on the recurrence of the “Scarpia” chords. The explosive beginning provides the impetus for the following scene, a chain in which every action is brutally interrupted by the next, in a narrative style that closely follows the frenetic interweaving of events. After the brilliant portrayal of Angelotti, Puccini skillfully introduces a comic episode that in no way weakens the main thrust of the drama. On the surface, the Sacristan’s little pantomime scene provides a humorous, tension-relieving diversion; but it does so while building the religious subtext of the opera. The lack of the chorus is depicted by a little skipping theme, which the rats imitating its manner—“riding up the words” corresponding to a “nervoso segnato da un rapido movimento del collo e delle spalle” (“nervous—in a rapid movement of the neck and shoulders”), noticed by a circle in the score (Ex. 5.14a). The Sacristan’s passage, grumbling, is just as ready to kneel and pray when he hears the first three of the twelve chimes that announce the Angelus (Ex. 5.14c) as he is to show his bigotry in a scandalized reaction to the Magdalen that Cavaliere di Malatrasi is painting.

The tenor aria, “Recondita armonia,” is the first moment of contrast, and the colors mentioned in the text are transferred from his palette into the orchestral color of the two flutes. The impressionistic parallel fifths and fourths introduce a lyric expression of feminine beauty, which inspires a brief, but passionate, central section (see Ex. 5.14b) that contrasts with the Sacristan’s grumbling: “Scarsi e vivaci sono i pastori nati” (“Sheep and swine, not with voices”). The piece closes with a reprise of the introduction, and as the tenor soars up to Bb the Sacristan squeaks indignantly: “Queste diverse goeve / che famo concorrera alle madonne / mandan tenue d’interno” (“These women, who vie with the Madonna / carry the

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15. Here, Puccini adopted a musical technique highly reminiscent of the scene in which Elektra, disguised as the "Cacchettina nera," burns the twelve victims of Orestes. The pitch of the bell is the same (C), as its function as a guide among which appear a brief, hurriedly executed series of chords. Perhaps the composer was encouraged to adopt the technique because he understood that in both cases the bell is a catalyst for supernatural events.
Cavaradossi scarcely has time to recognize Angelotti before their dramatic encounter is suddenly interrupted. Tosca is the third Puccini heroine to be heard before she is seen on stage, but this time we do not expect a gentle young woman like Fidelia or Mimi. The power with which her voice projects over the music of the two Jacobs (Ex. 5.7.27) is reflected in her tense, suspicious attitude on entering the church (although the love theme on solo flute and cello unfolds lyrically over violin and viola arpeggios. See Ex. 5.7.4).

Floria Tosca, famous singer (or, rather, classic prima donna), also belongs to the devotional, Roman atmosphere; she has brought a bunch of flowers to ask the Virgin’s advance pardon for visiting her lover to arrange an evening at his villa—and perhaps for the inevitable “sala” that will ensue during their ardent love duet. In the long opening section, sacred and profane love intermingle without mediation: Cavaradossi arouses Tosca’s suspicion, the Madama receives her floral tribute. The heroine’s overflowing sensuality, inseparable from her religious zeal, is revealed in “Non la sospiri la mia casetta” (“Do you not long for our little house?”), the melody lightly doubled by harp and cello (Ex. 5.7.3). The structure of the duet, the center of which is this Allegro modensato, is dictated by its complete expressive nature; when Tosca reaches the height of passion, Cavaradossi quite spontaneously joins her in song (Ex. 5.7.4). The number ends with a melody that derives from the initial love theme (Ex. 5.7.5), cf. Ex. 5.7.27; 13), again developing a thematic idea according to the requirements of the action:

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stink of Hell”). In his reactionary valle system, “sono ingiusti tutti quanti” (“All are unjust”). The “cani di volcariani” (“enemies of the holy government”) arc exercised with a quick sign of the cross before he leaves, taking two snuffs of tobacco (also meticulously annotated)—but not before he has put aside a basket of food refused by Cavaradossi, a significant action that not only reveals his greed, but later becomes important evidence in Scarpia’s investigation.

After having ushered his beloved out through the church door, Cavaradossi resumes his conversation with Angelotti, anticipating the dramatic nucleus of the opera when he reveals that “E' buona la mia Tosca, ma credente / al confessor nulla tiene calmo” (“Tosca is good but credulous / the hides nothing from her confessor”). This puts the dangerous relationship
between faith and politics in a nutshell, the allusion to a confessor makes a
subtle but direct connection with Scarpia, whom Cavaradossi later, and in
heroic mood, describes as a "bipocco sacro" ("bipocco santo"); see Ex. 5:12). Each line of this
verse is accompanied by the three chords of the opening,
thus reinforcing the intersection of various sides of Scarpia's personality—
his sexual perversion, his frequenting of the church—which help him
obtain confessions. The association, moreover, is a rapid synthesis of the
main aspects that fuel the plot.

A sudden cannon shot interrupts this section, and from here until the
end of the act—as noted soon after the premiere in that Rome couture—
the "clerical aspect" dominates. The final words between the two friends
are heard while the Sartor's theme is played again by full orchestra, as if
to reinforce the close relationship between Scarpia and his world. The
Sartor reappears, leading a group of clerics, to prepare the solemn Church
rites in celebration of the presumed Austrian victory at Marengo. The
union of society, politics, and faith is indicated by the bells, whose chimes'
add color to the celebratory dancing of the children and the Sartor's
(an anticipation of "doppio soldo"—"double pay").

This is certainly not an upstage setting for church, as the stern baron
hypocratically reminds them when he suddenly enters, announced by his three
chords, bringing their small celebration to an end and silencing everyone
in terror. It is a masterly coup de théâtre, one that establishes a clean break
between the first and second parts of the act, introducing a mood of oppo-
sition, suspicion, even plain evil. The long wait before he appears—he has
been "announced" many times by the theme that keeps him constantly
at the center of the action—stimulates interest in his character (a tech-
nique also effective in Butterfly and, above all, in Turandot), and offers fur-
ther proof of Puccini's musical strategy in controlling the opera around him.

According to Carner, the reason for the baron's appearance in the Church
of Sant'Andrea is inexplicable unless we know Sardou's play, in which a
robber, dynamiting the church, has revealed Angelotti's plan of escape to the Chief of Police
(Carner, 1971). But his decision is in fact entirely plausible: Scarpia shows
that he is aware of the Attavanti private chapel, which he immediately has
his men search. Finding the Marchese's fan, besides the terrorized Sac-
trian, like any good spy, supplies him with the piece of evidence that com-
pletes the jigsaw: the lunch basket, carefully hidden, is found empty in the
chapel. By this time, Scarpia has a good idea of what has happened, and
Toxca's sudden return—to tell her lover that she is now unmarried that
evening—quickly prompts his suspicious imagination.

The bells sound again during the ensuing duet. They are one of the fun-
damental means of characterization in the opera, going beyond merely
marking the solemn ceremonial rites to symbolize the hypocrisy of the
two characters (both characters whose scarcely concealed erotic desire is
aimed at very different objects).18 The baron's offer of holy water to Tosca
is significant in this environment of suave blackmail, and the skill with
which he plays his cards leaves no doubt that his plan will succeed. As the
fateful start to fill the church, Spoleto begins his search, and Scarpia starts
the monologue that will lead into the Te Deum.

In the context of a drama that aims to link the Church with temporal
power, this finale is fundamental. On the symbolic level, it is one of Puc-
cini's most successful creations, and his attention to the smallest details of
the ceremony is clear and well motivated: it is through these details that the
action is made symbolic, that Scarpia's sexual perversion is revealed as the
other side of his hypocrisy. Both facets are connected to the exertion of
power through the "official" background of the ceremony, without which Scarpia's outrageous proposals would lose much of their effect. It would be
difficult to better this synthesis of the official characteristics of papal
and political Rome behind the finale we can glimpse the specters of the Bor-
gias, the Carafa, and all those others who have continued the tradition in
government buildings of the Italian capital.

Act II. Palazzo Farnese. Night

The second act opens with a musical structure governed entirely by the
aim of conveying a private portrait of Scarpia before Cavaradossi enters.
It is organically based on the tonal areas of Scarpia's theme: the descending
melody of the brief prelude, which accompanies his entry, gravitates around
the dominant pedal, with dominant thirteenth chords and tonic chords in secon-

d inversion. In the space of a few measures, three themes from earlier in the
opera follow one another, as if Scarpia is reflecting on recent events (com-

pare Ex. 5:16, W, Q, L, with EX. 5:16a: W, 5:1la and 5:12b: Q and 5:12
and 5:13b: L).

The gavotte in D major, played by offstage flute, viola, and harp, is Scar-
phia's cue to mock the sophistications of court, with a subsequent brief
arioso in A-flat: "Ha più forte / sopra la conquista vienata / chel mili-
liùo consento." (Violent conquest has a stronger flavor than magnificent
victory). In the central section, an unexpected shift of E major (a clear re-
rence to the last two chords of the Scarpia theme) and the chorus ascends
to high E and F ("Bravo. La voce brama / persegùo, me ne nato e via la
getto; I desire. I pursue what I desire, take my fill, and cast it aside"). The

18. The bells used here (W, Q, E, L) are within significant ones that are sounded
differently, both because the tempo is much faster than in the finale, and because they have
to give the impression of a festive and undetermined pealing.

to show off when he praises the work of his hired thugs as they search
the villa ("Finito... razzaolo... frugolo...". "Sniffing around! Rummaging!
Ransacking!") their movements mimicked by little bursts of syncopated
figures exchanged in the woodwinds.

The realistic inclusion of stage music, heard through the window that
Scarpia has thrown open, makes tangible the submerged wait for the diva
—engaged in soliloquy—who has then to get to the ground floor of the Far-
nese Palace. Performance of the celebration cantata blends with the in-
terrogation scene, and the additional sound source, referring as it does to a
space larger than that of the stage, allows for the simultaneous development
of two related events, the offstage situation reinforcing the main action
and becoming the catalyst of subsequent developments. The double basses
underpin a lugubrious cantilena in the woodwinds (Ex. 5.17, X), which acts
as a background to Scarpia’s investigation, alternating with the offstage
voices, among which Cavaradossi, with emotion, recognizes Tosca’s. At
this point spectators assume the character’s viewpoint, and in this way their
involvement in the event increases. Puccini exploits the combination of
sounds in a great coup de théâtre, uniting the woodwind theme with the

37. This effect involves a narrative technique called “localization,” which Luca Zopoli
deliberately exploits in L’opera una ramato (Venice: Marrullo, 1903), 133–40.
end of the cantata, so that the increasing musical elaboration causes Scarpia hurriedly, and like a true puppeteer, to close the "real" window. In this way, attention is focused on his final questions before Tosca bursts breathlessly into the room, just in time to hear the order to begin the torture (while the cantata erupts loudly in the brass).

The exchange of civilities between Scarpia and Tosca does not last long. The orchestral texture consists of brief, piercing woodwind phrases, with violas and cellos reaching high on their fourth strings; and as Cavaradossi's offstage cries provoke Tosca's anguish, the conversation turns into a terrible confrontation that places the characters in radical vocal contrast.¹⁹

Example 5.19. Tosca, II, 2 after ²²

![Tosca score](image)

All non-gestural function disappears from the music, which becomes purely a background for the action. The violent tension of this passage, the heightening of vocal declamation, and the aggression of the orchestral accompaniment make the opera seem nothing less than an anticipation of expressionism. But not even here does Puccini entirely lose sight of the underlying religious ambience, having Spoleto recite some lines from the Dies Irae.

After Tosca's confession and Cavaradossi's futile heroic response, news of Napoleon's victory, the conflict resumes when the diva asks Scarpia the price of his favors. His ironic response is underlined by an ascending woodwind motive that is directly related to the last that drives him (Ex. 5.19a–b), and which eventually leads him to the violin, untransfigured erotic exclamation, "Che dev'io fare?" ("She diva's love already consumed me"). In the midst of this highly charged atmosphere, Scarpia is temporarily checked by the sound of military drums (Ex. 5.19c).

TOSCA: SOME BETWEEN FAITH AND POWER

which again emphasize the nightmarish, inexorable progress of time articulated by external events, while cellos and basses re-echo the motive of Angelotti's escape (see Ex. 5.8a–b).

Example 5.20

a. Tosca, II, 26

b. Tosca, II, 2 after ²²

![Tosca score](image)

The sinister rhythms bring to mind the deadline of Cavaradossi's execution, allowing Scarpia's law to dominate the scene. It is at this point that the soprano sings "Vissi d'artista," a number that releases us briefly from the demands of unrelenting drama. Puccini wanted to omit it, because it
interrupted the continuity of the action; but in the end he let it remain, and rightly so, because its effect is to expand psychological time, as if Tosca’s life is flashing before her eyes. The effect is achieved through the semitonal technique of rapid bourdon, to the main section in E-flat, which is an exact repetition of the music in A-flat to which Tosca entered the Church in Act I (see Exp. 5.116), there is a constant tension toward a crystallization of time, even echoes of past anguish (see Exp. 5.110 and c) are fixed in an illusionary moment one wishes would last forever.

At the close, the inexorable cadence of Scarpia’s three chords introduces the peremptory demand: “Risolvesi!” (“Decidete!”). Spoleta’s breathless return, bringing news of Angelotti’s suicide, precipitates the final deception: Scarpia orders that Cavaradossi be shot in “a false execution,” but it is understood from the way he and Spoleta communicate that they have a secret agreement. Tosca accedes to her persecutor with a nod, and the “ora quarta” (“four o’clock”) is fixed for a meeting. But before yielding to her blackmail, the singer confronts Scarpia, eventually overcoming him both physically and vocally, in a passage that demands all the performer’s acting skills.

While the head of police writes in the safe-conduct, tragic music in G-sharp minor is heard (see Exp. 5.114). Tosca sees the knife on the table, seizes it, and hides it behind her back. The killing of Scarpia is accompanied by several tense minutes of piercing timbres at full volume, fragmentary phrases, high notes shouted rather than sung—and although it saves Tosca from sexual violence, it does nothing to alter her own overt religious belief. The act closes with a pantomime described in detail in the score. After having removed the safe-conduct from the right hand of the corpse, Tosca declares, “E avanti a lui tremavo tutta Roma” (“And all Rome trembled before him!”). Then, moved by Christian compassion, she rearranges the body, placing a crucifix between the hands and putting candles at the sides, all her gestures accompanied by restrained music in which the “lust” theme sets off an ironic act of musical mourning, the dead villain’s three chords repeated over and over until they have encompassed the entire chromatic scale in the space of just eleven measures (III, from III). Eventually, the side-drum rolls rise Tosca, reminding her to hurry toward the Castel Sant’Angelo to save Cavaradossi. This highly effective scene was created by Savelli for Bernhardt, and Puccini wrote his brief postlude in order to retain it with the intention of reinforcing the ambiguous presence of the religious element.

Act III. Platform of the Castel Sant’Angelo, four o’clock

The music of the finale of Act II links to the beginning of Act III almost without break. The Roman dawn is not a neutral ambiance, since the shepherd’s gondola and the bells make it seem unrelated, if not downright hostile, to the victim’s fate, permeated as it is by signs of Scarpia’s restlessness and vitality. The love theme (Q, III, 12) weaves into the musical fabric, before the strings melody that announces Cavaradossi’s appearance—a desperate melody on which his entire solo is based—emerges from the bow E of the great bell. After having coldly refused the comforts of religion, the painter belies the guard for pen and paper. But he tries in vain to leave a last farewell for his lover. A cello quartet creates his state of mind,41 the music reassembling themes to create new combinations, not relying solely on Cavaradossi’s memory, but also on that of the listener, who once again is invited to share the character’s emotions. The duet melody (Q) is followed by the end of “Vissi d’arte,” itself a reference to Tosca’s interrogation (see Exp. 5.110 and c), and a situation that Cavaradossi did not experience:

Example 5.39. Tosca, III, 3 other (I)
The linking passage between this section and the start of the main aria is played by the clarinet, which begins the cantabile while Cavallari's mutes mumble nostalgically about a night of love (Ex. 5.21a):

Example 5.21

a. Tosca, III, 3

The woodwinds then take up this "memory" theme, until the artist begins his melody. At the third statement, painful memories return with a force that only the desire to live can provoke. "E non mi posso disperare!" (And I die desperate!) (Ex. 5.21b) is the parole sacre that makes Cavallari's farewell to life all the more tragic. This phrase inspired the whole piece, Puccini having firmly insisted that Iliana alter the philosophical monologue so admired by Verdi. 47 The ephemeral, sensual reminiscence of a night of love is one of the best illustrations of Puccini's modern and Decadent art: all heroism is absent.

It is a consistent attitude, since the only authentically non-religious character in the opera could hardly appeal to other religious, exaltations of art, or nostalgia for Rome, but had no choice other than to prepare for death with desperate awareness of the very same consciousness that had undermined the faith of Puccini's generation in current values. Cavallari maintains his understanding of the inevitability of death even in the face of the sacrilegious scenes of Tosca: if one accepts the logic on which the opera is based, only a believer can have faith in his confession. The music contradicts Tosca's confidence, and the still-fresh memory of the terrible events of Act II make her tale more and more electrifying; the leap to high C finally flashes the knife blade before our very eyes. The dialogue then fragments into an extremely modern kaleidoscope of impressions, and...
CHAPTER FIVE

THE TOPICALLY OF TOSCA:
A MARGINAL NOTE

Of all Puccini's operas, Tosca is even now one of the most alive in the collective imagination. Its vitality is primarily due to technical factors: the composer faithfully carried out his intention of depicting a reality, an environment, and characters, placing music at the service of the drama, and in so doing—as usual—he modernized his musical language. Innovative orchestral combinations, melodic invention, and motivic development arise from an economical and rational use of material, one that looks forward to even more daring structures, in line with developments elsewhere in contemporary European opera. Lacing the late-nineteenth-century sensibilities of Sardou's play with a linguistic modernity that found ardent admirers in Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg, and an equally passionate detractor in Gustav Mahler, Puccini set out into the new century on the best possible part.

The influence of the opera spread in many directions. A primary route has been indicated by Fedele D'Amico:

The novelties in Tosca are inseparable from its expressive discoveries: Scarpia's first theme, those three chords that open the opera and, with some variants, conclude both the first and the second acts, certainly offer new harmonic ideas, but the innovative force of these "novelties" is in its showing a human monster that until now no music had looked in the face. The twentieth century looked at it, in music, more and more willingly.

Salome, Elektra, Wozzeck: sooner or later we will have to find the courage to add Tosca to this list; chronologically, it would come first.

If, after Scarpia, erotic perversion—often with sadistic overtones—involves many characters of various origins, so was the singer Floria Tosca joined by other prima donnas in fin-de-siecle opera, the profession adding a special fascination to them all. Leoncavallo's impassioned Zerlina acts in the colorful world of the cafe-concerto (1896), Adriana Lecouvreur, the tragic actress of the Comédie Francaise immortalized by Giza (1892), plays the part of Racine's Phèdre; two singers compete for attention in Strauss's Ariadne auf Naxos (1911-16), Berg's Lulu fulfills her dream of excelling as a soubrette (1937). But Tosca's closest relation is the heroine of Janáček's The Makropulos Case: 1926. Not only is Elina, like Tosca, an opera singer, but in the second act she also needs a safe-conduct in order to survive: the formula for the elixir of life created by Father Hieronymus, the alchemist at Rudolph II's court in magical sixteenth-century Prague. And she, too, can obtain it only by submitting to the erotic desire of a baritone-baron, Jaroslav Prsa. In contrast to her "cousin," and over the course of a long life (317 years) in which she has excelled outrageously under various persons, Elina has become a cynic; yielding to her blackmail does not involve any violation of her moral code, merely a tolerable irritation. Janáček's homage to Puccini's masterpiece is clear, and his originality lies in the fact that the reference to another famous drama enriches the opera with new nuances, stimulating implications drawn directly from the comparison.

To conclude, let us turn briefly to the relationship between opera, history, and ambience. Papal Rome at the beginning of the nineteenth century is, without doubt, a fundamental element of the plot, and the Sicilian baron Scarpia is its incarnation at the center of the cast of characters. Out of these elements Puccini strove to create an unforgettable picture of a corrupt and bigoted world. Thanks to Sardou, every date, every situation, becomes a believable moment of the past recuperated artistically, but Puccini's greatness lies in his exploitation of the dramatic foundation to enrich the narrative, overcoming the restrictions of theatrical performance and the prescribed length of a performance. Whoever wrote the Roman account that遏ved the "nécessiterical" in Tosca was quite familiar with the composer's meticulous research, and also knew its true function. Vertisimilitude stimulates the spectator's symbolic imagination, and if works of art are ways of interpreting reality, Tosca is preeminent in representing, as no other work does, the authentic spirit of Rome. It is an eternal spirit that has spanned the centuries, from the imperial age to papal Rome—city of the Counter-Reformation, of Pius IX, the capital of Christianity, and, finally, of Italy. In depiction through the eyes of the Jacobins Corvaccidi.

47. Although well known, Mahler's pronouncement, in a letter of 1903 written to his wife from a small town in Austria, is worth repeating: "Let me have there was a visit to the Opera: Tosca, so I told you... Act 1: Esqui pagansary with coaxing chanting of bells (especially in part 3 from Italy). Act 2: A man near the horrible city. Another visited by a mighty host. Act 3: Monstrous monstrosities and a look over all Rome from a cascade. Followed by an entirely fresh ocean of lolling a man's death by a fire-party.

I got up before the shouting and went out. Needless to say, a masterly piece of work. Nowadays may longer orchestras to perfection." Cited in Alan Mahler, Gustave Mahler: Memories and Letters, trans. Bess Copleton, ed. Donald Mitchell (London: John Murray, 1979), 278. Beyond any music recognition of Puccini's with as orchestration, seeming not at all to be taken for granted in an Italian, Mahler's judgment sounds exquisitely but tempered, particularly if use thinks of his own frequent recourse to his symphonies to "convene" music, in particular of course to its. Perhaps the quality of a provincial Austrian opera house was none too high?


49. Tosca opened at the National Theater in Rome on 12 January 1900, on the evening following Janáček's Jenůfa. Jenůfa, both as a critic and composer, greatly admired Puccini's opera.

50. All this strengthens the biographer Eugene Guèrin's opinion that the writer of the novel was Guglielmo Zaccaria, the same poet who had written the libretto for Donizetti.
TOSCA: ROME BETWEEN FAITH AND POWER

The intensity of the phrase "E avanti la vita trovasi Roma" ("And all Rome trembled before him"), was much greater than usual, heightened as it was by Tosca's gesture toward the map. The final act was extremely bare: a chair in which the victim was shot from behind, steps leading to a window high enough for Tosca to throw herself into nightmare emptiness.

The three unities were not disturbed by this setting, and only the cupola of St. Peter's in Act III was missing from the traditional scenery. Rome was reconquered intensely on a symbolic level, and its spirit remained intact, retaining its power to influence the conclusion of the tragedy. The taking of the stage and beams of light cutting through the darkness increased the sense of pessimistic gloom, one of the most distinctive features of Puccini's opera.

Miller made various statements that provide the final element in understanding the topicality of a masterpiece like Tosca:

'The shift in historical period is merely an attempt to promote greater analysis. Identification with events narrated in Puccini's tragedy is a method... that intensifies audience participation; they are no longer faced with a Romantic opera set in Napoleonic times, but rather, through updating the setting, by a historical context of which they... have personal recollections, directly or indirectly.'

'The main reference is, of course, Bistone opera... But it is not only about a historical context. The entire period lends itself brilliantly to an illustration of Tosca's underlying theme, to giving an exact, not only figurative, image of dictatorship, of torture... Moreover, I felt even more justified in doing this after having read Gaía Servadio's book about Luchino Visconti, in particular the episode that told of Visconti's imprisonment and the actress Maria Denisi's attempt to free him. Denisi went to Pietro Koch, the head of the OVARA, the fascist police, head of the group that terrorized Rome in that period. Koch replied to Denisi's request by saying that he would free Visconti if she were to accept his sexual advances.'

The Florentine production's contribution to a renewed understanding of the values in Turandot is thus clear. The musical structure of the opera proved perfectly capable of supporting a setting almost a century and a half later than the original, thus demonstrating the universality of the dramatic and

was perhaps not unimportant in the protests and disturbances during the world premiere.14 the audience were devoted enough to the voices of their beloved leaders not to want them ridiculed quite that clearly.

Interpretative issues raised by two recent stagings involve a final version of Tosca's connection with history. A version in June 1991 tried to establish a realistic connection with the original settings of the opera via a different medium, a film performance in real time.15 The studio orchestra was linked to the church of San'Andrea, the Palazzo Farnese, and the Castel Sant'Angelo, where the stagings performed, and each act was transmitted on television at the exact time of day specified in the score.

This project did not, however, take into account Casini's famous maxim in Pagliacci: "E li tre ma la vita non son la stessa cosa." ("Theater and life are not one and the same"). True unity of action can exist only on the stage, and each place, when loaded down with its reality (including in this case the reflections of neon lights from the Campo dei Fiori), lost its symbolic identity. Despite the global broadcast permitted by modern technology, the universality of the opera was belittled.

The staging of Tosca by Jonathan Miller for the 49th Maggio musicale in Florence in June 1966 was much richer in ideas. There was significant protest against the decision to shift the action to Nazi-occupied Rome in spring 1944, making Scarpia's role of the OVARA16 and Cavarella as an intellectual in the Resistance. It was said that the opera lost its distinctive traits, defined by its closeness to reality, and that the parts of the libretto referring to particular events contradicted the new historical setting. But with few adjustments to the text, the modernization was perfectly plausible and, moreover, effectively restored the essence of the drama.

The production involved a single set, the stage sloping from left to right, and needed few alterations to different locations. In Act I, the light projected onto windows at the back, and a row of altars and catacombs, with the scaffolding and painting on the right, made the reference to a ruined church insurmountable, rendered even more desolate by the total absence of decor. In Act II, an enormous map of Rome placed center stage suggested a venue in which a powerful puppeteer could control the entire city.

15. Regarding the first version of the libretto, when the work was still in its early stages, Ricordi wired a draft to Milan: 'I don't like this ghastly present in Rome. For example, they will create bad feeling! And they're disgusting. They should be abolished, find something else. Have cholera and ergotism in the church choir' (6 November 1900, Gau, ms. 575, 554). It is clear that Iliac, fervent anti-fascist that he was, had exaggerated slightly in his negative demarcation of the Roman religious environment.
17. Opera di Vigilanza e Repressione Antifascista, the political police in fascist Italy. (Trans.)

aesthetic message of Puccini’s masterpiece. The driving mechanism of the violence of power set in motion against the background of the Eternal City is unchanged. If anything, the shift from Bourbon to Fascist occupation reveals quite clearly Titus’s exposure of the unchanging behavior of the leaders, secret police, and supporters of all modern dictatorships, their cruel pleasure in oppressing aspirations toward freedom.

Madama Butterfly
An Exotic Tragedy

When Puccini, with his publisher Giulio Ricordi’s agreement, decided to return to La Scala for the world premiere of Madama Butterfly, he gave his numerous enemies a unique opportunity for spectacular revenge. Not since April 1889 and the three indifferent performances of Edgar had there been a Puccini premiere in Milan, and during that period Ricordi had been more able to control the mood of the La Scala audience. In the following years, there were clear signs that the war between publishing firms in Italy was still being waged. In the whole of Puccini’s career, for example, Manon Lescaut was the only opera that took both the public and critics by surprise, achieving a glamorous and unsporadic success. But the decision in 1896 to return to Turin for La Bohème did not turn out well; though the audience was extremely appreciative, the same could not be said of the critics, with a few rare exceptions. Also in Rome reviews of Tosei had not been encouraging, nor were protests entirely absent, though they were of little significance since they were restricted to a small faction of those present, partisans of Mascagni. Tosei was Puccini’s first work to have the honor of a review in an academic journal, from which pulpit the Wagnerian Luigi Tochetti peremptorily declared: “Everyone said: ‘Tosei is a fine subject; Puccini is a talented composer.’ Well, in my opinion Tosei is nothing special, precisely because the composer’s talent is modest.”

The opinion of the critics was vital to the decision Ricordi made during this period. While his energetic rival, Edoardo Sonzogno, relied primarily on importing contemporary foreign works—French, and later German (since after an explosive beginning, the success of Mascagni and Giordano had waned)—Ricordi was trying gradually to export his best producers to the rest of Europe. This meant, first and foremost, Puccini’s...
opera, which boasted an up-to-date compositional technique as well as immediate emotional impact. Conditions were not yet favorable enough to allow Puccini's world premieres in foreign theaters, although the French market looked encouraging after the success of *La Bohème* in 1896. In terms of cultural prestige, quality of staging, liveliness of intellectual and critical ambiance, and the long runs of performances these guaranteed, Paris was an enormously important venue, as was Covent Garden in London, which on 12 June 1900 staged the première of *Turandot*. Puccini was also very popular in Latin America, traditionally a fertile ground for Italian opera, and a few years later the US market would open up. And although, after a promising start both personally and professionally that lasted up to *Manon*, Mehler barred Puccini from the Hofoper in Vienna, performances in German theaters and in Austria-Hungary had been very good since the première of *La Fille du regiment* in Munich (1892).

With Ricordi continuing to rely on Italy for world premieres, the publishing war inevitably heated up. For Sommoggi, domination of the Italian stage was essential, and to be achieved by any means. For example: in spring 1895, Sommoggi was under contract as impresario to La Fenice in Venice (a job he often took on personally), and staged the world première of Leoncavallo's *La Bohème*. Just a few days later, Puccini's *La Bohème* was staged at the nearby Teatro San Benedetto (spring season, from 17 April), and it is clear from the Venetian newspapers that the local boos by the audience had been prearranged.

But it was on 17 February 1904 that the war probably reached its height. *Madama Butterfly* had been carefully rehearsed by the great conductor Cleofante Campanini, and the twenty-seven-year-old Rosina Storchio—who had been chosen to sing Cio-Cio-San as early as 1902 (Gara, no. 193, 230)—was at the height of her career. Giovanni Zanella at Pinkerton and Giuseppe De Luca as Sharpless were added luxuries in a cast fittingly completed by Giuseppina Giacchini (Suzuki). For months, Tito Ricordi and Hofmann had been preparing the staging (although the perhaps excessive attention to realistic effects during the orchestral intermezzi that accompanied the heroine's vigil jarred with the overall context).

Excesses of every kind had been advanced for the brutal way in which the public dismissed the opera. The newspapers attacked Puccini because the heroes and heroines of his operas present no variety in type and sentiments. Almost all of them resemble each other. But *Butterfly* seemed no more than an encore of *La Bohème*, with less freshness and abundance of form. (Napoli, in *La Pervenusa*).

The reference is chiefly to what seemed a similarity that verged on self-borrowing—one caught by almost every journalist—between the melodies that accompany the heroines' entrances. This was unjustly extended by Napoli and others to include the general style of *Butterfly*, the anticipated masterpiece now defined as a "potpourri of the three fine operas [Manon, La Bohème, and Turandot] and others too" (*Gazzetta teatrale italiana*, 29 February 1904). Other, similar statements also lack calm, clear judgment, as is readily apparent in the rest of Napoli's article, in which he admits that Puccini's harmony has exquisite originality and elegance, except when he overindulges in... the Japanese palette that Mascagni first used in *Iris*, which many recalled yesterday.

Anyone who knows *Iris*, the Japanese opera by Mascagni fresh from its debut in Rome (1898), and its well-received production at La Scala (1899), will appreciate the weakness of such arguments, since Mascagni's imitation of the exotic is in no way comparable to Puccini's, either in orchestration or in musical treatment—indeed, it is surpassed in almost every way.

To obtain a better understanding of how the unfortunate première really went, it is more useful to read the letter Puccini's sister Remmelde wrote to her husband just after the performance:

"We went to bed at 2, and I can't close my eyes. To think we were all so sure that everything would be all right! Giacomo had not spoken about the opera at all. We went with very little trepidation... The audience was against us from the start. We realized it immediately. We never saw Giacomo, poor man, since we could not go backstage... Lubat, the leading tenor, was there, and Giacomo imagine their delight. I should like to be at home, but not yet. I abandon Giacomo at a moment like this! Would that he had never thought of staging it at La Scala! (29 February 1904; Marchetti, no. 351, 352)"

Elvira Puccini was of the same opinion:

"Mila is Hell, and I would already have left were it not asf Hollow to abandon Giacomo in his misfortune. At first, he put a brave face on it. Today he is disheartened, and it makes me really sorry for him. Poor Giacomo! How wicked the audience was!... Before the performance many were saying: 'It will be a fiasco for sure!' (To Odilia del Carlo, 20 February 1904; Gara, no. 351, 165)"

Obviously, Elvira sided with her husband, but in the circumstances could not speak publicly. But she had no particular reason to lie. Puccini's confidence is proven by the fact that, for the first time in his career, he had invited his famous sister Remmelde, and his niece Albina, to a première of one..."
of his works. But he was certainly aware that the failure had been organized. He spoke frankly, the day after the affair, to his friend Camillo Bondi:

With a sad but strong heart I can report that it was a real lynching! Those cannibals didn't listen to a single note. When an appalling orgy of lunatics, drunk on blood, burst into "Butterfly," it remains as it is in the most heartfelt and evocative opera I have ever conceived! And I'll have revenge, you'll see, when it's performed somewhere less vast, less full of hate and passion. (18 February 1904; Marchetti, no. 292, 293)

The following day, this conviction was expressed publicly, albeit cautiously, in an interview with Giovanni Pozza in the Corriere della sera. Puccini's friend Alfredo Casell and Tito Ricordi also spoke out. "We will stage the opera, with cuts, in a smaller venue, where perhaps virtue will not infringe," the composer said. "On the other hand, there are rumors of powerful, well-organized conspiracies that will try to prevent a second performance from reaching the end," added Pozza. The case had been made, and it remained only to stamp it with the necessary seal. This occurred the following month in Musica e Nuovi, in an unsigned article most likely written by Giulio Ricordi himself, editor of the monthly journal. It is resolvedly polemical:

Greats, foils, bowls, laughter, bellows, gravers, the usual solitary call for an encore, made purposely to egg the audience on; this, in short, was the reception the audience at La Scala gave to Puccini's new work. After this pandemonium, during which almost nothing could be heard, the audience left the theater happy as a lark! Never have so many been seen, joyously satisfied as if by a collective triumph in the theater, the joy was at its highest, hands rubbed in glee to these very words: commasiomus et, parvus rebus ("It is finished; spare him who has been buried"). The performance in the auditorium seemed as well organized as that on stage, since it began precisely when the opera did. It seemed as if we were witnessing a real battle, as if the Italian army in the world had wanted to attack the stage to drive away all Puccini's Japanese.... This is an exact account of the evening, after which Puccini, Giacosa, and Illica, in agreement with the publisher, withdrew Madama Butterfly and returned the fee for the production rights to the theater management, despite the lively interest of the directors, who wanted to continue staging the opera.

4. Musica e Nuovi, 39, no. 3 (15 March 1904), 189. The allusion to the starred ranks of the Russian army is to the very exotic, virtually unknown attack by the Japanese on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, five days before the premiere of Madame Butterfly at La Scala (25 February 1904), where the front pages of newspapers were still devoted to this conflict.

MADAMA BUTTERFLY: AN EXOTIC TRAGEDY

Although unproven, the presence of a hostile clique in the theater seems at least probable. Their motivation is not certain, but can plausibly be generalized. Mosco Carner, who believed the event had been planned, emphasized the influence of the clique at that time, recounting an incident in which the great Russian bass Shalyapin had a disagreement with the head of the clique at La Scala, who had offered his services in 1901 when he was singing in Munich (Carner, 150).

In this context, the event finds a more logical explanation, as does the immediate revival of the original little more than three months later; although Puccini made more than minor changes, they were not enough to justify such a rapid shift of opinion. For this writer, hearing the original Madama Butterfly restaged at the Teatro La Fenice at Venice in 1983 dispelled all doubt: the first version was indeed inferior to the definitive score, but no one could call it a failure. However, the Milanese had at least one practical result: in Puccini's lifetime none of his other operas would be premiered at La Scala.

ANXieties AND FEARS FOR THE NEW ERA

The advent of a new century was not without its consequences. Although Puccini had gained success with the confidence of a thoroughbred, he was persistently tormented by doubts and melancholy. Profound inner turmoil did not, however, prevent him from continuing to choose those subjects most suited to his talents, guided as he was by near infallible intuition, in the Italian tradition. But signs of imminent crisis began to become more frequent: increasingly, he tended to create problems for himself, sometimes with no good reason, multiplying the levels of indecision that made the choice of every work problematic. Puccini's existence was almost entirely centered on composing, and to deprive himself of creative achievement meant losing the part of his personality that could find fulfillment only in the theater. His attitude, as the years went by, almost given one the notion that he instinctively thought of his genius as something apart from himself, almost mechanical, while the depths of his soul remained inscrutable to the outside world. He referred to this jollily many times, in his letters and in improvised verses on the backs of postcards—fragments that allow us to

5. The performance was the "premio Abruzzi." On this occasion, the Teatro La Fenice published a commemorative program book, Madama Butterfly: La prima e ultima versione (Venice: Teatro La Fenice, 1982), with contributions by Enrico D'Amico ('Dalla prima all'ultima butterfly,' 112-14) and Eduardo Rigacci ('Il titolo libretto,' 153-59). In Madama Butterfly (Venice: Teatro La Fenice, 1982), 160-62, a thorough study of the variants in the various versions). Unfortunately, the proceedings of the conference dedicated to the problem of the different versions, held in March 1982, were never published; but they prompted a careful re-examination of the question by Carner, which may be read in the posthumous reprint of his monograph (Carner, 437-38).
glimpse a kind of Tuscan "spleen" in his character, caused by the intense contrast between reality and appearance.

The composer entered the new century having just reached the critical age of forty. Tosca was his best calling card for success in the principal theaters of Europe (also because this brutal, harsh, and aggressive opera signaled a break from the poetic world of La Bohème). We have seen how he hated to waste time. As soon as he added the last note to a score, his letters reveal it: there is a burst of requests for collaborators on new proposals (immediately subject to close scrutiny), and to people whose opinions he valued about possible operatic subjects. Fueled by an almost obsessive personal reading of literature, his attention toward any genre that could possibly be set to music—whether theatrical or narrative—came to verge on mania. He formed the habit of periodically making inquiries about the most recent successes in opera and the theater. Beginning in November 1899 he began to travel through a vast range of subjects, in a search that, in breadth and variety, exceeded all previous ones.

Having refused Don Pierre, a one-act drama by the Neapolitan Roberto Branco, Puccini showered Luigi illica, his favorite collaborator, with possible titles: Dostoevsky's From the House of the Dead, Richepin's La Gia, Maeterlinck's Pôles et Miroirs, Zola's La Fausse de l'abbé Marie, Balzac's Le Dernier Chouan, Pierre Louys' Aphrodite, Rousseau's Le songe d'amour, Paul de Kock's Daffi. After trusting at length with the idea of setting a trilogy by Alphonse Daudet (Tarascon, Tarascon sur les Alpes, Port-Tarascon), Puccini sereenized Goldoni's comedies, from La baulee checcacce, and seriously considered Illica's proposal of adapting the vicissitudes of Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI.

In May 1900 there was talk of a possible collaboration between Puccini and the future "lord of Italy," Gabriele D'Annunzio. The project undoubtedly had its attractions to pair the most representative Italian opera composer with a great and well-established poet, consummate interpreter of Decadent aesthetics. From the point of view of publicity, the collaboration could have been put to great advantage by someone as shrewd as Giulio Ricordi, though he never exerted direct pressure on the composer. The first proposal, dating from six years earlier, had been formulated by Carlo Clessetti, head of the Naples branch of Caso Ricordi. Puccini replied that I myself know that D'Annunzio merits very special attention... It has been my idea for years and years to have something wonderfully original...

6. The special attention to Daudet's story emphasized the focus between both libretto and Puccini favored comparison between the character of Tarascon and Verdi's Falstaff, as opera that for many years discouraged the composer's often-expressed inclination to set a comic subject; second, because from the first months of the century (the first documents about the Tarascon works date from between March and May), the idea of constructing an opera by drawing together three different episodes was outlined. This idea would take more precise form in September 1900, when Puccini worked out a plan for an evening of single-act works from the best talent in Italy. Explain any genre to him. Poetry, poetry, tortured tenderness, flash, shimmering drama, almost unexpected, inescapable finales. (15 July 1902; Gara, no. 235, 261). In the face of such a list, expressed with such decided clarity, D'Annunzio's faith probably wavered, and to those who know his work even slightly, nothing will seem more distant from Puccini's dramatic and aesthetic world. Exalted rhetoric, elegance for its own sake, impressionistic verse; D'Annunzio's qualities could only hamper the composer's artistic development. In the years to come, new attempts at collaboration would nevertheless be made, but for the meantime the composer dropped the matter by writing to Luigi illica (one way, among others, of returning his faith to his collaborator): "Oh marvelous of marvels! D'Annunzio is my librettist! Not for all the gold in the world. Too heavy! I want to stay on my feet" (15 May 1900; Gara, no. 261, 266).

None of the subjects mentioned so far had made as great an impression on Puccini as David Belasco's play Madame Butterfly, which he saw at the Duke of York's Theatre in London in June 1900. The composer was won over by the tragic situation of the heroine, played by Evelyn Millard, even though he understood not a single word of the text, as he was almost completely ignorant of English. Being able to grasp the sense of the action without understanding the verbal language, just as when Bernhardt had played Tosca, insured him of the communicative power of the text, and thus of its universal success.

Back in Italy, Puccini immediately began to badger Giulio Ricordi, showing his firm intention to set Madame Butterfly. "I should be grateful if you would tell me whether you have written to New York for that American subject. I think about it constantly." (16 August 1900; Gara, no. 139, 201). All this enthusiasm is easily explained: the composer had come across a highly sentimental drama that offered numerous opportunities to tug at the heartstrings. He could take up a thread interrupted by Tosca, repop the world of La Bohème, and further delay by some years a full coming to terms with the changing role of the twentieth-century opera composer, which he intuitively sensed. Butterfly was therefore a pleasant detour on a route already mapped out, a way of rediscovering his youth before his inner crisis became more acute and fully assimilated into his artistic personality.

Puccini continued to consider other possibilities for some time, but only as a courtesy: on 22 November he again wrote to Giulio Ricordi to turn down a proposal that had come up in the meantime (Constant's novel Adolphe, judged too similar to La traviata) and at the same time to confirm his enthusiasm for the Japanese subject:

The more I think about Butterfly the more excited I become. Ah! If only I had a little more time to work on it! I think that instead of one set we should be able to make two out of it, even quite long ones. The first set in North
CHAPTER SIX

America—and the second in Japan. Illica would certainly be able to find what he needs in the novel. (Adami, no. 69, 89)

The reference to a version with an American prologue is mysterious, and is never clarified in the course of the correspondence. However, it is important to note that from the start Puccini thought of the opera in two parts, a structure for which there is no model in Belasco's tragedy, and which essentially was retained even when composer and librettist agreed to divide the second act into two.

The task of dealing with Belasco was entrusted to George Maxwell, Ricordi's representative in New York. The business side was complex, since Belasco had himself adapted a short story by the lawyer John Luther Long; the firm had to be sure of not paying two sets of author's rights. Ricordi was not in favor of the new subject, although he moved with his usual dispatch to ensure that Puccini obtained it; exclusive ownership of the rights was not settled until April 1901, a month after Puccini had sent a specially prepared Italian translation of Long's novel to Illica.

The librettist drafted the original plan of the two-part opera on the basis of this source. The first part, as well as an entire one-length evening in the theater, was an introduction supplying the necessary background to Belasco's play, which hinged entirely on the heroine's unrequited love for Pinkerton's return. The second act was originally divided into three scenes: (1) Butterfly's house, (2) the Consul's villa, (3) Butterfly's house (Gara, no. 240, 241). Illica later changed the setting of the central scene, shifting it to the American Consulate. Given the proportions of this sketch, it seems that they toyed with the idea of making the first scene an act on its own. Meanwhile, Giacosa was working on the libretto, which was finished in June 1902, after Puccini had already made a good start on composing the first act.

7. The short story Madame Butterfly by John Luther Long was published for the first time in the Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine 55, no. 3 (February 1898). 191-192, and appeared in the same year in a collection that the theatrical devoted to Japan.

8. The publisher always maintained an unswerving opinion of the Japanese opera, which he defined as a “sweetharter.” We learn of his initial reaction to the following letter in French from Puccini to Maxwell on 21 September 1900, in the Capadocia (hereafter CC). Joussot at the Ricordi Archives: “It was I who suggested to Mr. Ricordi to write a short opera on the play that I saw in London. Mr. Ricordi is not very encouraging, although he likes the play—I want to work on the little effort any way, and would thus like everything to be arranged with Mr. Belasco, that is, to have the rights for the opera in all countries” (CC, 5-9).

9. My thanks to Arthur Gruen for allowing me to quote freely from his transcription of the Capadocia material that has also permitted me to transcribe some letters published in the correspondence. I also owe him thanks for putting at my disposal his transcription of part of the letter, also in the Ricordi Archives (see Arthur Gruen, Madame Butterfly: a personal story of the composer,” in Borsi–Ginzburg, 141–48).

10. The short story was subsequently published in a collection by Andrea Clerici in La lirica, 4, no. 2 (February 1909): 171–172, and 4, no. 3 (March 1909): 193–204.

But suddenly the composer had a change of mind, realizing that the Consulate scene would irreversibly damage the work's coherence. This meant choosing between various endings offered by the sources; in Long's novel the two women meet at the Consulate, while in Belasco's play, Kate Pinkerton goes to Butterfly's home. Puccini wrote to Illica on 16 November 1902:

Do you know what I've realized? That the Consulate would have brought the disaster. The opera must be in two acts: the first one yours and the other Belasco's play with all its details. I'm absolutely convinced of it; the work of art will make a great impression this way. No encores, and the end having lasted the audience riveted for an hour and a half! It's extraordinary, but it's the lifeblood of the opera. (Gara, no. 187, 225)

On the same day he confirmed his new conviction to Giulio Ricordi:

The Consulate was a grave mistake. The drama has to run to the end without interruption, closed, efficient, terrible! With the opera in three acts, we were bound to fail. . . . I'm sure I can hold my audience, and not send them away dissatisfied, by doing it like this. And in the same way we would have a new type of opera, and enough for a full evening performance. (Adami, no. 72, 91)

Puccini was without doubt fully aware of the risk he ran in writing an act this long, but he saw an element of modernity in the arrangement. He returned to the subject with increased strength and conviction, in particular persuading the reluctant Giacosa, who once more threatened to withdraw from the enterprise in the belief that the alteration would damage the opera. But Illica, as ever, was quick to understand the composer's reasoning, and in December 1902 defended Puccini's idea to Ricordi, who was still decidedly skeptical about the new dramatic shape:

When Puccini arrives and you feel your heart contracting in a breathless span at Butterfly rushes off, returns, and presents the child, you will understand my enthusiasm! I am sure that only then will you see how the Consulate scene would have weighed down the whole opera! No, after the last scene, and the presentation of the child everything must be dramatically reversed, whether in one scene or two, but keeping it in the same setting. To go down that hill, down that path we know

10. As Giovanni Puccini and Madame Butterfly: a personal story of the composer, 187, the Consulate scene does not disappear entirely, since part of it is transferred to the last part of the opera. Moreover, the possibility of two dramatic endings played a fundamental role in the process of reviewing the opes. On this see Giovanni's detailed discussion in “Lettamon F. B. Pinkerton: Problems in the Consulate and Performance of Madame Butterfly,” in The Puccini Companion, ed. Minnesota Puccini and William Wann (New York and London: Norton, 1998), 182–9.
so well, to pass through the port, cross the European city, enter the quarter of the Consulate—don't you feel the effort? Isn't it useless distraction? (Gara, no. 293, 228)"

And so the opera assumed the shape we now know. Though Giacosa inclined to a more traditional form, Puccini, backed by Illica, glimpsed the possibility of something new and modern. As we will see, the musical structure of the drama rests on this foundation.

"MAESTRO GIACOMO PUCCINI IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT"

On 27 January 1901, Italian culture suffered an enormous blow: the death of Giuseppe Verdi. Attending the funeral service, Puccini was probably conscious of remaining the last major figure in Italian opera, notwithstanding Mascagni and the other composers of the so-called "Giovanne Scuola." Puccini shared with his colleagues Giordano and Francesschi a passion for motors rather than stylistic similarities. He already owned a motorboat, which he used to go hunting on Lake Massaciuccoli, and had made some useful flying visits to the beach at Viareggio through the canals that run close to the sea. In 1901 he had been a regular visitor at the International Automobile Show in Milan, and jokingly informed Illica of a future project about la lettre:

"Today we're going with Giobrando on an automobile business to various workshops. We have great ideas. We dream of a 100 horsepower stereomobile. Operas that are too heavy will, though, be banned. (6 May 1901; Gara, no. 254, 212)"

The idea of a technological traveling theater was discarded, but Puccini acquired a brand-new 5 hp Clement Bayard, certainly not the fastest of cars, but useful enough for short trips. He had his first accident, not a serious one, in April 1902. But on 21 February 1903 he wrote to Illica from Milan with a parenthesis of misfortune worthy of a libretto:

"I am leaving now for Turin for five or six days with Elvira, by car. God protect me! (Gara, no. 302, 233)"

On the night of 25 February, making his way home after dining with his friend Alfredo Caselli, a mistaken maneuver caused the car to go off the road and roll over a hill. His wife and son, traveling with him, escaped serious injury, but Puccini fractured his right ulna—he was trapped under the car and very nearly crushed. For Madama Butterfly, of which he was currently orchestrating the first act, it was a very serious blow. Forced to keep still, he gave in to his natural inclination toward pessimism several times:

"I have a very uncommon temperament! Only I understand myself and I am distressed by it; but my sadness is continuous, it gives me no peace. Even working does not console me, and I work because I have to. My life is a sea of sadness, and I am lost in it! I think I am loved by no one, by no one at all, you understand; and I think that many say I am a man to be envied. (To Illica, 24 November 1903; Gara, no. 332, 333)"

The accident could have presented a good opportunity to revive his marriage with Elvira, long since in crisis. Their relationship had become particularly suffocating after the marriage of his stepdaughter Fosca (whom he treated as his natural daughter), as witnessed by a letter of August 1902:

"You have opened a great void by leaving, Fosca, and the life that we lead, the two of us, Elvira and I, is simply terrible! We are victims of our temperament; now you are no longer here, and we miss you deeply. (Gara, no. 281, 212)"

"This marital crisis actually had a very specific cause. In January 1901, on a train journey to Turin, Puccini had met a young female student with whom he began an intimate relationship, which Elvira discovered accidentally. The family was shaken by the first tremor, and Puccini wrote to his sister Ramolli, who had taken Elvira's side, saying that he was ready to make amends by marrying his partner, well knowing that, as long as Nuccio Gentiggiani was still alive, there was no risk of losing his freedom."

I have borne much trouble, but have only myself to blame; I am well on the way to recovery, but the one who suffers greatly is sick because of it, in poor Elvira, reduced to the lowest state—no ever the blame in mine, however. I have perhaps aggravated her illness. As for the divorce, if she succeeds in getting it, I have no problem with getting married, if only for Tante's sake. (5 May 1901; Marchetti, no. 247, 253-54)"

He was nonetheless careful to sever his relationship with the mysterious Corinna, crossed many times among his circle of friends during the period..."
of wheelchair confinement caused by the car accident. A strange atmosphere gripped the house of the illusory invalid, one full of vague unease.

On 23 May 1903, Puccini told Illica, using expressions worthy of Act III of La Bohème, that:

"They undidaged me yesterday, and progress was so insignificant that Guarnieri declared I will have another three months of it, if all goes well. I can't tell you how I feel! I was hoping to get to the piano and begin work, to see foot on the ground! Farewell to everything, farewell Butterfly, farewell my life! It's terrible! The discouragement is really getting to me now. I am trying to take heart, but I can't succeed in calming myself down. Why? Who knows? (Gara, no. 113, 239)

But there was somebody else seriously concerned with the causes of Puccini's state of health: Giacomo Puccini. In his opinion, the composer had some time earlier fallen into a state of physical and mental exhaustion from which he did not intend to emerge. On 31 May he sent Puccini a long tirade:

But is it possible that a man such as Puccini, an artist who has made millions of people tremble and weep with the power and charm of his creations, has become a ridiculous and faint-hearted puppet in the unclean hands of a common and unworthy female? ... And that this man does not understand what vast distance separates love from the obscurity that destroys man's moral perception and physical vigor? Words that would cause a shiver of fear, had one not read their justification the publisher had given a few paragraphs earlier:

Certainly, the unforeseen and cursed catastrophe that befell you is the primary cause of your present state, but this had already been prepared by prior events, just as the reasons since then have helped to maintain it. ... You know very well that I am no rhetorician, pedant, or Franciscan preacher, but that I am a man of the world, sufficiently experienced to see and keep silent, to assess and condone. But in a man's life, in duties toward himself, there are boundaries that he must not cross, because beyond them is the abyss of every moral as well as physical exhaustion, degeneration of thought, madness, or cremiatria! ... Puccini, who could have been the modern Rosmini—that is to say, the real Imperatore minacce—is on the verge of becoming another poor Donizetti."

13. This letter is published in the anthology in Claudio S. Samuel, Puccini, 60–68.
14. Ibid., 61–69. Sarra refers to two further letters from Ricordi, dated 1902 and 1903, in which the publisher expresses similar worries: "Puccini is a man who is not to be trusted and to his friends! Everything indicates that his book, the success of his new work, the movement of his body, his drivel, his moods baffle! And how I should lie here in a false prophet!" (69).

MADAMA BUTTERFLY: AN EXOTIC TRAGEDY

Far from acting the morosini, Ricordi flirted for the life of his favorite composer, who under the circumstances, perhaps inadvertently harboring the same fear, did not reply to his publisher but instead confided in Illica:

Without evidence he should not accuse me like this, but all the rumors and reports have made him judge too harshly. Even about my illness he's not right. ... The affection he has for me grows from the letter like the sun, and I am consoling that. (4 June 1903, Gara, no. 315, 240)

Luckily, Puccini was not diagnosed with the dread of syphilis, merely a guiding form of diabetes. The last act of this small tragedy with a happy ending was the final break with Corinna, who in the meantime had threatened to make their correspondence public. While the whole affair passed into lawyers' hands, Puccini set about making the exquisite sacrifice. The morning after the car accident, Narciso Guarnieri died; but before the widow could enter into a new marriage about ten months had to pass. On 3 January 1904, in Turin, La Scala, Elvira Bonturi became Elvira Puccini.

THE SOURCES: BETWEEN REALISM AND EXOTICISM

The Japanese subject awoke an interest in Puccini; he already felt for exoticism, a new direction that would further establish itself in subsequent works, from La fanciulla del West to the unfulfilled Turandot. At the beginning of the twentieth century, exoticism was not an established fashion; but it had at least been tried out in contemporary theatre, as in operetta."

Since Félicien David's opera La Péruvienne (1851), composed after the success of the symphonic odes Le Début (1849), exotic opera has been the last and monopolized by French composers, with a theater in Paris that specialized in the genre. In the vast repertory of the Théâtre Lyrique between

15. On 7 December 1903, Ricordi had written to Corinna Ricordi: "But assured that I am behaving myself now—because I was frightened by the letter from the lawyers in Turin, and wrote a sharp letter to Corinna, telling her that I don't deal with intermediary lawyers, rebuking her sharply for going to this depth, laying my correspondence before a chief priest, and that in such matters I would rather deal with her directly. Thus about the reply I enclosed the other day—but believe me on my honor, I was in no way inclined to conciliation—never itself", Peter Rose and Dieter Schwemmer, Editor, "Lettre de M. Ricordi à Mlle Puccini", "Recueil de lettres du Prince à Giacomo Ricordi", NRM 11, no. 4 (1970): 87.
1854 and 1870, the Orient was primarily represented by a fairy-tale India that provided opportunities for sumptuous decor: Adam's St Jéan's Roy (1854), Le Roy's SchahBaluchistan (1854), Rivier's Le Stara, and Bizey's Le Réveil de Bâche (1863).  

Even biblical subjects, or subjects generically set in a mythic past, such as Saint-Saëns's Samson et Dalila (1870) and Massenet's Ezdrache (1880), took on exotic coloring, since in order to imitate the Oriental composers had long used a kind of "standard" language, based on a limited number of elements in melody (small intervals used as generative cells, augmented seconds, oscillations around one note, melismatic writing), harmony (frequent alternation between major and minor, considerable exploitation of modal sequences and parallel chords, pedal notes, unisons), rhythm (rhythm to the beat of drum and repeating rhythms), and orchestration (prominent use of percussion, a predilection for the nasal timbres of the woodwind, usually double reeds, and for flute). 

No specific elements were used to differentiate locale: the India of Dever (Lalla Rookh, 1863) and Massenet (Le Roi de Lahore, 1872) resembled the Egypt of Verdi (Aida, 1874) and Bizet (La Juive, 1874); or Gounod's Brazil (Il Giauvaro, 1872)—with, of course, from the stylistic idiocynarities of individual composers. Saint-Saëns used some "authentic" themes in La Princesse Japonaise (1875); a magic potion causes the heroine to dream of living in Japan, as did Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado (1883); in Ira (1888) Massenet attempted to reproduce the atmosphere more realistically by using recreations of original instruments. Except on rare occasions, the non-European setting is primarily a place of escape, to be set against Western reality. 

Giuseppe Meyerbeer was the first to dramatize the confrontation between the exotic and the Western world. The last two acts of L'Africaine, a hugely successful grand opéra of 1864, are set in India;公主 Sibilla, in love with the Portuguese Vasco da Gama, resigns herself to letting him flee with India, thus inaugurating a veritable chain of remigrations by Oriental women for the sake of Western men. While the heroine's sacrifice in Meyerbeer's opera is driven primarily by selfless love, Lakmè (1853, Le Déluge's Indian masterpiece) is different. In this story, as would be the case in Butterfly, the irreconcilability of racial and cultural differences plays a fundamental role. Attracted by the beauty of Lakmè, daughter of the Brahmin Nilakantha, the English officer Gérard provokes the sacred garden. The heroine is the agent of her father's revenge, and leads Gérard into a trap. But after having cured him from a stub wound inflicted by Nilakantha.

West versus East

Wherever his operas were set, Puccini was always at pains to characterize the atmosphere realistically, as he had done in Turandot. After having tried in vain to arrange a meeting with the Japanese actress Sada Yacco, who was on a European tour with her husband Otojiro Kawashima in 1902—although in all likelihood succeeding in attending a performance of their show at the Teatro Lirico in Milan between 25 and 28 April—he again turned to Mrs. Ooyama, from whom he obtained most of the information he needed.

She told me so many interesting things, sang me some native songs, and promised to send me some music from her country. ... She didn't find the name Yamadera suitable since it's feminine, and also inappropriate because in Japan they give suggestive names, suitable to the type and character of their dramas. Neither is uncultured’s name right. Similarly, the names Saruminden, Linco, Sanyo, etc. are also wrong. (To Guido Ricordi, 18 September 1902, Adami, no. 74, 93)²³

In his search for material to use in the operas, Puccini took down melodies on manuscript paper and listened to records from Tokyo, and consulted some publications that quoted Japanese songs. An investigation of the way the composer used original melodies is indispensable to understanding his approach to the Oriental world, since the space they occupy in the score is significant, in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. Almost half of the first act is dedicated to evoking Japanese color; music constructed on authentic themes occupies a quarter of the total number of measures, while another fifth is devoted to a skillful musical recreation of the Orient. (The scholar Kimuyo Powle-Olano has tracked down as many of the latter, as well as numerous metaphorical allusions, related to the actress and her reputation. See Green, "Lise-Maria E. B. F. Fabritius," 170–73, 176, n. 15. But the two librettos that follow Long’s example in the account of Cio-Cio-San’s visit to the mission, and the forewarning of her religion at Puccini’s registration, an episode entirely absent in Belasco, "Gusapole" becomes "Oshikido," the name of the god Saruminden and Sanyo, which Suzuki was to have revised at the beginning of Act II, are correct to "El Taztagh de Jarambo / Saruminden de Emon."²²)

Puccini’s name was probably Le Mandarin japonais, as Isolde Miyagawa has pointed out in "Some Original Japanese Melodies in Madame Butterfly," in GPCV, 178. The collection contained music used during the performances of the Kwakwara Play Company in 1900, arranged by Gratien and arranged by Bennett. Other books available at the time included Le banjo en Japon by the collector Alexandre Kreis (Florence, 1878), and Francis T. Pick’s The Ethnic and Musical Instruments of Japan (London: Bandfield, 1895). We are informed of the dispatch from Japan in 1901 of a case of discs with a hundred titles in Kimuyo Powle-Olano, Puccini’s "Madame Butterfly" (London: Verlag für symptomatische Musikwissenschaft, 1956), 48.

²°. Of 460 total, 237 are Japanese, 61 have an Oriental coloring (44%), of these, 370 are based on prevailing themes (25%), 149 on inverted themes (19%).

²³. Ilica and Giacosa took from the mood the starting points for a more detailed description of the sentiments: certain details of the interior of the house on the hill and the view...
as ten original themes (transcribed here and compared with Puccini's versions, in the order in which they appear in the opera).\[132\]

Example 6.1:

(A). Belgie-jiebi and Butterfly, I, [133]

(B). Hana sake han and Butterfly, I, [133]

(C). Ume no Hiro and Butterfly, I, 3 after [133]

(D). Sake and Butterfly, I, 4 after [133]

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4. The list supplied by Powell-Okura (Puccini, "Madama Butterfly," all-63) is very detailed, and also full of information — on which I drew here — on the sources. The present tran-
In chronicling these motives, Puccini did not look for exact correspondences with the plot. Shiryu-ndo ("Melody of opposition") was chosen because Long had paraphrased its words, which were used in the first version of Butterfly's Cazzone, where she describes to Sharpless an imaginary meeting between her child and the Emperor, who makes him Prince. The use of the Japanese national anthem "Kimigayo" ("The Dynasty of the Gods") to solemnize the geisha's marriage is pertinent; while the popular song "Mynoma (II)", which bears the emblem of the Mikado, becomes associated with rich Yasukuni, probably by way of the title, "Noble Prince." Kappo

15. The verset of the arts "One was made" were then radically altered in the definitive version; see below, pp. 231–33.
16. The melody appears at the beginning of Sharpless's visit, then explodes in a roar of colour when the Japanese prince is introduced (II, 5b).
music ("The neck above the head is in love," 1) a common and vulgar popular song, is inappropriately used when Butterfly inadvertently shows her leg to the Consul, thus again in the aria "Cie tua madre," (E) in canzone guiraldes, (2) in 8 before (3), and finally as a gentle lullaby after the night vigil ("Dormi, amor mio," (4) to (5) in the finale. Puccini made a less serious mistake, but undoubtedly one with comic implications, when he had Suzuki sing her prayer to the melody of Debussy's "(The high mountain," (6), a song about cucumbers and eggplants. The other melodies merely create atmosphere: "Echigo-fun" ("The Dancing Lion of Echigo," (7)), Kabuki theater music, "Ode to Nihonbashi" ("The Nile Bridge at Oedo"—the ancient name for Tokyo—(8), and the three songs dedicated to the flower season, Sakura ("Cherry blossoms," (9), Hanami no haru ("Blossoming spring," (A)), and Ume no haru ("Spring among the plum-trees," (B)).

All the melodies, with the exception of C, move in brief phrases within a restricted range. Seven make use of the pentatonic scale, six of them anhemithonic (D, E, F, G, I, J); one has an added ornamental tone (L, F). This scale has been called the "Chinese scale," since it was long thought to have originated in that country, before the discovery that it was equally widespread in Asia, Africa, the Americas, Australia, and even in European popular music. The lack of semitonal pull makes the pentatonic scale, along with the whole-tone scale, well suited to characterizing a Japanese atmosphere, whose refined static quality is one of the dominant stylistic traits of Madame Butterfly. 18

Puccini knew how to insert both authentic and invented ideas into his harmonic language in a manner that made them sound natural. In the pro-

17. "Chinese (Puccini's Madame Butterfly," 55-60) notes that behind the words of Ume no haru is a hidden allusion to the story of Sagami no Michitaro, a favorite of the Emperor, who bathed in hot springs to become more intelligent. The modern cover is more likely to be an allusion to a real-life Ume no haru, and Mis Ogami might have sold the tale to Puccini.

18. The pentatonic scale is the principal adored artistic scale. Its notes are usually divided into two, or two plus three (6).

The whole-tone scale divides the octave into equal parts, and two versions are possible: 6 and 6. A characteristic of the scale is its lack of the dissonant thirds of the leading tone (from which descends its melody, and the intense to all intervals of a fourth. As well as Delius and Puccini, all the principal European composers of this period used it: from Strauss to Berg, Borodin, and many others. A common of Schoenberg, who also made use of it, is wondrous song: "Some think that the whole-tone scale arose from the influence of Chinese music..." But for myself, however, I have never been acquainted with any music..." So do I believe that the Romance of the French, who have perhaps greater access to be the Japanese, have taken advantage of their access expressively to import this raw produce of a free. I believe, on the contrary, that the whole-tone scale has originated in all contemporary music, quite of its own accord, in a natural consequence of the most recent events in music." Arnold Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, trans. Roy E. Carter (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), 390.

The orchestra plays a fundamental role in characterizing the tragedy. The usual orchestral forces are strengthened above all in the percussion section, the tom-toms and Japanese bells together with cymbals and tubular bells. Mascagni employed similar instruments, making use of the three-stringed koto of Kabuki theater (the shamisen), and having a real oboe made that was smaller than usual. But the plot of Iri, a drama of Japanese love, lacks the contrasts between very different worlds that prompted Puccini to find particularly brilliant effects in order to create juxtapositions, also through orchestral style. In the opening fugato the strings characterize American efficiency, while a little later they play a tremolo of passage, which gives an ethereal texture to the motive with which Goro marks the entrance of the heroine and her female companions (Ex. 6.1A, E).
Among numerous noteworthy examples, it is worth citing the beginning of the concertato's central section, in which Butterfly's relatives throng around the wedding belfry. The transparent effect is achieved with considerable skill (Ex. 6.3).

Example 6.3. Butterfly, I, 4

This brief passage is entirely constructed on the pentatonic scale E, G, B, C, D, which woodwinds and harps play in contrary motion in very short notes, and against which we hear graceful little motives on the piccolo, clarinet, and bells. The ostinato G–F of the violins, cellos, and timpani augments the oscillation of the flute and cello trills into eighth notes, creating an effect of tension and excess, while the upper pedal (pizzicato violins) strengthens the harmonics of the lower pedal, a double open fifth, creating an amalgam of B-flat major and the pentatonic scale (and, for a moment, the subdominant E-flat). The passage eloquently demonstrates the care with which Puccini integrated exoticism into the Western system, while maintaining the identity of both. 30

While exoticism had already been in fashion for just over a decade, Oriental music itself remained unknown, except to the few who had seen the Paris Expositions, which began with the 1890 show that so fascinated Claude Debussy and others. In the 1900 Exposition, the Kawasaki Play Company, with which Sada Yaco performed, made its first appearance in the West. Listening to the original melodies could provoke bewilderment in the public, but the themes could also function as a distinctive and perceptible sign of difference. Puccini relied on precisely this quality to enrich the dramatic message of his opera.

To emphasize how the wedding is a metaphor for American supremacy, to which the Japanese were obliged to adapt, Puccini juxtaposed with the numerous melodies describing the delicate and childish world in which the heroine lives a single American theme: namely, what was, at the time, the Navy anthem “The Star Spangled Banner” (it became the National Anthem in 1931). Example 6.4:

Example 6.4

a. “The Star Spangled Banner”

b. Butterfly, I, 4

30. After having pointed out that for Debussy, like Puccini, “exoticism is an integral part of their musical language, on the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic level,” Theo Heringer notes that “exoticism is also means of avoiding this trap (transcending locality), since one can comfortably define exoticism solely in terms. The same can be said of nationalism, despite the fact that the Orientals use this in a different way.” See L’Exotisme chez Debussy et Puccini, 143, “Antipodites” in Etudes, 250.
The melody appears for the first time in the introduction to the aria "Down came the moon" (Ex. 6.44 and d). An echo is based on words of the Imperial Commissioner during the marriage ceremony (II). In the first part of Act II it is repeated twice, with great effect, as Butterfly proclaims herself an American citizen (6 before (F)), and as she rejoices triumphantly at the arrival of the long-awaited ship (5 before (B)). The melody succeeds perfectly in making the audience assume the dramatic perspective constructed by the composer: the melody that represents the West and its values stands out clearly against the refined sound world of the Orient, just as the youthful American technological force, rapidly consolidating with unstoppable momentum, contrasts with age-old Japanese culture. Having declared herself, she could fully adjust to such anarchy, and so become "American." Butterfly must take her life as the very moment of her disillusionment, returning to the authentic traditions of her own country. In this tragic perspective, victorian is not simply a tassata: it plays a fundamental role in strengthening the coherence of the opera's overall meaning, adding new complexity to Puccini's operatic language.

FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND BUTTERFLY

The problem of the revision of Madame Butterfly presents an intricate case of musical philosophy, given that the current version derives from four very different versions: the La Scala premiere, the Brescia revival (28 May 1904), the London Covent Garden production (10 July 1905), and the French premiere at the Opéra-Comique (28 December 1905). On 22 February 1904, immediately after the disastrous premiere, Puccini revealed his intentions to Bondi:

I'm still stunned by everything that happened, not so much for the devastation to my poor Butterfly as for the poison that hit me, an artist and a man. Now they are saying that I'm reviving the opera, and that it will take six months' work. But not in the least; I'm not revising anything except a few details. I will make some cuts and divide the second act into two, something I had already thought of doing during the rehearsals, but didn't have time for because the premiere was so close. I'm not taking the slightest account of that performance; it was the result of a pre-prepared Danube inferno. (Marchetti, no. 793, 196)

Surely Puccini did not revive the opera as quickly as within three months, even if he worked speedily; neither could it be said that the alterations were of little importance, aside from the division of the second act into two parts, which had no influence on the original structure (although this adjustment does compromise the powerful dramatic effect of the act performed without a break). There were, however, many cuts, above all in the little episodes of outdoor locale in the first act. In the Milan version the combat between the Japanese and Americans was much more crude. Pressed to perform by an arrogant, derisory Pinkerton, the uncle Yashida had drunkenly sung a tavern song accompanied by a trumpet ("All'ombra dell'anticellula e sul notturno Yamato"). And the Lieutenant bravely ignored the poetic nuances of the three servants, addressing them rudely as "Muso primo, secondo, e muso terzo" ("Mug one, two, and mug three").

Although the proportions became more manageable, the Brescia version did not lose the many sections full of Japanese color. Pinkerton was given the brief aria "Addio, fiero sullo" in the final part of the second act, which makes his stage presence more substantial. The original Pinkerton, more cynical, and hardly gripped by remorse, left dejectedly after having given: Sharpless some money, muttering:

Você da filho parlante,
on non oso. Ho tempo;
prorudito—Addio—mi
pgressor.15

You speak to her about the child;
you do not dare. I am remorseless,
bewildered! Addio—I will get
over it.

13. MADAMA BUTTERFLY /... MILANO, TEATRO ALLA SCALA & Correriana—
Quindicina 1904 (Milan Ricordi, 1904), 68.
Two other revisions were of modest proportions but of primary importance, revealing Puccini’s fine judgment in improving his work, and finding the best way of making the music serve the drama. In the suicide scene, Butterfly turns to the child, and after the exultant, recitative-like beginning (“Tu, tu, piccolo Idalio”), Liu, y before [58] her line develops into a broad melody. In the first version the melody descended, following the sense of the verse exactly (Ex. 6.5a: x, y); in the revision Puccini changed four notes (Ex. 6.5b: x, y), so that the voice rises to high A:

Example 6.5

a. Butterfly, II, [58]

b. Butterfly, IIi, [58]

Thanks to this simple revision, the piece acquires an emotional impact previously lacking, and ends the tragic journey toward Butterfly’s dawning realization with devastating effect.

The second change was even more significant, since it involved the theme that accompanied the heroine’s entrance, and the two brief melodic ideas linked to it. The motive, which sets the image of a woman in love into its natural poetic context, has fundamental importance in the desaturgy of the opera, and recurs—not by chance—in various circumstances to characterize the relationship between the genie’s feelings and reality.

In the Milan version the harmony differs: the soprano of the tonic chord descends to the dominant, on a second-inversion tonic chord, then moves to the leading tone, creating the dissonance of a seventh on the last quarter note of the measure (Ex. 6.6a). From there, the phrase rises through six degrees of the whole-tone scale: setting out from A-flat major, by way of a sequence in which the augmented chord functions as the dominant of the new key, it reaches G-flat (Ex. 6.6b) after having lingered on D major.

Ex. 6.6a.

In both cases the descending melodic idea clipped the wings of the progression, and the comparison between Examples 6.6c and d shows that at least in this case the critics were not wrong in identifying a reminiscence of La Bohème, although at first sight it seems completely innocent:

Example 6.6c.

a. Butterfly, I, [59]

b. Butterfly, I, 3 before [59]

c. Butterfly, I, [59]

d. La Bohème, I, 4 after [59]

The change made for Braccia was simple, but it was one whose significance could decide the fate of an opera. Puccini did no more than bring the dissonance of a seventh forward halfway through the measure; this prolongation increases the tension enormously and makes the resolution onto the sixth—and with an augmented chord at that—more unexpected and drastic (Ex. 6.7a). Perhaps the composer took the idea by analogy from
a passage in the love duet (Ex. 6.79). Similarly, the revised profile of the melody—which develops, with quite different effect, around the notes D (Ex. 6.74) and G (Ex. 6.59), changing from descending to ascending—might owe its existence to a similar idea in the final ara

Example 6.7
a. Butterfly, l, 2

b. Butterfly, l, 3 before [III]

c. Butterfly, l, 3 after [III]

In this new version, the passage acquired an impetus it had previously lacked. Increasing the tension of this sequence called for a stronger point of arrival, the unfolding of Butterfly's cantabile in G-flat. The highest degree of the scale is also the culmination of an endless, all-consuming r

35. The passage appeared a few bars previously, shared between the voice and the violins, at Pinkerton's words "mai da voi" (see Ex. 6.74).

36. And like every real tragedy it respects the three unities of action and place, by de

37. Peter Rose, "Elaborations heuristiques d'oeuvres musicales in Madame Butterfly," in Euro

38. Simple proof of the structural implications of the themes in Butterfly may be found in the table compiled by Antonino Toma, whose structural analysis of Puccini's opera supports the coherence of the melodies on the basis of their intervallic structures (Peter Rose, 92-93).

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A Psychological Drama

The choice of a subject that was a type of return to the past, and the plot itself, had significant repercussions for the musical dramaturgy of Madame Butterfly. More than in any other operas, Puccini essayed leitmotivic elaboration in the Wagnerian sense. He did this because, for the first time, he faced an entirely psychological drama, dominated throughout by a single female character, who acts as a catalyst in relation to the outside world.

Cio-Cio-San, a fifteen-year-old girl uprooted from the age "of games" mentioned in the libretto, follows the social custom of her country and time, but in her eyes the marriage represents liberation from poverty and the dishonorable profession of geisha. Her conviction of the falsity of the status of "American" wife is rapidly crushed by the sequence of events that will force her, like a real heroine, to accept the external law of every tragedy: whoever upsets the social order, as she has done by falling in love with a man to whom she merely gives pleasure, must restore it through self-sacrifice.

The psychological drama rests in large part on the contrast—which grows more and more distressing—between the stubborn faith of Butterfly's convictions and the surrounding world in which she is essentially alien. Puccini rendered this perceptible by making the "real" situation evolve around a heroine who wears, with all her strength, to live in a virtual world. Thus just as the musical themes transform themselves to the point of becoming a reality that seems to strengthen the heroine's resolution, they simultaneously contradict her. The themes set in motion a constant process of manipulation, "an essential characteristic of this opera, which offers fertile ground for leitmotivic elaboration insofar as both rest on the same foundation: the principle of development," a process in turn allowed by the common structure of many of the opera's themes. Four examples, referring to four symbolic areas, will explain this procedure.

36. And like every real tragedy it respects the three unities of action and place, by developing entirely around the inside and outside of Pinkerton's house, and of time, if the last act is considered a prologue that took place three years previously.

37. Peter Rose, "Elaborations heuristiques d'oeuvres musicales in Madame Butterfly," in Euro-

38. Simple proof of the structural implications of the themes in Butterfly may be found in the table compiled by Antonino Toma, whose structural analysis of Puccini's opera supports the coherence of the melodies on the basis of their intervallic structures (Peter Rose, 92-93).
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The Curse

The motive that accompanies the far-off voice of Butterfly's uncle does not seem to possess a definite identity, although it introduces two constants, a metric scheme based on dotted figures and the interval of an augmented second that is repeated in succession (Ex. 6.8a). But barely has the priest arrived to threaten his niece, who is guilty of having abandoned the religion of her ancestors, when the fragment changes, acquiring an obsessive character, extending over five of the six degrees of the whole-tone scale (Ex. 6.8b). 39

Example 6.8
a. Butterfly, I, 6.8 above [83]

[Music example]

b. Butterfly, I, 6.9 below [83]

[Music example]

Puccini uses this passage as a kind of open fragment, to be subjected to constant development and therefore suited to symbolizing Cio-Cio-San's journey toward isolation. At the beginning of the duet the theme appears like an echo of her relatives' outcry (greater tension is provided at this point by double-dotted quarter notes, Ex. 6.9a), and returns in identical form as the curtain rises on Act II (before [84]). In the meantime it has acquired a new form, when the heroine compels herself to a butterfly in the hands of a collector, a clear personification of her fate. Her vocal line echoes the rhythmic pattern of the preceding theme (Ex. 6.8), while the melody spans an augmented fourth (which might also be heard as part of a fragmentary whole-tone scale, Ex. 6.9b). A further variant appears in the second act when Suzuki drags Goro out to face Butterfly (she is guilty of having slandered her condition, Ex. 6.9c). Thus Puccini gradually defines a semantically-field in which, from the moment she is discovered by her people, the geisha's isolation becomes clear. The evolving motive leads to other connections, at times ones aimed subtly at the spectator's unconscious. It re-

39 This observation closely only concerns the melodic line, which moves from B to E, and not the harmony, in which the whole-tone progression is contradicted by the C#. The relationship with the preceding motive is established by the dotted figure and by the (shared) major third in the melody.
Example 6.9 (continued)

But it is again this theme, twice echoing Pinkerton's calls to Butterfly from offstage, that finally completes the tragedy while underscoring one of its principal premises (Ex. 6.9g).

Death

The two themes that most clearly represent death in the opera are derived, as we have seen, from Japanese melodies. The first appears in the orchestra when Butterfly replies to the General's question about her father: "Morte" ("Death"; see Ex. 6.1c, Ume no hara). It acquires greater semantic import when Cio-Cio-San draws from the sleeves of her kimono the mysterious case in which she keeps the knife her father used for hara kiri; Cio-Cio-San explains the object to Pinkerton (and thus to the audience) (Ex. 6.10).

Puccini used this theme as flexibly as the other. It underlines the moment at which Butterfly, suddenly giving up all self-restraint, declares her love to Pinkerton at the beginning of the wedding ceremony. The girls
The Oriental melody is completely absorbed here in a chorale-like harmonization, and this loss of tonal identity underlines Butterfly’s decision to drown her own voice.

In the second act, the heroine’s inevitable fate is also represented by her melody in the second section of the aria “Che, tua madre” (“CE Butterfly, oh, terrible destiny, danze alla per te?” see Ex. 6:1 (7), Suzuki-Schôdo). The section is set with an echo of the girl who cried out her refusal to return to her old life of geisha, preferring death instead (II, 6 before (13). Having created a musical and dramatic connection between this and the preceding scene, in the finale Puccini was careful not to confuse their meanings. The temporal perspective, and the very articulation of the tragedy, is bound to these themes, thus allowing the audience to relive the scene as if it is new, in the same way as we made the audience understand the characters, their gestures, and their inner feelings. The same gesture, therefore, becomes more meaningful, more powerful, and more expressive. And the audience, too, is given the opportunity to understand it, the gesture, and the meaning behind it. This is the power of music, the power of the human spirit, the power of the human heart.

Fisherman

Love and Illusion

By gradually altering the motive that accompanied Butterfly’s entrance, Puccini made meaningful connections to other moments in the opera. In various musical contexts, in fact, the brief motive (see Ex. 6.7a) acquires dominance over preceding resonances, that is, over the original version of the motive heard in Milan. When Pinkerton, in the duet, sings the delights of love, the theme loses its complex and refined harmonic and orchestral elaboration (Ex. 6.7a), and this significant adaptation contributes...
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Appearance and reality are distanced all the more, and this dualism is further emphasized when the theme is reused in the form of the duet before Butterfly presents her child to Sharpless (Ex. 6.13c). The prominence of this quotation almost seems to imply the biological aspect of the relationship outlined a little later: “E nato / quando eglì stava in quel aus grande peso” (“He was born / while he [Pinkerton] was away in his great country”). The theme returns, much altered, in her last dédée moment, immediately before the cannon shot marking the arrival of Pinkerton’s ship in the harbor (Ex. 6.13d):

Example 6.13

a. Butterfly, II, 1, (II)

b. Butterfly, III, 6 before II

In this last heartrending appearance, the motive again symbolizes the love in which Butterfly wanted to believe, the love forced on her by Pinkerton. The dramatic perspective is thus emphasized at a crucial moment, before the theme disappears from the score. In the finale Puccini again establishes the futility of Butterfly’s dream through reminiscences of some melodic phrases heard at her entrance; but by this time they sound like a bitter reflection on the past, possible only when feeling has exhausted its vital drive.

Example 6.14

a. Butterfly, I, 3, after II

b. Butterfly, I, 3, after II

In the second act the motive occurs twice more, like an unequivocal sign of destiny. First, when Sharpless fears that he may not be able to read Pinkerton’s letter to Butterfly (4, before II), and second, at the beginning of the exotic tragedy.
of the intermezzo. But Puccini treated even this very brief theme in the same way as the others. Looking at the structure (Ex. 6.126) of the generative cell based on an augmented fourth (x), one can see immediately that the retrograde (y) is used as a specific dramatic sign. In this form (Ex. 6.179), the motive precedes the second appearance of the theme linked to the father's suicide (Ex. 6.170), while later, in more developed form, it will introduce melodically Cio-Cio-San's first words at the start of Act II (Ex. 6.157).42

Example 6.15

a. Butterfly, I, 5 before [7]

C6 move. gen. te. Prima no. te.

b. Butterfly, II, 3 after [7]

This last example gives us further proof of the care with which Puccini constructed his thematic web in *Madama Butterfly*: having outlined certain conceptual fields, he set them in a continuing process of growth that follows the development of the tragedy even in small details, clearly revealing its premises and consequences.

**The Musical Structure of the Two-Act Version**

From the first Puccini conceived of the opera in two parts, an idea to which he quickly reverted after a period of indecision about the Consulate act.

42. Inexplicably, Carter identified motive Ex. 6.126 as the theme of the father's suicide (Carter, 143).

Among the alterations made for the Brescia performances, there was the interval step after the humming thorns, with the addition of a few measures—to create a sense of ending—in place of the brief transition to the symphonic intermezzo. However, no printed musical source (except a French vocal score of 1906) reports a proper division into three real acts; the final act preserves the division into two parts. It is thus to be hoped that the practice of performing the two parts continuously, as in many recent stagings, will become more common.

To break up the opera at that point goes against the very nature of Belcanto's drama, which Puccini followed faithfully in Act II, in which Cio-Cio-San's vigil stands as a central point. To increase the emotional impact of the scene, the composer used real-life sounds such as the birds' notes in the score (and a simple stage direction asking for "noises of the chains, anchors, and the ship's movements" to simulate the ship's approach). But above all Puccini relied on the evocative power of the music to join the two parts by means of the intermezzo, which acts as transition to the finale. In *Butterfly*, unlike in *Mam'zelle Lecour*, the piece does not fill a gap in the action, but rather marks a different kind of narration: the thoughts running through the mind of the heroine, who is stationary during the long wait. This is achieved by way of themes that make specific semantic references to key moments of the plot: the arrival of the American ship in the bay, evoked by the distant cries of sailors, and the sunrise, projected by multicolored orchestral timbres in a crescendo of shimmering colors, bells, glockenspiel, and harp chords and arpeggios.

The sense of continuity established by the intermezzo relies, in turn, on Puccini's overall sense of dramatic and musical articulation, and this sense extends even through the break in the act, imparted on a musical reality that nonetheless would seem to resist it. We should now turn to the formal elements that reveal the planning of the overall structure of the Japanese tragedy. The most important are the exact symmetries between the beginnings and endings of the two acts, which function as recognizable and decisive formal markers.

Puccini made spritely use of his contrapuntal ability in his career; in *Madama Butterfly*, he used the technique to dramatic ends, as he had done in the second finale of *Mam'zelle Lecour*, but much more broadly.43 The opera begins with a four-voiced fugal exposition, created strictly until the fourth entry in the bass (Ex. 6.16). It is a musical mechanism honed to perfection, with predictable criteria of regular proportions (eight measures per entry, each entry at the expected pitches, and even two countersubjects, all in only thirty-two measures), rather like the practical "casa a soffietto" ("folding house")—in which ceiling and walls "varano e vengono a prova / a norma"

43. In *Mam'zelle Lecour,* two oppositions unison in the moments preceding the heroine's arrest. For a more traditional Puccinian use of the technique, see more obvious sources, such as the Eurydice and the "Cosa Sanno Spirito," of the Gloriosa in the *Messia* (1806).
This situation relates subtly but clearly to the beginning of the following act. Before the curtain rises on Act II, the flutes play a fugal subject, to which the violins respond a fifth higher. But instead of playing the countersubject, the first voice drops out, and through this formal anomaly the passage assumes a character quite different from that of the first:

Example 6.17. Butterfly, III, beginning

All sense of dynamism has disappeared: the subject, in G minor, moves warily step by step back to the tonic, and each of the three voices lingers at the ending, creating a sense of exhaustion, time spent in vain, as if Butterfly's life had itself stopped for three years. Homophony resumes from the bass entry at the lower octave, which stops abruptly to allow the curse theme to be heard (see Ex. 6.59). The juxtaposition represents the time that has passed since the heroine's solitude began, increasing the potency of the aflection to that beginning, in which Butterfly's misfortune was decided even before her entrance onstage.

The symmetry that connects the endings of the first act and of the entire opera, however, is harmonic. In both cases, the last chord we hear is a first-inversion triad on the sixth degree of the home key, a chord that has the tonic as the lowest note but lacks the usual sense of resolution. The model for the two endings was Cio-Cio-San's entrance with her friends in the mutipal procession. The chord (Ex. 6.18a: X) is tightly linked to the theme that precedes it, one of the preexisting motives (cf. Ex. 6.1, B) and is heard as Butterfly bows in submission before Pinkerton, making her friends bow with her. The same theme later accompanies the heroine's nervous confession, as she reveals to her husband that she has abandoned her ancestors' religion to follow her destiny. The melody loses any Oriental connotation—created primarily by the timbre of the celesta, with piccolo, flute, and harp—and acquires a passionate, Western character, exactly the transformation that the heroine is trying to achieve. In this case, too, the"
short arioso ends with an inverted chord (Ex. 6.18: X), answered by the theme representing the father's suicide:

Example 6.18

a. Butterfly, I  z after H

b. Butterfly, I  s before H

The two passages are linked not only musically, but also through the dramatic gesture that accompanies them: in both cases, Butterfly subjugates herself to her husband's needs, as she will in the duet, when she yields to his embrace. Her entrance melody returns in the final measures (Ex. 6.19):
HEROINE’S DYING BREATHE, THE THEME THAT READS HER FATAL DESTINY, PLAYED MOSTLY BY FULL ORCHESTRA (Ex. 6.10, X). THE CONTRIVANCE IS Rendered all the more potent through its rhythmic asymmetry: the melody, which is strictly pentatonic, passes three times on the tonic triad (B minor) on no offset, then follows a normal cadential pattern up to the deceptive cadence (achieved through use of a pedal). THE EFFECT IS OF A SUDDEN DISSONANCE, GIVEN THAT THE THREE TONIC CHORDS LINGER IN THE MEMORY, AND THAT THE G TRIAD IS Brought OUT OVER THE PEDAL BY THE FULL WEIGHT OF A POWERFUL BRASS SOMNOLENCY.

Example 6.10. Butterfly, II, ii, (5)

Amore a grillo,
dir non saprei—Certo contei
la tua coll’ingenua—arti innocente.
Lieve qual tenue—pero soffisso
alla statura—al portamento
sembra figura—di parvene.
Ma dal suo lucido—fondo di zocca
come con subito—molto si stacca,
quale farfalla—solleva e pone
cosi tal grazietta—silenziosa
che di rincorrela—furor m’iscuole
se pure invarangere—di dono l’ale.

THE REMINISCENCE COMES AFTER THE PLAY OF SYMMETRIES HAS FOUNDED THE DRAwaIC SEQUENCE WITH LATERAL MEANING—SO MUCH SO THAT THE ENDING OF THE FIRST ACT COMES TO MIND, IN RETROSPECT, AS THE PRELUDE OF THE NON-COMPLETED TRAGEDY. ONCE AGAIN, THEN, PUCCINNIs USES TECHNICAL DEVICES TO GIVE A SENSE OF EVOLUTION TO THE DRAwaIC MUSIC; BUT THEY ARE ALSO STRUCTURAL PILLARS THAT OPEN AND CLOSE THE TRAGEDY, ALMOST FORCING IT DOWN AN OBLIGATORY PATH.

47 THE EFFECT OF HEARING A DISSONANCE AT A DISTANCE IS STRONG ENOUGH TO HAVEaubled SOME SCHOLARS “THE ADDITION OF THE NOTE V TO THE I MINOR CHORD” (Carné, 479) OR EVEN AN “ADDED SIXTH, CORRESPONDING TO THE PLACE OF GIVING THE SENSATION OF THE DISSONANT V MINOR AT THE END OF THE OPUS” (Bartók, “La musica Pucciniana” 556). SUCH CLIPS—NOT IN SIGNIFICANT—BY EMINENT SCHOLARS DEMONSTRATE THE COMPOSER’S SKILL.

MADAMA BUTTERFLY: AN EXOTIC TRAGEDY

“NOI SIAMO GENTE AVVEZZA/ALLE PICCOLE COSE/UMILI E SILENZIOSE”

WITHE THESE THREE PHRASES (“We are people accustomed to small things, humble and silent”) AT THE HEART OF THEIR DUET, BUTTERFLY BEGINS TO LOVE FAR. NO WORDS COULD BETTER DEPICT THE GIRL’S ATTITUDE. PINKERTON, HOWEVER, TAKES NOT THE SLIGHTEST NOTICE OF HER POETIC TENDENCIES, AS IS SHOWN CLEARLY IN HIS OPENING CONVERSATION WITH GORO AND SHARPLESS (THE LATTER BEING AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF CONVERSATIONAL SONG, THE CONTINUITY UNBROKEN EVEN BY THE ARIA “DUOVOQUE AL MONDO”). THE AMERICAN CONSUL REVEALS A GREATER HUMANITY THAN HIS FELLOW COUNTRYMAN, EVEN THOUGH HIS WARNING TO PINKERTON ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF BUTTERFLY’S LOVE PROVES USELESS. A TOST TO THEIR DISTANT HOMELAND DISPELS THESE TROUBLING ISSUES, AND ALLOWS PINKERTON TO EXPLAIN WHY HE IS INFATUATED WITH HIS FUTURE WIFE:

True love or fancy, I can’t tell. I am only certain that she has adorned me with her simple arts. Light as fragile blown glass, in her stature and bearing she seems like a figure on a screen. But from her shining background of loveliness, she moves away, suddenly, like a little butterfly, fluttering, settling, with such pretty, silent grace that I am seized by a passion to pursue her, even though I risk breaking her wings.

The image is central not only because it clarifies the tense’s point of view in a definitive way, but also because, thanks to Giacosa’s taste for miniatures and his refined stylistic sense (played couplets, quietude with added sonance), the figure on a screen acquires a seductive, poetic vivacity, one that increases when BUTTERFLY begins to climb the hill, her voice heard off-stage. Her passionate G-flat cantabile conveys the extraordinary intensity and depth of her falling in love, derived from convictions much deeper than any contract or convenience. PINKERTON, however, has merely acquired a product. He will not withdraw when faced with a fifteen-year-old girl—although the revelation
leaves him perplexed for some moments—and he certainly does not fall in love with the gentle-mannered reserve of Cio-Cio-San, who quietly takes her small treasures from the sleeves of her kimono. To the Westerner, the little creases of her ancestors are puppets, she herself little more than a doll, which merely has the effect of influencing his senses.

Little by little, as the narration is filled with detail, the distance between cultures and ways of life becomes clear, although their blending has a symbolic in the bambini Gura, a light tenor who wears a bowler hat and acts as bridge between East and West. He is one of the many characters who illustrate the cynical and efficient world that surrounds our heroine. Even her relatives are ready to gossip about her at the buffet table, predicting a speedy divorce before launching themselves greedily at the food and drink. But the Imperial Commissioner summons the couple, hastily recites a simple formula, and everything changes. As Cesare Gabelli aptly put it:

Butterfly is a gush of little value and low price, who sells herself in marriage; but, once married, the state makes her a wife in all respects, a wife firmly determined to defend her status. To be a wife is, in fact, the only thing that justifies her existence, and guarantees her a reality.9

As soon as her uncle makes his gesture of disapproval, the abyss of solitude open wide before Cio-Cio-San: the drama leaves its preparatory phase and we enter the central part of the opera. The long duet is the first step on an uphill journey: it ends the first act, and should be a moment of amorous transport, but in reality it exhibits the clash of male sensuality with real feeling.

Puccini carefully differentiated the two characters’ attitudes. The elaborate formal structure of the piece, which is divided into five sections, moves the listener through the quality of the melodies; but the characters live in contrasting worlds. Their inability to communicate gradually becomes more obvious, and all Pinkerton’s lyricism cannot mask his superficiality.

In the first section of the duet (Andante affettuoso), Pinkerton’s tone is conducing (“Bimba non piangete,” L. [III], echoes of the curve still sounding from outside. The lights dim, and his voice becomes more persuasive (“Vieni la sera,” III). Cio-Cio-San prepares for the night, and the verses of the first duet (in fact, two soliloquies) deepen any ambiguity:

BUTTERFLY

Quest’ohi pomposa
Di singolar tra cciopi...

PINKERTON

Con modi di scomposto
I modi all’iarla c sciglie... 


His excitement, disguised as romanticism, continues to mount (“Bimba dagli occhi pieni di rabbia,” a after III, but she persists in her restraint, as if frightened by her own fate. “Stolfa pura, l’amor non uccide” (“Foolish fear, love does not kill”), Pinkerton urges, ever more passionately: this begins the fourth section of the piece, a sophisticated arch form of six brief subsections, the first two in reversed order a–b–c–d–e–f.9

Within this fume, Pinkerton’s increasing desire is not against Butterfly’s hopes and doubts. If in section B the curve theme appeared to disrupt matters (Ex. 6.94), in the corresponding section the heroine’s words coincidentally associate her destiny with that of the butterfly (Ex. 6.96). At the center of the arch, Butterfly declares her admiration for her husband (C), then yields for a moment (D): a violin solo accompanies her as she becoms a “bene piccolino” (“tiny favor”), but her need for tenderness “profonda / come il cielo, / come l’ombra del mare” (“deep like the sky, as the ocean wave”) takes flight, growing into a broad phrase doubled in the strings over three octaves. A moment later the barriers are again impermeable: the clash recurs in “Via dall’umana iniquità,” and opens the fifth and final part of the duet, in which the heroine’s entrance music is repeated (“Dolce nostalgia! Fantasia musicale”)9. Not even the sighing union of the great cantabile melody can bring true harmony: Butterfly romantically contemplates nature and the starry sky, Pinkerton draws her toward, and both end on C to crown their individual experiences.

To consider Pinkerton’s character as it emerges from this context, one has to evaluate the insertion of the aria “Addio buono amico” in the last part in a different light. Many commentators have seen it merely as a concession to the tenor to balance the enormous attention given to the heroine. In Act II Pinkerton disappears from the stage, but continues to have a ghostly presence, so much so that his personality would be less coherent if, on his return, he had only a few simple lines (as happened in the first versions of
the opera). The added aria offers us a sharper portrait—of a man who has not changed over time, and who, in comparison with the drama of Cio-Cio-San, furtively becomes lost in the “amaran fragranza” (“fluster fragrance”) of flowers adorning the room, a metaphor of a sensual love now dead, but which still fascinates him.

Butterfly, in contrast, has begun a tortuous journey, as the theme that closed Act I indicates (see Ex. 6.19). It was to this melody a few moments earlier that the heroine declared she wanted to play out her destiny (Ex. 6.18b), a destiny which, at the opening of the curtain, has already become part of an obsessive present. In the conversation with Suzuki we see many examples of the blind obstinacy with which Cio-Cio-San refuses to look reality in the face. Among the most touching is the reference to the rokans’ nesting, which would mark the season in which her husband promised to return. The orchestra accompanies her comment with an impressionistic brushstroke: major seconds in the obbligato flute, violin, and viola, chirping above a murmuring tremolo of violins and clarinets, and touches of triangle (II, III). This idea seems to energize the dialogue, until Suzuki’s desperate tears, to which Butterfly responds with one of the most affecting passages in the opera. “Un bel di vedremo” is the story of a mistaken prophecy, in which Butterfly mimes the arrival of Finkerton’s ship in Nagasaki harbor, and her hiding among the crowd in expectation of the embrace she has longed for these three years. The aria unfolds in Puccini’s favorite lyric key, G-flat major.

Example 6.21. Butterfly, II, I

The melody sinks downward, moving in brief phrases restricted in range (minor third and fourth) that are subtly tinged with melancholy, as if doubts are beginning to creep into her heart. Three muted trumpets, with an icy sense of distance, accompany her anxious gaze on a man breaking away from the crowd; but the intensity of which Cio-Cio-San is capable, as she identifies herself in the vision, kindles unbearable pathos. The grandiose outburst of the final moments seems to restore her heroic illusion, confirmed by the only upward leap of a sixth, while the blaring of the brass adds emphasis.51

After the aria, the distance between reality and self-deception could not be greater; but the journey toward the destruction of her dignity involves even worse moments. Butterfly opens the door of a Western house to Sharpless, schooled in the love and wealth offered her by the rich prince Yamadori, and going so far as to mime, to the pain of those who watch her, the little scene in which that fine American judge sends to prison the husband who wishes to divorce his wife. While Suzuki serves tea, the violins play an elegant, highly affecting, slow waltz (II, 4 after II), and Goro announces the arrival of the long-awaited ship.

Almost everything has now been completed: alone with the Consul, Cio-Cio-San prepares to hear Finkerton’s letter. The B-flat major episode that accompanies their voices is one of the most poetic passages in the opera. Built from a sparse melodic material, it uses a technique similar to that of the Allegretto in Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony: a three-note cell that spans a perfect fourth (Ex. 6.22) forms the basis of a steady accompaniment, and is then developed in a higher register in larger note values—as though a fully-fledged melody—at the exact moment Butterfly sustains the first blow. “Non lo rammento!” (“I do not remember him?”): three years of suffering are distilled into those three words (Ex. 6.22).

Example 6.22. Butterfly, II, II

51. The implacable pace of the tragedy will later be reflected directly in the melodic lines of the heroine, who is progressively forced into wider and wider intervals.
resonance with the refined somber landscape, remote voices that could be mysterious insidious spirits, or benign ghosts. In a tragedy, when the chorus is sung, the chorus takes the hero’s part, helping him to complete the final act. Sometimes death appears with the gentle face of comfort.22

From the Third to the Fourth Butterfly: Mise-en-scène at the Service of the Music

As we have seen, Madame Butterfly did not acquire its present form in Brescia. To follow the process that led to the current version, we need to enter into Puccini’s artistic workshops, and to make the acquaintance of the director Albert Carré.23 In his mise-en-scène for the first French performance of Butterfly at the Opéra-Comique, many details in the first and second acts were sharpened, with a view to a different finale, which is arguably more effective and coherent.

Puccini’s theatrical sense meshed well with the sensibilities of Carré, who had begun his Paris career by directing the French premiere of La Bohème (1868). A few months after assuming directorship of the Opéra-Comique, in the course of a few years his prestige as a régisseur grew significantly, thanks to the world premieres of Charpentier’s Louise (1900) and Debussy’s Pélée et Béaumarchais (1902). In October 1903 he also directed Tosca, and on that occasion his contact with Ricordi won him the French premiere of the new Japanese tragedy.

To understand how the fate of an opera could be dictated by the choice of director, one should remember Puccini’s increasing attention to staging, no longer treated merely as an accessory, but as an essential component of the production, one capable of determining its coherence. He had already offered numerous demonstrations of his ability to conceive staging and action in relation to the music in spectacular scenes such as the prostitutes’ embarkation in Manon Lescaut, the Lauta Quarter in La Bohème, and the Church of Sant’Andrea della Valle in Turandot. This inclination intensified through contact with Luigi Illica, who was gifted with a vivid scenic imagination, amply testified by the detailed stage directions in his libretto.

22. Carré writes that when he broadens the work, Puccini composed the chorus first, then wrote the music for the latter scenes, saying “Puccini, no doubt, also associated this music with Butterfly’s premonition and her answering faith in Pinkerton’s love” (Carré, 477). The composer in fact wrote to Illica on 3 December 1903: “Pay attention to the last act, and then in particular, to serve as a chorus: we must find something good. Mysterious humming voices, for example” (Illica, no. 165, 275). The intention was to make the opportunity to employ the chorus might suggest that, at least incidentally, Puccini had thought of its symbolic weight in the terms of death in tragedy.

23. Carré (1873–1935) had a famous success in the operatic theater, being the witness of the famous Bérénice Michel, worthy partner of Jules Bastiat (Meyerbeer’s Don Giovanni, Coustou’s Aesop, Thomas’s Mignon) and Corinne (Berlioz’s Pierre et Gudule).
But from *Butterfly* on, one notices Puccini's increasing interest in different aspects of staging, not just in bringing about great *airs de théâtre*, but to relate every detail coherently to the crucial points in the drama. With this in mind, he also began to be concerned with lighting effects. On 1 October 1901 he wrote to Iliisa:

> I like the fact that it will be night, with that reddish light on the child—keep Suzuki's wiping off stage, after she [Butterfly] examines the knife and is on the point of suicide, interrupted by the arrival of 'Dolores.' (Gara, no. 161, 214)

As a psychological drama, and one of manners, *Madama Butterfly* required a concern for single gestures; but above all, it was well suited to directorial "reading" in the modern sense of the term. Acting and staging combine to create a dramatic action that unfolds around subtle points, and after Brescia, Puccini did not stop making detailed revisions to these aspects of the score. For the Bologna performances in October 1903, for instance, he recommended to Toscanini two lighting effects:

> At the first hint of sunrise in Act III, try to obtain the effect of lamps that fade through lack of oil, since the inmates, or scene persons, is to be performed in its entirety. (Gara, no. 430, 196–99)

> Two words about the mise-en-scène. The final scene, when Suzuki leaves the stage, must become completely dark, with very few footlights; and when the chid goes out through the exit door there will be a violent, strong ray of sunlight coming from it, broad beams of light in which the final scene will be played. (Gara, no. 431, 199)\(^55\)

Two musicians who were taking an interest in the stagings: a good clue, useful for understanding the reasons for the final changes made in the work. The alterations originated from this heightened visual sense: the "broad beams of light" are a truly dramatic gesture, which throws the heroine into relief at the exact moment of the tragedy.

Tito Ricordi had resumed contact with Carre at the end of June 1906. Puccini at first expressed doubts to his friend Sylfied Seligmann about the new production of *Butterfly*:

> It's going to be given at the Opéra-Comique in November, but Carre is not to make certain alterations, to which Guido [Ricordi] thinks it would be against my dignity to consent. (4 July 1906, Seligmann, 53)

But evidently Carre's explanations of his requests reassured Puccini, since on 13 July the composer wrote from Paris to his friend Vanziani that

\(^{55}\) Similar attention to lighting effects is later found in the scenes of *Suor Angelica*.

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**MADAMA BUTTERFLY: AN EXOTIC TRAGEDY**

I have fixed *Butterfly* definitively... The director of the opera, Carre, will do a special, very original staging... It is the first opera in Japanese costume ever to be done at the Opéra-Comique. (Gara, no. 497, 335–37)

Puccini went to Paris on 23 October, summoned by the theater management because the director believed his precise necessary at the rehearsals. The premiere was postponed far beyond the predicted date, and Puccini stayed in Paris more than two months. It is symptomatic that references to the staging in his letters became more frequent. On 15 November he wrote to Ricordi:

> It is going slowly here! Carre (not to mention his wife) is meticulous enough about staging to turn one's hair gray... The opera is being prepared very well, and already, in these partial rehearsals, everyone is convinced that it will be a great success. At the moment the music being done here in Paris is terrible. (Gara, no. 495, 333–34)

Iliisa joined Puccini in the first days of December. His presence was necessary not only to encourage the composer (who did not relish having to stay in Paris) and to work on new libretto plans, but also to carry out the textual changes required for the new Italian vocal and orchestral editions of the score—a sign of Puccini's realization that the opera would reach its most satisfying form in Paris. This is shown in a letter from Iliisa to Ricordi of 8 December:

> I went with him and was present at *Butterfly* performed in its entirety, and from the discouragement of the morning, I saw—little by little, act by act—not only hope and faith reborn, but Puccini become animated in the certainty of a great success... The staging is beautiful and logical. When certain Italian effects are not achieved, others are obtained: details, small inessential things, in good taste and artistically effective. Carre's staging, for the most part very different from ours, is logical, practical, and poetic. Nagasaki in the first act—truly—is like paradise. The tragic finale offers scope for discussion, and I myself, very prudent and silent in these circumstances, dared to make a small observation to the terrible Carre, who acknowledged it. But this tragic finale, if made clearer and more logical, is very novel and would be enough on its own to assure Carre the esteem and artistic respect he deserves. (Gara, no. 497, 335–37)

\(^{56}\) The printing of the orchestral score began in June 1906, which explains Ricordi's negative response to inquiries about the possibility of other changes, after hearing what Carre wanted. It does not, however, necessarily indicate, as Julian Smith believes ("Madama Butterfly," 129–31), that Ricordi and Puccini considered the present state of the opera as less definitive.
In light of this recognition of the director's secrets, it is worth considering the manuscript mise-en-scène of Madame Butterfly (hereafter MES), housed at Paris in the Bibliothèque de l'Association de la Régie Théâtrale, which exhaustively works Carre's work in its final form. This weighty livret was drawn up with extreme care, and every action described in such abundant detail that one has the impression of reading an essay on the psychology of character. Many details of the staging deserve thorough examination, but it will suffice here to offer some comparisons between the two scores that document the evolutionary phase of the opera before the Parisian production (third Italian/English version, hereafter B3), and following the work by Carre and Puccini. The mise-en-scène, citing verses and pages of the score, shows all the musical changes made since the previous version, and corresponds, save in a few details, with the current version of the opera (hereafter B3), also published in full score in 1907.

In the introduction to his description of the French score, Hopkinson implies that Puccini was not happy with the changes made by Carre, and considers them in the context of the capture of a prima donna and her powerful husband, who, to suit French taste, preferred to soften the "colonial" aspect of the plot and suppress Pinkerton's crude attitudes. But the cuts in the score did not involve Butterfly, as they would have had they been made at the singer's wishes.

In Act I of the third version, there were still three little episodes of outdoor locale which were omitted in Paris, removing digressions from the drama and making it more coherent. Moreover, the loss of every sense of carrière reinforced dignity to the Japanese, contrasting them more forcefully with the Westerners.

The first cut (B3, pp. 50–52, 48 mm; MES, p. 27) concerned the episode in which Butterfly described, at length, her ideals the house and the dumbairi yakuza, as well as Pinkerton's mocking memoirs about them ("Carpio un bono un gentile,—/I deve malam la pia?,—/I understand—a bozo and a simpleton.—/The two make a pair"). The second cut, a few pages later (B3, pp. 74–77, 48 mm; MES, p. 29), was along the same lines: Cio-Cio-San had introduced her mother and her cousin and child, and Pinkerton had made some coarse comments about the servants and the food. The double cut makes the new dramatic collage much tighter, eliminating a sketch-like digression from the main action. Furthermore, it allows the arrival of the Imperial Commissioner, and the approach of the Official Registrar, to some extent after the better observation on Cio-Cio-San's fifteen years—"L'età dei giochi" ("The age for games"), says the Consul; "e dei confetti" ("and for weddings") finishes Pinkerton. This brings to the fore one of the essential points of the tragedy: a young girl enters almost unwittingly into a situation of that will eventually overwhelm her.

Finally, after the marriage, Pinkerton exclaims, "Stupigliamoci al piu presto in modo onesto" ("Let's finish this up quickly, in a respectable fashion"). A series of jokes with the drunk uncle and the corpulent nephew is omitted here, allowing the toast to follow immediately ("30 pp.: B3, pp. 92–105, 48 mm; MES, p. 41). Here again, the drama gains in pace, not only because the tone's impertinence to be alone with his wife is more obvious, but above all because it hastens the house's entrance, a central moment in the act. Carre's staging of this passage so pleased Puccini that he described it in enthusiastic detail to Giulio Ricordi in an important letter written on 25 November 1906:

The house's arrival is brilliantly effective. From a rise, he launches himself onto the stage, crossing the bridge (over which Butterfly also ar-}

The exact date of this letter is clear from its position in the Codice («C»).
Chapter Six

The final cut in the first act was the removal of a short arioso for Butterfly in the last act after the beginning of the love scene ("Pensavo se qualcor mi volessi..."). This, which described her initial difficulties toward the American proposed for marriage by Goro. The passage altered the proportions of the duet (the arch form was then constructed in retrospect), but above all introduced an intrusion extraneous to the emotional thrust of the piece.

We can now turn to a specific aspect of the staging of Act II, which Puccini discussed later in the same letter. He was enchanted by the fact that

Yamadori does not go into the room, but sits gallantly on the little step outside the garden—I should explain that the floor level of the room is raised by 40 cm, and that on this special little platform there is a row of lights, and the side of the platform toward the audience is covered in flowers. So the garden is 40 cm lower.

The mise-en-scène simply states that "Le prince Yamadori est venu vers la maison, mais reste dans le jardin" ("Prince Yamadori came to the house, but stays in the garden"). MES, p. 71). This is not mere detail, but forms part of a complex strategy that delineates Cio-Cio-San's psychology through her estrangement from the surrounding world, the efforts of which we can better evaluate by examining the new version of the finale. Dramatic and musical directions relegate the aristocrat to the role of ghost in the garden: Carré consistently pursued his aim of separating Butterfly's illusionary world from reality, implicitly accentuating the Count's importance as the only one to approach the heroine's "American" world.

Another change in the second act revealed through comparison of the two scores is the rewriting of the text of the Andante mosso "Che tua madre" from the second section on

B3, pp. 167-69

Ed alle impietose
grinti, ballando de' suoi canti al suon,
gridace—Udite, udite
udite la bellissima canzone
delle estrosi mire
divinità vestite di splendor.
E passerà una fila
di guerrieri coll'imperatore,
cui dirr—Sommo duce
forma i suoi servii e resta a riguardar

B4, pp. 241-47

Ed alle impietose
grinti, in man tremante
starnudo!
gridando—Udite, udite
la triste mia canzone
A un'insolente madre
la castità, mostravvi a pietà!
E Butterfly sorride
dentro, diceva per te!
E come face già
la Ghisla canta!

MADAMA BUTTERFLY. AN EXOTIC TRAGEDY

quest'occhiene, ove is luce
dal cielo azzurro onde scenziost appar.

And to the singing people,
dancing to the sound of her song,
cry—Listen, listen,
listen to the beautiful song
of eight hundred thousand
divinities robed in splendour.
And a troop of soldiers
will pass with the Emperor
to whom I will say—Supreme leader,
halt your servants, and come to look
at those eyes where the light
from the azure skies from which you
descended appears.

Whereas in earlier sections he had merely made a few slight adjustments, in the final lines here Puccini radically altered the melodic shape (Ex. 6.25).

Example 6.23. Butterfly, II, 33

Moso

Ed el... for moto il..." "Perché, ma... de' soggiorni del gio... for... "Ah!

Ah!

Ah! morta!

Ah! morta!

The repetition of the word "morta" ("dead")—with its vocal plunge of an octave from high B♭, an angry leap of a fifth again to high B♭, and another octave descent in the last three measures—gives the piece enormous dramatic power. By replacing a renewed evocation of Japan's mythi-
cal past with one of Butterfly's recent past, in line with the omission of the other episodes of cointer locale. Puccini shows clearly that the heroine has acquired a "moralistic" Western mentality, now refusing to return to prostitution.89

Before discussing the new finale, it is worth reading the first part of the letter to Ricordi (25 November 1905) quoted above:

I have the scene here, almost ready. Tomorrow it will be completed. Should I leave the mise-en-scène as it stands, or change the main things? Carré has altered almost everything, and to good effect. There is also a new cut in the second act, that story of the good judge before the tea. Should I mark it in, make it definitive? With the new mise-en-scène, this passage seems to me entirely superfluous. Everything is well rehearsed and I hope that it will be a very good performance. I really like Act III as Carré has done it (he has removed most of Kate's part, leaving her outside in the garden, which is on the same level as the stage, and without a hedge—that is to say, no awkward barrier). The finale scene is also excellent, and we'll have wonderful effects with the lighting and flowers.

Adami, no. 93, 207

Ricordi replied promptly, on 29 November:

As I already told you in Milan, the substitution of the Consul for Kate seems to me very good, and I would adopt it, but I really don't approve of cutting the good Judge. It is extremely fine both as music and as action, and entirely typical of Butterfly. I would have that scene with Prince Yamadori as it was, because it is pleasing and graceful, and I really don't understand why Prince Yamadori has to sit on a step instead of going into the room. This will be some subterfuge of the excellent Carré; but let's let him have it for his theater, and not complicate things. This little business where the Prince enters— we have always done it—is a very poor excuse of giving the scene a bit of polish, and has always been of interest, while the scene between Butterfly and Kate was always dangerous both for the dramatic situation itself, and because it was so difficult to make them act convincingly (CL 8.17-18).

One can agree with the publisher about the cut of the episode of the good judge, a central moment in demonstrating Cio-Cio-San's obsessiveness;69 but, while Carré's good reasons for keeping Yamadori outside have

64. "The flower scene is almost all done!" (Adami, no. 93, 207)
65. Carré's decision to omit the action of eighteenth-century lawyer (9a, 277) involves the inclusion of the opening scene of Mies (p. 53), as the publisher suggests.
66. One gathers from the mise-en-scène (Mies, 73) that the passage was effectively deleted, to be repeated in the definitive version.

already been discussed, one cannot miss how Puccini linked his position "outside in the garden" to that of Kate Pinkerton. The two wives meet here in the finale, an epilogue that in Paris took the form now known only by virtue of some textual changes, which radically change the plot perspective.85

After having decided to eliminate the Consulate act, Puccini felt it necessary to make Kate's scene more powerful, warning Illica on 31 January 1903:

move on rapidly and, above all, with a logical thinking of a very short scene, finding all the necessary path in Kate's few words to Butterfly—as in Butterfly's tenor scene and silences (silence is needed for Butterfly).

(Guida, no. 199, 132)

Until the third version, Kate and Suzuki entered from the garden, the former talking quietly to the latter. Butterfly, still surprised at having sought Pinkerton's face in vain, recognized her rival in the room and addressed her directly (Ex. 6.14, B2). In the current version she merely turns to Sharpless with a desperate awareness (B4):


Immediately after, Kate tried to approach her, and was pushed away before showing emotion with the powerful phrase "I, your cause" (Ex. 6.13, B3). Now these measures, with changed text, are given to the Consul and Butterfly (B4) (Ex. 6.13).

66. Puccini also cut a brief dialogue between Butterfly and Suzuki after the Americans' exit (B3, 271-72, 26 lbs; Mies, 117), in which the heroine sings a lament to: "E venire alle mie preghie / (questi il posto di scena—er ne, 2006—t' e folla vi jacc! / amici, facete la pace."

He came to the door, I took the place of everything—and went— and left nothing—nothing save death!

The action hastes without pause toward its tragic epilogue.

67. Gross rightly concludes his detailed analysis of the libretto by noting that it is not possible to speak of a definitive version, nor of the superiority of one version over another, given that the revisions depend on dramatic decisions made at the time of origination, when it was decided to abolish the Consulate scene ("Literaeaus F. B. Finkler", 187-98).
Example 6.15. Butterfly, II, ii, 8 after [Z]

Kee Fikusha

B1

Non mi temete; e quel silenzio, quel silenzio!
E la causa in noi, in te d'o' gig: vu, un, giun.
Per dura te.

B2

Non mi temete; e quel silenzio, quel silenzio!
Quando poi che avrai sperato... voli?

B1

Ah! sussurro gliel'ho! Tutto eerto per quel mare al fi ni: no! Ah! Co.

B2

Non mi temete; e quel silenzio, quel silenzio!
E la causa in noi, in te d'o' gig: vu, un, giun.
Per dura te.

B3

Enorme luce, in te farai. La pia bestia... voce?

B4

Voi gli! per son premurose
Il giorno quindi to fata e a.

B1

La temere non

Non mi temete; e quel silenzio, quel silenzio!
Vuoi co' suoi umili, ma non posso parlo regale.

B4

Ah! triste madre! triste madre! Abbandonarmi è gl'occhi!

A brief cut of seven measures (B3, pp. 266-67) accentuates Kate's humanize further, as she reaches for Cio-Cio-San's hand. Her cruel and unfailing demand to Sharpless is particularly prominent: "E il fango lo detto?" ("And she will give him the son?") is said from a distance, but cuts through

Thanks to the altered role of Kate Pinkerton, and her phrases that pass to Cio-Cio-San and the Consul, a more coherent dramatic perspective is achieved. The stage position of the American wife assumes a key role: remaining outside the room, as Yamadori had, she becomes a true phantom in the private obsessions of the unapproachable heroine, from whom she will remain essentially distanced. Moreover, the complete lack of a musical identity—she has very little music in a sound world where everything is depicted—makes Kate purely functional to the tragic denouement: when Butterfly finds herself with Kate, she sense in a single moment what she has refused to understand throughout the entire opera.

It falls to the American Consul to carry out the ungrateful task of maintaining the rights of this unwinking blonde doll, whose lack of concern is due to the natural incompatibility of social convention and biological necessity. Sharpless, helpless bearer of pity from the very beginning of the opera, will necessarily be the only Westerner entitled to end Cio-Cio-San's insane utopia, convinced as she is of being able to subvert the order of the real world; she has to learn the truth from him and him alone. Carré made a fundamental contribution to this aspect of the drama. Driven by a staging idea that is the theme of the drama—Butterfly's isolation—the director's alterations received Puccini's full approval, and with a few brush strokes the latter adjusted the framework perfectly to usher in the final stages of the tragedy.

Butterfly dismisses everybody, asking that "Voi mezz'ora salite le collina" ("In half an hour you climb the hill"); see Ex. 6.56) with the melody

68. In commenting on this version, Smith helpfully notes that "Kate Pinkerton, in early versions an immature widow, was always ready to use her intimidating charm to achieve her aims, transformed by Carré's alterations into a genuinely compassionate lady, understandably reluctant to intrude on the bitter grief of Butterfly" ("Madama Butterfly", 135).
that has, throughout, represented her fate. A visionary hope during the aria "Un bel di vedremo" (Ex. 6.40), it now announces her death. She remains alone with Suzuki, immersed in darkness while the music anxiously murmurs around her, the themes of the opera intertwining in feverish variations, recalling the past, driving her to the decision. Finally, she sends the servant to her son, to keep him company while he plays. At this moment (II before III) a two-note figure in staccato sixteenth notes appears (timpani ostinato, with a heroic character); it is the sign that the gerhita has found her dignity once more. Grandiose music accompanies her; as she blindfolds the child, a melodic line of English horn and violas unfolds over an ostinato figure (V-I) articulated by mournful strokes on the timpani, bass drum, and tam-tam in syncopation with the first trumpet, pizzicato, over a pedal of two muted horns. Then death comes, with the powerful sixth chord on which the curtain falls.

This unresolved final chord, which refers back to the finale of Act I, reminds us that the fifteen-year-old child has become an eighteen-year-old woman on the last day of her life, when the flight of Butterfly is stopped forever. The transformation of themes and melodies has delineated the evolution of the heroine's inner drama. Now it accompanies her to the last poignant realization, elevating her to a great heroine of a tragedy as perfect as it is capable of moving a worldwide audience to pain and compassion.

69. This musical arrangement anticipates the march to the scaffold of the Prince of Persia in Turandot (viols with trumpet). The extract confirms Puccini's virtuosity in accompanying music for recitative-like phrases: that of the second finale of Tannhäuser and Campanella's succession.

Puccini in the Twentieth Century

CRISIS: GENRES, SUBJECTS, AND COMPETITION

The most significant evidence of the restlessness that gripped Puccini after Butterfly is found in his letters between 1904 and 1912. Rereading some of them can help us understand better the range of his crisis.

(a) I'm going through a period of nervousness that stops me even from sleeping, and all this through not finding what I want. At times I think about something like La Bohème, the tragic and the sentimental mixed with the comic (and I believe that something like this should be done again, in a different way, certainly, requiring a different ambiance, less sweet sentimentality—-that is, less of it in quantity—and more drama of the "liturgical" type. I don't think anything medieval: however much I have read, I am never moved by it. (To Valentino Scottini, 18 June 1904. Gazzette, no. 387, 377–78)

(b) This evening I feel like writing an opera buffa, but buffa in the real sense, Italian buffa, without a shadow of history or morals at the end for anyone: comic, light, cheerful, carefree, not comic but to make the world, which gets worked and "wound up" dealing with the feverish cares of life, split its sides laughing. Any idea? (To Luigi Illica, 2 March 1905. Gazzette, no. 406, 257–88)

(c) I've planned something original with D'Annunzio: the extraordinary libretto will be finished shortly, and it will be a double surprise, of both poetry and music. (To Alfredo Vanzetti, 3 May 1906. Gazzette, no. 473, 314)

(d) Don't desert me after the second battle. . . . I don't want the kind of realization that you could approach only painfully, but a "quid medium" that consumes the listeners through sad and amorous events, which would occur logically and glimmer in a radiant halo of the poetry of life more
than of a dream. (To Gabrielle D’Annunzio, 16 August 1906; Gar, no. 485, 318)

(4) The whole world is expecting an opera from me and it is about time for one too. Enough of La Bohème, better, and company; I’m sick of them as well! But I really am quite worried. I’ve tried to find new subjects even here [in New York], but there’s nothing suitable, or rather nothing complete. I’ve found some good things in Belasco, but nothing particular, firm, or complete. I like the Western setting, but in all the plays I have seen I’ve found only a few scenes here and there that would do. Never a simple story, all a jumble, and, at times, in bad taste and old-fashioned. Before leaving, I shall have a meeting with Belasco, but I don’t have much hope. I’ll go again to see a powerful Belasco play, The Music Master, and another by Hauptmann that they tell me is good, and then I’ll do.

(To Tino Ricordi, 18 February 1907; Gar, no. 500, 348–49)

(5) I am reading, thinking, writing to Geroldi, Serre, Belasco. D’Annunzio is offering his services again and this morning I received a letter from him saying that his old nightmares have awakened with the spring and would like to sing for me. I get plenty and librettos every day, all the stuff of junk dealers. Colani would like to find the solitary poet for me. My God, what an awful world the theater is, in Italy and abroad. (To Giulio Ricordi, 4 April 1907; Gar, no. 507, 342)

(6) I have already written to Maxwell, asking him to find out what Belasco wants [for The Girl of the Golden West], adding that a lot of his play will need to be discarded, and a great deal created and done over again. If his demands are unacceptable I won’t do anything with his play, etc., etc. If you also want to write to Maxwell that would be good. I am sending you the third and fourth acts, although they aren’t worth much; they need rewriting and redoing, and then you could get something good from them. There is the clausula sacra (school for idiots) which should be kept in some way, and I would tie up the fourth act by having the lovers set out for the open country, setting it half indoors and half outdoors—for example, outside the house with a great overhanging roof. But it’s winter and things don’t happen outdoors. What do I say? When you’ve read the play, I’d say pass it on to Zangrilli. In short, read it and tell me immediately what you think. (To Giulio Ricordi, 15 August 1907; Gar, no. 518, 317)

(7) We’re there! The Girl promises to become a second La Bohème, but stronger, bolder, broader. I have a grand scenario in mind, a clearing in the great Californian forest, with colossal trees, and we’ll need to have 8 or 10 horses appear onstage. Zangrilli is now in the incubation period; let’s hope he bounces safely. FS. Illica sent me an awful first act of M[erla]
present at a season dedicated to his operas at the Met in January and February 1907). But the play was not even mentioned in passing, indeed even the frontier setting seems to have provoked little interest. The first reference to the new opera dates from April 1907 ("Messer Belasco is sending me a copy of The Girl of the Golden West," Seligman, 122), and it was another three months before Puccini showed any enthusiasm for the work:

I've read the first two acts of The Girl—I like it very much. The first act is very moulded, but it contains distinct possibilities. The second act is more beautiful; I'm naturally waiting the other two acts. (8 July 1907, Seligman, 157)

By August 1907 Puccini was becoming convinced, even if the tone of "We're there!?" (8) seems rather exaggerated. And eventually: "I've never before had such a fever!?" (8). But it was by then already February 1908, a year after the trip to New York.

So it took more than four years for Puccini to decide to set a new subject. Six months had passed between Tane and Butterfly, the former chosen before the premiere of La Bohème, and before that the composer had never been without a subject for more than a month. The sudden incapacity to make a satisfactory decision is a symptom of insecurity, perhaps owing to a weakening faith in his intuition. It is the most obvious symptom of Puccini's crisis, the exact nature of which can be found by looking at some other circumstances.

First, it is important to consider his natural inclination for renewal, marked by an awareness that his work was at that time breaking onto the international scene (6). This necessitated more than before a full sympathy with European taste, and the ability to grasp changing fashions among a vast worldwide audience.

Being recognized as the foremost opera composer of his time increased Puccini's sense of responsibility. The first glimpse of this private torment may be caught by considering the subject to which he was attracted during this period. Among those considered between 1903 and 1910 (more than thirty in all), two were later successfully set to music by Austrian composers: A Florentine Tragedy, an unfinished play by Oscar Wilde (set by Zemlinsky), and George Rodenbach's Bruges le morte (set by Korngold). Puccini, however, as in the case of Il penitente and Mélisande (two of his dramatic ideals), is in the case of Giovanni de' Medici (his Canzoni, Canzoni of Sansone (which he had thought about in 1910, seven years after Eugene d'Albert's masterpiece Tristano was staged, see Seligman, 195). All this shows

2. Aleksandr von Zemlinsky, Schoenberg's brother-in-law, composed Dies flemmingische Tragédie (Stuttgart, 1913), Krau Wolfgang Korneguygo his masterpiece Don seu Sacr (Cologne and Hamburg, 1910).

Puccini in the Twentieth Century

that he searched in very different directions, yet always remained perfectly cognizant of the trends of European opera.

Puccini explored every possibility. Even though it had not yet become fashionable, and he himself was unconverted, he considered setting an opera in the Middle Ages, making inquiries about Mauve Fancis, a play by Masterpiece act "in medieval Tuscany of the great conductors" (March 1903, Gara, no. 159, 246), and gave more thought to Marnhena de Carstena, "an early thirteenth-century subject" by Valeriano Soldini (February 1904). Between June 1903 and October of the following year, he was inspired by one of Victor Hugo's most famous novels, with many ideas for a musical setting. For La Rondine de Notre-Dame he had thought of

A type of podloga like that in Mefistofele... Notre-Dame, the dead of night,... and then, gradually, organ, chorus, children's voices (choruses rather than single notes in the bass). A rhapsodic musical scene, new, grandioso, with Fagott 1 de Bach (to Illica, 2 June 1910, Gara, no. 171, 275)

Besides planning unusual sonorous landscapes, Puccini repeatedly considered new formal structures for drama, and returned to the idea—already thought about in vague terms at the beginning of the century—of bringing together plots of different character in a single evening. In the summer of 1904 he read some stories by Gorky, with the idea of drawing from them three single acts under the title of the collection about to be published in Italian: Racconti della steppa. It is possible that the Russian setting had awakened his interest because of two recent successes by Giordano, Fedora (1898) and Siberia (1923). He bombarded Illica in September 1904 with requests and pleas: "I insist on the three; Road and The 16 for Olim and the story The Gypsy as the third;" (Gara, no. 195, 230).

For some time he even entertained the idea of addressing Gorky directly:

As for the Refi, [Konow] last told me the stage problems... I ask you again write the letter to Gorky. We might get the third subject we need from him, the ideal, the poetic, the sentimental, or the tragic—seren]**

1. Joseph von Balmont, Le balzonts de Noye-Dame (1909) anticipated a long series of Italian and foreign works in this period, from Montalagn's La damnata (1912) and Fontana (1917) to Zemlinsky's The Brandenburg of Russia (1915) and Stravinsky's King crops (1916).

2. At the time, the French edition of Gorky's stories was readily available (Olim la Steppa [Paris, Perrin, 1910]). While the Italian translation by Emanuele Vito came out in 1910, after many of the short stories had already been published in literary journals, see Martin Gorky, Racconti della stessa, edizioni italiane venne pubblicato di "Marnhena," Il coro fannino (Naples, Bocchi, 1915).
After having decided on the genre of an opera buffa, in March 1905 Puccini summed up his final stance on the projected triptych: "Have you thought of anything buffo... Three acts, either comic or serious, but no more, no less" (Gara, no. 409, 289). A little later Daudet's Tartarin sur les Alpes, rejected five years previously, came once more to mind. "It's an idea, and I believe that there is potential for unusual comedy and variety" (Gara, no. 411, 293). And perhaps this was his ideal blend: "Tartarin sur les Alpes for the opera buffa, Gerky for the seria" (Gara, no. 412, 290). That Puccini was looking for something powerful in literature suggests a more overtly satiric and social message is not only confirmed by his attraction to Gerky's stories, but also by that for a play by Octave Mirbeau written in 1897, about which Illica voiced his uncertainty to Ricordi:

He has sent me Mirbeau's Les Mariés de Bourgogne. Just think! L'artiste adapted for the stage! Strike, preachers, on both sides! (May 1905; Gara, no. 421, 296)

Despite his collaborator's lack of conviction, one cannot fail to notice how Puccini himself, albeit with hesitation, was constructing the foundations for his own future: when Britten became a reality less than ten years later, the first part was Décors Gold's La Spazialmente, a piece quite in which social injustice and misery play a fundamental role, and the final one, Giandot Schicchi, was his solo incursion into the buffo genre. And what can one say, when one reads a reflection on Operetta? At least if we were operetta, I could do it while traveling. An operetta is merely a question of twenty little pieces, and for abroad (London) it would be big business. (To Illica, 8 May 1905; Gara, no. 418, 293)

We know that La rondine, at least originally, was conceived as an operetta, although for Vienna rather than London. For Puccini, then, this was a period of constraints, in which new perspectives emerged, but current problems were left unresolved.

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5. Subject considered before Farewell, either of them discussed in the text, were The Tale-Tale Nurse, a short story by Poe; La promenade, Varèse, and Luise Meier, biographical subjects by Illica; Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet; Le Chantecler, a collection of poetry by Francis Bacon; a drama by Giacomo Puccini; Le troyens L'Ecluse; a short story by Alain Barrière; the ballet, the Comédie italienne de Lulu by Capriccio; Giacomo Puccini and Coësme, by Giacomo Puccini, a tale of Pierre de Seguin; a theatrical novel by François Queneau and Villiers (1890); Swann's Way; a short story by Gerke; Battaglia; a novel by Gerke; Knoyse; a short story by Himan; The Madwoman, a novel by Lost; Enrich Adan; a short story by Frasson; The Death of Bertha by Wilder; Le Cabaret de trois versets; and The Last Days of Pompeii.

6. Puccini probably read the vocal score of Pelléas, which was published in 1903 (the orchestral score came out in 1905).
great artist in his last years. 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. 7

Puccini’s reasoning demonstrates the depth of his understanding of Debussy’s musical system—from which he drew ideas over the course of his career—and his awareness of the limitations of this language, primarily the inherent restrictions on its capacity for variety. This certainly did not suit his nature, even if one accepts the rather widespread critical notion of a Puccini intent on assimilating the innovations of others. The lack of productivity among the most original French composers, all of whom wrote a single opera—from Debussy to Dukas (Ariane et Barbe-Bleue, 1907) and Chabrier (L’Arlesiana, 1907)—made him think that he never had competitors in France, merely detractors such as Bizet, Lalo, Debussy, and Dukas, who, driven primarily by chromaticism, were little inclined to objective criticism. Puccini’s attitude to the phenomenon of Richard Strauss was very different. Strauss had made a powerful entrance onto the world stage on 9 December 1905, in Dresden, with Salome. Because of the prohibition on staging biblical subjects, Mailer was unable to give the opera at the Imperial Theater in Vienna, and the Hungarian premiere, prepared and conducted by Strauss, was given in Graz on 18 May 1906. There were many already well-known composers in the audience, such as Zemlinsky, and future celebrities such as Schoenberg and his young pupil Berg. 8 Strauss wrote with satisfaction to his wife, Pauline: 9

Mähler and his wife have left; they send you cordial greetings. The Italian composer Puccini also came especially from Pescia, and there were several young people from Vienna, their only hand-luggage the piano score. 10

Puccini was returning from an acclaimed cycle of his operas in Hungary, and natural curiosity, together with the expectation surrounding the new work, encouraged him to go as far as Graz. The day after the performance he sent a brief judgment from Vienna to the Hungarian composer Ervin Leóvai, who had been his pupil for some time:

Dear Ervin, Sarmond is the most extraordinary, terribly expressively thing. There are some brilliant musical effects, but in the end it’s very tiring. Extremely interesting spectacle, though. 11

Beyond his taste for colorful descriptions, the letter illustrates his interest in the score, and his conviction that it worked visually. There is no trace in the letters of who he met at the banquet after the performance, though meetings probably occurred. It may be, for example, that Puccini traded opinions with his young Austrian colleagues, or debated with Emma Boccioni Sauer, who told Strauss on this occasion of her desire to sing Salome (and to perform in person the famous Dance of the Seven Veils). 12

An acclaimed performer of various works (she was the first Santuzza, as well as Elektra opposite Caruso) and of late Massenet (Sofa), Boccioni, now at the end of her career, was the main means by which Strauss’s opera entered Italy. She was Salome for the first time at the performance in the Teatro Regio of Turin, conducted by the composer on 23 October 1907, while La Scala produced the opera around the same time under Toscanini, with Salome Knospe in the title role (26 December). Knospe was Butterfly in the Brescia revival of May 1905, and would take the lead in the Italian premiere of Elektra in Milan on 6 April 1909, just three months after the world premiere. Thus began a sort of competition between performers of Puccini who would go on to excite Strauss, and vice versa. We need only recall that Maria Jeritza, acclaimed as Tosca (1911), Minnie (1915), and Giorgetta (1920), starred in the world premiere of Ariadne auf Naxos (1912) and Die Frau ohne Schatten (1919), and performed successfully in Salome and Der Rosenkavalier (Ottaviani) at the Met from 1912. Emmy Destinn, who created Minnie in New York in 1916, was also a renowned Salome; Selma Smetana exchanged Zerbinetta in the revised version of Ariadne (1916) for Tosca (1913); and the great Lotte Lehmann, Soprano in Rosen- kavalier in Hamburg (1911) and then a memorable Arabella (1913), was in

8. Lachen, Chabrier’s second opera (1911), is merely a feeble continuation of L’Arlesiana.
9. It is rather less agreeable to recall the presence—confirmed by reliable sources—of an embarrassing guest, the failing artist Adolf Hitler.
the 1920s a stupendous Suor Angelica, also excelling as Manon at Vienna in 1923 ("I can honestly say that I have never heard a comparable fourth act of Manon" was Puccini’s comment).13 Tosca, and Luisa (opposite Forza as Turandot in 1936).

The German musical world had finally produced an opera composer capable of winning the favor of an international audience, and it was natural that Puccini was aware of the rivalry, although his position remained unthreatened. His hostility, which seeps out in these few lines written to Giulio Ricordi from Naples on 1 February 1908, resembles the antipathy that Molder had many times shown for:

Yesterday I went to the premiere of Salome by Strauss and sang (?) by Bellini, whose dancing was wonderful. It was a success... How many will be convinced of this? The orchestral performance was of a thoroughly dressed, Russian saloon. But the composer was there—and everyone says it was perfect... When Strauss was rehearsing, trying to inveigle the orchestra to a course, violent performance, he said, "My dear gentleman, this is not a question of music! It has to be a war. Come along, blow your instrument!" Truly memorable! (Adami, no. 105, 210)

Fortunately, Puccini was not always harsh, but his opinion of Strauss was never very friendly;14 for as long as he lived, however he followed Strauss carefully, judging him to be his only serious competitor. Puccini took A Florentine Tragedy into consideration because it was an opera by the author of the subject of Strauss’s masterpiece, and because: "It would be a project to rival Salome, but more human, more real, closer to the feelings of all of us." (to Giulio Ricordi, 14 November 1906; Gara, no. 401, 332).

The figure of the restless princess loomed again when he described Elisirica of Wilde’s other play, in which the betrayed husband kills his wife’s lover in a duel.

The woman (like Salome in her dealings with Naboth) does not even deign to glance at the dying man, and cries out to her husband:—Ah, I never knew you so strong and daring!—And he—Never have I seen you so beautiful! (24 November 1906; Gara, no. 406, 333)

In spite of obvious differences in harmonic technique and orchestration, Strauss and Puccini shared an almost exclusive focus on feminine protago-

13. 21 December 1903; Schmuckl, 126, 232. Puccini thanked Lehmann warmly for having rendered an incomparable service to his music.

14. After having been present at the Milan premiere of Elektra, Puccini confided to Seligmann, "Elektra! A horrid! Salome passes, but Elektra is too much!" (16 April 1909, Seligman, 175).
enormous importance in understanding Puccini's ideas on art, and many subtle details of his psychology. 16

Eviva was not jealous of the relationship between her husband and Sybil Seligman, perhaps because she was so beautiful, so refined, so cultured, of such a high class (so different from Eviva, in fact), made her feel very awkward, overshadowed her, enough to make her doubt that her Giacomo would have had a love affair with such a great lady. 17 Her behavior was radically different, however, toward a much younger and more fortunate woman, taken into service after Puccini's car accident (February 1903) to care for the composer. Doris Mantfredi, a sixteen-year-old from Torre del Lago, soon progressed from nurse to full domestic help, a job she carried out with diligence and energy, showing real devotion to her employers. But suddenly, in autumn 1908, something inexplicable happened. Eviva, incited by malicious relatives (according to biographers, at least), accused the girl of having an affair with her husband, and began to persecute her harshly. Forced to leave her job, Doris was slandered daily by Eviva wherever she went, the full force of Eviva's irrational hatred turning the small world of Torre del Lago upside down. Puccini's beloved village became a hell, and the composition of La fanciulla was hard hit:

My life goes on in the midst of servitude and the greatest unhappiness! . . . As a result The Girl has completely dried up—and God knows when I shall have the courage to take up my work again! (4 October 1908; Seligman, 166)

He confided to Sybil that he was being forced to take heavy doses of sleeping pills, and he eventually sought refuge in faraway Paris. In the meantime Eviva's ferocity reached its climax, and Puccini expressed his increasing worry to Seligman:

My work goes on (La fanciulla), but so slowly as to make me wonder if it will ever be finished—perhaps I shall finish first! As for the Affaire Doris, Eviva's persecution continues unabated; she has also been to see the priest to get him to talk to her mother, and is doing everything she can to drive her out of the village; I've even seen the poor girl secretly once or twice—and the sight is enough to make one cry; in addition to

16. Puccini among Friends (1957) was the second collection of correspondence to appear, after Adami (1950). Vincent Seligman, understandably, offers no hint of the relationship between his mother and the composer. But the photographs chosen by him for the frontispiece is a good indication of their intimacy. On it Puccini inscribed a dedication on the final lines of the manuscript from Manon Lescaut: "The Claire study (the score placed the last line 'En souffrant les beautés')." We are indebted to the kind cooperation of the late Monsieur Léonard for the loan of the letter in which Dido expresses his interest in the composer's personal progress.


everything else she is in a very poor state of health. My spirit rebels against all this brutality—and I have to stay on in the midst of it if I hadn't been for my work which keeps me here, I should have gone away, and perhaps forever. (2 December 1908; Seligman, 168–69)

It is an exemplary profession of noble sentiments. But Puccini showed his lack of courage yet again, avoiding a situation that he should have confronted with greater determination. His attempts at comforting Doris were evidently to no avail, since her nerves did not last long. On 1 January 1909 the young woman poisoned herself. 18 Puccini, since Eviva persisted in maintaining the truth of her accusations, was unnaturally involved in the affair; eventually he found it convenient to escape to Rome, where he reconstructed the events for Sybil's benefit.

Her (Doris's) brother wrote to me in a rage that he would like to kill me because I was his sister's lover and that my wife had said so to herself. In a word, poor Doris, faced with Hell in her own home, and dishonour outside, and with Eviva's insults still ringing in her ears, in a moment of desperation swallowed three tablets of chloride and died after five days of atrocious agony.

You can imagine what happened at Torre. Eviva left for Milan and the day of the poisoning everyone was against me, but even more against Eviva. By order of the authorities a medical examination was made in the presence of witnesses, and she was found to be sane, then public opinion turned round entirely against Eviva. . . . But Doris's family have brought an action against Eviva for public defamation. We're trying to see if we can stop the action, although I'm not directly taking part in the negotiations. In any case, Eviva will never be able to go back to Torre— or she would be lynched. (6 February 1909; Caras, 197–98)

We do not know for certain the extent of Puccini's relations with Doris, and despite everything, we cannot exclude the possibility that there was intimacy of some kind. 19 The lawyer Carlo Nani, charged with representing the composer's interests, expressed his initial doubts quite frankly:

I will not conceal from you that the rumors were grave worries for me (and I have a letter that will show you what I am talking about), rumors

18. Caras cites the same interview. He might think with good reason—a relationship between biography and art: "It is more than probable that Doris's character, her ultimate suffering and death, were at the back of his mind when he portrayed the Nita in La fanciulla and the little slave girl in Torakore. . . . Doris's tragedy is perhaps the only inspiration in Puccini's life when a profound artistic experience in the world of reality was transmuted in the crucible of his artistic imagination" (Caras, 244).

19. Doctor Rodolfo Giacchi, who carried out the post-mortem and performed the autopsies, had been living on the street since 1909, and that his remains were identified by the Puccini family, perhaps he was the only one capable of revealing exactly what
of abortion, etc. But now every doubt, however distant, has vanished. (21 January 1909, Marchetti, no. 351, 356)

Moreover, he advised Puccini to separate legally from Elvira, and had in this an authoritative supporter:

Giulio Ricordi was very affectionate with me, and toward you. He approved the double plan wholeheartedly: to resolve the dispute immediately or as quickly as possible, with decisive and well-defined separation. (4 February 1909, Marchetti, no. 353, 355)

News of the scandal spread rapidly, and on 12 February the devoted Lendvai wrote to Puccini from Berlin, expressing concern:

My God, the whole world is reading this very strange story. I always knew that your wife was very jealous, and that one day there would be a great upheaval in your heart; but I never could have imagined! You, as good as an angel! You had told me in Venice that your wife threw out the photographs of Bánca and that she did not—as they say in Hungary—look with a good eye on Bánca’s most insinuating letters. But this tale with Doria is very strange. (Marchetti, no. 356, 357)

On 6 July 1909 Elvira was sentenced in absentia by the tribunal in Lucca for defamation, injury, and threats of five months’ imprisonment, a fine of 700 lire, and the costs of the trial. In the following months, Puccini and the Manfredi were involved in negotiations aimed at repealing the sentence in return for substantial compensation. Doria had already been vindicated in court, and her relatives were satisfied. The case was legally closed in October, and relations with the Manfredi family gradually became normal. But the consequences for Puccini were devastating. Domestic tranquility was something on which he had always relied, and now it was profoundly disturbed. His relationship with his son Tonio, then twenty-three, was also damaged (and repaired with difficulty only in the years to come).

Elvira’s reasons for attacking Doria are still unclear, given that she had been betrayed numerously other times, and had been aware of it by direct and indirect means. The principal trigger would have been Puccini’s comportment—unlike Puccini’s other women, Doria belonged to the same background, albeit not to the same social class, as Elvira; furthermore, she had lived for some years in their house. Perhaps she was viewed as a rival because she lived for the sole person capable of assuming the role of wife, the role of the real wife. Elvira’s life was dedicated to the material needs of the man with whom she lived, but who had not loved her for many years.

*Supposed. According to Magri (L’opera di Puccini, v, 73-74) the composer—with undeniable discretion—in the years after the tragedy had a relationship with Giulia Manfredi, who was a relative, albeit a distant one, of Doria.*

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**Puccini in the Twentieth Century**

The scandal disturbed the outward appearances and civilities of a tranquil little world in which Elvira had found a semblance of equilibrium. On other occasions she had forced herself to suffer in silence, or to make her presence behind closed doors; this time she was probably seized by an attack of paranoia, and decided to wish her distant linen in public.

During the months of separation, and in light of the legal proceedings, Elvira openly blackmailed and threatened her husband:

I will accuse myself, you, whoever. And you will have to accept the consequences. For too long you have made me your victim, have always trampled over my good, loving feelings for you, always insulting me in my affection as wife and the passionate lover I always was. But if there is a God, he will make you pay for what you have made me suffer, and the hour of punishment will come for you too, and then you will be sorry for the evil you have done me—but it will be too late.... You’re not twenty anymore, nor do you enjoy good health, and the day will soon arrive when isolation will weigh on you and you will seek out the cure and love of an affectionate person, but it will be too late and you will have to end your days alone and abandoned by everyone. (13 March 1909, Marchetti, no. 359, 362)

In spite of such words, which are not usually written in complete absence of proof, there was a reconciliation less than a month after the trial; it was the most improbable of endings, one would have said, given that on 1 February Puccini appeared unmistakably convinced of the necessity of separating:

I am leaving my wife: this is the penalty and it should be enough for them. There is no more to tell. I am crushed, humiliated, finished? (To Ramoado Puccini; Marchetti, no. 352, 354)

But in a sadistic-masochistic relationship no victim can do without his torturer, and in the case of Giacomo and Elvira the roles were interchangeable. Only death would divide them.

**To New York**

Among events that made the genesis of *Le fiamme problematic*, Giuseppe Giacomo’s death on 1 September 1896 was certainly significant: a fundamental element was removed from the small forge in which Puccini’s operas were gradually crafted. Just as Giulio Ricordi, who did not rate Butterfly highly, was urging Puccini to set an even stronger and more ambitious subject than usual, Ilica turned up again with *Maria Stuarda*, a project set aside five years earlier. Puccini was courteous but firm in his refusal. He had always valued Ilica’s talent, especially his ability to adapt any
subject to a libretto, often with enormous skill, and of knowing how to arrange the action in a way that was both logical and powerful. But he never allowed him to work alone. With Giacosa, Illica had found a perfect equilibrium between action and poetry, which until then had been at the root of his creativity. Everything implies that the composer had realized the impossibility of recreating a similar situation.

However, Puccini considered Maria Antonietta on several occasions, partly because the subject was particularly dear to Giusto Ricordi. After the initial refusal, the subject had been suggested unsuccessfully first to Mascagni and then to Montemezzi. Puccini reexamined the scenario in May 1903, while he was interested in the three short operas based on Gorky, and wrote to Illica that "the structure of the opera seems to me frighteningly "intense" and, in my opinion, beyond the scope of success" (Gara, no. 430, 294). This was, in short, his stance, but he remained abreast of the discussions, concluding in the end that "if already have Butterfly, an opera around a single woman — I wrote to the librettist in January 1906 that Maria Antonietta should be set aside" (Gara, no. 456, 315).

It was at this point that D'Annunzio reappeared in Puccini's life. La Scala was preparing the world premiere of La figlia di Jorio, the first of D'Annunzio's tragedies to grace the operatic stage thanks to a setting by Alberto Franchetti (19 March 1906). With this credential in hand, one that he could not exhibit by the turn of the century when a collaboration with Puccini was first mooted, the poet discussed his ideal with the leading composer of the day. After meeting, both men seemed convinced that an agreement could be reached. Puccini:

His idea about opera are consonant with mine. He will give me an outline of the subject, but first we must come to an agreement about financial matters. (To Clemenza, 13 February 1906; Gara, no. 465, 317-18)

And the future "Bard of Italy":

We are already in perfect agreement about the conception of the opera. And I hope to be able to offer him a poem in which the most passionate human breath will be expressed through the visions of the most exceptional poetry. (To Tito Ricordi, 16 February 1906; Gara, no. 466, 318)

The decision to draft an original subject, something that D'Annunzio would attempt only once again, testifies to the good will of the poet, who also reassured Puccini about a requisite he deemed indispensable:

I mean to compose a lyric and poetic poem, of such clarity that the spectator will immediately understand the action. (13 February 1906; Gara, no. 468, 318)

The composer turned down Perverse because it was "too broad and profound," but thought another project had possibilities. The poet explained it to Tito Ricordi:

The action takes place in the Cypress of the Loggia, thus in a virgin field, not yet harvested by anyone. The title will perhaps be La rosa di Cipro: a prologue and three episodes. I am composing a cantabile poem with four acts. (Gara, no. 480, 314)

It was August 1906. A little later D'Annunzio wrote to Puccini, who was taking a holiday at Boccola, who in Abergau. The letter is worth rereading, since it makes very clear why their agreement was destined to come to grief:

This morning, half-asleep, I heard a divine prelude to the Convent episode in the second act of La rosa di Cipro. It was down, and to the gentle sound of the sea the rite (inconceivable) of daily life was beginning to wake. A cock crowed, another room—more distant—replied. The first had a passionate and strong cry on six notes. The second responded with the four primitive notes of the cock-a-doodle-doo, calmer, without force but with earnestness. I do not know how to tell you the profound musical emotion I felt at the alternation of these two themes on the harmony of the dawn... Are there cocks at Boccola? You need to take down the two themes, the short and the long one... Pick up your ears to the roosters' song. (5 August 1906; Gara, no. 485, 315)

We do not have Puccini's reply, but it is not unlikely that he put his head in his hands at reading this lofty prose, complete with technical advice. His reply around the disappointment of the figurative "Bard," and also some irritation:

The day before yesterday I wrote to you about a morning Prelude. I thought that our agreement, so cordial, was achieved. I now receive your unexpected letter... Do you believe that the more-or-less patchwork composition of your old libretto has spiritual power? You have the beauty of the image before your eyes, but do not realize that the real virtue of my lyric fiction is the "human element" in its internal essence. (9 August 1906; Gara, no. 485, 316)

After having tactfully dismissed D'Annunzio, Puccini did not however move away from Decadent literature, but began to become interested in a subject by Pierre Louÿs. He mentioned it to Ricordi in March 1906, and was convinced enough to sign a contract for the rights the following June.

2. Mascagni see Perverse to Mascagni in 1913.
It is not difficult to explain the reasons that moved him to this decision. Louys, one of the greatest French Decadent writers, had been a friend and collaborator of Debussy, who had set his _Chansons de Bilitis_ (1897) to music, and had considered—the year before Puccini had the same idea—basing an opera on the novel _Aphrodite_ (1890). Louys's second novel, _La Femmme et le pantin_ (1896), is dominated by a fascinating and ambiguous woman, Conchita Perez, who from the start had all the necessary criteria to interest Puccini. The composer was not, initially, worried about the extreme eroticism of the work, in which Mato (le pantin) is so overpoweringly by his physical attraction to Conchita that he completely debases himself. He described the project to Massano:

1st act: the tobacco factory at Seville, a frenzied picture, full of colors and little episodes; meeting of Mato and Conchita.

2nd: Her house, in the garret with the Mother, a fairy comic character.

3rd: the Baile, a vivid picture in the streets of Seville. Strange scene, of the audience; Conchita's dance in front of the English, practically naked. Strong and gentle final scene.

4th [but 3th]: Patio-Grille Scene, terrifying!

5th [but 4th]: the last, Mato's house, the tragic scene of the beating, ending in an erotic duet, tremendously powerful, the two falling about on the ground.

There you have the basic outline of the opera, and I assure you that Vaucraiz's French libretto is wonderful. (13 September 1906, Gara, no. 487, 123-26)

Puccini worked with Maurice Vaucraiz on the dramatization of _La femme_ in August, and then during his subsequent long stay in Paris for the staging of _Butterfly_ from October to December 1904, he was attracted by the Spanish setting, and did not seem worried by a possible comparison with Carmen, of whom Conchita was the decadent version. But the analogy with Bizet was not to use by Illica, who had been asked to help with the libretto, and whose doubts probably influenced Puccini's decision to reject the project:

But I'm thinking of Carmen, where there is real passion; real passion comes from the scene that fulfillment only increases its violence and desire; instead of dying down and being satisfying, it finds a fire that is more and more consuming, which burns the blood and throws the pair of bodies and souls into convulsions! (Letter to Puccini transcribed for Giulio Ricordi, October 1906, Gara, no. 488, 310)

This "true passion" was precisely what was lacking in the intellectual relationship between Louys's leading characters, Mato is forced, against his will, to play the part of voyeur, and it is as good as impossible to make the key to the plot—the protagonist's virginity—fully evident in the theater. Illica produced an adaptation very different from both Louys's novel and Vaucraiz's sketch. And perhaps it was a compromise of those versions that drove Puccini to renounce the subject while still in Paris. He justified his decision to Giulio Ricordi on 1 April 1907, that he had no fear of the "patience of Anglo-Saxon audiences in Europe and America" (demonstrated by the violent protests against _Salome_ at the Met in New York in 1905), but of the last scene which, as he wrote (and I don't mean the violent part), is impossible to do; or rather, impossible to do outrage in an acceptable way without giving a theatrical spectacle so "natural" that even Aretino himself would have dared to do it, and note that this finale is not possible otherwise (I had thought of having an unfortunate darkness descend on the couple). (Gara, no. 504, 134)

Vaucraiz's libretto, adapted and translated by Zangarini, was passed on to Zandonai, who set _Conchita_ in 1911. 21

After the long interlude in France, in May 1907 Puccini again started to press Illica, proposing new changes to the libretto of _Maria Assunta_ while already negotiating for _The Girl of the Golden West_. For some time he kept his old collaborator on teetotum, but then finally decided in favor of the American subject. This rejection, which occurred in the following September, caused a nasty argument with Illica, and the breakdown of their friendship; it would be many years before the two enjoyed their previous relationship again.

Meanwhile, in August, Puccini had met Carlo Zangarini, who had been recommended to him by Tito Ricordi. Since he knew English, Zangarini seemed the most suitable person for the job. While he was working, Puccini inquired about securing original musical material, obtaining "Indian songs" from Sybil (Schigman, 140) and writing to the United States for other material. After having read the translation he focused his attention on the finale, for which he very soon devised an ending that more or less corresponds to the current one:

She arrives, surprised, and there is a big scene in which she plans for his freedom-everyone being against her except Dick [Nikki]. Finally the cow-boys are stirred to pity, and the bid a moving farewell to all—there is a great love duet as they move slowly away, and a scene of grief and celebration..."
desolation amongst the cow-boys, who remain on the stage in different attitudes of depression, misery, etc. etc. But the scene must take place outside the Polo in a big wood, and in the background to the right there are paths leading to the mountains—the lovers go off and are lost from sight; then they are seen again in the distance embracing each other, and finally disappear. (14 July 1907; Seligman, 139)

Descriptive outbursts like this, which at one time had been sent to Illica, now found an obliging respondent in his English friend. But notwithstanding her sensibility and culture, Sybil was not a professional libertin, and Puccini himself began to shoulder all responsibility for dramatic decisions. Zangarini set himself to the opera with a will, and on 5 November 1907 Puccini could write to Sybil:

"How pleased I am with The Girl! How I adore the subject — The first act is finished now, but it will be necessary to return to it later, as it needs to be clearer and to be sharpened up. The second act is nearly finished and, as for the third act, I'm going to create that magnificent scene in the great California forest of which I spoke to you at Abetone. (Seligman, 139)

But things changed all too soon, and Puccini became aware that he was dealing with an incompeent. He had already begun to compose, but in March 1908 there was still no sign of the third act:

"I'm doing the house [scene] and the prelude, but Zangarini is being lazy [io paradiso]. Will the famous third act ever arrive? I'm beginning to doubt it. (To Luigi Peri, 12 March 1908; Gara, no. 543, 366)

Their relationship deteriorated over the following months:

Yesterday Zangarini was with me here, all words, but nothing concrete. He brought me part of the plan for Act III — made according to my instructions, but nothing well thought out, or theatrical in expression — and I told him bluntly that it was no good because he had not felt it — and I'm convinced that this man has no sense of liberty — at least one good idea, not even the most simple, well-deliberated scene."

But in the meantime Puccini had taken remedial measures, and the diligent Tito Ricordi put him in contact with the Tuscan poet Giacomo Puccini, in whom Puccini hoped in vain to find his new Giacosa. To persuade Zangarini to accept a collaborator, Puccini eventually had to threaten to call in a lawyer (Seligman, 153). The first act, crammed with superfluous little scenes, needed to be thinned out, and the subsequent acts put right, but

Puccini soon noticed Cavini's inexperience. There were often vocal misses that created gross dramatic incongruities, and the composer gave vent to his feelings to Giulio Ricordi:

"You are right, we are in the hands of an unaccommodating people! These librettists are a disaster. One has disappeared and the other doesn't even reply to my letters!... This first act is long, full of details of little interest! I really need someone here with me to follow my instructions properly; how can it be done? I am discouraged, because I would like to make cuts, but they must be made systematically, with the necessary connections, and I cannot do it alone. (11 July 1908; Gara, no. 547, 365)"

The tragedy of Doria Marfedi thus complicated an already difficult situation. Work on the American opera could resume only in July 1909, when the troubled domestic waters had calmed. By September Puccini had almost reached the end of Act II, and, in spite of everything, he finished the score the following year with some satisfaction. On 28 July 1910 he told Giulio Ricordi that

"The opera is finished! I made a few cuts and removed some nice but useless things from the libretto, at midnight. Believe me, like this it is a work of no small importance, emotionally, technically, and because of its ending. (Adami, no. 110, 173–174)"

He went so far as to declare to Sybil that "The Girl has come out, in my opinion, the best opera I have written." (Carra, 223).

The orchestration was entirely finished on 6 August, well ahead of the premiere, originally fixed for 6 December 1910 at the Met in New York (Seligman, 191). It was the first time a Puccini opera had been premiered abroad, a sign of the status achieved by America's most famous opera house. Its importance increased even more during its management by Giulio Genazzani, who in 1908 had left La Scala to move to the Met, where he remained in charge for twenty-five years. In Puccini's lifetime, no Italian theater would ever again premiere one of his new works. This settled for good the small-minded, gossipy Italian critics, and the market expanded as Giulio Ricordi had wanted, now primarily oriented toward those venues that were the most important showcases for new works.

Both composer and publisher profited greatly from this shift, thanks to the hiring of orchestral material for performances of works that remained in the repertory for long periods; also, more funds were available for staging, which became more and more spectacular and technically daring. The musical forces at their disposal were also larger and better trained, and this explains the fact, for example, that Puccini used quadruple woodwind for the first time in La fanciulla, allowing a greater density and wider variety of..."
orchestral textures. Finally, what other theater could guarantee a cast like that of the premiere on 20 December 1910 of Emlyn Williams (Minnie), Enrico Caruso (Johnston), and Pasquale Amato (Rance) were supported by a very respectable cast of minor roles, including the faithful Antonio Pinza (Curti) and (Happy). Above all, there was Arturo Toscanini, now one of the top conductors in the world.\textsuperscript{24} Puccini, who went to the United States accompanied by his son Tito, had no idea whether he was supervising the staging — received a very warm welcome.\textsuperscript{25} The premiere was a popular triumph: forty-three calls of Osage, in total, for composer and performers. Even David Belasco, who had actively participated in the rehearsals, was called out.

A certain reserve, however, was evident in the press; but the boldness with which Puccini had revolutionized the traditional parameters of Italian opera was praised. Richard Aldrich commented:

"In setting this drama to music, Mr. Puccini undertook a task that not so many years ago would have been deemed impossible, almost a contradiction in terms: all the conventions and all the virtues of the lyceum drama could not or should be. But the Italian composers, of whom he stands indisputably at the head, have evolved a technique, a treatment to which this drama and the others like it can be subjected. . . . There is no weaving of a broad tapestry of thematic development in the operatic fabric; the music has no time to wait for that—it must hurry along after the action, and try to keep pace with the spoken word. . . . There is plenty of the personal note in what he has written, and yet nobody would suspect it of being Debussy's. Yet it may be doubted whether any who knew the composer only through "La Bohème" [sic] would recognize him in this, so far has he traveled in thirteen years. (\textit{New York Times}, 12 December 1910, 2)"

Others, however, criticized the lack of realism in many elements of the plot, and emphasized Debussy's influence on Puccini's harmonic style. Here is Lawrence Gilman:

"They are, doubtless necessarily, Latinized Americans whom Puccini exhibits to us; but it is none the less disconcerting to the middle-class dramatic variety to see a stageful of red-shirted miners posed in attitudes of lachrymose abandonment under the redwoods or weeping upon each other's shoulders. . . . There is a great deal of writing in the score that is beautiful and moving, and much of it one can honestly delight in and honestly praise. But, to be quite frank, there is altogether too much of Debussy in it for those who are aware of Puccini's gift of authentically personal utterance. (\textit{Harper's Weekly}, 17 December 1910, 19)"

The critic at \textit{The Nation} noted that:

"In the whole opera there is not one of those stirring, broad, sensuous melodies which have made "La Bohème" [sic], "Tosca," and "Madama Butterfly" famous. The orchestration is rich and varied and betrays great technical skill but in this direction—the direction that the act on through Berlioz and Richard Strauss— OPERA success does not lie. We shall be very much surprised if "La Fanciulla del West" is a success in any European country. (\textit{The Nation}, 15 December 1910, 19)"

\textit{La Fanciulla} was immediately revived in many American opera houses, from Philadelphia to Chicago (27 December, conducted by Chodounsky Campionati), Saint Louis, and Boston (1 January 1911). The European premiere took place at Covent Garden on 29 May 1912, with Destinn, Amedeo Bassi, and Campionati. The opera was not performed in Italy until 12 June, at the Costanzi in Rome. Unfortunately Caruso—for whose voice Puccini harbored a real passion—\textsuperscript{26} was unavailable and had to be replaced by Amedeo Basile, Eugenio Burzio and Minnie, while only Pasquale Amato and the indispensable Toscanini remained from the original cast. It was an opportunity to implement some cuts, approved by the conductor,\textsuperscript{27} in the first act, and to find out whether the indifferent attitude of the Italian critics toward him had changed over time.

\textsuperscript{26} A selection of critical opinions is printed in \textit{Gno}, 180-81. To establish, as the last journalist did, a direct relationship between Berlioz and Strauss is a misunderstanding, as well as provincial, display of emotions.

\textsuperscript{27} In Liverpool in 1910, almost at the beginning of his career, Caruso sang La Bohème, the opera with which he made his \textit{La Scala} debut in 1903, obtaining a tremendous success after the first night, in which he sang dismaying because he was ill. He sang Puccini's opera in all the major opera houses of the world for Covent Garden from 1910, in the act of 1912, quickly becoming Puccini's favorite actor. In 1909, following an operation to cure a hyperplastic nodular thyrogloss, the color of his voice became darker than ever, and his middle range gained the quality that made his voice sweeter and unmistakable. Johnson, in the first part that Puccini wrote expressly for Caruso, and the scurries, above all that of the brief solo "Ghirlanda con canto," seems consciously designed to exploit his gifts. After his return to Italy following the first triumph of 1910, Puccini sent the revue some poetic lines of gratitude, highlighting the role in which Caruso excelled (\textit{Maiu}, La Bohème, Testa, No. 1): "I have not once seen him, Fosco, in the role of Mmino. . . . Ciao, il traduttore, qua, con me . . . cerca il traduttore, qua, con me . . . ringrazio il traduttore. Fosco, a Milano, Rosoldo e Mario, 0 fai Johnson strappati! ("Il tuo cuore non mi! I have the voice of your derivations. . . . Ciao, il traduttore, qua, con me . . . cerca il traduttore, qua, con me . . . ringrazio il traduttore. Fosco, a Milano, Rosoldo e Mario, 0 fai Johnson strappati!") in his heart not to sound I have the voice of your derivations. . . . Ciao, il traduttore, qua, con me . . . cerca il traduttore, qua, con me . . . ringrazio il traduttore. Fosco, a Milano, Rosoldo e Mario, 0 fai Johnson strappati!"

A final scene in which Minnie gives a lesson to the Indian Billy disappeared from the score, as did a brief account of the miners' sufferings; further cuts were made later.
The modernity of the score did not go unnoticed, with particular praise for the "varied, refined instrumentation, which showed the sure and successful choice of blends best suited to obtaining color" (Costanzo Cesari in Il Sociale), and for Giovanni Pozza (Corriere della sera), "never has Puccini displayed a more sure control over his talent and his art than in this work."

No one noticed, however, that La fanciulla represented an important turning point in Puccini's oeuvre, a move away from his previous style toward new, unexplored paths. It will be useful to conclude this brief reception history by considering the opinion of Primo Levi, who helps us to understand better the tendencies of reception during that period:

In too many parts of La fanciulla, exaggeration in the voices, and even more in the instruments, is so great as to give the impression that Puccini did not just want to put onstage humble characters in situations that, at the end of the day, concern no one but themselves, but that he wanted to present legendary or historical figures and events of world importance, and the ear and mind, rather than dwelling on Minnie, Ramer, Dick, and their fate, readily run to some catastrophe, or to a figure on whom the world depended: Alexander, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Waterloo, Cretlp, the San Francisco earthquake, the Flood; so much that, without being aware of it, the maestro felt he had to force the music to achieve that effect which, had he been more moderate, would have been lacking.29

The lack of understanding, or, if you will, critical misfortune of La fanciulla, begins here. Levi's opinion, which stigmatizes the musical splendor reserved for "humble" characters, helps us understand why contemporary critics were not willing to accept the notion that music could represent: the force of human passions independently of the social conditions of the characters.

This attitude presaged a return to "commedia" opera, in which legend and fable predominated. Mascagni set the trend, with the dramatic legend la vera (Buenos Aires, 2 June 1911) on a libretto by l'...</div>
CHAPTER SEVEN

Every measure astonishing. Very special sounds. Not a shade of In cultivated
And mine is a first-hand impression. I have to say I really liked it.

There were those, then, who recognized a characteristic of the twentieth-century Puccini that manifested itself for the first time here: a detachment, felt and realized unconsciously, between the work of art and real feelings, which made the correspondence between words and music artificial and unresolvable. In consequence, the music assumes a type of emblematic quality devoid of the Romantic brilliance that permeated Puccini's earlier operas up to Butterfly. In confronting the subject, however, the composer acted as he had always done, even though he had to struggle with the helplessness of first one and then the other librettist who worked on the adaptation of the American drama and its verisimilitude: there was no means of exchanging opinions with them, nor participating in those lively discussions that were essential for him to put the structure of the opera in focus, as in the golden days with Illica and Giacosa.

Consequently, Puccini’s influence in dramatic decisions increased out of all proportion. After finishing their work, the librettists protected themselves by playing down their responsibility, Crocifissi Cavallini being the first to do so in an article published in the form of an open letter in the Giornale d' Italia, some days before the premiere in December 1892. The poet complained of Puccini's lack of respect for the most elementary theatrical rules, showing he had not understood that the real problem was elsewhere. In this situation, Puccini had to bear practically the whole weight of a personal interpretation of The Girl, trying to unite elements peculiar to his own style with those of Belasco's drama. After having located the crucial point, he altered the plot significantly by compressing the last two acts into one. He replaced the action in III with the spectacular scene of the lynching, an idea that had occurred to him, as we have seen, on first reading. Minnie's impassioned entry out of save her lover from the Lynch mob was also his idea. Thus he succeeded in creating a

much greater tension than in the original, in particular increasing the credibility of the ending. He also distillled Belasco's last act into a brief and emblematic final image, with the two lovers journeying alone toward freedom. Thus a restatement of Act IV of Massimo Leanza was avoided.

His decision to replace Old Joe Miller's joke, the text of the lesson that Minnie teaches Belasco's miners, with the Bible, open at Psalm 51, is particularly significant: the theme of redemption it thus introduced is prominent, as is needed, ready to be exploited in the finale, where Puccini used it as the emotional stimulus of the heartbroken cry with which Minnie succeeds in moving the miners to pity. There is a clear and direct testimony of his intention to emphasize this aspect, whose influence on the musical structure will be considered later.

In Belasco's drama, for example, from which I derived the opera... the idea of the heroine as redeemer was given quite a small part; it was I who wanted the librettists to develop this further: the desire for purification, that breathless longing for a peace won with love and industry, became clearer, more sincere from it. 37

The entire musical structure of La fanciulla del West is built with a view to the happy ending, and this is no small novelty, since in European opera of the time the key to reception relied primarily on the relationship between the individual composer and his audience; the audience expected was therefore tightly bound to the usual choices of that specific author. Furthermore, even if the most famous opera composers maintained a relationship with their own tradition, they all now faced an international audience, and nineteenth-century generic conventions were by now weak points of reference for this or that stylistic trait, having almost entirely lost their conditioning influence. In other words, it was unlikely that an opera would fall for the same reasons as those, say, that caused such a disastrous reception for Carmen. 34 The prime concern was whether a composer would be able to develop the drama with the necessary coherence; and his successful earlier works, together with those of his competitors, formed the basis for an assessment of his work.

Although the American subject proved much more difficult to set to music than he had expected, Puccini never doubted in effectiveness, and

Footnotes

30. Letter of 27 March 1948, quoted by Franco Serpe, “La voce in proscenio” in Puccini e la musica, ed. Valentino Romano (Quaderni della Fondazione Festival Puccini 3; Florence, 1973), 186-87. The original is in the Library of Congress (Music Division), Washington. My thanks to Teresa Mancini (Arnold Schoenberg Centre) for having allowed me to see a copy of it.

31. This is, in essence, the thesis proposed by Leonardo Fornarini in his Puccini (Univ. Florence: Vallecchi, 1974), 124-25. Twenty years later, and after the most recent contributions of international musicology, one can document in how much self-awareness Puccini composed, and thus how, in itself, was the theme of the distance between words and music declined by Puccini, attempting to vary it to overcome it.


34. The failure of Bitter's masterpiece (and of French opera) was largely due to its collision with practices still prevailing in 1857 at the Opéra-Comique, and especially the scandalous subject of this La colombe (Rom: Novello, 1850), 124. See also Carlo Zangarini, “Puccini e La fanciulla del West,” Propaganda musicale (1950), nos. 1-7.
prepared a series of dramatic and musical devices that are channelled in a coherent way toward the conclusion, reflecting the preliminary note in the libretto and score derived from Belasco's "drama of love and moral redemption against a dark and majestic background of primitive characters and wild nature." The representation of nature was not treated merely as background, Puccini gave it a significant role in the development of the drama in the last two acts (we will see how the musical themes associated with the setting, particularly the blazon in Act II, are interwoven with those that characterize fundamental aspects of the plot). It did not, however, have the disproportionate weight suggested by certain commentators. It is difficult to agree with Luigi Ricci when he states that "La fanciulla del West is an opera whose essential aspect is its setting."  

Before ending these preliminary observations, it will be useful to outline some formal elements that depart from the usual patterns. La fanciulla begins, for the first time since La Fille, with a genuine prelude while the curtain is still down; in all the operas after La Fille, the opening music had inevitably run into the first scene. The function of the Fanciulla prelude does not derive from nostalgia for the past, but from the need to emphasize the music that represents the opera's fundamental concept. The prelude also serves to show from the very first the role of the orchestra, the real protagonist in this opera. Note the color of the arpeggios and the juxtaposition of unusual groups, through the adroit use of the quadruple woodwind sections and the harp, which creates an effect of extreme richness. Thanks to this shrewd technique, the subsequent blocks of brass chords, doubled by string tremolos, become much more incisive (see Ex. 7.1). The broad thematic sequence is intended to symbolize love as a redemptive force. The musical mimesis is obtained by having the two chordal phrases in the two dispositions of the whole-tone scale (A, mm. 1-6); they express an indefinite torment of the soul followed by a brief...
The decision to emphasize the theme of "redemption" from the very beginning had a crucial influence on the entire opera. But at the intertextual level, *La fanciulla* also relies on many Wagnerian effects, illustrating how Puccini at this time inclined firmly toward a pluralism of style on the one hand the idea of the "Western" and its realistic corollaries, on the other the great European traditions, with its strong aura of a moral fable. Puccini

39. One cannot fail to recall the Gisheng's Cak-Walk, which closes Deloney's "Children's
seems to distance himself from the dramatic material, casting an ironic eye on his own tradition and its favored models.

The "redemption" motive recalls Parsifal, an opera Puccini greatly admired. It is true that Minnie, by cheating, does not show herself to be totally pure; nor is the humanity of the Far West free from passion, only from selflessness; but although the motive is located in a different reality, the resemblance is no less recognizable. Minnie, a wild lover on horseback (this was Puccini's vision at least, as indicated in the stage directions in the libretto and score), has, as Carner observes, something of Die Walküre about her, and this is reinforced by a detail of Act II when the wind flings open the door of the house as the two protagonists embrace just like the young Sieglinde and Siegfried, indifferent to everyone and everything.

So far we have discussed elements that form the nupsi of the story; a little later, however, Puccini offers another reference, much more important because it is purely musical. When Minnie decides to hide the wounded Johnston, a four-note motive appears in the orchestra (Ex. 7:36). Its funeral-march rhythm then dominates the entire finale of Act II:

Example 7:36

Puccini here employs one of the most classic gestures of a twentieth-century composer: he uses the chromatic motive that opens Wagner's Tristram (Ex. 7:39) as a recurring theme, offering the spectator a subtle reference to the opera that was the point of departure for a new way of depicting love in the theater.

The gesture was fully conscious; just as in the past, he had used the Tristan chord many times, this reference was also motivated semantically. One of the numerous guides that analyze the opera's themes, drawn up by the Belgian Maurice Kufferath and translated into Italian in 1897, has an apt comment on this passage. Puccini might even have read it himself (he knew the musicologist personally: Gara, no. 557, 574; see Ex. 7:38).

Wagner often divided it into two parts, so as to form two distinct themes. The descending chromatic cello phrase (4a) indicates more particularly Tristan's pain, while the upward motion seems to characterize Desire, as much that of Tristan as that of Isolde. Note how the one theme is similar to an inversion of the other. . . . Do not desire and pain have a common source? And are they not eternally opposed in life? 46

Puccini's reason for using this famous fragment, harmonized in E-flat minor, does not seem very different from Arnold Schoenberg's when he used it in Verklärte Nacht (1899), where the motive of Ex. 7:36 is connected with the verses of Richard Dehmel's poem, and announces the words of a woman who reveals her sin to the man. 47 Similarly, Puccini's quotation is

43. His opinion deserves citation: "Nothing of Richard Wagner has died: his opus is the point of all contemporary music, and there is yet something so passionate, large, in happier artistic times. The moderns, however, have diminished and lobated the supreme Massaian tendency toward consciousness and exhaustion. Perhaps they did this because of their lesser genius, but certainly it was because of the extreme succession of things of dreams and of life, the characteristic music, and also not diminished emotional currency by an excess of approach."

44. Maurice Kufferath, Tristan et Isolde: étude et analyse de la musique de "Tristan et Isolde" (Paris, 1898). We have often noted how Puccini's imagination was stimulated by the text, even if he had not read the poems although his passion for Wagner had always induced him to collect background information, while he was composing La fanciulla he complimented Ciampiati: "your Tristan is a wonderful production. It is very interesting and very well composed" (5 January 1899; Gara, 10:533, 535). He notes in a little volume produced in the occasion of the Neapolitan premiere of the opera conducted by Mascioni, which contains a lengthy encomium on the genius of the opera, like a good Wagnerian, Ciampiati emphasized how the theme of desire centered many times in the character of Tristan's delirium when he was dying in the third act. See Carlo Ciampiati, ed., Tristan e Isolde. Regia Teatra S. Carlo. Napoli 1899: seconda edizione (Milan: Ricordi, 1907), p: 5.

45. Dehmel's poem, taken from 1895 and 1896, was used by Schoenberg as a program for the music, and was published on page 5 of the score Verklärte Nacht (Berlin: Verlag Dréilick, 1903). The stanza appears in the end of the initial section (no. 87), a little after the woman begins to sing in the poem: "Ich trag ein Kind, und ich singe, Dir / ich geh in Sinde, auch di / ich geh in Sinde denk Dir" ("I carry a child, and I sing, Dear / I go in Sinde, and I / I go in Sinde I think Dear").
not merely a simple homage but a living, functional way of conceiving dramaturgy: 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 terrible trial to save the life of the man she loves, and who, like Tristan, is new wounded. The analogy is made stronger by the fact that Johnson goes out unarmed to meet his pursuer, like Tristan, who allows himself to be wounded in the duel. Both are struck down by their important rivals in love, Rance and Malvolio. These references, however, beyond the grasp of the average listener, appear almost to complex, in the composer's mind, what on the surface seem two completely different "tales."

The "Polka"

The introductory character of the prelude is prolonged across the raising of the curtain, which reveals the inside of the saloon where Act 1 is set. The horns provide the rhythmic support of a delicate barcarolle, over which the oboe develops thematic cell A and its inversion (A'); see Ex. 7-4), extending them into a short motive (X) roiled by the movement of the parallel chords. A little later the same idea is heard in fourths in the flutes, one of the many impressionistic touches that animate this opening passage. Meanwhile the shouts of miners arriving to meet for the evening are heard from outside; then a baritone sings the first phrase of the carceral melodic song of nostalgia. This is the first vocal melody of the opera, and a little later we hear it sung by Jake Wallace, the camp's barked singer. It is also the first of the original themes that Puccini took from a collection of Indian songs and from other sources; here, however, the melodic exaltation is more important than the rhythmic syncopation, and does not bring about a dramatic contrast as in Butterfly, since it is limited to providing the music with a suitably generic tone.

A few measures after the idea of redemption was evolved at the beginning, the other dominant sentiment of the work appears: nostalgia. The plot embarks on a detailed semantic journey. 43 From this first episode on...
the exposition of material follows a formal logic that enjoys an obvious symmetry, so much so as to make one think that the constructive value of the themes came into being only in retrospect. In this, Puccini pointed to new paths, skillfully manipulating the mainstays of his dramatic style while at the same time strengthening his connection with more up-to-date tendencies.

The first act presents a cast list that involves a different musical arrangement than usual, with a large group of secondary parts, all male voices, coordinated on a vast scale. The small crowd of minors includes a second baritone, Sonora, and another seven well-individualized roles who act as a collective character, and who in this guise, after the enforced defection of Larkens and Sid, also function in Act III as a protagonist. In addition, there is an important second tenor, Nick (manager of the Polka Saloon), a first bass (Abby, agent for the Wells Fargo company), two character actors (Jake Wallace, baritone, and the Indian Billy Jack Robin, bass) and two generic part actors, the half-breed José Castro and the pony-express rider. A "real" crowd, then, with only one small female part—Wendy, Billy's Indian woman—besides the heroine. 59

The situation seems almost like a dress rehearsal for Sonnet Angela and Gianni Schicchi; Puccini pulled it off by giving the orchestra greater prominence than before. Such a decision involved a lossening of the commissive power of the main motives attached to individuals. If we think of Tosca—the direct antecedent of La fanciulla—in its rigid interweaving of environment and characters in the context of an action-drama—where a thematic variant is attached even to the Marchesa Attavanti, who never appears onstage, we can suggest a reason for this turnaround. The minute particularization of every member of such a large group would have involved a loss of clarity; by developing the connective tissue instead, the composer structured the dramatic material in a broader but flexible sections of more dialogue in recitative style, to the detriment of the expansion of the lyric parts (which are reduced to a minimum). This causes awkward staging problems, especially in this first act, given that the characters have to acquire

59. From the point of view of secondary parts and singers ( likened to 1990) and the nature of their roles, La fanciulla is by far the most demanding opera produced by an Italian in the first decade of the century. Adriano Loureiro (1953) notes several, Sabata (1953) resolves (through, unlike in La fanciulla, many of the same roles are taken by one singer), and Sabata (1953) etc. Among foreign works the piece most closely links to the forty-two characters (although many are triple roles) in Luius (1950), followed by Rezoszek's Twenty-five (1971). But let us in Massaggi's Le marche (1950), the comic names of the adjutant actors for the number), and the thirteen in Salome (1955) and Salsato (1955). Scene have considered the presence of great crowd scenes as a primary trait of Der fliegende Holländer, perhaps modeling on Crusaford Calaf (1953) and, to some extent, the number of secondary parts is directly related to the historical subject. One would, moreover, have to wonder what Richard Wagner, whose operas feature many characters, has to do with variants.

Puccini in the Twentieth Century

their individuality—necessary in view of the last finale—through song. Each character's reaction in that finale, including the chorus subdivided into little ensembles, has an important weight in the gradual drive toward the denouement.

The stage directions supply a very detailed outline of how the action should be coordinated. Thus in this first section, the nostalgic Larkens is already onstage, intent on mailing a letter, and the bar of Sheriff Rance's cigar glows in the half-light. Then Nick lights the lamp at the bar, and as the light gradually increases, the music develops symphonically, with the first theme of the prelude (Ex. 7.1, A) alternating with the barcarolle in melodically developed variants; thus the story takes form before anything has happened onstage.

A syncopated theme accompanies the entrance of Joe, Bella, and Harry (Allegro vivo, Ex. 7.5), then that of Happy and Sid, and, finally, the action at the table (where they play faro). The miners cross the stage like marionettes, improvising dance steps and singing a famous popular song, Dodo Do (Ex. 7.5). This is provided with a melodic ending that gives their actions grotesque impetus.

Example 7.5

a. La fanciulla, I, [3]

b. La fanciulla, I, 3 before [2]

A further fragment of the cakewalk rhythm emphasizes the entrance of Sonora and Trip (Robusto c sostegno, [2]). All the action and exchanges of dialogue rest on the orchestral accompaniment, which provides a natural and continuous flow to the episodes thanks to its syncopated nature. The "gambling" motive (Ex. 7.5), treated as the theme of a broad rondo, acts as pivot around which the main action rotates, allowing for the simultaneous presentation of different perspectives. The proto-film technique, already tried out in the Latin Quarter scene of La Bohème, is employed with great skill here. Thus the omnipresent whole-tone theme (Ex. 7.1, A) emphasizes for a moment the problem of the oh!ing, heartless Larkens (1 before [2]). A new motive accompanies the boys' anxious inquiries about
Minnie's amorous preference, and a chain of parallel ninths underpins Nick's cunning reply, until the camp singer's voice reaches us from outside, interrupting the rapid pace of the action.

Jake Wallace is accompanied by an offstage harp with paper between the strings, to simulate the sound of the banjo slung over his shoulder, and this starts a long lyric interlude. ("Che faranno i vecchi rai?", "What will my old folks do?). Everyone joins in the song, the words characterized by excessive candor, but yet again serving to express a concept. The group song, in simple but effective polyphony, has a moving central section, treated in responsorial style ('Al raddio tesorio', 'As the home he'll score'). This stage music is meant to show the miners' good nature, but also to unleash Larkin's emotional reaction and Sonora's gesture of generosity, the collection of money to allow his companion to return to Cornwall. Here a variant of the idea on which the prelude is based occurs: the song becomes associated with the whole-tone theme that expresses Larkin's distress, and becomes the solution to his problem when Wallace's melody is hummed by the men in the short coda.

When the game resumes, the action once more becomes rapid and hectic. The chanting episode produces some necessary contrast and illustrates how camp life varied between extremes: after having demonstrated their good will, the "boys" are ready to hang Sid on the spot. Rance then has a chance to take the spotlight with a few moments of simple philosophy, pinning a two of spades on the cheat's breast, and warning that if he touches cards again he risks the noose. A third fragment of cakewalk (263) marks Ashby's entrance, and he gives the first information pertinent to the progress of the plot by describing the dangerous bandit Ramirez, whom he is hunting a short and sinister theme, associated with the band of Mexicans, and which will reappear many times, characterizing this passage (Ex. 7.6). It shows once more how the relationship between voice and orchestra is systematically arranged, with the clarinet in the chalumeau register and the violas enriching Ashby's declamation.

We have so far seen various aspects of life in the saloon: sensuality, cruelty, danger, and solitude, outlined in brief scenes characterized by the tropes of frontier fiction (later to be appropriated by Western movies). We have not yet seen the duel over the woman, which happens after Sonora insults Rance. As they reach for their pistols the orchestra is engulfed by a powerful rhythmic frenzy: percussive ostinati shift from one section to another, the high instruments run repeatedly to the top of their range, the horns raise their balls, and with the trumpets sound a crescendo (mm 46).

The stage direction of the score (Ex. 7.7) indicates that the instrument slung on the miner's arm is a guitar, after having specified that the harp form to feature: a banjo.

Example 7.6. La fanciulla, I. [II]

46. The stage direction of the score (Ex. 7.7) indicates that the instrument slung on the miner's arm is a guitar, after having specified that the harp form to feature: a banjo.
little violin theme is heard, with a curious motive at the end (Ex. 7.8c: ?).
This reappears an infinite number of times in the score, causing various
reminisences. In the first finale, for example, when Minnie talks about her
love to Johnson (Ex. 7.8b), the figure evokes the affection with which she is
surrounded, just as in Act II, when the men gather round the hut to bring
her help (Ex. 7.8b). It is an affection that the heroine returns with absolute
devotion when she prepares to defend the gold they have entrusted to her
(Ex. 7.8c). But the cell is also heard while Minnie prepares to meet Johnson
(Ex. 7.8d), and later at the moment of her first kiss. Cases like this demon-
strate that Puccini was occupied by the drama as much as by the purely mu-
sical coherence of the fabric, making this function as a vehicle of dramatic
meanings.
The schoolroom episode,7 which is open to criticism for its extreme
sentimentality, is another of the numerous building blocks from which
Puccini carefully tried to construct the perspective of the finale. The mu-
nic devoted to the “Classe di asini,” as the composer called it, continues to

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7 In the first edition of the score (1910, Pl. 11491, I, from fol. 75 before fol. 77 to 77 fol.
the schoolroom scene had a brief appendix, in which Minnie aux (e) sends some good messages even to the Indian Billy Jack Robinson, noting that her efforts are in vain.
be of high quality (it is rich in effective orchestral combinations), and is
crowned by the important semantic reference destined to imprint itself in
the miners' hearts. As in the Larino scene, Puccini uses only the first part
of the sequence that at the beginning had united love and redemption (Ex.
7.0, A; cf. Ex. 7.1), connecting it with the words, and attaching the word
"love" to the song of nostalgia (Ex. 7.5, B). But the one who must free him-
self from sin is still missing, and here it is only necessary to emphasize the
miners' ability to show mercy.

Noble sentiments and deeds also blend in the following pensive episode.
Ashby has prepared a trap to capture Ramerez, thanks to information from
Nina Michelorena, who is, according to Minnie, "una strega
che fa comunio di nero fino per farsi Poccio l'ingano" ("a busy who
spends all her time ogling men"). Meanwhile, the miners have a quick look
at new from the world from which they are isolated, and Joe drown his
(presumably not too serious) sorrow at the death of his grandmother in a
glass of whiskies.

Up to this point Puccini has outlined the relationship between the hero-
ine and the community. Now he briefly concentrates on the figures of
Minnie and Rance, left alone onstage. Ex-keeper of a gambling house turned
lawman (a common case in westerns, most famously with the ex-badman Pat
Garrett), the sheriff plays a role in the drama similar to Scarpia's he repre-
sents power, and would like to make the heroine his; he will pursue Dick
Johnson, alias Ramerez, a gentleman-bandit and so an idealist like Cavaradossi.
Compared with the aristocratic Roman, however, Rance's manners
are much more polished, and his sense of honor will eventually prevail over
his passion. The latter is expressed by a unique orchestral theme, which
accompanies his dialogue with Minnie and will return with great effect
during the duet for Johnson in Act III.

Example 7.10. La fanciulla, 1, 3 after [11]
But Rance tries in vain to win Minnie by offering her prosperity, the one thing, he says, that has not failed him: gold. In the brief Andante sostenuto (just twenty-seven measures), the first arioso of the opera ("Minnie, dalla mia casa son partito; "Minnie, I left my home"), his declarations of cynicism are contradicted by a noble and passionate melody. Minnie contrasts her own way of looking at love in the Andantino "Lagnin nel Solodid," in which, with a few graceful melodic gestures over a brisk rhythm, she depicts the quiet life of a father and mother in a small house. Little things, but the ascent to the concluding lyric section of the brief aria is grand and unexpected, and its yearning seems the result of sincere conviction.

Example 7.11. La fanciulla, I, 8 after 51

The orchestra promptly responds to this difficult vocal passage, one of the many Minnie facts in the course of the opera, by inviting playing the cakewalk heard at the end of the prelude. It is a sign that the girl's desire has been satisfied: Johnson has entered the room.

Looking more closely at the music that accompanies the first dialogue between Minnie and the newcomer, we see a further illustration of how Puccini's narrative technique had evolved, indicating a decisive renewal in relation to his previous compositional procedures. Up to this point, the representation of grand vocal melody as the principal means of expression has been all but complete; Johnson's entrance, however, which brings a decisive acceleration of the action, shows even more clearly that the underlying musical elaboration of La fanciulla is primarily of a symphonic and orchestral nature. It presents a type of parallel narration—at times lyric, at times dramatic—to the singers' declamation (which at certain points picks up ideas already heard from the pit). Johnson's character is depicted by the cakewalk motive, which is extended in the bass and joined in counterpoint by a soaring, romantic melodic idea that suddenly makes plain the empathy between the two young people (Ex. 7.12a). The brief pause in the conversation is marked by a rhythmic motive in the double reeds (Ex. 7.12b):
to begin the robbery is mined by the piccolo (4 after [2]), and the woodwinds repeatedly imitate the snowstorm with very fast ascending and descending pentatonic scales through the range, over string tremolos, with the wind machine also joining in.

After this hectic and realistic section, Minnie and Johnson are left alone together. Their long duet (lasting barely less than that of Butterfly and Pinkerton) is not reducible to traditional form: within the five-part structure, it is once again the orchestra, where the movement of the themes leaves the voices free to converse naturally, that creates the sense of drama. Yet again action and concept prevail, with two dramatic aims: first, to show how Johnson has set out on the path toward change, and second, to reveal how Minnie's awareness of his love increases. The brief introductory section fulfills the first aim (39), opening with the whole-tone theme. This precedes the reprise of the waltz in A major (40), which does not symbolize their hidden love, but simply a crystallized moment in time just experienced (a function deriving from the fact that, like Wallace's song, it was originally stage music). In the central section, Minnie and Johnson compare their aspirations, expressed by two intense melodic ideas that follow in close succession a few measures apart. The contrast between which the tenor expresses his love of life, and the comparison with Minnie's world, still void of experience, derives directly from the initial saloon theme (Ex. 7.14a, cf. Ex. 7.4, X). Minnie, for her part, after calling herself a "povera fanciulla, o scura e buona una nulla" ("poor little girl, humble and good for nothing"), tries to raise herself to the man's standing (Ex. 7.14b). The two voices touch B♭ for both of them a note that projects them toward the ideal:

Example 7.14

The reprise of the waltz has the effect of reminding them that real life continues. The key drops to G-flat, and Johnson's words describe their new intimacy as a basis for the future:

Example 7.15
But the drama suddenly interrupts, forbidding an idyllic development. The third section is another extract from "real life." Nick warns that the Mexicans have been seen on the track (the clarinets promptly make their presence clear), and the whistle preannounced by Castro is heard. We know already that the robbery will not take place, but a brief solo by Minnie dispels any remaining doubts; dramatically resumes the miners' life of hardship and sacrifice, and rises to B♭ to express powerfully her will to defend the gold earned by sweat and toil. The fourth and punctuating section of the duet immediately captures the effect of these words on Johnson. The whole-tone theme (Ex. 7.16, A) is preceded by a dramatic variant (A'), and for the first time is followed, as in the prelude, by the sequence representing the love that drives toward redemption (B). Now that the change has taken place, the spotlight gradually shifts on to Minnie, eventually framing her exclusively. Her invitation to Johnson to come up to her little house precedes a brief reflection on "Ciò che avvenne sotto casa" ("What we might have been"); then, muted strings and delicate woodwinds accompany the restatement of her theme (Ex. 7.16, B), the melody sung by fifteenoff stage tenors. The sonority thus gradually in Minnie moves on the words with which Johnson left her. Solo violins and cello, the other strings afair, begin a harmonic journey that leads for a moment or the major seventh, which Minnie, in a reverie, repeats "Avete un viso d'angelo" ("You have the face of an angel"). Finally, a sudden crescendo through two measures leads to the last repetition of the theme; which leaves the final chord unresolved, the sound dying away as the curtain falls. The effect, as in Butterfly, is masterly, but here the orchestration is much more sophisticated. The chord on the tonic C occurs off through the last three measures, and at the end only the harmonic nucleus of Minnie’s theme remains, a solo string per note of the major ninth (C–G–E–D–B, spread widely through the range, with both violins in an octave, and a flib in the violas), blending with the choral’s open fifth and the timbre of the horns, an instrument purposely created to produce a special blend. It is an ending that, combining voices and instruments to realize a new and distinctive timbre, seals an act of considerable complexity, and of a completely new conception.13

49. There few measures are the strict interweave of Luigi’s melodious in Il tabarro, which has a similar vocal line; whichever in the middle range that rises by leaps to the high register, well supported by the orchestra.

50. Johnson’s phrase ("Ah, non tremare"; "Do not be afraid") is a promulgation of love will happen an hour later, since it anticipates the theme of his soliloquies during the polter game (see Ex. 7.25).
A Poker Game

The construction of the first act of Fanciulla on long sections of static alternating with sudden action can be put down to the attempt to structure the drama in the same way as a broad symphonic exposition, where every element is subject to rigorous development. This ambitious attempt cannot be said to have entirely succeeded, primarily because the music is often more interesting than the action, and attracts more attention. One can, however, understand Puccini's intention, which can also be seen as a preparation for the first part of Suor Angelica. Minnie's surroundings are essential to our understanding of her reactions, which originate from the contrast between her aspirations and her everyday life: Johnson breaks an equilibrium that has been achieved with difficulty, and imposes a change that is bound inadmissibly to his own.

The opera takes flight on these premises, which allow a better balance between music and drama. The last delay in the action is the "Indian" prelude and scene that opens the second act. A licker of English horn and clarinet on the whole-tone scale alternates with a little staccato theme, before Wowkle sings a lullaby on three notes for her son in her arms. Refined orchestral colors, and a dash of the grotesque in the dance ("Come fil d'aria e di gioia"). "Like a blade of grass is the day"), do not entirely save the portrait of the couple from convention. Billy experiences the difficulties of living in a different culture, drowning his instincts in a bottle of whisky.

Fortunately, Minnie arrives in time to cut short a superfluity of intimacies and "Ugh." An hour has passed since the end of Act 1, and to the amazement of her Indian servant, Minnie asks her to prepare a meal for two. The music continues to weave its subterranean plot, interlacing motivic variations on the "redemption" theme. As the heroine anxiously looks about, the flute detaches the "Indian" motive and joins it to 1 variant of the whole-tone theme (Ex. 7.17: A), immediately after this, Minnie begins to per on her Sunday best, singing a fragment of the progression that evokes redemption through love (Ex. 7.17b: B').

Example 7.17
a. La fanciulla, II, 3 after [3]

43. Carner identified the melody sung by Wowkle as an Indian lullaby (Carner, 45). The miniscule song coincides with the first "hence l'incerto è pianto / furore intenso e cruel" ("winter descends on the plains, as the heart becomes acid and cruel") and anticipates the sentimental-grotesque style of Foggia and Tipton in Il tabarro ("Il sogno una canzone"). "I dream of a little house

54. Also believes this melody to be a variant of the waltz theme, but does not mention that this is sung by Rameau ("L'LTRAMO-T务菜-REDUZIONI"). "371-376.
The kiss, the culmination of the entire piece, is carefully prepared. The atmosphere of fervent expectation is made tangible by a theme that leaps an octave (Ex. 7.196), derived from the oboe melody at the beginning of the opera (see Ex. 7.44, cells A and A'). When Minnie opens the door to dismans Wehke, another protagonist in the story of their deepening love, the snowstorm. Puccini depicts it with parallel fourths, fifths, and octaves that tumble down onto the low F pedal, reinforced by timpani rolls, lightly brushed cymbals, and the wind machines. A few measures later, as the couple embrace, the door bursts open on its own, with a subtle psychological effect. Up to now, the prelude sequence has united two themes, characterized by the opposition of the whole-tone scale and diatonic scale. Now, however, that same contrast is embodied solely by the sequence that represents love as redemption. This appears on the whole-tone scale, overcoming the fury of nature (Ex. 7.169), but, as soon as the door has closed again, it assumes the diatonic form, unfolding intensely, languidly (Ex. 7.199).

Example 7.20

a. "La fanciulla, II, \[\text{Ex. 7.196}\]

b. "La fanciulla, II, \[\text{Ex. 7.169}\]

c. "La fanciulla, II, \[\text{Ex. 7.199}\]

The emphasis here is on the allegorical aspect of the story, and substantiates the Wagnerian element in La fanciulla we have already discussed, as if love were making the two forget the outside world.

When Johnson prepares to leave, the description of the setting becomes paramount, anticipating the breath-taking tension that will soon dominate. A great deal of action overlaps within a few measures, before nature and feeling force Johnson to stay. Over the harp, triple woodwinds run up and down the pentatonic scale in septuplets and triplets: the love theme is heard many times over the powerful F pedal. Dynamics fluctuate from the scarcely perceptible to very loud, and the depiction of the storm emphasizes the rhythm of stormy events. Three solitary notes ring out; a harp glissando over a timpani roll; the trumpet bursts out with the harp's cake.

The music that really fire Puccini's orchestral imagination are those in which break-neck action prevails. The gunshots signal that the hunt for Ramuzza has begun. So he decides to stay, and the words "Oh no ti lascio più" ("I won't leave you again") acquire a symbolic import that goes beyond life and death. Passion reaches a climax in the pentultimate section, constantly increasing in intensity. But for Puccini the passage still lacked something: for a revival of the opera he added sixteen measures to heighten the lovers' rupture, taking them to high C.79

While Minnie eavesdrops on the bedroom, ready to sleep, a brief coda in D major—the waltz, exquisitely scored—ends the piece. The "expectation" theme (Ex. 7.196) rings out over the long harp glissando while Minnie asks her final question: "Come sonati ora Nina Melitonezza?" (Did you ever know Nina Melitonezza?) The tenor answers her C with a G, the tritone interval a clear indication that he is lying.

75. "I have added to back to the second duet of La fanciulla that will be performed in Rome. They are scenes intense here, which were lacking in Ricardo Schiralli, 14 October 1921, Corr. no. 443, 6.08. Puccini was able to hear the new music in a production in Vicenza on 9 September 1922 (see the letter to Maria Rizza Gandi, 1 of 14 September 1921)."
But peace lasts no more than a measure, and, over the pinnacled drum roll and the muffled rumbling of the wind machine, Nick's voice is heard offstage, and he soon bursts into the room together with Sonora, Ranco, and Ashby. Puccini deals quickly with the recognition episode (a few measures of recitative punctuated by thematic reminiscences): Ranco shows the portrait of Ramirez obtained from his lover Nina, provoking a bitter reaction from Minnie. In the meantime, Nick becomes aware of the presence of his prey, but decides not to betray him out of respect for Minnie's love (the detail is essential to understanding his attitude in Act III).

This episode leads us, with significantly sharpened interest, to the second half of the act, where two overwhelmingly tense scenes await us. Minnie makes Ramirez come out of his hiding place, and as she drives him toward the door her melody breaks into short, agitated phrases, with sharp leaps to the high register. Johnson's confession is structured in three broad sections. The intense recitative widens over the course of his first conversation with Minnie (“Una parola sola” “Just one word”); see above, Ex. 7.12a), which recalls his lies. The narrative “Or sei venuto” follows this, underpinned by a rhythmic accompaniment (see Ex. 7.12b); he explains that he became a bandit only to sustain his family after his father's death, her to an inheritance whose real nature he had not known until that moment (“Una mansarda di banditi da strada”, “a gang of highway thieves”).

But his meeting with Minnie (see Ex. 7.13a) has changed him, and the lyric third section emphasizes the force with which this change has occurred (“E il labbro mio”, “And my lips”); the progression that represents his passion blends with the theme embodying his amorous caress, an ardent passage that demands broad, forte phrases from the singer:

Example 7.20, La fanciulla, II, 4 before [5]

53. “I warned”—Puccini told me, perfectly aware of the inconvenience caused—I wanted to write the orchestra part in [ and the vocal part in [ but this does not fit into my system of writing. In none of my operas is there such notation, which to the uninitiated could seem a post” (Betti, Puccini incoraggia di te stesso. 66). This prudent attitude does not invalidate the novelty of the original rhythmic conception.
Minnie’s will wins over Johnson’s denials, and the arioso passage—to the words “Sei l’uomo che baciò la prima volta. Non puoi morire!” (“You’re the man I kissed for the first time. You can’t die!”)—leads to the E-flat minor theme that echoes Prunier. This accompanies the laborious ascent to the loft where Johnson is hidden, and will dominate the finale with tragic force (see Ex. 7.30).

The climax of the opera has now arrived. Rance is highlighted by the noble melody that portrayed him in Act I (see Ex. 7.31); now the wily, he precipitously returns to seek out his prey. Unlike Scarpia, the sheriff is without malice, and is ready to trust Minnie when she assures him she is alone. But for a moment he succumbs to his love for her, while the orchestra, with violent, sharp brass accompaniment, depicts the passion that overcomes him (and, its corollary, his powerful motivations in the encounter that will follow shortly).

The orchestra sounds out a heavy accompaniment at slow march pace, which leads to a blood-curdling coup de théâtre effected through the harp with two mordent brush strokes. First harmonics, then two flickering high arpeggios punctuated by the ride drum (45 after 43). Johnson’s blood drips on to Rance’s hand. An intense passage marks the brief struggle between Minnie and Rance, underlined by an extremely tense, declaratory vocal line in irregular rhythm. Then Johnson comes down, accompanied by the E-flat minor theme—tagged off-balance by bass drum on the offbeats—and he fumes on the table.

From this point, the ever-changing rhythm becomes a prominent protagonist, reflecting the outrage situation and the crudeness of the gestures. Minnie’s simple morality pins everybody on the same level—the gambling-hound proprietor Rance, the outlaw Rameriz, even herself, “padrona di baccio e bisacca” (“lady of a low tavern, a gambling-den”). A pairing theme of minor seconds sounds in cross-rhythms in the orchestra until the “wounding” theme returns, in a very quiet dynamic that accentuates its tragic character. Like all romantic heroines tormented by baritones, Minnie offers herself for the prisoner’s sake. But she will not give herself to Rance “fredda, esanime e spoglia” (“cold, lifeless, and bare”), like Leonora in Il trovatore. She means to gamble for Johnson’s freedom in a game of poker, “due mani sopra tre” (“two hands out of three”), and slips away furtively to the wardrobe, hiding a pack of cards in her stocking. The oboe accompanies her proposition, and the love theme follows, under fragments of dialogue, before the orchestra is reduced as if by magic to the rhythmic pizzicato of the double basses (9 after 59), and the vocal lines—apart from some melodic fragments—reduced to parlando as the game begins. The obsessive movement of the muted lower strings,99 in a gradual crescendo, exacerbates the tension, as if there were both the tumultuous beating of Minnie’s heart and the inexorable passage of time. They reach a crescendo, and at the climactic moment Rance confidently reveals the decisive winning hand. The music is pure gesture and color.

Example 7.32. La fanciulla, II, 39

But Minnie merely has to feign illness to buy time to substitute a card pulled from her garden: she can then recover and show her “tre e sette e un pajo” (“three aces and a pair”), the most typical “full hand.” The sheriff’s reply, as he takes his leave, is brief and gentleman-like as promised; but the orchestra bursts out moto forte. The “wounding” theme, instrument
throughout the brief card game, unfolds with funereal gravity over a mighty ascending scale in trombones and cellos, and the harp glissandos run through the entire range, coming to rest on a chord of E-flat minor, strengthened by bass drum and cymbals.

Puccini had not achieved a similar tension in a finale since Act II of *Turandot*. It is created here with an economy of means and attention to scenic grammar that fully correspond with the stylistic leap forward in *La fanciulla*. But perhaps the real novelty is in Minnie’s reactions, which the music heightens and amplifies to the point of excess. Before the curtain falls, Minnie, clutching Johnson, laughs convulsively; then she breaks out into an unguished cry. Nervous tension alone is not enough to explain this attitude, which borders on hysteria. The evocative force of the full orchestra suggests that, at the very moment she metaphorically possesses her lover, she experiences a moment of true insanity. As Mosco Carner has perceptively written, here “the suggestion of the character in an almost pathological state of frenzied composure” (Carner, 466). It is, once again, as if Puccini went beyond the strict boundaries of a coherent dramatic motivation to reveal a human dimension motivated by the most secret primitive impulses, which were among the most exhaustively explored subjects on the European stage in these years.60

The Manhunt, and a Happy Ending

From the beginning of the third act, Puccini succeeds in creating an atmosphere of tension that continues through to the finale in unbroken sequence. A gloomy atmosphere permeates the music that accompanies the brief opening conversation between Nick and Ramer, which is based on a double-bass ostinato of an augmented fourth (A–E↓)59 over which a brief fanfare is heard (baritone, then horns). On this sinister dissonant canvas, Nick sings a whole-tone melody, a musical *tinta* spread over an icy winter’s dawn, with campfires that cast flickering lights on the colossal trunks of the redwoods. Ramer’s melody (Ex. 7.10) accompanies the sheriff’s bitter reflections on his “ciao cavalieri” (“chevalier act”). A week has passed since he left Ramer in Minnie’s loving care, and everyone is lingering nearby, waiting to capture the bandit. The conversation ends with a brief reflection on love by Nick, one of those autobiographical confessions that would become more and more frequent in Puccini’s works from this point on.62 According to the tenor, “tutto il danno mondo s’innamora” (“the whole damn world is in love”), and the B-flat minor phrase, tinged with bitter disillusion, lingers in the memory despite the reassuring reprise of Minnie’s theme in C-flat (in a chamber-like arrangement: first flute and two strings).

This passage (Lento sostenuto, mm. 1–89) proceeds, and acts as an introduction to, the great scene of Johnson’s pursuit, which ends in his arrest. It is in four movements, treated symphonically:

- Andante mosso con agritazione (mm. 81–181)
- Piu mosso (mm. 182–115)
- Allegro selvaggio (mm. 216–335)
- Andante mosso (mm. 336–60)

Each section has its own thematic material, parts of which have already been heard previously, while the reprise of the Andante as a conclusion forms a cyclic structure at the service of the drama, rendering the idea of encompassing the outlaw. Other recurring formal elements increase the fluidity of the action, like the tritone in the bass in the Lento introduction, which also appears in the following movement, serving as the basis for both the syncopated (orchestra) accompaniment (Ex. 7.14c X) and the motive sung by the miners offstage. To obtain a pruned increase in tension, Puccini widened, to a fifth, the intervallic range of the initial ostinato figure—which assumes the role of principal theme (Ex. 7.14b X)—and gave the violins a *perpetuum mobile* in octaves:

Example 7.13

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60. Carner points out that “he is here, too, that the Strauss of Salome made his chief contribution to Puccini’s score” (Carner, 466).

61. To obtain this note Puccini prescribed that the fourth double bass string (E↓) be lowered by a semitone.
A little later the horns sound out a vigorous theme in A minor (bar 6 after \( \text{Bar 5} \)), followed by the recapitulation of Rance’s melody (\( \text{Bar 12} \))—he has been left on-stage to express his joy. The restatement increases the coherence of the symphonic development, at the same time putting Rance in the foreground for a few moments. Passion and revenge make him indifferent to what is happening around him (like Scarpia in the Te Deum scene, but with very different connotations). The reprise of the principal theme (\( \text{Bar 5} \) before \( \text{Bar 3} \)) accompanies the precipitate return of some of the miners, who narrate the first phase of the chase.

As the moment of capture draws near, there is a frenzied coming and going of men on horseback in the background, and cries of joy welcome the description of Ashley galloping off on the fugitive’s trail. The tempo speeds up to \( \text{Piu mosso} \) (\( \text{Bar 13} \)): bassoons and horns play the F-sharp minor melody with which Johnson warns Minnie that he will not leave her again (see Ex. 7.180), underlined by a cymbal struck with metal sticks. For a moment, the allusion intertwines the persistent bandits’ destiny with death. When the theme moves into the violins, the somberity thins, allowing us to hear Sonora’s strangled cry announcing the capture. The miners give free reign to their savage joy, singing the melody \( \text{Danza Day} \) Allegro selvaggio in A-flat major (\( \text{Bar 22} \)), their caricatured movements set off by the cello as they look forward, with besidder fury, to the moment the bandits will hang from a tree. But in a brief passage that acts as a coda, the noise dies down to allow

Nick to come into the foreground. Before rushing off to warn Minnie, he bribes Billy, charged with the hanging, to delay preparing the noose. Finally, the orchestra takes up the initial Adagio at the moment Ashley returns on-stage with Johnson and conveys him to the community, so that "Puccini en casa giustizia" ("It can carry out justice"); the suffused \( \text{parlare} \) of the choristers responds to him: "La fazi" ("It will do so").

The perfect interlocking of symphonic structure and action provides Puccini with the ideal means of realizing a great stage spectacle in five intense minutes of music. The reminiscences employed as themes serve to recall those moments most suitable to increasing the emotional impact of the section; on the other hand, the effect of the passing horse riders is strengthened by the stage music, which enhances the spatial illusion. Even these days, the passage is difficult to stage (and at the time must have been taxing even for the best-prepared performers), but if performed well, it clearly shows the tendency to anticipate film techniques, in which every phase of the chase comes alive in the soundtrack, and is rigidly controlled by the formal structure. A considerable rhythmic variety, together with lively, original orchestral clashes (from strings playing on the bridge combined with muted horns, Ex. 7.216, to different variations of percussion and celesta), makes a decisive contribution, helping to make this an ideal part of the concert, most striking in all Puccini.

Before moving on to the ending, Puccini gives us in the only "acena e aria" of the entire opera, in order to throw the hero facing death into great relief. The summary trial is over in a few measures. Ramerrez reacts nobly to Rance’s mocking and the lengthy list of accusations by the miners (accompanied by a crescendo of verbal and physical abuse), the most serious of which—and the only one proven—is of having stolen Minnie’s affection from all the men in the camp. In the G-minor aria "Ripararmi lo sconcerro" (\( \text{Bar 44} \)), the music begins to earn the unlooked for’s respect, enough to make Sonora defend his rights when his request to speak for Minnie for the last time triggers a muttered protest.

"Ci’ella mi creda libero a coronar" ("May she believe me free and far away") has a dramatic position analogous to "E Lucrino le stelle": a touching farewell to the hero beloved at the moment of death. Unlike Cavardosi, Johnson externalizes his feelings, preparing himself to die like a hero before everyone, the stage direction states that he sings "con grande espressione, esaltazione, col volto quasi sorridente" ("with great expression, growing uncontrolled, almost smiling"). The entire melodic concept

65. Ricci notes, with regard to the positioning of the tenors: "The sound should gradually increase in intensity, from the first notes of the five tenors in the face of the first tenors. For the first three voices (place among seven part notes, success from six notes onward), ... turn toward the backboard and make both hands into a cross at the sides of the mouth, a graduated cross" (Puccini interpreta di al tenore, Requie 45).
of La fanciulla is distilled in these twenty-one measures of Addame molto lento. The voice moves ever upwards by step in G-flat major, reaching high B by a leap of a fifth. Up to this point, the orchestra had doubled the tenor at many octaves, "come organo" ("like an organ"), but in the second part it claims the melody as its own: the simple chorale-like harmonization gives the piece the character of a gentle lullaby, the ultimate sign of innocence, allowing the voice to leap upward once more in a final moment of regret.

The brief march to the scaffold that begins at figure 194 has a very different character from Carraradini’s analogous moment on the platform of Castel Sant’Angelo. The broad theme in C-sharp minor, played by horns, trumpets, and trombones, and marked by functional percussion strokes, has a majestic feel, a long way from Carraradini’s intimate, suffering confession. When the insipid rhythm of the strings and woodwinds overlaps in counterpoint with the brass, there is no longer any doubt that Johnson is being presented as a martyr, protagonist of a tragic fate.

This heroic passage is the dynamic prelude of the finale, where Puccini stole the plausibility of the entire opera. It was necessary for the music to be persuasive, since, if only the plot is taken into consideration, the event could credibly conclude with Johnson’s hanging, loudly celebrated by Rance. But the whole scene begins to crumble as soon as a variant of Minnie’s theme introduces a grand scenic gesture: Minnie’s voice sounds from behind the scene, and she gallops on stage, a pistol between her teeth.

Example 7.24. La fanciulla, III, 6 after [13]

Unlike in Turandot, in which the clarity of the tragic element makes the final scene seem fake, Minnie’s arrival throws everything and everyone into turmoil (almost reviving the finale of rescue opera), cutting into a musical texture carefully prepared for a positive ending.40

We have seen many times how Puccini tended to construct the endings of his works by extensive use of reminiscences. His final passages never lack logic, and are always an inescapable consequence of what has gone before. In this context we might recall the musical signs used to make credible, step by step, the idea of moral redemption, starting with the thematic sequence presented in the prelude of the opera (Ex. 7.1), which has been given meaning and enriched with new connotations by Minnie during her explanation of the psalm (Ex. 7.9). The other theme that plays a fundamental role in the finale is the popular American song that embodies the miners’ nostalgia for home (Ex. 7.4). However, the most important melody of the concertato, sung by Minnie, derives from the theme to which the curtain rose (Ex. 7.4, X). After having used this melody prominently in Johnson’s music during his first duet with Minnie (Ex. 7.14a), Puccini exploited its subtle power to evoke life in the saloon, thus establishing a continuity with the sentiment of trusting hope that animates the concertato (Ex. 7.2b). Together with Minnie’s theme, all these elements interlace in the finale, which follows a rather traditional four-part structure, within which the music dictates the sense of the drama:


During the Molto mosso Minnie diamonds and shields Johnson with her own body. As her theme forcefully returns in its original form (C major ninth chord, 5 before [19]), she turns her pistol angrily on anyone who tries to approach her. The solemnity then, and the tempo shifts to Moderato mosso, the music based on the reprise of the Act 1 passage that accompanied the miners’ gift to her of ribbons (Ex. 7.8a), here exploited to suggest Minnie’s gentle blackmail of her boys. The “redemption” progression accompanies the phrase “Il bandito che fe’ e fe’ il mio tesoro” (“The bandit that has already died, up there under my roof”): Ex. 7.25b.

6: Rescue opera was very popular in the Napoleonic period. Beethoven’s Fidelio (1805–06) is certainly the most famous in a long line that includes Lobkoczky (1795) and Les Deux Journaux (1811) by Cherubini, Tébaldi – Donizetti (1817) by Rossini, and Tébaldi – Monteverdi (1818) by Metastasi. Even the finale of Bellini’s I puritani in the Parisian version (1829) belongs by right to this genre, from which Puccini’s Turandot was also not very far removed.
Example 7.25

a. La fanciulla, III, 4 before (3)

Minnie

E un cielo che mi
è già venuto lassù, sotto il mio tetto

b. La fanciulla, III, (3)

Minnie

E che tu bevi, m. beve...

Minnie begins the concerto (Ex. 7.15b), and in the A-remainder molto sostenuto addresses the men one by one. From this point on, Puccini imposes a substantial, intentional sense of sonic and musical stress, in order to bring about the climactic crescendo through thematic reminiscences, which gradually permeate the music in the buildup toward the anti-heroic denouement. Thus the soprano's principal melody twice takes up the "nostalgia" theme:

Example 7.26

a. La fanciulla, III, 4 before (3)

Cantata della nostalgia

b. La fanciulla, III, 4 before (3)

Cantata della nostalgia

But after Minnie has thrown away her pistol, the emotional tension heightens and the third repetition of the preceding phrase is developed, moving into a whole-tone range by a change of the minor third to major (X):
In this way, Puccini prepares a return to the full "redemption" theme sequence, crowned finally by the musical and dramatic climax achieved after the phrase "Fratelli, non vò al mondo pecatore, cui non s'apra una via di redenzione" ("Brothers, there is not a sinner in the world for whom the path of redemption is not open"; Ex. 7.28). This passage doubles the form of the prelude exactly, and makes manifest the secret moment in Act I (Ex. 7.26) when the change in Ramerurre occurred.

The gradual increase in passion in Minnie's vocal line, well supported by the orchestra, overcomes the minions' final resistance:

Example 7.28. La fanciulla, III, 7 after [11]

This clearly signals the decisive emotional crescendo that precedes the denouement. Even this brief concluding section, in which Somers hands Johnson over to Minnie, makes use of two reminiscences: of the wake and of the Act I duet (3 before [13]: "una nuova pace che dir non so"); "a new peace that I cannot describe"). In the touching final moment, the two lovers sing the melody that in Act II (Ex. 7.18a) symbolized the crowning of their dream of eternal love, superimposed on the last fragment of the miners' nostalgic song. After the last triumphant rise to B, Minnie and Johnson move off into the distance, as if in a fade-out. The effect is obtained through a sophisticated use of similar in the last six measures, the E major triad sounding through an extreme range, from double basses (Eb) to the violins five octaves higher. The slow fall of the coda is accompanied by lower harmonics, and strokes on tam-tam, bass drum, and cellos. Each instrument enters individually, the accompaniment becoming ever quieter: the first time in a Puccini opera that such an even dynamic is sustained so far ahead (twelve measures) of the final chord.

The finale is thus managed with persuasive logic, and intended to provoke intense emotion; indeed, one feels that Puccini was more interested in perfecting the techniques capable of making an impression in the dramatic subject itself. It is almost as if he were, in this transitional phase, making a detailed study of the way he had previously composed in order to extract its fundamental aspects, with an eye to new experiments. Consequently, it is not the plot that elicits emotion here, but the way in which it is created. The high technical quality of the music that accompanies the unfolding of the narrative lays bare the allegorical base: behind the concept of redemption there is an act of faith in the power of a love that can overcome every obstacle. Perhaps Puccini, in his own life, was also trying to convince himself of his own efficacy of affirming in a different way the feeling that had always inspired him.

In subsequent operas, Puccini never again recuperated the creative invention with which he made different levels of narration interact in La fanciulla, an opera in which he chose—with his usual instinct—the only rhetorical means capable of making plausible the subject in which he had made himself believe. He was no longer interested in achieving a merely generic communication, but in trying to distinguish what he owed to the public from what it owed to himself.

The contradictory figure of Minnie, an unusual heroine, as chaste and gentle as she is passionate and bold, is guided by the strong natural instinct that drives her toward the man she loves, and the denial of herself to Johnson after their first kiss is only a way of increasing his fascination in her. God and redemption are merely a useful pretext to state a more worldly reality. Minnie has been the image of affectionate, amorous happiness for the listener; at the end she quite legitimately presents them with the bill for her devotion. She is apt, then, as ingenuous. In the outlookers' happiness for her, which forces them to grant mercy to a redeemed Ramerurre, there is regretful yearning for an impossible consummation; a comment that Minnie, however, prepares to enjoy as she walks toward liberty in her lover's embrace.

"To Know Oneself or Die?"

When choosing the new subject, Puccini had declared that he wanted to finish with the world of La Bohème; he scarcely had begun work on La fanciulla. Puccini was immediately compared to "a second La Bohème, but stronger, bolder, broader." In his Puccini's masterpiece, Puccini underlined the existence of comic, sentimental, pathetic, and tragic elements. It is precisely in his conviction that opera should be sustained by a mixture of heterogeneous elements that the key to Puccini's late operas, up to Turandot, lies.

The composer's aim was to find a way of infallible talent for imagining the staging. Never, before La fanciulla, had he managed to do this on such a broad scale, both in the unusual importance of the visual elements and in the urgency of the action at key moments (which finds a corollary in the detailed stage directions, practically a production book in itself). Puccini's natural inclination to find a new and more balanced relationship between music and mise-en-scène had thus become, after Bu-
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For his dramatic energy, novelties emphasized by the unusual happy ending. His letter to Clasnetti on 9 July 1911 illustrates this idea:

Everyone across Verdi to Mascagni, developed stylistically: some for the better, some for the worse. In my case, I believe the only case, I have found the agreement of critics and audience, for me this is confirmation that I have not made a mistake. You can tell him about the formal approach that I limited myself in earlier operas, and that now the essence, especially the melody, is of my very blood. Add that this has not been difficult at all, and that I think this has been the era that came to me by the most immediate inspiration. To renew oneself or die? Today’s harmony and orchestral music are not the same... I promise myself, if I find the subject, to do better and better on the path I have set upon, sure of not remaining at the rearguard. It is obvious that Cunah either understand little or has heard the opera only once. On first hearing, the drama can prevent one from listening to the music, but at a second or third hearing, when one knows the plot, the surprises no longer have the same effect, and one can listen to the music. This always happens in opera where the libretto is fascinating. (Cara, no. 583, 30)

According to Puccini, then, the way to renewal was not principally through the subject, but through the development of musical language; and it is symptomatic that he emphasized the dramatic qualities of a mediocre libretto. Opera as a visual genre was about to be overtaken, in the sense of the wider audience, by film, which in 1910 lacked only sound to reach its full potential. Before dying, Alban Berg would attempt a utopian conciliation between the two arts, conceiving an interlude of Lulu as film music, subjecting the quick-moving scenes of the escape episode, facilitated by film, to a musical setting based on the sophisticated technique of reiterating earlier material in retrograde. Puccini did not go so far as to imagine a collaboration between film and opera; but with La fanciulla, and with the same optimism about the resources of opera as Berg, he made one of the most vital early contributions to the idea of such genres blending?


67. Clasnetti was charged with drawing up an answer to a letter to Puccini from Cunatia, editor of D’Amicis.

68. According to Mazzol, Puccini was interested in film, and unusually frequented movie theaters of the time, while he did not much care for recordings (even though the artistes “The Volks” from Moses Lesser had already been recorded in 1908 by E. Vernet Puc-
nini, 117–19). On the subject of the Cassa Familiare (see verses by Luigi Illica), his only composition written especially to be recorded at the beginning of 1907, see Michael Krey, The Unknown Puccini, p. 38.
Wars, à la Operetta

TWO SUBJECTS, TWO PROJECTS

As Le fanciulla del West had begun its journey around the world’s theatres, Puccini seemed to become calmer. The anxiety that usually attacked him as soon as he had written the last note of a work gave way to a more deliberate and focused approach to music, a greater amount of time dedicated to reflection, and more thoughtful decision-making.

Puccini found a valuable correspondent, which he had previously lacked, in Count Riccardo Schiabò, whom he had known since 1895. Schiabò was a man of culture and wealth—his father’s family was Austrian, his maternal family from Umbria—and a born music fanatic. His friendship with Puccini deepened from the second decade of the century, when, as well as receiving the composer’s most intimate letters, he joined Sybil Seldman in the role of artistic advisor. He also worked to disseminate Puccini’s operas throughout Europe, in particular cultivating relations with opera houses in German-speaking countries. In 1902 he actively participated in the Viennese premiere of Il trittico, staging Sant’Angelo (1925), a task that he then undertook for all three operas in Hamburg in 1921. Moreover, in the following years, he sought for La rondine—not a particularly popular opera, but one very dear to the composer—to be revived in Monte Carlo. A deeply cultured man, he drew Puccini’s attention to Gerhart Hauptmann’s play Hanswurst (first performed in 1892) and commented on the possibilities of adapting this play, approaching the poetic symbols perfected in subsequent works. His plans attracted Berg, who shared the idea of setting Unanippe senza fine (1908). Later, and also looked after the attention of Respighi, who in 1927 set Die verwunschene Glocke (1896). Puccini did not give much thought to the scenes, which he already knew in French translation, since the protagonist’s mystic aspiration to discover love in death was not a theme that particularly interested him:

I read and rejected Hanswurst thought and thought again deeply and concluded that it’s not the thing! Too sad and uniform—the heroine in bed

1. See the preface of the Puccini–Schiabò correspondence (Schiabò, 19–21).

It was a calm, deliberate judgment that led to a quick refusal without excessive worries or regrets. But Puccini never lost the habit of considering even subjects that did not appeal to him, but whose dramatic potential he gauged in a detached way. The first mention of the novel Two Little Wooden Shoes (Das zwei Holzschuhen) by the Belgian writer Louise La Rausche (pen name Wouda), from the time of the Italian premiere of La fanciulla, it is the story of a Belgian flower seller who, thrown out from Brussels to Paris, where she discovers that the painter she loves is living a debauched life. Having returned home, she then attempts suicide, dressed in her own past as a professional tearjerker. It was not by chance that his interest in the work was never stimulated by the conscious use (almost half a million copies) of his name. The commercial success of the novel was not something that interested him in 1914 when Mascagni declared that he had for some time been thinking of setting Wouda’s novel to music. It was the memory of the old dispute with Leoncavallo over La Bohème that drove Puccini to insist that Tito Ricordi bid in auction for the copyright in March 1915. The firm acquired the rights and offered the subject to Puccini, but after the composer had thought about it until October of that year, Two Little Wooden Shoes left his life to enter Mascagni’s end as Lodoletta (1917).

Puccini’s attitude towards these predicaments is made clear in a letter to Luigi Illica, to whom he turned to discuss possible subjects and the theatrical world in general. After having considered the new possibilities offered by modern staging (see Gira, no. 606, above, p. 161) Puccini momentarily seems to ironize himself, with calm detachment and a thin veil of melancholy:

I said you about wanting to make them ugly: this is everything. But do you think it’s easy? It’s terribly difficult, my dear Illica. Above all, where does one look for a subject? And will our imagination ever find something
sacrifice; enduring? We are not looking for original departures, packaging our brains in a search for the new. Love and sadness were born with the world, and we know both their ways equally well, especially when we are more than fifty years old. (6 October 1911; Gara, no. 667, 404–5)

Another distraction was provided by the Quintero brothers' comedy *A theme allegro*, which the composer had seen in Milan in 1909. Puccini’s interest in comic theater—unlike that in *Oidipus*—was very definite, and led him to ask Sybil:

Do you know of any grog-nose novel or short story or play, full of hooch and buffoonery? I have a desire to laugh and to make other people laugh. (10 November 1911; Seligman, 211–12)

This project too was short-lived, but it led Puccini to meet the journalist and comedy writer Giuseppe Adani, who became his most faithful collaborator in his final years, later editing the first collection of the composer’s letters as well as a biography of note (although embellished with anecdotes, sometimes inacurate and often misleading). He was always ready to help, to do and humbly reto anything, to draft a hundred versions if necessary. After the disastrous experience with *La fanciulla*, Puccini now realized that he could and must take greater responsibility for the structural planning of his operas, and so a librettist of the Puccini type was a necessity.

Moreover, he urgently needed someone to find artists for his operas in the land of Sassia (Tito Ricordi) —we’re in a nice fix! But on the very first occasion that let tries of his tricks, I shall leave the firm— you can be quite sure of that, I promise you! (Carnet, 213)

Among other things, Puccini was troubled by the idea that Tito thought it time to find a successor to him, and his good taste was offended by the choice: he did not rate highly the probable debut of Riccardo Zandonai, about whom he had often expressed a low opinion.

In the meantime, however, he had to adapt and, perhaps because of Tito’s preferences, D’Annunzio returned to mind. Probably Puccini received further stimuli from the fact that in 1911 Debussy had set *Les Martyrs de Saint Sébastien*, a “scandalous” mystery performed by the dancers and mime artist Ada Rubinstein, and a work with which D’Annunzio had gained much fame in the international musical world. Puccini asked him for:

Two or three (better) varied, theatrical aces, as passionate as possible—small aces—of genteel and small chores and people, your Little Mermaid to leave ample room for visual effects, put as many characters as you wish: have three or four women. The female voice in a small group is beautiful; have some children, flowers, ravings, love. (27 August 1912; Gara, no. 664, 409)

In November, after another conversation with the poet at Arcachon, Puccini sent him an important timbre-based idea, one that seems to show a desire for diaphanous colors, and which eventually emerged in the concluding “Miracolo” of *Suor Angelica*:

The sounds that accompanied the choir bound me, I hear them in my mind. I’ve already made a list, but there’s the problem that is it a kind of orchestra in the wings. Harpsichords, muted trumpets and horns; voices through choirs and paper, high and low flutes; violins, cellos, violas, glass—spill glass harmonics (sounds of glass) and other things, I can’t yet define but can hear. But give me a great love scene. Is it possible? In this subject? And above all each act should have its own great emotion to bring to the audience. (Gara, no. 619, 443)

In spite of the ill-conceived irony with which Puccini approached D’Annunzio—a specialist in achieving effect at any cost—that time the poet seemed convinced that Puccini was willing to acquiesce, and proposed *La veggia dei lunghi*, a “very unusual subject”, full of pathetic force, passionate contrasts, illusions, and purity (15 November 1912; Gara, no. 610).

2. After the London premiere of *Gianni* in July 1911, Puccini submitted himself to Sybil about *Stagnone’s great success in this young author, who does not lack talent but who is prone to pique that little something which is needed for Gig theater. Above the libretto are a note that I transcribed below—which seems to me something” (Carnet, 190).

3. Giuseppe Adani (1879–1966) published his correspondence in 1938. The dating of the letters, unfortunately, is extremely approximate, and was not examinated in the 1912 reprint. His biography (Pace) also contains many errors, some of which will be pointed out in subsequent sections.
425). The plot was based on a historical event in 1721, when thousands of young people were taken aboard at Marseille and sent to Alexandria in Egypt, where they were sold as slaves. Puccini received the first version in January, and, as had happened before, was not at all satisfied by it. He sent the poet a letter full of respect, but with precise objections to each point in the plot, while he wrote unequivocally to Sybil a few days later that "D'Annunzio has given birth to a small, shapeless monstrosity, unable to walk or live." (17 January 1913; Seligman, p. 110).

Meanwhile, he already had in hand the first of the opera subjects he would eventually set to music. Back in Paris to supervise the premiere of La fanciulla at the Opéra (16 May 1912), as well as to meet D'Annunzio, he toured the theaters as usual in search of novelty. It was probably on this occasion that he heard Straussian's music for the first time, when Parsifal, the great success of 1911, was playing at the Théâtre du Châtelet. Frequenting the boulevard theaters, Puccini came across Didier Gold's La Hoppeglande, a highly charged drama in everyday language, which had run for two years at the Théâtre Marigny. Since the beginning of the century he had been looking for a strong subject with social undertones, and now he found something that matched his ideas: social poverty and injustices, passionate love; a powerful story with a surprise finale; the whole thing dominated by high tension.

There was a problem, however, with the proportions of the work: the action was concentrated in a single act. It was therefore natural that, in seeking to extend the length of the performance, Puccini returned to the idea of contrasting time, and spoke to Ilica, who, at the time when Gorky had been the main interest (1905), had closely followed the original project:

"I insist on La Hoppeglande (The Clock), and I have written to Paris to find out whether it is free, and if anyone has the rights. It is an Apache subject in every sense, almost (or actually) Grand Guignol. But that doesn't matter. I like it, and it seems very effective to me. But we need something to contrast with this red stain, and this is what I am looking for: something to give us the elevation and opportunity to make music that will take wing." (9 February 1913; Gubi, no. 619, p. 110).

The idea of an evening made up of single acts took firmer shape in the following June, when Puccini was able to inform Sybil that "I think I have arranged for the three operas. One is Gold's Hoppeglande; another with D'Annunzio, and the third (comic) with Tristan Bernard." (Seligman, p. 113). Despite very poor relations with the supercilious D'Annunzio, Puccini began to see Ilica, courting the verification to the Tristan poet Fernandes Marini.

Just when everything seemed set for the best, something happened that suddenly threw plans into disarray. While in Vienna in October 1913 to supervise the revival of some of his works and attend the Austrian premiere of La fanciulla, Puccini was approached by Siegmund Eberenschütz and Heinrich Breetz, impresarios of the Carinthian, the main opera theater along with the Theater an der Wien (where the composer had just seen the premiere of his good friend Lehár's Die Ideale Gardine). The two managers offered a sensational amount for the composer of La Bohème to commit himself to write something for them. At the time Puccini was not very keen, but he was obliged to rethink quickly when he realized that Tinio's attentions toward him were tailing to the bare minimum: he had not even sent a telegram for the important Austrian premiere of La fanciulla (Gubi, no. 604, p. 115). Puccini wrote immediately (3 November) to one of his dearest friends, Baron Angelo Eisner, who was to become his most important contact in Vienna:

"Tinio acts badly toward me! It's incredible! But there it is—and I therefore beg you to see the signor director of the Karl Theater and make inquiries—I am very keen—I really wouldn't mind finally becoming a Montreux, to teach useful lessons." (7)

He closed the deal a little later, asking for clarification as to who would own the world rights of the score. It was a vital precaution, given that the unsum that subsequently led to World War I was already in the air. The fee offered was extremely generous: 200,000 Austrian crowns plus a clear share of the rights:

I would reserve for myself Italy, France, Belgium, England, North America. The rest for them, that is, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Spain, South America (Holland, Switzerland, etc., etc.) (To Eisner, 11 November 1913; Gubi, no. 615, p. 116).

But there was a detail of prime importance in the agreement that Puccini had not clearly understood, which would be noticed only after having read the first scenario. He immediately objected to Eisner:

The subject you have sent me is quite unsuitable. It is the usual sloopy and banal operetta, with the usual East and West contrasts; ball scenes, interludes for dancing; without any study of character or originality. . . . So what now? I shall never compose operetta; comic opera, yes; like Rodulfi, but more entertaining and more organic. (14 December 1913; Gubi, no. 616, p. 117).

Although he had thought of an opera as a pastime since 1905, Puccini, faced with the concrete opportunity, firmly rejected the idea. But a new subject arrived from the Carlbacher, entrusted to two professionals, Arthur Maria Willner and Heinz Reichert, and events took a turn for the better. Puccini agreed to discuss it, and gave the task of preparing a libretto from which he would only write spoken dialogue. In the meantime, he worked hard with the librettists to change everything that did not please him — quite a task, as we will see. It was Adami who convinced the recalcitrant Puccini, taking it upon himself to prepare a verse draft of the scenario in the form of a commedia dell'arte in summer 1914. Puccini, in Ashbrook notes, 8 never had the slightest intention of writing an operetta:

Let my enemies talk. Here it is also being said that I'm lowering myself to do operetta like Leoncavallo! Never, ever, and then never again. I couldn't manage to do it like him even if I tried. (To Ettore, 13 March 1914, Gara, no. 466, 4q3 10)

From the beginning, then, the project took a different turn than originally planned, to the satisfaction of all parties. For the Austrians it was a leap in quality, for Puccini an opportunity to amuse himself, to test his abilities under a subject that was short, but full of interesting possibilities.

In the contract the rights were divided as Puccini wished, and the premiere was fixed for Vienna, in German, with a chance guaranteeing the composer plenty of scope in his choice of collaborators for the Italian version. Adami must shoulder much of the responsibility for spreading unfounded anecdotes about the circumstances in which Puccini signed the agreement in April 1914. He suggested in his biography that Puccini acted out of spite against Tito Ricordi. According to Adami's reconstruction of events, Tito had forced Claussetti, assisting Puccini at a revival of Tosca in Vienna in spring 1914, to go to Naples urgently for a revival of Francesca da Rimini. But as D'Azeglio has shown, Tosca was not given in Vienna during that period, nor was Francesca in its Naples. Moreover, there is no trace of bad blood in Puccini's correspondence with Tito. Although relations were not good, Puccini was loyal to the firm, and to the very last offered Tito the chance to sign the contract with the others. The reason

8. Willner's librettists include some of the most successful Viennese operettists, from Die Kollegialmacher für Los Polt (1907), a collaboration with Glattauer, to Die Graf von Lamberg (1906), Ziggywanzl (1906), and Zwei für Leid (1911, all with Bodenschi). In 1912 Willner and Reichert would provide Lieber with the text of D'Azeglio.
9. Ashbrook, The Operas of Puccini, 157. See also Adami, Puccini, 49.
10. Up to that point Leoncavallo had produced two operettas, ?alavà (1909) and La regina della corte (1913), as well as the farce Sì, ma non troppo (1913).

9 life, a la operetta

Ricordi decided not to take La rondine (the title was decided in May 1914) to be produced instead the class that would have forced him to share the world rights (an arrangement with which Puccini himself was not satisfied). Had Ricordi agreed to share opera rights with another publisher, he would have set a bad precedent that might be extended to many other companies, with damage to his business. Puccini set to work on the comic opera while the world went mad around him. After the ultimatum following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo (28 June), Austria declared war on Serbia (28 July), and the conflict gradually worsened, with the entry of Germany and Russia (1 August), Great Britain (4 August), and Japan (8 August). Through the network of alliances, Italy should have taken the side of the Austro-Hungarian empire, but for almost ten months it remained neutral — an attitude fully shared by Puccini.

Perhaps the composer hoped that the spark would never ignite in his own country. To side with France and England meant renouncing the flourishing German market, to side with Austria means losing the French and English ones; either possibility was frightening. It was for this reason that he did not become involved in two important demonstrations against the Central powers, one in Venice on 25 August 1914, the other in Venice on 30 August, which collected contributions from some of the main figures in contemporary culture, and a manifesto against the shelling of Trieste (February 1915). Puccini was not aware of this appeal, and therefore did not sign it. But news spread that his name was on the list, and this was enough to stoke the anger of the German public, who demanded a boycott of his operas in German theaters. Puccini lusted to publish an impudent decalogue, provoking the anger of the French nationalist Right, who in turn asserted that his work should be banned in their theaters. In fact, the composer had his own views on the matter, which he expressed plainly to Tito Ricordi:

You know my feelings, and also know that, although I may be a Germanophile, I have never wanted to be seen publicly for either side, always denouncing that the war is spreading its horror throughout the world, and also because I wish to remain within my shell and be discreet, according to the neutrality that our country has adopted. (Gara, undated, no. 665, 437-33)

Puccini was not a patriot in the strict sense of the word, and was never very enthusiastic about the war, as many other artists were. Neither did he consider the war as a "cleaning" of the world. It produced only damage, carnage, death; and some of the harm was to his own interests. His concerns about the fate of his new opera should be considered in this context.
He was already well into the work when he sent Christmas greetings to Eisner:

La rondine is in good shape, two acts complete. Tell me, given the current dreadful state of affairs because of this horrible war, what will become of this opera? (15 December 1914; Gara, no. 665, 430)

But in the meantime the Triple Alliance had cracked, and Italy entered the war on 24 May 1915 alongside Britain and France; in August Puccini thought that he should break his agreement with the Viennese impresario. Then there was a stalemate. In October he reached an agreement with his clients and punctually informed Tito:

I had a letter from Bartoletti, who, together with the other parties, rejects my proposals and defers the arrival of La rondine until after the war, as if it were still spring. He says that if the Italian publisher wants to share, let him write, and hope that they will make an agreement. I have not yet found the third (i.e., for Zanetti) and without that third I am undecided have settled down to compose La hoopla, but even for this a revision is needed to make the language more rough-hewn—it’s too sappy at the moment—and that I find myself at a bit of a standstill in a work that was taking good shape. As a result, however, I know all this and have promised to come to see me after 20 November. (30 October 1915; Gara, no. 685, 418–19)

The score of La rondine was already further advanced, and in the meantime each address as a diversion while Puccini’s creativity was focused on the French play, much to his satisfaction. The work was a good tonic, allowing him to overcome all bitterness:

I have worked on La hoopla, and it is going very well. What a shame it’s only one act. I hope to finish soon, but what’s the point? If this war doesn’t end, what will the world want with music? (To Tito Ricordi, 16 December 1915; Gara, no. 685, 430)

Despite his good intentions, Adami was not capable of providing verses to suit Puccini’s requirements, and the composer had a third collaborator secretly intervene, this time a man of the highest theatrical prestige: Niccolini took La hoopla for recreation, left him the original and the translation... it is not easy to give the necessary color to this drama in ariete. In the meantime, also with Forzano, we are seeking

13. Puccini also believed that the agreement might be canceled because he thought that in its present state La rondine had little in common with the original project (‘one of Wili- me’s first design is a piece in Act I’; letter to Tito Ricordi, 3 August 1915; Gara, no. 676, 430–31)

a two-act play to complete the evening, if Gold’s won’t do it. (To Tito Ricordi, 30 March 1916; Gara, no. 686, 441)

Up to this point, Puccini had never worked simultaneously on two operas, moreover two works so different from each other as La rondine and Il tabarro. But they spring from a single creative impulse, which had its roots in the first years of the century, and were part of a multiform project already witnessed in La fanciulla. At this stage, the search for something to put with the single act was not necessarily meant to achieve the perfect number, three. It seems rather that Puccini was unconsciously thinking more along the lines of Busoni, who very soon (1917) would stage a single-act (Arisbos) and a two-act opera (Tirant) in the same evening. La rondine was completed on Holy Saturday 1916 (Adami, no. 130, 137). A little later Puccini told his collaborator that

I have orchestrated everything to the point of having no more music ready. Thus I find myself with a good part of Tabarro finished. And it has gone well—I am very happy with it. (Adami, 2 May 1916, no. 143, 137)

The frost, for operatic affairs at least, had in the meantime reopened. Puccini had found a publisher who would take responsibility for solving all the problems concerning publication and staging, and who had absolutely no qualms about sharing the rights, this being his usual practice: Lorenzo Scaglione, “It grieves me that this business could not end up with you,” he wrote to Tito on 11 July 1916 (Gara, no. 690, 443); but a little later the agreement with the rival firm was made, and Ricordi could only regret it in vain. Neutral territory was agreed for the world premiere: the theater of the Monte Carlo Opera, unopposed since 1895 by the impresario and composer Raoul Gounod, whose talent and imagination had made it a highly prestigious venue. Suffice it to say that under his direction, the stage premiere of Berlioz’s La damnation de faust (1859), Massenet’s Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame (1900), and Don Quichote (1910) were held there, as were—after Monte Carlo had become the fixed abode of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in 1913—Ravel’s L’enfant et les sortileges (1925), Honegger’s Judith (1927), and I’Aigle, by Hornegger, and Ibert (1937).

It was a triumphant gala. La rondine, the first swallow of the new season, constitutes the tradition of success established by every work signed by this great man: Puccini.
Thus was the premiere of the new work, conducted by Gino Marinuzzi, greeted by the *Journal de Menace* on 27 March 1917. Gilda Dalla Rizza, who was to become one of Puccini’s favorite singers, was Magna, the trysting girl. Tito Schipa her lover Ruggiero. Francesco Dominici was Punier, Ines Maria Perratini was Lisette, Gustave Hubertaus the banker Rambaldo. Despite inconveniences caused by the war, several leading Italian music critics crossed the border. Prominent among these was the young correspondent of *La Nazione*, Giannetto Bastianelli, the leading exponent of new Italian music criticism, and a musicologist and composer who was a prominent advocate of the renewal of the Italian tradition alongside Torrefranca and the composers of the so-called "Generazione dell’Ottava." His account introduced the problem of Puccini’s relationship with this school, the establishment of which coincided with the intensification of nationalism feeling.

Just as certain dreadful librettos of Piave have given rise to Verdi’s masterpieces, so this libretto by Adami has given rise, if not to a masterpiece (there are no longer, alas! masterpieces in our theaters), at least to a light, but successful and very entertaining opera of pure Puccini... Puccini has tried to return to the style of "Manon."... We are pleased with the sense of satisfaction that good Tuscan, who seems suddenly to be appeasing his hunger with peasant food, little stews, caserole, etc., after ruining his stomach with exotic and artificial foods. (*La Nazione*, 28 and 29 March 1917)

This certainly does not appear to be the opinion of someone who has seriously considered the evolution of opera. Idealistic prejudice shows clearly through his confrontational derision of Piave’s libretti, while the culinary analogy, which we might find in bad taste, betrays the blind faith in Italy’s past that blunted not only the vision of Bastianelli but also Fausto Torrefranca. After the boldness of *La fanciulla*, they would both certainly have drawn a deep sigh of relief, believing they could see in *La rondine* at "Italian" stringing style, which must have appealed Bastianelli like a sister’s song.

There were also contradictions in the critical response to the Italian premiere, performed at the Comunale, Bologna on 2 June under Pasinetti, with a cast that starred Aurelia Pertile (Ruggiero) and Totti Del Monte (Lizette). The critics worked hard to find a way of classifying the work, and tried to minimize its importance. The Corriere correspondent complained that, although Puccini was "in a particularly happy period of lyric inspiration... he had... to force himself into the low and narrow standards imposed by an essentially frivolous artistic group—opera." *La rondine* was never really understood for what it was a sort of clever reflection, cloaked in melodic charm, on the formulas of light opera, but at the same time an orchestral experiment in a light and brilliant style animated by the most varied dance rhythms. Neither did the public let itself be seduced by the work, which never really took off.

Perhaps the person who understood best the melancholy yet serene mood of the opera was Lucrezia Bori, who chose it for her final opera performance, opposite Beniamino Gigli, at the Met in 1916. For a long time Puccini believed that the problem with the opera was inherent in the drama, but just this once, perhaps he was wrong, and now the spring awaited by *La rondine* has arrived.

*La rondine, or Disenchantment*

Among the many novelties Puccini faced when carrying out his Viennese commission was having to deal for the first time with a subject not directly derived from the theater or literature. But it would be wrong to suggest that the plot proposed by Willner and Reichert lacked precedents. The resemblance to *La traviata* strikes one immediately: the "courtesan" Magda de Grevy, kept in high-society luxury by the banker Rambaldo, finds true love with a young man (Ruggiero Lastouc) who has just arrived in the colorful Parisian world from the provinces (Montauban). Replace Magda with Violetta Valery, Rambaldo with Baron Douphol, Ruggiero with the Provençal Alfredo Germont, and Second-Emprise Paris with that of the mid-nineteenth century; the mold is obvious. The subject Puccini set to music clearly lacks the moral element at the heart of Verdi's work: Violetta returns to the baron so that the respectability of the Germont family will not be tarnished, whereas Magda seeks refuge in Rambaldo's arms because she had told Ruggiero nothing about her past, and because she is little inclined to be cooped up in a small house, tête-à-tête with her lover, pestered by his old mother's blessing.

The plot of *La rondine*, which from the second act develops around the heroine, also bears a strong resemblance to a little-known opera by Massenet, *Sapho* (1897), the *pièce symphonique* derived by Henri Cain and Arthur Bernard from Alphonse Daudet’s eponymous short story.14 The tense Jean de Gueunin is also from the provinces, and like Ruggiero falls in love at first sight with a worldly woman, whom he meets at a party where he is very ill at ease. Fantasy Legendre, stage name Sapho, is an earlier version of Magda, with a more dubious past. She falls with the unwitting Jean, living with him for a year in idyllic happiness in the suburbs of Paris, until the young man learns the truth from two of the woman’s ex-lovers, and brutally deserts her. After a discretion set in Avignon, at Jean’s parents’ home, in which

14. This plot outline is drawn from the source of *Sapho* (Paris: Hengel & Cie., 1897). My thanks to Julian Budden for drawing my attention to Massenet’s opera. Weller’s criticism of *Sapho’s*_yawp* reveals it interesting this comment (see his lecture from Paris, 1897, above, p. 150).
Fanny, like Manon, tries in vain to win back her lover, the two plots coincide again in Massenet's fifth act (Puccini's third). Jean finds Sapho in Paris, and begs her to return with him; but, realizing that he would never be able to forget her past completely, Fanny casts an eye on the lover he has left her forever. There are too many coincidences for them to be unintentional, and although Massenet's opera has, as key moments, a decidedly dramatic style shunned by Puccini, it nevertheless seems legitimate to consider it a primary source for La roumaine.

Looking more closely at the cast, it is, moreover, apparent that the influences on Willner and Reischert did not end there. La roumaine has a double pair of lovers, one upper class, one lower class Magda and Ruggiero, and the maid Lisette and poet Prunier; double soprano and double tenor, two lyric voices, a mezzo and a light tenor. The situation is very common in eighteenth-century comic opera: for just one famous example, think of Der Einfluss von der Seelen. Other Mozart masterpieces, from La nozze di Figaro to Cosi fan tutte and Die Zauberflöte, are all envolved by a contrast between two couples of different social standing.

If the roots of La roumaine are thus set deep in the most popular operatic tropes, it is equally evident that at least one situation in the plot came from a famous operetta. By taking herself off to Bolivar in her mistress' clothes, Lisette acts in a similar fashion as Adele, the maid of the Eisensteins who goes in disguise to the great party of Prince Orlofsky in Johann Strauss's Die Fledermaus. Even the (denied) revelation of identity between mistress and maid is followed faithfully in the action of Lisette, who believes she recognizes Magda despite the latter's attire as a gipsy. And Lisette is unable to escape her mistress' watchful eye, just as Adele cannot escape Rosalinde, who also arrives in disguise at the Russian nobleman's palace. A final similarity involves the ambition of both maids to win success on the stage. The connection between the two operas is thus clear; moreover, the transfer of parts of Die Fledermaus back into a Parisian setting returns the subject to its origin, since the source of the Viennese masterpiece, Muller's and Halévy's Le Rêveiller (1873), was set in Paris. But connections with the operetta end here; and those identified thus far do not validate an interpretation of La roumaine as a piece in that genre.

Similarly, the wholesale use of dance music — above all, the unpretenentious waltz, whose apocryphal origins at the heart of the second act, but also the modern dances woven into the opera, from the fox-trot to the one-step, the tango, and others — is not intended as light theater. Puccini attempted through such music to depict a chromatic of illness and joy de vivre that is an essential component of the first two acts. At the same time, it is another sign of his modernity. These dances, which had already been popular for some time in the United States, were becoming fashionable in contempo-

rory European art music, especially in France, and offered composers an opportunity to enrich their rhythmic palette, especially when used with the style and irony of composers such as Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky. The environment in which the characters in La roumaine move is cynical and unrestrained, peopled by those animated by a realistic spirit, who aspire to enjoy themselves and to follow the fashions that run wildly through the capital. The fashionable dance rhythms are indispensable ciphers of this worldly frivolity.15

The opening of the opera is an excellent example of the lightness that characterizes La roumaine, a lightness reflected in its very delicate orchestration, often comprising muted effects, sul ponticello, and harmonics. The orchestra vigorously attacks a lively theme, then stirs into a languid phrase of chords that suggest an image of "romantic" love, shot through with a subtle chromaticism that reveals ironic detachment. The curtain rises on an elegant drawing room in Magda de Civry's house. The trio of female friends sings a brief chanson, three notes each, responding to the invitation of the brilliant Prunier, who has just introduced them to a self-evident truth, accompanied by a tango rhythm (Ex. 8.10). The theme does not suggest any Romantic tension toward the ideal, merely a practical attitude toward the delights of everyday love, an ephemeral sentiment that stimulates the senses and banishes boredom (Ex. 8.16):

Example 8.15

La roumaine, L. 6 after 16

Ex. 8.15: La roumaine, L. 6 after 1

Ex. 8.15: La roumaine, L. 6 after 1

Ex. 8.15: La roumaine, L. 6 after 1

Ex. 8.15: La roumaine, L. 6 after 1

Ex. 8.15: La roumaine, L. 6 after 1

Ex. 8.15: La roumaine, L. 6 after 1

Ex. 8.15: La roumaine, L. 6 after 1
Example 8.1 (continued)

b. La rondine, I, \[\text{I.1}\]

WARS, A LA OPERETTA

Family is the rule in Magda's house, as is the conviction that life is a series of pleasant distractions. The melodic style is simpler and more fluent than in La fanciulla, very well suited to underlining the interaction between the characters by means of the tired and true technique of sung dialogue. Lisette has a chance to display her sharpness, expressing her simple point of view on galanterie: "Mi vuol? Ti voglio? E fata?" ("Do you want me? I want you! It's done!), before abruptly moving away from the group. Premmer pointedly describes the fashion "dell'amar sentimentuale" (Puccini amusing himself by ironizing his own traits?), the poet's nonconformist behavior—though aspiring to great ideals he is actually content to be Lisette's lover—reveals the naivety Puccini, supported by Adami, aimed at Gabriele D'Annunzio, whose grandiose metrical was as renowned as his voracious erotic appetite. Magda vivaciously invites Premmer to sing his latest song, calling him "Il porta Prunier, gloria della Nazione" ("The poet Prunier, glory of the Nation"—D'Annunzio was "Vice d'Italia," "Bard of Italy"); and the tenor, full of himself, does not even notice the good-natured teasing. His voice at the piano and strings areppazie, the orchestra silent, with a beautifully surreal effect of distance created by a real pianist accompanying from the wings. Then he sings the first of the opera's many set pieces, and at the ricornello declaims emphatically, "O creatura," a D'Annunzian catch phrase par excellence.

As the target of the author's irony is made more obvious, an amiable piece of meta-theatre begins. Premmer's narrative is the first anticipation of the love story that Magda will play out during the course of the opera; just like the imaginary Doretta, she will find passion in a kiss delivered by a student. The poet then passes his "glory" to the soprano, who continues the story: "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta" is a deservedly famous number, immediately demonstrating that Puccini did not think of his main character as a soubrette: the lyrical melody unfolds in a languid slow waltz, reaching high C in the ricornello, and requiring great skill in the final moments, with its numerous high notes and large leaps. Attentive above all to semantic connections, Puccini completes the piece with the famous little theme of the opening (Ex. 8.1b) just after Magda has sung "Chi importa la ricchezza / se aham è riflessa / la felicità" ("What are riches, if at last happiness blossoms again"). From this point it becomes a symbol of the illusory world of a heroine inclined to embroider the real one with poetic conceits. But reality is different, as it does in the matter-of-factness with which her general lover faces life: Ranaldo is crushed by "tavolo romantico" ("romantic devil"), giving her a gift of a precious jewel.

The conversation unfolds vacuously, lightly, over dance rhythms underpinned by harmonies more settled than usual. Yet there are opportunities for splashes of color: for example, when Lisette bursts in to announce that a young man is waiting for Ranaldo in the antechamber, her vivacious impatience is translated in the orchestra by marcelletto minor seconds. The superimposition of the two lines a semitone apart (woodwind and strings, beginning F against Fl, from [\text{I.1}2] does not aim at bitonality, but at lifting up the atmosphere, preparing for the second, intense lyric section—"Donnar! Niente altro che domani!" ("Money, nothing but money!") begins by the heroine just a few bars after the first.

"Ora delli s/divina" ("Sweet and divine hours") carves out a lyric space by narrating an episode in Magda's life, when as an adolescent she escaped her old aunt's watch to go dancing at Ballill, meeting a student whom she then left without reason. The aria is essential to understanding the real significance of Magda's aspirations. The music will be repeated in Act II, when the heroine relives the situation now more clearly narrated, and, under the spell of nostalgia, asks her companion to make the same gestures as the young man she met in the past, trying to experience past emotions. The narrative is the second link that connects, as in a chain, the meta-theatrical elements of the opera; but it is also a splendid example of lyric dialogue, which unfolds in a continual exchange between real life and the ideal world. The ricornello in waltz time then becomes the melody that identifies the wish to fall in love that sets Magda (and which will in fact reappear as soon as Ruggero Lastorie makes his entrance into the room) (Ex. 8.2b). But the following lines should not go unnoticed, where the "voce lontana" ("faraway voice")—perhaps that of a necessarily vigilant conscience—warns that "dieti baci, i sorriri, l'incanto ai paga / con stille di piano" ("One pays for the enchantment of kisses and smiles with tears").
Puccini immediately suppresses the lyric expansion, trying to hold life and romantic reality in balance, avoiding the risk of emphasizing one to the detriment of the other. The atmosphere again becomes brilliant when the Decadent Prunier lists the women worthy of him, fictional characters who stimulate his imagination. The brief list, which includes Poe's disquieting persona together with the mythical Galatea and the adulterous Francesca (Dante's Francesca, but certainly by way of D'Annunzio and Zandonai, more "da Rimini" than "da Volterra"), closes with Salome (Ex. 8.3). The tenor joins the English horn, which quickly plays the princess's themes from Richard Strauss's opera—and not from just any moment, but exactly when the woman comes to after kissing the mouth of Jordanian's severed head (Ex. 8.3). The irony extends in more than one direction, directed both at a rival opera composer, and at the "perverse" poet who displays a decided taste for self-mutilation (another ironic pass at D'Annunzio):  

Example 8.1  
La rondine, I, 10 after  

The theme is the second of those associated with the princess, and is listed for the first time in the clarinet where Salome meets Jordanian in scene 3 of 1983. See Salome (Franz: Berlin, 1905), 17–58. Here it begins with a minor third. This becomes clearer in the "Dance of the Seven Veils" (II, p. 292) but not until the final scene, from the moment the exorcism ends the dreamer's head (new and clarinet, 1983, p. 115). does the minor third embody the heroine's narcissistic obsession. It is this focus that is cited in La rondine.  

Example 8.4. La rondine, I, 10  

In the second part of the act the music divides the stage into two settings. From one side, a skipping theme in G minor (III), over a very delicate fabric of open fifths and harmonies in the violins and staccato violas, accompanies Prunier who improvises as a magician and calls for a screen to obtain the necessary intimacy. From the other side, the music of the moderato waltz that accompanied Magda's dream underlines Ruggero's entrance and his exchange of pleasantries with Randolfo. The two situations could not be better differentiated, and there is an anticipation of the minions' trio in Pamadore in the marimba-like music that accompanies the palm-reading. The subtext with which Puccini makes these two pictures interact assures the greatest possible coherence to the action. Ruggero represents love, but does not acquire a musical identity; the theme that accompanies him is merely the projection of Magda's desires. The heroine's aspirations return to the foreground when Prunier's words predicting her future are briefly isolated. It is a languid prophecy with which the circle of meta-theater that began with Doretta is closed, a prophecy that anticipates the end of the opera, as if to lay a coating of deconstruction over the events of the third act. The phrase will function as the theme of destiny, at once inevitable and yet devoid of high drama.
CHAPTER EIGHT

When the two stage spaces merge, however, Magda never enters into Ruggero's sphere—after all, their subsequent meeting has to seem by chance, and it is essential, in light of the third act, that, like Jean de Gauzain, he is completely unaware of her past. The young man has come to ask advice on how to spend his first night in Paris, and the poet's response, nonconformity to the bitter end, demythologizes the legend of the city's charm with a facade-like solo (188) that is an ironic variant on the Marcelia (Puccini settling the score, perhaps, with France). But Lisette leads the rebellion, proclaiming the reasons for the reign of women to the rhythm of an elegant polka (125), yet another dance employed to lighten the atmosphere of the opera. The young man, bewildered, leaves to go to Bullier's, the pulse of the pleasure-loving city's life, while the lights dim in the drawing room, the guests leave.

But there is still time for a delightful finale, which has a definite purpose. The echo of the waltz has still not faded as Magda grants Lisette the evening off, and the melody associated with destiny seems almost to suggest what she should do: she reads the note on which Ruggero has written the name Bullier; her face lights up, the leaves. The conclusion is a short duet for Lisette and Prunier. "T'amò... Menti!" ("I love you... You're lying") is one of the most important passages in the opera. Prunier makes sure that Lisette's clothing, skillfully "borrowed" from Magda, is to his taste, from the claw to the hair, even to the makeup. The music could not suit the situation better: for ninety minutes we have heard an ominous motive that gravitates around the dominant of E-flat major, rises to a tone and descends again, without once establishing the tonic clearly except for the few measures in which the poet, alone for a moment, invokes the Muse's pardon for having descended so low ("Piano, piano... e non rageso!"; "I love her, love her, and do not reason"). But barely has Lisette come back with another battle than the sense of suspension is restored, as if the erotic desire that unites them in the extreme simplicity, without pretext, is destined never to be exhausted: not even when they leave arm in arm after a resounding kiss do we hear the waltz. The orchestra, now reduced to chamber proportions, entirely collaborates, never failing to add subtext and variety to the scenario. Nearly every restatement of the motive has a different color, and is presented in the most varied blends—oboe with bassoon, violins, flute with bass clarinet; a translucent touch of harp harmonics here and there.

The harmonious naturalness with which this couple banishes monotony emphasizes their difference from Magda: barely has the swallow come back on stage disguised as a greisette than the waltz establishes the long-desired E-flat, and subtly contrasts her illusion to the reality of the two lovers who have just left. The ritornello of Donnello's song faces the image of a woman who is not very happy, and certainly very bored, trying to steal from the reality of everyday life a few moments of elation and happiness.

WAR, À LA OPERA...
Puccini deals with the "chance" meeting by reinventing duet form, creating a mosaic-like scheme mixing orchestral and choral passages. Ruggiero and Magda, still in the style of lyric dialogue, gather together all the melodic germs, releasing their dynamic potential. Moreover, the use of reminiscences strengthens our conviction that Magda has initiated this episode as a flirtation, and the love that gradually arises seems more and more a more semblance of that genuine passion for which Manon and Mireille gave their lives. The first sign of her real attitude is given by the "destiny" theme, which accompanies her brief apology to Ruggiero as she sits down beside him (Ex. 8.5). It is confirmed by the presence, at key points of their conversation, of the motive that embodies amorous illusion. The languid phrase frames them for an instant, at the center of the room where everyone is dancing (Ex. 8.5b):

Example 8.5

a. La rondine, II, 5

The tenor promptly invites her to return at his table, precisely because her modesty makes him think of his native region. The nostalgic evocation of the Montandian girls awakens Puccini's orchestral imagination: he paints a charming picture in unison rhythm (193), colored by glockenspiel, cello, and triangle. Ruggiero's inability to respect Magda's real position, even though she has entered a place of elevated repast quite alone, makes his provincialism even more obvious, and he begins to treat their meeting as if it were the first step to eternal love. "L'avventura strana come sei di lontani" ("A strange adventure, as in days long ago"), murmurs Magda. Only then does she abandon herself to the waltz for the first time ("Nella dolce carezza della danza," 193), in which the melodic outpouring takes us back to La Bohème, so beautiful that it does not seem true. The ideas pass to the chorus while the couple blend into the crowd of dancers; the restive of the music of the Act I narrative (193) quickly reminds us that Magda is living in images of the past.

The dance floor gradually becomes more lively as expectation increases, but suddenly the voices give way to the orchestra, which begins the second waltz with frenzied bríos. The melodic profile impulsively reaches upward, the style becoming distinctly Viennese. Ritenuti, marked accents, elastic phrasing, procyclic cell, and Luftpause on the last quarter note. Puccini employs the required Austrian formulas in an inspired way, and adds all his skill as an orchestrator (Ex. 8.6).

Although brief, this dance apoteosis has the same centrality as has the waltz in Act II of Die Fledermaus. But there is a new idea still to come, sung by the sopranos and characterized by a gentler, more romantic cadence, heard when the pairs of female dancers depict spring (193): music that will reappear in Act III to recall Magda's meeting with Ruggiero. Thus, and Prunier's entrance once again has the risk of dampening excessive lyric abandon. The two move among the crowd, framed as in Act I by a lively little theme (Ex. 8.7b) which further contributes to dramatic continuity, given that the idea was heard when Prunier commented on the story of the swallow's flight from her old aunt (Ex. 8.7a). But it is not long before Magda and Ruggiero, dancing, return to the foreground. The narrative music is restated, and, right on cue, Ruggiero orders "due bollis" ("two beers") and leaves a tip of twenty solidi. The same order, the same way of exchanging names by writing them on the marble table, but this time Magda has decided not to run away, although she introduces herself with the false name of Pauline. But from the point Ruggiero begins to reveal his feelings, much of the seemingly deep passion is contradicted. The "illusion" theme supports the beginning of the tenor's declaration (Ex. 8.8a) and, after Magda has begged Ruggiero, "mi accogliete come li destino mi pone" ("accept me as fortune has brought me to you"), it reappears a moment before their first kiss (Ex. 8.8b).

The lyric coda of the piece, with poignant comments by the chorus, is
Example 8.7: La vendetta, II, 2 before 55

Example 8.8: La vendetta, II, 2 after 55

Example 8.9: La vendetta, II, 7 after 55

hastily resolved as the music refocuses on Prunier and Lisette. The maid's agitation as she believes she recognizes her mistress, and her lover's pedantic rebukes, suddenly reanimate the action, dissolving the rapture and reintroducing real life. The four sit down for the exchange of introductions, and Lisette is persuaded that she was mistaken: the woman she meets is not elegant. The recognition between Magda and Prunier is also an opportunity for the former to show that her spirit is still intact, teasing the poet because, after having declared his preference for "perverses" women, he appears accompanied by the maid. Puccini further clarifies the implications of the recognition by having the comic dialogue accompanied by the Act I music to which Prunier debased the fashion of sentimental love (2 before 55), in which they are now taking part.
It is the point of opportunity for a *brindisi*, which Puccini treats rather like the central concertato finale of a late nineteenth-century opera. The lengthy development, the tempo indication (Andantino mosso, [3]), and the obvious sense of difference from the preceding section (which can be considered a "tempo d'attacco" in traditional formal terms) are all assimilated into this form. Ruggero's melody (perhaps the most beautiful idea of the opera; see above, Ex. 1.40) spreads to the soloists' quartet and the chorus, and Magda reaches high C three times, imitated by Liutierio and the soprano of the chorus. It is an affecting piece, in Puccini's best lyric vein.

The brief conclusion once more acts as a counterbalance. Bellini is about to close, but the arrival of Rambaldo disturbs the peace. As everybody leaves, the bourgeois couple have a meaningful exchange, important if one is to understand the drama of the next act. Magda professes her certainty in loving Ruggero with all her soul, her unshakeable embodied by a violent ascending passage that reaches high B. But the heroine accepts the situation easily, and offers her a very civilized farewell: *Possoni non pensivene!* ("May you not regret it"). The phrase further motivates the opera's conclusion, preparing the audience for the possibility that the heroine may change her mind. The little finale is conceived along these lines, and is as subdued as a minuet. Over the syncopated string flourishes, the offstage soprano is heard, singing a parametric melody in G-flat that is doubled by a piccolo, mimicking the whistle of a customer.19 It is a touch of exotism at the service of the main idea of the opera, a message that belies the eternity of love. The faraway voice sings:

- Sua l'amore che nasce per fuga
  ogni istante di notte luna!
- Nell'amor non fidate
  dispera
  every moonlit enchantment
  Do not trust in love!

When Ruggero returns, the melody of the *brindisi* is repeated in the orchestra in a delightful new arrangement. Thecello plays it first, then pass it to the violins, pianissimo in the high region, while the bells sound together with the bass cadence, the harp providing gentle accompaniment. Magda clings to Ruggero, hiding her tears behind the thrill of happiness. Puccini has helped the listener to a full understanding of the act, illustrating in the music the real limits of the woman's feeling. But it is worth

19. A piccolo is indicated in the score, but a whistle may be used to give the episode more character.

20. If the melody were an offstage soprano (together with a voice), interacting with the main situation in an almost empty stage. Here, the voices are those of the two minor lovers conversing before leaving each other at dawn, and the echo of their happiness makes the protagonist's pain all the greater.
("Tell me that you want to follow me to my house") in F major (Ib). The young man speaks of a house with an orchard, of his mother's blessed protection, the "piccoli uomini di un bambino" ("tiny little hand of a baby"), provincial sentiments that the music describes with simple affection and innocence. We have often noted how Puccini's arias demonstrate an internal dramatic development: this passage, on the other hand, is completely static, and the four strophes follow the scheme A—B—B—C—A′, as if to emphasize the tenor's lack of imagination, his capacity only for insulated tenderness.

The sobbing with which Magna parts from Ruggiero, who goes off to the post office, might seem to express guilt for having kept silent about her stormy past. But it suggests with equal legitimacy the difficulties of adapting to a life much more boring than the one she fled, or alternatively of losing her status as a worldly woman who spends afternoons on the terrace overlooking the sea, in order to become a mother devoted to gardening and raising children at Montauban.

Her gloomy reflections ("Che piti dirgli... Che fare? / Continuare a tacere... o confessarlo?"") "What more can I tell him? What should I do? / Continue to say nothing, or confess?") after (I) last only a few measures, and are immediately counterbalanced by the entrance of Prunier and Liüette. Any slight hint of tragedy is wisely dampened by this alternation with the brilliant element, here emphasized by virtuosic orchestration, particularly when the theme is restated by three mixed trumpets as the couple go up the steps (Allegro spgiavano, 4 after (II)). The scene, termed Pygmalion, has attempted to launch Liüette on the stage in Nice, but it has not been successful, and the echo of the fiacca is caught in the music, with a very high piccolo C♯-voicing her obsession about the winning of the audience. But Prunier is also here to inform Magna that everyone at Paris still remembers her and cannot believe her unexpected happiness. His lines recall the death of Manon ("T'amor mio... non morire..."), "my love, do not die!", but allow the swallow to choose her own fate:

Perché la vostra vita non è questa, 
fra piccole risorse e nostalgia, 
con la visione di una casa onesta
che chiude l'amor vostro in una tomba.

Because your life is not this one, 
living among little sacrifices and nostalgia, 
with the vision of an honest home 
that closes your love in a tomb.

The music of the duet that closed the first finale signals that the situation is once more assuming a realistic outline, that while Nice and the Côte d'Azur are fading away, Paris is once more becoming closer. The opportunity for completing the circle comes when Liüette, after yet another quarrel with her lover, prepares to put on her maid's pinapple, which she has sorely missed. She provides Prunier with an easy comparison:

Anche voi... come lei, Magna, dovete 
se non oggi abbandonare 
un'illusione che credete vita.

Like her, Magna, you too should abandon, if not today, 
an illusion you believe to be real life.

Rambaldo's message, conveyed via Prunier, offers Magna an untraumatic solution to her little drama, as easy as the way the poet, with his usual simplicity, schedules a rendezvous with Liüette before leaving "con molta dignità" ("with great dignity").

The orchestra anticipates Magna's decision, taking up the little theme that throughout the opera has given voice to romantic illusion (II), the sentimental love that has enthralled all Paris. To this same music Ruggiero returns, clutching a letter that could represent the solution to all his problems. It contains his father's blessing: she not only allows the marriage, but speaks of the "comunichi che rende sano l'amore" ("motherhood that makes love sacred"). sending a kiss to Ruggiero's chosen wife, which he places, weeping, on his beloved's forehead. Now Magna can no longer hold back, and reveals her entire past. But it is not remorse that drives her, nor a crisis of unworthiness (the omnipresent little theme reveals this), but the breaking of the illusion. Her dreams have led her to a collision with a reality that only now, deep down, she understands she cannot accept. She can only be Ruggiero's lover, not his wife.

For Ruggiero there is time for just one final futile plea. "Ma cosa poi lasciarmi" ("But how can you leave me") Andante mosso in A-flat major, 2 after (II) is a nicely grandiose piece, with emotion kept on a superficial level. As the evening bells strike, he clings to Magna, sobbing, and she takes up the melody, with a final reference to La novitza that is loaded with nostalgia for mezzanotte of the past. Magna justifies her decision as a sacrifice, to spare breaking the bond of family affection. But there is neither illness nor moral dilemma: the swallow "riprende il volo e il pensa" ("takes flight again, with her pain") and leaves. It is a light, poetic farewell, accompanied by diaphanous orchestral color: strings outside their normal register on a very high dominant chord, a thin layering of sound. And for Magna, a final, suggestive offstage B♭, ushered in by the bells and ending on the concluding tremolo D♭ chord.
WARS, À LA OPERETTA

Between Sentiment and Cash

The finale exerts a seductive charm not only through its distinctive orchestral refinement but also because such an ending is wholly in keeping with the background situation set up in the course of the first two acts. Puccini was not, however, of the same opinion, and a little while after completing La rondine, he began to make revisions:

I need the entire full score of La rondine. I have made some valuable adjustments and useful little changes to the first act; Prunier is now a baritone, Lisette in a higher tessitura, Rambaldo more conspicuous, Ruggiero less stupid, and Magda finishes the first act singing effectively. For the second we'll have to see what needs to be done. Meanwhile it is important to change the mise-en-scène, that is, the stage set. As for the third act, there are real problems! It is a great stumbling block, because the real enemy is the plot. (Gara, no. 721, 467)

This letter, written to Renzo Sanzogno on 5 July 1918, refers to the second version of the opera. It is significant that Puccini was concerned about the tenor's level of intelligence, giving him a further solo ("Parigi è la città dei desideri: "Paris: it is the city of wishes") as an entrance aria, and that he considered the last act the greatest problem. He decided, with Adami's agreement, to set it in Ruggiero's parents' house in Montefano. Then he changed his mind, restricting himself to making changes to the ending that made it all too reminiscent of the second act of La traviata. Having received his mother's written consent, Ruggiero leaves to prepare the wedding (Alfredo Germont goes to Paris to pay his debts). In the meantime, Prunier puts pressure on Magda, persuading her to leave her lover (on the model of Giorgio Germont). Her "sacrifice" will save her lover from a terrible disappointment, while the luxury Rambaldo offers will allow her to recover quickly from nostalgia. So she swallows the advice, leaving a note of farewell on the table together with the wedding ring she had just been given. It is as if La traviata had ended after the clarinet solo that accompanies Violetta as she writes the letter of farewell to Alfredo.

This version of the opera went onstage at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo in April 1920, conducted by Vittorio Gui, then at the Volksoper in Vienna in the following October, the long-awaited first performance in German. This last Rondine, finally returned to its nest, was not exactly the same as the version staged in Palermo, because Puccini—who did not su-

21. Puccini wrote to Schnabl on 25 January 1918: "the third act is a real burden— I'd like to redo it, it's monotonous; in the third act I want to change the arrangement, that is, the stage set... I'm going to redo the last act. It is a great stumbling block, because the real enemy is the plot." (Schnabl, no. 46, 68).
from the post office, does not cluch his mother's letter, but an anonymous missive, which he reads quickly to Magda: "La donna che tu credi d'ignorar me lo vedrai... E l'amante di Rambaldo" ("The woman you believed worthy of your life is Rambaldo’s lover"). The music, however, continues as in the current version, save two small cuts of material superfluous in the context of the new words. 26 Ruggero calls against Magda, and when she picks up the awkward gift left by Rambaldo, he believes he understands her real motives: "Il danaro! E il danaro!" ("Money! It is the money!"). This mistake allows him to see a little less stupid than in the preceding version, but also nastier. The tedious arioso 27 with which he had implored Magda not to leave him becomes hers, as she despairs in vain. After the tenor has left, Liùte approaches her mistress and tries to ease her grief; the curtain falls to the chimers of bells. 28

There is no doubt that the version just described was not Puccini's preference, only letters attesting his resolution to stage the operas in its new form as soon as possible, although Tisandro was absorbing his creative energies, he remained concerned with La rondine until three months before his death. 29 It is indisputable that he was acting in the conviction that he was improving a dramatic outline that had seemed weak at several points; nevertheless, some clues in the correspondence invite further reflection on the issue of which version is really preferable. Six months before confessing his doubts about the third act, Puccini had written a very different kind of letter to Ricardo Schmidt, dated 18 June 1917:

Levi had already written to me too but didn’t mention anything about Act III etc. I defend this act, which is the best, keep that in mind because at [Mona] Carlo it turned out well, and moved people, while it made them laugh at Bologna in that dead-loss performance—I swear it was such, on the four gospel! (Schmidt, no. 36, 61)

These words invite further investigation. The letters written in the ten months after the premiere do not show a disestablished composer; at most, he

23. La rondine was performed at Palermo on 20 April 1913, and at Vienna on 9 October 1913, conducted by Felix Weingartner. On the Vienna version, see Keyser, The Unseen Puccini, 173–96, which publishes different versions of the brindisi, with information about the circumstances of its performance. The current reduction for voice and piano, La rondine/The Student, Universal Edition (S. 20, 506.5.8)—Casa musicale Sonzogno (S. 20, 502.12); Vienna and Milan, 1913, 1914 (Benedetti-Rossi), is compared with the score published by Sonzogno, probably in 1911 (La rondine, Sonzogno, Milan, 1913); Benedetti-Rossi, the version discussed here. For a complete list of the scores see Hopkinson, A Bibliography of the Works, 33–47.

24. Puccini added a measure from (Re) from 5 after (El) of 7/2 to 3 after (El) of 203–13: "Mai ci si mici mai / Sonpero Scampi / Benedetti-Turati\".

25. For this episode Puccini used the a radio music, which accompanied Ruggiero’s confession of loving written home (El, from (El) of 164–64), with a cut of six measures (cf. El, 114–18).

26. The first set measures to eighteen minutes (Re, from 7 before El to before El, 119–23; Re, from 0 before El, 110, the second to four Re, from 13 after El, 195, 197–

27. "Non malevole ascolto", (Re), 1 after (El) of 168.

28. The original orchestration was not during World War II, and the Rambaldo episode was then performed with piano accompaniment when the third version was first staged, at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna in 1917 (although it is possible that this version was staged in the '50s in a German company). In 1914, the Teatro Regio di Parma commissioned the composer Loffredo Pintoni to orchestrate the missing parts of the third act, leaving the minor alterations in the earlier 1917). This version was performed on 15 March 1916.

29. The composer regularly asked Sisamn Gipps to keep up a line with theater in England, where he was convinced that the opera would be appreciated. From 1914 until his death his only correspondent about La rondine, apart from a brief mission to Gilda Dell’isola, was his friend Schmidt.
was concerned about the performance, especially the conducting. From a letter to Giovacchino Forzano on 8 October 1912, one deeply critical of **Magione** (so appreciated at the time of **Teatro**), we learn that Puccini considered respect for the delicate conception of the opera vital to its success:

> "The paper says a bit of everything about **La rondine**. I haven't read them. Only the *Corriere* is good, but none of this bothers me, or upsets me much. What pains me is to see my work so badly performed! **Magione** is truly awful: no finissi, no musica, no compass, three things so necessary in **La rondine**. Awful first act; the second confused, unbalanced, and inappropriate; the third heavy at the start and overdrawn in the rest of it. Then, between the two acts (Marin Farnetti) and my earlier readings about how she was right), that square, inaccurate scene [Thrace] who has not a hint of bel canto, and **Him** [Magione]: I've been bunched. Even the audience was too good for the opera. Renzo [Soncino] didn't turn up. If he had been there, I would have made it clear that ‘**Rondine**’ is not to be treated by these standards. It will be an eternal disgrace if no provision is made for suitable performances." (Ministri, no. 447, 443–44)

We can date the origins of Puccini’s dramaturgical thinking through a valuable letter from Wilmer in Vienna, dated 11 February 1910, in the Somnagno archives. In the absence of the original scenario, it provides the best clues to the contents of the plot sketches dispatched by the two Viennese librettists in the first months of 1914. Immediately after the first draft project had been rejected by Puccini. When he wrote to Puccini, Wilmer had had “a piano reduction” of the opera for a few months, from which he immediately realized how significantly it differed from the original. He complained that Adami had eliminated every dramatic effect, so that “the opera in the present form is now purely lyrical.” Moreover, in his opinion the maid Luissette should not have been part of the bourgeois group, but should Rambaldo have entered a place of Ill-gotten alone. Wilmer professed himself unconvinced by the way in which Puccini moved Ruggiero away at Rambaldo’s entrance in the second finale, but his criticism was primarily directed at Act III. He had envisioned, from the very beginning, a scene where:

> An atmosphere possessing a storm reigns, which in fact gives way to a very dramatic showdown between Ruggiero and Maddalena. [Maggio], while Adami simply has his old mother’s sentimental letter read. For a short

30. On 8 October 1912, the evening before the Milan première at the Dal Verme theater, **Puccini** complained to his nurse Alighina del Pinetti: “Lucky for you that you don’t have to deal with writers and conductors! **La rondine** goes on tomorrow. May God let everything go all right today! (snif snif)! Enough, let’s hope for the best!" (Ministri, no. 436, 445). He returned to the **Magione** problem on 17 April 1912, writing to **Soffi**: “I’m very much afraid, and I certainly wouldn’t give the Opera with Magione—we would ruin everything. I have two proofs of that: the Bourges in Milan, and the *rimessa di Napoli* (Genova, 300).

31. **Anacordo**, “*La rondine* nelle verità a Angelo Traversi,” 454–57. The letter is published with no indication of its importance.

32. Further proof of this comes from the idea of altering the finale of the second version in **Mountain**. The fourth act of *Sapho* takes place in *Jean*’s parents’ house in *Mafigni*, and his brother intervenes firmly to get rid of *Flavio*, who has disturbed the family’s harmony.
CHAPTER EIGHT

But the following day, Puccini was seized by even more serious doubts, which was probably decisive, since it completely changed everything. The problem was, yet again, caused by Ruggero's reaction:

Where did he find Magda, in a convent, perhaps? So this great love of his collapses the moment he realizes who she is? Anyone who now listened to such a drama would not be convinced, and would find the end almost illogical; in short, it is not convincing. And when the audience is not convinced there is absolutely no chance of success. . . But Act III, as it stands, is useless, dead. The usual duel and brawl, unconvinced ending. . . . La ronde is a real disaster! (Adami, no. 121, 123.)

Puccini did not find the Willner and Keibert story line consistent with the character of the subject. The problem was resolved the following year, when the composer resumed work with renewed vigor:

I'm at the end of the third act, and it's going very well indeed. I have taken out all the historiography, and the end is reached in a delicate fashion, without bowing or ails from the orchestra. Everything is in tune.
(22 August 1915; Adami, no. 126, 127)

The following month he clarified his views still further, probably also in relation to the quality of the music already written:

I would like to reconsider the inventive. . . . Basically, Ruggero must not seem so completely stupid as not having realized that Magda was no impecunious lily. (17 September 1915; Adami, no. 126, 127)

And gradually (in a series of undated letters probably written between October and November 1915), Puccini found the solution he was looking for: I've been thinking (and you should think too) of completely changing the scene with love and Puccini in Act III. . . . I would suggest bringing the two on to tempt Magda (a seduction trio). Magda is very upset when they leave (they cause especially to take her away from there, etc.) and when Ruggero arrives with his mother this decides to go away. Take out the duet, she has facts (what have you done?), and the subsequent constraint— that is, all the drama there at the moment. So only a few changes in the final act: just lighten it, bring it back to the type of opera it's meant to be. Even the trio should have some light, comic touches. (Adami, no. 127, 128)

"The type of opera": the phrase reveals the clarity of Puccini's insight; he was trying to find a light solution, coherent with the events of the proceeding acts. More precisely, his modern conception of the plot is manifest in the phrase "decides to go away": Magda makes a mature choice in order to avoid a provincial future. In this new context, it was necessary to make the poet's role more realistic:

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We need an aria, a piece characteristic of Puccini (to push up the beginning) when Lear returns to Magda's service. Puccini must say something about it to Magda. It is essential. Otherwise this character, more or less the philosoroper among them, would cut a trenched figure as nothing better than the manly companion. This won't do. He must find the opportunity to say to Magda: He de parler [I have to speak to you], he could say it when Lear returns for the little white aprons. Then he can say: "My dear, I know that he wants to marry you, and this can't happen. You weren't born to live in the provinces at Montauban." And here he can make fun of the old woman and the house and that kind of lie. He can continue: you can give this young man, etc., etc." Do you understand? It's essential. Puccini has to be less mean at the end. (Adami, no. 129, 130)

Besides the idea of making the character act's actions more realistic, it is significant that Puccini expressed himself so bluntly over the issue of the parent's house: the credibility of the finale and the entire lyric comedy lay in the contrast of this environment with Paris.

The plot of the first version of La ronde reveals a greater logic, and in conclusion I would like to examine the reasons for this. Magda leaves her love near the Côte d'Azur without being forced, and it happens because she has understood what it would cost her to give free reign to the illusion born at Bal Bullier, the illusion that combed her to flee to the coast. In the aria "Ora dolci e divina," she has, after all, recalled a "faraway voice" that said: "Incinta, è sboccio l'infante! / Defendi, difendi il tuo core!" ("Young girl, love has bloomed! / Defend, defend your heart!"").

Her prudent attitude is not, then, surprising. The aria "Dimmi che vuoi registrati alla mia casa," in which Ruggero reveals himself clearly for what he is, deals a severe blow to Magda's expectations. Crying blindly to his mother, he offers her a beloved life of family affection, so to be lived in the provinces until death. What woman of the world would take this step lightly? Were her judgment to waver, Puccini would merely shatter her convictions (or illusions) deliberately, reminding her that her love is too great to be confined within four cozy walls and a little garden.

The picture of a real femme fatale emerges from this context: a mature woman, without superficialities or affection, who asserts herself for the sake of her independence. Magda is a modern woman who does not want the same end as other Puccini heroines, from whom she is very different. Certainly, her decision cannot be taken without making someone suffer. But it is a gentle, veiled suffering in a love that is certainly not carnal, the pleasure of reconciliation is a noble recompense. The swallow can take flight for noble reasons: she cannot be anything but a lover—and that would be no small thing. The revelation of her dethroned past has the ring of an excuse formed rapidly after her destroyed reading of that awful letter of
blessing from his old mother, her face close to hers. Ruggero is not adult or mature; he is more like a little puppet.

It is interesting to consider whether behind all this lay the conviction of the author: Puccini, who refused the world of noble sentimentality, Puccini, ready to take on his icy Chinese princess, Le randonnee is more modern if read in this vein, and the newness would be irrevocably lost if Ruggero were to drive Magda away on the strength of an anonymous report. It has to be she, as a woman, who decides to save herself from all that brutality. The more serious climate introduced by the rejection almost seems like an uncomfortable appendix in the context of the first two acts, permanently spoiling the light-heartedness that dominates the score up to that point. Reaction by the man would also contradict the centrality of the feminine world in Le randonnee.

Rambaldo’s return on stage is also damaging to his character. The Act II finale has left us with the portrait of a gentleman-“Ponete non penserete” (“May you not regret it”) is a phrase that permits his woman to make her own decisions. His experience allows him to sense that Magda’s escape was the whim of a moment, and as the same time to attribute to good sense her reasons for returning through a door always left open. Rambaldo’s relationship with Magda is extremely civilized. Perhaps it was an ideal relationship, the type that Puccini himself would have wanted with an intelligent woman, not only to share the small joys of everyday life, but also to discuss art, as he did with Bea, the Baroness von Stengel, his great love and consolation of these years.

These are only hypotheses, however; and, above all, a matter of taste. For the first time, Puccini’s second thoughts seem worse than the original. Perhaps the third version would have needed to be longer, in order to be better developed, but one guesses that even so the problem would not have been solved. Better, then, to go with the first idea, and accept that a medium of sentimentality is part of Puccini’s mature style. “Torna al mio la rondine e cinquetta” (“The swallow returns to her nest and sings”) with these words from the finale of Le Rondine Puccini dedicated the score of his commedia lirica to Toscanini in 1921. Magda de Civry seeks a pretext to find true love, but in reality does no more than pleasantly relieve an adolescent escape. Through her we seem to see a Puccini who regretfully renounces the past (almost echoed by a tolling bell, which sounds more from Luca than from France) to face a present that promises quite other adventures. His painful maturity was not to produce extraordinary results in Il trittico and Turandot. Written in the context of the final masterpieces, La rondine, with its brilliant, ironic music, sprinkled with cynicism, is a precious jewel that sparkles with its own light.
as a director. He wrote a large number of serious dramas and plays, which he always staged himself, directing the best companies of the time and subsequently becoming one of the greatest apodemes of D'Annunzio, skillfully moving between one and another of the memorable events celebrating Italian art promoted by Fascism, from the Viennese to traveling theater. Even more relevant, and less involved with the regime, was his work in directing opera, an occupation he had pursued since the beginning of the century, becoming Italy's first professional in the field. This was a crucial period for staging, which had already earned an aesthetic place of its own in European theater thanks to the new perspective of Swiss scenographer Adolphe Appia and the ideas of artists such as Gordon Craig, Alfred Roller (in Vienna with Mahler in the first years of the century), and Max Reinhardt (who introduced into opera experiments tried out in the prose theater, notably in the premiers of Strauss's Rosenkavalier and Ariadne auf Naxos). Forzano worked unceasingly, and, although he remained well within traditional norms, contributed to the transformation of the figure of stage director into a creative job that carried full responsibility for staging. In this capacity he would later make his mark with the revival of Otello at La Scala in 1922 and direct the world premiers of Pizzetti's Dorothea e Jules (1922), Respighi's Belfagor (1923), Bohou Mayr's (1924), and Taramanci (1926). This last was particularly suited to his love of grand spectacle, both in terms of scenery, and because it allowed him to display his skill in managing crowd scenes. There are very few letters concerning the details and methods of Forzano's collaboration with Puccini, since they lived very near each other. In any case, the dramatic's boshefulness suggests that we should approach his account of events with some caution. Forzano stated that he refused Puccini's offer of the adaptation of La Hoopboardiers, giving reasons that reveal an intolerable conceit tinged with national overtones: "My dear Maestro," I replied to him, "my aim is to write a libretto for Giacomo Puccini on my own original subject, and not to adapt, as usual, the subject of a foreigner. Shall we see whether Ferdinando Martini would agree to adapt it?"

Although he hardly inspires sympathy, it should be recognized that Forzano was an ideal collaborator for Puccini, gifted with a real flair for experimental effects, specialized expertise, and a real inspiration that permitted him to solve the problem of the triptych's first "panel" very quickly. As a good Florentine (not from the city itself but a native of nearby Borgo San Lorenzo), he turned for his subject to fellow countryman Gianfranco de Cavalcanti, a character sketched in a few verses of Dante's Inferno. We can establish when he formulated his ideas thanks to the promptness—he was eager to establish himself in the Milanese theatre milieu—with which he informed Tito Ricordi on 3 March 1917: "I sent the libretto of San Angelico to Mastro Puccini some days ago. He has declared himself—kind as he is—very satisfied... I have also finished a brief outline of a plot based on Gianfranco de Cavalcanti. You know the Maestro's opinion of this subject, which is rich in possibilities and whose comic nature is quite out of the ordinary. (Gara, no. 706, 453)

Puccini had no difficulty completing the two single acts, and, since the subjects were original and the plots highly functional, he did not engage in much discussion with his collaborator. Had the composer been able to compare the libretto with a play or novel, he would perhaps have formed a more personal point of view about the style of the opera. After having supervised the world premiere of La Rondine, from the end of March Puccini threw himself wholeheartedly into the new work, immediately imagining the atmosphere that would best characterize the place where the unfortunate Angelica was confined. As he did during the composition of Tosca, he enlisted the help of Pietro Pancielli: I am writing a cloistered convent opera, so I need some Latin words for it. My knowledge does not go so far as my heavenly heights. I will need some of the words of the litany, for example: "Turris Eborum, Fons Rerum," etc. (I don't remember) but instead of the Deus pro nobis I need another response enabling the Virgin herself. To give you the idea, I can tell you that there is a vision of the Madonna, which is preceded by choirs of distant angels, and I want the litany and some of their verses. So no prega mei. Instead, it needs a Nove Regina, or una Santa delle Santis; something to repeat over and over again in Latin. Assume that they are angels glorifying Mary. Then, at the moment of the miracle, I'd like the "marcia reale della Madonna." Neither the Ave Maria Stella nor the Ave Maria, which I already have the music singing, is quite right for me. (1 May 1917; Gara, no. 707, 457)

The joke on the "marcia reale" ("royal march") shows that Puccini did not view the miracle through mystical eyes, but approached with a certain detachment a subject that had its roots in the sentimental and affecting world of Butterfly. In order to collect background information about the

4. Jerey aimed both at the Madonna and the king.
pecially life of dotted notes, he obtained a special permit to enter the restricted areas of the convent at Visopoldo, where his sister Ima was another superior.

Puccini worked on *Angelica* while Forzano was writing the libretto of *Schichichi*, which was sent to the composer in June 1917. The drafting of the subject cost the dramatic "much effort from the literary point of view," as he wrote to Tito Ricordi in May 1917 (Gara, no. 709, 454), but it was worth it, since the finished product fired Puccini's enthusiasm, so much so that he sketched an outline for the comic opera immediately, before returning with renewed energy to *Sanctus* (which had been almost entirely composed by the end of June, and was fully orchestrated by 14 September). Gianni Schicchi followed closely behind, with the final passages written on 28 April 1918.

The premiere was fixed for December in two theaters, the Metropolitan in New York and the Caiozani in Rome. The last gasps of the Great War made traveling extremely difficult, especially across the Atlantic. Puccini decided not to go to the United States, and concentrated all his efforts on the European debut. He underwrote the construction of the opera house at Rome, so that he could have his own, which he thought to be the most interesting. "The idea of setting the opera in a pre-teenage period of puritane stage was his own. This was the episode more than the new spatial dimension that would contrast with the painted backdrop.

Another alteration came up at the eleventh hour:

I've spent the new aria for *Sanctus* a lot of time on it, thinking it will work if we do it now, because this piece makes the piece more important and isn't difficult. I would have liked the method of coming out with this new aria in it, and ask you to arrange it so that at least in Italy it comes out like this (G. Tito Ricordi, 7 October 1918, Gara, nos. 713, 712).

The reference is to "Senza mamma", previously only a brief sketch of a few measures, which Puccini extended by adding a section in F major taken from the intermezzo. The piece was included in the edition of the score, and performed at the European premiere as Puccini wished, but by this time it was too late for it to be sung in New York, since the conduc-

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6. Two extra pages (169 and 170) were inserted into the final version of the vocal score of *Sanctus*, after *Sanctus, Gianni Schicchi (Mihara Ricordi, 1918, Pt. no. 17209)* so that it might be published. Pages 169 of the original version was mistakenly omitted with page 170 and repurposed on 189. The supposed errors of that version appears in the first edition of the libretto.
CHAPTER NINE

duced escapes the mudlins and stage 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 Sour Angelica), our composer has lost none of his own personality through his assiduous contact with dangerous foreign composers, the feared stress of France and Russia; he has seized their secrets and used them to construct new and solid structures of a markedly national style. (31 January 1919)

Leaving aside the final passage, which chimes all too well with contemporary political tendencies, the argument is in any case debatable: the development of certain stylistic features had been implicit since Mazon Learner, and, over time, was naturally bound to converge with those of other great European composers. A single, anonymous critic suggestively put his finger on the central problem of the reception of the three operas:

The three Puccini acts can be seen to constitute a divided piece. And the unities, if such it is, is provided by the character of contemporary music, which Puccini has approached by degrees, as his inspiration gradually began to lose its inventiveness, as his creative touch gradually diminished, as his language slowly lost its own accent while increasing in emphatic sonority. ("One of the public," in L'Espresso)

Although the reasoning is founded on a negative judgment, aimed at elucidating the values of the romantic expression of feeling and the inspiration of the Puccini of Mazon and La Bohème, the composer's new horizons were caught perfectly. Greater attention to a musical form more distant from the traditional notions of Italian opera, the concern for the coherence and internal rhythm of each section of the work, the search for homogeneity throughout the entire opera; all these qualities make Il trittico the most daring step taken before Tosca—and one that was necessary before the latter could be attempted.

In the years following the premiere, Puccini shaped the three operas into their current form with his usual care. Scipioni needed few revisions, almost all of them to Rimuzio's arioso "Avere torto" and the subsequent sottorezzo "Firenze è come un albero foresto"; these were shifted up a semitone (from E-flat to E major, and from A to B-flat major) to give the voice greater brilliance.

This alteration is already present in the second edition of the three piano-vocal scores, published in 1919. Puccini also shortened Michele's corno scotole "Scarti, fante eterno!" from fifty-one to thirty-three measures. This was still not enough: the October 1921 revival in Bologna

persuaded him that the piece needed radical alteration, and he told Adami that he wanted to:

begin with some broken phrases as the lovers pass each other. Then a sob, when the "lights out" sounds (offstage trumpet). Then he peeps into the cabinet: "she isn't asleep. I know that she can't sleep. And then a few desperate, lyric verses. In short, something direct, touching, new, heartfelt, not too long. That monologue is really too academic; it damages the end of the drama... We need a piece that will give rise to different moods. Finish with a mouvoir depeup of four or six verses, but rhythmic and rhymed, and above all suitable to a musical flight that I hope to find with the help of your words. That raging toccatae duoscope, chokes the female. (3 November 1921; Adami, no. 295, 173)

The new version was published in the 1925 edition, but the piece had already been performed by Carlo Galfetti in the La Scala production on 19 January 1923. On this occasion Puccini also made a final decision about a large cut in the finale of Sour Angelica. Ever since the first performances in Rome, problems had been caused by the excessive length of Angelica's part. After "Scena malapaga" (fifty-five measures), she had a second solo of eighty measures ("Amici, fiori") at the end of the intermezzo. Despite his love for the piece, Puccini allowed it to be cut. He tried to illustrate the problem by eliminating twenty orchestral measures in the 1925 reprint of the score, but it was not sufficient. The aria was probably not sung after the Milan premiere.

THE UNITY OF IL TRITTICO

The word that today universally identifies Puccini's three operas was, according to an anecdote told by Marotti and Pagni, the subject of an animated discussion in Torro del Lago by the group of painters who met again during the Great War. A host of suggestions, from "triangle" and "tripod" to "trinity" and "triumvirate," were all rejected; then someone exclaimed:

"Triphyth!"

"But tripods," said one,

10. "Scritta non in Angiolo!" I suggested for one evening—after that, no, but will not happen!" (30 August 1913; Schuh, no. 48, 37, my emphasis). Since, in the other two operas on the subjects of Gilda Della Rosa (30 March 1909; Gara, no. 749, 481) and Ricardo Schuβ (1 January 1914; Schuh, no. 92, 72, 185), Puccini insisted that the act was to be performed, it is logical to suppose that contemporary practice was to cut it.

11. The orchestral score (pp. 88-89) and the current version of the piano-vocal score (Gia Rohingya [Milan: Ricordi, 1914, 1923, 1923]), 1954) still bear signs of this misunderstanding, albeit retained numbers from (22 to 25).
meanings," continued another,  
"three sides," added a third,  
"that useless," completed a fourth.

The discussion became heated; we were all agreed on the impropriety of the word; nonetheless determining, despite La Croce, and the fear, to baptize the three operas Il trionfo.

In homage to the friends' doubts, no printed music source calls Il trionfo, Sinfonia, Arie dell'Incredulità, and Giacomo Schmelz by the title Il trionfo: they were published separately as the current orchestral and piano-vocal scores, while the first two editions of the vocal score (1918, 1919) grouped the works together, but with each retaining its own title. We have seen that, since May 1900, Puccini planned to make an opera by drawing together the three episodes of Daudet's Tertulians. Returning to this idea between September 1904 and March 1905, he thought of three single acts in different genres, but at the same time he was anxious to find elements that would connect them in a unified theme. For this reason, he turned to a single author and setting: Goethe, and the atmospheric theme of the disembodied. But there was little chance of finding in Goethe's short story on a comic subject, that contrast of three Puccini forms. Besides, some of the stories really fulfilled his tragic ideal. On 19 March 1907—during another transient enthusiasm for the three acts—the composer explained to Carlo Ciametti what the problem had been two years earlier: Some time ago I thought of doing three different sketches (3 acts) from Goethe, taken from The Wayward and In the Steppes; I had chosen The Wayward and The 40 against One, but was missing a strong and dramatic idea for the finale of the evening, and couldn't find it in anything else of Goethe. Then I reconsidered, and found the idea (a practical one: three different things, which would then be performed by the same singers, would destroy the illusion and damage the representative truth. And so I gave up the idea. Now I am thinking of it again. (Garr. no. 501, 547)

When he stumbled across La Ragazza, Puccini found precisely the strong subject that had been missing the previous year: the story of a girl who has been in love for a long time but is now determined to move on. The young woman has been chosen as a prototype of the type of woman who is depicted by the author, and the story of her love affair is used as a vehicle for exploring the themes of love and desire. The opera was first performed in 1909, and has since become one of the most popular and beloved of all Italian operas. It is a story of love and loss, set in a world of beauty and tragedy, and is known for its richly colored and evocative music. The opera is also known for its innovative use of the orchestra, which Puccini employed to create a rich and varied sound palette. Puccini's music has been described as being both beautiful and poignant, and his operas continue to be performed around the world today.
to stage Adriano and Tancredi (whose première had taken place in Zurich in 1717) in a single evening but the unity created by Bosini was not part of an organic project, a fact also true of Bels Bailey's depiction—despite the expressive and stylistic continuity between the masterpieces Blavet's Cendrillon and the pantomime ballet The Winter's Prince, staged in 1718, the same year as Il trittico. Neither does the pairing of Handel's highly expressionist Mühler, Hoffmann der Frauen and Der Nach-Nacht-Nacht, a "play for Burmese Marianneves" (1721), appear particularly meaningful.

Il trittico was therefore unique in contemporary European opera, and became of this found unexpected, albeit enticing, admixture among composers such as Tagliapietra and even Mârski (who directed a type of opera with the slightest relationship to romanticism, which he detested). The fact that dramatic realism was shattered by giving three separate stories to the same singers soon ceased to bother Puccini. As he discussed the casting on the basis of the vocal characteristics of each role, accepting the twinning of Giorgetta and Laura, or of Laura and Angelica, and also agreeing that the two outer operas could use the same baritone and tenor. This implies that he believed he had created an organism of sufficiently differentiated mass, and that the "paradoxical"-the desired unity was created on the basis of their very contrast. Interestingly, in the final ordering of the acts he placed the "wrong" subject at the beginning, although he had originally conceived it as the last-as if the third uniting "the panels" were revealed by one of his most famous maxims.

There are fixed rules in the theater: interest them, surprise them, move them, or make them laugh. (Adams, no. 198, 179)

The expressive violence of Il tabarro interests and surprises, the delicate music and the nature of the drama experienced by the protagonist of Sper Angiolina never fails to move. Giorgetta and Schioppa is highly amusing, although the macabre element tarnishes the laughter slightly. The device functions perfectly, and the three "panels" could not be ordered differently. Their co-

14. Mârski seems to have considered this work carefully, and desired his trilogy Gineas from three single acts (1721). Tagliapietra, in his turn, composed La festa di un giovane (1721) as a "saggio to be played in one act and divided into three episodes." Alfredo Casella also made a folkloristic contribution to the single-act form with his single comedy Le piu (1714). In the tradition of Dafne there is a very late by Luigi Bontempelli (Liberto, 1750). On the other hand, the first opera of a single act, see Hans-Peter Neef, "Der erste Formelmusik und der Opernset", in Siegfried Belling and Wladimir Elsschot, eds., Giorgetta and Schioppa (Studien zur Opernhistorie) (Laden-Leben-Verlag, 1991), 31-64. Discussion of Il trittico is inevitably moving from the value of the score.

15. See the letter to Carlo Geminiani written on 8 April 1718 (Geminiani, no. 748, 152). Puccini was fully versed with the European premiere at the Court in Rome, when these singers performed two roles each.

hercule is clearly perceptible in performance. Carner is quite right when he points out that "The few complete productions I have seen proved that the reverse of the three works at hand by themselves as a powerful dramatic agent, reinforcing retrospectively for the listener the impact of each individual opera." (Carner, 473).

Carner begins, however, less convincing when he compares the three panels with the Donizetti comedy, even though he admits, "In this reading, the three episodes of the Tristano suggest the idea of a gradual rise from darkness to light, and therein lies, to my mind, an element—ideological rather than real—of cohesion." Along a similar line, which concerns the authorial intention rather than comprehensibility in the theater, there is a rather striking connection between the period in which the fictional situations develop and their settings.

From the contemporary Paris di Il tabarro, Puccini began a journey back through time, passing Sper Angiolina, in which "the action takes place in a convent toward the end of the seventeenth century" (libretto and score do not indicate a place), and then leaping to 1509, and Dante's Florence of the "inferno" ("Imp") Giorgetta Schioppa. It is undeniable that the emotions provoked by this progression of works derive from absolute negativity in Il tabarro to the happy ending of Schioppa. In Il trittico, one again witnesses the decision to provide a happy ending as seen in La fanciulla, and the choice of entrancing the most remote subject—moreover, one from the Inferno—with the task of reviving the millet of the spirits suggests another hermeneutic key. The beginning of moral standing on the part of the sympathetic singer, full of virtue and common sense, who—despite the convictions of his impenetrable vision—acts with the best of intentions, is a tribute not only to the Florence of "la gente nuova," but, more generally, to the reality of a materialistic, positive world, radiating an optimism that reflects on the preceding two acts. The laughter at the end dispels both the hypocracy that surrounded Angelica in the convent and the misery that forced Luiz and Giorgia to clandestinly wed.
opera is littered with references that gradually make one conscious of the slow passage of time. "Le tre sore delle fontane d`oro" ("The three evening of the golden fountain") are the only times the cloistered mists can see the sunsets, and lead the sisters to reflect sadly, "Un anno è passato." (Another year has passed!). Sister Genovieffa's innocent desire ("Da cinquant'anni non vedo un appello! - I haven't seen a little lamb for five years") is one of many premises of Angelica's sad realization, as she talks with her aunt the Princess, that "Sett'anni son passati." (Seven years have passed.) Since she entered the cloister. Temporal structures, then, must be recalculated in order to contextualize the moment acted out. Gianni Schicchi is different because its only premise is Rossini Donatus death, and the action unfolds in the whirl of a present time, in Gianni's words, "E tale da sfidare l'eternità." (It is such as to defy eternity.). The present then becomes the future of the two lovers, and of the eternal character types of comic opera who, up to this point, have acted with all their usual license. Re-creating from the contemporaneity of Il tabarro to medieval Florence creates a temporal counter-narrative, a shift from a time of memory and impotent nostalgia, to that of immortality, and then to a present time that looks forward to the future.

But the strongest unifying element in the three operas is the new role played by the musical characterization of the setting, in relation to the development of the plot and the musical form of each act. Puccini usually established meaningful connections between events and their location, as in the case of Tita's setting in papal Rome, or the refined Japan of Madama Butterfly: in these cases a symbolic relationship was established between drama and environment: achieved through long passages of pictorial music (the Te Deum and down in Tadzio), or through themes, harmony, and orchestral color that echo exotic elements. This tried and true method reached a clear turning point in La fanciulla, since the music describing the Californian setting interacts in a direct way with that of the characters (the depiction of the fury of the elements in the first two acts, the setting in which the manhunt takes place in Act III). And the "western" opera sets the stage for further developments in Il trittico. At the beginning of the century, when Puccini was running through literature characterized by strong social concerns—from the poverty of Godiva's Russia to that of Octave Mirbeau's Le Memoire Berger—even he himself had not realized exactly what he was searching for. Only after La fanciulla did he decide to dedicate a different type of space to the atmosphere of an opera. Functional musical and dramatic interaction between event and place allowed him to bring about the new musical structures that had had in mind ever since he had become aware of the symptoms of the twentieth-century crisis.

After having established his model in La Rondine, he joined forces with Formato for the next opera. The first play offered a perfect starting point the monotonous flowing of the Seine, depicted by the music, presupposes an analogous flow of events linked to the social situations experienced on the margins of Paris, yet simultaneously influences the characters' behavior. The uneasy and oppressive atmosphere, and the perpetual motion that is also a metaphor for passing time, are the underlying motivations that drive Georgette into Loïs's arms.

From the large room on the banks of the Seine, where love tills, is suppressed, and stolen, we are taken to an ascetic cloistered convent, where the pulse of life has stopped and love is absent, and where we sense of guilt and hypocritical bigotry reigns. Prayers, bell chimes, Latin hymns, modal writing, and soft, shaded colors all mark a detachment from the world of earthly feelings, the result of constraint and renunciation. La Rondine is far removed from the realism that permeates Il tabarro (newboat sirens, keepers' homes of cars passing along the Seine, the beguile at the baracks sounding the "lights out"). But the setting of a cloister also provided an opportunity to construct a rigorously homogeneous musical fabric reflecting a particular environment. The same is true of Gianni Schicchi. Through the old-fashioned vocabulary of the characters, Rimini's cantato celebrating the great artists of contemporary Tuscan, and the Arno running through the score, an image of Florence gradually takes shape, eventually revealed through the balloons of the flying opera: a final, liberating backdrop behind the embracing lovers. Devices from the tradition of realistic Italian comic genre, from faces to eighteenth-century comic opera, are revived through the all-powerful force of rhythm, while the comedia dell'arte is represented by the doctor from Bologna, practically Balzac's double. Puccini's coherent conception of Il trittico seems to derive from the various balances between music that depict the setting on the one hand and individual events on the other; the unity is obtained through the functional juxtaposition of the acts, each of which is, moreover, connected by the importance of the concept of time. A closer examination of the formal structure of each "panel" will clarify how Puccini's conception of the relationship between music and drama changed in a fundamental way. The individual formal structures of each work is clearly perceptible to the ear (unlike La fanciulla, where the complexity of the score makes such perception difficult). Puccini had already given ample proof of this class-cut shift, especially in La rondine, where his ironic use of traditional forms is part of the same inclination as his usual use of citation. As early as La fanciulla, he seems less concerned about the tastes of his audiences, and in La rondine he took a further step in freeing himself from its dictates, a progression that would lead to Il trittico.
Consider the opening theme of Il tabarro, which continues unperturbed while the action is played out, supporting the formal structure of three-fifths of the opera; or the insistent C-minor cadence that points to sinister light on the adulterers’ clandestine love, but also functions as connective tissue between one section of the score and the next. The unfolding drama rests on such elements, as in Angelica, where the work falls into large sections, each based on its own musical material. Middling ideas associated with the sacred permeate the work perceptibly and ironically, whether in the church or in Tosca’s room, where the greedy farce is opposed. “La mia felicità sarà rubata dall’opera di Sera Reparata” (“My happiness will be stolen by the good works of Santa Reparata”), Giunio exclaims as the mirage of his inheritance fades, developing the incipit of “Regina virgini um ora pro e,” which accompanies the miracle at the end of Angelica. Giunio Schiavi is the culmination of this new way of organizing musical material, thanks to the extended function of rhythm; for example, most of the thematic variants that make the act perpetually moving, restless organism derive from the initial incitement.

This compositional method, which both quickens and enhances the action onstage, makes the impact of the three operas, when seen consecutively, one of the most overwhelming of all Puccini’s works. Unfortunately, after the first revivals, Sera Angelica began to lose its success than her sister. After the premiere at Covent Garden on 18 June 1922, it was cut from the program under the pretext that the prima donna was ill; it was never reinstated, despite the composer’s vehement protests. In 1923 Albert Carré programmed Gianni Schicchi at the Opéra-Comique (5 November), and later even Il tabarro. Puccini went around the world paired with very different operas, from Caterina Cornaro to Salome (Covent Garden, January 1937). Even though Puccini’s practical instinct ensured that he preferred his operas to lead separate lives rather than the sulphur, there is no period that he approved of the resulting split, except one brief comment to Adami during the staging at Bologna in October 1921. And despite the difficulties involved in staging the three single acts—not least of which is filling the long list of characters and finding a director capable of perceiving the unity of

17. “How I have those charlatans! You could never imagine it. In Bologna they seemed to be as conductive as water, but not a sound!” (November 1921; Adami, no. 141, 178). Recent reassessments of Puccini, after a review at the Teatro alla Scala in Florence (2 May 1916), authorized several performances (Puccini intrecciati a Venezia, 175-79). But letters after the show to Sybil (29 January 1921, 2 February 1922; Sibilla, 131-32) are at the very least cast doubt on this statement. What is certain, however, is that the Ricordi firm envisioned this type of production, given that several editions were published after Puccini’s death (see Hopkinson, d. Bibliography of the Writings, 46-79).

the three scores—it is desirable that Il tabarro be revived according to the composer’s intentions. It will never fall to surprise, move, and entertain.

IL TABARRO: "WAITING, LIKE THIS, FOR DEATH"

The first panel of Il tabarro is often associated with Tosca, with which it shares a particularly sensational subject that gives rise to numerous moments of unbearable tension. Both in dramatic and musical terms, however, the differences between the two operas outweigh their similarities. Puccini’s Tosca is firmly established, since by killing Scarpia he protects herself from his sordid erotic intentions. Moreover, her action goes beyond the expected reasons (the physical torture inflicted on her lover and the psychological torture she endures in Act II), reaching a morally unexceptionable end: the liberation of the world from a decrepit and blood-thirsty tyrant.

Michele strangles his wife’s lover out of revenge, but behind the crime parziali lies a squalid background responsible both for the adultery and the murder. From a positive perspective—according to which events and their causes are free from moral judgment—this background is an inextricable tangle of explosive conflicts brought about by social and biological factors. We can immediately see signs of this in the score and libretto, which, like the play, specifies the characters’ ages next to their names: Michele is fifty, his wife Giuseppa half his age, while her lover, Luigi, is barely twenty. The betrayal thus has a crude natural motive in the woman’s wanting physical attractions to her older husband, a reality on which Michele reflects bitterly in his final dialogue with her.

Puccini and Adami borrowed their general structure from Diderot’s Gold’s play, the climax of which is the murder committed by Michel, but they omitted the episode in which the steward Gozzi (Tosca in the opera) brutally slays his wife in a tavern in the slums. Another murder would have weighed down the plot even more, and to little purpose: Il tabarro was Grande Guignol enough already. However, the libertines skillfully used a reference to the heavy-drinker’s cuckoldry married life in a premonition of the tragedy, letting Michele adobe to the ‘bogatascia’ (‘banshees’) wife of Tosca, who ‘best per non accidarci’ (‘drink in order not to kill her’).

The other changes were no more than slight revisions, but they tightened the opera and made it more convincing. In the characters’ dialogue and their desperate reactions in the misery surrounding them, Gold had simply emphasized the social dynamics that lead to the tragedy; but he went no further than depicting fact. Puccini and Adami, on the other hand, gave their characters greater depth; above all, they knew how to make a more coherent connection between the characters and their background. This is
achieved primarily through the mechanisms that cause the betrayal. Georges draws Louis into her arms, and throughout the drama he is unable to free himself from a sense of guilt. But Puccini's lovers have no feelings of remorse, and are driven principally through natural erotic attraction. This helps to explain Luigi's brief monologue ("Hai ben ragion; meglio non pensare": "You're right; better not to think") in which, unlike Louis, he vehemently denounces the opium that he and his colleagues suffer. The brief solo shows that adultery is an inevitable consequence of the miserable, laborious stevedore's life, one without time for a normal relationship, since

Il pene lo guadagnai col sudore.
E forse dell'amore va rubato...

And time for love has to be stolen.

Va rubato fra spasmici e pance.

Stolen among sufferings and tears.

The development of the plot should be considered in relation to this passage, which the composer set in order to make the tragedy more convincing. We cannot with any certainty attribute a coherence to social nature to Puccini, but it is likely that his theatrical pragmatism and narrative instinct would have led him, in his search for a dramatic truth, to believe Luigi's words the more convincing motivation not only of this character's actions, but also those of the crowd of laborers on the banks of the Seine, burdened with woe or rummaging through garbage. Luigi never becomes resigned and raises his head to find a glimmer of light; but he is ultimately destroyed by his own primitive impulses.

The element in La Rondine that most attracted Puccini was the complete new possibility of finding an idea to represent the river setting that is the background for the action and determines its pace. That setting is vital to the musical structure, and is bound to the mise-en-scène more tightly than ever before. While the head premier of the opera was still being prepared, Puccini sent Tito Ricordi two letters that are fundamental to understanding the way he intended the scenic aspect to interact with the form:

I repeat, once again, that Il tabarro must be performed in its entirety on the barge. And even in a theater with a large proscenium, I don't think it would be a great misfortune if the action were to remain at a distance.

(St. Luke 1918, Gora, no. 72, 659-660)

The stage set you sent me recently is well sketched; but, as usual, all the space for the action is toward the audience, and for the thousandth time I have to tell you that this won't do. You seem not to know how Il tabarro is constructed! The episodes and details that have to come from the background are of the greatest importance. . . . The problem with the scene, which I think is Rota's fault, is that the main wall is too far away for it to be in correct proportion with the characters (Frugola, balled singers and "sindetta," wandering singers, etc.).

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have to come from or set from there, it's the only way. So you need to make the entire first level smaller that is, the passage, compact, and ascend ing street that distance me too much from the place of action, the barge. It will be gloomy, the still dead bend of the river; it will be what it will be; not really the Seine—but that doesn't much matter, as long as the scene is the way it needs to be. (21 August 1918; Gora, no. 727, 465)

Puccini's attention is focused entirely on the barge: the outstage river, as the original sketches show, would have instead an alienating distance between singers and audience, while from behind the barge the outside world interacts perpetually with the developing tragedy, which takes place in its own stage space. The reason for such a forceful request for a particular staging becomes clear as soon as the curtain rises, and the music that represents the Seine begins to unfold:

Example p.11 Il tabarro, beginning

Andante moderate cantate
In the opening thirty-two measures, this theme of parallel dyads (fourths and fifths) alternates regularly between \( \frac{3}{4} \) and \( \frac{6}{8} \). Its archaic atmosphere derives from the lack of a fully established tonality, with fluctuations between the Mixolydian mode and G major, and from the cyclic repetition of ostinato accompaniment figures in the muted double bass pizzicato. Over the bass movement there is a soaring melodic idea (Ex. 9.20) that functions as second theme, followed by a third motive, which the voices develop as a counter melody above the flowing principal theme (Ex. 9.28):

Example 9.3

a. Il tabarro, 6 before \( \pi \)

\[ \text{[Music notation]} \]

b. Il tabarro, \( \pi \)

\[ \text{[Music notation]} \]

By means of this regular structure, the monotonous flow of the river—inexorable as destiny and regular as passing time—is imitated with almost kinetic vivacity. The direction in the score to raise the curtains before the orchestra begins, unique in Puccini’s operas, ensures that the river music is identical with the action already going on, played out in expressive muted gestures by the characters onstage; and when the voices of Giorgetta and Michele are superimposed naturally over the ostinato, one has the impression that their existence is regulated by this flux, while around them we hear concretes sounds of city life: car horns, rumbling trucks.\(^{18}\)

Throughout the first part of Il tabarro, the cyclic pulsation of the Seine marks out life in this world of the vanquished. Even when it disappears, however, the music’s connections between drama and background continue. For example, the penultimate conversation between Michele and Giorgetta is based on an ostinato melody in G major (Ex. 9.29) that unfolds step by step in long note values (see below, Ex. 9.11a), and which also seems to come from the whirlpools of the river. Moreover, the Seine will reappear, flowing through the monologue that prepares the end of the opera, as the baritone’s delirious fury explodes when he imagines surprising his wife’s lover and drowning him into the “gorgo pit profondo” (“deepest vortex”).

The other theme that guarantees the score structural unity is the one that, like a musical spy, identifies the clandestine love between Giorgetta and Luigi. It is a simple perfect cadence in the minor mode; its sinister character is supplied by rests that simulate hesitation and suspicion. It appears briefly in the first part, just after the stavedoires’ broadside, and accompanies the scene of Luigi’s love for the wandering organ-grinder (see Ex. 9.30). The theme replaces the river music when the action moves toward its bloody climax, from the first furtive conversation between the two lovers (Ex. 9.32):

Example 9.3

a. Il tabarro, 3 after \( \pi \)

\[ \text{[Music notation]} \]

b. Il tabarro, 3 after \( \pi \)

\[ \text{[Music notation]} \]
It becomes apparent through examining the structure of the opera that Puccini made full use of his dramatic experience, plumbing the depths of his resources. The drama is organized according to golden section proportions. The first part presents the characters who populate the Parisian scene; the second, centered around clandestine love and Michele's nostalgia, sets in motion the action that will lead to the ending, dominated by murder and concluded by a shocking finale.

The compositional novelty of "Il tabarro" is revealed by analysis of its structure. Unlike Le fauviste, there is no feverish piling up of themes that adhere to the action, suggesting development; rather, the action in "Il tabarro" is subjected to the requirements of the musical form, articulated in three broad sections. This procedure brilliantly solves the problem of the concentration posed by a single act, and moreover assures the score a unity never before achieved by Puccini, by means of a technique that updates classical features. The first section is largely dominated by the material of the instrumental introduction (mm. 1–33): the principal theme returns in the middle and at the end along with the third idea, while the second idea reappears twice, and is the germ for the second part of Luigi's monologue. The two themes that dominate the action in the second and third parts are both anticipated in the preceding sections, in a clear cyclic structure that aims to make the drama more coherent. At the very end, the repeated "cadence" cadence is twice fired into the rapid section dominated by the clock theme, stated in a much faster tempo (see below, Ex. 9.130). On the broader level, one cannot miss the strong similarity to a three-movement symphonic form: broad Maestoso opening, central Allegretto, concluding Allegro with slow introduction. But, as Berg's Wozzeck would illustrate more radically, the formal structure is so bound up with the drama that it goes unobserved on the theater. The development of the plot is clearly articulated according to the scheme exposition, peripetia, catastrophe, and in the corresponding three sections there is a perfect equilibrium between thematic episodes, "music of scenes" (stage music, marked below with an asterisk [*]) and "music in scenes" (ostinato music, marked by two asterisks ["**"]), while a duo and solo pieces are never treated as traditional arias or duets.

Part 1: Exposition (mm. 1–969)

- 1–51: the river (theme themes)
- 53–59: song of the stenches

19. Examine the Puccini model of his single act in sophisticated formal terms comes from a letter to Ricordi of 18 September 1916, when the final act was being added to the original "Il tabarro" was not finished. I have nothing left to orchestrate except two movements of the opera and to finish the final scene" (Gazz. no. 69, 1916).

20. On the distinction, see p. 79, no. 11. In the following analysis the themes are correlated as follows: river theme = CT, stenches theme = AT, clock theme = CT, ...
83
84-87
88-91
92-95
96-100
100-104
104-108
108-112
112-116
116-120
120-124
124-128
128-132
132-136
136-140
140-144
144-148
148-152
152-156
156-160
160-164
164-168
168-172
172-176
176-180
180-184
184-188
188-192
192-196
196-200
200-204
204-208
208-212
212-216

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60-83
84-142
143-186
187-236
237-279
279-320
320-370
370-401
401-465
465-496
496-524
524-552
552-583
583-613
613-643
643-673
673-703
703-724
724-753
753-783
783-813
813-843
843-873

Part 1: Percussion (970-1109)
870-917
duet, Giorgina–Luigi; 1: AT
918-953
duet, Michel–Giorgina; 1: Andante
954-989
duet, Michel–Giorgina; 2: Andante moderato
990-1025
solo, Luigi; 2: Allegro moderato
1026-1061
solo, Luigi; 3: RT
1062-1097
solo, Luigi; 4: RT
1100-1135
solo, Luigi; 5: RT
1136-1171
solo, Luigi; 6: RT
1172-1207
solo, Luigi; 7: RT
1208-1243
solo, Luigi; 8: RT
1244-1279
solo, Luigi; 9: RT

Part 2: Confrontation (1140-1499)
1140-1175
love duet and "lights out"**
1176-1211
monologue, Michel; 1: CT
1212-1247
monologue, Michel; 2: CT
1248-1283
monologue, Michel; 3: CT
1284-1319
monologue, Michel; 4: CT
1320-1355
monologue, Michel; 5: CT
1356-1391
monologue, Michel; 6: CT
1392-1427
monologue, Michel; 7: CT
1428-1463
monologue, Michel; 8: CT
1464-1509
monologue, Michel; 9: CT

Another aspect new to Puccini's technique, appreciated only in retrospect, is that no theme characterizes a person, but each character is identified exclusively in a particular context. Michel, absorbed in contemplation of the setting sun, his speech pipe between his lips, seems almost to seek redemption from beyond the horizon; Giorgina, on the other hand, is unainted in nature, but is preoccupied by the labor of the man unloading the hold of the barge, not the scenes to relieve by offering some wine. Before everyone comes up on deck, the baritone vainly seeks her lips; she turns her cheek to him, immediately casting a meaningful glance toward Luigi. The young man begins the Chant: a grand waltz to which everyone, beginning with Talpa, raises his glass. From La serva padrona through Giuditta to La rondine, the prattler has always enjoyed a special place in opera, becoming finally an inevitable mark of realism with Turiddu's cry "Vira il vino spumeggiante" ("Vira sparkling wine"). But what a distance lies between those examples and Il tabarro, where the wine does not recall "il viso dell' amante" ("the face of a lover"), but is the only pleasure of men condemned to unhappiness by social injustice (Tosca says, "In questo vino affido i tristi pensieri"—"in this wine I drown sad thoughts").

The movement increases, providing an opportunity for Pacini to continue to translate reality by musical means, after the prattler of the beginning. It takes little to raise the spirits of the damned of the earth; a passing organ- dismantled out-of-tune melody is enough. A flute melody is superimposed at the diminished octave over the rhythmic foundation of the waltz in E-flat major (diminuendo) that accompanies the opening steps of Giorgina and Tosca:

Example 94. Il tabarro, 4 after: (1)

[Music notation provided]

Critics generally cite the waltz in Turandot as a model for this use of dissonance, but it is clear from the second theme that the dance is almost a paraphrase of the melody in Chaucer's Op. 34 no. 1, one of his most famous works.21 Meanwhile, the drama proceeds by subtle hints: when Luigi takes

21. The different tempo (Tempo di Volta moderato in Pacifico—Vivace in Chaucer) could be characteristic, and the melody of the AT, 9:4 does not correspond exactly to the main theme of the aria (min. 15:5-31); the double articulation is by no means exceptional, but it is the place (from 1 before II) with which the waltz for piano (Kaskin and Gellman, min. 14:58). Among other things, the two pieces are both in A-flat major. In Le Père, Sommerville makes the harmonies, giving the accompaniment in E-flat major in the baritone, and the melody in A-flat major to the soprano; cf. Puccini (New York: New York and Hawkins, 1946), fig. LI, p. 89.
over from the chorus. Tonio and dance with Giorgetta, who always languidly in his arms, a two-note figure that forms an ascending chromatic scale indicates the lovers' passionate secret. A few measures later the figure will become an anxious pulsation as Talpa signals Michele's return (III), and the end of the party.

The men go down to finish their work, and in the background two musicians appear, encircled by a crowd of sighing madonnari. While the singer states preparing to sell his "ultime canzonette" ("latest little song"), an argument flares between husband and wife, and as the harvest begins to play, their tone becomes harsher, corresponding to the words of the "veinditore," which allude to the couple's marital unhappiness.

Example 9.6. Il tabarro, 3 after 47

Puccini's detachment from his old dramatic world is locally stated, with an unexpectedly lively self-irony.

Fregada belongs to a twentieth-century concept of opera, a decidedly eccentric character who is perpetually intent on rummaging in the garbage. Talpa's wife introduces herself with the song "Se tu impieni gli oggetti strani" ("If you know the strange things"), a modal murmur in which Dorian and Aeolian alternates, the melody running through the gamut in a frighteningly mechanical manner, moving by small intervals and coming to rest forcefully on the final. D. Mutato trumpets in the orchestral introduction lend a sinister atmosphere to the ragwoman devoted to worshipping her tabby cat, whose meowing suggested to Puccini a minuet that further increases the grotesqueness of the music (Ex. 9.8):
The reprise of the river theme indicates that the hold is empty; Tutia can go to the inn. His exclamation "E fest scrive il viso di affliggono i pensieri di ribalta" ("White is good for you! It draws thoughts of rebellion"), ending in a hysterical laugh, provokes Luigi. His brief solo is extremely taxing vocally, remaining persistently in the high register, and gives the tenor an opportunity to take the limelight. But he is also absorbed into the setting, here depicted in the orchestra by the second river theme (Ex. 11), which is heard as the young man describes the misere zoo.

Life of a storyteller: exhausting work, baths, sweat, secret-amorous passions.

Frugola replies with dark pensiveness, and talks of her aspirations, accompanied by strings ad leges. "Ha soppresso una casa" ("I have been forsaken"), a solo in the Andalucia mode (Ex. 12), describes a peasant's dream, tinged with the melancholy of the final image of the two old people lying in the sun "aspetta col mais, chi" ("wait like this for death, cured of every ill")—words echoed by the querulous chirping of the crows in its high register.

Her friend's dark resignation provokes Giorgetta; she is not thinking of little country gardens, but wants to abandon her wandering life to settle in Paris. Nostalgia for her native suburb, Belleville, is embodied in the Example 99. It returns, after Ex. 11.

Example 99

The most beautiful melody in the opera, and Luigi takes up her lyricism in moving a due.

The contrast could not be greater when, after Giorgetta has muttered "Con'è difficile essere felice?" ("How difficult it is to be happy"), the lyrical theme in C major begins in the c Daten (Ex. 9.14). Michele's reappearance
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Example 9.10. Il tabarro. 44

The melody repeats cyclically, like a lullaby modeled on the rhythms of the river, while Michele evokes the happy time when their child was alive, and he cradled him with his mother in his cloak. The key word of the drama appears here for the first time, and is marked by the foreboding orchestral theme (see Ex. 9.4b). But when Giannetta prepares to go back to suspicions are raised, there are embarrassing excuses, a last plea, almost a vision of fate: "Resti vicino a me!" ("Stay close to me!"), while clarinets, harp, and violas encircle the voice like lapping water, and sinister bells sound from a nearby church.

The portrait of a gentle, nostalgic man vanishes when his wife goes down into the cabin. "Squadralunati!" ("Where are you?"") he shouts, and after this comment we hear the farewells of the two young lovers, whose shadows can be made out in the distance. Then the song plays the "lights out" in B-flat (clashing with the lower pedal, the bass fifth of an A-minor chord). These "real-life" references reinforce the sense of darkness that creeps over the stage, and prepare a suitable atmosphere for the greatest solo for any Puccini baritone.

The piece assumes a central role in the drama: there have already been some clues to suggest the possibility of a violent turn of events, but we still have no precise idea either of the real nature of Michele's suspicions, or of his physical force. In the original version the monologue was very different in character. "Scordi, sano eterno!" ("Forget, eternal river!"") were the words with which the bowman began his conversation with the Seine, from which he sought comfort, while the piece developed monotonously over the cloche theme. The current version contributes more fully to the drama, to very different effect. The music frames a man who looks about circumspectly (Ex. 9.12b), asking himself what his wife is so anxiously waiting for. His fury increases in the central section, as he runs through his employer's name, searching for her lover. When he names Luigi, the adulatory theme makes his suspicions more pointed (Ex. 9.12b):
Not understanding, however, why the young man requested to disembark, Michele could do nothing more than react in his impotent fury, which grew to a persiflon. The obsession of the watery abyss into which he would drag his rival is represented in fast descending chromatic scales (thirty-second notes in the strings). Here are the final quatrains of the two versions, the first sung to the Secco, the second to the ghost of the lover:

1910:
Lavo via la tua pena e il mio dolore,
fa la mia sorte!... E se non posso la pace,
allor dammi la morte! THEN: 1911:
Sul... Dividi con me questa tana!
Acomunia la tua con la mia sorte!... Ghilda... girl... insane! Nel gorgo più profondo
La pace è nella morte!
Wash away your pain and my grief,
Make your fate mine also!
And if you cannot give me peace,
then give me death!

The river setting has thus become the sinister place in which the tragedy will be played out. The monologue theme, in a quicker tempo (Ex. 9.13b), provides an introduction and accompanies a very short mine scene. Michele lights his pipe, Luigi sees the march, believing it to be Giorgetta's

The cloak hides neither joy nor sadness, but a murderer; and as Michele throws upon the sinister garment, pressing the woman's face against Luigi's, the cloak theme sounds in full force from the orchestra, and the curtain falls on one of Puccini's best and most moving scenes. So a murder ends B falso, just as it does the version pair Cavalleria rusticana-Pagliacci; but the difference in dramatic treatment gives the bloody gesture an entirely different connotation. All three situations are
founded on a love triangle, and end with the betrayed husband killing the lover; but only Puccini took a deeper look at the causes of the tragedy. Both Alfio and Cao set in order to protect their honor, the care-driven more aristocratically fighting an offspring duel, the eleven releasing his fury on the point of a knife, running through both Ninons and Silvio in quick succession. Michelet, on the other hand, cares nothing for honor; he sees under the influence of a irresistible impulse brought about by the torment of lost love, a love that is fresh and blood and at the same time the only redeeming feature of a life filled with bitterness. His murderous fury is motivated by an existence deprived of light, immersed in those mist over the Seine which envelop the characters of the opera. While Cao and Alfio eventually regain their dignity by escaping a wrong, obtaining the understanding of their audience, Michelet degrades himself through the murder, reaching the lowest possible point when he throws open the cloak, a tragic gesture saddened by black iron, which demands neither cure nor absolution.

**Suor Angelica: "Another Year Has Passed"**

Massenet's Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame (1903) is set, like Suor Angelica, in a cloister. It also has other traits in common with Fortunio's second panel of Il trittico. The uniformity of vocal range is similar (Massenet is an entirely male cast, Puccini an entirely female one) as is the ending in which the Virgin intervenes (offering her blessing to the poor minister, and her forgiveness to Angelica). The closing mystical apparition echoes the medieval tradition of the miracle play, and in both cases the principal protagonists expire to prayers sung as the curtain falls. Puccini interprets the event as the binding of a dying woman, while Massenet very simply constructs an authentic miracle; Jean offers his juggling skull to the Madama, and is rewarded with entry into the ranks of the elect. The Virgin in the miracle of Maurice Maeterlinck's Suor Angelica (1901) is much more active for the entire second act, the weaves the clothes of the heroine, who has fled the claims of love, and effects a miracle in the name of her protege. But apart from the setting, the plot has no other connection with Puccini's opera.

Puccini preferred this act over the other two not only because of the subject's originality, but above all because it allowed him to return to the

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15. Giovanni Pascoli's libretto to Maeterlinck, to whose adaptation he later added Suor Angelica, published at the beginning of the century with other plays by the Belgian writer (Maurice Maeterlinck, Théâtre, 1 vol. Paris: Le Moniteur du Te, 1901). The work supplied the subject for operas by Goossens (1917), Wolf (1917), L'Hermitage (1920), and Raspail (1946). The revival of the miracle play was part of a general vogue for the Middle Ages, developments of which were D'Annunzio's plays and Delaborde's Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien (1911).
As in Il tabarro, the action begins at sunset and ends late at night. There are fifteen female characters in all: eight sisters plus two alms sisters, two novices, and two lay sisters, to whom the soprano of the choir are added. The Princess, Angelica's aunt, is the only character from outside the convent, and the only significant role Puccini ever gave to a contralto. Boys' and men's voices are heard together in the miracle scene, in the hymn "O glorioso virginiun." Puccini knew how to avoid any sense of timbral uniformity, partly his experience in La fanciulla to good use. He often isolated small groups from the context, treating them like a chamber choir, and gave solene phrases to the higher-ranking sisters (three mezzo-sopranos). He also made use of a second soprano with a lighter voice, Sister Genovia, for some "character" passages. But above all he knew how to fuse voices with orchestra, gauging the sonorities and the colors, skillfully exploiting bells, chimes, and triangle in long concerted passages together with the upper woodwinds and strings, often adding muted trumpets and horns.

Sister Angelica has the firm structural base, organized through the juxtaposition of episodes. The broad outlines on which Puccini worked are not specified in the score, but are closely indicated in Forzano's libretto, and are marked in the music by clear passages, in it is a Via crux (Way of the Cross) in seven sections:

1. prayer
2. penance (from Ex. 1)
3. recreation (from Ex. 1)
4. return from alms collecting (from Ex. 2)
5. the Princess (from Ex. 2)
6. grace (from Ex. 3)
7. the miracle (from Ex. 4)

The orchestra moves delicately within a drama made of subtle decrescendo and crescendo, displaying a great variety of muted, light orchestral colors and restrained dynamics (from pianissimo to piano) from the very beginning, when the four-note ostinato bell motive is played while the curtain is still lowered. This motive is immediately taken up by the cellos over the strings' parallel fourth-inversion seventh chords. On this diatonic web, a vivid echo of organ techniques, a small offstage choir from the choir in the background sings the Ave Maria, with a melodious piccolo countermelody also coming from the wings. Gradually, this background is colored by other instruments—bells, organ, harp—while we see the heroine cross the stage and prostrate herself in a brief act of contrition before joining her sisters.

The construction of Sister Angelica's character begins with this minute, which shows her humility and submission; immediately afterward, her personality is summed up in the monotone sister's first phrase, when the little group in white habits comes onstage. "Sisters in humility, you missed quidens, in Sister Angelica did, but she has made full contrition!"

While in Il tabarro the themes are strictly tied to the symphonic macrostructure, here they follow the development of the drama more flexibly, since its nature is profoundly psychological, that Puccini returned to leitmotivic techniques. One notice, for example, the way he modulates, from a cell of the motif's first half-phrase (Ex. 9.15: X), other short ideas that belong to the heroine, gradually constructing in this way the basic ideas of the most important melody in the opera. A first variant of X begins the episode of the nursing sister sung by waps (Ex. 9.16: X'), immediately helped by Sister Angelica, who reminds the nurse of the bitterness of the potion (Ex. 9.16: X'), a clear metaphor of the hidden moments in her soul.

Example 9.16
A. Sister Angelica, [Ex. 9.16]

Example 9.16
A. Sister Angelica, [Ex. 9.16]
Example 9.16 (continued)

b. Suor Angelica, 9 after [71]

Angelica

The Fratello

Quan-dova'l’ho al cielo cielo ver-ne-te-a ven-te-te.

The melody takes its definitive shape when the alms sister describes the carriage that has arrived outside the parlor (Ex. 9.16(c), X). Angelica takes it up in the second part of her great solo “Senza nomina,” as she serenely imagines her own dead child (Ex. 9.16(d), X). It is a son she was never able to know, whose death therefore represents the denial of any future. The past is the only dimension in which the unhappy mother can find herself again, and the music reconstructs this past in every nuance, going back to its remote origins. When the Fratello pompously recites the death of her niece’s parents, fragment X reappears in a revised, chromatic variant (Ex. 9.16c, X), which establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between that death twenty years earlier and the heroine’s tragic present.

No less rich in implications is the monstress’s second half-phrase (Ex. 9.15, Y), which emphasizes Angelica’s humble gesture of contrition from this derive two exact reminiscences directly intended to reconstruct elements of the time that preceded the action. The sisters’ phrase supplies our first information about Angelica’s past (Ex. 9.17a, X’), a past that reappears tragically at a crucial point in the conversation with the Princess (Ex. 9.17b, Y’), when the nun thinks of her younger sister, who was an adolescent when she left but is now about to marry.

c. Suor Angelica, 11

d. Suor Angelica, 4 after [72]

Angelica

The Fratello

Ah! Ah! Suor! Resta mecchina! Il sette-prima al di sopra!

Only then does Angelica seem to remember, as if woken from a long, sad dream, that seven years of isolation and privation have passed. To convey the anguish and anxiety that Angelica experiences as she sings the phrase “non passai sette anni” (“seven years have passed”), Puccini isolates a period of the time of her enclosed life at the beginning of the final “scena” of the opera. The orchestral breaks into the stirred atmosphere of pain and anguish (Ex. 9.18) and suddenly breaks out, Arpeggios and succo chords, above a legato melody on muted horn and cello (Ex. 9.19), introduce the image of a ray of sunlight that pierces the convent’s walls. It is not a common atmospheric phenomenon in the cloister, and a happy theme (Ex. 9.18c) accompanies the movement of the sisters who sing hymns to Mary, the month of Mary. The teacher explains to the novices the reason for such great happiness: the nun always enter and leave church at the same time, and only for three evenings of the year (“Le tresure du soleil lunaire”, “the three evenings of the golden fountain”) can they see sunset. The event allows for a commemorating of time, and leads to the sisters’ melancholy reflection as they remember the death of one of their companions.
"Un altro anno è passato" ("Another year has passed"): Angelica, too, counts the days she has left behind her. Behind the tiny operetta—untroubled by tritones in the lower voices (Ex. 9.18)—that echoes the nuns’ grief, one can read the heroine’s endurance of a life that drags on always the same. This passage allows us to share with the character the sensation of a slow passing of time, and the revealing phrase increases our emotion when, through the conversation with the Princess, we learn the true cause of Angelica’s anguish.

Deeply meaningful passages such as these justify all the attention Puccini invested in reconstructing, gesture by gesture, even down to minute details, life in the convent: a limbo where every minute lasts an eternity. The episodes that demonstrate the harsh rules of the cloister are plotted along these coordinates. In the second "station," the monestress punishes Oocinto because she has hidden two scarlet roses in her habit, symbols of a contact with the world not permitted to the sisters. They must not nourish any desires, as the novice mistresse admonishes a little later, "I desiderio sino i fiori dei vivi" ("Desires are the flowers of the living"). With this touching lyric phrase Angelica raises her eyes from her little garden, and sings a serene hymn to death. It is a swift but intense gesture that detaches her from the context of the little things that enliven her, for example the

perceptions of the ingenuous Genovese, who misses the lamb she looked after when she was "a shepherdess" (an affected passage accompanied by woodwinds, trilling in imitation of blastings— ), or the far Dolcina’s appetite: "La gola è colpa grazia!" ("Creed is a grave sin!"). A little knot of sisters cries out. They are also ready to gossip about Angelica, who desires having desires: "Che Gesù la perdona, ha detto una bugia!" ("May Jesus pardon her, she has told a lie!"). Allegro con agitazione, mormor the nuns over a chromatic progression intensitated by minor seconds in the clarinets and bassoons, before a sinister diminished-seventh variant of the Marian theme in the woodwinds (see Ex. 9.13d) depicts the heroine’s unease (over the sisters’ whispering, which tells about Angelica’s seven years in the convent).

One more little portrait closes the third "station": Sister Chiara has been stung by wasps, a banal incident that allows Angelica to demonstrate her familiarity with flowers, which provide all her cues and from which she knows how to extract a remedy for every ill. The episode is marked as an optional cut in the score (from i to before ii), and this has crucial implications that we will discuss when analyzing the final part of the opera; only by comparing the current and original structures—throughout the scene includes the suppressed "aria dei fiori"—can we understand Puccini’s reasons for removing these sixty-six measures in 1919. At first sight, they would appear essential; besides the two phrases defining Angelica’s personality (Ex. 9.13d-f), they contain an even more important brief recapitulatory sung by the morning sister (Ex. 9.13d). In the final version the heroine sings these same words at the end of the short intermezzo, clarifying her intentions with lucid self-awareness while she prepares the poisonous potion (Ex. 9.13b), but even before this variant of the phrase appears when the oldest calls Angelica into the parlor (Ex. 9.13b), and it suggests a disturbing link between flowers and death.
“Il ritorno dalla cera” (“The return from seeking alms,”) fourth “station,” (22) concludes the first part of the opera on a furious note. The laying out of food excites Dolcina, who offers around a little bunch of red currants. The action halts as if by magic; flute, first violin, and oboe exchange a frivolous little theme, while glockenspiel, celesta, and triangle are heard over the fine veil of the horn pedal. Their tinkling articulates the sisters’ rhythmic nibbling, but Puccini transforms this mechanical movement into the call coming from the parlor. It is the visit the heroine has awaited so long, and which marked the unexpected turning point in the drama. While a terrible anxiety consumes Angelica, the orchestra, from the description of the carriage by the alms sister (Ex. 9.168), begins to play music that will be heard many times later in the opera, but is here scored very differently (Andante mosso, (22). The sisters crowd around, all hoping for a visit, but seeing Angelica’s expressionless face they pray to the Madonna to grant her wish. The rhythmic variant of the theme that reminds us of the flowers (Ex. 9.198) makes the wait for the call exhausting, and sounds like a premonition of death, to which all voices coming from the cemetery also allude as they sing a few lines of the Requiem aeternam, on which the first part of the opera closes.

As Angelica prepares to face the fifth “station” submissively, the strings play a theme in C-sharp minor that begins on the tonic and, after moving through a series of thirds, ends on the dominant; the horns immediately descend a semitone to hold a C-minor chord for two measures (Ex. 9.309). This contrast between the two harmonic areas, repeated on different degrees, gives a sense of sinister and implacable power. The lower strings resume the motive in a variant made more sinister by muffled pizzicato and further chromaticism, as the stage empties and an old woman dressed in black, bent over a stick, slowly makes her way into the parlor (Ex. 9.308): (22)

Example 9.30

The stage direction, the longest in any Puccini score, describes in detail the contessa’s entrance and the heroine’s entrance at the moment they meet.

In the gallery of great Puccini portraiture, the Princess occupies a prominent place because of the psychological complexity she demonstrates in such a restricted musical space. Her ostentatious coldness is almost pathological, a fact Puccini suggests by filling her vocal line with obsessive formulas, beginning with the introductory phrase (Ex. 9.207) that is recalled at the center of her solo (Ex. 9.208). The vocal style is mainly declaratory and moves, scale-like, by step, creating the image of a motionless figure whom time has frozen in a past full of hidden rancor. The recitative is full of Mahlerianism (see Ex. 9.26), which strain the harmonic texture, shattering the delicate monody of the modal background that has dominated until then, while gradually the imperative behavior of the aristocrat is revealed in the large intervals that end her phrases, plunging downwards. In a rarefied atmosphere, she announces the purpose of her visit: the division of the estate in order to show the marriage of Angelica’s younger sister. The Princess shows anger only when her niece calls at the decision, whereupon she is coldly reminded of “la colpa di cui macchiaste il nostro bianco stemma” (“the sin with which you blotted our pure house”). But the sent immediately resumes an impassive aspect, singing a cruel arioso in C-sharp minor, “Nel silenzio di quei raccoglimenti” (“In the silence of those recollections”), Ex. 9.210. The voice rises by fourths, evoking the solitude that can be gained in prayer, as if the old woman were seeking the peace of the grave in mystic ecstasy, and in expectation of her own death seeks reasons to extinguish the lives of others.
The progression that underpins the contralto’s words (triads on the fourth and lowered-seventh degrees) will accompany the first part of Angelica’s solo (Ex. 9.21b) like a distant echo of that cold place where her child died: in the new context, the staid scoring—from the ecclesiastical sounds of horns and trombones to the sad emotion of woodwinds and strings—conveys that the mother is reliving the situation with all her emotion. The Princess’s invocation of justice that comes from repentance at the end of her solo contrasts with Angelica’s desperation, expressed by a chromatic theme on a domineering figure, obsessively repeated for eighteen measures (Ex. 9.22a), with as many as six tempo changes. In the name of the “Madre soave delle madri” (“Sweet Mother of mothers”), she flings at her implacable torturer her only desire during those seven years: to know the fate of her son (the stain on the family line because born outside the bonds of marriage):

The scene ends with intense dramatic tension concentrated into a few measures. The aunt’s silence provokes in Angelica the most excruciating anxiety, expressed by an unexpected leap to B♭. The cold explanation follows, like a clinical report. A sinister whole-tone setting surrounds the question “E morto?” while cellos and double basses play an ostinato bass in which the tri tone is once again prominent. When the old woman bows her head in a sign of assent, flutes and bass clarinet are added to the lower strings, and the violas play a motive that has the ring of a cruel and deformed children’s song (Ex. 9.22b). The music gradually takes us into the very soul of Suor Angelica, who falls suddenly to the ground. The violin
arpeggios, which move through a chain of parallel ninth chords, provide a brief diatonic passage during which the flower theme is again heard (Ex. 9.13, X). The dark, whole-tone music then returns for four measures, before the anguished ostinato is repeated melodically by the violins in a passionate outburst (Ex. 9.13). The transition through these fourteen measures from hypnotic stasis to a late romantic harmonic flux gives an almost physical image of the heroine dissolving into suffocating sobs.

This passage, perhaps, the emotional summit of the score, and prepares the atmosphere for the sixth "stretto," which begins with Angelica's great solo, one of the best-structured and most passionate numbers Puccini ever wrote for soprano. The cantilena of "Senza mamma" (86) moves like a murmuring over the Princess's modal cadence; "Ora che sei un angelo del cielo" ("Now that you are a heavenly angel") is reminiscent of the music that announced the carriage's arrival, whose gentleness seemed almost an omen of serenity, suddenly interrupted by the breakneck passage that accompanied the summons to the parsley (the rhythmic scheme of which is the basis of the last section, "Dillo alla mamma": 85). The reuse of these three passages is intended to characterize Angelica's psychological development; evoking the death of her son, she invocates herself in a past she can never regain. On the other hand, the modal writing (Acolian on A) almost seems, after the preceding chromaticism, to return her to a state of resignation. In the first twenty measures the voice unfolds sadly, always with a downward trajectory, but in the middle tetrad it throws herself lyrically into a visionary world. The B-major melody (Ex. 9.15b) conveys the mother's feelings for a son she has seen only once and who now seems to be everywhere; but the orchestra, accompanying in the low register (muted horns, viola, and harp), recalls the parlatory episode, the present time. It is as though the protagonist were rejecting her own reality, falling into a trance-like state. Even more harrowing is the return of the Acolian mode in the last section, when the voice moves lightly across wide intervals, beginning an imaginary conversation with the child. The melody seems out gently against the rarified sonority of harmonies in three violins, and finally comes to a halt with a leap of a sixth to a pianissimo high A on the word "amor" ("love").

The form of this piece was fixed definitively between the end of September and the beginning of October 1918, after the vocal score had already been engraved.29 Puccini had no qualms about adding a further
repetition of music that had already been repeated eloquently in the intermezzo; he probably thought it useful to dramatize the connection between the parts of the work as far as possible, and to strengthen the melodic and harmonic relationships on which the score is constructed. The poetic recurrence of this music, with significant differences in the scoring, raises the emotional temperature and suggests an atmosphere of static obsession, almost as though Angelica’s soul were gradually engulfed by it.

Adjusting the solo was not the only problem Puccini faced in this difficult finale. The main one was to make his conception of the concluding miracle clearly perceptible, avoiding the risk of a religious—or blasphemous—interpretation. Finding a balance suitable for reception in areas that were both Catholic and Protestant was not as simple, as was proven by the success of the judgments of the New York critics, who dragged in, not very perceptively, the reference to Suor Angelica, a drama that is anything but ingenious.

Suor Angelica is mock-Medieval, that is not true mysticism. The Belgian poet’s “Sister Beatrice” is exquisite. The miracle happens. In the libretto by Giacchino [sic] Forzano of Puccini’s music, the apparition is an illuminated Christmas card... (James Gibbons Huneker, New York Times, Tuesday, 13 December 1910, ii)

No less misleading is the statement “To convey mystical ecstasy and the cathartic power of Divine Love lay beyond the composer’s powers” (Carrer, 65), given that the composer had no such noble aims. To clarify Puccini’s perspective, we need to examine the structure of this crucial seventh “station,” as it was given at the Roman premiere, and compare it with the structure currently known, which emerged in the course of the Milan performances in 1911.

33. D’Amico, in his volume on Puccini’s “Suor Angelica” (Venice: Treves La Fenice, 1958, II, 81-83), is grateful to the publisher for the permission to quote from his work. The present paper, however, is concerned with the dramatic strategy in this particular work.

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distantic and modal context. The link with modernity through Malipiero, however, is not relevant, among other things because any exchange between the two composers is automatically precluded by the dates of composition (Malipiero wrote Le sette canzoni the year after Il trionfo, and they were only performed, as part of the Orfeide trilogy, in 1915). We might, however, believe that Puccini differentiated his compositional style to such an extent in order to bring about a dramatic gesture as clearly as possible. As she gathers the flowers, Angelica conveys precise information to the audience: she is preparing a poisonous potion, involving above all the help of "Arthropos" ("deadly nightshade") and "viola vipersino" ("poisonous hemlock"). She thus brings to its end, in a radical way, that detachment from reality initiated in "Senz'a mamma" (when the echo of the Princess's absorption in prayer, and the transfiguration of the present, gave the impression that she herself was losing her reason). Before the miracle takes place, the motive attached to her son's death (Ex. 9.122) accompanies what the stage directions and text seem to depict as Angelica's realization, her sudden repentance for an act that commits her to dying in mortal sin. The appearance of the Madonna is a message of peace and charity; but it is not the Virgin who will grant a pardon the heroine does not need, nor will heaven be where the mother is reunited with her son. The dazzling appearance seems anything but a supernatural event: rather, it is a hallucination caused by the poison, in which Angelica is able to realize her unsatisfied maternal desire, checking the pure apparition of her child.

Probably, after the first performances of this scene (he persistently complained about the staging of this finale),28 and reading both the American and European critics, Puccini realized that his idea had not been understood. He decided to experiment with new solutions. Until the La Scala premiere, the episode in which the nurse asks for Angelica's help was omitted; but in a letter written just before this important Milanese debut, Puccini told his friend Schindli that "the wasps section will also be performed here" (31 January 1924; Schindli, no. 92, 1958). The connection between the insertion of this episode and the removal of the "aria del foro" is clear. Puccini decided to use the information about Angelica's knowledge of flowers in the wasps episode, and to complete the picture by superimposing a brief reminiscence onto the final measures of the intermezzo. The phrase "Sic in armi sekra..." was inserted as a detail of the suicide could not appear twice.29 "Amici affati" forcefully emphasizes the moment Angelica begins to hallucinate, but even in the current version the sensation that she acts in an unconscious state is not lost. She seems almost not to bear the tragic irony in the sisters' cheerful remarks as they return from the cemetery: "Sarete contenti sorelle, la Vergine ha fatto il grazie" ("The happy, Sister, the Virgin has granted you grace"). Angelica sings "Vi grazia è disse al cieco," her increasing exaltation taking her to high C. Now she sees death as her goal, and when the stage empties, first horn and cello take up the melody

32. Puccini was not happy with the staging in Rome, but thought the Vienna 1920 premiere satisfactory. In view of the Hamburg premiere of Il trionfo (February 1920), he recommended to Schindli: "For the miracles, where we can't do what they did at Vienna, we should keep to what is simple and natural—e.g., the Madonna, two angels, a crown of tiny little poisonous leaves for the halo, a little backdrop of trees in a blue sky—a little lamp among the flowers, while the Madonna holds down to her knees—and the light reverts on her face—single—practical—the whole atmosphere one of a little chapel in times of Blu there you have it" (Schindliq, no. 72, 192). 13. In November 1920, the Teatro Comunale di Bologna staged Il trionfo, in a joint initiative of Gas Ricardi and the director Ricardo Chailly, including the "aria dei foro." It was very controversial, although nothing stemmed from the validity of the current ending. D'Amico maintains, on the basis of oral evidence, that the flower aria was performed at the Milan premiere (23 January 1920). But this is unlikely, since it would not have made sense both to remove the wasps episode and to estimate the aria. It would therefore seem more likely that the new ending was tried out in the first performances at La Scala, not in the following May at the Fenice in Florence, as D'Amico states ("Un ignorata pagina multipartita," 8-9).
of the central section of the aria for the last time. Angelica reappears, transfigured, holding the bowl of porridge in her hands, and she bids her final farewell to the place where she has suffered for seven years. The scene farewell turns into a desperate cry: "Ah, son dannato!" ("I am damned!") - a mysterious offstage sound responds.

The mixed choir is supported by a cold, brilliant orchestral combination: high stringing on two pianos and the long-held organ chords, furnished except three trumpets, light strokes of cymbals, bell chains (not tubular). The timbre in itself suggests light, but also enhances the effect of the beams of light coming from the little chapel. The orchestra doubles the lead's melody line, reaching up to high C, with sparkling crescendos and celeri; and entry makes Angelica cry out in an exaltation that sounds almost erotic (unannounced descending parenthesis from high G). The reprise of section B, which was heard before the intermezzo, with the addition of the flutes sung at the beginning (see Ex. 9.14), closes the dramatic circle in a logical way. The reminiscence continues, in fact, to the moment when the heroine, seized by mystic exaltation, cries "La grazia è dono del cielo" ("Grace has come down from heaven"). Reality and hallucination that intertwave, far indeed from "pastoral religiosity" (Carrer, 499), since religion has little to do with it, even though the stage directions in the score require the Virgin to urge the child toward the dying woman. It is a staging problem that Puccini would undoubtedly have resolved had he lived long enough, and which is now easily remedied: all that is needed is to project light toward the dying woman, and allow spectators to infer what they wish.

With this orchestral innovation, which conveys the idea of the heroine's transfiguration, the curtain falls on the central act of Il trittico. It is the perfect ending for an intensely poetic opera, one which, when heard in its context, never fails to move. It is not difficult to understand why Puccini loved it so much; but it is still easier to share his anticipation of the final act's laughter.

MUSICAL STRUCTURES OF
COMEDY IN GIANNI SCHICCHI

The dramatic cycle of Il trittico is closed by Puccini's only comic opera, which also happened to be the last work he completed. Many passages in La forza del destino (not to mention the unjustly underrated Il giorno di regno) testify to a genuine inclination to comedy on the part of Verdi. Puccini, however, despite the brilliance of large sections of La bohême and

La rondine, never inclined toward truly cathartic laughter. The thoroughly comic humor of Gianni Schicchi therefore surprises more than that in Verdi's Falstaff, but the comparison between the two operas is still as inevitable as it is legitimate. Their main points of contact, however, are owed to the tradition of comic opera that both composers took into consideration, from the choice of baritone for the leading role to the sentimental interweaving of the soprano-tenor plot - love opposed by the lovers' families - and to the boat that leads to the denouement.

Boito skillfully centered his plot on Falstaff's double deception, creating at the same time a basis for the ironic humiliation that the wives of Windsor inflict on Ford, second baritone and, perhaps more importantly, a traditional jealous husband. Despite the women's protestations, it is Ford's deception that allows the canonic happy ending, with a marriage blessing pronounced over the two lovers. Puccini's baritone, in turn, directly provides for the two young lovers' happiness, after having cleverly imposed his will on the Donati family. In his final reflection on the plot, Verdi states: "Tutti gabbati!" ("Everybody mocked!") Puccini, on the other hand, recognizes Gianni Schicchi's "exceeding circumstances," and we are all ready to do the same when he claims them on stage. Falstaff's is a more complex reality, one which at the end merits expression in a real eight-voice fugue. Verdi, although through a veil of bitterness, still showed faith in art, and indicated redemption through it; after all, throughout his operas the comic element reflects profound ethical principles, although with an extremely light touch. Puccini did not intend to shower us with precious maxims, and his humor draws mainly on the irresistible greed that agitates the dead man's relatives so violently.

Puccini's idea of comedy was wicked, often bordering on the grotesque, and tinged by the macabre. Buoso Donati's corpse is present during the entire action, in full view before it is lifted bodily into the room next door on the arrival of Gianni, who slips into the same bed without so much as a change of sheets. To blackmail the relatives, Schicchi points out that the punishment in Florence for impersonation is amputation of a hand: this threat fascinates the unwary group around him, just as the "terra mora" (dejected head) of the moon will baffle the people of Peking in a hypnotic sleep in Turandot.

The primary sources for Gianni Schicchi is a few lines of the Divine Comedy. Gianni is savagely attacking the neck of another condemned to hell,
and suffers the same punishment as Mirra, since both are guilty of being “falsatori di persone” (Inf. 33, lines 31–40; 43–45):

F'Arduco, che rimane, torcendo, qui dice: “Quel folleetto e Gianni Schicchi, e va ribellarsi altrui conciando, se non se vi iso, non penso di esserlo mai.

Questo a poco con esso così venne, faticando sé in altri forum, come l'altro che li sen va, sottoceno,

per guardare la donna della torcia, falsificata in il Buoso Donati, restando e dando al terremoto norma.”

And the Arduco who remained, trembling told me: “That goblin is Gianni Schicchi, and in his rage he goes treating others.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

She came to sin with him by counterfeiting a herself in another's shape, just as the other who goes off from thence,

to gain the queen of the herd and by counterfeit as himself Buoso Donati, making a will and giving it legal form.”

Puccini was passionate about Dante's masterpiece, which he knew very well, and from which he had often planned to extract an opera; but we do not know whether he or the librettist chose this particular passage from the Inferno as a subject. The literal quotation of the final eleven-syllable line in the baritone solo “In terra li apiellina” might seem placed there on purpose to assure eternal life to the librettist, who had derived a well-constructed plot from such a slender idea. But Forzano in fact began from a much more detailed source, courtesy of the far-sighted philologist Piero Fanzani, who in 1866 edited an edition of the Divine Comedy that included as an appendix a commentary transcribed from a manuscript attributed to a fourteenth-century “Anonimo Fiesolano” (“Anonymous Florentine”). The passage deserves quotation not only for its charm but because it documents the true nature of the librettist’s word:

This Schicchi was one of the Cavalcaldi of Florence, and this is what they say of him: Buoso Donati, struck by morbid illness, wanted to make a will,


but thought he should make some bequests to others. Simone’s, his son, tried to talk him out of it, but kept talking for so long that Buoso died. When he died, Simone hid the fact, afraid that he had not made a will while he was healthy; all the neighbors said that this was the case. Simone, not knowing what to do, lamented to Gianni Schicchi and asked his advice. He knew that Gianni could imitate any man with voice and gesture, especially Buoso, since he had known him well. Gianni said to Simone: “Have a notary come here, and say that Buoso wants to make a will. I will get into his bed and we’ll hide him behind me; I’ll wrap up well, put his nightcap on my head, and make the will so you would like; it is true, I want to profit from it.” Simone agreed. Gianni got into the bed and acted as though he were suffering, and imitated Buoso’s voice so that it sounded exactly like him, and began to recite, saying: “I leave 150 florins to the works of Santa Reparata, and 4 lire to the Franciscans, and five to the Dominicans,” thus giving to God, but only a very small amount. Simone was delighted, but Gianni then said, “and I leave 500 florins to Gianni Schicchi.” Simone said to Buono: “This does not need to be put in the will; I will give it to him as you prescribed.” “Simone, let me do my business as I see fit; I will leave you so well that you will be happy”; and Simone remained silent out of fear. Gianni continued: “And I leave my soul to Gianni Schicchi” (because Buoso had the best soul in Tuscany). “Oh, Buono,” said Simonene, “he doesn’t care that much about the will!” “I know what Gianni Schicchi wants better than you do.” Simone began to get angry and agitated; but he held back out of fear. And Gianni Schicchi continued: “And I leave to Gianni Schicchi the 100 florins that I owe by my neighbors and of what remains, within fifteen days, otherwise all the income goes to the Franciscans of the Santa Croce monastery.” And the will being made, everyone left. Gianni got out of bed, and put Buono back, and they started crying, and said that he was dead.57

Most of the libretto is in this extract: the idea that Buoso had wanted to earn himself a place in paradise by means of his bequests; the hiding of the corpse; the detail of the nightcap; and the fear of being discovered that damped Simone’s rebellion. There is also the “opera di Santa Reparata” (“works of Santa Reparata”), which benefited by exactly “ciascun lira” from the bequests and one of the juiciest moralistic in the inheritance, “the best soul in Tuscany,” for which Puccini’s Simone would also say the sympathetic swindler did not much care.

Forzano invented very little, then, but translated each idea from the source into surefire comedy; this is illustrated by his use of the phrase "ci ogni viene iniziando per Dio, ma pocchissimi danza" ("this giving to God, but only a very small amount"), from which was derived the wise axiom "Buoso" digresses when the notary objects to the messenger's having left the religious orders.

Chi corse e lascia malo
alle croci le ai frati
fa dire a chi rimane
"era quattromila rubini!"

Forzano also managed to reconstruct the historical period in a realistic way. Not being able to use music to describe this setting, Puccini took advantage of his collaborator's skill in evoking in his text the pungent spirit of their region. The characters' language has peculiar expressions, real Tuscanisms, which stimulated Puccini's creativity in no small way, especially in the lively concertato ensembles.

Florence is further brought to life through historical references that were rigorously vetted by an expert from Pistoia before the libretto was sent to press. There is the inn of the faction opposing the Guephs, pointed out by Gianni as a warning to the Donati family if the deceptions were to be uncovered ("E va randagio come un gibellino"). There is also, and above all, the homage to the "Gente fiorentina" in the reprisal of Rinuccio's Tuscan tiramisù: the tenor sings an ode to the Arno, which "prima di correvve alla fonte, core baciando piazza Santa Croce" (before running to the estuary, sings as it kisses the square), comparing its flow to the procession of illustrious men into the city.

Ed val d'Elsa di sua Castella
ben venga Arnolfo a far la torre bella
e venga Giusto dal Migid sebbene
e il Medici mercante coraggioso.

Historical characters and topographical references are woven into this little portrait, but in the course of the action Florence is differentiated geographically from the Valdarno, where the properties covered by the Donati family are wooded (starting from Ficulle and ending with Ficcelino, passing through Quinale, Signa, and Empoli, with a short journey to the north-west to reach Prato). For her part, Lauretta would go willingly "in porta Rossa / a comprare l'anello" ("To porta Rossa to buy the ring"), since after having had her first kiss in Pistoia, she and Rinuccio have seen the city with different eyes.

Firenze di lontano / Florence in the distance
ci parve il Paradiso... / seemed Paradise to us!

Puccini's excursion into the world of comic opera reflects his unanswered resolution to compose a work more entertaining and organic than Die Ritterknabe, that is, less weighted toward sentimentality, and more compact. The programmatic tendency toward a concentration of musical material was facilitated by the decision to extend the number of different relatives from the one in the source to eight: the members of the Donati family act cohesively united in the aim of taking possession of Buoso's best possessions — and Rinuccio is different only because he is motivated by love for Lauretta. The family members are multiple emanations of the original source's greedy intrigue, and so Puccini treated them like a chamber choir, creating a background suited to pulling the strings of these ever-present marionettes. Moreover, he sought a musical style they could share but which would at the same time allow them to clash at the appropriate moment without mediation between the different modes.

Like Verdi, Puccini found the solution to this problem in the Italian tradition: he made rhythm the unifying element of the work. While the curtain is still down, the double basses noisy strike a dominant pedal as the other instruments leap energetically upward, setting in motion an ostinato figure in eighth notes. Suddenly, the rhythm transforms into a theme in D-flat major, its range restricted to a fifth (Ex. 9.25, A) and its movement comically thrown off-balance by figures (first woodwinds, then violins) on the offbeats, which coincide with the accents of the theme, confusing downbeat and upbeat. At measure 16, a brief, fragmentary theme is superimposed on this, increasing the dynamism of this short prelude. Both themes are generated by the initial impetus, and their flexibility derives from their ability to assume different guises by way of changes in meter and tempo. Puccini uses the ostinato (A) in about two thirds of the score: it constitutes perfectly the irresistible flow of the plot, the only formal determinant possible in an opera where everything evolves with stunning rapidity.

39. See the conclusion of the letter to Elster quoted above, regarding La resina. "I will never do an opera: comic opera, yes, Die Ritterknabe, but more entertaining and more organic" (14 December 1885, GMS, no. 6.38, 417)
The eighth-note theme appears three times—the grotesque timbre of the bassoon is particularly prominent—with the function of restarting an abruptly interrupted action, and it delineates a tripartite structure:

1. Largo (II); the ostinato supports the funeral lament of the Donati family that mark the beginning of the opera; after the discovery of the real will Rinuccio sends for Schicchi, who then arrives, taking the relatives by surprise;

2. Andante (II), "Andante? (Perché stanno a leggermario?)" ("He’s gone? (Why are they standing around weeping?)"); with difficulty they begin the negotiations that lead to the pact: notary and witnesses knock and enter while Gianni warns the Donati family of the risks they are taking;

3. Andante espressivo (to after II), "Odi... niente più?" ("Oh! you’re here?"); Gianni begins to impersonate Buoso and dictates the false will.

In the first part, from the Allegro of the prelude to the Largo on which the curtain rises, the ostinato characterizes wonderfully the hypochondrial laments of Buoso’s relatives in front of the corpse. A little later, now in Allegro vivo (II), the ostinato effectively describes the feverish search for the will, the ramshackle of every corner of the room.

To emphasize the Donati family’s sudden changes of mood and state of mind, Puccini did not merely change tempo: he increased the role of the theme as a cohesive element in the score by creating an important variant. When Schicchi, in his solo "Si corre dal notaiolo" ("Run for the notary") (III), describes to the relatives what the lawyer is to see, the ostinato reappears, and is subsequently condensed into the two oasesustains on the words "sensato" and "let-ty" (Ex. 9.16a, A'). The echo of the hypochondrial crying underlines Gianni’s cunning, his ability to grasp the relatives’ weaknesses quickly in order to play the deception. The melismas become an automatic dramatic-musical sign that extends the material from which it derived. Puccini could thus use it to even greater effect, to mold the important melody that warms the relatives about the punishment for impersonation. Gianni points to the Arnolfo tower, which can be seen from the window, and, “alzando il braccio a muovere” ("raising the stump of his arm"), sings "Adio, Firume" (Ex. 9.16b, A'):

Example 9.16
a. Gianni Schicchi, II after II

b. Gianni Schicchi, III

Adio, Firume - m. - m. - m.

Such a process of thematic derivation and distillation strengthens the impression that Gianni has succeeded in taking possession of the relatives’ consciences; they repeat his words, subdued and frightened.

Puccini employed the other motive in the prelude (Ex. 9.15, B) just as feebly. It has a sharp, ironic character, used in the first part of the act to ridicule the Donati family’s interest in the inheritance. Its shape makes it well suited to contrapuntal treatment over other themes, and it recurs many times in its original form or through its generative cell; see Ex. 9.15, B, connecting contexts that, at first, might seem very different.
The motive becomes explicitly associated with Gianni Schicchi when Rinuccio first mentions his name: the connection between the original motive and the variant is made clear by the use of the cell's rhythm (see Ex. 9.17a) and the occurrence of the intervals in the original ascending phrase (see Ex. 9.15c and 9.27a: B'). After having punctuated the entire last part of Rinuccio's solo ("Avete torto!"; "You're wrong!"), the theme permeates the rest of the score in the same form, and when Gianni knocks on the door, it is superimposed on the bass melody that announces Lucrezia (Ex. 9.17c). Finally, with irresistible effect, the theme is sung in a further variant of the initial form, as an adulatory chorus by the three women of the family after they have dressed Gianni (Ex. 9.17d: B').

Example 9.17
a. Gianni Schicchi, 6 after 33

Gianni Schicchi!

Rinuccio

b. Gianni Schicchi, 5 after 33

Gian-ni Schic-chi!

C. Gianni Schicchi, 4 after 33

E. Gianni Schic-chi

[Musical notation]

Example 9.18
a. Gianni Schicchi, 8 after 33

Gianni replies to them: "Vi servirò a dover! Contente vi farò!" ("I will serve you dutifully! I will make you happy!"); here, too, the music subtly emphasizes the difference between Gianni's cunning and the Donati family's arrogant credulousness; their belief that the situation is under their control.

In the first part of Rinuccio's solo, there is a thorough description of Schicchi, and the third important motive associated with him appears, alternating with the "name" theme. The voice is accompanied by a little fanfare of reiterated thirds (Ex. 9.18a), which imitates on one mind the words "Mottuggato! beluffegato!" ("Mocker! scoundrel!"). From here on, this sequence will remind us of the protagonist's real nature, in contrast to his false identity as Basso. For this reason, and unlike the other motives, it maintains its original form when it renews, except when it echoes Procaccio's emotion (seeing Basso, he almost bursts into tears); here it appears in minor, marked at the beginning by the pungent inversions of half-diminished seventh chords (Ex. 9.18b: C').

The music of the tenor's eulogy of great Tuscan (Ex. 9.18d; C'), a homage to the roots of Gianni's spirit, originates from the meter of this ringing fanfare (Ex. 9.18e; C').

Example 9.19
a. Gianni Schicchi, 9 after 33

Gianni Schicchi, 1 after 33

E di voi d'Elia gli dolce ra-menta

F. Gianni Schicchi, 1 before 33

[Musical notation]

Experimental Dramaturgy
Meter and rhythm connect many other situations: not only the Donatini theme (Ex. 9.25, 8) but also Rinaldo’s staccato, like entire sections of the ensemble, is based on ostinati and in the concerto that follows Gianni’s solo (“Schicchi! Schicchi!”) one can clearly perceive the derivation from the initial theme. A brief fragment of ostinato is also inserted into the cadence that appears when the Donatini family open the parchments (Ex. 9.194). The theme will later be recalled when Spinelluccio boasts at the wrong moment of the presence of the Bologna school (Ex. 9.196); and, in Schicchi’s solo (Ex. 9.195), it refers to the notary, at whose entrance it then reappears with great pomp (after 67). Medicine and the law are thus associated ironically, in a scholastic perfect cadence, the ostinato figure adding a touch of pedantry.

Example 9.19

a. Gianni Schicchi, 2 before [5]

b. Gianni Schicchi, 7 before [4]

Example 9.20

b. Gianni Schicchi, 7 before [4]

c. Gianni Schicchi, 3 before [5]

Experimental Dramaturgy

Rhythm is thus established as the main vehicle of the comic element, and the real generator of musical material, which becomes concentrated and homogeneous. The orchestral writing provides crucial variety, with Puccini more concerned than usual to ensure contrasting shades, from very subtle ironic touches to grotesque exaggeration. The woodwinds, particularly the reed instruments, are from the very beginning given the task of colorizing the numerous caricatures that form the hub of the opera. A good example is when Spinelluccio asks the relatives whether Buoso “Ha avuto il Beneficio?” (“Did he have a bowel movement?”), a picture of Don- tean frankness (recall Barbariccia’s closing gesture in Canto XXI of the Inferno), the bassoon playing a rapid descending scale down to CI.

One of the most effective pieces in the work is the concerto that follows the reading of the will, in which the relatives’ rage explodes against the friars who have been named Buoso’s beneficiaries (“Dunque era vero!”, “So it was true!”). The Donatini family pace the room, enraged, bursting into “risa sardoniche che esplodono come uria di dannati!” (“sardonic laughter, which explodes like bombs of the condemned”). As their anger gradually increases, the orchestra underscores every significant word: violas and second violins clash, exchanging quadruplet sixteenth-note figures, and the first violins play pizzicati on the offbeats, with a snare on the side-drum when Zita evokes the picture of the friars who lick their lips at the thought of gaining weight at her expense (Ex. 9.30).

Five measures later, the friars’ lavish meal becomes a distressing reality—tender and delicious birds fly through the relatives’ imaginations, the orchestra becoming lighter, the music rising in register. Clarinets, English horn, and viola rhythmically sound seconds; piccolo, flute, and violins in the highest register give the texture a sinister sonority that realizes their collective nightmare of poverty (Ex. 9.31). The blend of colors is for a moment reminiscent of Act I of Turandot. Although for the most part a diatonic opera, Gianni Schicchi contains some extremely daring dissonances, as these two examples demonstrate: timbre and harmonic language concur to produce an effect of comic caricature.

The writing becomes more stringent when the massive scale of the situation is emphasized, the percussion underlining this element in caricatured fashion, from the nauseating the obsessive, funereal side-drum strokes are heard over the initial theme of the opera (a before [3]). The most intense moment comes unexpectedly when Gianni, after having examined the will, sets about explaining his plan to the Donatini family. An ostinato in the low strings and harp, beat in mournful strokes on the timpani and side-drum, accompanies his question “Nessuno sa che Buoso ha reso il fisco?” (“No one knows that Buoso has given up the ghost?” Ex. 9.329). The sonority grows thinner, and all melodic movement halts as Schicchi clears the bed of its cumbersome burden: the cello shadows the faux bourdon of the
double basses, creating an atmosphere full of suspense (Ex. 9.38) that is broken by the entrance of the Bolognese doctor. From here, the muffled bass movement crystallizes into a chain of altered ninth chords, which move to the other strings exactly when Gianni feigns the voice of the dead man (a call that comes directly from the grave, Ex. 9.39). In this way Puccini created an important association between the grotesque business around the corpse, and Gianni’s gesture, which resuscitates Busso for Spinelloccio’s benefit. The emancipated dissonances produce a ghostly somnolence that throws a sinister light on the episode, in which even death is not spared irony.

Example 9.38

Example 9.39
Plot and characterization are built on the structure whose cardinal points have been outlined here. In the first part, the Donati family are at the center of the action, the three leading characters emerging in relation to them. Libretto and score identify them all individually: as well as their ages, their family relationship is defined—a particularly important detail when establishing who has the rights to a particular inheritance (also to understand the subtle nuances of the insults they fling at one another). Each one demonstrates greed and cynicism in the desire to achieve his aim; the corpse of Buoso Donati is the last of their worries. Being religious only for propriety’s sake, they display a façade of sorrow to keep up appearances; but the impoverished nobles think only in terms of giving in order to get—Simone is ready to light candles as soon as his name appears in the will, but extinguishes them immediately when he realizes he will receive nothing. The Donati family’s mourning has, from the beginning, the cadence of a sighing litaney. While they daydream of the inheritance their voices take on a psalmody tone, but when the bells ring again for the death of the baptized noor (an event that for some moments puts Schicchi’s plan in danger) they moan a lusidry “Requiescat in pace,” set in a hobbled style. Their true nature is revealed when Gianni proposes a solution to their problem: they sing a hymn to family love, but their agreement is questioned by the sharp harmonization of the little motive, dyads of fourths with added minor second (Ex. 9.139). A few measures later, this takes on a

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CHAPTER NINE

Example 9.32

4. Gianni Schicchi, 14 after [1]

Example 9.33

The form of a long list, repeated sequentially within a double pedal, as each dictates his true rights to the false Buoso (Ex. 9.33b):

Example 9.33

a. Gianni Schicchi, it before [1]

EXPERIMENTAL DRAMATURGY

The discursive chain of sentiments completely unmasks this pack of wolves, and when they have to decide on the best item (the mask, the horse in Florence, and the bulls at Siena, in that order), which they all want, the sour cantilena bursts out with wild abandon (3.5 before [23]).

Even Rominus participates in the settles of his family’s destiny, and, after having found the will, hopes in vain to attain his dream of love. But
there is nothing he can do except join in the angry collective against the church that opposes his happiness, singing an important phrase in the first grand ensemble: "La mia felicità si trova nel cavallo che porta d'opera di Santa Reparata" ("My happiness will be stolen by the works of Santa Reparata"). This will be repeated at the end of the first act, and appears as a three-trumpet flourish during the dictation of the false will, as if to mark the danger that has been avoided (see before).

The young man stands out from the context, however, with his solo: "Avete torto," reflecting sensibly to his relative's hysterical protest against a misfortune between a Donati and a Fieschi di Sesto sceso a Firenze in conto dell'udienza!" ("The daughter of a peasant! Down a street in Florence from the country!). It is one of Puccini's longest pieces for tenor, but does not in any way resemble previous arias because it is entirely lacking in sentimentality. It is also the first of four acts given to the three principal characters, and this fact becomes particularly interesting both in comparison with the other two "parody" of Il trovatore, and, more generally, with Puccini's style from La fanciulla onwards; but above all, in light of Turandot.

There is no sense of recapitulating a "neo-classical" tone, but rather of a formal decision taken in order to create the necessary detachment between the leading characters and the comic nature given to the little family. Considering the structure, one might think that Puccini had wanted to recreate an eighteenth-century model, in which the aria was at a time part of the dramatic action as the recitative. The large-scale use of thematic strands associated with Schicchi (see Ex. 9.247, 9.250), which appear in the first part of the tenor describes the character, strengthening this idea.

The first strophe of "Fiorono e' come un albero sirtita" ("Florence is like a flowering tree"); Andante moderato., [II] ends with a lyric orchestral melody, which translates into music the portrait of the Florentine palaces and towers exalted by Ruccio (III). It is repeated at the end of the pieces, before Gianni and his daughter knock at the door (see Ex. 9.259), and, more importantly, provides the germ for Laura's famous aria "Oh! mio babbo caro" ("Oh, dear Daddy"). [II], in which the girl pleads her father to help make her dream of love come true. Puccini used the melody of the "nunziare" to indicate continuity of action, and constructed this brief, sentimental exposition in A-flat major in order to associate the sense of family love, which the Donati family completely lacks, with the "gentle mood" earlier evocated by Ruccio.

Schicchi is by far the most clearly defined character. He proves himself master of the situation from his entrance, and immediately wins our sympathy, engaging in a little quartet where he addresses Zita in extremely strong language: "Vecchia toscana! Sciatto! smarrita! spolpitata grata!" ("Old Tuscany! Stupid! Smitten! Spoiled! Grateful!"). A heavy little march, built on the second theme of the opera, accompanies his reflections as he explains the will (Ex. 9.244: B); the lovers reply by echoing the phrase that sym-

bolizes their love (Ex. 9.245), and which twice voices their disappointment before Gianni gives them a glimmer of hope. Then, "Non ci potere sposare per il Calendimaggio" ("We can't get married on May Day!") becomes "Forse ci potere sposare per il Calendimaggio" ("Perhaps we'll be married on May Day!").
accompanies with pizzicato string chords, while the baritone melody is doubled by staccato woodwinds. The piece is a touch sinister, and, moving in a slow fox-trot, seems like something out of a smoky Berlin cabaret. In reality, it is the grotesque funeral march for a dead man who has been revived. Giacinti suggests his idea of the dance is such as "sideral l'eternità" ("to defy eternity"); the dissolute orchestra interjects his cadence on high G, with its ironic intertextual reference to Dancio, who reserved him a place in hell.\footnote{The general opinion among philologists is that Dancio, a proud Gaselli and an imitator of the Donat family—of whom his beloved Giacinta was once—and artistically arranged Schicchi's edict.}

The same music is heard again just after the frenetic concerto, when the Donati family hand him the dead man's clothes and promise him payment in return for the best items. "Addio, Finocchi" acts as the necessary prelude for the grand finale, and is a macabre warning to the relations that is rammed home at the notary's entrance.

From this point onwards, the music provides the action with irresistible energy. It is still made up of reminiscences, but for the first time it is destined not to awaken sympathy for a heroine, but laughter and admiration for this representative of the "gente nuova." There are no troublesome points to overcome, since the rigid musical construction has made the dramatic structure quite clear, the climax easily predictable. The themes of the hour, and Schicchi's abundant vitality, show him to be representative of the sturdy bourgeoisie class of the period in which the opera is set, and also of the time in which Forzino wrote the libretto. The spectator willingly accepts that Schicchi will bequeath himself the most precious belongings of dead Rusto Donatt, the only possible happy ending, since it brings about the union of Rinuccio and Lauretta, which had been prevented by an impiad and corrupt aristocracy.

As the name Giacinta Schicchi is written in the will, the relatives' irritation grows to a paroxysm, reaching its peak when the face of the Signor mills is decided. To ward off the Donati family, Schicchi is forced to alternate his diatribe with the song "Addio Finocchi," the harmony becoming more and more saturated by dissonance. Finocchiaro is bidden at with the walls in II tabarro, but Schicchi himself, with good reason, pointed out a reference to his ballet in this treacherous passage (Ex. 9.33; X).\footnote{Seravalli states that: "I have sometimes thought that Puccini may have half remembered the tale told in Finocchiaro when he wrote Schicchi's music measures before released No. 98." See Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, Expedition and Deathbeast (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), 157. The example is from the score of Finocchiaro, 152.}

As soon as the notary leaves, the atmosphere turns into complete fiasco; while the long list of relatives rage, Giacinta class the Donati family out of the house with his stick, trying to retaliate the precious objects that the greedy windbags would take away from him. Then the stage erupts and,

over the very long G-flat pedal, Puccini introduces the high A-flat that begins the orchestral love music of Lauretta and Rinuccio, who open the window, allowing the midday sun to flood the room where the macabre performance took place. Their love, like that of Ninetta and Fenton in Falstaff, redeems all human weakness, including that of Giacinta Schicchi, who returns onstage clutching the belongings snatched from the Donati family.

At this point, the opera should really end; time remains only for the licenza (lit., license) that closes every respectable opera buffo. Even Verdi

\begin{quote}
L'Heure espagnole also ends with a dumit, which the characters sing lined up on stage. Ravel, however, stops with tradition, writing a delightful quintet that ends with the memory of another great Verdi:
\end{quote}

C'est la marche de Roucoul:
Entre tous les amants, seul amour effacé,
Il arrive au moment, dans les désirs d'amour,
Auquel le mélancolie son tour.
It is the march of Roucoul.
Among all lovers, the only effaced love,
The time comes, in effect of the best,
When the melancholy has its turn.

The scene ends with Louis and Puccini sharing, among other things, a taste for satirical and disenchanted morality, and both are enhanced by skillful orchestration perfectly adapted to the
ended Faust with "a chorus," but he cast it in the strictest of forms, an orchestral-accompanied figure that seems almost a defense of the musical plot behind the drama. Puccini's amiable swindler, on the other hand, contemplates the happiness of the two lovers for a moment, then moves to the front of the stage to declare the licenza over held chords in the orchestra:

Ditevi, Signori,
se i quadroni di Buoso
potevan finir meglio di così!
Per questa bizarreria
n'han cacciato all'inferno... e coi t'ai;
rio, con licenza del gran padre Dante,
s'essa va in agra divertente conta.

(Se il gatto vuole appendere)

P. (Ti m'ha noia graziosamente)

Tell me, ladies and gentlemen, if Buoso's money could have ended up better than this? For this caprice they banished me to hell—and so be it; but, with old father Dante's leave, if you have enjoyed yourselves this evening, grant me leaving a sleeping action exulting circumstances!
(basso grazioso)

Even this is twentieth-century theater: his words break the theatrical illusion, reinstating our own power over the fiction. Gianni, the perfect comic character, bows to the audience in the house, while the curtain falls on the final masterpiece of Italian comic opera, now reunited with the European musical theater.

nature of the subject. To see them together is a double hit, as something happens, it is extremely opportune to confirm Kwei's judgment, extended to Giacomo Casadesus, on Puccini "Il mondo a 4 mesi" ("He was our brother").

In April 1979, Puccini bought a tower in Mantua, near Verona, among the Roman and Etruscan ruins. He had thought of it as his ultimate refuge, where he could fish and hunt, but he soon tired of its seclusion and returned to the shore of Lake Maggiore. In 1922, however, the establishment of a noisy first factory on the lakeside forced him to make a final move to his villa at Viareggio. Time was passing fast, as he explained to Spindler, he could not resign himself to it.

I'm nearly sixty, dear friend! How unjust it is that one should grow old—it makes me simply furious, confused! And to think that I won't surrender and that there are times when I believe I'm the man I used to be! But isn't it illusion, and also a sign of—strength? (5 November 1918, Zeilsee, 364–84).

His inner turmoil prevented him, almost to the last, from finding consolation at home. 1917 saw the end of his six-year relationship with Josephine von Steding, the German baroness he had met at Viareggio in 1911. Their passionate liaison left a deep impression on the composer, deep enough for him to succumb to nostalgia three months before his death, replying to a postcard from Schindler: "The Marienhof Hotel reminds me of my first meeting with Josi! beautiful times" (17 August 1913, Schindler, no. 136, 241–43). He had never had a companion so capable in his letters of combining romantic illusions with firsthand impressions of theatrical events (she was a regular at the Munich theater), but even in such a circumstance he did not feel inclined to end his marriage.3 Continuing to

1. In October 1917 (Maccani, 20, 474, 475–40). Puccini was refused a visa to go to Lugano and met Steding. It would have been their final meeting. Three of her letters appear in Maccani, no. 473, 473–74. In August 1913, Maccani tells us that Puccini went clandestinely with Josephine to the Festspiel in Bayreuth (Gioconda Parisi, 113–17).
travel the world, he met the thirty-one-year-old German soprano Rose Adé, who between 1921 and 1923 was, probably, his last lover. This choice reflected his desire to return to the old days of enthusiasm with his performers, as always an apt interior of his inner artistic self, it was the one way, perhaps, of generating the impression that time was not passing.

On 75 January 1939 the Peace Conference after World War I began in Paris, and on 18 April the final constitutional articles of the League of Nations were presented to the assembly, with the dedicated aim of promoting international cooperation and respect for human rights. In Italy, meanwhile, the future oppressors of freedom were coming to the fore: on 23 March Benito Mussolini founded the first “fasci di combattimento” (fascist squads) in Milan. Three days later, Puccini wrote to his wife that he had composed an occasional piece dedicated to Princess Jolanda of Savoy: the Inn a Roma, which the regime subsequently adopted for official ceremonies. Puccini gives his clear verdict on the hymn in a letter to Elvira Gara (no. 751, 481), calling it “real garbage.” We might be inclined to share his opinion. After all, Puccini, who had maintained a neutral attitude during the war, harbored certain doubts about the new movement that was forging its way by force—walking some of his colleagues (including Mascagni and Giordano), who were quick to compromise themselves. Concerned by the disturbances that were sweeping through the country, he did not have any faith in the remedies of the Fascist action squads:

Here the fascists, as you know, want power. We will see if they succeed in putting our beautiful and great country in order again, but I don't believe they will.” (Undated, 1939-1940, Schnaible, no. 143, 20)

He entertained the dream of a national theater that would produce Italian operas in an exemplary way, and export them to other countries, but an audience with Mussolini in November 1931 proved unproductive. In the following spring the officials of the Viareggio branch of the Partito Nazionale Fascista sent him an honorary membership card, and for the sake of a quiet life he did not refuse it. He was appointed senator on 18 September 1944, but death prevented him from sitting on the same benches as the instigators of Giacomo Matteotti’s assassination, which had been carried out on 20 June.

The slow but inexorable journey toward death was heightened only by creative activity. A renewal of his friendship with the Veronese playwright

Renato Simoni (1875-1951), journalist and sinologue, led in March 1929 to the most ambitious project of his life. Simoni and the ever-faithful Achille, charged with renewing the splendor of the illustrious-Ciaocchi partnership, were entrusted with the adaptation of Carlo Gozzi’s La turandoti and from that moment Puccini’s biography is mirrored in the composition of the Chinese opera.

The enthusiasm for Toscanini’s magnificent performance of the commemorative production of the thirty-year-old Manon Lescaut at La Scala in 1933 clinched the composer’s choice of conductor for his new work. Relations between Puccini and Toscanini had cooled around the time of Il trittico, but revived in these years, and were a great comfort to the composer. Also gratifying at this time was his enormous success in opera houses all around the world. Many Italian and European cities honored his operas with extremely prestigious performances, and festivals dedicated to his works became more and more frequent. A season of his operas was prepared in Vienna in May 1923, side by side with masterpieces of Strauss and Wagner, and in the following October a short Puccini cycle was performed there, centered around Lotte Lehmann’s performance of Manon Lescaut. The composer was very surprised by the reception: this performance received, and was charmed by the high quality of the soloists, choirs, and orchestra.

Toward the end of 1923, he developed a violent cough and very painful sore throat, but, having always been a heavy smoker, was not very concerned. In the meantime, he had finished Turandot up to the death of Li; only the finale was lacking. In his letters between 1923 and the beginning of 1924, Puccini seems almost to have had a premonition of an imminent end:

I have begun to orchestrate in order to save time, but I won’t be happy until this is done . . . carve a few hours out of your busy schedule, and devote it to this poor old composer who needs to finish this “magica” opera quickly.” (To Simoni, 22 December 1923, Gara, no. 875, 545)

In the meantime, he had finally finished Turandot up to the death of Li; only the finale was lacking. In his letters between 1923 and the beginning of 1924, Puccini seems almost to have had a premonition of an imminent end:

I am wilder and wilder here. I work from morning to night; I am in a good position, almost at the end. And I’m also very happy with my work. (To Gilda Dalla Rizza, 17 February 1924, Gara, no. 885, 546)

Puccini’s health continued to worsen. Always afraid of illness and terrified by death, he was finally forced to consult a specialist in Florence. The diagnosis was kept from him, but was given to his son Tonio: throat cancer, too advanced to operate. The sole hope for recovery was to try radiation treatment, at the time practiced in only two clinics, in Berlin and Brussels.

2. The only known love letter from Puccini to this singer, dated 24 May 1912 and published by Maggi, Liremi Puccini, 255–6. As in the previous relationship, the wholly unexpected Ricardo Schnaible covered for his friend Auguste Antonius to see Schnaible, no. 81, 98, 141–45.

3. In an essay given in the Chamber of Deputies on 29 November 1924, Mascagni stated that the composer had asked for membership of the P.N.E. (National Futurist Party) some months before dying. See, however, Puccini’s remarks in Puccini: Una vita, 209.

4. Puccini believed for some time that the problem was due to the aftereffects of an incident at Langenbad in May 1923, when a guest horse had bucked in his throat.
CHAPTER TEN

In October 1924, Puccini played Toscanini the passages he had composed of the final duet in Turandot, which, on the composer's account, made a great impression. It was on this occasion that Puccini proclaimed the thematic prophecy: "The opera will be performed incomplete, and then someone will come on stage and tell the audience: 'At this point Maestro Puccini died.'" Needless to say, Toscanini had been told of the composer's desperate condition.

On 4 November, accompanied by Tonio and Carlo Clasnetti, Puccini traveled to Brussels, and a few days later the X-ray treatment at the Institut de la Connaissance began, directed by Professor Ledoux. The operation on 24 November was carried out with only local anesthesia because of the delicate condition of Puccini's heart. Ledoux inserted seven radium needles into his throat. The final days were torture, but his physical condition seemed to offer some cause for hope, and on November 27 a slight improvement led Ledoux to declare: "Puccini en sortira" ("Puccini will pull through"). But his heart did not hold out: the following day he had a heart attack at six o'clock in the evening, surviving another eighteen hours during which he remained fully conscious. His suffering ended at 2:15 on the morning of 25 November (see Marchetti, nos. 471, 472), with Tonio, Fonte, Sybil Seligman, and Carlo Clasnetti at his bedside. On 2 November there was a funeral in Brussels; on 3 December a solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated in the cathedral of Milan. Toscanini conducted the orchestra and choir of La Scala in the Requiems from Verdi.

Turandot remained incomplete despite the fact that Puccini had taken as many as twenty-three pages of sketches to Belgium. These were subsequently used by Franco Alfano to finish the final scene. The opera was performed at La Scala on 23 April 1926, with Rosa Raisa, Maria Zambello (Liù), Miguel Fleta (Calaf), Giancarlo Rovani (Ping), Enrico Teuscherini (Pong), Giuseppe Nesi (Pong), and Carlo Walter (Tamburlaine). Tortano directed the staging, Gallisco Chini designed the sets, Caramia the costumes. For the subsequent premiere at the Costanzi theater in Rome, this last task was given to Brunelleschi.

The reviews were unanimous in their praise of the richness and stylistic maturity Puccini had achieved, in spite of the extreme modernity of harmony and timbre. For Gaetano Cesari:

Puccini's last opera, besides being the product of a personality dominated by great experience and a keen sense of the theater, offers yet further proof of the composer's versatility in adapting his genius as a colorist to the most typical manifestations of musical expression depicted in modern art forms. (Corriere della sera)

6. Reviews may be read in Goto, 351-65.

AN INTERNATIONAL COMPOSER

Andrea Della Corte in La Stampa was more cautious. He recognized that such an opera was really new for Puccini, who did not set it as a fairy tale but gave it a realistic essence, treating it like a human event with bizarre interludes... "The new woman" (Turandot) was thus scarcely glimpsed by the bird of Mint and Manon. And it is with these poetic, tender people that Puccini's name will remain eternal.

It should be added, before leaving Puccini the man, that none of those present at the world premiere heard Alfano's finale. Toscanini stopped the orchestra after Liu's death, turned to the audience, and repeated Puccini's prophecy: "Here the opera ends because at this point the Maestro died." The genuine artistic emotion experienced by all was not on this occasion suffused by the music of Giannini, which by Mussolini's decree of 31 April 1925 was to precede every theatrical performance in Italy. Despite pressure, Toscanini refused to perform the fascist anthem, and the Duke canceled his attendance on this gala night. Among Toscanini's many merits, therefore, was also the fact that he prevented Puccini's triumph from being suffused by such an outrage.

1. In Germany, where I do nothing but fight for Italianism in music and yes, Italian in Italy, East Prussia, Switzerland, Dalarna. Yes indeed Puccini, dreams Verdi, and proliferate yourselves.—In Rome—before German medicaments. —Eugene Ysaye (letter to Casella, 25 July 1933)

After the Rome debut of Il trittico, Puccini, by now past his sixtieth birthday, continued his usual lifestyle, supervising the production of his works and, above all, looking for a new opera subject. The extreme linguistic modernity achieved in the three single acts had, however, become so ingrained as to condition his decisions far more than previously. Puccini was certainly aware of the changes that contemporary musical language was undergoing, but intended to face the general crisis by continuing to work as ever, he sustained his interest for novelty, but remained within the boundaries established by his birth and education, confines he never entirely escaped.

He thus showed himself to be above those who attacked him, those who complained that the domination of opera had deprived Italy of great instrumental music. The idea had been proclaimed polemically by Fratelli Tarantelli since 1911, but only during the most experimental phase of Puccini's career were his arguments actually taken up by the more militant critics, and acquired a following among the new wave of composers (who
intensified their activities transcribing the music of Italy’s glorious past. In
his pamphlet, Torrefrance advanced the proposition that “opera cannot be,
for it has never been, the ideal of [Italian] national musical culture,” and
continued:

In Puccini the purely personal search for the new is absent he applies, does
not discover, work cautiously on what has already been done, assimilates
from the French and Russian, from the Germans, and from his Italian
contemporaries. And in applying, he never succeeds in broadening what
he has learned from the others, but uses it as a “common ground” of
modern music, constructed from success and given value by fashion.

After having criticized foreign audiences for contributing (more than
Italian audiences) to the spread of Puccini’s opera, Torrefrance drew the
logical conclusion of his destructive premises:

Puccini is the manipulator par excellence of “international opera.”
The ideal condition of international opera is to have music that
can be adapted to any tradition, in any language of the world, music
that is neither Italian, nor Russian, nor German, nor French.

The persuasive nature of this pamphlet is simply illustrated by its
arguments and the way in which they are treated: Torrefrance turns from
“Puccini’s femininity” to his creative laziness, and from his supposed “dramatic
consonances” to the specific demonstration of how he is not a real com-
poser, “since he lacks musicality, because he is not a musician, because he
does not make art.”
The goal of these arguments—which earned Torrefrance a professorial chair, and found numerous adherents from Giancarlo
Rastanielli (though with some differences) to Alfonso Garallo—was to dem-
strate “the impostor ideal of opera” and to affirm “the aspirations of
young musicians, who are coming forward enriched by other training,
inspired by very different ideals.”

Puccini’s only reaction was two lines written in 1915 to his friend Ven-
dini: “Have you read our dear Torrefrance? He deserves a good beating”
(Gara, n° 665, 432). All things considered, the idiocies of an aspir-

7. Torrefrance, Gare e Puccini e Figlio internazionalmente. 3.
8. Ibid., p. 64.
9. Ibid., p. 65.
10. Ibid., p. 64.
11. Ibid., p. 64. Torrefrance (1870–1952), had already published La voce musicale dell’opera
(1912). In 1913 he obtained his first position at the University of Rome, then moved to the
University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, eventually winning the chair at Venice in 1941. He
is to be praised for his work in revising neglected and/or inferior Italian music, but his criticisms
are in taking an often mistaken idea of critical success, for example by focusing on the
critical attitude of the Roman editor around the time of Italian composers (Le origini italiane del
manifesto musicale. [Turin: Boeri, 1936]). See Fantina Nestico, “Il senso tradizionale della
nuova musica,” in Gli istituti di innovazione del Novecento musicale in Italia (Florence: Sansoni,

ling academic bothered him little. Nor was he very interested in those
young savants of the homeland evoked by Torrefrance, the members of the
so-called “Generazione dell’Ottava.” He did not have time to assess them
in any depth, and dismissed them brusquely:

Now that I’m old, it’s better to stop and make way for the Malventi and
Preziosa, and all the others who don’t want to have ideas. (25 December
1922; Schnabl, n° 113, 250)

He paid more attention to Ottorino Respighi, who moved into the spot-
light during this period with his symphonic poem La fontana di
Napoli (1910), and whose orchestral arrangements of Rossini and Rachmaninov pieces had
already demonstrated his mastery of the orchestra.12 Ida Cavazza,
on the other hand, a fervent apostle of the new dramatic style, interested
Puccini very little, and on the occasion of Debora e Ifigene he expressed a firm opinion:

You’ll have Debora; in my opinion it doesn’t work, but there are certainly
some very interesting things (and I want to hear it again). Abolishing
melody is a grave mistake because this type of opera can never last long.
(25 December 1922; Schnabl, n° 117, 250)

Besides drawing away from the new generation, Puccini took note of
Mascagni’s regression:

After the success of Il pittore [Moral] (I wonder how the Gascon
from Livorno would like this qualitative diminuendo?) my country makes me
sick. It may be beautiful but it has no real character—of poetry or refinement.
And this the country of Le Forza del destino, of Pagliacci and Compare
Alfo! and of long, grand duets! (5 June 1912; Schnabl, n° 70, 136–37)

I am enclosing a clipping from Il Giornale d’Italia. They have discovered the
“most noble” crani of Italian music: Verdi will at least be first
singer! And all this after that grand Revolution—of the stomach. (To Si-
meni and Adriani, 20 June 1912; Gara, n° 803, 558)

Bitter words, showing a man increasingly aware of his isolation on the
Italian musical landscape. Perhaps it was for this reason that Puccini began
to pay more attention to foreign composers, who became his real col-
leagues, even across stylistic differences. His interest in Stravinsky was
critical but sincere, as the Russian composer himself stated in a lively memoir:

I was introduced to Giacomo Puccini for the first time at a performance
of Pervodiva in the Théâtre du Châtelet. Puccini, a large and

12. Respighi, accompanied by Deglio, had orchestrated some Rossini piano composi-
tions (taken from the Peché de solennel) for a ballet called La festa di Sant’Agata (1914), and also
Rachmaninoff’s Piane Tèlemann (1916–22).
handsome but rather too dignified man, was immediately very kind to me. He had told Diaghilev and others that my music was horrible, but that it was also very talented. I had talked with Debussy about Puccini’s music, and I recall—contrary to Mosco Carner’s biography of Puccini, incidentally—that Debussy respected it, as I myself did. Puccini was an affectionate type of man and an affable, democratic gentleman. He spoke thick Italian-French and I spoke thick Russian-French, but neither that nor the musical distances between us was any obstruction to our friendship.13

In May 1913, Puccini, together with Debussy, had been among the supporters of Le Sacre du printemps when the audience in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées had viciously attacked the work. Echoes of Stravinsky can be caught in Puccini’s last operas, particularly at a crucial moment in Turandot, the aria “Tu che di gel sei core,”14 Puccini could not agree with some of Stravinsky’s new stylistic traits, but moral principle led him to defend them regardless of personal taste. In the final years of his life, engagements permitting, he always tried to keep abreast of the times; in October 1920 he attended the Austrian premiere of Stravinsky’s Dies irae from Schubert’s Unfinished Symphony in Vienna, and in 1922 he saw a revival of Pfitzner’s Palestrina in Munich. In June 1922 he asked Schnabel for news of the two latest Stravinsky works, the burlesque Renard and the comic opera Mavra.

His last inquiry into contemporary music came just before he died. Casella had organized an Italian tour of Schoenberg’s Pierrot lunaire, which reached the Sala Bianca of the Piti Palace in Florence on 1 April 1924. The event provoked the open hostility of the Florentine musical establishment, but Puccini traveled by car from Viareggio especially for the occasion, accompanied by Marotti, who wrote an account of the episode. Puccini followed the performance with a score that Schoenberg himself, informed of his presence, had provided. At the end of the concert Puccini returned it, giving Schoenberg, and talking with him amiably for about twenty minutes.

14. Roman Vlad, in his Stravinsky, 1935, Frederic Puller (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 16, pointed out the indissoluble relationship between the melody of Lito’s aria and the motive that appears in the first and last words in the “Massed painterly” Ogye Sar_figamag, Le Sacre du Printemps (London and New York: Bowery and Hawkes, 1941), as a sort of Th. 38. Witnessing those who have since claimed to find other sources for the idea, bearing the same idea, is as futile as the relationships more than the most minute itself, there is a resemblance to the method used to construct an imputation of relationships in the orchestral studies. To those, in the main idea following Lito’s sacrifice, discreetly cut clusters among the orchestral studies, but just as they do in the “Massed painterly.” The music for Lito’s aria was written in March 1921 without any stimulus from text, and two months later the composer had the idea for the score; the reference to Stravinsky’s work should be considered in this light.

17. The article to which he refers had appeared in the diary in December 1945. The criticism is from Alfredo Casella, Music in my Times: The Memoirs of Alfredo Casella, trans. and ed. Spencer Newton (Newman University of Oklahoma Press, 1955). 161, originally published as L’Esposizione delle idee (Florence: Salabert, 1951), 210. Casella mentioned that Puccini had been the first to bring the music with him, and that “despite the performance, he asked to meet Schoenberg. His remarks on that occasion were not only courteous, but even warranty admission. It was a very hidden spectacle to observe the conversation of these two maestros who represented two diverse eras of art, expressing reciprocal cordiality and esteem.” (Ibid., 46.)
importance of the setting increased, and the irony that dominated the Venetian work was diminished.23

Puccini did not have the original play to refer to, but used Andrea Maffei's translation of the German version of Turandot.24 Friedrich Schiller had prepared this version in 1803 for the court theater in Weimar, putting Chénien: Werther's prose adaptation into verse—he and Goethe amused themselves at every performance by changing the text and solutions of the riddles. In 1809 Carl Maria von Weber wrote a "Chinese overture" and seven orchestral pieces for this production (which remained in the repertory after Schiller's death), replacing the original music by Franz Dostoevsky. Weber was the first of several composers, two of whom Puccini knew well, to choose this subject. Giuseppe Gianbattista had written Il dramma d'amore in 1875, and Antonio Bazzini had written La turandot, on a libretto by Guazzetti, which failed sensational at La Scala in 1867.

But Puccini's most important predecessor was undoubtedly Feruccio Busoni, who had been working on Turandot since 1902, when he wrote a suite in eight movements. In 1917 he had the opportunity to adapt it for the stage, with two further additions, when Max Reinhardt decided to revive Puccini's play in Berlin, in Karl Vollmoller's new translation—the show to which Puccini refers in the letter quoted earlier. Finally, the material composed thus far was collated with the Chinese tale Turandot, performed in Zurich on 12 May 1917 together with Attiljiiho. We can assume that Puccini heard talk of the opera, but the different aesthetic conceptions of the two Tuscan composers makes this irrelevant. Busoni aspired to a neoclassical detachment from his subject matter, something confirmed by his choosing the form of arioso. His work, moreover, was devoted to reproducing the spirit of the original text as faithfully as possible, and it contributed to a renewed interest in Puccini by other composers.25

Puccini, however, as we have seen, reimagined through twentieth-century eyes the nineteenth-century perspective accumulated through the versions of Turandot by Reinhardt, Werden, Schiller, and Maffei, and thus his own version assumes a different phrasing. Busoni had created a stylistic difference between the main characters, who speak in blank verse, and the stock characters of the commedia dell'arte (the "maske", who were

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23. Wagner drew the subject for Die Fledermaus (1813-1815) from Le donne erranti in a similar way, while many German composers, including Dani (1810) and Riani (1813), composed operas Turandot. See Raymond Le "Turandot" est les Opéras, Perspectives des Opéras, a Tragédie. Peter Lang, 1996.
25. Alcide Caselli arriva con donne erranti (1951) from the book by the same name, while Puccini's own Turandot (1913) and Massed King (1926)
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given a rough draft in prose. In the Schiller-Meff in version, all abbreviations were realized, and the masks also speak in verse; moreover, the story is set in more pathetic cases, excelled by the humanity that was an essential stimulus for Puccini.

The composer was, then, in a favorable position as he prepared to begin work. Certain of the subject's vitality—something vouched for by its ancient origin and the eternal topicality of a story clearly centered on conflict between the sexes. He was also encouraged by the success that the subject had won in the theater and opera house. But despite this, throughout the four years during which he dedicated himself both body and soul to the new opera, he was haunted many times by discouragement, deserted the work, returned to it, forced the librettists to prepare at least five versions of the final draft—the problematic crux of the plot—and attempted in vain to beat death to its completion. It was certainly not a gestation devoid of problems, but this was, after all, normal for him. It is not correct, therefore, to interpret the periodic pauses when the composition of Turandot came to a halt as signs of the composer's inability to overcome the restrictions of his own style. Such considerations should, if anything, be reserved for the central idea of the denouement, the idea of giving a genuinely cathartic role to love.

From the very beginning, aside from some uncertainties about the librettists' first outline, Puccini had voiced an unusual consciousness of the value of his work:

At first sight, it seems good, save some observations about both the second and third acts. For the third, I was thinking of another ending—I thought her death would be more meaningful, and I would have wounded her, in front of the people, to burst out with love. In an excessive, violent, shameless way, like a bomb exploding... The outline is there, ready for an original and perhaps unique opera. (18 July 1915; Adami, no. 288, 160)

Important novelties were introduced gradually as the project assumed more definite outlines. Puccini decided to add the character of Li in August 1920. The "piccola donna" finds a partial model in Gozzi's Tarare princess Adelma, who is Turandot's slave, and also her rival because she is in love with Calaf. She reveals the name of the unknown solver of the riddles through jealousy, while the other slave, Zelma, tries to persuade the heroine to listen to her heart.

24. The avviso, a written outline of a dramatic event that provided the basis for an improved performance, was a much-praised form of the romanzo dell'arte, (Gale).

25. The origin of the legend of Turandot is a brief story of two thousand and one nights. The princess who lived behind her mother was adopted into the West in the fourteenth century, thanks to La Noia et le Jour, compiled in the Centro parlante published by Pierre de la Creuse (1170). Finally, the story was transferred to the Far East by Jean Claude Galilée, in his work Contes La Princesse de Chine (1746).

TURANDOT

The composer expressed an interesting opinion on the four stock characters of the commedia dell'arte (Turaglia, Pantalone, Truffaldino, and Bifolco), which the librettists would gladly have eliminated:

It might even be that, by keeping the masks with discretion, there would be a national element, which in the midst of so much Chinese mannerism (because such is it) would be something of our own tone, and sincere. The close observation of Pantalone and company would lead us back to the reality of our lives. In short, make it a bit like Shakespeare often does, when he brings on three or four characters who drink, swear, and speak ill of the King. I have seen this in The Tempest with the Elves and Ariel and Caliban. (No dates [27 March 1920]; Adami, no. 178, 167)

So Puccini was already thinking of characters who would really participate in the action, not just be limited to commenting on it like Gozzi's masks. His wish to fuse their grotesqueness with the heroism and tragedy of Calaf and Turandot, and with the pathetic element provided by Li, should be seen in the context of the multistylistic experimentation begun with La fanciulla.

The first idea for the work concerned Li:

I entrust to you Li in [Oct] III. You will need to use an unusual meter—I have a bit of Chinese-sounding music, and it will need to be adapted slightly. (15 March 1910; Adami, no. 116, 172)

The musical form of the tria, founded on his conception of the character, preceded its definitive positioning in the drama. At this point, still far from its place in the current version. As late as September 1911, Li was to be tortured, and was then to have a brief dialogue that would make "La scena Turandot's pity" (Gale, no. 771, 496). The idea of Li's death only comes to Puccini two months later.

I think that Li should be consumed by sorrow, but that it is impossible to develop this—unless we have her die under torture. Why not? Her death can help contribute to the drawing of the princess. (1 November 1911 [date 1911]; Adami, no. 206, 192)

This "drawing" is indispensable, considering the different character Puccini had given Gozzi's heroine, who had explained her bizarre behavior to Zelma thus (III, 2):

... È un uom, Io abbraccio,
   E le doppio acbero. Son muri infanti,
   Delleali son muri, e son amere.

26. Gara wrongly dates this letter "December 1905." But the phrase is also contained in a plan of the two-act version sent to Simon, which Puccini annotated in a letter to Adami on 24 September 1911 (Adami, no. 143, 194).
find a way out, perhaps I am torturing myself because I have one set idea. 

Turandot should be in two acts. What do you say to this? Don't you think
it drags on too long after the riddles, in the lead up to the last scene? Cut
down some episodes, remove others altogether, arrive at a final scene where
love explodes. I can't suggest the exact structure, but I feel that two
more acts are too much! Turandot is in two large acts! And why not? Do as
in Parigi, with a change of scene in the third act, set it in the Chinese
Grail temple! All red flowers and the breath of love! (13 September
1921; Gax, no. 816, 515)

The idea lasted little more than three months, and Puccini quickly
returned to reflecting on the crux of the drama. He found sensuality a useful
means of making Turandot's 'dreaming' more plausible:

I think that the great crux is the dream, so I would like to suggest some-
thing. I think that great passions could be achieved in the dream, and to
get it, I think that Calaf has no idea Turandot and show his great love to this
cold woman. After kissing her, a kiss that lasts several seconds, he has to
say 'era che mi amava,' I'm even ready to die, and he tells her his name
on her lips. (Undated [ca. 20 October 1921]; Adami, no. 156, 175-76)

And the following year:

I'd like Turandot's dreams to melt in the course of the dream, namely, I
want some anxious intimacy before they appear in front of the people—and
the two, walking together anonymously, set out tenderly toward her fa-
ther's throne through the amazed crowd and proclaim love. She says: I do
not know his name and he, for her name, and finally in ecstasy, jubilation,
the glory of sunlight... The dream and finale is all one block and faster.
(9 July 1923; Adami, no. 203, 180)

In the attempt to distance himself from Gax, Puccini achieved some-
thing truly original. With this addition, the finale became a moment of
fundamental importance, and, man of the theater that he was, he could not
but be aware of it. He needed to 'move' the audience at the end, but not in
the same way as in La Bohème or Butterflies. The task was not easy, but the
crux of the problem was quite clear: how to make the princess's unexpected
change credible. If Turandot's hatred of men was caused by trauma, it was
essential that love impose itself with equal disruptive force. The composer
identified two such forces in which he placed all his bets. Liu's sacrifice and
Calaf's sensual kiss. He meant, as he had written many times during the
four years' work, to install new life into Italian melodramas, and was un-
doubtedly aware of the weight of this burden when he wrote to Adami:

Giovanni, 119-38.
I think of Turandot hour by hour, minute by minute, and all the music I have written up to now seems a joke, and no longer please me. Is this a good sign? I think no. (Adami, no. 128, 1931)

It was March 1924, eight months before his death. Four months later, Busoni would also be dead, leaving incomplete the finale of his most ambitious operatic project, Doktor Faust. In 1911, Mahler had died leaving his Tenth Symphony incomplete; in 1932 death would prevent Berg from finishing the third act of Lulu. Like Puccini, he left sketches and notes on his desk. All are masterpieces of the century, conceived and realized on the threshold of their composers' deaths, their aesthetic evaluation made difficult by their incompleteness.

**Exoticism and Décor**

Certainly the only person in the world who sees, in the mind's eye, the scenic and character figures as apparitions of a story, with an earnestness that seems to make them real, is the composer, while he imagines his opera has still to be written. —Syrus Bonnetti

It is highly significant that Puccini turned to an oriental subject for the opera that would constitute a decisive turning point in his theater. While in Madama Butterfly East and West are contrasted through two different stylistic "masnons," distinctions of this type cannot even be attempted in Turandot. Its exoticism is bound tightly to the fairy-tale setting, an inseparable unity that is sanctioned by the libretto, which sets the action "in Peking in legendary times".

To depict the atmoosphere, Puccini used the method successfully tried out in the Japanese tragedy in which he found four melodies that suited his requirements in J. A. von der Au's Chinese Music (Shanghai, 1888), obtained for him by Caruso on request. The first is heard at the end of the Prince of Persia's funeral march (Ex. 10.14); the others all characterize the music of Ping, Pong, and Pang, first at the beginning (Ex. 10.15), then toward the end of the Act II return (Ex. 10.16), and finally in the third act, when the dignitaries offer cakes overflowing with precious jewels to Calaf, to try and make him abandon his quest (Ex. 10.17).


32. "I will also find ancient Chinese music and information and pictures of various instruments, which we will put to use (not in the order of)" (64) [ca. 12 March 1920]. Adami, no. 176, 165. For Puccini's preoccupation with the music of China, see Lo, "Turandot," 11. Marco Carteri identified the four melodies in Ex. 10.1 from the music source (Carter, 653–57, respectively Exs. B, G, C, H). Being a ideologist, Simon may have had the idea of calling the "piccolo donso" the name paid up from the sounds that correspond to the degrees of the Chinese scale (Zohar).

Another three melodies come from a more unusual source: a music box owned by Puccini's friend Baron Fasini. From this precious souvenir, Puccini took the idea for one of his most exquisite characteristics: the patterned, mechanical tone (a change of meter at every measure) that accompanies the masks' entrance on stage (Ex. 10.16). He reserved a second

51. Carter refers to other publications for the melodies of Ex. 10.14 and Ex. 10.16, the Chinese national music from 1911 (Carre, 631–36, especially Ex. B, F, D), while he located another important melody, which appears in the Note sur le théâtre de la musique (Paris, 1930, see Ex. 10.17). Puccini's music box was mentioned for the first time in a report by the musicologist Fasini, writing from Paris, May 1920, which appeared in the Giornale d'Italia on 18 August 1920: "The other day [Puccini] was listening to the music of an old Chinese king, which was coming from a little music box, but then the Baron Fasini had brought it from the Orient" (G. Gabrieli Berg, Baruzzi e Daniello Bucostioni, "Carnival. . . .". Trenta lustre di Giovanni Puccini a Ferramonti Guglielmo [1916–1926]), in Biagio-Scappi, 1920). Later, William Warren tracked down the instrument and learned the three melodies; see William Ashbrook, and Harold S. Powers, Puccini's Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). This book is at present the most stimulating expository treatment of Puccini's incomplete masterpiece. On original themes, see also Lo, "Turandot," 551–653. "The configuration once written by Caruso, the original example, more to his taste and in original notation, are carefully transcribed and discussed."
motif for the march that accompanies the emperor’s procession in Act II (Ex. 19a) and which later appears in the chorus “Al tuo piedi ci prostriam” (II, 1 after 49). But the most important of all appears after the rising of the moon invoked by the people (Ex. 20a). This theme, a melody called *Mia Li-Hua* (jasmine flower), represents Turandot’s human side, and recurs many times, often in the children’s chorus, a timbre that symbolizes Turandot’s innocence. All these examples, except *106a*, make use of the pentatonic scale, which is then harmonized usually. *Mia Li-Hua* uses a different method of musical mimicry:

**Example 106a**

a. *Turandot*, I [37]

b. *Turandot*, II, 12 after [41]

The motive is constructed on the pentatonic scale C, B, G, F, E, but A♭ and D♭ notes that complete the transposed Mixolydian mode, appear in an extensive bass. The use of a “Gregorian” aura serves to distance the listener, who instinctively notices archaism but cannot identify it.

With an eye to the great riddle scene in Act II, particularly the section

in which Calaf asks to face the trial, Puccini used this technique on a large scale to reconcile the exotic with the ritual element. In this scene, Puccini contrasts two tenor timbres: the weak voice of the celebrant, the emperor of China, and the young and powerful voice of Calaf, who in this rarefied setting repeats three times his desire to measure himself against Turandot.22 The passage opens with the “sacred bronze” (offstage trumpets and trombones; II, 31) outlining the Mixolydian scale, the same scale that, transposed down a tone, is used for the final repetition of “Diciamati amanti al nostro Imperatore!” (“May our emperor live [10,000 years]!”) by the chorus. The final reference to the sacred is the organ, which joins the orchestra in the great choral hymn of thanks that closes the act, both increasing the volume and accentuating the ritual character of the whole tableau.

Puccini gave instrumental timbres a fundamental role in determining the atmosphere of *Turandot*, demonstrating all his gifts as an orchestrator with coloristic effects that are both violent and finely judged. Each section of the orchestra assumes a maximum complement, and many more instruments are required for stage music: six trumpets, four trombones (one a bass), double bass, drums, and woodwinds. There are also two solo saxophones, used very rarely in opera of this period.23 Their mysterious, sweet timbre blends with the children’s chorus, doubling them in the wings in Act I (Ex. 106a) and II (52), before moving on stage, hidden, just before the princess enters. Finally, they play an outsized music that accompanies the emperor’s exit (II, 2 after 52).

Puccini used a massive percussion section with many bell-like sounds in a rhythmic texture dominated by ostinato figures. Chinese gongs, xylophone, glockenspiel, tubular bells, and celesta are used throughout the score, as are cymbals and triangle. These instruments play an extremely interesting role in the incantation that accompanies the crowd’s entrance in Act II (9 after 54), and particularly in the subsequent march that introduces the emperor (1 before 70). Two harps playing double glissandi, woodwinds, and celesta in dissonant arpeggios (seventeen thirty-second notes in two quarter notes), xylophone glissandi, and glockenspiel chords are superimposed on the horn melody. As the war bells pass, the offstage brass add a new sonority to the passage, just after the percussion has come together in polyrhythmic figurations.

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22. We might guess that Puccini had in mind the judgment episode in the first scene of Act IV of *Elektra*, where Elektra gives the “Stirn” (led by Randolf) an active character by using Gregorian formulas, thus implying in the audience’s unconscious a reference to the Catholic tradition. The Egyptian priestess demands “to the lower stages level” and begins a real dramatic ritual accusation repeated three times in archaic manner, accompanied by the harp.

23. The harp was used by Saint for the stage music in *Le Districts* (1872). Up to this point appeared in the work of some French composers, from Thomas (Hébraïs 大き, 1861, François de Roux, 1865) to Masson (Sibylle, 1887, Wöhrer, 1888) and D’Indy (Forme, 1890). The instrument later became popular in Koeck’s *Jenny with the Lamp* (1915) and was used by Schréder in *The House of Morgan* (1925) and by Berg in *Wozzeck* (1930).
Bass drum, wooden side-drum, and tambourine are prominent in the most barbaric passages, but Puccini also uses them for particular effects such as the bass drum strokes that punctuate Turandot's sad and opening narrative to his son, imitating him in an aura of legend (I, [3]), or the symbol stroke with drum stick over the flute and muted first horn chord which evokes the scene of Turandot's physical and mental distance as she begins "In questa Reggia" (II, [3]). Paper between the strings of the second harp in the final part of the minuets' trio (II, [3]) dulls the brilliance of the sound, and allows the cymbals to sparkle over the singers' murmuring.

Puccini often made use of one last "exotic" procedure: chains of dyads and parallel chords. They appear everywhere in the chorus of the first act, the music of the masked character, in Turandot's aria, in Liu's Act III music. But the composer, in his efforts at musicology, went still further, reproducing polyphonic procedures practiced in the Orient, such as heterophony—that is, the simultaneous performance of different variants of the same single melodic line. A particularly interesting example appears when Ping, Pong, and Pang enter in a group of seductive cadences, and offer them to Calaf. The four notes of the sopranos (D, E, G, A) fill out the acoustic space, arranged in different figurations (Ex. 10-3).

The immense orchestra is entirely at the service of the spectacle. Puccini had on various occasions conceived the musical element of the dramatic conception first and then made the stage action correspond, thus deriving the staging from the music, so that in each of his operas there is always some grandiose passage in which the visual aspect is, to an alert ear, dependent on the musical structure. For Turandot, the composer imagined a special staging, one suited to the needs of the artistic novelty already discussed. The traditional Aristotelian unity of time became an opportunity to trace a journey through the three acts in which the passing of time acquires emblematic value. The "drawing" of the proper princess is placed at the culmination of a symbolic juxtaposition of colors, suggested by changing lighting: the different stages of the day progress before our eyes, and the metamorphoses of Turandot arrive with the white of dawn, then intensifying into the golden rays of the first sun.

The opera opens with the reddest colors of sunset, projected onto a gold background (sharp rhythms, constant movement, extended percussion), which merge into a more intense blue as the people wait excitedly for the full moon, to see the latest unfortunate suitor of their sovereign behelded. These breathless moments are immersed in almost complete harmonic stasis: as Turandot appears silently in the open gallery, a ray of light illuminates her, linking her ethereal beauty to the emotions that seize the unknown prince. He needs no persuasion to hurry to the huge gong that is prominent in the background—a musical instrument that is also a crucial symbol in the drama, since to strike it means to begin a game with death.

Hidden by a drop curtain throughout the first scenes with the three ministers, the palace appears in the second act, shining and filled with a brilliant crowd of dignitaries. The functional juxtaposition of the two scenes is easily grasped: the mechanical movements of the trio, dominated by the precise, disenchanted cynicism of the ministers, breaks out into an enormous passage whose grandiose effect recalls the tableau of grand spire. After the clouds of incense diffused earlier have dissipated, the legendary

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34. For an example of a similar scene, see Carmen, 524.
Chorus: Catif

475
722

37. T莎, FlI, d, w, 729.

Chapter Ten

As can be seen, this outline also divides the act into four parts, each in turn composed of four sections corresponding to "la solita forma" of the separate number. Compare the two outlines: it is easy to recognize the almost completely consistent correspondence between the "episodes" of one and the "movements" of the other, accommodating the great differences of tempo within the sections. There remains, of course, the fact that the finale has two arias and a large concertino (sinfonia with chorus), but even this, if we think of the first finale and central finale of La Bohème, does not seem absolutely new, nor is it the first time we have identified solo and ensembles in which the framework of a nineteenth-century "number" is clear (from the duet between Manon and her brother in the prostitutes' embalming scene, to the final passages of La fanciulla). Adopting such an analytical outline need not, however, imply the rejection of a network relying on thematic elements, since each section, except the last two, uses melodies that will play a role in the following acts: a scene in the Lento introduttivo (in the first chart) with a recurring harmonic setting (the dominant clash heard under the mandarin's declaration of Turandot's law); two codas in the following section (II and III) as well as a large body of motivic material; and another particularly important theme in the Aria B (see Ex. 12.15). Compared to the usual method, there is a smaller number of themes, and these always reappear in the form of a reminiscence. Only the opening theme is treated as a leitmotiv (see below, Ex. 12.16 and following), and as such permeates the score until Liu's death. The act thus seems to be constructed through the juxtaposition of episodes, each complete in itself. It is in this aspect that Puccini's scoring emphasizes, after having recognized the numerous similarities that link various sections of Puccini's score to the work of other European composers, from Ravel to Barbó, Debussy, and Schoenberg.

It seems possible to break the whole of Turandot down into separate fragments, a type of patchwork quilt, made up of a jumble of materials found here and there throughout the world, and across the ages. It is precisely this fragmentation of the writing that seems to be one of the essential characteristics defining the modernity of the formal compositional thought in Turandot. . . . The musical exposition proceeds as if in a chain, through putting in a temporal sequence the "blocs" or "routines" with uniform character, derived from their own specific and particular "textural" principle.

This way of thinking about the score, suggested by an eminent scholar of the New Music, is important for an accurate evaluation of Turandot's modernity, moreover, it permits us to go beyond the fictitious opposition

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Ashtbrook and Powers, Turandot, 166. Measure numbers are given after the rehearsal numbers.

41. Isherwood and Powers, Turandot, 166. Measure numbers are given after the rehearsal numbers.
between symphonic structure and "number" opera, perhaps initiating a new and more fertile period of discussion of Puccini's last masterpiece.

"Bintonality"

Many commentators have noted the harmonic modernity of Turandot, clearly evident in passages such as the diminuendo Little March of the onstage brass, which announces the reawakening of the court. The passage is especially interesting for the skill with which Puccini exploits the complex sonority of a dominant ninth, alluding to G-flat major, above the continuo in A-flat minor.

Example 4.2. Turandot, II, 1 after (i)

Beyond the particular interest of this example, it is important to note the functionality of the techniques employed—which belong to an advanced musical language—with respect to the theatrical perspective the composer wished to create. The "bintonal" passages of the opera are examples of this. The simultaneous presence of two tonalities in the same passage, whether sporadic or continuous, became prevalent around the time of World War I in the works of Ravel, Bartók, Stravinsky, Milhaud, and Casella, to cite only a few. Puccini employed it as a structural link between the acts, even though in all three cases analysis shows that while two different sonorities are suggested, they are never fully established.

At the beginning of Act I (see below, Ex. 4.10, Z), when the Mandarin announces Turandot's law, fifths on C# and A are superimposed on the triads of D and B-flat minor; by contrast, the music that introduces the trio of masques uses a sequence of major triads (E, D, and A) on the bass moving in parallel motion in the diminished octave. With precise symmetry Puccini repeats this Act I sequence at the beginning of Act III, floating a sensual melody over it. The musical correspondence between these three moments traces a dramatic journey: at the beginning, the dissonance strengthens the impact of the first four measures, indicating the cruelty of Turandot's law, the law that in Act II sets in motion the sequence of events that will lead to the riddle challenge; then, in Act III, the melody superimposed over the harmonic sequence softens its character—suggesting the possibility of a change in Turandot—and prepares the ground for Calaf's lyricism, certain as he is of victory. The connection between these situations is further strengthened by the Mandarin's reading of the pronouncement: two-thirds of the way through the middle act, just before the offstage boys' chorus and the princess's entrance. "Bintonality" is thus employed to support the narrative; at the same time, it is one of the cornerstones on which the macrostructure of the opera rests. 

The People of Peking

One of the principal novelties of Turandot is seen in the first act: the impressive use of the crowd in a role that could be defined as protagonistic. The role of the chorus surpasses all previous models both in extent and importance, and a more equal balance is achieved with the orchestra. Massive blocks of stacked voices are integrated into the texture, or shatter into delicate conversational passages.

Fragments of the two themes of the first section (see Garner's analysis) ricochet from pit to stage. The growing furor is depicted by the high chorus's resiustans, and the soliste pierce the texture with instruments playing outside their natural range: the soprano climbs up to high C#, ending the chorus "Ungi, arrosto!" ("Oh, sharpen!") with unprecedented force after an accumulation of pulsating excitement, which is then channeled into the static invocation to the moon.

Here, words and music draw the listener into the nightmare world of the Peking people, in a tension that mounts once again by means of a chromatic modulation through distant keys. The tragic spectacle that the powers force the terrified crowd to celebrate—it is their sole form of public entertainment—inspired Puccini to some of the most evocative passages in the opera. After the palms-like opening, in soprano, then tenor, then basses ("Parth' tardi in lasso"); "Why does the moon delay?" (II), the
clarinet responds to a fragmentary tenor melody. The flute and celesta then follow suit, alternating with the clarinet, until the final crecendo coincides with the appearance of the full chord. The atmosphere of the piece is surreal; Puccini describes how the masses are driven to collective hallucination. After the boys' chorus has evolved the alarming picture of Turandot (Mib-E-Flat, cf. Ex. 10.22a), the crowd once again falls into a mood of humane compassion, typified in the sorrowful funeral march of muted trumpet and viola that accompanies the procession of the young man condemned to death. Hope then replaces melancholy; it is the brass that respond to the final request for clemency, and again the same boys' melody frames the innocent figure that appears on an open gallery in the distance.

Puccini twice alternates the massed chorus with a chamber choir. In both cases, the pieces function formally as a trio within the "Scherzo" dominated by the masks, and their dramatic function is to encourage Calaf to accept the challenge of the riddles. The invitation of the chorus of nine soprano is pure scherzo while the masses speak mockingly of Turandot, as if she were any ordinary woman, the handmaids confirm her uniqueness, with a chromatic melody that unfolds in the ambitus of a major seventh (I, II), repeated by Calaf at the end of the piece. The evocation of the phantoms (see below, Ex. 10.19) heroically handles the unknown prince's rivalry with anyone who has loved Turandot before him. Four countertenors and four tenors (the male and female registers with the most similar timbre) are instructed to sing "prolonging the sound, covering the month with the hand in a shell shape." The psalm-like movement, the melodic fragment with the range of a minor third, and the complex harmonies all confer a spectral tinge on the piece. But even here, as in the moon chorus, there is no sensation of crossing between the real and the fantastic; it is rather the fusion of anguish and reality.

In Act II, the chorus takes part in the grandiose court ceremonial, assuming an active role again in the last act, first terrified by the death threat imposed by the princess on all her subjects, then moved to pity by Liu's tragic fate. The short section where the people beg forgiveness of the young slave's corpse ("Onhara dalmno," "Grieving shade," II) includes a very complex and interesting harmonic progression that releases the tension created by the dense accumulation of the musical material of the throesody for Liu.

The description of the people's pitiable condition under Turandot's reign is as important as the situations of individual characters, and is treated musically in a varied, complex, and affecting manner. As supporting columns of the colossal edifice of sound, the chorus triggers more agitated movement, naturally enough to make persistent a comparison with Massenet's "Boris Godunov.

Frank Thelen's view of this piece as "an apocalyptic beast, incapable of thought, continually changing, and always bloodthirsty," undervalues the importance of Puccini's pessimistic intention to show how the fate of the masses is tightly bound to the fate of those who rule them. It was a theme of great relevance during that period.

The Bronc and the Grapeseed: Three Masks

As we have seen from his letters, Puccini considered Turandot's three minstrels essential to the renewal of his dramatic energy. Their only precedents can be found in opera buffa, and this includes their vocal ranges: Ping, a basso, is the principal, while Pong and Pang are lighter tenors often restricted to an accompanying role. They always function in trios, but trios whose relationship to traditional form is different because of the position these human puppets occupy in the plot, where they become, to all intents and purposes, a single symbolic character. They offer cynical comments on the action in the manner of Shakespearean fools, and express judicious opinions on the insane reality that surrounds them. Their position is expressed by the use of unison, or simple canonic forms. Their melodies—authentic cantilenas, with as many as five original themes—are often based on the pentatonic or Chinese scales, and rest on rhythmic foundations colored by percussion (especially xylophones). Changes of accent and irregular meters give a marionette-like character to their music, as in the central part of the "Scherzo," in which they try to make Calaf yield to the sensual charm of the female chorus.

Example 10.5: Turandot, I, 107

Example 10.5 (continued)

Puccini devoted the entire first scene of Act II to the ministers, but he was aware of difficulties from the very beginning: "This piece is very difficult, and is enormously important because it is a recitative without a scene presence, and so almost academic" (14 April 1913; Adunarii, no. 113, 189). He succeeded nonetheless in treating this very long trio (more than 40 measurers) in a varied, interesting way, but it obviously needed a very clear formal scheme. Ashbrook and Powers analyze it according to "in solito forma": 46

2. 0. sensi Allegro moderato
   23 Allegro moderato
   64 Allegro moderato
   120 Allegro moderato
   170 Adagio ma non troppo
   222 3. tempo di mezzo
   244 Allegro
   299 Molto moderato
   315 Molto calmo
   325 quasi animato
   349 4. sensi Allegro moderato
   420 transition to the finale [coda]

The central axis of the structure is not only clear in this scheme, but it is also perceptible to the listener. Yet the form is permeated by a kaleidoscopic play of reminiscences, from the excommunicant's assanthissimi "Ungi,

46. Ashbrook and Powers, Trawiał, 156, and 147. Although on the whole agreeing with their analysis, I would add some internal sections in order to emphasize how the outline and functional sections are significantly broadened. The suggested outline to the scene should be broad in mind: A-B (15 meas) from 7 to 3 after B-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (9 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before E-F (10 meas) from 3 to 2 after D-E (10 meas) to 5 before

47. "Turandot! The Unknown Prince" Together with Rodolfo, Calaf is the most important of Puccini's tenors. The composer wrote for him in "a very high tessitura ... clearly considering him, albeit in a fairy-tale setting, a basically heroic character." 47 From this, one can begin to place the unknown prince in the context of general renewal that characterizes Turandot. Puccini had never used tenors of this type before, usually being more interested in the female characters, around whom the principal man was forced to gravitate. But in Turandot, the drama forced him to this extreme reversal: if love is to triumph, the character...
who inspires it has to be sufficiently credible. The symbolic challenge Calaf offers to Turandot risks his life, the only thing as valuable in such a situation as love. The interaction between the allegorical (required by the nature of the fairy tale) and the human (desired by Puccini) necessitated an extremely strong protagonist.

In the scene of the march to the scaffold, Calaf's is the first voice to be heard above that of the collective drama: he curses the princess before she appears on the open gallery, only to change the moment he sees her. Puccini depicts this change by modeling his melody "O divina bellezza," "O divine beauty," (Ex. 10.6) on the theme that characterizes the crowd's pity for the condemned young man (Ex. 12), thus emphasizing the poverty of a love born from seeing a woman condemn a man to death. After the court retreat has left, Calaf falls into a feverish state of love, and it unquestionably the most prominent character in the first finale (except for the absent presence of Turandot). The dramatic role he plays in the grand concerto is emphasized by counterpoint and the repetition of the end of the aria within the piece, while the peak of tension is reached in the final measures as he calls out Turandot's name three times at different pitches, finishing on high A—before the fatal striking of the gong.

In the scene of Calaf's invocation of the challenge, he himself becomes part of the rival environment that dominates Act II. The real action then begins with the opposition of Calaf and Turandot in the coda of Turandot's aria, with a vocal battle that reaches high Cs with a fermata. Even in this passage, Turandot's final "softening" should be kept in mind, since the identity of the motive is the first permutation of their eventual union. Faced with her bewilderment in the face of defeat, Calaf offers an escape route: to guess her name. The difficult trial overcome by the unknown prince is recalled by the three chords that characterize the scene (see below, Ex. 10.43), but the idea of solving the riddle of his name appears on the only theme that can be associated with him, in the violins (Ex. 10.64). This is used for its gentleness, establishing with great intensity the connection between two different situations: Turandot, who does not want to love, and the gentle resolution of Calaf's love.

The famous solo "Nessun dorma!" at the beginning of the third act is based on the repetition of this theme, which becomes the melody of the aria as Calaf's passion feverishly builds (Ex. 10.68).

48. When planning the structure of the finale, Puccini suggested that he would "finish after Calaf's hymn (style like the trio from Samson) with a strike on the gong!" (5 Decem-ber 1904; Adams, 191). The beloved role played by the prince here may be compared with Marguerite's unexpected cry in the end of Gounod's opera: "En me, mon amour est en dehors des claus" ("Pure and radiant angels, Carry my soul to the bottom of heaven"; V.H.).
restricted dimensions. She is, all at once and purposefully, a second soprano, and Puccini used her cautiously to introduce the novelties in the score. Liù represents a fundamental point of transition between one poetic and another, and thus, in the course of the opera, the character takes on an importance of which Puccini was well aware. Indeed, the manner in which she gradually acquires dramatic depth reveals the profundity of the operatic design. Her musical material coexists fully with the structural elements so far described, and from the very beginning is arranged with the great suicide scene in mind.

When Liù first addresses the prince, her vocal writing is characterized by a prominent use of the perfect fourth (Ex. 10.7a); the melody of her first aria is then constructed on that same interval. Another structural element worth noting is also immediately presented: the rhythmic cell formed by an eighth note and two sixteenth notes (Ex. 10.7b–c), which appears in the first phrase within a descending fourth.

Example 10.7


b. Turandot, I, [4]

After a brief cry of encouragement during the riddle scene, Liù remains absent from the stage for an extended period, reappearing only in Act III, when the tension gathering around Calaf reaches its peak. Declaring that she is the only one who knows his name, she draws out the best of the terrorized crowd. The complex organization of this scene, which ends in her suicide, rests almost entirely on the few musical elements that we have seen construct her theatrical personality.¹⁰⁵ There is also a brief descending phrase, with which Calaf vehemently threatens the torturers

¹⁰⁵ “Signore assoluta” (I, [4]). “Tanto amore segreto” (III, [3]), and “Ti chiedi di gel sei cinto” (III, [2]), of 16, 16, and 17 measures respectively.

Ashbrook and Powers (Turandot, 33–35) analyze this scene according to the “notta forma”:

Turandot

(Ex. 10.8a–X), and which is linked semantically to Liù’s pain (Ex. 10.8b–X), becoming its basic expression, this theme is also linked to Turandot, through a quotation of the Mi–Li–Hul̂ interposed between two repetitions of the phrase (Ex. 10.8c–Y; cf. Ex. 10.8a–Y):

Example 10.8

a. Turandot, III, 6 before [4]

b. Turandot, III, 2 before [4]

Now, underlining the dramatic importance of the brief solo “Tanto amore segreto,” whose melody is based on a series of pentatonic phrases, the center of the last scene written by Puccini is “Tu, chi di gel sei cinto.” He prepared this moment with extreme care, and at the climax of the drama he reassigned all the elements out of which he had constructed Liù’s character, as if to ritualize them. After the aria, which is also based on a pentatonic motive transposed to various scale degrees of E-flat minor (the “tragic key” of the opera), Liù kills herself. The principal melody immediately becomes her thread, based for almost seventy measures on the interval of a fourth and an rhythmic cell A in various forms, brought together in the ostinato accompaniment:

In this way, Puccini achieved a powerful formal cohesion, which, even though the opera remained incomplete, strongly influences the development of the action, and aids making the following scenes seem merely added on. Undoubtedly the considerable weight that now accrues to Liu’s suicide would have been exploited by Puccini, who had carefully planned his final act. A delicate orchestral veil is sketched through the use of extreme registers (B♭ in the piccolos, B in the double basses) as the funeral procession exists.

**Turandot: The Tristesse and the Riddle Scene**

As was his usual habit, from *La Bohème* to *Turandot* and through *Il tabarro*, Puccini presented the most significant theme of the opera in the first moments (Ex. 10.10). The series of notes marked X, followed by the chords that accompany the proclamation of the prince of Persia’s sentence of death (Z),

The theme looms large during the Mandarin’s reading of the edict, stated insistently over the “bissati” chords. The music concords with the dramatic situation through the sinister character of the theme, produced by the augmented fourths between the first (X) and the second cell (Z). Puccini often made use of the tritone, the most extreme example being in *Turandot*; here he employs it in a more obvious way than usual, in particular by having it appear outside the context of the whole-tone scale. He exploited every possible use of the interval within the modal system.

Like Liu’s perfect fourth, the tritone is present at every level, saturating the musical texture with the important presence-absence of Turandot.

When the bloodthirsty crowd in the first act noisily demands to see the beheading, it is the progression of the dyads through the *diabolus in musica* (X) before (Z) that recalls the theme.

A little later, an extremely effective passage fixes the connection between the two sides of Turandot’s personality:
When Calaf invokes her name after having seen her, he is echoed by the Mei-Li-Huai ($F^\#$)—the melody that represents Turandot's naïve, uncontaminated beauty. We then immediately hear from offstage the voice of the most recent condemned man, the prince of Persia, answered in counterpoint by the theme that represents Turandot's cruelty. The broad downward motion from the high register is almost a macabre imitation of the head rolling from the block ($X$).

The tritone appears in one of the most “advanced” moments of the work, the chorus of phantoms who died for love of Turandot, and who drive Calaf to make his challenge. The interval is stressed obsessively by the double basses, and has an equally important harmonic function, in anticipation of the double role it will assume in the riddle scene (Ex. 10.13).\[51\]

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51. In this piece, the writing is truly bivalent, since we find a dominant seventh of B-flat major in the bass ($F, A, C, E$), while in the treble there is a ninth chord on the subdominant of A minor ($F, A, C, E$). The double-bass ostinato is superimposed onto these two main harmonic formulations without compromising them.
Turandot is again evoked by this type of musical synecdoche when Calaf, before she appears on the gallery, calls her “crottilo” (G3 after Bb), the tritone appears between F# and Bb. A few measures later, when the tenor sings “O divina bellezza” (G3 after Bb), the interval is absent from the otherwise unaltered melody; the passage makes palpable the impact of the vision on his change of mind. A final significant example of the effect of the tritone on the musical texture comes in the grand aria “La cusata Regina” (“In this royal palace”). When Turandot, recounting the fate of her ancestor Lo-y-Ling, sings the word “unu” (“man”), she turns directly to Calaf, and at the moment the previous accompaniment of parallel sevenths is reduced to dyads of diminished fifths (Ex. 10.14). Immediately afterward, a wonderful violin melody intensifies the second part of her solo, vividly projecting the passion that lies within her (Ex. 10.14). Her words vehemently confirm her rejection of men, but the emphatic upward movement of the strings reveals her sexual side; the juxtaposition almost seems to reflect the Freudian identity between negation and affirmation.

The final scene is the apotheosis of this “strategy of terror,” set in motion by Puccini to sculpt the negative image of the neurotic protagonist, and it is one of his high points as a musical dramatist. The first two chords of the brief motive (Ex. 10.15: X) revolve around the third, a diminished seventh on C, and while one tritone of the chord, the dyad F–B (Ex. 10.15: Y), accompanies each of Turandot’s riddles, her melody unfolds within the compass of the other tritone (C–G) of the diminished seventh chord (Ex. 10.15: Z).

The orchestra is reduced to a murmuring; the harmony is reinforced by the intermittent melodic doubling in the clarinets, the lament of the two solo cellos, and the double basses. This extreme statism, obtained by exploiting the most unstable chord in the tonal system, conveys the anxiety and terror that Calaf and the crowd are experiencing. Meanwhile, the protagonist’s voice unfolds in the higher register and then leaps downwards, sustaining the metallic resonance of the oboe’s trumpet blast at the beginning of the cantata. But the formal foundation above all is intended to reinforce the ritual atmosphere of the scene. Note, for example, how the number three recurs persistently: these chords in the theme, three riddles
Example 10.15. Turandot, II, 2 before [88]

whose solutions are given by the prince in three phrases, and repeated
three times by the wise men over a chromatic scale in triplets), and three
duplet sighs in the cellos accompanying Turandot's phrases.

This atmosphere remains unbroken even when the emperor, the crowd,
and finally Liù emerge for the only time from the background to which
they have been confined, to encourage the unknown prince in agonized ex-
petation of his reply to the second riddle. Their phrases are accompanied
by the repetition of the opera's first theme, the theme establishing Tur-

At the final riddle the music rises a semitone, from D to E-flat minor,
the tragic key of the opera, but also the relative minor of G-flat major, the
key in which Liù had tried to dissuade the prince from attempting to win
Turandot. But G-flat is above all the key in which Turandot, though still
denying herself love, revealed her passionate side in her grand aria, a po-
tential humanity that is confirmed by the melody of Mi-Li-Hal sung a mo-
moment before by the jubilant people, and which now accompanies her last
words in Act II. The possibility of a change within her is distilled in this phrase, and in the prince's reply: 42

Example 10.17. Turandot, II, 3 before (36)

Turandot

No, not a bribe, a kiss...

Tsung...

Grande...

No, no, Pisa, es perdonar. Avanti, nel silenzio... d's'mort!

The tritone reappears when the heralds, at the beginning of Act III, read the edict that threatens death to those who refuse to reveal the prince's name. But Turandot's return barrage is accompanied by Mi-La-Huá, a further sign of what will shortly happen in the drama.

DEATH OR INTERRUPTED FUTURE?

Only two months have elapsed since the unhappy passing of Giacomo Puccini, struggling against fate to complete his "Turandot." 43 As there were then no new figures on the horizon giving promise of equal or similar gifts as a melodist, there is scarcely occasion for surprise now in the circumstance that no other has arisen to take the world's audience by the ears.

Grosse as it would sound to speak of the composer of "Roberta" and "Turandot" as the last of the melodists, it is probable that an exhaustive search far and wide would fail to bring to light a composer, high or low, on whom there could be anything like universal agreement that he was, in fact, a notable melodist. 44

52. The fifty-year reigns of 200 for the tenor, although making some in that it accentuates the pathetic aspect of the music, is not preferable to the scaling shown in the example, which lends the theme to a 120. After having reconstructed most of the work, Puccini became aware of how difficult the leading role was. "But who will sing the opera? It needs an exceptional woman and a solid tenor. Enough, we'll see, singers can be born. Stars have been born with new openings in the past—and it will happen again," (see Carlo Chiarinzoni, 12 February 1924, Gara, 86, 569). The answer to the question is: "Roberta," "Turandot," and "Turandot" respectively in the source they are "Tsung," "Tsung," and "Tsung" (Turandot / Ids argangini, 274). 53. Eduardus, "In Ouer of a Melodi," Musical America, 10 October 1924 41, 48.

Discussion of the last two scenes of Turandot (the duet in which love between Turandot and the prince triumphs, the glorification of their emotion before the people) cannot ignore the question of how Puccini posed at the end of his critical biography: are these scenes by Puccini or not? 45

This final riddle may now be solved, thanks to Jürgen Maehder's exemplary critical study of the thirty-six pages (set out on twenty-three folios) of sketches for the finale, which Puccini took with him to Brussels, and on which he worked for as long as his condition allowed permits. In July 1925, Carlo Chiarinzoni and Renato Valencereghi, directors of Casa Ricordi, entrusted the task of completing Turandot to the Neapolitan composer Franco Alfano. Arrigo Tomatis, perhaps influenced by the recent success in Bologna of Alfano's exotic opera La leggenda di Scoltuna (1911), was crucially influential in the decision. Alfano, then directo of the Turin Conservatory, completed the task faithfully, but his work diverged significantly from the sketches left by Puccini. In preparation for the La Scala premiere, the palindromes engendered from the first edition of the vocal score 100 measures that were unrelated to the sketches. 46 This was more than a quarter of the total 377 measures. 47 The numerous imbalances one finds in the finale derive from these cuts, many of which rob the musical discourse of the necessary continuity. The full score of the first version, preserved together with Puccini's autograph sketches in the Ricordi archives, was performed for the first time in a concert performance in London (1936), and then staged in New York (1935), Rome and Bonn (1935), Rotterdam (1937), Saarbrücken (1939), Salzburg (1946), and most recently in Basel and Stuttgart (1997). The real problem posed by the ending, however, is not yet been resolved: the original completion is more coherent, but Alfano's creative imagination was very different from Puccini's. Moreover, it poses a serious challenge for the two singers, who are required to sustain extremely high tessituras, sometimes against the weight of the entire vast orchestra. The current version, with all its imbalances, at least has the merit of brevity. 48


43. Toscanini's final version was published by Ricordi (Milan, 1936, Pl. no. 119731), readily available in numerous editions. Subsequent editions bear the caveat of copyright, have fewer pages (except in the first German edition), and differ on the present page; see Hommender, A Bibliography, 52–53.
From whatever point of view the problem is examined, the fact remains that the difference between Puccini and Alfano as creative artists was simply too great. Moreover, in an attempt to bring about a fundamental change in his basic dramatic premises, Puccini had given free reign to his inspiration, and for this decisive passage he had reserved four important new melodic ideas, as well as other themes of lesser importance. The sketches almost exclusively concern the duet between Calaf and Turandot (from 15 to 6 before 5), and correspond to Alfano's second version as follows:

1–19 "Principea di morte..." (Cal.), 17, iv
20–30 "Chi mai osi sfrontarlo..." (Tur.), 47
31–47 "La tua anima è in altri" (Cal.), 47
48–56 "No, mai nessun s'arabi!" (Tur.), 56, iv
57–64 "Sacrilegio!" (Tur.), 9 after 47
65–71 "Oh! Mio fiore mattutino!" (Cal.), 57, iv, 67
74–82 "Come vincerò?!" (Cal.), 57, 67, 71
83–100 "Noi, essi incomincia" (Cal.), 3 before 47
101–15 "Del primo piano" (Tur.), 47
156–65 "Di questo male" (Tur.), 5 after 47
166–95 "Il mio mistero? Non os ez lo pio?" (Cal.), 57, 67
177–209 "So il tuo nome" (Tur.), 2 before 47
210–15 flatness. (8), (8), (8)
216–20 "Amore" (choir), 3 before 47
151–57 "Amore" (choir), 3 before 47
316–38 "Viva del mondo io sonore" (choir), 3 after 47

As can be seen, less than half of the music we usually hear comes from the sketches (115 measures), while for another seventy-six measures Alfano used themes derived from the other acts.76

The sketches are drawn on three staves in a turned hand, and are difficult to decipher. There are some excellent melodic ideas, like that of "Oh! Mio fiore mattutino," as the unknown prince turns to Turandot after the first kiss: the music lends sensuality and gentleness to the gesture that functions as the premise for Turandot's retiring. But Turandot's change of heart could have been motivated more logically by passages derived from central moments of the opera. Take, for ex-

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76. The table is based on appendix II, "Saddellazione degli appunti di Puccini," compiled by Medolago in "Studi sul manoscritto di Francesco," 340, with some amendments. The first column shows measure numbers, the second the first phrase of text followed by the related number, the third the reference to the source, the fourth the theme of first material used by Alfano. 57. Specifically, from the "Nidole" theme (mm. 198–205, 181, 191, 191, 191), the flatness theme (mm. 212–35, 212–35), the "G-Ma" theme (mm. 212–35), and the "G-Ma" theme (mm. 212–35).
Other sketches indicate that Puccini had very clear ideas about how to make the princess's metamorphosis convincing. A case in point is the passage in which Min-Li (Hu Pei) appears exactly when the soprano marks the ice princess's defeat ("Fwi! l'halba: Turandot tramonta!" "It is dawn: Turandot's sun is setting"). The dawn—moon antithesis thus finds musical expression in the theme that has represented the potential humanity of the princess throughout the opera.

On the other hand, it is difficult to understand the brevity—nearly twenty measures—with which the unknown prince rides himself of all the ritual ritual surrounding Liu's death, even though the two moments are well separated by strong tonal contrast (E-flat and A minor). Alfano accommodated this with good reason, contrasting the extremely delicate timbre on which Puccini's final scene fades away with the crag of the three dyads in the full orchestra, followed by the primitive unison on which Calaf declaims his invective against Turandot ("Principezza di morte").

A mysterious annotation at the end of a famous page of the sketches, 177, is particularly interesting: "poi Tristan" ("then Tristan"). Commentators have made great play with this. Alfano did not make use of the music, but at the foot of the page Puccini wrote the lines "So il tuo nome ora si mesce" ("I know your name; I am the judge"), which in the first printed version of the libretto immediately followed the unknown prince's phrase "Io son Calaf il figliu di Timur."

Perhaps, as Maestri has suggested, noting the chromatic writing in the passage, Puccini intended to pay tribute to another opera in which the force of love transcends the reality of the scene just before the final assassination. Or perhaps, as Celli suggested, Puccini meant to use at this point the theme of the grand concertato of the first finale (124), a melody he believes echoes the so-called "sea motive" in Tristan and Isolde. This latter theory seems improbable; if Puccini had meant to convey a sense of continuous development toward the denouement, he would certainly not have repeated a theme that returns us to a crucial moment previously experienced by the heroine. For the same reason, Alfano's idea of taking up the title theme when Calaf exclaims "La mia gloria è il tuo amante" ("My glory is your embrace") (124) seems inappropriate. At this moment there is nothing more to guess, and, rather than introduce an element of suspense, it would seem important to prepare for the happy ending.

But those with due respect for the incomplete masterpiece by a composer such as Puccini should perhaps not linger too much over such hypotheses.

62. Turandot, G. Ricordi & C., Milan, 1926 (II, aero 125777, B). Alfano set this line in the first version of his finale without following Puccini's revisions (see Preti, 1st vocal score, 325).

63. Maestri, "Studii sui materiali di frammenti," 1965, CALL, "Circa autogrammi," 106. Wagner's melody is played in the first scene of the opera by the oboe (I, 16, from 154). Although Alfano at times deliberately ignored the frequent indications concerning orchestration in the sketches, his work should be reassessed in the knowledge that he was not able to study the autograph full score until he was adding the final touches to his composition. The numerous stylistic differences in instrumentation are easily understood in this context; and it is this difference, more than any other, that is responsible for the sense of disjunction between the finale and the rest of the opera.

Alfano was at his most heavy-handed during the interlude that precedes the change of scene, offering an ammaturish display of Wagnerism: the entire brass section sounds out a fanfare, while the highest register is filled out with violins, clarinet, and piccolo trills (127). The orchestra abruptly introduces the Act II clarinet, repeating at full volume the marz of the chorus "Ai tuoi piedi ci proromprim,

but with a ruggedness impossible distant from the compact and highly colored timbres used by Puccini. The sketches, unfortunately, merely show an intention to reuse the melodic to which the prince had posed his riddle (II, 122; see Ex. 10.6a) at the moment the prince sets him free with the word "Amore," in line with "the internal logic of the libretto that unleashes the resolution of the dramatic conflict with a name." We can guess that Puccini would have found a better way of realizing his sketches, especially since Alfano displayed a taste more suited to Hollywood in the concluding pages. To arrive at a reprise of Calaf's romance ("O sole! Viva Eternità!", "O sole! Life Eternal!") in D major, he mobilized a highly conventional harmonic arsenal (ninths, sevenths, augmented chords, transition enharmonic changes), superimposing on the dominant pedal a progression based on the melody of Turandot's first arts, emphasized with spectacular vulgarity by the horns and trumpets.

Leaving aside the problems with Alfano's realization, it is nevertheless indisputable that the finale was also problematic for Puccini himself. This is immediately apparent from his letters, from which we learn that the opera was entirely composed—except for a few small revisions—by November 1923. Little more than three years, then, had passed from the moment Puccini had declared that he had "filled several music sheets with sketches, and the beginnings of ideas, harmonies, procedures" (13 September 1910; Adami no. 185, 163). But he began to orchestrate long before he had finished composing, and this was not his usual habit (Verga had done the same with Falstaff, but only because he was feeling old, and was afraid of forgetting the ideas that were coming to him). As early as 12 March 1923, when he was writing the ministers' trio in Act II (Gara, no. 850, 533),

64. He had Puccini's full score for less than twelve days before dispensing the music to Cor Rolfh; see Maestri, "Studii sui materiali di frammenti," 107.

65. Ibid., 104.
he began the orchestration, and as he continued he began to work faster. When only the duet was lacking, he wrote lyrically: "I am orchestrating to save time" (31 December 1913; Adami, no. 221, 288). He finished the second act in February 1914, and on the following 25 March informed Simoni that everything was in score except the finale (Gara, no. 887, 550).

The decision to fix down to the last detail what had already been finished provides convenient evidence for purveyors of morbid theories. It confers, for example, a certain persuasiveness to that proposed by Claudio Sartori, who begins his biography with Turandot by entitling the second chapter: "The opera that killed him".

Puccini would not have been willing to lapse into his own Pucciniana, to rework himself. He preferred to die, to abide. That the opera was not left incomplete through unhappy accident; it could not be finished because the intended triumphant conclusion was repugnant to the composer himself. 65

It is more plausible that Puccini realized the necessity of completing and refining what he legitimately considered to be his finest music. He would thus have been able to set the ending on a pedestal imposing enough to influence decisively the organization of the duet, while waiting for a more satisfying text than the one offered him at the beginning of September, less than two months before his death. Looking again at the material already composed, Puccini would have found the solution to the problem; in particular—and this is demonstrated by the reappearance of the Mi-Li-Hsi and the possible connections between the first and second arias (see Ex. 10:18)—we can guess that he would have invented derivations and references to show how the childlike, cruel princess was already potentially the new woman everyone awaited.

Liu's sacrifice, then, would also have found a more balanced context. Let us return briefly to this crucial moment, to consider a last piece of evidence that shows how carefully Puccini had prepared his ending. In March 1911 he had composed some "musiche di sapori cinesi" ("Chinese-tasting music"), but put the idea aside, expecting to use it later. 66 We have already seen on numerous occasions how Puccini started with fully-formed musical ideas, then used these to create a rigid system of semantic relationships; and in this case, given that the character considered a point of transition from the old to the new opera, no one better than the composer himself would have been able to find suitable verses for the passage. Axbroeck and Powers have compared the beginning of the true finale (the theme that recurs in the orchestra as the unknown prince declares "Principessa di morte!" [Ex. II] with the melody of Liu's aria [Ex. 10:24], demonstrating convincingly that the new motive is nothing but a variant of the preceding one. 67

Let us turn for a moment to the Mi-Li-Hsi, the melody that represents the innocent side of Turandot, paying particular attention to the beginning (Ex. 10:24). This is characterized by a dactylic figure that, given the number of recurrences of the theme—the last of which precedes the beginning of Liu's torture (see Ex. 10:28) —was already implanted in the listener's mind at the moment the funeral procession began, when the same figure, bound semantically to the slave since Act I (see Ex. 10:79), is prominent, along with the interval of a perfect fourth (see Ex. 10:90). Here is a first, strong point of contact between the "little woman" and the Princess destined to "thaw," a musical contact that thanks to Liu's double function as a cathartic element, increases Turandot's positive potential, preparing the way for the events of the closing finale.

If we look more closely at the tonic of Liu's final aria from the fifth scene, we can see that these melodic shapes are derived from it, each associated with a different character in the opera.

Example 10:19

Turandot, III, 5 before Ex. II

65. Sartori, Puccini, 10.
66. Commenting on the first sketch of "Tu, che di pregi instriieti," Colli mentioned ("Gli abbandoni," 65) that the aria was composed just before Puccini saw the sketches of it to Adami (November 1913). But a letter of 30 March 1911 refers to this sketch (Adami, no. 286, 173).

The importance of these similarities can be assessed in relation to the individual characters, at various moments in the drama. Liù’s phrase and that of Fang have a cause-and-effect relationship: Liù is enduring the torture threatened by Turandot, and recently closes her eyes (Ex. 10.10, A). The passage in which the princess explains the reason for her inactivity comes from the aria “In questa Reggia,” and the tone of her expression is human, sorrowful: she hates men for ancestral reasons, a hatred no less strong than the love she can offer the unknown prince. In contrast, Liù sacrifices herself to allow the man she loves to win. The outcome of this final context is thus secretly announced: the love offered by Calaf, a Tartar prince like the Tartar who murdered Lo-u-Lung, will redeem an ancient wrong (Ex. 10.15, F). The composer’s phrase is taken from his brief solo in Act I, the first moment he saw Turandot, when love invaded his whole being. And Liù will close her eyes to keep from seeing him (Ex. 10.10, C); this too is love, but it belongs to a time long ago, older than the emotion that drives Turandot into Calaf’s arms, erasing the memory of the “morte amaro” (“terrible night”) where the “frusce voci” (“frastic noise”) of her servant was silenced: Liù’s feelings were ones that Puccini had experienced in the more distant past; the soprano’s death forms part of the extremely complex rite, constructed around his best music, which testifies to his archetypes and conscious commitment to leave the past behind him.

I have suggested a comparison between these three melodies, although I am not completely convinced that Puccini had precisely calculated the effect that such similarities would have on his audience. I am certain, however, that these connections belonged, whether consciously or not, to his world of the “innocent” narrator. This time, however, the narrator

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66. “Fu quando il Re dei Tartari in corte non fu (Tartar in court not present)” (“He was when the King of the Tartars did not appear”) thus the people comment on Turandot’s behavior in Act II (A before F).
CATALOG OF WORKS

OPERA

The operas are listed in chronological order. In those cases where an opera did not go through radically different versions (listed in alphabetical order), cited piano-vocal scores (VS) are the current versions. All except Le randine are published by Ricordi, Milan. Notes indicating the main revisions after the premiere are followed by the year of the copyright and plate number.

1. (a) Le Villi; leggenda drammatica in one act and two parts
   Libretto by Ferdinando Fontana, after Alphonse Karr (Les Wilis, 1852).
   Premiere: Milan, Teatro Dal Verme, 31 May 1884.
   (b) Le Villi; opera-ballet in two acts
   Premiere: Turin, Teatro Regio, 26 December 1884.
   Second version, altered and revised during subsequent performances; VS © 1944-90457.
   • List of characters: Guglielmo Wulff (Bar), Anna, his daughter (S),
     Roberto (T), villagers, willi, spiritus. The Black Forest.
   • Orchestral Score (for hire): Milan, Ricordi, © 1944 (pl. no. 126977).
   • Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 3 Cl, 2 Bb, DBn, 4 Fn,
     2 Tp, Pstn, Ct, 4 Tbn, Cimbasso (6 Tbn), Timp, Trg, BDr, Cymb,
     T-T, Car, Harp, Strings.

2. (a) Edgar; dramma brioso in four acts
   Libretto by Ferdinando Fontana, after Alfred de Musset (La Coupe et les Larmes, 1832).
   Premiere: Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 21 April 1889.
   The (b) edition published by Elkan & Vogel in 1918, wrongly attributed to the
   Madrid revival in 1892, belongs to this version; VS [1892], 427366, which
corresponds to the version performed at Lucca on 5 September 1891.
List of characters: Mimi (S), Marcello (S), Rodolfo (A soloist), and Ulrico (T).

Orchestral score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1900, P. 111 (repr. 1928). Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 3 Fuv, 4 Hn, 3 Tp, 3 Tr, 3 Tbn, Btbn, Timp, Trg, Tp, Tbn, Muscal glasses, T-T, BDr, Cymb, Xyl, Car, Camp, Harp, Strings; on stage: 4 pipes (Picc), 4 Tp, 6 Dr.

5. Turandot, melodramma in three acts

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after Victorien Sardou (Théro, 1887).

Premiere: Rome, Teatro Costanzi, 14 January 1900.

Small cuts and revisions in the second and third acts, VS © 1899, 1901.

List of characters: Farinelli, a celebrated singer (S), Mario Carreras, a painter (T), Baron Scarpia, Chief of Police (Bass), Cesare Angelotti (B), the Sorcerer (B), Semiramide, a seductive woman, town-dweller, and sedan chair, in full dress. Rome—June 1800.

Orchestral score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1900, P. 111 (reprint 1950). Instrumentation: 2 Fl (also Picc), 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Fuv, 3 Hn, 3 Tp, 3 Tr, 3 Tbn, Btbn, Timp, Trg, Tp, Tbn, Muscal glasses, T-T, BDr, Cymb, Xyl, Car, Camp, Harp, Strings; on stage: Fl, Vla, Harp, 2 Hn, 3 Tbn, Cam, Org, 1 Dr, Rifles, Cannon.

6. Madame Butterfly, Japanese tragedy in two acts

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after David Belasco (Madame Butterfly, 1900). John Luther Long (Madame Butterfly, 1898), and Pierre Loti (Madame Chrysanthème, 1887).

Premiere: Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 17 February 1904.

Revised at Venice, Teatro La Fenice, 16 March 1905, © 1905, 11000.

Orchestral score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1905, P. 111 (repr. 1950). Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Fuv, 3 Tp, 3 Tr, 3 Tbn, Btbn, Timp, Trg, Tp, Tbn, Muscal glasses, T-T, BDr, Cymb, Xyl, Car, Camp, Harp, Strings; on stage: Fl, Vla, Harp, 2 Hn, 3 Tbn, Cam, Org, 1 Dr, Rifles, Cannon.

(b) Madame Butterfly, Japanese tragedy in two acts

Premiere: Turin, Teatro Regio, 1 February 1896.

Substantial revisions to Act II, with the addition of a scene and the reworking of the finale; VS © 1896, new ed. © 1898, 50000.

4. La Bohème, scene libretto in four “quadri”

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after Henri Murger (Scène de Bohème, 1845–48; La Vie de Bohème, 1849).

Premiere: Turin, Teatro Regio, 1 February 1896.

Further cuts, VS © 1896, 112000.
CATALOG OF WORKS

(d) Madame Butterfly. Japanese tragedy in two acts.

List of characters: Madame Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) (S), Suzuki, Cio-Cio-San's servant (Mts), Kate Killdeer (Mts), F. B. Finkerton, Lieutenant in the United States Navy (T), Sharpless, United States Consul in Nagasaki (B), Goro, a marriage broker (T), Prince Yamadori (T), Cio-Cio-San's uncle, the bonze (B), the Imperial Commissioner (B), the official registrar (B), Cio-Cio-San's mother (Mts), her aunt (S), her cousin (S), Dolores (soloists), relatives, friends of Cio-Cio-San, servants.

Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1907, P. 112 (repr. 1979).
Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, @ 1917, 1918, P.R. 218 (repr. 1970).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, Bf/Tbn, Timp, Trg, Tmb, BDr, Cymb, Glock, Cel, Harp, Strings on stage: Ce, Car horn, Harp, Scream, low Camp.

Zard Angelica, opera in one act
Libretto by Giovanni Bottanesco.

Premiered at the Metta premiere (21 January 1919) with the current revision of the arie "Senza mamma" and the arie "Ave lodo". Revisions of the finale, with revised arie, in 1921; VS @ 1921; new ed. @ 1925, 1171866.

List of characters: Sister Angelica (Za), Zita Principessa (A), the Monaster (Mn), the Monasteresina (Mn), Sister Giuseppina (S), Sister Omessa (S), Sister Dollina (Mn), the Mistress of Novices (Mn), Sister Giuseppina (S), the Monasteresina (S), the Lay Sisters (S). A concert, towards the end of the seventeenth century.

Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, @ 1918, P.R. 215 (repr. 1970).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 1 Tpt, 3 Tbn, Bf/Tbn, Timp, Trg, Tmb, BDr, Cymb, Glock, Cel, Harp, Strings; offstage: Picc, 2 Fno, Ortm, 3 Tpt, Cymb, Glock, Wood Block.

Gianni Schicchi, opera in one act
Libretto by Giovacchino Forcino, after Corso della Divina Commedia di Giovanni Francesco de' Pisa (1866).

Luciano's solo "Dove si trovava il nome..." was sung by Ferriani in 1870. VS @ 1871, 14944.

List of characters: Gianni Schicchi (A), Zita (Za), Flora (F), Marchese (M), Betto (B), Remigio (R), Monsignor (Mn), the Chamberlain (Ch), the Doctor (D), the PRIEST (P), the Lord (L), the Priest (P), the Lawyer (Law), the Pawnbroker (Pn), the Mayor (M), the Cook (Ck), the Servant (Sv), the Spectators (Spt). A concert, towards the end of the seventeenth century.

Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, @ 1918, P.R. 215 (repr. 1970).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, Bf/Tbn, Timp, Trg, Tmb, BDr, Cymb, Glock, Cel, Harp, Strings; offstage: Picc, 2 Fno, Ortm, 3 Tpt, Cymb, Glock, Wood Block.

1. "A te," song for voice and piano (ca. 1875)

2. "Paisiello papal", four-voice motet for choruses and orchestra (1877)

3. Chorio for soli (tenor and baritone), choir, and orchestra (1897)

4. "Vesale REGIO, anthem for mixed choir and organ (1880)

Text by Venanzio Fortunato.

5. "Messa a quattro voci con orchestra per soli (tenor and baritone), choir, and orchestra (1899)

Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, @ 1918, P.R. 114 (repr. 1970).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, Bf/Tbn, Timp, Trg, Tmb, BDr, Cymb, Glock, Cele, Harp, Strings; offstage: low Camp.

6. "Salve del ciel Regina," for soprano and harmonium (ca. 1882)

Used in La Vedova, Kay 36-37.
7. "Mentira l’avviso," recitative and aria for tenor and piano (1881)
   Verses by Felice Romani.
   Used in Amore e Giustizia; Kaye, 37–44.

8. "Ad una morte," song for baritone and piano
   Verses by Antonio Ghislanzoni.
   Used in Le Streghe; fragments; Kaye, 138–41.

9. "Storiellia d’amore," melody for soprano or tenor and piano (1883)
   Verses by Antonio Ghislanzoni.
   Used in Edgar; La maschera popolare 2, no. 40 (1883); Kaye, 50–4.

10. "Sole ed amore," "marinetta" for soprano or tenor and piano (1888)
    Anonymous text, perhaps by Puccini himself.
    Used in La Bohème; Il Pagliacci 2, no. 33 (1890); Kaye, 58–59.

11. "Avanti Urania!", song for voice and piano (1896)
    Verses by Renato Fucini.
    Used in Madame Butterfly; Florence and Rome; Gesello Venturini, 1892; Kaye, 65–66.

12. "Un so a Diana," for voice and piano (1897)
    Verses by Carlo Alberto.

    Verses by Renato Fucini.
    Used in Gismonda; Kaye, 81–84.

    Verses by Enrico Panza.
    New York 1903, annual sets and letters album, 1904; Kaye, 88–89 (from the autograph).

15. "Cristo d’anime," album leaf for voice and piano (1904)
    Verses by Luigi Illica.
    Written for the photograph, recorded on a 3/8 by Gramophone & Typewriter Ltd., 15397; Kaye, 105–9.

16. Requiem for three-part choir, viola, harmonium or organ (1907)
    Performed at Milan, 27 January 1907.
    Eilen & Vogel, 1976.

17. "Casa mia, casa mia," song for voice and piano (1908)
    On a traditional text.
    Kaye, 117.

18. "Sogno d’oro," ballad for voice and piano
    Verses by Carlo Marilli.
    Used in Le romanz; Nata il Nuovo (Christmas and New Year's edition), 1913.

19. "Morire?", song for voice and piano (ca. 1917)
    Verses by Giuseppe Adami.
    Used in the second version of La rondine; Almanacco del Giornale per la C.R. Milan.

20. "Inno a Roma," for voice and piano (1919)
    Text by Francesco Salvadori.
    Performed at Rome, 1 June 1919, orchestrated for band by Vanzella, and for orchestra by Fiorelli, Inno di Roma (Milan: Santangeli, 1923; Kaye, 156–61.

**Instruments and Exercising**

1. *Preludio e ariette* in E minor/ major (1876)
   First modern performance: Lucera, 6 October 1909.
   Autograph score: Lucera, Museo Casa Natalle, pp. 1–4, 7–11 (pp. 5–6 are missing; "Giovani Puccini adi 5 agosto 1876" written on the last page in Puccini's hand).
   Orchestration: Picc. 2 Fl., 2 Ob., 2 Cl. in C, 2 Bn., 4 Hn. in E, 1 Tr., 3 Tuba, Obbligato, Timbù in E–B, Strings.

2. *Adagio* in A major for piano (ca. 1881)
   Used in Le Vittime; MS I–L.

3. Largo Adagietto in F major for orchestra (ca. 1881–82)
   Used in Edgar; fragment only the first part completed; MS I–L.

4. *Preludio riflessivo* in A major for orchestra (1882)
   Performed at Milan, 23 July 1882.
   Used in Le Vittime and in the first version of Edgar.
   Orchestration: Picc. 2 Fl., 2 Ob. (first only Eng. time), 2 Cl. in A, 2 Bn., 4 Hn. in E, 1 Tp., 3 Tbn. Obbligato, Timbù in A, BDr., Cymb., Harp, Strings.

5. *Fugue* for string quartet (ca. 1884)
   Andante poco mosso in C minor; Andante sostenuto in A major; Andante mosso in G major.
   MS I–L (copies).

6. Scherzo for String Quartet in D (1884)
   Reduction by Michele Puccini for piano, four hands (Giovanni Puccini / Scherzo per Archi (stesso tempo del Quartetto in Re) / Riduzione per piano a 4 mani / di Michele Puccini / Lucera Ottobre–Novembre 84); MS Museo Pucciniano, Genoa.

7. *Capriccio riflessivo* in F major for orchestra (1884)
   Performed at Milan, 24 July 1884.
   Autograph: Lucera, Museo Casa Natalle; angle portion and orchestral sketches; I–L; editorial notes under Le Vittime, Edgar, and Le Bohème; Milan, F. Lucero, 1884 (for piano, four hands).
CATALOG OF WORKS

Orchestral Score (for hire): Milan, Ricordi, © 1975 (p. no. 131247).
Instrumentation: 2 Fl, 3 Ob (first also Eng horn), 2 Cl in Bb, 2 Bn, 4 F in E, 2 Tp, C, 3 Tim, Ophicleide, Trg, Timp, BDr, Cymb, Harp, Strings.

10. Three Minutes for string quartet (1881).
   Used in Muses Luccesi; Pagan, Milan, 1884 (repr. Ricordi, Milan, 1987).

11. Orissianti, elegy for string quartet (1869).
   Performed at the Conservatories of Milan and Brescia in February 1869.

12. Pisaletto suller for piano (1894).
   Used in La Bella Ttish a Roma. Genoa: Mononciano, September 1894.

13. Sonate elettrica, march for piano (ca. 1890).

14. Piece for piano (Calma e molto lento, 1918).
   Turin: Associazione della stampe, November 1918.

LOST MUSIC AND MUSIC ATTRIBUTED TO GIACOMO PUCCINI

Items marked with an asterisk (*) are by Michele Puccini. For a list of fragments in this collection, see Cavalli, Il frammenti pucciniani, 18-19. With the exception of no. 6, the numerous passages left incomplete by Puccini are missing from this catalog.

1. I fiji d'italia bella, cantata (1877).
2. Dance Suite for piano in G (ca. 1880-81).
   Allemande, Corrente (fragment), Gavotta (used in Taro).
3-4. Four-voice fugue (ca. 1880-81).*
   Allegro moderato in G major, larghetto in E minor. MS. I-I.
6. Scherzo in A minor for String Quartet (1881).*
   Fragments I-II.
8. String Quartet in D (ca. 1880-81).*
9. Salve, for voice and piano (1888).

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