PUCCINI
His International Art

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best monograph on music published in Italy between 1993 and
1996, for the Italian edition of this book.

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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
RENÉ LEIBOWITZ
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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 Pier Luigi Petrobelli, Lorenzo Bianconi, Federico D'Amico, and Giorgio Pestelli, the level of discourse has improved markedly. This prize-winning discussion of Puccini's oeuvre 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 Germanicized 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 as proof of the public's susceptibility to being shortchanged. 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 1910 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 adroit scrutiny of the music betray 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 Le Villi to Turandot is stimulating.

I have learned from reading it. Now I understand what I had failed to appreciate before: the purpose behind the tedium 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. Apun,
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 that opera's aspects so appreciatively recognized by George Bernard Shaw when it received its English premiere in May 1894. It is noteworthy, too, to observe how the impulse behind a barely assimilated feature of Le Rêve—the symphonic interlude that made Verdi uneasy—becomes integrated in the sonato-dramatic structure of Manon Lescaut.

The chronological discussion of the operas is less further coherence by biographical connections that illuminate the ambiance within which Puccini worked. Particularly helpful is the account of Puccini's sometimes complicated relationships with his librettists. Following the finally unavailing Edgar, 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 Giacosa and Illica's libretto for La Bohème with that which Leoncavallo cobbled together for his own treatment of the Murger subject. In Leoncavallo's La Bohème the comic episodes fill the first two acts, while unrelied tragedy occupies the last two; in Puccini's score the light-hearted and tragic episodes are intermingled in the last two acts so as to heighten the poignancy of the drama.

Girardi is right in stressing the importance of Giaio 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 Villi (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 success 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

FOREWORD

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 1991, and a year later was awarded the 1995 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, 1998), I have updated the book, revising and correcting various oversights and inaccuracies. In particular I have added a substantial section to the chapter on La Bohème, which was the first to be written. For his help in the various stages of revising I should like to thank my friend and colleague Dieter Schlicking.

My discussion is arranged around a central framework of music examples, and the fact that the dramatic analysis is closely related to the musical—more precisely, 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 ably carrying out her task as translator suggested numerous small improvements; to Bonnie Blackburn, for copyediting the volume with the patience of Job; and to Kathleen Hensell, 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 Bagli Ravenni, Sylvano Bussotti, Gabriela Dutton, Arthur Groos, Maurizio Pera, and Mercedes Viale Ferrere. 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

Plate 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:

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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, italic type denotes citations, or "stage music" (music within the music).

ABBREVIATIONS

CP Critica pucciniana. Lucca: Provincia di Lucca / Nuova Gradiva Lucciana, 1976
GPCN Giacomo Puccini nel comitato della società. Lucca: Lorenzo & Nardi, 1976
I-Li Biblioteca dell'Istituto Musicale Facoltà "L. Boecherini," Lucca
LS Le Sire
Marchetti Arnaldo Marchetti. Puccini concerto. Milan: Curci, 1973
MO Música d'oggi
MS manuscript
NRMF Nuova ristampa 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 divergence 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 (1858-1924) and continued by Antonio Benedetto Maria (1742-1819), Domenico (1772-1842), and Michele (1813-64). The latter was the father of Giacomo, born in Lucca on 10 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...
the luce musicate in Venice, where he was also—through only for the Carnival season 1878—79—maestro concitatore and conductor at the Gran Teatro La Fenice."

To complete the picture of Puccini's musical heritage, we need to include the musical tradition of Lucce, into which so many composers were born. Lucce 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 Guarni family also won acclaim, particularly Giuseppe (1541—1612), Francesco Savio Geminiani (1665—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 Lucchese, Alfredo Catalani, aroused great expectations in the world of Italian opera during his short and unhappy life (he died of hemophilia in 1893 before reaching forty), keeping alive audiences' hopes for a successor to Giuseppe Verdi.

## Apprenticeship in Lucce

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, Albina 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. Mosca Carner, who was powerfully influenced by psychoanalytic theory, found the hermeneutic key to Puccini's works in his relationship with his mother, stigmatizing the composer's marriage to Eletta Fontana Geminiani as a union with a woman who "took the place of Albina in his unconscious"; he viewed Puccini's innumerable extramarital affairs as the search for a relationship "with socially obscure and inferior women." Carner read all of Puccini's operas and all 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 originating in a "distinct ambivalence in his character that forced him to love and hate at the same time." Or women were, in his unconscious, "rivals of the castrated maternal image" (Carner, 90). 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 Lucce, but both men were earmarked to be organists in their respective towns. The post in Lucce 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 1874 he entered the Istituto Musicale "Pacini," 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 intransigence and the boy's natural laziness prompted Albina to send her son instead to Carlo Angeloni (1834—1901), a teacher of singing and composition with whom both Catalani and Gaetano Gustavo Luporini 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 Pisa 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.

In 1877, under pressure from his mother, Puccini took part in a local arts competition in Lucce. The subject was a cantata for solo voice and
choir on a patriotic text (Cantate il zan d'arru... Do 't ven figli, Italia bella). It was his first public failure. Since the music is lost, we can only guess that the lack of success was caused by Puccini's indifference to patriotic ardor, a sentiment that would always remain foreign to his sensibilities.

Puccini wrote his first important works in the sacred genre: the motet Plaudite populi (1877) and a Vespas, performed on the feast day of Saint Paulino, patron saint of Lucca, on 12 July 1878. The two pieces were very successful, so much so that for his diploma exam Puccini incorporated the Vespas into the Messe a quatro versi om ophonia, his non-musical masterpiece. The piece was also performed on the feast day of Saint Paulino on 12 July 1880. Public reception of the composition was enthusiastic: Puccini's departure from the city could not have been more promising.

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 feel. 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 1875 under the tutelage of Antonio Bazzini. Puccini's mother Allina 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 Casafina and by the marquis Patravaccini, in obtaining a scholarship of 100 lire a month from Queen Margherita. Later, Puccini found a patron in his uncle, the wealthy and powerful notary Nicola Cerù, just as

7. The only proof of the existence of a Preludio riflessino in E minor major was supplied by Nino Galletti's article "Gli anni giovanili di Giacomo Puccini." L'infanzia musicale, 5, no. 6 (1939). 28–30. This also included the final page of the work, dated "5 agosto 1879." (A). For many years, attempts to find the manuscript, which belonged to Galletti's dispersed collection, were unsuccessful. But in June 1939, when the present volume was already in production, research undertaken by the antiquarian judge Luigi Della Sensa of Lucca to locate the manuscript finally bore fruit. The manuscript of the Preludio a violino (the work's authentic title) has now been acquired by the City of Lucca and will be housed in the Museo Cerù Nicola. An edition of the work, and an investigation into the circumstances regarding its composition, remain to be undertaken. A critical essay by the present author is being prepared for publication in Studi guscesiani, 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. 16.

8. Many catalogues mistakenly claim that the Messe for baritone, mixed chorus, and orchestra was also used in the Mass.


Verdi had been helped by Antonio Baretti. Cerù proved less gracious than Baretti, granting only a modest income for Puccini's final two years on condition that he be paid back from his nephew's first earnings. 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 me harmonize a bass of only one line, unfigured and very easy, and then they made me complete a melody in D major, which didn't come out too well... I go to Catalani's very often; he's very kind. I went to hear L'Amore dei Due [by Meyerbeer] with Donadio and Aubert's Prò Diacono with the famous tenor Nardino.

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, each with the Teatro Libico 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 frequendy described in elevated terms, as a Mecca conquered only with difficulty), thanks to cheaper ticket prices and—at times—the help of various friends. From letters home: the picture emerges of a dedicated young man who spent his days at his books or at the keyboard, in rather strained 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 familiarity toward his younger companion, helping him in many ways. Thus Puccini came into contact with the Milanese Scapigliatura movement, with Arrigo Boito, Franco Faccia, Marco Praga, and many other prominent personalities in contemporary cultural life.

Meanwhile, Puccini was admitted to the Conservatory with a score of 8.18 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 Traviata, performed at La Scala in 1853, is his only opera,
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 Bizzini lasted little more than a month, since the latter was called on to become director of the Conservatory in place of Stefano Bonciani-Montesini, and ended his own post temporarily to Amilcare Ponziani, an arrangement that became permanent in 1883. Puccini could certainly not have found a teacher more suitable for encouraging his natural inclinations. In Ponziani’s works, especially La Gioconda (1876), the lack of stylistic refinement is compensated for 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, which his technical training allowed him to address in some detail. His teaching must have influenced Puccini’s development, helping the young man liberate himself from the customary polarized approach to Wagner’s theories of drama (either vehement rejection or wholehearted embrace). The breadth of Puccini’s taste is apparent from the list of his main readings of vocal and orchestral scores, which begins with Boito’s Mefistofele and ends with Parsifal, which he bought at the beginning of 1883 in joint ownership with Mascagni, also a student at the Conservatory and his roommate for some months. The first hint of his curiosity about Wagner’s harmonic world can be found in the margin of a sketch of the song “Ad una mosca” from Ariadne on Naxos, which probably dates back to 1883. Even if the exact meaning of his indication “alla Wagner” is unclear, the unresolved 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.

Contact with the French operatic world, which immediately attracted his interest, is amply 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 Manzoni (March 1883), and Franck’s poème-symphonie Rédemption at La Scala on 23 March 1883 (“I was rather bored”). By this period the taste for French opera and the “opera-ballo,” as grand opéra was called in Italy, was already established. Puccini was in repertory at La Scala, where, between 1880 and 1883, Meyerbeer’s Les Huguenots, Halévy’s La Juive, and Massenet’s Hérodias were also staged. There were frequent revivals of older masterpieces such as Ernani, Der Freischütz, Don Giovanni, La clemenza di Tito, and Otello, as well as more recent operas like Giacomo’s II Guarany and Boito’s Mefistofele. Besides attending the revised version of Simon Boccanegra, Puccini was also at the premiere ofSmareglia’s Bionca di Ceri (February 1883) and Cavallini’s Dejanira in March 1883 (“artistically 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 instinctively gathered together the elements he would need in the future, albeit apparently without a precise plan. From Ponziani he strove above all to learn the capo di bottone, 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 debate that allowed him to cultivate his natural propensity toward thematic reminiscence and complex chords in relation to the drama. Through the performances he

13. Three incomplete versions of the piece exist. This and the following examples are taken from the first version, which contains further annotations and sketches in the margin, apparently unrelated to the piece and difficult to read. See Alberto Cavalli, “Indici giovanili di Giacomo Puccini,” GPCN, 199–200 and table 15.
14. These comments, except the one about Carmen, are from a letter to his mother dated March 1883 (Garn, no. 3, 4). However, as Samir notes (“L’abbaco Giacomo Puccini,” 72), both Adamo’s and Garn’s conclusions of letters arbitrarily put together “separate portions from separate letters to connect fictitious new ones, sometimes so unlikelikdy that the error is apparent on first reading.”
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, 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 Castalani. But soon he was persuaded that

From Lucca (the publisher) there is nothing to hope for as far the Theatre is concerned, because Ricordi has a stronghold on it and the [Lucca] is in direct competition with him. (To Rambaldo Puccini, 9 December 1884; 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 Cappelletti Medes and to ask him whether he has found 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 Michele Cerri, 6 December 1882; Marchetti, no. 8, 17).

Puccini's compositions of this period were produced to satisfy his student requirements. In July 1882 he wrote a Preludio sinfônico in A major, and in the following year he produced a Capriccio sinfonico as a diploma exercise after completing other compulsory tests (he scored 16/400, 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 Franco 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

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A copy of the autograph score is housed in the library of the Milan Conservatory (MS 15, fol. 189), and is dated by Puccini "Julij 1882, Milan" on the final page. Many biographers have rather unfairly attributed some of Puccini's symphonic compositions to the Lucca period, whereas the genre was not practiced and there was no available repertoire capable of tackling this repertory; the manuscript pieces dated over forty years. The reference date of 1881 could have been certified when Puccini himself gave the Preludio to the literary Musicians at Lucca in 1891, together with the Manus and other works of his student period (for the date of this donation, see Arángua, "Calendario...," 55; for an inventory see Cavalli, "seconda galleria..." 105). Further confirmation of this date is found in six fragments acquired by the Museo Pucciniano at Lucca (see Alfonso Cavalli, "Frammenti pisani di Cecilia," CII 250). For a careful reconstruction of all the events relevant to the period, see Michael Elichmann, "Le prime musiche sinfoniche di Puccini: Quanto ne sappono," QP 3 (1963) 144-61.


16. See the letters written to his mother on 10 June, 3 July, 17 July (Marchetti, nos. 2, 17-18, 19; Marchetti, no. 8, 17).

17. See the letter written to his mother on 10 June, 3 July, 17 July (Marchetti, nos. 2, 17-18, 19; Marchetti, no. 8, 17).

the many chromatic inflections, and the elaborate accompaniment rich in secondary sevenths.

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, from _La Fanciulla_ to _La rondine_, 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 indolent 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 rehearsals of preceding works, can certainly count as laziest.23

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 Capriccles, 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,24 nor to confirm that borrowing, beginning with abstractions, has been practiced extensively by all the great composers of the past. But a brief sketch of what stimulated Puccini in these circumstances might serve to clarify some of his stylistic habits.

The most cogent reason for replacing 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 _te vese music_ 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.25 Puccini

24. See Giorgio Sciarrini, “Un nuovo di Puccini... ‘Storia di un’opera viennese’ (E. Durruthy),” _G. V. P. 65-93_. The problem is also discussed by Mariuccia in Giacomo Puccini, ed., “L’esame _Arianna_ di Puccini,” in _il melodramma italiano dell’Ottocento_ (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 451–509. He points out how “as in all, all or almost all of Puccini’s vocal chamber works have operatic potential” (456). See also the Catalog of Works below for a list of “self-borrowings.” During the course of the book, only one case of reusing expansions in relation to the context will be pointed out.
25. See the chapter devoted to _La bohème_ for more precise details about this characteristic style in connection with the preceding music. In _Manon_ (an libretto are used as “music di scena” (stage music) since they accompany the dancer as inserted into the action but were played by the pit orchestra. “Musica in scena,” on the other hand, required the use of sound sources different from the pit orchestra or from singers concert, as with the choirs behind the scenes in _Edgar_. For a careful examination of the concept of stage music, see Carl Dahlhaus, “Dramaturgie dell’opera italiana,” in Lorenzo Baricco and Giorgio Puccini, _Edgar_, 355–367.
CHAPTER ONE

who had died on 18 January. Two of its themes were to play a fundamental role in the fourth act of Manon Lescaut:

Example 1.3

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Example 1.3

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

Other cases pose no less interesting problems, for instance the dramatic scene "Menda l'avvisò" (1892), which provided the idea for Des Griez's aria "Domna non vidi mali, and the Agnus Dei of the Mass, on which the Madrigal in the second act of Manon Lescaut (again "stage music") is based. These examples reveal that the "rehashing" process is 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 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 revising material lessened somewhat, but never ceased entirely, as the following example demonstrates:

Example 1.4

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 Ecco la giovinezza.
(1885) by Catalani. They show that Puccini was capable of competing with composers then active in the flourishing quartet societies.

The Capriccio sinfonico 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 additivo 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 synoptic 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" (Carner, 331), 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 coda 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 restated in the home key in the coda. The motive that opens the Allegro vivo, in F major, supplies a lively contrast, and interweaves first with an extrovert melody in waltz time (but in B), and then with a new and spirited contrasting idea, before finally rejoining 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 1) 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 oboe, and is then taken up, very broadly, by the strings, before the piece finally dies away gradually. Even though it lacks a "program," the Capriccio's formal organization communicates the sense of life's vicissitudes: of a tragic start, gradually evolving toward a serene conclusion.

The idea underlying the Preludio sinfonico 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. 1.5a: 4–6). This is immediately restated with a chromatic coda that resolves onto a half-diminished seventh (Ex. 1.5b: 4–6). The diatonic–chromatic opposition is reinforced by two further variants in the initial part of the theme. In the first, the rising sixth (Ex. 1.5c: 2) is developed to give forward impetus; in the second

The lack of low-pitched sounds gives it an ethereal sonority, as does the opposition of homogenous groups of timbres—first woodwinds (Ex. 1.5d), then strings (Ex. 1.5e)—which, although occurring in reverse order, recalls the prelude to La bohème, also in A major. The voice-leading of the

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15. In an unpublished study, Jürgen Mohler hypothesizes that the opening theme derives from the overture to Le Roi de Lahore (1857). In effect Puccini's passage resembles the melody that opens the Andante moderato cantabile in Massenet's opera (see Fétis's summary in Massenet's score (see Le Roi de Lahore [Milan: Ricordi, n.d., Pl. no. 557]), 65); it would be Wagnerian filtered through a French source, as we will find in other cases. Puccini could have known the opera, given at La Scala in 1859, not surprisingly Verdi's reservations, Berneri was at this time very taken with Massenet, though that remains unconfirmed. In this case, however, it is also very likely that Puccini had firsthand knowledge of La bohème—subject of contention since
chorus also gestures toward Wagner, and the beginning of Puccini's theme was not unique to Mascagni, who echoed it in the final part of the duet between Santuzza and Turiddu in his Cavalleria rusticana ("No, Turiddu, rimani ancora"). Puccini skillfully altered versions of the theme, providing them with a lyric code, changing both the tempo—from Andante mosso to Animato (m. 75)—and the blocks of sonority up to the climactic point in its more chromatic guise, given to horns and trumpets over a trombone and ophicleide pedal, under ostinato sixteenth-note figures in the strings. The piece then dies down gradually until the choir also comes in at the beginning of his career, entered on the last page of his manuscript of the Prologo a orchestra in E minor major. Until recently, it was the only one of the composer's more valuable autographs, but its recovery (see above, n. 7) makes possible a brief consideration of this short piece.

The ten remaining manuscript pages of the Prologo (out of an apparent 12; pages 7 and 8 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 shown no precocious signs of talent. Nonetheless, the work's formal schema does exhibit a certain ingenuity, with its playful returns of thematic material weaving together the two sections into which the Prologo is divided in an A-B-A'-B plan (A: 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 Manon Lescaut in the sad, melodizing first theme in the minor. Orchestration and harmony, often full of pungent chromatics, 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 Messa a quattro voci con orchestra, mistakenly called Messa di Gloria by the editors of the first printed edition (1951). The structure is that of a solemn Mass:

1. Kyrie eleison in A-flat major, Larghetto (2. Introduction and three sections: A–B–A' form)
2. Gloria in exultate Deo in C major, Allegro non troppo (2, 1, 1¼; 3. motto sections: A–B–C–D–A'–D'–E–F–G)
4. Sanctus in G minor, Andante, Benedictus in E-flat major, Andantino, 4
5. Agnus Dei in C major, Andantino, 4

It is scored for four-part chorus accompanied by a large orchestra, with some sections for vocal soloists: the "Gratias" of the Gloria and the "Et in carnis est" of the Credo are for tenors, the Benedictus is for baritone. Both soloists sing the concluding Agnus Dei, accompanied by the chorus. The musical style of the Mass is typical of that of an Italian operatic composer of the time. Nothing would be more unhistorical than to lament the lack of a specifically sacred style, as has been done with Verdi's Requiem (1874). The sections of the liturgical Ordinary have always fixed the imaginations of opera composers, who have often revealed their dramatic possibilities. The "martial" opening of Puccini's Gloria should be considered in this light, as should the initial theme of the Credo, both of them clearly inspired by Verdi.

Nonetheless, the Mass does not entirely lack elements of the sacred style; for example, the beginning of the Kyrie, characterized by a polished four-part chorus in forte mezzoforte, is worthy of Puccini's many musical forebears. The latter are also honored in the masterly display of imitative writing, from various forms of canons to fugato—which at times shows understandable naiveté. The work is full of interesting ideas, in a variety of situations ranging from the dramatic intensity of the Credo to the epinmural elegance of the Agnus Dei. It is, throughout, supported by the orchestra, which in Italy usually served merely to double the vocal parts, but here enjoys a notable independence.

The Gloria also deserves close examination for its compositional variety.

27. The printed score assigns the "Gratiae" of the Credo to a tenor soloist, while the manuscript score gives it to the bases of the chorus. See Messa a quattro voci con orchestra / G. Puccini, op. 10, Museo Casa Natale di Puccini in Lucca. This source has the following scoring: Picc, 2 F, 2 Ob, 1 C, 2 Cl (first the Eng), 2 E, 8 Hn in E, 2 Tbn, Ophicleide, Timb in A, Bassoon, Synth, Harp, Strings.
The exposition of the first verse moves from C through E-flat major to B-flat major before returning to the home key; the "Gratias" in D-flat major offers an expansive lyric 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, "Cum Sancto Spiritu," is an accompanied fugue. In the strettas Puccini brilliantly combined the first part of the fugue subject (Ex. 1.6) with the initial theme (Ex. 1.6a) in a double canon (basses and sopranos, tenors and alios), with an effect that transcends the usual expectations of such "academic" writing (Ex. 1.6):

Example 1.6
a. Gloria, mm. 1–4.

\[
\text{Gloria, gloria, in exultatione Deo.}
\]

b. Gloria, 8 after Ex. 1.

\[
\text{Cum sancto spiritu...}
\]

c. Gloria, 1 before Ex. 1.

\[
\text{In gloria Dei.}
\]

This passage brings out the cyclic unity of the section, but, in contrast to Verdi (who in the "Liberi 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 vividness 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 Lecce I ran into the community of artists who spent their summers at Maggianico; they were on their way home. There were conservatory professors and young masters: Puschialli, Dominici, Salabino, and others. Puccini was among them. I got into the same railroad car as Puschialli, who told me about his pupil's intention to enter the Sonzogni competition, and suggested that I prepare a libretto for him. Then 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.

I spoke to Fontana, the poet, who was taking a holiday near Puschialli, and we almost made a deal for a libretto better still, he told me that he liked my music, etc. etc. Puschialli 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 like 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 Sonzogni competition. (Puccini to his mother, n.d. [ca. 20 July 1883]; Gara, no. 6, 6)

Thus Puccini's theatrical adventure began. Announced on 1 April 1883, the Sonzogni competition for a one-act opera owes its fame almost exclusively to the 1886 winner: Mascagni's Cavalleria rusticana. Puccini had little time, since entries were to be submitted by 31 December, yet for a while his participation remained in doubt since Fontana had promised the subject to another candidate and had to retrieve it before drafting the libretto proper, a task he began in August. The poet worked swiftly; for the purposes of the contest brevity was a necessity. There are no letters by Puccini from which we might learn how long the opera took to compose, but we can guess that it was around four months: he received the libretto in early September and submitted the score by the deadline.

The absence of letters also makes it impossible to document the early stages of Puccini's relationship with his first collaborator. Ferdinando Fontana (1850–1929) had an ebullient personality and a versatile mind; well used to surviving from hand to mouth professionally, he had experienced his first literary success in Milan a few years earlier, with comic plays in dialect. An authoritative character, he wrote easily in all sorts of genres, and acted for Puccini as Solera had done for Verdi. He became well known in Scapigliatura circles just when the movement was on the wane, and remained consistently faithful to it. As a librettist he was almost a novice (his first work, Marchiame di Gemi Ahor, an opera buffa in Milanese dialect for Enrico de Bernardi, dated from 1875), and in the end he proved more useful to Alberto Franchetti than to Puccini, providing verses for the former's Aida (1888). In light of what happened with Edgar, Fontana's passion for Nordic legends and sages might seem ill adapted to Puccini's poetic world; but even if the composer had a low opinion of his collaborator, he was not then in a position to assert his rights, as he would be with all his librettists from Manon Lescaut onwards.

Throughout February 1884, while waiting for the results of the competition, Puccini kept busy with the Capriccio sinfónico, which Giovannina Lecce was publishing in a four-hand piano reduction. He had no particular reason for fear failure. Aside from the fact that he knew he had worked well—if a little hurriedly—the committee was certainly not ill disposed toward him: in fact, Puschialli was in the chair, and another of his teachers, Aminture Galli, was also involved, as were their colleagues Cesare Donatelli and Franco Faccio, who had conducted the Capriccio and would take it to Turin the following July. Pietro Planzani was the only judge with whom Puccini had no personal relationship.

Yet in March the winners were announced: Zucelli and Mappelli (the latter had entered a setting of Fontana's Anna e Gavarno). It is at this point that biographers usually begin. Most biographers attribute Puccini's failure to his indiscernible handwriting, probably on the basis of an article

1. The extract is taken from Marchetti, no. 18, 37 to 40; no source is indicated. Fontana's version is slightly different; see "Giovanni Puccini," Gazzetta musicale di Milano 35, no. 41 (19 October 1884), 378–2, which dates the meeting to August. Bar on 17 July Puccini had been asking his mother for money in order to visit Puschialli as soon as possible (Marchetti, no. 18, 36).
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 inaccuracy, if not downright false, statement. After all, Puccini, who had corrected Fontana'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 as if it 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 Scapigliatura. 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 intermezzo in symphonic-descriptive 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 debates, 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's with mezzo Ponzighelli, who recommended me, but for now there's not much to hope for. (Marchetti, no. 29, 44)

Thus the composer had 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 ac-

3. Fontana, "Giacomo Puccini," 83. The article, which appeared in record time, is an example of the Ricordi firm's excellent control of promotional means.

4. The manuscript copy allows us to refute the theory that the work failed because of its incomprehensible harmonies, since the original parts of the songspur present no legibility problems—a sign that Puccini wanted to follow the regulations of the competition as far as possible, and to prepare the material for eventual performance. Only in the parts added to the original structure after the premiere in the Teatro Dal Verme, which were bound together with the critics and presented to the Prefecture of Milan on 14 January 1885 for approval, is the composer's hand the same one we are accustomed to from his later scores. The first page of the preface bears the name of the score by the Prefecture as "No. 26 Ponzighelli 3 May X884," p. La Presse (A. Zegna), together with the code name used by Puc-

5. 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.

6. The publisher's state of mind is aptly described by Verdi's former student and friend Emanuele Muzio, who on 7 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.

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 Fili for the revival at Turin (14 December 1884), which was wisely pro-

7. Other manuscripts and letters from Puccini and Fontana tell the same story as the preface

8. Puccini's letter of 8 July 1884 to Verdi at his villa in Squadra, which was wisely pro-

9. Le Fili was to be performed at the Teatro Dal Verme on 14 January 1885; the manuscript copy is dated 3 May X884; p. La Presse (A. Zegna), together with the code name used by Puccini as composer, "alla." Thus the opera was presented to the jury without permission, and some parts (the "Basta morire" and "Treguardo") are indeed fair copies. As Larsen, where Le Fili was composed, Puccini habitually employed the print Monitor, a very skilled copyist (see Marchetti, no. 29, 44).

10. On 16 April Puccini wrote to his brother about parts to be copied (Marchetti, no. 26, 27-28) and at about the same time Fontana gave the composer a list of ten subscribers with their paid-up assessors. Among these were Sala, Boito, the critic Aldo Nozetti, and some musicians and intellectuals (Gina, no. 49, 25).
Pantaleoni, 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 Luca, 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 unreservedly to be quite out of the ordinary. . . . Puccini, it seems to us, has something more, and this something is perhaps the most precious of gifts, in the search for which many a misunderstood genius toils and strives, their impotence disguised under the specious name of the future! This precious quality, in our Puccini, is that of having ideas in his head (un modo non ueso, as the French say); and as Coletta would rightly say, these one either has or one hasn’t, nor can they be acquired by assaying and restudying the dots, counterpoint, harmony, dissonance, and sweating for long hours over those hieroglyphs full of science and poetry 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. Biaud

**Le Villi**

Until a few years ago the source of Le Villi was thought to be a German myth told by Heinrich von Düren in Erschöpfung der Auseinandersetzung (1849), from which the ballet Girolam, in Le Villi by Christophorus Paulus and Henri Vény of Saint-Georges (1842), with music by Adolphe Adam, was derived. The great popularity of this German ballet, written for Carlotta 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 sustained by Girolam until dawn, when the spell breaks. The salvation of the man is a metaphor for the beneficial power of dance, and as such is extremely well suited to the requirements of one of the greatest pas de deux 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 current fashion.

**Scapigliatura Interlude**

Rancy, as in the case of Manon. Fontana was no exception when he took up Alphonse Karr’s French tale Le Villi, published in 1852.10 He was faithful to the plot both in general theme and in detail, from the Black Forest setting to two of the protagonists’ names (Wilhelm Wolf and his daughter Anna), and the city of Mainz, to which the girl’s fiancé travels to claim his 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 Lorbek legend narrated by Heine had already inspired Catalani’s opera Elda (Turin, 1880), and Puccini thus had an opportunity to continue this poetic trend, which was still quite capable of further development.11 That he was familiar with Elda 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 orchestra chorus during the "nobilissima" (the first part of the intermezzo, now entitled "L’abbandono," so called on the model of the prelude to Rigoletto’s Mefistofele), which he requested from Fontana on 20 August 1884 together with a new passage:12

The concept would be this: "Pace! Pace! alla morte d’amore Requiem Ever­num etc." As for the tenor scene, the reminiscence of the Preghiera "PO

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9. Gazzetta musicale di Milano 40, no. 5 (February 1885), 44-45. To understand Ricordi’s statement better, one should remember that in July Wagner was still being published by Giuseppina Luca, and that Ricordi’s attitude changed immediately after he bought out the civil firm in 1888.

10. See Julius Stubbs, "The Genesis and Literary Sources of Giacomo Puccini’s First Opera," Cambridge Opera Journal 1, no. 4 (1981), 79-82. References to the plot are taken from Stubbs’s highly synopsized "Le Villi Alphonse Karr" in written in violet ink on page 57 of Puccini’s manuscript score.

11. In trying to demonstrate the originality of Le Villi, Monaldi gets himself into difficulties when he challenges the notion that Catalani’s opera was a model by stating that Lory, was signed only in 1860 (Monaldi, Giacomo Puccini, 126). Lory is in fact a rewriting of Elda.

12. The page suggested by Gah on this (note, 48), is one of the many errors bringing his edition of Puccini’s correspondence. Fontana’s response allows us to date the letter correctly.
These are the first hints in Puccini's letters of a strong-willed dramatist, a persona that from this point on will gradually become more familiar.

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 time of moments *Requiescant in pace!*

After all, the procession only moves by, and the importance of the description is in the orchestra... The reminiscence will be in the upper voice. You'll see! (30 August 1884; Marchetti, no. 85, 53).

The opera took on its definitive form between September and October. At the end of September Puccini had Ricordi listen to Anna's first page of the manuscript and from the first page the composer wrote: "The first page the composer wrote: "Il canto del Verme." Milanese 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 the *Le Villi* a new aspect—just that I like—far distant from the usual, conventional melodramas... In the second act instrumental passages entitled "L'abbonamento" and "La tragedia" become integral and scenic parts of the work at the Dal Verme they functioned merely as symphonic interludes. (La preservazione, 18 January 1885).

The critic is, as usual, perceptive. The first version was much closer to the Scapigliatura aesthetic, exalting the role of poetry in musical expression. And the point about the intermezzi acquiring a dramatic function is...
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, but on 3 September 1864 Fontana wrote to Puccini:

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-ballo." The term suggests an adaptation of grand opera, an enormous influence in Italy after 1870, in which the ballet typically functions as a spectacle within the operatic action. The genre then developed into an independent Italian type, with operas such as Meisnerfe (1868; second version in 1873), Aida (1871), and La Giacconda (1876). 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 meter is almost ubiquitous), and contribute vitally to the denouement.

The opera's symphonic unity, noted by Filippini, is strengthened by the three prominent sections for orchestra. The Gran Scena e Duetto Finale is broadly based on "L'abbandono" (Marchetti no. 84, ed. expressive, 83)—in which there is an interpolated reference to the duet "Tu dell'infanzia mia" and on "La tregenda," which accompanies Wilis' appearance and exhausting concluding dance. The third section is the prelude, apparently constructed on the model of a potpourri piece, in which the principal melodies are given a first hearing. By a method Puccini would refine over the years, while thematic ideas emerge during the very first measures (Ex. 2.1a), the opening and part of the duet No. 4 (Ex. 2.1b) derive from them. The four-note figure that completes the theme (Exx. 2.1a 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 Asura (Ex. 2.1c). The harmonic progression of the prelude (Ex. 2.1a) should be noted; the combination of the upper part (resolution on 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 (a), and the exchange between clarinets and oboes in the upper part.

Example 2.1
a. Le Villi, Preludio, beginning

\[ \text{Example 2.1a} \]

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

\[ \text{Example 2.1b} \]

c. Le Villi, No. 4, Duet, 12 after \[ \text{Example 2.1b} \]

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

The relation between the phrase that rounds off the prelude (Ex. 2.3d) and one that appears in the Preghiera at the end of the first act (Ex. 2.3d) 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 "Abendmahl-Musik" is clear,17 as is the similarity between Puccini's theme and the famous passage from Otello that accompanies the Moor's entrance into Desdemona's bed-chamber in Act IV (Ex. 2.42). One should perhaps not exclude the possibility that Le Fiefo was the connecting link between these similarities; Verdi had read Puccini's score while composing his opera.18

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 interly devoted to love, even to the point of self-sacrifice; but she was too ingenuous to free 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 piccina" (No. 3), ascending scale passages alternate with wide leaps in a formal structure that has none 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 metapace addressed 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 vehement leaps of tessitura. But the central part of the final meeting with her lover is permeated by a melancholy and nostalgic re-evocation of their lost happiness, expressed by a reminiscence of the duet "Tu dell'infanzia mia." The Willi entices Roberto into the trap by means of this remembrance — nostalgia for a time past that seems for a moment to have returned — and she delegates her vengeance to the spirits of her unhappy companions.

The character of Guglielmo Wolf 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 Prophets that ends the first act, Anna's father blesses his daughter's union with Roberto as the latter's request, and authoritatively invokes the "Angelo di Dio." But it is Anna who

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17. The first to write about these connections was Roman Vild, "Abendmahl in 'Francesca,'" GP, 1895. The suggestion is the first sign of Puccini's modernism: at the time he was writing Le Fiefo, Puccini had appeared in Bayreuth less than a year and a half earlier.
18. Verdi acknowledged receipt of Le Fiefo in a letter to Ricordi dated 16 February 1883; see Cesare Ricordi: Ricordi (1820-1916), ed. Franco Celli, Marcella Ricordi, and Maria di Gravina Ceppi (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdi, 1995), nos. 218, 226. Before this, he had spoken of the opera to Count Oppereadori Arrivabone only hours before (letter of 10 July 1884, see below, p. 96).

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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 cammino ad ogni pellegrina, / non sìri distinssìgni ogni sogno d'amor; / May the path be good for every pilgrim; / let every dream of love be free of disillusion").

The baritone Guglielmo reappears after the two symphonic movements, and his Preludio e Scena (No. 8) has the purpose of clarifying the dramatic events, linking Roberto's betrayal with his daughter's death and the Willi's vengeance. A few measures of orchestral prelude introduce a brief horn theme in C minor, which descends slowly by chromatic step in a largo doloroso.19 The baritone's recitative is forceful, on the heroic model of a Verdi father. The most recent example dated from 1881: Jacopo Fiesco in the introduction 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 recitative—aria the first theme introduces the true aria (Andante lento) 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 "serato... dei martiri" ["mourning wreath"]), the Puccinian father articulates his request for divine vengeance with a melody that descends and ascends through a vast range in union with the cellos and in octaves with the winds, evoking the Willi's divine instruments of vengeance. Seized by remorse, he asks God's pardon, as Fiesco has done after having raised at the Virgin, but Puccini, by using the same melody that had served to invoke justice, missed out on a valuable dramatic opportunity.

The hasty close of the piece is justifiable, however, by the urgency of the near moment, which provided a strong stimulus for the composer's imagination. Roberto's "Scena drammatica—Romaiana" conveys the father's anxiety at 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-
ences to crucial points in the plot, to which it thus becomes organically bound: besides the reminiscence of the prayer ("O sommo Idolo") mentioned above and the echoes of the Willis (part of the "Tregenda" music and the extract shown in Ex. 2.4b), the "Abbandono" theme, now in minor, also figures ("Forse ella vive," [27]). The Romanza "Torna a feli ci di" (Austante mento) is at the heart of the scene; it is certainly the most interesting passage in the opera and one of the most significant anticipations of Puccini's dramatic personality: it begins in B-flat minor, which together with E-flat was one of his favorite keys for tragic scenes.

The melody that embodies Roberto's state of mind has a charm deriving from its combination of sensuality and melancholy. Dissonance is exploited to express ends: the initial phrase is colored by the voice-leading, suspensions twice causing clashes of a minor second that express the young man's anguish. The vocal line already carries hints of Puccini's mature style, with long phrases in the high register and wide leaps, and it is shrewdly reinforced by fuller orchestration in the reprise, enriched with chromatic cells to increase the intensity. Despite the oversize of sequence in the coda, the long solo (over ten minutes of music) is the high point of the opera.

Puccini also proved his worth in the crowd scenes. The music of the "VOI SOVETIERSEMINI"—with which the opera opens, in tribute to the formal conventions of nineteenth-century Italian opera (the melodramma)—is obviously French-influenced. After the initial section ("Er vivo i sbandanzati"), an elegant waltz in A minor offers the first choreographic opportunity ("Gira, balla"), its stylized melodic and harmonic grace recalling Carmen. Although the voice-leading is a little academic, the grand concerted that follows the Freghiera according to the classic scheme (exposition by solos and reprise with chorus) is enlivened by telling thematic reminiscences. The relationship between Guglielmo's melody (Ex. 2.5a) and the prelude theme inspired by the Abbandono-Music—is used to vary the final reprise (Ex. 2.5b)—is a further demonstration of Puccini's ability to manipulate musical material according to precise semantic schemes; both ideas have a relationship with the sacred. The "Agnèl di Dio" melody in fact comes from the Sesto Regina Puccini composed in 1881, and after getting to know Fariña at the beginning of 1883 he must have realized the possibility of creating a relationship between the two themes:

Example 8:3  a. Le Villi, [3]

Chorus and dance blend in the concluding finale at the sound of the offstage choir of Wills and Spirits, the "Tregenda" music accompanies the dancers, who draw the traitor into the final, exhausting G minor tarantella. Their "Omnia" closes the opera with a mild touch of blasphemy, Fontana's final tribute to the spirit of the Scapigliatura movement.20

Le Villi 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 1895 Puccini was to complain that "Le Villi initiated the type today called 'Mascagnian,' and nobody gives me due credit" (Gara, no. 127, 117). He was probably referring both to the recent Guglielmo Rondi, 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 pervasion at the end of the opera, and skilful 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 Villi. One therefore has to agree with Carner:

Neither Catalan nor Francais nor Smeriglia nor any other Italian composer of Puccini's generation, sailing under the twin flags of Verdi and the German romantics, achieved in their early operas the imaginative level that characterizes the best pages of Le Villi. (Carner, 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. Budden ("The Genesis," 81) notes that the Sesto of Le Villi "Sua comparsa, in quanto" (Edoardo Risb_DS) closes unostentatiously the "Omnia del Salto" (WVRS) which closes the second act of Rostro's Melinfefi.
CHAPTER TWO

DIFFICULT YEARS?

Albina Magi, Puccini’s mother, had been in poor health for some time. In May 1884, with preparations for Le Villi at their height, her condition worsened; but she held on until she heard of Giacomo’s triumph from his brother Michele, no. 52, 64. Then, a precipitate decline ended in her death on 17 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 Ramsele Puccini, August 1894; Gara, no. 14, 14)

In support of his psychoanalytical theory of Puccini’s relationship with his mother was perpetuated in that with his future wife, Mosca Carner stated that Puccini fled from Lucca with Elvira Gemignani (née Bonturi), the wife of a wealthy grocer, “immediately after the death of his mother.”

The flight, however, actually took place two years later, although the relationship probably started in October 1884, when Puccini returned to his hometown for the first time since his mother’s funeral (if we can trust a letter Michele sent to him at Lucca on 5 June 1885). Given the circumstances, one can understand the brother’s ironic prudence in changing her surname to Buchignani:

Ranuccio 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 Buchignani 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

22. Puccini recounted the incident in his letter Ramsele: “You don’t know how the business started. When we left Lucca, ’86 was a provisional departure because her belly was so much a point that it could be hidden no longer. She pretended to be at Prato and they believed it for some time; after Tonio was born and the marriage began, only one brother returned” (end of April 1881; Marchetti, no. 147, 156).
23. A valuable documentary chronology of Puccini’s life has been compiled by Dieter Schmidling; see his “Chronologische Verzeichnis von Puccinis Aufenthalten, Reisen und Theaterbemerkungen,” in Giacomo Puccini: Biografie (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag-Auswahl, 1969), 390-396. Certain details, however, can be current on the basis of information supplied in Simona Puccini, ed., “Lettere di Ferdinando Puccini a Giacomo Puccini: 1884-1919.” QP 4 (1995). This valuable correspondence has allowed us to explain fully events in the composer’s life between 1884 and 1887, and provides crucial new information about the genesis of Manon Lescaut and Tosca.

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.

In reality the family’s reputation was anything but good, and Elvira’s life cannot have been all that boring, given that Narciso Gemignani enjoyed a reputation as an irrepressible 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 [Gemignani] has put his family through and given his character, she can perfectly well leave him with nothing more than a letter. . . . Goodness me, if he were a saint, an adorable husband.—But a character like that = You understand me.22

The implication is that Gemignani, 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 Gemignani at Viareggio (he died, after months of suffering, on 26 February 1901) that Puccini and Elvira were able to marry and legally recognize Tonio (born on 23 December 1886) in 1904.

And so Elvira leaps from the frying pan into the fire. Wherever 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 Cesira Ferrari (the first Maun), Haricles Dividès (the first Tosca), Maria Jeritza, Emmy Destinn, and finally the light soprano Rose Auer, the last love of his life (the affair ended in 1923).23

26. Gemignani’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 familiar in Lucca clearly remembers Elvira’s husband as an imperious librettist, and have given exact information about the real cause of his premature death.

27. This information is taken from the chapter entitled “Puccini e l’ donne” in Magi’s biography (Cronaca Puccini, 195-196). The author compiled an invaluable, detailed list of the composer’s mistresses (among whom were also Giulia Manfredi, the mysterious Cunnns, a
Puccini sought an equilibrium with Elvira 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, Le Villi was revived under the composer's watchful eye at Bologna in November 1884, and a little later, in January 1886, at Venice's La Fenice. During this period Fontana consulted 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 the publisher, having seen 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 bouts of exaltation and depression.98

But the genesis of Edgar was undoubtedly made more difficult by the travails of Puccini's private life. In March 1886 Elvira became pregnant; leaving Lucca then became inevitable. This happened in August, thanks to the good offices of Foscarini (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 like 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.99 His correspondence suggests that he was not convinced of the quality of his work, and that the publisher, having seen the possibility of a première at Rome in the

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98 As Venice, Le Villi was on a double bill with the ballet Enchanted by Musseaux and was for fifteen performances (Girardini and Rossa, II Teatro La Fenice, 188). The opera was then revived in Fermo in 1886, in Treviso and Pisa the following year, and in Nepi in 1888. It was given ahead for the first time in Roveco Asin (1846).


100 "Giacomo has finished Edgar. The fourth act has turned out better than all the others" (Deiana to Rondinella Puccini, 29 July 1887; Marchetti, no. 320, 190). The dates of composition on the autograph are 4 May 1888 (Act I) and 13 July 1888 (Act III). The last act was delivered on 15 November 1888.

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Carnival season of 1887–1888 fade, was in no hurry for Edgar to reach the stage:

I'm orchestrating and it's a big job. . . . Ricordi has renewed my hopes and has said that I will be all right. For now nothing is arranged for La Scala. . . . I am here alone at the mercy of this chaos of impresarios, publishers, poets, etc., and it gives me much displeasure and worry. Ricordi in the meantime is bowled over by my fourth act and on the whole I seem to have worked pretty well. Enough. We will see. (To Raffaello and Rosalba Fracceschini, 9 September 1887; Marchetti, no. 122, 127)

The premiere of Edgar at La Scala (21 April 1889) made little impression on the audience and critics, notwithstanding Franco Faccio's excellent conducting and solid contributions from Romilda Pazzaloni (Tigrana), Aurelia Cattaneo (Fidelia), Gregorio Gabrieleco (Edgar), and Antonio Magnini-Cardelli (Franz). The music was not criticized (though no one liked the libretto much), but neither were there enthusiastic reviews. Gramola, in the Corriere della Sera, did not hide the climate of general coolness with which the opera was greeted, although he praised some passages for their originality, especially in orchestration. After two further performances Edgar was withdrawn so that Puccini might work on it some more.101 Faced with this half-hearted result, there was every reason for Giulio Ricordi to lose patience, but the publisher authoritatively and publicly defended his protégé in his home newspaper, and in the process summed up the real problem with the opera:

The Milanese critics inveighed against the libretto with great severity, and if they were more lenient with the composer, recognizing his talent, they nevertheless welcomed the work in a such a manner that, were Puccini not made of sterner artistic fiber, he might have decided to find another occupation! . . . Ferdinando Fontana has special ideas, shall we say, regarding the librettist's art: some of these we share, but regarding many others we are on completely opposite sides. . . . It needed a powerful, inspired composer like Puccini to clothe the grants canvases supplied by the poets in dazzling colors, but it is no less true that those very difficulties of dramatic situation inspired the maestro to a passage of magnificent music [Edgar's funeral].

Ricordi had probably realized some time earlier than the principal obstacle in the way of Puccini's development was the librettist, who himself had no
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 1889. Fontana could not grasp the situation, realizing it only after the opera's premiere.

You must remember that evening at Ricordi's when the famous Signora Giordana (Giglio's wife) was saying loudly that anything good in Edgar came from the composer, and in spite of me. The maestro, also, 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 QUEST'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 Seligman in 1905 (Carrer, 57). It was the third time the composer re-worked the opera in an attempt to make it more going, 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-worked series of changes 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 "Splendidia notus," 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 (Ronaida Fantaleoni), who sings it very well. Originally it was written for mezzo-soprano.

(25 August 1890; Manc, no. 44, 48)

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 Iberian sky, and, whipped by the winds of the nearby Atlantic, I trust in a kind welcome from Calderón's countrymen.

(22 December 1890; Manc, no. 49, 52).

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, sensing 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 del Giglio in Lucca on 5 September 1891, where it was greeted with notable success, giving the lie to the saying some preposta 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 25 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 finishes with a completely new scene of great dramatic effect. This I verified at Lucca. (Manc, no. 56, 60–61)

Proper, p. 145–70, which compares the three piano-vocal scores published in 1890, 1891, and 1905, and lists measure numbers, cuts, and variants.

16. He went as far as to declare the administration of the Teatro Real as "one of the usual vulgar mismanagements from which, in so speak, we must also protect our modest [see Propr., p. 145–70] to Mancinelli, 11 January 1891; Manc, no. 59.)
Puccini also agreed about the need for greater brevity:

I've heard that rehearsals for Edgar are beginning. Poor Gigli! because of me you'll have to battle with the huge number of cuts and compromises, and the patching-up of mistakes I made at Lucua 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 reprise after Edgar's recitative: "Vediamo non pazzera" and then I'd send the entire army to Hell as quickly as possible. (December 1892: Gazz, no. 57, 61-62)

It was at Lucua, then, that the opera was reduced from four acts to three, although that 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 Durot in the maestro's place during the rehearsals for the final revisions, which were being made for the final revisions, 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 reprise after Edgar's recitative: "Vediamo non pazzera" and then I'd send the entire army to Hell as quickly as possible. (December 1892: Gazz, no. 57, 61-62)

37. The cast included Amalia Savarelli (Tigiana), Tito Mariaçano (Fidelia), and Osasco Relicarlo (Edgar).

38. The passage, noted in the principal biographies of Puccini as written expressly for Madrid, was published at "how" by Elia and Vogel in 1895. It figures, however, in the first piano-vocal score on pp. 309-33, and operas that published in 1895, before disappearing from the current score. The error was noted by Marini ("I travegliato Anesi-Prospa," 49). On this topic see the meticulous reconstruction by Francesco Costi, "L'uomini di vita del periodo all'iva IV al Edgar," (1981) 119-128.


40. "Caristand will give you all that remains of Edgar and tell you about the hard work done this month. It seems to me that the opera, as it stands, should go well" (Puccini to Ricordi, 14 March 1902: Gazz, no. 248, 28).
Fontana strove to retain the allegorical foundation of Musetta'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 Tannhäuser to Marguerite in Faust.

Puccini did not realize in time what a mess he had got himself into; he attempted to set 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 jocularity, his tone became haughty and brusque, and every line was defended to the last. At the beginning of their eccentric relationship (23-24 March 1883) 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 not less pathetic, obvious and separate, yes—well defined as far as is needed—but not independent from the whole, rather substotiated by it and especially to a concentration of developments, of musical levels leading to an explosion, toward resolution in the so-called stretta delle spade [sword stretta].

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

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

Act II = Three pieces of which the first is a man-like March and recitative for baritone with a reprise of the March, the second a funeral March; the third a Duet for tenor and female voice, and then a grand concertato. A figure like this

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

Tell me I'm mad, you'd have good reason.\(^4\)

In 1891, 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 chorals 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 nostro villaggio in fi vienon in the third act, but I tried, with the melody in my ears, to replace them with others that would fit without forcing. I needed this change to graft on 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, Guido, and many others want. I also approve wholeheartedly of the idea. You see that I'm not one of those who—well, as you'll have you believe, it is an extremely logical, artistic, and theatrical idea. If only it had come into our minds at first.\(^5\)

The experience with Fontana, however, was beneficial to Puccini at least inasmuch as it obliged him to test his strength within a 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 Guido 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 outlandish versification, 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.

\(^5\) Ibid., nos. 141, 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 noose forced around his neck by the libretto.

Fidelia's opening arioso is an early 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. Fidelia, I, 7 after (1)

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 Man, invites the villagers to the ceremony and supplies an appropriate background to the tempestuous 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 articulation of the rule overtones, which in the Kyrie initiated the third repetition of "Chains ecclasis"), now serves to emphasize Tigrana's growing emotional excitement, contrasting the purity of the religious remembrance with her demonic nature.67 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 sastanico) establishes in eight measures of bolero rhythm a sort of gypsy calling card for the woman. This fragment is justified by Tigrana's origin, the was abandoned as a baby fifteen years earlier by a "rowing man of Moors" and grew up "like a vipers"

45. Fidelia is the first of a long train of Puccini's heroines, from Mimi and Tonio in Butterfly, whose voice is heard before she appears onstage.

46. In Cavalleria Rusticana a religious occasion also represents the symbolic opposition between sin and purity, and references to Voices are also heard in Leoncavallo's Pagliacci. Casson notes that in Rossini's Il Mostro the sacred music becomes associated with Sparina's appearance (Casson, 34). But in that case, the sacred and profane elements, rather than oppose each other, generate a much more complex dramatic situation. The idea of using "liturgical" material as stage music is, however, common, although in Edgar it is a case of self-quotetion, while in Zaza, as we will see, it involves a sophisticated manner of "inverting the truth."

47. In the four-act piano-wood score the eight measures of Allegro sastanico serve as introduction to the recitativo of the Canzonette that Tigrana sings after her meeting with Edgar. In the final version, however, Puccini eliminated the first repeat, making the prelude seem like a reminiscence rather than an introduction to the aria, and cut the musical example from the recitativo, whose words maintain the peasant's language: "Gli avvenimenti che mi strumenti, chi è qui? Il suono alimento! O voi, coi voi, signori!" ("What is that noise? Is it food? The sound is nourishment."

48. "Che il mondo è in fiamme" (Ex. 4.8) ""The sight of the winds, roaring,

49. "Then said to the dying man / O! foolish human! This is what the Lord wanted", Martini joyfully defined this note as a "sighing noise" ("A streams flute-phrase," 490).
melody,\(^4\) which Tigrana had launched with ungainly sensiari tranchi ("Sin per voi l'orazione / a per me la canzone"), is also used—with comic affect—to express the resentment of the bigoted village women; the curses of the union male voices, which often recur in the choral scenes, are one of the many stylistic traits that remind us of Ponchielli and the world of the Scapigliati.

The example of Puccini's composition teacher is more obvious in the incoherent first finale, which is made up of sections that climax in a grand concertato. The events are strung 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, tardi idoli!" ("Back, foolish gods!") inexplicably changing his initial attitude toward her. After an orgy of diminished seventh, he exclaims, "Ed or da voi men vo', tostolo gregge" ("And I will now leave you, stupid herd!") and, cursing his "paterno tetto" ("paternal roof"), he sets fire to the house. The gesture would be utterly gratuitous were it not for the following metaphor: "Tigrana, vien!... / Noi pure accendete di nuova vita la voluttà" ("Come, Tigrana! Let lust 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 coup de théâtre: Frank's jealousy spurs him to bar the couple's way, in turn, old Guastiri intervenes between the rivals. The pacifying gestures of Frank's and Fidelia's father provide the static moment necessary for a grand concertato, 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. 2.9a), is extremely effective; but the dramatic relationships it establishes are difficult to follow. The different moods of those present are merely fixed in a traditional manner: Edgar's pentecost, Frank's consternation, 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 duel the melody is triumphantly and noisily repeated by the brass to close the act, as in the first finale of Le Villi,\(^4\) though without creating a logical connection between two similar dramatic situations. The same could be said of its reappearance a little after the beginning of the following act (Ex. 2.9b).

Example 2.9

a. Edgar, I, 1 after Ex. 2.9a

b. Edgar, I, 1 after Ex. 2.9b

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Even if it is a coincidence, this similarity might suggest that Puccini had studied and assimilated the score of the French masterpiece.
The reminiscence of the concertoato lacks logic: Edgar leaves, disgusted by the orgy, and it is not clear whether the clarinet's anguished melody alludes to the disturbance following the old father's gesture, or to nostalgia for Fidelia. And the charming introductory chorus, "Splendidia notte, notte giocaconda," gives no hint of an orgy, being a piece of refined harmonic colors and French-influence 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." It is unfortunate that Puccini frittered his talent away on the infamous 'pietram di pigri' with which Edgar begins the recitative ("Orgia, chiamora dall'occhio vireo, dal solito ardore - che si assist incendia"), with its chromatic chain of descending sevenths. But the mood of this passage, the reminiscence of and nostalgia for lost innocence, was evidently more congenial to him, and is well depicted in the short aria "O soave notte," which is enriched by echoes of Fidelia's music in the first act. The subsequent duet is much less convincing: a strangely tender Tigrana, who remembers her dreams of "Borge e de luna" ("of organs and kisses") while a brief reference to the Kyrie is heard, is called "sambot" in the tenor's agitated phrase. The mezzo-soprano knowingly replies that she is unable to escape her influence, since he would become a "menzùio" ("beggar"), a statement that exceeds in pragmatism even those "egre soglie" ("thresholds of sickness") Alfredo crossed in Violetta's Racconto di selenii.

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, to the sound of a patriotic hymn in D major sung by Frank, the only person capable of understanding his rival's torment, Edgar enlists 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 ostracized soldiers.

The opera finally takes wing in the first part of Act III with Edgar's return 50.

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 in the future would inspire some of his best moments (such as the fourth act of Manon, the end of La Bohéme, Cavaradossi's execution in Tosca, or Lili's suicide in Turandot). Given its high level of inspiration, and the desolation that prevails throughout, Toscanini's decision to perform the piece at the composer's funeral in the cathedral of Milan is fully understandable.

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CHAPTER TWO

Example 2.10 (continued)

b. Edgar, III, 1 before [2]

Example 2.11

a. Edgar, III, 6 after [3]

Example 2.13

a. Edgar, III, [21]

b. Edgar, III, [26]

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 intermezzo. The neutral color of the children's voices increases the anguish of the character of the first melody (Ex. 2.11a) and heightens the contrast with the serenity of the second (Ex. 2.11b):

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 scene, 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," exciting the soldiers, who eventually launch themselves in an angry uprising against the catafalque ("Ah corvi il tuo cadavere," "To the crows with his carcass"). Their barbaric wrath ends when Fidelia sings her final solo (Ex. 2.13b). Here Puccini makes use of the melody with which the monk evoked Edgar's wrongdoing (Ex. 2.13b):

Example 2.14

a. Edgar, III, [21]

b. Edgar, III, [26]

53. In the Requiem the mixed chorus is split into six parts, with added children's choir. The cantonic introductions of the subject ("In pace fumo et loca ejus") are conducted mostly in unison in three real parts.

52. The melody arises from an adagietto for orchestra composed in 1885 (Mephisto, "Una ricordanza di Puccini," 79). The complete score is lost, but a lengthy sketch is preserved at the Institute Musicale "Torre e Tram" of Lucera.
CHAPTER TWO

Although the connection has its own logic (Edgar had exposed facts to which Fidela was a witness), it lays bare the artificiality of the drama. Obliged to furnish 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 baril situation after having let his inspiration take flight in the preceding solo.

In the second part of the act things fall apart, and Fontana’s responsibility looms large. In Musset’s play the protagonist, like a true romantic, takes light in the preceding solo. Which Fidelia was a witness), it lays bare the artificiality of the drama. Unconsciously becomes an active part in his private life. Edgar’s priv ed of its true motivation, Edgar’sAILSING·

Edgar approaches Tigrana in the concluding passages Edgar approaches Tigrana with a gallanty ill suited to the habit he now wears. Although Puccini succeeded in treating the short Cantone “Bella signora” il pianto scoppia gli occhi” with irony, dramatic coherence has already been irretrievably lost. Edgar yields to the allure of a sparkling necklace that glitters in Edgar’s hands, while the gypsy theme from the first act (III, 22) reappears to remind us of her immortal nature. But would a symbol of perversion really surrender like a puppet to the vulgar excoriation 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 façade de scène accompanied by traditional effects such as the loud trumpet blasts in the wings to recall the soldiers. Allegro furioso, III, 23. With this imperious harangue, supported by Tigrana’s spontaneous confession, the monk persuades the people to knock down the catafalque, and again we hear Ponchielli’s unison. (iii. iv)“Ah curvi il tuo calvario.” Finally Edgar can remove his habit and display his military garb; yet another couplet de thèâtre, this one crowned by the predictable reunion with Fidela.

The final measures are devoted to Edgar’s rejection of Tigrana, a powerful inceptive in II minor spat directly at her. Fontana’s verses, an intolerable pour of sonatas and themes in a monotonous succession of octaves, deserve quotation:

O debito, aspetto del mondo
O fronte di bronzo
di bronzo e di fango
tormenta e giugno giacendo
Go—or I will crush you!

Puccini was not able to react to stimuli such as these, and could only limp to the end. The “libbra” theme is played noiselessly by full orchestra as Tigrana brutally kills her rival. In terms of romantic implications, the effect is ludicrous to say the least, and perhaps the surprise of this conclusion can be ascribed to the fact that evil kills good, whereas the plot and the music would make a revenge against the catalyst of this senseless project of redemption more logical.

“Orrido! A male!” the opera closes in the relative minor (8) of the tonality with which it began (D), a fortunate coincidence certainly not foreseen in the original scheme. There is, however, no doubt that in Edgar Puccini refined his musical language, often showing himself to be at the forefront of current trends. It is difficult to assess the quality of orchestration, which at times is very high, given that it was extensively revised for the current version, after the composer had Butterfly behind him. Flanders in 1929 was hardly an ideal setting for Puccini: the dramatic scheme imposed by Fontana forced him to use many clichés of the Scapigliati that clash with those parts of the opera in which the style is already close to that of his masterpieces, soon to emerge. Edgar was the only real failure of his career. Without suitable drama no musical talent can thrive; in this sense the lesson was very useful to Puccini, since it made him understand the necessity of choosing subjects himself, and defining the dramatic structures of his libretto in advance, before setting it to music. He would never again make a similar mistake.

55. Carver shows us the possibility to connect the original version when he points out “the considerable enlargement of the instrumental vocabulary. The opera begins in D major and closes in B minor” (Carver, 345).

56. This situation holds for most of the current versions of the scores, think of La Fanciulla, which Puccini retired 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 Giacomo Ricordi's role both in the composer's career and in the general theatrical milieu of the period requires further comment. After hearing Le Vill, 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, Puccini represented continuity and the young Boito 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 the 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—of which there had already been talk in 1880—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 (2 February 1893) and Manon Lescaut (1 February of the same year) one might posit a banding over of the mantle from Verdi to Puccini. But even more significant is the coincidence in their choices of Shakespeare and Verdi 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 Edgar:

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

After this unsuccessful attempt, in fact, Ricordi gave Puccini extraordinary responsibilities that made his position as Verdi's successor quite clear. Two months after taking over Giovanni Luca'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. Under the circumstances, Ricordi thought it more important that the composer undergo a new experience than finish Edgar. And while still urging revisions to the problematic score, he sent Puccini once more to Bayreuth in July 1889, this time with Adolf Hohenstein, director of the firm's graphic department and the future scenographer of Tannháuser and Tristan. The purpose was to assess the staging of Die Meistersinger in order to prepare for its Italian premiere at La Scala (conducted by Franco Faccio), scheduled to open the coming Carnival season. On this occasion Puccini again saw his beloved Perufia, noting down the cast on a vocal score and giving a brief judgment on the two performances, the first conducted by Felix Mottl, the second by Hermann Levi. "Bayreuth 23 July 89; orchestral performance.—15 July 1889, splendid performance, great experience." 3

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

1. Giacomo Ricordi d'Antonio, 64, no. 17 (8 April 1886), 271.
2. Schiclcg (Giocomo Puccini, 79) found the name "Puccini, Giacomo e Mallini" and "Giovanni Ferrandino" in the register of those at Bayreuth (2 August 1888). The identity seems certain despite the names of the names. Although Fontana tried Puccini for reimbursement for "German Trip 1886 itin." (Puccini, ed., "Lettere di Ferrandino Ferrandino," 10 September 1889, no. 135, 114). Schiclcg is right in maintaining that it was Ricordi who financed the excursion, advancing the necessary money.
3. The autograph annotation appears on the first page of a score of Puccini's published by Ricordi. It is reproduced in Atti, Giacomo Verdi, 4, 179.
4. Ibid., 378. The publisher's letter to Faccio of July 1889 continues: "I am about to leave for Lipari, and on 17 August I will be at Bayreuth as agreed; we will arrange everything on the spot. Tomorrow the Curtis leaves, Puccini and Hohenstein left this morning, changed by not to report on the staging, since the end of August would be too late for me to see it. We can then start 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 Deprius in a letter of 20 August 1890:

Not everyone has the luck to travel as 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 that "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 this 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 Swatlock to sing again the part of Tigrana in *I Vespri Siciliani*. All this seems absurd to me, but it is only right that it should be like that, because these days "dynasties" 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! (Carner, 39)

Verdi probably had frequent contact with Puccini, but there is not much evidence of the cordial relations bemoaned by Carnabuci. Correspondence reveals, however, that Puccini's opinions were highly valued by Ricordi and were discussed by Verdi, a case in point being that of Giuseppe Pesca, who was being transferred 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 the good sense to draw Ricordi's attention to *Cavalleria Rusticana* before it won the Somogno competition. Deciding to

5. In August 1884, Puccini told his wife about one of his visits to Verdi: "We then spoke about Puccini's work. We do not like this kind of music, because it follows the footsteps of Mascagni, etc." (Abatti, Giuseppe Verdi, 41-42). These words sharpen the image of Puccini as faithful mentor to his ex-pupil, but are insufficient to condemn a negative judgment on the part of Verdi, whose admiration for Mascagni is well documented. Later, Verdi wrote to Giulio Ricordi (29 March 1893): "I'm afraid for Falstaff and Mascagni elsewhere in Ricordi. This is a mistake! One will cancel out the other! Stage Mascagni only. I have no need to get ahead in my career and I'll be pleased that others may benefit from it." (Abatti, 199).

6. "Puccini, at least so far as Puccini is concerned, gave cause for concern," Verdi notes boldly in a letter to Ricordi of 17 June 1884 (Abatti, Giuseppe Verdi, 41-42). Ricordi continued to nurse relations between the two composers, and was careful to advise Puccini from Paris that "on Tuesday October Verdi will be 81; if you want to telegraph him with congratulations, I am sure that he would greatly appreciate it, since, in spite of having much to do, he has already spoken to me twice about you, what you are doing, etc. etc." (9 September 1894, Guel, no. 119, 127)
was given before Falstaff was equally sound: only in this way could Puccini’s opera expect to receive due attention.

Cesira Ferrani, of whom Puccini was particularly fond, played the heroine opposite Giuseppe Cremonini (Des Grieux), Achille Moro (Lescaut), and Alessandro Polonini (Edgar); Alessandro Rome 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 Colomboni in the Gazzetta musical.

Although expectations had been high, the opera still surprised us with its great artistic merit, its powerful musical conception, its theatricality. . . . Between Edgar and Manon Puccini has kept a gulf . . . If any of our young composers has understood the famous motto “Let us return to the past,” it is Puccini. . . . Manon is, in a sense, an opera of classic character. Its music has the developmental character and style of the great symphonies, without relinquishing 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 sensationalism. . . . But Manon is a musical drama as simple as it is spontaneous, interwoven 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-worked instrumental color is very important in the work: this is required by modern art, and so it is fitting that the orchestra cannot merely be a simple accompaniment of the voices without losing its raison d’être.

The comment cited by Colomboni, “Let us return to the past and it will be a step forward,” was of course Verdi’s. In that February of 1853 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 Falstaff with a light heart.

**A Multi-Authored Libretto**

In Catalani’s lengthy outburst, cited earlier, the phrase “web of publicity” offers a first clue to an accurate dating of the moment Puccini decided to

9. On 15 July 1890, Puccini congratulated Fontana on having secured engagements in the opera, “so that you can now and prepare yourself for my tremendous beta.” (Catalani, no. 74, 76).

10. Alfredo Colomboni (1869–1900) died two years to fulfill the potential displayed in his book L’opera italiana del secolo XIX (1900), 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.” It is often happened 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 (23–24 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 magically.

The writer was Ferdinando Fontana, who in spring 1889 had also been the first to draw Puccini’s attention to Sadoulet’s Tau. Probably the second opera mentioned in the brief Ricordi notice. One cannot but admire the librettist’s nonchalance 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. You 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 you now had said to me: “I want this one”—I, who already had worked on it, etc., would perhaps have decided to reach an agreement with you.

The first letter illustrates Puccini’s tendency to choose subjects many years after first thinking of them, and implies that he at least glanced at a prose drama based on Prévois’s novel. Besides vindicating the dramatic
In this particular case, his fickleness is shown in the decision to consult Ruggero Leoncavallo, perhaps to polish some of the verses, look over the plot structure, and contribute some ideas. Around July 1889 Leoncavallo, thanks to baritone Victor Maurel’s recommendation, had signed a contract with Ricordi to compose I Medici, 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 Bolto for Puccini, but the relationship was not idyllic, and probably jeopardized his future as one of the firm’s literati. Relations began to break down at the end of 1890. 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. 17

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

Act I
Amiens. Meeting of the lovers.

Act II
Manon’s and Des Grieux’s apartment in Paris, the gambler’s scene, Manon’s flight.

Act III
Geronte’s assignation, 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 Oliva sent him for Act II, and requested a new draft the following September (Garà, no. 40, 349). He also demanded that the general outline be broadened, with the addition of the scene set at Le Havre. Praga promptly made this re-
CHAPTER THREE

requirement an excuse to quit the enterprise, while Oliva sent Puccini the verses he had requested on 19 October.

Here is the second part of Act III. I have made two small changes in the plot. The officer has become the 'Commander of the Archives.' The prostitutes' offstage song was to have been a drinking song, almost obscene: instead . . . I've put in here a fragment of a sad song; I extract my work to your genius for completion . . . But I quite like the overall effect, except for two serious difficulties . . . Everything that Lescaut does in this act is illogical: why does he go like him, a cynic, a man without honor, come all the way to Le Havre? To rewrite 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, near the shore.24

Judging by these objections, Oliva seems to have been anything but unqualified, especially in stressing the inconsistent 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 verifying Act IV and revising Act II by the end of the year.25

Puccini must have considered the ending of the tragedy satisfactory, since he completed it before the other parts; but since remained the problem of the second and third acts. The difficulties they 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 corrected 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 peroration, or, better, a very short, statifying episode to mark the ship's departure" (letter to Ricordi, 14 August 1890; Gara, no. 69, 71). But his most important contribution was in solving the problem of the concertato with the prostitutes' roll call. He outlined the form of the scene to Puccini in detail:

11. Luigi Illica, "Venti minuti a Giacomo Puccini del dicembre '83 al settembre '91." Offa 1 (1895), 233.
24. "My friend, Manon, has grown and seems to me in good health. From private minister Oliva I have had no more news; I learnt the fourth and second acts." (Puccini to Ricordi, 15 November 1890; Puccini: 271 letter modern, p. 46.)

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 immense sadness, a wave of real melody (Manon has no sentimental pieces 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 entrusts 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.26 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 Gossé's dramatic adaptation Manon Lescaut et le Chevalier Des Grieux. The subject's topical interest lay in its main theme: the eternal clash between love and virtue, which takes place in an atmosphere of romantic passion and literature. 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 Merimee 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, Scarlatti's opéra comique for Auber in 1852. Massenet's Manon belonged to the same genre, and even Puccini said to Praga 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 that Manon accepts—with little enthusiasm—what is an infringement of her freedom. Massenet continuously interposes a screen of gallantry between reality and the passions, giving more emphasis to the nobility 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 accelerating her cynicism and making her a character of contradictions and more appealing.

In Act I, which reveals the wealthy old Treasurer General Geronte de Ravol'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 readied by the older tutor for his own flight with her. Thus a murky atmosphere, quite independent from her desire, surrounds the young girl, and is generated by the price men put on her beauty—even her own brother, who fantasizes about gaining his own comfortable lodgings in Paris.

Massenet's Manon is gallantly courted by Guillaume de Motzoult and Des Grieux, who wait with their mistresses at the post stop at Amiens. Despite her bewilderment at the journey, she greedily eyes the ladies' jewelry; but she nonetheless chooses flight with the young Des Grieux in order to avoid the cloister. All this is certainly more convincing than Puccini's version, but Massenet's title character lacks the more embarrassing 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 Prévost's original conception, is lacking in Puccini, where the tenor 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 Geronte's mansion in Paris: by eliminating any happy coincident in poor surroundings—the lovers' humble retreat disappears, as does the little white house and the entire context of petty bourgeoisie 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 fate as Manon (in which she 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 Prévost'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,23 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, 336). Anyone inclined to disagree can find a cue in the words Puccini used to explain to Praga why he did not fear such comparisons on the basis of the plot: "[Massenet] well feels it as a Frenchman, with powder and muskets. I will feel it as an Italian, with desperate passion."24 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 developmental period (one thinks of Wagner's Liebestod or Verdi's Nabucco). Puccini's genius erupted 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 questions 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 Roi de Yéminite the young composer, who was already well educated and shrewd, had paid homage to Parsifal with a quotation of the Amfortas-Mistress (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 friend,” 27 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: reaping Wagnerian in name only.

The acquisition of new and presupposed native structures was never taken to account the style of such pieces; here one thinks of Mascagni’s L’amico Fritz (1891) or Pagliacci (1892) rather than the third-set intermezzo of Manon Lescaut. Yet if one excludes the operas of second-rank composers such as Antonio Nuarcigilia (La Fuitina, 1857-1905) and Alberto Franchetti (Germanna, 1902), in which the attempt to revive a Wagnerian idiom is obvious, the most representative works produced in fin-d’siècle Italy still rely on either a sequence of set pieces, as in Cavalleria rusticana (1890), or a sense of score-based unity, as in Il Pagliacci (1891). 28

The adjective “young” was invented by Boito himself in the translation he published in La percorrenza and other periodicals of the Breif on an event indicative Italian, now to him by Wagner on 2 November 1871 in response to an enthusiastic letter about the premieres of L’elisir d’Amore in Bologna.


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 is opera: symphony is symphony,” Verdi had written to Count Arnaldo Bardi in 1884, criticizing the Internazionali a Le Ville. 29 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 Leibowitz asserted that “the first act reveals, on many levels, the principles of Wagnerian throughput-composition,” 30 and attempted to describe it as a symphony in four movements. 31 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 [H]); B, mm. 12-25 (up to 2 after [H]); transition, mm. 26-31; A", mm. 32-41 (up to [H]); coda, mm. 42-53 (up to [H])
Second theme group in the relative minor, mm. 54-118
“Vive sara” (Edoardo) and concertino (up to 4 before [H])
Development, mm. 180-257
“Bia: Misericordia virtuosa” (staccato), up to [H]
Abbreviated and varied recapitulation (f-sharp-A), mm. 258-302
Second theme group, mm. 303-377
“Danze bianche e folli” (up to [H])
First theme group, mm. 378-505
B, “E splendendo ed irromente,” mm. 379-411 (up to [H]); revision, “Tutto ricorda” (with [H]); A, mm. 402-505 (up to 13 after [H])

Leibowitz then pointed out a “slow movement,” starting from the entrance of the carriage (13 after [H]), a “scherzo” in the exchange between Lescaut

31. Michel Carrere identified the live action of the opera as being in scherzo form (Carrere, 317). Further on (1949) he explained that De Grois’s sextet constitutes the trio of the scherzo, and that the greeting song just following it is the same form. Annali, Times, 3-2 decades later, identified the eighteenth-century scene at the start of the second act as a four-movement focus; see its Front d’arte: Puccini e il fenomeno del melodramma (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 17.
and Geronte (from [75]), and a finale from Manon's reappearance (31). Despite some inevitable strain, his remarks can be verified objectively. The act 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 off-stage corner fanfares (3a after 23), which first announce the carriage and then, with other melodies, recall Des Grieux's falling in love. The sense of organicism is also produced by the orchestral style. Leibowitz again:

The task of thematic development in this scene (the first movement of the "symphony"), except in the arias ("Te va, bell'"), is amplified as much in the vocal parts as to the orchestra. It is clear that the composer had no intention of threatening the purely-lyrical structure with symphonism. In such cases, the thematic material employed in the opera is set out in a clear system of relationships, one that ties characters to the situations they experience and their relative states of mind. The music, liberated from simple narrative necessities, serves to create sophisticated symbolic associations. One example is the brief passage in which a broadest chromatic theme in the orchestra identifies the Treasurer General Geronte de Ravois as an artful schemer (Ex. 3.1b). 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. 3.1a), but it nevertheless emphasizes the girl's instinctive cynicism:

Example 3:

\[ \text{Music notation} \]

Leibowitz, Storia dell'opera, 348.

In addition to motivic continuities connecting various moments 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, these leitmotifs are varied in rhythm, harmony and orchestration to produce a musical analogy to the developments of the action.

33. Ashbrook has shown that Puccini himself wrote the title "Scherzo" as the opus number to the music of the page corresponding to no. 37 in Act I, starting from the string theme in D minor (The Opera of Puccini, 166). He especially recalls Shaw's review of the London premiere of Manon Lescaut in 1893, where the famous dramatico noted that "The firm sonata also is a melancholy symphonic development, and occasionally combination of the thematic materials, all in a symphonic way, but also is a musically homogeneous way. "The more obvious explanation for Puccini's use of the name "Scherzo" is the main theme of this scene (see below, Ex. 3.1a) which comes from the final part of a quartet dating back to his student years in Lucua, and transcribed by his brother Michele at a piano sheet for his handle Giacomo Puccini / Stecca per Archit (all most tempo del Quarteto in Bb / Studioso per piano a quattro / A Mihch Puccini / Lucua Ottobre-Novembre 53) (photograph in the Puccini Museum in Celle). See Schlesing, "Giacomo Mimmo Brilli", 89, and Julian Budden, "Manon Lescaut: Del monsignor all'opera", in: Manon Lescaut (Milan: Tassini alla Scala—RCS 1998, program book).

34. Leibowitz, Storia dell'opera, 348.

35. In addition to motivic continuities connecting various moments 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, these leitmotifs are varied in rhythm, harmony and orchestration to produce a musical analogy to the developments of the scene.
Such passages clearly show how the entire opera gravitates around the heroine, who is depicted with almost embarrassing crudity: in these two excerpts the enormous power of money is linked to the fascination of youth for sensual pleasures, to one who has been bought, but not yet tamed. This further reinforces the principal interpretative key to the plot: everything happens because Manon can control neither her love for luxury nor her erotic computations.

In the extensive gallery of Puccinian 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 Amiens:

Example 3.2, Manon Lescaut, I, from 13 after 22

Manon's theme (Ex. 3.40) springs from the sequence of chords heard in Example 3.3 (Verdi's woodwinds and chorus). Her theme lends itself to citation and variation through its flexible melodic shapes (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' expression of curiosity ("vediam!", "let's see!") and appreciation of luxury ("Viaggiatori eleganti... Gallanti!", "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. 3.30), and the pulsating phrase with which he addresses the girl (Ex. 3.38), which from now on represents his romantic love, 37 are both based on the motive associated with Manon's name (Ex. 3.40):

Example 3.3

a. Manon Lescaut, I, 3 before II

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. 3.48) 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 recurs also in the duet, at the words "E in noi l'aprio" (ex. 1.7, before 31). Carrier suggests that insufficient differentiation between the two lovers is "one of the chief weaknesses of the opera" (Carrier, 35), 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 Guastalla's recitative and aria "Mia cara signora", in his setting of a section of Romani's libretto La vedova di Misuric (1848), which he had written in June (1878) as a diploma piece for the Milan Conservatory. The melody comes from the opening of the A-decrescendo, "E il nome che mi resti" (Ex. 2.1), and is the same as Des Grieux's solo, with more reserved as the symbolism required. In this recitative, Puccini cleverly intended to emphasize the instrumental motive rather than the vocal phrase, in order to stress the relationship to Manon's theme.
In Act II, sequence B (which connects the "Manon" theme to that of Des Grieux) reappears slightly varied in the heroine's aria (Ex. 3.59), just as the position of the semitone in Manon's theme is varied in the very first measures of "In quelle trine morbide" (Ex. 3.56)—although the overall shape of the melody is the same, descending as it does through a tetrachord and coming to rest on the dominant:

Example 3.5
a. Manon Lescaut, II, 5 after [B]

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. 3.6a). It moves from the voices to the orchestra in the intermezzo (Ex. 3.6b), and reappears in the concluding passage of Act III as the two embrace before boarding the ship for America (III, 25). Finally, it returns like a su\-rage (Ex. 3.6c) just before those isolated chords introduce desperate, lonely awareness in the aria "Sola, perduta, abbandonata":

Example 3.6
a. Manon Lescaut, II, 6 before [B]

b. Manon Lescaut, IV, 11 before [B]

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. 3.1: the theme's generative cell (A) occurs in inversion in the bassoon, 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. 3.2a), in that of the courtesan (Ex. 3.2b), and in the melodic profile of the minuets (compare Exx. 3.2a and 3.2b):

Example 3.7
a. Manon Lescaut, II, 16 after [B]

b. Manon Lescaut, III, 17 after [B]
A little later the theme reappears briefly (violins and clarinets, II, (3)) with a brilliant arpeggio accompaniment of strings and woodwinds, an illusionary moment of gaiety for a Manon who believes herself free and rich. But after Geronte has had her arrested, the initial section of the intermezzo (Ex. 3.10)¹⁰ presents a chromatic, tormented variant of her melody, in which the part-writing, the sequence of sevenths, 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. 3.8).⁴⁶

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 upward 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. Premontion 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 (“Ia sete mi divora”; “thirst consumes me,” 4 after (3)), and in her last moments of life (Ex. 3.11b), where in its more chromatic variant it makes us understand that nothing remains of the heroine’s “lucciosa giovinezza” (“bright youth”) but a final, faint glimmer:

Ex. 3.7 (continued)

b. Manon Lescaut, II, 4 after (3)

Ex. 3.8. Manon Lescaut, II, 1 after (3)

Ex. 3.9. Manon Lescaut, II, (3)

Ex. 3.10. Manon Lescaut, Intermezzo Act III, beginning

Ex. 3.11b: 40

Ex. 3.11h.

Ex. 3.12b

Ex. 3.12h

Ex. 3.11g

Ex. 3.11f

Ex. 3.11e

Ex. 3.11a

Ex. 3.11d

Ex. 3.11c

Ex. 3.11b

Ex. 3.11a

Ex. 3.10

Ex. 3.9

Ex. 3.8

Ex. 3.7 (continued)
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 intermezzo through B minor, while Manon’s theme passes through various tonalities (B-flat, G major, etc.) before being absorbed in the final act by F-sharp minor, the relative minor of the initial key. In recent years, such relationships have often been overlooked, 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.

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 semiotic web that corresponds to the musical structure (Ex. 3.12). 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.

Example 3.12

a. Wagner Tristan and Isolde

b. Manon Lescaut, 1, 5 after 43

Puccini frequently used the half-diminished seventh in Manon, but here the reference to the Tristan chord is more direct. Here in other places in the opera, through the overlap of the violin and other instruments, the sensuous sound of the Tristan chord is also heard (Ex. 3.12b). The music is heard before Des Grieux begins the refrain “T’as mon âme,” and this doubt on his casual self-confidence. As Steven Huebner has pointed out, Manon began and ended differently in Salome, see “Massenet and Wagner: Revisiting the Influence,” Cambridge Opera Journal 11, no. 1 (1997): 149–69. In Werther, however, the French composer took a step backwards when he ingeniously revisited the melody “Pourquoi me réveiller?” set in the crook of the act, the sequence words from a musical point of view, but not from a dramatic one. Concerning knowledge of the Tristan chord in Italy, see Franchetti’s legacy for full chords from Tristan: Francesco Crovetto, from around 1868 (modern edition published by Stelvio Zocchi, Milan, 1968), where an exact quotation of the chord, transposed down a fifth, occurs in the fourth measure. It was apparently the first in a long series of quotations. The fact...
These measures infiltrate 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 achievements even while he was still developing his craft, as well as the distance that lay between him and other Italian composers then considered greater. *Manon Lescaut* is a masterpiece because Wagner’s influence has already been absorbed into compositional method, as Lichoszynski affirms:

An interest in pure symphonic elaboration is what distinguishes it from Wagnerian leitmotiv technique. And in this we see how Wagner’s influence was not 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, two other operas of the period in which a single theme develops in a similar way. In Giordano’s *Andrea Chénier* (1896) the melody of the hero’s “impromptu” song (“Un di di afflizione spezial”) in Act I has an important role. Furthermore, the poet is the central figure of the plot, and so 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:

The brilliant orchestral writing, embellished by touches of carillon and frequent accelerandi, makes it difficult to perceive the origins of this lively opening section; but although reference to the original minuets gradually

when the melody returns in the next act it merely serves to recall Andrea’s meeting with Maddalena five years previously. It is also used as a reminiscence in the third act, to introduce the soprano aria “La mamma morta,” and just before Chénier’s entrance to receive the people’s justice. An inability to control symphonic technique prevented Giordano from constructing more meaningful connections. Cilea had the same problem in *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902), when he used the melody “Io son Fumai ancella,” even though he showed greater skill by bringing into play other themes and subtly varied orchestral colors. Like Giordano, however, he was ultimately bewitched by the idea of leitmotifs, believing that it was enough to construct something functional and up-to-date, he merely achieved the dubious result of enormously extending the role of the prima donna, to the great satisfaction of those in the gallery.

Puccini’s prima donna, on the other hand, dominates the work by way of the phrase that represents her—simple but with vast implications—and in the process unleashes an intense passion that continues to overwhelm us even today.

**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 concept was that of the eighteenth century, particularly its hypocritical 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 minuettio per quartetto d’archi*, published in 1884. He derived the opera’s opening theme (Ex. 3.13b) from the second of these pieces (Ex. 3.13a). The theme then returns cyclically during the act as a sign of youth, sometimes in its entirety, sometimes merely as a generative cell (Ex. 3.13c–d), often overlapping with other melodies. The brilliant orchestral writing, embellished by touches of carillon and frequent accelerandi, makes it difficult to perceive the origins of this lively opening section; but although reference to the original minuets gradually
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 execution. 46

Although Des Grieux takes the spotlight with an ironic F major orient directed at the girls ("Fra voi bello"); 47 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: Z), as they observe at a distance, makes frequent incursions into the lyrical duet. Manon responds to the young man hesitantly, but when she asks his name an expansive chromatic 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.” 48 The entire sequence might be seen as a two-part aria, since the solo matches almost exactly the proportion of the duet, transposed from C 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 codetta 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 in 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 scheme here. The apt, rather sorrid, discussion between Locust and Ermope takes place while the men and students are busy playing cards. Employing the nineteenth-century technique of parlante, 49 this conversation takes place:

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47. The scene is originally in F-sharp major (Albano). The Opera, 45); that key fit better with the mood of the scene, in which A major and its relative minor pervade; moreover, it guaranteed brilliance in the vocal lines. On this interpretation see Julian Budden, “Puccini’s Transposition,” 6–7.

48. Parlante involves giving the main melody to the orchestra while the voices are engaged in dialogue.

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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 Edmondo, whose effervescent mood finds an outlet in the stage music. The two madrigals “Ave, serà gentile” and “Giovinetta è il nostro nome” establish in a brief but inspired passage the somber longings 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 gumbling 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 its 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 sonata (staging 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
over a busy string theme in D minor (Ex. 3.14a)—which recurs in various guises during the soloists' dialogue (Ex. 3.14b) and in the card scene—and on a second theme in the relative major (Ex. 3.14c):

Example 3.14

![Example 3.14](image)

The dramatic situations constantly overlap, but the clarifying action of the themes prevents any detail from being lost. Thus Lescaut emerges as an ambiguous figure, a man of the world seduced by the demimonde and always on the lookout for profit. The chromatic theme that suddenly heard in the orchestra (see Ex. 3.14a) underpins preparations for the abduction, which Edmondo overhears, and characterizes Geronte briefly but very effectively. The cynicism of these two is increased by contrast with the light-hearted music sung by the young people.

Everything is now prepared for a full duet between Manon and Des Grieux, one promised in their preceding encounter. Edmondo reavers 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 then 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-echoes in the cantabile the life she leads in her "casetta" ("little home"). Andante amoroso, (33). The tone is subdued, the orchestration extremely delicate: the flute plays the elegiac melody, while violin and viola thirty-second-note figures shimmer in the background, sharpened by muted 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 reprise of the principal theme, Geronte reappears accompanied by his chromatic syncopations—which give the impression of lascivious 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: this: what if for La Scala we made a radical cut in the first finale and replaced it with something for Lescaut and Geronte that would make the second act a bit clearer? (Around 20 October 1893. Gara, no. 94, 92)

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 31 January 1894. Considering its obvious functionality, in 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 Manon and a desperate Des Grieux. Therefore, from the central part of the tenor's arietta (Ex. 3.15a) he derived the flute theme on which the curtain rises in the next act (Ex. 3.15b), and also an important phrase of Edmondo's (Ex. 3.15c).

Example 3.15

![Example 3.15](image)

have been considered by some commentators as "unusually redundant" as "eighteenth-century pastiches...singularly cumbersome in the economy of an opera that involves large gaps in the chronological development of the plot." In fact, they play a fundamental role, allowing the audience to experience Manon's interior world, the one that motivates her reactions.

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

Lescaut's entrance—in the codas of the B-minor episode—causes a momentary break in the airbrushed atmosphere. The subsequent duet has multiple dramatic motivations. In the first place it reveals the fulfillment of the brother's prophecies and the ease with which he moves in this highly refined world, while at the same time explaining what has happened in the meantime to Des Grieux. But it also helps us understand the true nature of Manon's feelings, smoldering beneath her sumptuous 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 (3, 4), shows how Manon's feelings acquire greater prominence:

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<tr>
<td>0.</td>
<td>Scar</td>
<td>&quot;Sei spiritalia e lascia&quot;</td>
<td>Lescaut</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tempo l'intero</td>
<td>&quot;Una canzona argusa&quot;</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>E-flat</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Modenuto con moto</td>
<td>&quot;La qual tre tro morutde&quot;</td>
<td>Lescaut</td>
<td>E-flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Traspi di reni</td>
<td>&quot;Poichè tu vuoi...&quot;</td>
<td>Lescaut</td>
<td>E-flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Cabaletta</td>
<td>&quot;Per me in seno&quot;</td>
<td>Manon/Lescaut</td>
<td>F</td>
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The little theme that had previously accompanied the question "Geronte ore", reappears when Lescaut describes the magnificence of Geronte's "palazzo aureo" ("golden palace") (C), initiating a section dominated by Manon's solo. "In quelle tre tro morutde" ("In those soft hangings") is constructed from compact musical material and linked to previous thematic

This semantic link is simple and effective: first the fate evoked by the young man is identified with Manon, the object of his attention—Edmondo's "povero fiore" ("poor flower")—then it becomes the ultimate fate of her unhappy passion. Skilled as he was in such manipulations, Puccini had no trouble weaving in a reprise of Des Grieux's aria; and giving the aria to the students at a stage song also created a more obviously perceptible link between the two pieces of stage music, not to mention a much tighter connection between the dramatic events. "Venezzielli noicicatelli" is therefore not a neutral background, and the song further emphasizes the hypocrisy of Lescaut's remarks to Geronte (Ex. 3.15f): the doors of the "palazzo aureo" ("golden palace") are wide open, ready to welcome a thoroughly ing counterpart.

**From Classicism to Passion**

The first part of Act II depicts boudoir life. The courtesan's gallantry, their simpering and affectation, wears Manon and creates great contrast with the love duets that follow, which is dominated by real passion but at the same time contaminated by Manon's evident moral corruption. The madrigal, minuets, and pastoral song that ring through Geronte's drawing room...
Greeted by Geronte, the characters who will bring the next scene to life—dancing master, quartet players, gentlemen, and abbés—make their entrance to the accompaniment of open fifths in the strings as the players tune up. The choice of a minuet as the emblem of a rich Parisian house in the eighteenth century was all but obligatory, and Puccini here employed a formal structure that follows the traditional tripartite scheme, but adapted to the dramatic requirements. 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 two of the remaining three (Ex. 3.16c 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. 3.16e and f), Manon begins to dance. In the meantime, the simpering tutor gives her advice, and Geronte, seized with enthusiasm, is admonished by those present to "adorare in silenzio" ("adore 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

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Manon Lescaut, II, 7 after fol. 109</td>
<td>d. Manon Lescaut, II, 7 before fol. 108</td>
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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 nunicines enter to sing a madrigal. Puccini borrowed this music from the Agnus Dei of his youthful Mass (1889), lowering it by a tone and shortening it for the opera. The choice of performers—all women en travestì—is an inspired one: the mezzo-soprano soloist is accompanied by a small chamber, which interrupts 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 harping back to the poetry of Cinquecento madrigals, is full of qinserì and rernonari tranchi with rime liczé and is based on obvious erotic metaphors ("Pieno Fido"/"Caor non hai Chori in se?/Vei... gia Fido in seno... "/"Fileno weeping/"Hai Chori no heart?/See, already Fileno in expiring!")). As certain points, Puccini had fun coloring it ironically with "madrigalism" (the solo's imitation of the language, the sighing lament on ascending and descending minor seconds, the rests imitating the erotic gap of "Fileno"). The music that had been written more than ten years earlier for the Agnus Dei proved to suit the operatic situation perfectly, as if a proof of the composer's agnosticism.

54. The cadence is interpreted on an F-major music chord in second inversion (ex. before fol.), which moves down a half step to an E-major chord, also in second inversion, the last three descending from C to B. The sudden modulation from F to C is obvious both in the orchestral and the voice, and generates an effect of bewilderment.

55. The name "madrigal" is clearly used here in the sense of a vocal piece on a mythological-pastoral subject.

56. In this case too, recourse to the youthfll imnoino for string quartet is wholly appropriate. For a detailed analysis of the relationship between these pieces and the opera, see Michele Girardi, "La rappresentazione musicale dell'abbesse abbraccia..." Manon Lescaut" in Bocconi, 65–69.
After the reprise of the first section comes an A minor “trio” (Ex. 3.16). A reminiscence of this will be heard in the final moments of Manon’s agony (Ex. 3.17), as if to establish the equation love = sin = death.

Example 3.17

Manon Lescaut, II, 1 after [23]

The lesson over, the dancing master asks, “con impazienza” (“with impatience”), for a partner for Manon. Geronte comes forward and the couple, to the saccharine 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. 3.20, X with 3.16a and 3.10, Y with 3.16f), Puccini pays 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 [23]

This musical description of the dramatic event is extremely effective: Manon has already been depicted as capable of humiliating the old, affected libertine Geronte in the name of sensual love. The turning point in the action, announced by those musical signals (the most explicit of which is the Tristan chord—Ex. 3.42)—at the end of the reprieve of the moment, has been evocatively described by Fedele D'Amico, 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 mistress's dressing room, which until that moment has echoed with misfortunes. She is by now saturated with false love. It should have been an outburst of true love, with fancies of happiness. Instead the orchestral basses play loud, heavy repeating notes, and this anguished pedal supports the two parallel chords of Manon's theme (see Ex. 3.9), darkened by the minor mode: frozen, static. 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.50

"Tu, tu, amore! Tu?": these words sweep away all the affections, and begin the most inspired passage of the opera.51 The moment: Manon's 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 titillating element—a woman seducing a priest—the two lovers in the French opera lack the passionate impetus 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 faced with chromaticism; Des Grieux speaks 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. "È fatico d'amor, credi, son tua!" ("It is the bewitchment of love; yield, I am yours!")—the embrace is depicted in an a duet (Ex. 3.21), the voices joining in the melody of Des Grieux's aria (compare Ex. 3.38). After reaching high $B$ at the climactic moment, Des Grieux gently lowers Manon onto the sofa, while a half-diminished seventh (enharmonically altered; Ex. 3.22) again alludes to the Tristan chord:

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 abbandonata"

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 imposing 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 impatiently humiliates the old baronet, comparing his senility to their 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. 32), based on a brief theme developed in fugato style, begins in the orchestra and accompanies Manon's arrest.52


51. See Guido Pardini's comparison of Puccini's novel and the operas of Aubert, Montrouge, and Puccini, beginning from this detail in the dramatic action, in "Tu, tu, amore tu," in his II pers di vita (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1992), 87–108.

52. Franz Schubert used a stylized form of the tarantella in his composition of a scene of tragedy in the edù del diavolo in $D$ minor, "Death and the Maiden" (D. 320) and the piano polonaise in $C$ minor (D. 828).
The intermezzo introduces the resolution 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. 3.10), 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 3.23. 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, 16 after [23] 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. 3.68) 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 leitmotif, 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 words acquires a contradictory meaning in light of all that has happened since. The lamplighter’s song increases the tension, heightening expectation of an impossible escape, but a gunshot tells us of the failure of Lescaut’s plan; people rush into the square, anxious to know what has happened.

The concluding part of the act blights on the great embankment scene. Thanks to Illica, Puccini had solved the problem of transforming a static concertato into an action piece, as Verdi had unsuccessfully tried to do in Act III of Otello.61 The Manon finale might be described as follows:

0. Semplice Allegro vivo “Alla marina” (chorus, [23])
1. Tempo d'intenso Allegro vivace “Estate!—E l’aria!” (Serg., [21])
2. Concorso Largo sonante “Adorati!—In the air!” (Serg., [21])
Sostenuto “And guardate!—Ah!” (Des Grieux, 1 before [22])
3. Tempi di mezzo Allegro dolce “Perdono, zio?” (Serg., 2 after [23])
4. Stretta Largo sonante “Guardami, parlate son!” (Des Grieux, [27])

61. In the Act III concertato initiated by Des Grieux ("A terra!... sei lìda l'infamia") the supreme quality of the music prevails, as do the demands of the close counterpart of

After the sputurito tempo d'attacco, the central section of the ensemble—the sergeant’s roll call, declaimed over an orchestral theme in E-flat minor (Ex. 3.24a)—functions as a prelude 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 sympathize with the heroine’s fate, and while there are salient 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 sighs, Lescaut continues trying to persuade, the procedures continue to pass. On the repeat of the Tempo I, the theme is heard, a sign of the lovers’ desperate resignation (Ex. 3.24b).
As the curtain rises, the second theme of the elegy Crisantemi (IV, 8 before II; see Ex. 3.4b) accompanies the two lovers as they drag themselves across the desert. Manon, doubled by 2 violas, sings an augmented threnody—a moment of final, loving intimacy (IV, 5 before II); then the orchestra sustains her with funeral timpani rolls, punctuated by bass drum, tam-tam, and snare drum rolls. Manon'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 love spent: "In­minente giovinezza" ("Luminous youth"; see Ex. 3.11b): the music that accompanied her dances in Geronte's salon returns to bring her sins jarringly to mind (see Ex. 3.17a).

But the cornerstone of this finale is Manon's aria, sung after she has sent Des Grieux in a vain search for help. "Sola, perduta, abbandonata" reaches the frightening dramatic intensity of a very real confession. As the heroine declaims 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 she invokes it serenely as an "au lite de piacere" ("refuge of peace"); then her voice rises up to the higher register, surrounded by string tremolo:

Example 3.15. Manon Lescaut, IV, 3 after II

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 Manon and late melodrama, for in the latter death is the only possibility for individuals oppressed by power to

46. While Verdi often explored recurring rhythmic themes to characterize death, this technique is rare in Puccini. Here the bass drum, tam-tam, and timpani mark the main beats, while the snare drum has triplet thirty-second notes on the offbeats. The model for this rhythmic texture is the Maestra Passione, the second movement of Beethoven's Third Symphony ("Eroica").

47. The aria is in F minor, while the tonality of the act is F-sharp minor, and the short orchestral introduction is in the minor tonality, G-flat major. The distinct of the som­no­me might respond to a need to give a specific color to the solo, allowing it to stand out still further.
realize their legitimate earthly aspirations. "Ma lasso ci vedremo in un mondo migliore" ("But there up above we will know a better world") sings Carlo and Elsabetta in Don Carlo. "O terra addio; addio, vale di piani..." ("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 morit" ("I do not want to die"). The Puccini 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 anguish-tinged, sensual 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... (sigh) ... trar)gerà l'oblio,
ma l'amor mio... non muore... My sins (sincerely) will be swept away by oblivion, but my love will not die.

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**La Bohème:**

*The Poetic Reality*

"Ah bien, je dis que nous ne devons plus ci Fani ni jamas songes a ces fausses choses que nous n'avons pas fait creer et avec un monde uniquement pour saccifier notre existence a ces Manons voluptueuses, et que le chevalier Desgrisant qui est si beau, si vrai et si pitoyable, ne se soucie du ridicule que par sa passion et par les Manons qu'il avait sa conserver. A vingt ans, il peut encore sa青春aux amis sans craire d'etre interesse; mais a vingt-cinq ans il aurait mis Manon a la porte, et il aurait eu raison." 1

**Ilica, Giacosa, and Puccini**

The end of spring 1891 brought the first contact between two men of letters who were destined to form one of the most famous pairs of librettists a composer ever had at his disposal. Librettist pairs were common in France (Barabas and Carré for Faust and Contes d'Hoffmann, Meilhac with Halévy for Carmen and with Gille de Massenet's Manon, to name just a few), but only Puccini and Mascagni regularly collaborated with such partnerships in Italy. Puccini's three best librettos—La Bohème, Tosca, and Madame Butterfly—were provided by Ilica and Giacosa, and after the latter's death in 1906 the composer tried to recapture the successful creative collaboration by finding a replacement. 2

Born at Castell'Acquato in the province of Piacenza, Luigi Ilica (1857-1919) played a role in the fin-de-siècle world of Italian opera similar to

---

1. "Well, I say that neither of us should think about such trumpery, that we weren't created and put on this earth just to adorns one existence to such commonplaces. Manon and that drivel Desgrisant, who is so handsome, so true and so poetic, it's only heard from absurdly by your youths and his cherished illusions. At the age of twenty, he can follow his inclinations without incurring so much interest that he would have chosen Manon the door, and quite rightly too." Henri Murger, *Sopr la vie de Bohème* (Paris: Gallièrard, 1881), 376.

2. In a letter to Ricordi dated 4 February 1915, Puccini admitted his having said: "I am much taken with Iliaci, and Iliaci would also accept him as a partner. I was thinking of revising some of the Giacosa duos" (Barber, *Puccini*, 196). In all of the opera after Butterfly except Gianni Schicchi and Suor Angelica, Puccini had at least two collaborations: La rondine, by Adami, used a scenario by Willett and Robertson; and Gianni Schicchi was rewritten by Darío Niccolini. Mascagni collaborated with Mascagni and Turati, together with Meilhac, for six of his fifteen operas.
Scribe's *grand opéra*. Before devoting himself exclusively to librettos he wrote, he became a noted poet. In their collaboration, he and Puccini rediscovered and renewed librettos, creating a new kind of verse,"


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 versi tranché,” since he had “a rhythmical 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ theme; Puccini had no trouble finding the gutteri tranché into two accents per measure.

Albeit not as fanatic a defender of the rights of poetry as Fontana, 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, 149):

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 not yet having fun in there. Musetta sings the lyrics from Act II. The accords must be in this meter: quaternari tranchè. Four lines. For example:

Not non dormiamo  
sempre beviamo  
facendomi l’amar  
gossefiam traciè. 5  

Later on, both librettists grew accustomed to the composer’s whims, resigning themselves to his sudden changes of mind. While versifying **Toua**, 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. (6 July 1896; Gara, no. 126, 149)

Whereas Illica was an extremely quick worker, Giacosa liked to take his time, polishing every detail. He often vested his frustration on Ricordi at being obliged “to re-do, revise, add, correct, cut, reduce and expand, without only to conclude there” (Gara, no. 123, 175), 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 versi and accents” (Giacosa to Ricordi, 20 June 1895; Carner, 96).

8. In the score this becomes “Tralleri: / Tralleri: / Fou e Not.”

The secret of this little group of collaborators was the sincere respect each had for the others. They worked under the ever-watchful eye of Gualtiero Ricordi, who ensured the necessary equilibrium in every situation, and could therefore later claim his own role:

“We all have clear conscientious; we worked from the heart, without any preconceptions, serenely enveloped in the pure atmosphere of art. You will excurse me if I say "we" and not "they." To me it seems that this beautiful Bohème is, if not like a daughter to me, at least a little like a goddaughter. (Ricordi to Illica, 15 February 1896; Gara, no. 157, 143)

**FROM A FRIED TO A LIBRETTO**

Immediately after I **Muské**, the same composer (Leoncavallo) will stage another opera, **La Bohème**, whose subject is taken from Meger’s novel of that name.

This opera, on which our good composer has worked for some months, will be given next year, 1894. (Il Secolo, 13–14 March 1893)

Maestro Leoncavallo wishes to make known that he signed a contract for the new opera, and has since then been working on the music for that subject (La Bohème). 5. — Maestro Puccini, to whom Maestro Leoncavallo declared a few days ago that he was writing **Bohème**, has confided only on returning from Turin a few days ago did he have the idea of setting La Bohème, and that he spoke of it to Illica and Giacosa, who, he says, have not yet finished the libretro. Thus Maestro Leoncavallo’s priority over this opera is indisputably established. (Il Secolo, 23–24 March 1893)

From Maestro Leoncavallo’s declaration in yesterday’s Il Secolo the public must understand my complete innocence [see note at end—editor’s note]; for, to be sure, if Maestro Leoncavallo, for whom I have long felt great friendship, had confided to me earlier what he suddenly made known to me the other evening, then I would certainly not have thought of Margret’s Bohème.

Now—for reasons easy to understand—I am no longer inclined to be so courteous to him as I might have, either as friend or musician. After all, what does this matter to him? Let him compose, and I will compose. The public will judge.

Precedence in art does not imply that identical subjects must be interpreted by identical artistic ideas.

I only want to make it known that for about two months, namely since the first performances of **Manon Lescaut** in Turin, I have worked earnestly on my idea, and made no secret of this to anyone. (Carriere della Sera, 24 March 1893)
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. As 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 artistically.

At the same time, however, there are good reasons for believing the main points of Leoncavallo's account of events in Il Sordò, 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, feigning surprise, seized the opportunity to state his own, similar intentions. It is perfectly plausible that Puccini, an omnivorous reader, had already considered Murger's work; but he had almost certainly not yet made the decision, as Leoncavallo had, to set it to music. Once again, as had happened with Massenet's Mammé, 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 theatre during the composer's lifetime. Neither Puccini nor Ricordi refrained from underhand methods. While occupied with coordinating details in the newspapers, Ricordi had 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 play in a letter to Illica, from which source we also learn that the Illica had already prepared a reply—most likely the commissione that appeared in the Carriere—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,

10. For more detailed discussion of the battles between opposing factions, see the chapter on Madame Butterfly.

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 Carriere—for publication.

I believe that to stay silent is to appear demure—unfortunately, 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. 11

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. (Gari, no. 83, 82–83)

Leoncavallo's behavior was understandably 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 Bohème 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 authors. Have you received the novel? Send for the French version. I urge you: the gauzy curtain has been thrown down and the challenge taken up. Leoncavallo writes to me from Venice that he will have to battle against two obstacles you and Giacosa, and that now he is going to study the background of the "Latin Quarter" (Gari, no. 83, 83) 11

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

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11. The date suggested by the editor, February 1893, is a printing error that should be corrected to March 1893. That month, Sonzogno managed two theaters for the Leoncavallo season at Venice, La Fenice and San Benedetto. Leoncavallo was probably too busy to supervise these performances.
transforming "mademoiselle Locilie, surmamed mademoiselle Mimi" into a romantic young girl. In the novel she is married to Rodolphe, but treats him badly and is often unfaithful, either through necessity or for pure pleasure.

The librettist paid great attention to detail, if not quite as much as Leoncavallo. Ideas large and small were taken from eleven chapters, from the name of the magazine for which Rodolfo writes (Le Courrier), to the Café Monna where the group meet, and the Bal Mobile visited by Benoît. There is also the manuscript of Rodolfo's play Le Vingtième, which burns several times over (chapter 6), the title of Marcello's painting (Le Passage de la Mer rouge) and many phrases and short passages transferred almost literally. One example is the second couplet declaimed jokingly by the painter in the concluding story, "La Jeunesse m'a quitté temps," from which the librettist's verses in the Act II conceit reprise of the opera are taken:

Non me jeunenne d'est pas morte,
La giovinezza mia non è ancor morta
Il n'est pas morte tout souvenir;
N è di te more è il sovvenire.

Ex e tu frappier à me porte,
Se e tu battes a la mia porta
Mon couレ, Musette, ti lasci ower,
C'andrebbe il mio cuore ad aprir.

The idea of the candle being blown out by a puff of wind, the lost key, and the muff to warm the ailing Mimi's hands were provided by chapter 9; the title of Marcello's painting is often declaimed jokingly by the painter in the concluding story, "La Jeunesse m'a quitté temps," from which the librettist's verses in the Act II conceit reprise of the opera are taken:

This was the motive of the la cédre, of the candle being blown out by a puff of wind, the lost key, and the muff to warm the ailing Mimi's hands were provided by chapter 9; the title of Marcello's painting is often declaimed jokingly by the painter in the concluding story, "La Jeunesse m'a quitté temps," from which the librettist's verses in the Act II conceit reprise of the opera are taken:

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Se e tu battes a la mia porta
Mon couレ, Musette, ti lasci ower,
C'andrebbe il mio cuore ad aprir.
thor of candide, had helped Murger attain success in La Vie de Bohème by eliminating all the 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 " pièce en cinq actes médié de chant." Alexandre Dumas fils’s episodes—from which Pave drew Verdi’s La traviata—had been considered immoral, and were blocked by the censors; although not published until 1841, they circulated in the meantime throughout: Parisian literary society. Barrère’s model is thus so evident as to be incontestable. Mimì, a kind-hearted courtesan 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 Romony, a young and respectable widow. It is a union greatly advantageous to Rodolfo’s uncle, the businessman Durandin, the “zio milionario” mentioned by Rodolfo in the opera. Like Germont père, he is the cause of the separation of his nephew and the young grizette. Everything is resolved in the last act, but only in the final measures does Durandin try to remedy the harm he has done Mimì, giving the marriage his blessing just as the girl dies.

Barrère and Murger could copy Dumas, living as they were in an environment where topical plots were widely exploited, 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 stereotyped dramatic formulas (one thinks of the earliest example, Alfred de Musset and his Mimì Fison). What is more, in adapting 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 Champfleury. This loss meant that Puccini’s opera was less bound to historical fact, and became more a type of systematic decision-making. Its universality 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 facetiously identifying La Bohème with their recent youths.

The merit of devising the operatic plot from the Scènes de la Bohème lies with Illica, who was immediately charged by Ricordi with adapting the novel for the stage. He worked skillfully and to pleasing deadliness. Then the two librettists began a steady collaboration. The original plan envisioned a structure different from that of the definitive version. The first act was divided into two scenes, entitled "In soffitta" [In the attic] and "Al quartiere latino" [In the Latin Quarter] respectively; the second act, “La barriera d’Enfer” [The tollgate at the boulevard d’Enfer], then became what is now the third act; the fourth act, again “In soffitta,” concluded the opera as we now know it. Between these last two, an episode entitled “Il cortile della casa di via La Bruyère” [The courtyard of no. 8 La Bruyère Street] constituted Act III. Here, in order to justify the final farewell scene between Mimì and Rodolfo, the librettists developed an idea from chapter 6 of the novel—“Mademoiselle Musette”—depicting a great party hosted by Musette (evicted by her lover) in the courtyard of her house. In this scene the viscount Paul—a scene only remaining trace in the opera is Rodolfo’s phrase in Act III, “Un moscatello d’Ali Visconti o la fia Focciola di trigilia” (“A foppish viscount makes eyes at her”) and Musetta’s in the following, “Intesi dire che Mimi, fuggita dal Viscontino era in fin di vita” (“I heard it said that Mimì, having fled from the viscount was dying”)—arouses Rodolfo’s furious jealousy by attracting the attention of the fiddle Mimi. But this kind of scene, one actually set by Leoncavallo, offended Puccini’s implacable sense of form, and he eliminated it despite his librettists’ 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 Giulio Ricordi often intervening with useful advice. He suggested, for example, that in Act III Musetta sing from outside the walls previously heard at the tables in front of Café Momus; moreover, he insisted that Illica, who had a passion for accumulating theatrical decorum, eliminate the excess of detail and realistic directions that he had crammed into the original, thus allowing the opera to assume its much-praised conciseness.12 Illica, in turn, also played a vital role in the symbolic rewording. Given the difficulties of the Latin Quarter act, he went so far as to prepare a diagram of...
the stage, which he sent to Ricordi together with the redrafted libretto requested by Puccini “in order to separate the bohemians” (February 1894: Garia, no. 98, 99). 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: (Marcello, Schaunard, and Colline enter the Café Mimos, but come not quite quickly, irritated by the great web surrounding vaguely inside. They carry out a table and a water follows them, not in the least inaudible at their wanting to dine outside...)

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

Given the current climate of bad faith among our enemies and critics, our satisfaction is a little too naïve, believe me! And to leave the bohemians sitting at a little table for an entire act, dining like this without even a single word in the libretto to justify it, is—believe me again—a good weapon for such gentlemen not to take it up. (To Giulio Ricordi, 7 December 1895 [7; Garia, no. 147, 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 lump 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 Murger’s Mimi either! (February 1894: Garia, no. 101, 99–100)

Illica’s unanswerable 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 Murger’s book is precisely that...

Illica’s scruples were addressed by Puccini to Ricordi, 13 July 1894: Garia, no. 108, 109. The process of seeing La bohème and reducing it to the preceding year (see Puccini’s note of 8 April 1894 to Verga, published in Margherita Alcione, “Lettraro di Giacomo Puccini,” QP 5 [1990], 236. “Now I'm working on La Bohème—yes, I hope that it will go quickly—later, or simultaneously, I want to have a new one about two stories, which I've been thinking about for some time already”). On this topic, see Maresca Scipioni, “Verga, Puccini, and La Bohème,” Musical studies 44 (1986), 61–76 and Luciano Chosatti, Puccini, Verdi e La bohème: Crónica di una collaborazione marcata,” in Messa nome e generi: Studi per Padre D’Erbalirio, ed. Agustino Zilani, Quaderni della Rivista italiana di musicologia 15 (Ferrara: Olschki, 1996), 541–52.
the herring lunch 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 vain.

(October 1893; Gara, 133, 126–17)

Puccini’s music reveals none of this complex, tortuous dramatic genesis. His masterpiece flows smoothly, passing in a flash like the youth of its characters, a group of friends living in close symbiosis. For this, the composer did not want star singers for the world premieres of his Turin’s Teatro Regio, 1 February 1893,21 but rather a cast that would work well together on stage, from Cesira Ferrari (Mimi) to Camilla Patsini (Musetta), Evaro Gorga (Rodolfo), Teate Wiltmatt (Marcello), Michele Mazzara (Colline), and Antonio Pail-Costi (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 concertato 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 Berserto (Gazzetta Fiornrrante) 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 typically defined in Italian dictionaries as “the hand-to-mouth existence of individuals who are ill-fitted 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 (1880–85), at the height of the Scapigliatura movement, and in the years immediately following.22 He evoked this situation in a letter to his “best

21. Puccini was not too enthusiastic about the choice of Turin, “first, because the theatre’s sonorities are too dull, second because they don’t ensure them, third because it’s too close to the Million… I’m not at all happy that the premier will be given in Turin, not at all!” (To Ricordi, October 1893; Gara, no. 133, 115).

22. Claudia Santini’s observation about the provenance of the opera’s opening theme (see Ex. 1.30) from Puccini’s 1881 diploma not piece Capriccio defsusie, as “a falling back on his own expression, the only expression possible for him of a similar spiritual climate” (Puccini, 175), is persuasive.
only as it is today, talk of its natural beauty may seem obscure. At that time, however, the countryside around Massaciuccoli 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 Macchiaiuoli but other, more celebrated ones such as Fantoni and Lega, were charmed by the spot, and visited now and then. On arriving, Puccini found the painters already happily absorbed in local life, and—though he had not yet achieved his considerable fame—his charm as a “great artist” immediately made an impact on the close-knit environment.

Pagni and Puccini quickly became friends, and, despite the composer’s natural reserve, began to paint in the visiting Giovanni Gramani’s “wooden 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, patronized mainly by the little group of artists. After hunting and fishing with them, Puccini would inflect 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 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 session’s greetings to you, to all you Torre people—to Venanzio, Lippore, Diego, Boccia, Sünchi, to the coots, to the large ladies, good Lord, don’t let me think about it. To Signor Ugoeno and Signora Ma., if they are also still there. We’re all very well indeed. I hope to visit in March. Cicio al tavolo con patata alle minestre del cameroccio.” 24 (12 December 1892; Marchetti, no. 153, 172)

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, or 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 Macchiaiuoli at Torre del Lago was really successful or prosperous, but all were ready for love at any time, and to transform it into romantic formures. For Puccini, the well-to-do artist still susceptible to memories of his immediate past, it was like having a live model for his drama, a slice of life ready to be wrapped in music.

When poor Gramani had to emigrate to South America in 1894 (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, christened 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. Cecca was ‘Marcello,’ I was ‘Colline,’ Giacomo—needless to say—‘Rodolfo,’ and the others ‘the merry company.’” 25

The “Cecca” 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 “mop” (“tovaglia”), “opera” (“viper”), “lombardino” (“housepainter”)—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 matinées 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 Orselini, a pedant as ostentations as the philosopher Colline, who is prone to Latinizing even at the Café Momus.

As a mark of respect for Murger’s work, Iliaca and Giacomo called the opera’s four parts “quadri” (“pictures”) rather than acts. The obvious reference to pictorial art in Murger’s work lives on in this formal denomination, which also emphasizes Puccini’s real-life relationship with the painters. 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 Schaussard, who at the beginning of the novel is compassing a piano with an out-of-tune D and exclaims, “Il est faux comme Judas, ce R! (“It is as false as Judas, this D!”). 26 In the second act of the opera, Schaussard utters an analogous phrase—“Falco questo R!” (“This D is false!”)—while urging our hero 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 (II). Pagni recalls for us the moment La Bohème was finished:

23. Marcello and Pagni, Giacomo Puccini, 61. This assertion contains a good deal of truth, which is borne out transcends the easy hindsight and inevitable biographical.
24. Murger, Scenes de la vie de Bohème, 46.
That night, while we were playing cards, Giacomo was at the final measures. "Silence, boys," he said suddenly, "I've finished." He left the cards, drawing around him. "Now, I'll let you hear, start again at—..This finale is good." He began at Mimì's final song, "Senza addormentarmi...."

As Puccini played and sang this music, made up of pauses, suspensions, staccato touches, 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 Mimì's death struck, a shiver ran through us and not one of us could hold back his tears. That delicate girl, our "Mimì," was lying cold on the poor little bed, and we would not more hear her good and tender voice. The vision then appeared to us: "Rodolfo," "Marcello," "Schunard," "Colline" were images of us, or "our" reincarnations, "Mimi" was our lover of some time or some dream, and all this agony our very own agony.²⁸

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 his surgita bohemienne existence in the Milan years, and was now reenacting 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. Foschi 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 relieved there, and able to be with you. [January 1896, Gara, no. 154, 135]

After having fired La Bohème in an ineludible artistic image, Puccini was drawing away from it in order to turn his attention to the singer Flavia Tosca, and the wicked environment of papal Rome at the start of the nineteenth century.

The "Club La Bohème" was over.

TOWARD THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A NEW STYLE

The poetry and dramatic peculiarities of La Bohème libretto demand that the music adhere with great naturalness to a plot that, except for the

²⁷. It was Puccini's habit to compose surrounded by confusion, a predilection shared with Richard Strauss; their most notorious instance in this was, of course, Marnie.

²⁸. Mussi and Pagni, Giacomo Puccini, 72-73.

passionate effusions of Rodolfo and Mimì, 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 element) to La forza del destino, that vast fresco animated by caricatures such as Preziosilla, the grotesque Fra' Melitone and the scold peddler Trabuco.

Verdi's La forza was, unique in operas until that time, had revealed to Puccini how topical, everyday elements could be translated without damage to the basic tensile of opera. But it was from Falstaff that Puccini drew the ideas that enabled him to realize his poetic vision of reality in La Bohème. The music of Verdi's last masterpiece traces the action in minute detail, avoiding any suggestion of naturalism, but leading 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 "Civile Scuola" 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 very 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 "numbers" became completely detached from the connective 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 rushing past at lightning speed, or rather at the speed of real events, never falling back into the safe haven of set pieces.

Verdi's final masterpiece, which is in essence no more than a rapid succession of recitatives and arioso, probably confirmed to Puccini the best way of evading the restrictions of opera divided into arias, duets, and concert, while remaining within the Italian tradition and creating a unified and coherent organism. In La 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 imminent, even in the most poetic moments. The passionate phrase “O dolce viso di mite circonvuota 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 fiancally introduces Mimi to the company, he is met with banter in Latin. The sentimental aspect emerges, without any disruption to the continuity, from a mechanism based on concrete detail, and returns to it transformed into symbol.

The comic element and its coexistence with the sentimented 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 paintings: the little "magic fire music" (I, [33] and the light sprinkled of water with which Rodolfo bathes Mimi's face (piccino, piccolo, violins with 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 "Taria la vola" evoked in the subsequent "Onore" monologue (flutes, piccolo, violins). 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 beats of Falstaff, the distinctive group of four staccato sixteenth notes that recurs 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, in this next opera Puccini relied on a different dramatic style, that 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 lyric melodies, mutable motivic cells, tonality 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

La Bohème: The Poetic Reality

Manon Lescaut, as we have seen, Puccini used a narrative technique that skillfully fused the Italian tradition of reminiscence motives with leitmotivic 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 connotation, in order to obtain further dramatic effects through multiple references, frequently using intervallic structures or metrical schemes to bring together seemingly unrelated motives. Consider, for example, the relationship between the following melodic profiles:30

Example 4.1

a. La Bohème, I, 3 after [33] (P)

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 Mimi (I, [31], 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. 4.18), 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 subtle 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 4.18 and 4.36, which refer to Golde and Schaunard; both phrases are in 4/4 (like 4.18), and show further similarities (4.36: 2 and 4.36: 2 return on many other occasions).

Let us now turn to the structure of the first part of this act, briefly sketched in the following outline.\(^31\)

\begin{align*}
\text{Act I (mm. 1-762, up to \([2])} \\
\text{Sec. 1, 1-333} & \quad \text{Sec. 2, 334-520} \\
\text{Marc., Rod., Coll. plus Schumaer} & \quad \text{plus Benoît} \\
\text{B (t 1), 6-66, E} & \quad \text{Marc., Rod., Coll., Sch.} \\
\text{B (t 2), 67-110, B} & \quad \text{P, 678-709, C} \\
\text{A, 111-195} & \quad \text{R, 710-74, C} \\
\text{A, 211-222} & \quad \text{R, 724-82} \\
\text{A, 223-30, C} & \quad \text{R, 757-80} \\
\text{C (t 3), 239-55} & \quad \text{D, 588-97, C} \\
\text{A, 334-85} & \quad \text{A, 555-69} \\
\text{D, 386-333, G} & \quad \text{E, 334-520} \\
\end{align*}

In this opening section, every character except Marcello is identified by a theme; there is even a little motive for Benoît (I). But the initial motive (A, Ex. 4.2a), 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:

Example 4.2

\text{a. \textit{La Bohème, I}, beginning (A)}

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 (B) 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 inserted the motive into recitative passages (the tumble down the stairs at I, \([2])\), 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. 4.3b); Marcello's and Mimì's meeting outside the Cabaret (III, 1 before \([2])\) and Rodolfo's awakening (III, 2 after \([2])\) are short fragments of that hard-to-manage existence, regret for the past is encoded in Mimì's desire as she separates from Rodolfo (Ex. 4.2c), 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' wild antics preceding Mimì's return to the attic.

Rodolfo's exuberant melody “Nei cieli belli” (A, Ex. 4.3b) characterizes well both his passionate vitality and his tenderness. It is heard in the flutes (I, 1 after \([2])\) 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. 4.38) and Schaunard (E, Ex. 4.39):

Example 4.3

a. La Bohème, I, 18 before \( \text{\textit{E}} \) (D)

b. La Bohème, I, 13 (C)

c. La Bohème, I, 1 after \( \text{\textit{E}} \) (D)

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 (E) originate in the orchestra. In musical terms, the free dialectic between the "cieli lapti" ("gray skies") (D) evoked by the poet and the Bohème 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 alight 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 D 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 (triads 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 also completely give way to timbre and harmony—light, scintillating figures in the upper winds and harp, divisi violin triads without bass support, and touches of triangle and carillon. This delicate fabric, broken only briefly by the intrusion of the Bohème motive, forms a backdrop for

The impression of a continuum, and the same kinds of techniques, also characterize the second section (mms. 314–320), 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 (\( \text{\textit{E}}' \)), 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, unheedng Schaunard, arrange themselves around the table and the fire. The game is interrupted by a singeong motive of parallel triads in F major, imitating the sound of a harmonica, an accompaniment over which Schaunard rapturously extols the merits of the Latin Quarter (F).

Example 4.4, La Bohème, I, 17 (F)

The illusion of real conversation before the cracking flames could not be stronger.
This is an important anticipation: the same music will return, in the same key but as a joyous fanfare (Ex. 4.4: a) during the festive clouder of the crowd at the start of the next act. The effect of characterisation is increased by the rehearsing, 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 set (see Ex. 4.4: b, recalled in the aria “Dondite lista usci,” Ex. 4.4: 16).

The Benoite 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 flautissimo-like melody32 with which the friends invite the landlord to come (H, Ex. 4.16), and the landlord’s own motive in the minor, little more than a melodic cell characterized by its dotted figure (L, p. after 213). The phrase in C-sharp minor with which Marcello begins to lead the unwanted guest into his trap (“Dica quant’ani ha,” L, 2 after 213), although heavy with irony, has a sense of real melancholy, the bitter taste of nostalgic meditation 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 Quarter theme (F) recalls the friends’ ultimate goal, thus kick-starting the action immediately after the “crescendo” motif (D) has drawn attention to Rodolfo and anticipates the unexpectedly sentimental outcome of his remaining in the house. The symmetrical conclusion of the first part of the act arrives with the cheerful reprise of the dynamic Bohème theme (A) as the three friends go down the staircase. The coordination between the episodes is thus fully articulated through formal parameters: a principal theme provides extremely dense consecutive tissue between these two-thrice episodes, and a coda offers a type of summary or recapitulation. However, such artifice does not impede the effect of spontaneous on the listener—rather, it brings out the naturalness of the narrative that animates this impudent 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; 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 lyrical expansion. When Giacosa received Illica’s first sketch for the two planned solo pieces, he dubbed them “autodissertation” (“self-portraits”): Gara, no. 104, 102: “their function was obviously an arte di versità, 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 florid thematic invention: as many as seven motives and melodies are employed here, with related variants, in the process setting up material for the subsequent act.

“Che gelida manina” is divided into four parts (mm. 912–83). In the short recitative-like section (“Chi sono?”) Schaunard’s first melody (B) reappears at the words “In povertà mia lieta scalzo da gran signore” (“In my happy poverty I squander like a fine gentleman”), an elevated, elevated, somewhat referring to his recently burned literary effort. This return to a previous event may be read symbolically, again fusing cyclic formal logic with narrative technique by the reprise of a theme. The concluding part (F) is the most lyrical (Ex. 4.16), with all the traditional elements, including a high C for the tenor—almost a madrigalism since it coincides with the word “spéranza” (“hope”).

Mimi’s aria has a more complex structure. Its opening phrase (L, see Ex. 4.7: a) is anticipated by the clarinet (L)33 as the heroicknocks at the door; so this significant melody also originates in the orchestra, only later becoming the connective tissue between different sections in a rondo-like manner. Puccini always begins Mimi’s theme on the dominant ninth of F, closing on the dominant of the home key, D major. It is a peculiarity that distinguishes the leitmotif sufficiently to isolate it from the context of those subtle feelings quietly professed in the various sections: “C’èermoglia un vaso una rosa” is similar to “Mi piacere quell’cosa,” and has the same melody; “Sola mi so” is a lighthearted interlude; at the central moment,
“Ma quando vien lo spoglio,” 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 sadilly recalling daily life; the leitmotif has the grim task of illustrating that gradual change caused by the imicable progress of Mimì's illness (see Ex. 4.4b).

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 (P, Ex. 4.14), 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 form 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 concertanta, at the end of the third act of Manon Lescaut, but this point in Le 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 (P, Ex. 4.4-4b) playing the parallel triads heard when Schaunard sang "Sei felice?" ("Are you happy?") as the love theme (P) promptly reappears. Finally the group sits down outside the Café and begins to order. The brief lyric pause allows Rodolfo to present Mimì passionately to his friends (L-O), singing a variant of his theme (P, "Dal nuc cervell schiocc to i campi"), an intimate outpouring that allows Colline and Schaunard to show off their Latin in jest to the whole Café. The toy seller Parpignol's brief interlude (II, [5]) adds another touch of refined orchestral color: divisi violin accompaniment, the backs of the boxes at the word "unfurled," rapid staccati on the xylophone, and triangle, tuned horns and trumpets. "O bella et d'imagani ed etopia" ("O beautiful age of illusions and utopias"), as Marcello describes the scene when the dialogue resumes: a realistic note that warns against euphoric 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 sections (as in the first part of Act I), dominated by the funfair symbolizing the Latin Quarter (P; often heard in varied form) and by the easy-going melody used to throw the characters' dialogue into relief (P). Furthermore, the Bohème theme (4.6) becomes part of the section dedicated to the bonnet, at the moment Marcello reacts bitterly to the romantic token of love ("Secondo il palotto è miele o seta"); "It's honey or gall, according to one's palate"):
Unlike the meeting of Rodolfo and Mimì, the episode involving Musetta 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 skilfully manipulates the rather limited melodic material to perform various functions. The capricious melody that characterizes frivolity (Ex. 4·5c), and is destined to recur with Musetta’s words (“Voglio fare il mio piacere”, “I want to do what pleases me”), is derived from the lively theme heard at her first entrance (W, Ex. 4·5d). A variant of this sketches the panting Alcindoro, who forms almost an appendix to her character (Ex. 4·5b).

Example 4.5

Puccini 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 B major, “Quando m’en vo’ solette,” which functions as stage music: a “real” song sung to seduce
Everyday Objects

Nineteenth-century opera is littered with objects; they belong to a theatrical staging practice still immersed 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 Trabucco’s merchandise, with “Forbici, spille, aspon perfetto” (“scissors, pins, perfect soap”) and various “oggetti di meschino valore” (“objects of little value”) offered to whoever passes. The wares are not characterized, since what counts is the tale, 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 Carmen also brings into the limelight a crowd of merchants, intent on hawk ing their wares. But the pièce de résistance, with its abundance of couleur locale, is part of a common dramatic technique in which collective movements function 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 “unsavory art” into an object presentable in painting, literature, or music.

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 concerto block with small sonata-like episodes; and the surroundings are not limited merely to containing couleur locale, as Mascagni’s fragment orange groves or the bells that sound Vespers in Leoncavallo’s plots Calabria, 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 Laste around that time. Dahlhaus notes that: 

Essentially, the protagonist of Laste—and even of La Bohème—is not the “heroine” whose sad fate the opera recounts but the city of Paris itself, to whom Charpentier and Puccini give a musical presence. The fact that a “sensation” becomes involved in a tragedy... is one of the associated aspects of drama, in which the location—specifically the milieu of a large city—is not simply the setting but one of the “actors”... In the

street scenes in Louise and La Bohème, the scenery is less a function of the
cast of human characters than the characters a function of the scenery.37

The array of objects in La Bohème is vast; they appear onstage, 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 iden-
tity governed by particular circumstances, but subsumes part of that identity
to the character or situation in a reciprocal relationship. To begin with, ob-
jects identify characters with their profession, from Colline's books to
Marchi's paintings and paintbrush, Schumard's horn, and Rodolfo's ink-
well and pen. Food, in many manifestations, acts as a measure of the com-
ing and goings of good and bad fortune in the four friends' lives, arriving
as an unexpected gift from Schumard in the first act, a sign of their tem-
porary 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 presages the specter
of poverty, which takes a vivid new form in the salted herring provided by
Colline. Then the philosopher's top hat becomes a bucket to hold water
that changes into "Champagne," while poker and tongs 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 least use-
ful 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 un-
varyed 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 burden 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 multicolored reality—and at the
same time a concept, that of bohemianism—which within the characters
seem like emblems. The four artists are identified as part of the precipitate

37. Carl Dahlhaus, Reborn in Nineteenth-Century Music, trns. Mary Whitrall (Cam-
bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 93.
Immediately after this, Mimì 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 debacles themselves are able to hold on to. The bonnet was sketched out at the start of Act II by Mimì's little phrase—seven notes in all: see Ex. 4.7a—when she asked her lover for the covered 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 accompagnemente (violin, 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, 7 after "

b. La Bohème, II, 6 before "

c. La Bohème, IV, "

From this moment 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 small 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 heart as though it were his beloved, dedicating it to the memory—true in itself, one of the melodic high points of the opera. And then he puts 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 X'). 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 lamentation 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 muff that is given her; it is a comfortable object, but one that lacks a past, and at the very moment it satisfies a need, it also heralds Mimì's death.
Memory and Pain

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-arioso, however, is similar. Mimì, desperately searching forRodolfo, appears after the music has described dawn over the wintry landscape of a customs point 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 D), raises the spirits of the last night owls: glasses tinkle as the dawn workers pass by. Mimì's theme, which accompanies her entrance, takes us back to the moment she first came into the attic (E) and to her temporary fantasy, the first time the music suggested her physical frailty. Puccini abruptly cuts it off in mid-phrase, 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 Mimì into the cabaret. Her reply is a question— "Is Rodolfo there?": only four notes mur- murred gently, a B-flat major triad immediately broken by the first, desperate lyric outburst ("Marcello, sii tuo!")), then a passage in minor, like a noose tightening around her throat.

Rodolfo's realization is announced by his melodies (B and F, III, m) 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 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. 4.10a), to justify his desertion to Marcello:

In this altered interval (from minor second, to fourth, y), 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 Mimì's voices mingle with Rodolfo's song, with its ultimate, tragic metaphor ("Mimì è svenuta") ("Mimì is a bothouse 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; Mimì then tries to take leave of Rodolfo with her secondaria. "Donne lieta uscita" is the
first complete essay in reminiscence music in La Bohème. In the first section the vocal line unfolds Mimì’s theme (L, from [22]), while in the second (“Ascolta, ascolta”) the melody is counterpointed by echoes of the Latin Quarter (F, Ex. 4.11; see Ex. 4.4.d) and the first aria, two sections that evoke the simpler aspects of her personality (A, 4 before [27] and Q, Ex. 4.6d, an idea we will hear again at a key moment in the finale):

Example 4.11. La Bohème, III, [22]

F: c (see Ex. 4.4)

The three themes recalled in these few measures show us how Mimì is already living in memory. Only in the final scene does her voice rise in a passionate lyrical outburst (“Se vuoi mi gridi, che mi canti?”); but the revival dies away in a murmur 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 Marcello begin the piece as a duet, “Addio dolce sogni all’alba marittima” (Farewell, sweet morning awakenings), with an intensely lyrical melody. It is useful to know the original, the maritaine “Solo 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, a after [22]

Sole e amore

It has taken me a bit of work, this wish of mine to keep to the first and then to lyricize all these little fragments [pennare]. 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 recurrences, except the little duet “Sono andati” and Colline’s Zinatella and a very few other things. (Puccini to Ricordi [November 1891]; Gava, no. 146, 133–34)

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 happy (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 memories.

The sharp impression of déjà vu is confirmed by the repeat of the theme with which the act begins; but there is none of the orchestral fragmentation we heard earlier, rather an instrumental ensemble that briskly 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, as 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 (F–X, L). Puccini is rather careful in his use of quotation here, only quoting, for example, the initial phrase of “Mi chiamano 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 forte theme finally returns to expose their inability to work (K, from [27], 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 pili non torni” begins.
As the music progresses, we gradually become aware that Rodolfo's words encapsulate the essence of the opera. "O Mimì, mia giovinezza..." Then, addressing the person, which he has taken out of his pocket: "Ah! veni sul mio cuore; potrei il mermo amor..." ("Oh Mimì, 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 reunifying the four friends in a last gesture of merriment. Again Schaumard and Colline enter, but this time the scene ingredient for the meal is a herring. There is no option but to make light of it, and to improvise some tomfoolery: a short private performance to avoid thinking about material needs. After commenting on the action with themes from Act 1, the orchestra engages in a graceful little dance suite, another (minuet and a little pavane are merely hinted at), fanfango, and finally a quadrille for Rodolfo and Marcello that finishes with the fantastic duel between Schaumard and Colline, armed with the poker and tongs 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, briskly interrupts the B-flat major tonality. Mimì has returned, as Illica wanted, to die near Rodolfo. Compare the form her leitmotif takes when she reenters the action (Ex. 4.13), with the opening phrase of her first airs (Ex. 4.13a). It is as if the melodic line and accompaniment are telling us that illness has now possessed her entirely and forever.

Example 4.13
1. La Bohème, 1. [1]

2. William郊ecnin ("The Musical Language," 59) rightly sees this recurrence as "the only instance of truly Wagnerian development... The reference to a Tristanesque sound world with its diminished and half-diminished seventh-chords (and a prominent English horn) are unmistakable."

b. La Bohème, IV, 16 before [3]

The leitmotif thus reveals that the only real event of the opera is the progressive conquest of the heroine's body by consumption. Of all the characters, Mimì is symbolic of love and youth, and 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 moments of the themes that depict Mimì'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 reconstructing a new entity—a collective memory—on the basis of the order in which the themes are restated. While Mimì is eased on to the bed, the music that accompanied her slight lapse during the first meeting with Rodolfo is heard (Ex. 4.14b), then comes the second section of her first airs, as accompaniment to Musetta's narration (Q, from II, "Dove stai?"). This gives way, with tragic effect, to the love theme (P, 7 after [3], "A far la mia famiglia...").

Puccini does not omit a single detail: at the phrase "Oh un po' di sospiro" ("I have a bit of a cough"; Ex. 4.14b) a plagal cadence takes us back to the moment in Act III when Mimì 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. 4.14a), and a very subtle reference, almost directed to the unconscious: regretful longing for her beautiful brown hair.

The first new music is Colline's "Vecchia zimarra," an aria 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
from under a cushion—"Te lo rammenti quando sona entrata la prima volta, là?" ("Do you remember when I came in the first time, there?")—M. from [55, Ex. 4.0] again the tragic opposition between past happiness and present sorrow. Mimì sings "Che gelida manna" (N. reference to the lost liberty of existence), before she falls back. Everyone rushes to the bedside, and Musetta gives her the snuff she wanted. Mimì slips her hands into it and says her last, Shakespearean words before death: "To sleep." The end is all suffering. Musetta's futile prayer, Rodolfo's vain agitation; only Schaunard perceives death, and signals it to the others.

Rodolfo is the last to understand: four first violins create a rarefied atmosphere of momentary peace, playing a few measures from Mimì's aria (Q. 3 after [13]) with an inevitable reminiscence of Violetta, Mimì's sister in illness, 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, Mimì's threnody is played by the full orchestra, with Rodolfo's final G4 desperately calling out her name. Carné saw this passage as Puccini's capitulation to verismo (Carné, 377), but it follows a logic that will also be applied to the finale of Don Pasquale, one significant theme is extended to the themes of death in the opera. This high and sometimes dazzling scene with the moving farewell the philosopher gave to the coat. Even this repetition transmits a message, communicates a sense of material parting beyond the fact that it concerns an object or a person. These are the elements of the "joyous and terrible life" conceived by Murger. The musical reminiscence reinforces the atmosphere 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 trans-

44. Carné writes or not, Puccini also referred to La tornade with his use of redshaded orchestration to imply Violetta's consummation. See La revue, the end of the prelude to Act III, the rising of the letters, right up to the heroine's final phrases, in all of which the systematic use of a small group of strings conveys the progressive grip of the illness on her.

45. William Aris ("The Musical Language," 83) maintains that this should be seen as a minor elevation of the final tenor; he believes more: how the same progression is present at the end of Mimì's aria ([I—II—I—II—II—II]). Although percussive, the connection is indirect in fact that the cadence is set on the notes of the scale in Puccini's time, functional harmony did not have many followers.

46. Carné (377, n. 13) suggests that the recital of the cadence from Colline's aria is used for the sake of the melodic movements and the musical expression, while Arthur Génés suggests much more sensitive to Puccini's dramatic reasoning when he reminds us, "To the final measures of the opera, the clause of Mimì's "Soona Audra?" will blend with his 'Voci che immortali' in the final act to the people's path" ("The Librettists," in Puccini: La Bohème, 79).
matic end has been marked by Mimì's death. Liberated from the constraints of conventional narrative, we can see the metaphorically weight of a tragic event that interrupts the flux of time so sharply.

Rereading the Muter 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 allowed no time for reflection: the tragedy halts the action and fixes their sadness in the infinity of art, allowing La Bohème 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 Mimì's death he too had finally, permanently, taken leave of his youth.

Tosca: Rome between Faith and Power
Sadistic cruelty has been given a licence by many modern political regimes, and fascism, specifically, provided it with a justification. Puccini anticipates the 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 entered 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 Poirier'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 different 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 absolute precedence over all the rest:

"I'm thinking about Tosca! I implore you to do everything necessary to obtain Sardou's permission before abandoning the idea—that would grieve 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. (Gara, no. 31, 31–32)"

Ricordi wasted no time in contacting Emanuele Mussio, the firm's representative 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...
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 mistrusted him quite disgracefully. Sardou is above all a businessman, 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 opera of it. But he would like to know what fee Puccini suggests; 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 rights or of the hiring out of the score for Italian theatres, which he would reserve 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, leaving made inquiries with Sardou’s agent in Italy. I flatter myself that he will give Puccini first refusal, but be aware that he will not give it up for a few thousand francs; he will want to be paid handsomely. The Bern treaty has secured him ownership of _Tosca_ in Italy. Since I had read in _Flotteman_ that Musset’s heirs already intend to sue over Puccini’s _Edgar_, 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.

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 them on, Ricordi at least had first refusal of the adaptation.4 Puccini, meanwhile, offered for _Manon Lescaut_, showing _Tosca_ in spirit of the fact that between February and March 1889 he had seen two performances of Sardou’s play (in Milan and Turin) with Sarah Bernhardt, the creator of the role. Strangely, these performances, though drawing huge crowds, did not inspire him to begin the new opera, as would happen with many of his twentieth-century works. Perhaps he was influenced by the negative critical reception of the play, of which Sardou had complained.

The contract was still in Puccini’s hands in June 1892, and _Tosca_ would probably have been composed immediately after _Manon_ if the composer had not fallen in love at first sight with Murger’s novel.5 In order to honor Ricordi’s obligation to Sardou, the composer Alberto Franchetti was called in: fresh from the success of _Crimini Colombe_ (1891), perhaps the first link in a long chain of fin-de-siècle Italian operas in which romanticized history is at the core of the plot, he was well equipped for the job. Ilica prepared an outline of the plot, which was submitted to Sardou for approval between the end of 1893 and the beginning of 1894 (Gara, no. 98, 99). But Ricordi’s letter to the librettist on 24 July 1894 shows that there was still no agreement about which of the two composers would set _Tosca_, and that Puccini had probably not yet decided to relinquish his priority.

Puccini has arrived. He had written to you to arrange an appointment this morning at 10, at my house. Perhaps the letter did not reach you? In any case, whether through Roman wrestling or English boxing, the matter must be finished once and for all!!! Shall I expect you at my house at half past one? I know that Franchetti has also arrived. I would like to settle everything today. Let’s see whether, as we’re dealing with music, we can arrive perfecto6 can be achieved. (Gara, no. 119, 123)

An agreement was reached over the summer; in October, Franchetti and Ilica visited Sardou to discuss the adaptation of the play. Their visit coincided with the premiere of _Oedipus_ at the Opera, with the eighty-one-year-old Verdi, in Paris between the end of September and 21 October 1894, contributing energetically to the preparations by actively participating in the rehearsals, with Giulio Ricordi’s help. According to first-hand sources, Verdi was present at the meeting between Ilica, Franchetti, and Sardou, and was highly enthusiastic about the subject, suggesting how Ilica’s excellent adaptation might be improved upon, and praising in particular a long soliloquy of farewell to art and life written for Cavarsoldi before his execution.7 Encouraged by Verdi’s authoritative opinion, Ricordi probably

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2. Puccini had already seen his _Crimes_ de sang (1892) from the play _Parvis_ (1892), a subject that Sardou had suggested in vain to Verdi. Later, two of Giacomo’s greatest successes (1895, 1913) were operas derived from _Beaumarchais_ and _Marmontel_ _Oedipus_ (1891).
4. Puccini eventually signed the agreement with Sardou on 18 November 1893, but as early as 1889 Ricordi had announced that the composer was contracted for two operas (see _Gazzetta musicale di Milano_ 40, no. 23 [5 June 1892, 75]). Ricordi was in that time trying to obtain Sardou’s permission to adapt a libretto from _Théodore, a plan that came to nothing (see _Mazzini_, ed. C. Orsini, 21 August 1892; photograph at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, _Versini_, no. 75-8). The play was later set to music by Xavier Leroux in 1907. 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 Heuristic Approach to the Unifying Element of the Opera” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1993). My thanks to the author for supplying me with a copy of her work, which provided much useful information.
5. _Le d’Amore e il Pianeta_, 29 July 1893.
6. Rinaldi, _Il Mondo del Teatro_, 1894, 123.
7. _Lettere di Murger_, ed. Gaetano Morando, 4-43, 127. The identity of this new opera is unknown, but it was certainly not _Le Bahut_, as suggested by some colonial journalists.
8. _La bohème_ (1847, 1855), _Tosca_ (1890), and _Manon Lescaut_ (1893), 127-8.
9. _Il Mondo del Teatro_, 1894, 123.
regretted having given Tosca to Franchetti (Casner, 199–20), and did everything he could to make Puccini change his mind. Meanwhile, on 23 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 libretto; this means that that 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 Sperlozza and Scarpia, with Tosca's-offstage cantata, which Sardou liked so much. So we struggle on with these wretched duet scenes that are truly Tosca's curse. I have succeeded in doing a quartet and am putting together a quintet. Sperlozza is becoming a very curious character.

Please say nothing for the moment to Franchetti, because he would immediately descend 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 Bohème. So to make Puccini work it should be enough to talk about Tosca!

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 Zarabina 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 (vain) hopes:

First of all there is the so-called legal question, and for this, we could go together to the lawyer: Valdara for a consultation. ... You could bring Franchetti's reason and we could find out all the ifs and buts, and whether...
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 future handed by Queen Maria Carolina of Naples (from Act II of the original) by way of “Tosca’s offstage cantata,” the scene Franchetti had disliked. He also removed the act set in Cavadarossi’s villa, and fused the two scenes of Act V into a final act on the battlements of the Castel 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 baritones, a situation that recreated the traditional triangle of nineteenth-century Italian opera, but with a completely different psychological basis. No longer was the heroine simply an antagonist; he was now the bearer of an utterly negative force, similar to Boito’s Jago in Othello and Barnaba in La Gioconda.

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

All right. I will set out on the opera right away. But it seems to me that to finish the first act with a monologue (“How shrewd, wise carasou”) and to begin the second with a monologue (“Tosca è un buon falso”), both by the same character, is a bit monotonous. Not to mention the absurdity of Scarpia wasting time describing himself. Characters like Scarpia act, they don’t express themselves in words. (14 December 1895)

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’ve already asked Toninaghi to tell you, I am deeply convinced that Tosca is not a good subject for any operas. At first reading I thought it was given the rapidity and the clarity of the dramatic action. And, on first reading, Illica’s masterly sketch seems even better. But the more one gets inside the action and penetrates into each scene, trying to extract lyrics and poetic passages, the more one is persuaded of its absolute unsuitability to musical theater... the first act is all sheet. Nothing but sheet! the second act (except the brief torture scene, in part of which only two characters are present).

12 Edmondo in Aladino is a second form, while the lumpishness appears only briefly in La Bohème. The only real character scene is the bass who plays Honest and Alecandro.

13 Puccini sent Gluck’s first version to Illica with the parenthetical demand: “Read, scrutinize, and help me!” (2 August 1896; Gara, no. 149, 150).
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 monotonous at best, and this is not the worst problem. The most serious issue is the predominance of what I would call the mechanical 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. (13 August 1896; Gara, no. 195, 150–51)

Needless to say, Giacosa yet again tried to repeat (whether it's the notion or not), I want "something to nourish" as they move from the society to the altar. (August 1896; Gara, no. 195, 158–59)

Panichelli 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 {Tai was interrupted again by the French premiere of La Bohème at the Opéra-Comique (13 June 1896), with mise-en-scène by Albert Carré, who had replaced Léon Carvalho as the theater's director some months earlier.14 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 Cavarsalho’s death (a reminiscence, perhaps, of the finale of La Nana versus). He was surprised by the dramatist’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 wasn’t work. He wanted that poor woman dead at all costs. Now that Deibler [the last executioner of the guillotine] has had his day, the Magus [Sardou] wants to take his place! He accepts the madwoman, but would have her faint away, die exhausted like a bird. In the revue that Salvi is giving on the twentieth, Sardou has introduced a great flag on the Castle, which, flapping proudly in the wind (he says), will have a great effect: he really goes for the flag (it’s more important than the play itself at the moment) . . . . In sketching the panorama, Sardou wanted the Tiber to pass between St. Peter’s and the Castle! I reminded that the river passed on the other side, lower down. And he, cool as cucumber, said: "Oh, that’s nothing!"

A fine character, full of life, fire, and historically-topo-panoramic inaccuracies! . . . On Tuesday morning I return to Sardou’s—the Magus

14 Carré was perhaps the first director, in the modern sense of the word, with whom Puccini dealt. In three circumstances their relationship, which as we shall see was important for Madame Butterfly, was not always smooth. "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 were along, wanting a lot of my time" (Puccini to Ricordi, 26 May 1896; Gara, no. 197, 184).
commands it—perhaps he’ll want Spoleto to die too. (To Giulio Ricordi, 13 January 1899; Adami, no. 54, 80–81)

Part of Tosca was composed in the total solitude of Marquis Manzi’s villa near Montagni, where the first act was finished in August 1898. The second act was written between 23 February and 16 July 1899; the last, save for the opening passage, was ready on 29 September. By 1 October, Puccini had received verses by the poet Gigi Giannattasio for a stanzas 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.15

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 (to October 1899; Gara, no. 208, 176–78), and with extreme verbosity 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 mani,” underpinned merely by a fragmentary, modest melody, and then, to complete it, a piece more or less verbatim from Edgar!! Superfluous if sung by a Tyrolean peasant woman! ... but out of place in the mouth of a Tosca or a Cavaradossi. In short, what

15. Letter to Alfredo Vandini, 23 September 1899 (Gara, no. 203, 175). In this case, too, the music was already composed, and Puccini dictated the required letter to his correspondent. After having received a sequence of manuscript, he apologized to Zanazzo through Vandini, because he had to add a 9th phrase (“ugly, but it has to be this way”), Oct, no. 311, 181).

The prelude was added to the score on 17 October 1899.

16. The Andante animato, which is at the core of the duet “O dolci mani innamorate e partite,” is in the form of a sonnet, the two quatrains given to Cavaradossi (“Amori aci per te m’ha strappato,” Tosca, III, 14) and the two returns to Tosca (“kiss me, sweet lover, I was never hers”). Ricordi is referring to this as the passage borrowed from Edgar (IV, p. 325). Puccini in fact related only the accompaniment, and part of the melody:

Perhaps, given Giacomo’s sophisticated choice of form, Ricordi would have expected something similar to Verdi’s setting of Bonzani’s sonnet for Peppino in Act III of Falstaff (“Dal lombro il canoro”),

CHAPTER FIVE

Tosca

The homeland is where love leads us.

Cavaradossi

We shall find Latin traces

and the ghost of Rome everywhere.

Tosca

And if I see you remembering, gazing far into the heavens,
I will close your eyes with a thousand kisses, call you a thousand names of love.

Perhaps, had he been able, he would also have removed the heroic apostrope from the final duet: nothing was more distant from Puccini's sensibilities than the exaltation of the ancient spirit of Rome, depicted quite differently in his Tosca. As for "Roman identity, within twenty years it would sadly have become a fashion; later, an obligation."

Only the capital of Italy could host the debut of an opera so intimately connected with its most important and well-known characters—and the venue also allowed Cava Ricordi to propagate a little in central and southern Italy. Moreover, the realism of the subject encouraged a close comparison with Guiseppe Verdi's model, which ten years previously had premiered at the same venue, the Teatro Costanzi. Tosca made its debut on 14 January 1900, with Hariclea Dardeché in the title role, Emilio De Marchi (Cavaradossi), Eugenio Garaldrone (Scarpia), Ettore Borrello (Scafistano), and Enrico Giordani (Spoleto). The performance was prepared with great care by Tito Ricordi, Giadino's son, who commissioned the staging from Adolf Hohensin, and was conducted by Leopoldo Magnone, a choice strongly backed by Puccini. The evening was graced by the presence of Queen Margherita and various ministers, among them Luigi Pelloux. Many composers, including Mascagni, Giza, Francaichi, and Sambatti, also attended; and the press was out in full force. The tension of the premiere was further heightened by an announcement, fortunately unfounded, that someone had planted a bomb in the theater. Despite numerous encore and curtain calls for both composer and performers, opinion was divided. Pariseo (Il popolo romano) found "the harmonization bold, even too much so at some points." The critic of Il Messaggero wrote that "there is no close fusion, no exact correspondence between the action and the music." Alfredo Colombani, 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 heavily poetry of "melodra\n
more than 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. Puccinii's international success was 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 interweaving 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 Melas and reestablished the Cisalpine Republic. This political backdrop is crucial to the tragedy of Tosca and Cavaradossi. In September 1799, after abruptly ending the Pari-

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19. The engineer Tito Ricordi had begun to involve himself in the office of the firm in 1877, accompanying Puccini (who nicknamed him "Sewan") to Great Britain for the local premiere of La Bohème, and in Paris the following year. Tosca was his first important experience as a stage director, and the choice of Hohensin as scenographer increased the feel-

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ING THE PAST
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 cantata celebrating the presumed Austrian victory at Marengo, and Eclecta Tosa’s mentor. Tosa, 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 début at La Scala as the lead in Naxos pazzia per amore. The opera made Paisiello’s fortune and, after the première 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 Cavaradossi, a Roman aristocrat educated in Paris in the principles of the Enlightenment: His pro-French stance was well known in Rome, and justifies the title “Voltoarenese” added by Puccini’s librettist. It was in order to allay the suspicions of the political police while remaining in Rome to enjoy his passion for Floria that he agreed to point the altarpiece in Sant’Andrea depicting Mary Madalene.

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 history of political regimes, where men who seize 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 counterposed psychology. The monologue that Giocosa so disliked are needed to reveal an erotic perversion tinted with sadism. Sardou may also have been influenced by Victor Hugo’s Homodei, the treacherous traitor in Angèle, tyrant de Padoue (1832), and he would almost certainly have been aware of Boito’s libretto adaptation for Ponchielli.

La Gioconda also gave Illica a clear model for the constellation of characters in the opera. The relationship between soprano and baritone in Tosa closely resembles the streamy connection between Gioconda and Barnaba,

...
Are truly the clerical tone.

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 son!!

Three: Bells, Te Deum, and Procession!!

The anonymous author of this sonnet in Roman dialect, published in La vera Roma on 21 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 Bohème, and on numerous occasions in the future—from the Japan of Madame 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 backdrops, 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 backdrops, paint a setting with dramatic purpose. But the ambience and the fates of the characters were never more intrinsically linked than in Tosca. 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**CHAPTER FIVE**

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. 5.12, Ex. 5.13, 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 immemorial cruelty of Scarpia" (Carnes), 904-953, but also at unifying, in an organic way, the symbol of Scarpia with the surroundings of which he is so malign an expression. Ex. 5.16 demonstrates how his specter becomes part of the atmosphere preceding the normal and dawn scene in the last act, while Cavaradossi's furious invective (Ex. 5.2) denounces Scarpia's connection with the Church.

Example 5.2. _Te Deum_ (solo, last chorus)

![Score](image)

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

23. The theme returns twenty-seven times in all, in three cases transposed by an augmented fourth (E, D, B-flat major; see Ex. 5.12, X), and once at the lower fifth. In the brief finale of the second act, after Scarpia's death, the E and D appear three consecutive times in the minor mode, as it does for the last time in Ex. 5.12. We will see later how further independent ideas are drawn from this theme.

24. "Pierdi sua cote et vera maternam gloriae mane... Te gloriosum Agnus Domini
cruentum..." Graduale Tripla (Solomon, 1963, 864). "Pro Gratiarum..."
the bell peals are subsequently heard as the final (B♭) and reciting tone (F) of the Gregorian chant. The sinuous viola and cello melody wends over this bass movement, Largo religioso, while reeds and horns cloud the tonality, establishing a mood suitable for Scarpia's erotic dehiscence. The baron gradually moves to the front of the stage, his reflections directed at the audience, as the bishop departs the high altar accompanied by antiphon verses recited by the faithful and supported by organ and climax, motionless, staring into space, while the assembly assembles, the audience, as the bishop reaches the high altar accompanied by organ and tonality, there is no word clearly explained.


This passage also deserves consideration in relation to Scarpia's theme. It is different from the first finale because Scarpia is now dead, a fact underlined by the appearance of the last chord of his theme in its minor form (Ex. 5:16), as it was heard in the finale of Act II. Thus the listener is made aware that, although Scarpia is no more, his decisions continue to feed into the plot to the climax, the "feigned execution" that Tosca describes to her lover. Even in the musical spell of this Roman dawn, Puccini subtly inserted into the texture elements that evoke Scarpia's spirit (like Stravinsky later did in the finale of Prokofiev, when the trumpet raises a disturbing specter of the protagonist over the puppet theater).

After the initial, four-horn unison, the shepherd bells chime, and the orchestra begins with a light staccato of violins divisi a tre, running through a Lydian scale on E (with the altered fourth degree, A♭), which alternates with F major. Scarpia is glimpsed a first time (Ex. 5:18), before the sequence.

The onstage instruments are four horns and three trombones, whose number strengthens the dramatic reference. Further reinforcement of the already impressive instrumental ensemble comes from the bass drum and the cymbal, previously used in Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring's Overture (1913) and in the opening of Orfeo.

The entire episode is therefore based on a modal framework enriched by chromaticism and tonal modulations, confirming Puccini's ability to forge a dramatic event by means of an extremely sophisticated musical structure dense with references and allusions. In this technique of reviving the old Church modes we can glimpse an attitude close to Verdi's: the idea that "to invent the truth" is better than merely to reproduce it.

The Verdiian maestro also holds true for the beginning of Act III, before Cavaradossi's entrance. Puccini wanted to depict Rome awakening to its thousand bells accurately, beginning from (I), they "sound Marini." The effect is complex, and owes its success, as Gavazzeni astutely has reminded us, to the "distances prescribed in the score for the various groups," which occupy eight locations and sound fourteen pitches.

Example 5.1. Text, disposition of bell tones in Act III

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26. The intentional linking of the last passage to the text is confirmed by the fact that Puccini returned to this idea for the ending (see Ex. 5:10).

27. The whole scene is read as Actas ("Puccini's Text,") 1913 according to an abstract theory of the relationship between music and drama, and as an exclusively satirical work, which offers no account of the fact that the harmonization of Gregorian chant was a significant aspect of an Italian composer's training. Among other things, melody helps create a theatrical atmosphere, and easily explained the third flat in the key signature when the greater part of the piece is orientated around B♭ major. Caruso can easily be challenged when he states that "the method musical characterization of a religious atmosphere and of Scarpia passing through his various states of mind would have required the genre of a Wagner or Verdi to create, and
of three chords is repeatedly stated at the end of the prelude. The Lydian mode gives a folk-like feeling to the dialect song, but also imitates hidden traces of Scarpia's presence from the first phrase sung by the shepherd (A↓ [= B♭], G↓ [= A♭], E↓, Ex. 5.30). A few measures later the melody is supplied with harmonies that make the reference quite clear (Ex. 5.38: X):

Example 5.5

a. Tosca, III, 1

b. Tosca, III, 11 after 2

c. Tosca, III, 6 before 7

For this stornello Puccini asked Zanonzo for verses unrelated to the plot (Carner, 117); the music alone is responsible for making Scarpia's presence imminent. 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 ambiance is again shaped by dramatic logic. Note how Puccini prepares for Cavaradossi's entrance at the end of Matiné, moving through a deceptive cadence from the dominant of E to that of A (Ex. 5.39). Scarpia's theme reappears fortuitously out of this chord, transposed, as in Act I, by an augmented fourth²⁹ (see Ex. 5.2, A), before the bass clarinet and low strings announce the E, 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 striking 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 little more than sixteen hours, from the Angelus recited by the Sacristan, just after the opening, to the "ora quinta" (four o'clock) act 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 aria 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 a rigid logic; every premise has a consequence, and there is no deviating 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 an accelerated timeframe, and thus to modify a narrative technique based on recurring themes and reminiscences to 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
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 (I, II) as Scarpia enters Sant'Andrea, almost suggesting a musical kinship 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 tetrachord 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. 5.6b: 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. 5.6c: Z') and the thirds of cell Z become diminished fifths (Ex. 5.6d: Z').

Example 5.6

a. Tosca, I, mm. 4–10

b. Tosca, I, 3 after 1

c. Tosca, III, 2 after 1

Thus the passage is not simply a label applied to Angelotti, nor do the diminished fifths simply create a reference to the disloca in musica 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 barding the fugitive. The recurrences of this motto (Ex. 5.6: Y) generate polyvalent references: we hear it in the love duet as Cavaradossi tries to make Tosca leave because "Urgo Popera" ("Work calls me!", I, 6 after II), when in reality he needs to be alone to help his friend; and again when the soprano, talking to Scarpia, is seized by jealousy at the thought of her "bel nido insospetto di fango" ("lovely nest befouled 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 tetrachord, 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 motto emphasizes Spoletra's suspicions, his conviction that the painter knows Angelotti's hiding place (II, III); finally, it opens Cavaradossi's fugile, heroic outburst when news arrives of the French victory at Marengo (Ex. 5.7b: Y).

Example 5.7

a. Tosca, I, 3 after 1

b. Tosca, III, 2 after 1

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 tetrachord traces a modulatory progression. According to Carrier, the latter theme belongs to Cavaradossi ("Sinfonia," in Giacomo Puccini: Tosca, 145): according to Roger Parker, it belongs to Alcindoro ("Astoriette Act II in Perspectiva," 146, 149). In relation to the words, both are right, given that the Sacristan sings the motive when he states "Avvenire giusto / come fresco risorgere / di Cavaradossi" ("I could have sworn that Cavaradossi had reappeared"), and the painter names Alcindoro when Angelotti reveals his identity to the woman in the portrait. But the application of labels at all costs ignores the fact that the theme does not so much identify a character as a mixture of feelings and circumstances, from flight to terror to conspiracy.
CASTEL SANT'ANGELO (Ex. 5.8a) is repeated in identical form when Scarpia orders the search of the Atravanti chapel (I, 6 after [ii]), but when the baron hands Tosca Atravanti's fan, the same motive develops in a whole-tone scale (I, 3 after [ii]), 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. 5.8b).

Example 5.8
a. Tosca, I, 3 after [ii]

b. Tosca, I, [iii]

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 E, 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, [iii]). 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. Carner points out a "cadential figure" that appears when Tosca conjures up for her lover the image of the house "ascon al mondo intero" ("hidden from the entire world") during their first-act duet (Ex. 5.10a); for Carner, the motive represents Cavaradossi's villa in the countryside, and it does in fact reappear when the house is mentioned both by Mario and Angelotti (I, 4) and by Spoletta and Scarpia (in their report on the painter's arrest: II, 7 after 111). At first appears, however, when Tosca stares furiously at the painting of Mary Magdalene (I, 11) and II, 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 core of this particular motive is a grappetta, a turn-like figure (Ex. 5.10a: g%). Similar figures decorate the melodies at many points in the drama, from the music that accompanies Scarpia as he writes the safe-conduct (Ex. 5.10b), to the funeral march as the soldiers form their execution squad (Ex. 5.10c), to cite just a few cases:

Example 5.10
a. Tosca, I, 4 before 9

\[ \text{Example 5.10a} \]

b. Tosca, II, 11

\[ \text{Example 5.10b} \]

c. Tosca, III, 1 after 11

\[ \text{Example 5.10c} \]

32. Carner notes that "basically characteristic of the melodic style in Puccini's predilection for grappetta-like figures either for a decorative purpose or in the service of expression" ("Style and Technique," in Giacomo Puccini: Tosca, 97).

This subtle linguistic thread, unusually, serves to unify the action in a cohesion derived from leitmotifs, while the ambivalence creates the impression of constantly moving musical action. To this end, cross-references are underplayed even in the most dramatic moments. The grappetta figure appears during Tosca's confrontation with Scarpia, at the very height of the tension (Ex. 5.10a: B). When it returns in the coda of "Vissi d'arte" (Ex. 5.10b: B), the heroine's suffering is witnessed by the woman who becomes part of the same semantic field as the unwelcome recompense offered her by God. Moreover, Tosca's question "Perché, Signor?" ("Why, God?"; Ex. 5.10c: A) resembles the joyful melody with which she celebrated the love nest in Act I (Ex. 5.10c: A). The similarity is not obvious to the ear, a fact that confirms how many motivic associations serve only to comment on events.

Even the lyric element of the opera does not escape the dynamic evolution of the drama. In Tosca, love does not dominate as an independent element, but rather as a refuge from the tensions of a difficult, oppressive life, as a yearning for sensual happiness to be fulfilled in faraway places, hidden from the secular tentacles of papal Rome; or else the passion is experienced as Scarpia illustrates, in the shadow of the altar at which Tosca prays. The prima donna, who does not like "minuscoli amori" ("tiny loves") and amorous effusions in a place of worship, nevertheless shares something with her implacable persecutor: she goes to find Cavaradossi in the Church of Sant'Andrea, arriving at an inopportune moment, and at the beginning of their meeting (Ex. 5.11a), as in the second part of the duet (Ex. 5.11b), we hear two themes that unequivocally represent the feelings that unite the lovers.

These broad, lyric melodies will permeate the opera. Nonetheless, Puccini is not wholly unambiguous when depicting his most congenial subject. The cell formed by a descending perfect fourth and ascending major
second (Q), which generates the second melody and characterizes both, is heard when Cavaradossi uncovers the painting of Mary Magdalene, provoking the Sacristan's indignation (Ex. 5.12a). It subsequently takes a lyric form in the aria "Recondita armonia," as the artist contemplates his painting of the unknown woman (Ex. 5.12b), a fourth and minor third. But just a few measures later the same figure is sung by Tosca, offstage, when she interrupts Cavaradossi's conversation with Angelotti (Ex. 5.12c).

Example 5.12

a. Tosca, I, 5 before f.<br>

b. Tosca, I, 9 after f.<br>

c. Tosca, I, 10 after f.<br>

Cell Q thus creates a broad system of relations, and does not merely identify the painter's affection for Attavanti,29 or his love for Tosca: it also harks at the unfortunate corollary of the singer's passion, given that Mario introduces her as a jealous woman, a failing she herself recognizes a little later (Ex. 5.11b). But when Cavaradossi passionately takes up the love melody, his words are all too clear: "Mia Tosca idolatrita" ("My idolized Tosca!").10 After (Ex. 5.12b) and later "Mia vita, amante inquieta / dirò sempre: 'Floria, canone!'" ("My life, my troubled beloved / I will always say: 'Floria, I love you!'") (Ex. 5.13b). Love also triumphs in its physical form, and the cell seals the duet (Ex. 5.13c) as Tosca reacts with a touch of pious coquetry to her lover's caresses.

The reference to jealousy returns when Scarpia sees Tosca suddenly reappear onstage (I, 4 after f.); he swiftly seizes the chance to take advantage of her anxiety, showing her the fan left behind by Attavanti (Ex. 5.13d; compare Cavaradossi's melody, Ex. 5.12b: Q'). Cell Q alludes to the development of his plan, penetrating the second theme, which accompanies Scarpia's subsequent monologue (Ex. 5.13e).

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. 5.16b). Later, the themes adhere 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 (Ex. 5.13d).

However, themes and drama once again establish a semantic relationship in the opening section of the next act.

31. Certain, the motive does not exclusively attach itself to Attavanti. Parker writes: "Cavaradossi's procession of Attavanti and Tosca in "Recondita armonia" such with the words: "Dalla pittura... Tosca non si!" but the instrumental idea in the arias features a receipt of the "Attavanti" theme (Ex. 5.12a). Are we to assume that Cavaradossi has changed his mind? Clearly, such formulations are an oddity: the theme is placed here for a musical reason, namely that its forward tendency is appropriate as a gesture preparatory in which all sense of tension is avoided" ("Analytic Act I in Perspective," 149). While certainly not wishing to ignore musical causes for ending the arias with the most important love melody, we should not refuse to acknowledge the way this ending functions in relationship to subsequent expectations of the theme, in particular to the music accompanying Tosca's entrance.
Example 5.13

a. Tosca, I, 4 before [II]

b. Tosca, I, 5 before [II]

c. Tosca, II, 8 before [II]

Such examples bear witness to the diversity of Tosca, something perceptively noted by Jurgen Maehder:

In Tosca, even the more cantabile themes seem to be constructed from short motivic cells, through transforming, recombining, and transposing these cells, Puccini creates a musical organism of great dramatic power. The logic of the motivic combinations, analogous to the Wagnerian “knowing orchestras” (“wissendes Orchester”), has a more discursive way of making connections, creating a psychological realism totally new in Italian music of this period. 14


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 gaps devidere. To search for the techniques used in La Boheme and Mireille, and those that would also dominate Madama Butterfly, would be pointless.

Rome, 17–18 June 1800

Act I, Church of Sant’Andrea della Valle, Angelica

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 scenes, 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-releasing diversion, but it does so while building the religious substratum of the opera. The base’s clumsy gait is depicted by a little skipping theme, in which the rests imitating his stutter—breaking up the words—correspond to a “tic nervoso seguito da un rapido movimento delle spalle” (“nervous tic—a rapid movement of the neck and shoulders”), notated by a circle in the score (Ex. 5.14b). The Sacristan’s pot­torskirt, grumbling, but is just as ready to kneel and pray when he hears the first three of the twelve chimes that announce the Angelus (Ex. 5.14d) as he is to show his bigotry in a scandalized reaction to the Magdalen that Cavadarossi is painting. 15

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 two flutes. The impressionistic parallel fifths and fourths introduce a lyric exaltation of feminine beauty, which inspires a brief, but passionate, central section (see Ex. 5.14c) that contrasts with the Sacristan’s grumbling, “Scherza col fanzù è lascia stare i santi” (“fool with innocents, not with saints”). The piece closes with a reprise of the introduction, and as the tenor soars up to B♭ the Sacristan exclains indignantly, “Queste diverse gonne / es fanno corrisponza alle madonne / mandan tifio d’inferno” (“These women / who vie with the Madonnas / carry the
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 Jacobins (Ex. 5.14) 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. 5.14).

Florta 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 "sins" 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 Madonna receives her floral tribute. The heroine's overflowing sensuality, inseparable from her religious zeal, is revealed in "Non la sopirr, in nostra casa" ("Do you not long for our little house?") the melody lightly doubled by harp and celesta (I, 3 after [20]). The structure of the duet, the center of which is this Allegro moderato, is dictated by its complete expressive naturalness; when Tosca reaches the height of passion, Cavaradossi quite spontaneously joins her in song (Ex. 5.15). The number ends with a melody that derives from the initial love theme (Ex. 5.14: F; cf. Ex. 5.14: E), again developing a thematic idea according to the requirements of the action:

After having ushered his beloved out through the church door, Cavaradossi resumes his conversation with Angelotti, anticipating the dramatic climax of the opera when he reveals that "È buona la mia Tosca, ma credente / al confessore nulla tiene celato" ("Tosca is good but credulous; she 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 "bigotto satiro" ("barbarous satyr"; see Ex. 5.2).

Each line of this invective is accompanied by the three chords of the opening, thus reinforcing the interaction 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 Roman concert—the "clerical aspect" dominates. The final words between the two friends are heard while the Sacristan's theme is played again by full orchestra, as if to reinforce the close relationship between Scarpia and his world. The Sacristan 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 Sacristan (in anticipation of "doppio soldo"—"double pay").

This is certainly not an uprooted fitting for church, as the stern baron hypocritically 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 opposition, suspicion, even plain evil. The long wait before he appears—has been "announced" many times by the theme that keeps him constantly at the center of the action—stimulates interest in his character (a technique also effective in Butterfly and, above all, in Turandot), and offers further proof of Puccini's musical strategy in centering the opera around him. According to Carner, the reason for the baron's appearance in the Church of Sant'Andrea is inexplicable unless one knows Sardou's play, in which a corrupt jailer has revealed Angelotti's plan of escape to the Chief of Police (Carner, 191). But his decision is in fact entirely plausible: Scarpia shows that he is aware of the Attavanti's private chapel, which he immediately has his men search, finding the Marchesa's fan. Besides, the terrorized Sacristan, like any good spy, supplies him with the piece of evidence that completes 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 Tosca's sudden return—to tell her lover that she is now unavailable that evening—quickly prompts his suspicious imagination.

The bells sound again during the ensuing duet. They are one of the fundamental means of characterization in the opera, going beyond merely marking the solemn ceremonial rites to symbolize the hypocrisy of the two characters (albeit characters whose scarcely concealed erotic desire is aimed at very different objects). The baron's offer of holy water to Tosca is significant in this environment of sordid blackmail, and the skill with which he plays his cards leaves no doubt that his plan will succeed. As the faithful start to fill the church, Spoleta begins his search, and Scarpia sternly monoologue 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 Puccini'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 exercise 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 Borgias, the Caraffas, 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 head, gravitates around the dominant pedal, with dominant thirteenth and tonic chords in second inversion. In the space of a few measures, the three themes from earlier in the opera follow one another, as if Scarpia is reflecting on recent events (compare Ex. 5.16; Ex. 5.12 and 5.13; Ex. 5.13b: 5.12b: L.)

The gavotte in D major, played by offstage flute, viola, and harp, is Scarpia's cue to mock the sophistications of court, with a subsequent briefarios in A-flat: "Ha più forza / sapere la conquista violenta / che il melli­fluo consenso" ("Violent conquest has a stronger flavor than mellifluous consent"). In the central section, an unexpected shift to E major (a clear reference to the last two chords of the Scarpia theme) and the basso ostinato to high E and F ("Bramo. La cosa bramata / perseguo, me ne sazio e via la getto"); "I desire. I pursue what I desire, take my fill, and cast it aside") strikingly reinforce the image of a powerful man fully prepared to carry out his plans. He then displays his strength by terrorizing Spoleto, causing him to invoke the help of St. Ignatius (protector of police) during the report on Cavaradossi's arrest. The character actor who plays Spoleto has a chance
to show off when he praises the work of his hired thugs as they search the villa ("Erao!... razzolo... frugol...", "Sniffing around! Ransacking! Ransacating!") — 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 subsequent wait for the diva engaged as soloist—who has then to get to the ground floor of the Farnese Palace. Performance of the celebration cantata blends with the interrogation 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 Cavardosi, with emotion, recognizes Tosca's. At this point spectators assume the character's viewpoint, and in this way their involvement in the event increases.\(^\text{37}\) 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 "incidentalism," which Luca Zoppelli brilliantly explains in *L'opera come romanzo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1994), 133-48.
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 cantilena 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 violins 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. 58

Example 5.18. Tosca, II, 2 after Ex. 5.19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scarpia</th>
<th>Tosca</th>
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All non-gestual 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 Spalato recite some lines from the Dies Irae.

After Tosca's confession and Cavaradossi's futile heroic response to 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 59 that is directly related to the lust that drives him (Ex. 5.19a: F), and which eventually leads him to the violent, unalleviated erotic exclamation, "Gli mi strugga l'amor della diva" ("the 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. 5.19b).

58. Here, as elsewhere, Puccini puts a madrigal into Tosca's vocal line: the phrase of a thousand forms to the image of the averting "domen."

59. Scarpia's vocal line (Ex. 5.19a: F) also alludes to the terminal of Angelotti's Atta­vonni (Ex. 5.0 and A). This relationship has some bearing, since he has hoped for An­gelotti's escape through it, and intends to enjoy the Marzio's favors, just as he hopes to do with Tosca. This is clear in Svelto's play, but not so much in the libretto.

which again emphasizes the nightmarish, intolerable progress of time articulated by external events, while cellos and basses re-echo the motive of Angelotti's escape (see Ex. 5.19: F).

Example 5.19

a. Tosca, II, 2

TOSCA: SOME BETWEEN FAITH AND POWER

The sinister rhythm brings 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 "Vesti d'arte," 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 reminiscence technique on which the aria is based. From the initial, pash-like melody, accompanied by chords in first inversion that recall the liturgical technique of faux bourdon, to the main section in E-flat, which is accompanied by chords in first inversion that recall the peremptory demand: "Risolviti!" ("Decide!"). Spoleto's breathless return, bringing news of Angelotti's suicide, precipitates the final deception: Scarpia orders that Cavaradossi be shot in a "fake execution," but it is understood from the way he and Spoletta 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 make-up, 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 the safe-conduct, tragic music in F-sharp minor is heard (see Ex. 5.108); 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 rigid hand of the corpse, Tosca declares, "E' davanti a lui trema tutta Roma!" ("And all Rome trembled before him!"). Then, seized by Christian compassion, she rearranges the body, placing a crucifix between the hands and putting two 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 Ex. 5.44). Eventually, the side-door rings rouse Tosca, reminding her to hurry toward the Castel Sant'Angelo to save Cavaradossi. This highly effective scene was created by Sardou 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 ambiguity, since the shepherd's cornelian 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 restless vitality. The love theme (Q, III, Ex. 5.17) weaves into the musical fabric, before the string melody that announces Cavaradossi's appearance—a desperate melody on which his entire solo is based—emerges from the low E of the great bell. After having solidly refused the comforts of religion, the painter bristles the guard for pen and paper. But he tries in vain to leave a last farewell for his lover. A cello quartet cries his state of mind,

40. One of the worst habits of "traditional" performances is to cut the measure at Ex. 5.108 and its resolution in the following measures, thus omitting both Scarpia's demand and Tosca's plea, "Mi vuoi separar di voi, piaf" ("Do you want me to greet at your feet?") (see Act II, "Vissi d'arte," Ex. 5.100). This was dictated by experience in the theater, where applause at the end of the aria made the measure (here transposed down a fifth to E, Ex. 5.17) audible. But, less understandably, it also occurs in studio recordings such as the one conducted by De Sabata.

41. The highly dramatic phrase was invented by Puccini himself, who protested vigorously when he realized that it had been cut (Gara, no. 103, 16-7). It is a perfect example of the "m鸟sica dispersa," either when sung on I, as written, or when declaimed, as is now common practice. The line is one of the many small but significant contributions Puccini made in the libretto, others were: Scarpia's "Come a m'imbiagio" (instead of "a m'imbizio") and Cavaradossi's "maso disperso."

42. An emergency scoring is provided, in which two violas can replace a first celli, obliged to play the melody in its highest register, reaching C.**
Cavaradossi’s desire to be consolved by his beloved becomes even stronger in their final conversation.

But four strokes on the ever-present bells remind us that “real” time is passing. There is space for a few moments of famously black humor:

**Floria:** Badd... Be careful!

**Mariò:** Non temere Don’t worry

don’t fall yet

che cada per momento— I’ll fall at the right moment—
el natural.

I would know how to do it.

There is no time for Tosca to close Cavaradossi’s eyes “with a thousand kisses,” because the firing squad enters for the “fake execution.” The orchestral march in G, Largo con gravità, underpins the soldiers’ taking up of position and the final gestures with ambiguous irony: there are reminiscences not only of the music that accompanied Scarpia as he wrote the safe-conduct, heard again just after his death (see Ex. 5.10 and 8), but also of that simple minor third, here in the trombones, which underlines the understanding between Scarpia and Spoletta as they made their secret agreement.** It is the moment before the rifle shots; but the audience—unlike Tosca—already knows that the painter will remain motionless.

The final tragic joke comes when Mario falls to the ground: “Ecco un artista!” (“A true artist!”); then, the march is repeated fortissimo, accompanying the soldiers’ exit as if in procession. And finally comes the scene that symbolizes the whole opera: Floria throws herself after Mario to the ground: “O Scarpia, avanti a Dio!” (“O Scarpia, before God!”). Only now, with the drama of politics and religious belief completed in a gesture of defiance, can the passionate melody of Cavaradossi’s aria end the opera with a symbol of sensual love, the only real, dependable value.

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46. A-C (woodwinds and lower strings) at the moment Tosca makes her decision in Act II (3 after 18); followed by the third B-D, which was heard immediately after Scarpia declared “Hai manco d'avventura?” (5 after 18). In Act III, the timbre of the trombone, especially the bus instrument, makes the similarity difficult to notice: the third B-D follows Tosca’s phrase “Ecco... appresso sarà...” (III, 1 after 18).
THE TOPICALITY 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 instant 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 path.

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

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 the de-de-circa opera, the profession adding a special fascination to them all. Leoncavallo's impassioned Zazà acts in the colorful world of the cafè-chantant (1900); Adriana Lecouvreur, the tragic actress of the Comédie Française immortalized by Coët (1902), plays the part of Racine's Phèdre; two singers compete for attention in Strauss's Ariadne auf Naxos (1912–16); Berg's Lulu fulfills her dreams of ex- celling as a sopranino (1937); but Tosca's closest relation is the heroine of Judisch's Fid Makedonula (The Macedonian Case, 1926). Not only in Eliza, 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 countess-baron, Jaroslav Pross. In contrast to his "cousin," and over the course of a long life (127 years) in which she has excelled onstage under various personas, Eliza has become a cynic: yielding to her blackmailer does not involve any violation of her moral code, merely a tolerable irritation. Judlekh'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 strives 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 reimagined 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. Whosever wrote the Roman sonnet that extolled the "mezzetti cristalli" 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. Its depiction through the eyes of the Jacobin Cavaradossi

47. Although well known, Mahler's announces recit, in a letter of 1903 written to his wife from a small town in Austria, it is worth reading: "Last night there was a visit to the Operna Tosca, as I told you . . . Act I. Papal pregnacy with continual desiring of both (especially impu­ nated both Italy). Act 2. A man extremely. horror scenes. Another instead of a sharp bombs­ kettled. Act 3. Many of the magnificent trinomial scenes and a view over all Rome from a window. Followed by an entirely fresh scene of self-ringing. A man shot by a firing-party. I get up before the shooting and went out. Never to say, a masterly piece of work. Nowadays any longer orchestras to perfection." Cited in Alan Mahler, Gustave Mahler: Memorias and Letters, trans. Basil Creighton, ed. Donald Mitchell (London: John Murray, 1973), 278. Beyond an ironic recognition of Puccini's skill as an orchestrator, something not at all to be taken for granted in an Italian, Mahler's judgment sounds excessively under­ tempered, particularly if one thinks of his own frequent recourse to his symphonist's "con­ cert" sounds, in particular at close to eb. Perhaps the quality of a provincial Austrian opera house was none too high.


49. Tosca opened at the National Theatre in Rome on 23 January 1900, on the evening follow­ ing Judisch's death. Judisch, both as a critic and newspaper, greatly admired Puccini's opera.

50. All this statements the biographer Ernest Giese's opinion that the writer of the son­ net was Greg Zosan, the same poet who had written the distinct memoir.
was perhaps not unimportant in the protests and disturbances during the world premiere; 34 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 invite a final examination 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. 35 The studio orchestra was linked to the church of Sant'Andrea, the Palazzo Farnese, and the Castel Sant'Angelo, where the singers 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 Cavazzoni's famous maxim in *I Pagliacci*: "Il teatro e 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 1986 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 head of the OVRA 36 and Cavaldetti an intellectual in the Resistance. It was said that the opera lost its distinctive traits, defined by their closeness to reality, and that the parts of the libretto referring to particular events contradicted the new historical setting. But with a 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 distinctive locations. In Act I, the light projected onto windows at the back, and a row of altars and chapels, with the scaffolding and painting on the right, made the reference to a ruined church inescapable, rendered even more desolate by the total absence of decoration. In Act II, an enormous map of Rome placed center stage suggested a venue in which a powerful puppeteer could control the entire city.

52. "Puccini’s *Tosca*" by Jonathan Miller for the 49th Maggio musicale in Florence in June 1986 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 head of the OVRA 36 and Cavaldetti an intellectual in the Resistance. It is said that the opera lost its distinctive traits, defined by their closeness to reality, and that the parts of the libretto referring to particular events contradicted the new historical setting. But with a few adjustments to the text, the modernization was perfectly plausible and, moreover, effectively restored the essence of the drama.

The intensity of the phrase "E avanti a lui tremava tutta 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 especially bare: a chair on which the victim was shot from behind, steps leading to a window high enough for Tosca to throw herself into nightmare suspense.

The three entities 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 reexperienced intensely on a symbolic level, and its spirit remained immanent, retaining its power to infuse the conclusion of the tragedy. The values of the stage and beams of light existing 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 audience identification with events narrated in Puccini's tragedy. It 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 reflections, directly or indirectly.

The main reference is, of course, *Roma e l'opera*... But it is not only about cinematic influences. The creative 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 Guia Servando's book about Luchino Visconti, in particular the episode that tells of Visconti's imprisonment and the actress Maria Denis's attempts to free him. Denis went to Pietro Koch, the head of the OVRA, the fascist police, head of the group that terrorized Rome in that period. Koch replied to Denis's requests by saying that he would free Visconti if she were to accept his sexual advances. 37

The Florentine production's contribution to a renewed understanding of the values in *Tosca* 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
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 re-
veals quite clearly Tosca's exposure of the unchanging behavior of the lead-
ers, secret police, and supporters of all modern dictatorships, their cruel 
pleasure in oppressing aspirations toward freedom.

6

Madama Butterfly

An Exotic Tragedy

CHRONICLE OF A CONTRIVED FIASCO

When Puccini, with his publisher Giulio Ricordi's agreement, de-
decided to return to La Scala for the world premiere of Madama But-
terfly, 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 pub-
lishing 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 experts by surprise, achieving a glamorous and unequivocal 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 
Tosca 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. Tosca was Puccini's first work to 
have the honor of a review in an academic journal, from which pulpit the 
Wagnerian Luigi Torchi peremptorily declared: "Everyone said: 'Tosca is a 
fine subject; Puccini is a talented composer.' Well, in my opinion Tosca is 
nothing special, precisely because the composer's talent is modest." 1

The opinion of the critics was vital to the decisions Ricordi made dur-
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 
Giotard had receded)—Ricordi was trying gradually to export his best 
products to the rest of Europe. This meant, first and foremost, Puccini's

98-114.
opera, which boasted an up-to-date compositional technique as well as immediate emotional impact. Conditions were not yet favorable enough to allow Puccini world premieres in foreign theaters, although the French market looked encouraging after the success of La Bohème in 1898. 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 13 June 1902 staged the premiere of Tannhäuser, although 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 Maman, Mahler barred Puccini from the Hofoper in Vienna, performances in German theaters and in Austria-Hungary had been very good since the premiere of Le Villi in Hamburg (1892).

With Ricordi continuing to rely on Italy for world premieres, the publishing war inevitably heated up. For Sonzogno, domination of the Italian stage was essential, and to be achieved by any means. For example: in spring 1897, Sonzogno was under contract as impresario to La France in Venice (a job he often took on personally), and staged the world premiere 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 loud booing 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 Cleofonte Campanini, and the twenty-seven-year-old Renata Storchio—who had been chosen to sing Cio-Cio-San as early as 1902 (Gara, no. 275, 210)—was at the height of her career. Giovanni Zenatello as Pinkerton and Giuseppe De Luca as Sharpless were added luxuries to a cast strikingly completed by Giuseppina Giaconia (Suzuki). For months, Ricordi and Holenstein had been preparing the staging (although the perhaps excessive attention to realistic effects during the orchestral intermezzo that accompanied the heroine's vigil jars with the overall context).

Excuses of every kind have 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 to have more than an echo of Le Bohème, with less freshness and aubustance of form. (Nappi, in La Permanenza)

The reference is chiefly to what seemed a similarity that verged on self-borrowing—one caught by almost every journalist—between the melodies that accompanied the heroines' entrances. This was unjustly extended by Nappi 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 Tannhäuser] and others too" (Gazzetta teatrale italiana, 29 February 1904). Other, similar statements also lack clear judgment, as is readily apparent in the rest of Nappi'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 premiere really went, it is more useful to read the letter Puccini's sister Ranelide 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! Giordano had not spoken about the opera at all. We went with very little trepidation... The audience was against it from the start. We realized it immediately. We never saw Giacomo, poor man, since we could not get backstage... Loudest, vile, rude audience. Not even a demonstration of respect... Mascagni was there, and Giordano is delighted... I should like to be at home, but how can I abandon Giacomo at a moment like this? Would that I had never thought of staging it at La Scala! (18 February 1904; Marchetti, no. 294, 295)"

Elvira Puccini was of the same opinion.

"Milan is Hell, and I would already have left were it not for the desire to abandon Giacomo in his misfortune. At last, he put a brave face on it. Today he is disheartened, and it makes me very sorry for him. Poor Giacomo! How wicked the audience was... Before the performance many were saying: "It will be a fiasco for sure!" (To Odilla del Carlo, 20 February 1904; Gara, no. 351, 261)"

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 favorite sister Ranelide, and his niece Alitra, to a premiere of one

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2. On the problem of Iris and its alleged "exoticism," see Michele Gravelli, "Ricordi e documenzione di 'Iris' e 'Madama Butterfly'" in Puccini e Mascagni (Lucas, Parisi, 1965), 35-54.

3. To evaluate these words accurately, one should remember that, notwithstanding the blood tie and understandable moral solidarity, Ranelide retains her impassive opinion without actually having made contact with her brother.
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 cannons didn't listen to a single note. What an appalling orgy of fanaticism, drunk on hate! But my "Butterfly" remains as it is: 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, n. 192, 295)

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 Caselli and Tito Ricordi also spoke out. "We will stage the opera, with cuts, in a smaller venue, where perhaps malice will not infiltrate," 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 Museo e museiini, in an unsigned article most likely written by Giulio Ricordi himself, editor of the monthly journal. It is relatively polemical:

Crucial, roars, howls, laughter, jellowings, puffaws, 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 usual! Never have so many problems been seen, joyously satisfied as if by a collective triumph in the theater. The joy was at its height, hands rubbed in glee to these very words: consummation est, parce sapeb it ["it is finished; spare him who has been burned"]). The performance in the auditorium seemed as well organized as that onstage, since it began precisely when the opera did. It seemed as if we were witnessing a real battle, as if the Russian army in scarred ranks 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 insistence of the directors, who wanted to continue staging the opera.

9. Madama Butterfly (A. 62, 3 (15 March 1904), 189. The illusion to the scarred ranks of the Russian army is to the very credit, stenographer attack by the Japanese on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, just seven days before the premiere of Madama Butterfly at La Scala (13 February 1904), at that time the front pages of newspapers were still devoted to this conflict.

Although unproven, the presence of a hostile clique in the theater seems at least probable. Their motivation is not certain, but can plausibly be guessed. Mosco Carner, who believed the event had been planned, emphasized the influence of the clique at that time, reenacting an incident in which the great Russian bass Chaliapin had a disagreement with the head of the clique at La Scala, who had offered his services in 1902 when he was singing in Metaphys (Carner, 159).

In this context, the event finds a more logical explanation, as does the immediate revival of the opera little more than three months later; although Puccini had 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 staged at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice in 1902 dispelled all doubts; the first version was indeed inferior to the definitive score, but no one could call it a failure. However, the Milan fascio 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 indigence 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 stifling the part of his personality that could find fulfillment only in the theater. According to the years went by, almost gives 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 jokingly 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 A骑士." On this occasion, the Teatro La Fenice published an outstanding program book, Madama Butterfly, La prima e l'ultima versione (Venice Teatro La Fenice, 1983), with contributions by Teseo D'Amico ("Dalla prima all'ultima Butterfly," 235-44) and Eufano Bacigalupi ("Delle Silentie," 125-89, repr. in Madama Butterfly (Vienna: Teatro La Fenice, 1983), 150-65, 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 promised a careful re-examination of the question by Carner, which may be read in the posthumous reprint of his monograph (Carner, 431-52).
CHAPTER SIX

glimpse a kind of Tuscan "sploen" in his character, caused by the intense contrast of reality and appearance.

The composer entered the new century having just reached the critical age of forty. This was his best selling card for success in the principal theaters of Europe (also because this brutal, harsh, and aggressive operetta signaled a break from the poetic world of La Bohème). We have seen how he had to waste time. As soon as he added the last note to a score, his letters reveal: there is a burst of requests to collaborators for 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 Petro, a one-act drama by the Neapolitan Roberto Bracco, Puccini showered Luigi Illica, his favorite collaborator, with possible titles: Dostoievsky’s From the House of the Dead, Balzac’s Le Dernier Chouan, Pierre Louÿs’s Aphrodite, Rovani’s I cento anni, Paul de Kock’s Dafne. After voicing at length with the idea of setting a trilogy by Alphonse Daudet (Tartarin sur les Alpes, Portesan),

Puccini scrutinized Goldoni’s comedies, from Le lacretta to Le baruffe chrestesite, and seriously considered Illica’s proposal of adapting the vieillesse de Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI.

In May 1900 there was talk of a possible collaboration between Puccini and the future Lord of the Opera, 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 set to great advantage by someone as renowned as Giulio Ricordi, though he never extended direct pressure on the composer. The first proposal, dating from six years earlier, had been formulated by Carlo Chaussetti, head of the Naples branch of Casa Ricordi. Puccini replied thus:

I myself know that D’Annunzio merited very special attention... It has been my idea for years and years to have something wonderfully original

6. The special attention to Dofietas memories emphasis: first because Illica and Puccini feared comparison between the character of Tartarin and Verdi’s Falstaff, as opera that for many years discouraged the composer’s often-explored inclination to set comic subjects; sec-
ond, because from the first discussions of the century (the first discussions about the Tartarini works date from between March and May) the idea of constructing an opera by drawing together three different episodes was ruled out. That idea would take more precise form in September 1900, when Puccini sketched out a plan of an evening of short-act works.

from the best talent in Italy. Explain my idea to him. Poetry, poetry, tortured tenderness, dish, scorching drama, almost unexpected, indecent finales. (18 July 1894; Gara, no. 107, 10g)

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. Enchanted 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 restating his faith in his collaborator): “O marvel of marvels! D’Annunzio is my liberté! Not for all the gold in the world. Too heavily; I want to stay on my feet” (15 May 1900; Gara, no. 226, 196).

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 Miller, 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 text without understanding the verbal language, just as when Bernhardt had played Tosca, assured 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 there is no doubt” (26 August 1900; Gara, no. 236, 203). 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, join 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 20 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. All If only I had it here with me to work on! 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
America—and the second in Japan. Illica would certainly be able to find what he needs in the novel. (Adami, no. 69, 80)

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 adopted a short story by the lawyer John Luther Long; the firm had to be sure of not paying two cordis representative in New York. The business side Belasco had himself adapted a short story into 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 Medina butterfly by John Luther Long was published for the first time in the Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, vol. 3 (February 1893), 575-83, and reprinted in the same year in a collection that the periodical devoted to Japan.

8. The publisher always maintained an unfavorable opinion of the Japanese opera, which he defined as a "shatterwort."

9. The publisher always maintained an unfavorable opinion of the Japanese opera, which he defined as a "shatterwort."


11. The short story was subsequently published in a translation by Andrea Clerici in La luna, 4, no. 1 (February 1904), 97-105, and 6, no. 1 (March 1904), 193-209.

But suddenly the composer had a change of mind, realizing that the Consolat scene would irrevocably 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 Consolat, while in Belasco's play, Kate Pinkerton goes to Butterfly's house. Puccini wrote to Illica on 16 November 1902:

Do you know what I've realized? That the consolat would have brought me disaster. The opera must be in two acts: the first one years and the other Belasco's play with all its details. I'm thoroughly convinced of it: the work of art will make a great impression this way. No en acte, and reach the end having lied 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 Consolat 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 at the same time we would have a new type of opera, and enough for a full evening performance. (Adami, no. 77, 93).
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 17 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 "Giovane Scuola." Puccini shared with his colleagues Giordano and Franca Venti 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 named la lettre:

"Today we're going with Giordano on automobile business to various workshops. We have great ideas. We dream of a true horsepower automobile. Operas that are too heavy will, though, be banned. (26 May 1901; Gara, no. 254, 222)"

The idea of a technological traveling theater was discarded, but Puccini acquired a brand-new 5 hp Clément 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 premonition of misfortune worthy of a libretto:

I am leaving now for Turin for five or six days with Elvira, by car. God protect us! (Gara; no. 304, 133)"

11. Interestingly, Illica emphasized the crucial influence that the continuity of the gift in the same ambience has on the tragedy, an opinion similar to Boito's reaction to Verdi's proposal of inserting a Turkish scene in the third act of Otello. "This attack of the Turks seems to me like a fake breaking the window of a room where two people are about to die of asthmatic ... The breath of life seems to fade out in our tragedy, and Otello and Desdemona are saved. To put them back on the road to death we must and then again in a fatal chamber, reconstruct the nightmare ..." (18 October 1887; The Verdi–Boito Correspondence, no. 4, 7).

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 down a slope. His wife and son, traveling with him, escaped serious injury, but Puccini fractured his right tibia—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 interested in 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 the only one to blame; I think I am loved by no one. No one at all, you understand. And to think that many say I am a man to be envied. (To Illica, 24 November 1902; Gara, no. 322, 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 Fonza (whom he treated as his natural daughter), as witnessed by a letter of August 1902:

You have opened a great void by leaving, Fonza, and the life 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; 222)"

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 intense relationship, which Elvira discovered accidentally. The family was shaken by the first tremor, and Puccini wrote to his sister Ramele, who had taken Elvira's side, saying that he was ready to make amends by marrying her partner, well knowing that, as long as Narciso Gemignani 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 and is sick because of it, is poor Elvira, reduced to the lowest state—not all the blame is 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 Tono's sake. (25 May 1901; Marchetti, no. 247, 153–54)"

He was nonetheless careful to sever his relationship with the mysterious Cortina, evoked 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 illustrious invalid, one full of vague unease. On 13 May 1903, Puccini told Illica, using expressions worthy of Act III of La Bohème, that:

They unbound 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 set foot on the ground! Farewell to everything, farewell Butterfly, farewell my life! It’s terrible! The discouragement is really getting to see now. I’m trying to take heart, but I can’t succeed in calming myself down. Why? Who knows? (Illica, no. 315, 239)

But there was somebody else seriously concerned with the causes of Puccini’s state of health: Giulio Ricordi. 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 letter:

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? 16

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 then have helped to maintain it. ... You know very well that I am no rhetorician, pedant, or Franciscan preacher, but that I’m a man of the world, sufficiently experienced to see and keep silent, to assess and conclude. But in a man’s life, in duties toward himself, there are boundaries that he must not cross, because beyond them is the abandonment of every moral sense, physical exhaustion, degeneration of thought, madness, or criminality! ... Puccini, who could have been the modern Rossini—that is to say, the real Imperatore universali—is on the verge of becoming another poor Donzelli. 17

15. This letter is published in its entirety in Claudio Santori, Puccini, 65–68.
16. Ibid., 61–63. Santori cites two further letters from Ricordi, dated 1902 and 1903, in which the publisher expresses similar worries: “Puccini is a man born to art and to his lady!” Everything indicates that his book, the illness of his dear Luise, the movement of his body, his exhaustion, his sudden bellowing: Why? How should I act in a false prophet?” (63).

Far from acting the moralist, Ricordi feared for the life of his favorite composer, who under the circumstances, perhaps inwardly 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 stories have made him judge too harshly. Even about my illness he’s not right. ... The affection he has for me grows from the latter like the sun, and I am convinced by that. (4 June 1903; Gara, no. 315, 240)

Luckily, Puccini was not diagnosed with the dreaded syphilis, merely a mild 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 her correspondence public. While the whole affair passed into lawyers’ hands, 17 Puccini set about making the extreme sacrifices: The morning after the car accident, Narciso Gemignani died; but before the widow could enter into a new marriage about ten months had to pass. On 3 January 1904, in Torre del Lago, Elvira Bonturi became Elettra Puccini.

The Sources: Between Realism and Exoticism

The Japanese subject awoke an interest Puccini had already felt for exoticism, a new direction that would further establish itself in subsequent works, from La Fanciulla del West to the unfinished Turandot. At the beginning of the twentieth century, exoticism was not an established fashion; but it had at least been tried out in contemporary theater, as in operetta. 18

Since Félicien David’s opéra La Perle du Brésil (1851), composed after the success of the symphonic ode Le Désert (1844), exotic opera had been all but monopolized by French composers, with a theater in Paris that specialized in the genre. In the vast repertory of the Théâtre Lyrique between

18. One need only recall Gounod’s La Reine de Saba or Bizet’s Carmen, which Offenbach insisted on staging at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens with a company of French artists. While the opéras comiques were the most important, French composers, such as D’Albert, Fauré, and Rameau, also wrote some exotic operas. In particular, the 1866 production of La Reine de Saba, with the libretto by Léon Gambetta, was a huge success. And the 1893 production of Carmen, with the libretto by Maria Malibran, was equally successful. The last exotic operas were composed by Offenbach, Scribe, and Gounod. (Ricordi, 1905, 244–45, 371, 424; Melin, 1995, 239.)
1871 and 1879, the Orient was primarily represented by a fairy-tale India that provided opportunities forSusannan decorum: Adam's Sî Înâzuki (1872), Gauziel's Sababahamu (1874), Reyers's La Statue, and Bizet's Le Pécheur de perles (1869).15

Even biblical subjects, or subjects generically set in a mythic past, such as Saint-Saëns's Samson et Dalila (1877) and Massenet's Esclarmonda (1876), took on exotic coloring, since in order to imitate the Orient composers had long used a kind of "standard" language, based on a limited number of elements in melody (small intervals used as gestures for voice and instruments), harmony (tremolo alternation between major and minor, considerable exploitation of modal sequences and parallel chords, pedal notes, unison), rhythm (ostinato basses and repeating rhythms), and orchestration (prominent use of percussion, a prelude for the nasal turn, d'individual composers.

No specific elements were used to differentiate locales: the India of David (Laîla Bombî, 1862) and Massenet (Le Roi de Lahore, 1877) resembled the Egypt of Verdi's Aida, 1871, and Bizet's Djamileh, 1872, or Gounod's Brazil (Il Guarany, 1870)—aside, of course, from the stylistic idiosyncrasies of individual composers. Saint-Saëns used some "authentic" themes in La Princesse jumelle (1852; a magic potion causes the heroine to dream of living in Japan), as did Gilbert and Sullivan (The Mikado, 1883); in Iris (1879), Mascagni attempted to reproduce the atmosphere more realistically by using reproductions of original instruments. Except on rare occasions, the non-European setting is primarily a place of escape, to be set against Western reality.

Giacomo 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 1865, are set in India: princesse Sélima, in love with the Portuguese Vasco da Gama, reneges herself to let him flee with Inès, thus inaugurating a veritable chain of renunciations by Oriental women for the sake of Western men. While the heroine's sacrifice in Meyerbeer's opera is driven primarily by selfish love, Lakmé (1883), Léo Delibes' 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 Lakmé, daughter of the Brahmin Nilakantha, the English official Gerald pretends the sacred garden. The heroine is the agent of her father's revenge, and leads Gerald into a trap. But after having cured him from a stab wound inflicted by Nilakantha.


Lakmé returns his love; and when she realizes that his nostalgia for home and sense of duty are stronger than his love, she poisons herself.

The librettists Gounin and Gillet had taken elements of their story from an autobiography entitled Le Mariage de Loti (1860) by a French Navy officer, Louis Marie Julien Viard, pen name Pierre Loti, the writer responsible for the origin of the Japanese tragedy so interested Puccini. Loti had served in Japan after the country had opened its ports to Americans and Europeans (1854–68), and personally experienced a "fake wedding," marrying a geisha. He described this in a novel that quickly became famous, Madame Chrysanthème, published in 1887. Marriage between Westerners and Japanese was then common practice: it was an easily understandable contract that lasted long enough to satisfy the man's sexual and emotional needs when on service far from home. The novel started an authentic vogue, spreading from literature to operetta—one thinks of Massenet's opera consigrant the same name (1893), or of The Geisha by Sidney Jones (1860) — and was probably well known to the lawyer John Luther Long when he wrote his Madame Butterfly.

While Loti's style is extremely refined, in many passages almost poetic, some of Long's prose is rather naive and crudely realistic. We are not even spared a touch of nationalistic pride in the description of the geisha, who imitates and defends American customs out of love for the man who has married her. Belasco fashioned a masterly play out of all this, but altered its most important aspect: his heroine, after the failure of her pretend marriage, kills herself according to fixed rules of honor. In Long's story she does not carry out hara-kiri; it is the last moment she reacts against her ancestral traditions in the name of the love the man has inspired in her, and allows Suzuki to treat her wound before disappearing from the house to start a new life with her child. The happy ending reflects an event that actually took place, related to Long by his sister, who had for some time been a missionary in Japan. Besides knowing of the matrimonial practices that bound foreign officials to geishas, Puccini made clear in his correspondence that he was not unaware of the realistic foundation of the episode: Mrs. Oyama, wife of the Japanese ambassador to Rome, told him that she knew "a story roughly like that of Butterfly... that really happened."

Belasco proved himself a born man of the theater, dramatizing the short story extremely effectively. The most important decision was to make the event develop in real time within a single setting, an ambience that gradu-
ally becomes more and more suffocating. In this sense, the external world never successfully penetrates Butterfly's internal existence, neither through the Consul Sharpless, who tries to make her understand reality, nor the cynical marriage broker Goro, who offers her marriage with Prince Yamadori. In Long, the Prince meets Butterfly in Goro's presence, but Belasco further emphasized his aristocratic figure by making his visit coincide with the Consul's. He thus had the opportunity to underline the heroine's stubborn persistence through the sketch of the American judge who refuses to annul marriages.

All the events revolve around Butterfly with perfect symmetry, and Puccini had no trouble in realizing that the Consulate episode was a digression that skewed the implausible progress of the tragedy. The opera gained in substance by retaining another of Belasco's innovations, that of having Cio-Cio-San and Kate Pinkerton meet within the impenetrable microcosm that protects the little geisha. Stepping over the threshold of the house, the American wife breaks into the heroine's life with devastating effect, provoking her desperate realization of the truth.

The idea of Pinkerton promising faithfully to return when the robins nest—merely hinted at in the story—allows Belasco to insert realistic details into Butterfly's vigil as she awaits the docking of the _Connecticut_, the ship on which her "husband" sails. During this scene, birdsong is linked to a gradual increase of light (simulating the sunrise); watching the scene, Puccini was moved by the tragic sense of anguish that this hopeless waiting communicated. The birdsong, a metaphor for Cio-Cio-San's obsession, prepares us for her bitter last words before dying, uttered to Pinkerton: "Too bad those robins didn't nest again."

Puccini never doubted the effectiveness of the play, and possible comparisons with _Avi_ did not worry him much; whereas Mascagni had written an entirely Japanese opera, he would stage an individual tragedy caused by a very real conflict between races, one that could rightly be interpreted by the audience as an artistic denunciation of American abuse of power over ancient Japanese values. To achieve this, the first act acquired a greater importance than usual. Besides determining the atmosphere of the events, familiarizing the spectator with the customs of the Oriental world, the prologue is constructed to evoke Japanese color; music constructed on authentic themes occupies a quarter of the total number of measures, while another fifth is devoted to a skilful musical recreation of the Orient. The scholar Kinuyo Powsila-Okuno has tracked down as many

of the harbour, as well as numerous metaphorical expressions related to the island and her relations. See Gino, "L'opera di F. R. Puccini," 17-18, 19-20, 22. But the two Wagners followed Long's example in the sequence of Cio-Cio-San's visit to the mission, and the following of her religion at Pinkerton's instigation, an episode entirely absent in Belasco.

"Nuccipapi" became "Nakade", the name of the geisha (Saruchinko and Sayontan), which Suzuki was to have retained at the beginning of _Madama_, and he corrected to "E Liutj ed longo e de Saruchinko e Sayonauta".

22. Puccini's score was probably _La masque japonaise_, an [Hotel Meyers has pointed out in _"Some Original Japanese Melodies in Madama Butterfly", in GPC, 472. The collection contains music used during the performances of the Kiliwana Play Company in 700, transcribed by Emery and arranged by Baudets. Other books available at the time included _La Masque en Japon_ by the collective Alexandre Karr (Florence, 1880), and Frari T. Piggin's _The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan (London: Bartholomew, 1893). We are informed of the dispatch from Japan in 1902 of a case of data with a hundred titles in Kinuyo Powsila-Okuno, _Puccini Madama Butterfly_ (Bregen: Verlag fur systematische Musikwissenschaft, 1980), 48.

23. Of the 1944 measured, 632 have an Oriental coloring (49%); of these, 354 are based on preceding themes (34%), 189 on inverted themes (17%).

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MADAMA BUTTERFLY: AN EXOTIC TRAGEDY

WEST VERSUS EAST

Wherever his operas were set, Puccini was always at pains to characterize the atmosphere realistically, as he had done in _Tosca_. After having tried in vain to arrange a meeting with the Japanese actress Saiza Yacco, who was on a European tour with her husband Ootjiro Kawakami in 1902—although in all likelihood succeeding in arranging a performance of their show at the Teatro Lirico in Milan between 15 and 18 April—he again turned to Mrs. Oyama, 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 _Yamadori_ suitable since it's feminine, and also inappropriate because in Japan they give suggestive names, suitable to the type and character of their drama. Neither is uncle _Nuccipapi_'s right name. Similarly, the names _Saruchinko_, _Liutj_, _Sayonauta_ etc. are also wrong. (To Giulio Ricordi, 18 September 1902, Adami, no. 74, 42)

In his search for material to use in the opera, 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 skilful musical recreation of the Orient. The scholar Kinuyo Powsila-Okuno has tracked down as many
as ten original themes (transcribed here and compared with Puccini's versions, in the order in which they appear in the opera): 24

Example 6.1
(A) Ebizo-jishi and Butterfly, I, [1]

(B) Hana sake baru and Butterfly, I, [11]

(C) Ume no baru and Butterfly, I, 3 after [16]

24. The list supplied by Powils-Okawa (Puccini: "Madama Butterfly," 68-69) is very detailed, and also full of information — on which I draw here — on the sources. The present transcriber does not follow the exact order of the book from which it is derived, since the association of certain ideas, although brilliant, is forced and sometimes imprecise. Moreover, the recent discovery of the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna of a folder of Dreams and Passions (to the so-called "Scende speciali"), has allowed us to trace a source for Example 6.1 (that was closer to Puccini, in the first of four Chants japones transcribed by a copyist. Well before Powils-Okawa's study, Carter traced six of the themes in Example 6.1 (B, E, F, G, H, I), and also a different source for A, consisting two collections published in Germany in 1894 and 1895 (see Carter, 343-347); six motives were identified by Miyawati ("Some Original Japanese Melodies," 157-81). Ex. 6.1: A, D, F, H, I). My thanks to Terumasa Ooka for a most helpful discussion of the Japanese songs, and translating their titles.
In choosing these motives, Puccini did not look for exact correspondences with the plot. Suiryu-buchi ("Melody of supposition") was chosen because Long had paraphrased its words, which were used in the first version of Butterfly's Cantoza, 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 Kamigai ("The Dynasty of the God"), to solemnize the geisha's marriage is pertinent, while the popular song Myonan (F), which calls the emblem of the Mikado, becomes associated with the famous bird, probably by way of the title, "Noble Prince." Kappo

25. The words of the aria "Cielo e mar" were then radically altered in the definitive version; see below, pp. 251-54.
26. The melody appears at the beginning of Sharpless's visit, then erupts in a riot of color when the Japanese prince is announced (II, 5).
butterfly: "The neck above the head is in love," I), a common and vulgar popular song, is inappropriately used when Butterfly exultantly shows her son to the Consul, then again in the aria "C'è una macchi" (RE is in cursive gallica etc.), II, 8 before [12], and finally as a gentry ballad after the night vigil ("Dormi amor mio," II, 8 after [13]) and in the finale. Puccini made a less serious mistake, but undoubtedly one with ironic implications, when he had Suzuki sing her prayer to the melody of Taketori yama ("The high mountain,") C, a song about cucumbers and eggplants. The other melodies merely create atmosphere: Echigo-fuchi ("The Dancing Lion of Echigo," A), Kabuki theater music, Oedo Nihontsurugi ("The Nihon Bridge at Oedo" — the ancient name for Tokyo — P), and the three songs dedicated to the flower season, Sakura ("Cherry blossoms,") B, Hanako-kuhara ("Blossoming spring,") B), and Une no kara ("Spring among the plum-trees,") C. 27

All the melodies, with the exception of G, move in brief phrases within a restricted range. Seven make use of the pentatonic scale, six of them anhemitonic (D, E, F, G, I, J); one has an added ornamental tone (A, F, B). 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. 28

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

27. Okuma (Puccini, "Madame Butterfly," pp 55-66) notes how the words of Une no kara is a hidden metaphor of the story of Sugawara no Michizane, a favorite of the Emperor then banished and forced to commit hara-kiri. The master event was well known to educated Japanese, and Mrs. Okuma might have used the tale as Puccini.

28. The pentatonic scale is the principal almost diatonic scale. Its five notes are usually divided three plus two (a, or two plus three (B). The whole-tone scale divides the octave into equal parts, and two versions are possible (c and d). A characteristic of the scale is its lack of the dynamic thrust of the leading tone (from which it derives its staticity), and the tritone in all intervals of a fourth. As well as Delius and Puccini, all the principal European musicians of this period used it, from Stravinsky to Berg, Bartok, and many others. A composer of Schoenberg, who made use of it, was Egon Wellesz. "Some think that the whole-tone scale arises from the influence of exotic music... As for myself, however, I have never been acquainted with exotic music... But I believe that the Russians or the French, who have perhaps greater access by race to the Japanese, have taken advantage of that source expressly to impart this new sound directly free. I believe, on the contrary, that the whole-tone scale has occurred in all contemporary music for its own sake, as a natural consequence of the most refined sensuous in music." Arnold Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, trans. Ray E. Cooper (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 390.

cess he approached French style — particularly that of Debussy — quite perceptibly. But more than anything he exploited the relationships between melodies — inevitable in such limited inter-vallic ranges — in order to increase the symbolic import of the themes, which assume a key role in the plot. At times he intervenes to make the connections stronger. Compare two phrases that symbolize death particularly strongly: Puccini modified the original line of Une no kara (C), which recalls the father's suicide, making it linked more tightly to Saito-Krisi (F), the sonic image of Butterfly's tragic destiny.

Staccato articulation and very subtle dynamics (see Ex. 6.1. A, B, E, H) are basic to the invented themes, which make use of repeated melodic sequences, enhanced by carefully chosen timbres, with wisps of melisma and timbral blends characterized especially by double reeds: for example, the caricature nature of the banboo passage (Ex. 6.2.), which heralds the mass arrival of the relatives, and the oboe lament (Ex. 6.2.8.) when Butterfly's extreme youth is mentioned:

Example 6.1.
2. Butterfly, 1.4 after [12]

Example 6.2.
6. Butterfly, 1.3 after [13]

The orchestra plays a fundamental role in characterizing the tragedy. The usual orchestral forces are strengthened above all in the percussion section, the tam-tam and Japanese bells together with celesta and tubular bells. Mascagni had employed similar instruments, making use of the three-stringed lute of Kabuki theater (the shamisen), and having had an echo made that was smaller than usual. But the plot of Éric, a drama of Japanese love, lacks the contrast 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 sul ponticello, which gives an ethereal texture to the motive with which Coro marks the entrance of the heroine and her female companions (Ex. 6.1. A).
Among numerous noteworthy examples, it is worth citing the beginning of the concerto's central section, in which Butterfly's relatives thong around the wedding buffet. The transparent effect is achieved with considerable skill (Ex. 6.3).

Example 6.3. Butterfly, I, (5)

This brief passage is entirely constructed on the pentatonic scale F, 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 oscillation of the flute and oboe trills into eighth notes, creating an effect of animation and excess, while the upper pedal (pizzicato violin) 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.

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 1889 show that so fascinated Claude Debussy and others. In the 1900 Exposition, the Kawakami Play Company, with which Sada Yacco 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, (5)

29. Alfredo Casella and Virgilio Mercalli deliberate that those comments to Puccini in their review, stating that the score shows "exotic and extraordinary" influences; see La musica dell'orchestra contemporanea (Milan: Ricordi, 1929), 138. This was probably just as much to preclude as to ignore, given that many of the examples shown, particularly from Italian works, are much less interesting than many examples of Puccini's orchestration.

30. After having pointed out that for Debussy, like Puccini, "exotism is an integral part of their musical language, in the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic level," Thos. Hinkebaum states that "exotism is one means of evoking this spirit (translating totally), once one can comfortably define exotic with in total terms. The same not be said of paraexotism, despite the fact that the Orientals are this in a different way." See "L'Exotisme chez Debussy et Puccini. Un four probleme?" in Esthèse, 166.
The melody appears for the first time in the introduction to the aria "Dovunque al mondo" (Ex. 6.4a and 6.4b) as an echo heard at the words of the Imperial Commissioner during the marriage ceremony (1, Ex. 6.4a). In the first part of Act II it is restated twice, with great effect, as Butterfly proclaims herself an American citizen (6 before III), and as she rejoices triumphantly at the arrival of the long-awaited ship (5 before III). The anthem succeeds perfectly in evoking a picture of the cheeky and restless American in the Orient, just as the youthful American technological force, rapidly consolidating with unstoppable momentum, contrasts with age-old Japanese culture. Having deluded herself that she could fully adjust to such alterity, so becomes "American," Butterfly must take her life at the very moment of her disillusionment, returning to the authentic traditions of her own country. In this tragic perspective, she is not simply a type; she 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 Madama Butterfly presents an intricate case of musical philology, given that the current version derives from four very different versions: the La Scala première, the Brussels revival (3 May 1904), the London Covent Garden production (10 July 1905), and the French première at the Opéra-Comique (18 December 1905). On 30 Feb-

31. The liberties reinforced Puccini's modernist approach to perfection in this aria, supplying rhymes such as those between "tochi" and "Wist" heard in English, too ("America for ever") (Ex. 6.4a, c), introduced by the lyrics.

32. On this subject, see the fundamental contribution of Carl Hoeprich, A Bibliography of the Works of Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) (New York: Bremond Brothers, 1968), 14–59. This invaluable annotated bibliography supplies a detailed list of the versions between the different editions of the vocal and orchestral scores, leaving no doubt as to the existence of four different versions of the opera. The issue was later examined in some detail by Mario Bonincontro ("La signora Pinkerton, una o due," Chigiane 31, no. 12 [1975]: 545–59), who does not sufficiently clarify the differences between the four versions and takes notice of many similar problems in the other operas, for example, in A Masked Ball. Julian Scott has put much of this right in "A Musical Notes and Queries: The Paris Premiere of 1905," in Sigrid Wisseman, ed., World and Western: Music and Literature (Leipzig: E. J. Brill, 1995), 234–39. See also the concise conclusion of Oskar Schindler: "Puccini's Work is Progress: The So-called Versions of Madama Butterfly," Music and Letters 76, no. 4 (1995): 317–21. On the evidence of scores, not yet considered, Schindler argues that it is not possible to speak of clearly defined versions of Madama Butterfly.

January 1904, immediately after the disastrous première, 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 spot at me, as an artist and a man!... Now they are saying that I'm reviving the opera, and that it will take six months! Well but not in the least; I'm not reviving 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 première was so close. I'm not taking the slightest account of that performance; it was the result of a pre-prepared Dunaut inferno. (Marchetti, no. 193, p. 296)

Surely Puccini did not revise the opera as quickly as within three months, even if he worked speedily; and 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 almost 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 entier locale in the first act. In the Milan version the contrast between the Japanese and Americans was much more crude. Pressed to perform by an arrogant, decisive Pinkerton, the uncle Yuzuki had drunkenly sung a tavern song accompanied by a trumpeter ("All'ombra d'un Ecki / sul Nunki-Nurko-Yama"). And the Lieutenant brusquely ignored the poetic names of the three servants, addressing them rudely as "Musico 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, fiorito splendore" 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 surreptitiously after having given Sharpless some money, muttering:

Voi del figlio parlate,
Io non so. Ho rispetto,
solo studiate—Addio—mi
pietra! 33

You speak to her about the child;
I do not dare. I am remorseful,
somebody—Addio—I will get
over it.

33. MADAMA BUTTERFLY / ... MILANO, TEATRO ALLA SCALA / Conruno—Quarta 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 anxious, recitative-like beginning "Te, ta, piccolo Idioli!" Hii. 7 before [32] she fine develops into a broad melody. In the first version the melody descended, following the scale 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, [32]

b. Butterfly, IIii, [32]

Thanks to this simple revision, the piece acquires an emotional impact previously lacking, and ends the tragic journey toward Butterfly's downfall realistically 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 development of the opera, and recurs—not by chance—in various circumstances to characterize the relationship between the geisha's feelings and reality.

In the Milan version the harmony differs: the superscan 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. 6.6c) after having lingered on D major.

The change made for Brescia 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 to 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 dramatic (Ex. 6.7a). Perhaps the composer took the idea by analogy from

Ex. 6.6b. In both cases the descending melodic idea dipped 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 6.6
a. Butterfly, I, [32]

b. Butterfly, I, 3 before [32]

c. Butterfly, I, [32]

d. La Bohème, I, before [32]

The change made for Brescia 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 to 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 dramatic (Ex. 6.7a). Perhaps the composer took the idea by analogy from
a passage in the love duet (Ex. 6.6). Similarly, the revised profile of the melodies—which develop, with quite different effect, around the notes D (Ex. 6.7b) and G (Ex. 6.7c), changing from descending to ascending—might owe its existence to a similar idea in the final aria:

Example 6.7
a. Butterfly, I. 36

b. Butterfly, I. 3 before 38

c. Butterfly, I. 38

d. Butterfly, I. 3 after 38

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 ro

36. The passage appeared a few bars previously, shared between the voice and the violin, at Puccini’s words “a te di qui” (see Ex. 6.1a).

MANIC EXPECTATION, AS IF TO ILLUSTRATE CLEARLY HOW THE HEROINE HAD GRADUALLY OPENED HER HEART TO LOVE. THIS INCREASES THE HEARTrending EFFECT OF “D’ER” TO WHICH THE VOICE CLIMBS. BUTTERFLY HAS ALREADY BEEN DEPRIVED OF THAT PEAK, HER FATE ALREADY DECIDERED BEFORE SHE CLIMBED THE HILL TO THE HOUSE THAT WOULD BECOME HER PRISON.

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 Madama Butterfly. More than in any other opera Puccini essayed leitmotivic elaboration in the Wagnerian sense. He did this because, for the first time, he faced an essentially 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 futility 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 eternal law of every tragedy: whoever spouses 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 finity of Butterfly’s convictions and the surrounding world to which she is essentially alien. Puccini rendered this perceptible by making the “real” situation evolve around a heroine who wants, 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 maturation, “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 matter of action and place, by developing entirely around the inside and outside of Puccini’s house; and of time, if the first act is considered a prologue that took place three years previously.
37. Peter Ross, “Elaboration leitmotivic e colori ascinti in Madama Butterfly,” in Essays, 70. The detailed arguments are of such importance that they are outlined here.
38. Above proof of the structural compactness of the themes in Butterfly may be found in the table compiled by Assunto Tiziano, whose structural analysis of Puccini’s opera exploits the coherence of the melodies on the basis of their intervallic structure (Enrico, 91–99).
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).

Example 6.8
a. \(\text{Butterfly, I, 6 after}\) [\(\text{Ex. 6.9}\)]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E}
\end{array}
\]

b. \(\text{Butterfly, I, 1}\) [\(\text{Ex. 6.9}\)]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E}
\end{array}
\]

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 (Ex before 111). In the meantime it has acquired a new form, when the heroine compares herself to a butterfly in the hands of a collector, a clear premonition 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 (he is guilty of having slandered her condition, Ex. 6.9f). Thus Puccini gradually defines a semimelodic field in which, from the moment she is disowned 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.

Example 6.9
a. \(\text{Butterfly, I, 7}\)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E}
\end{array}
\]

b. \(\text{Butterfly, I, 2 before}\) [\(\text{Ex. 6.9}\)]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E}
\end{array}
\]

c. \(\text{Butterfly, II, 1, 4 before}\) [\(\text{Ex. 6.9}\)]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E}
\end{array}
\]

d. \(\text{Butterfly, II, 1, 5}\)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E} - \text{G} - \text{A} - \text{C} - \text{E}
\end{array}
\]

This observation clearly only concerns the melodic line, which moves from 3 to 7, and not the harmony, in which the whole-tone progression is contradicted by the C6. The relationship with the preceding motive is established by the dotted figure and the (shared) major third in the melody.
Example 6.9 (continued)

f. Butterfly, III.3 after

Butterfly, III.3 before

Example 6.10. Butterfly, I, 2

But it is again this theme, twice echoing Pinkerton’s calls to Butterfly from offstage, that finally completes the tragedy while underlining 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 Consul’s question about her father: “Morte” (“Dead”); see Ex. 6.1 (C), Ume no haru. 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; Goro 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 girl’s confession is a desperate cry, and the theme rings out as yet another premonition of misfortune (Ex. 6.11a), foreshadowing the moment in which her happiness should begin. Even more meaningful is the subsequent reference in the Act I love duet, into which the melody creeps behind the heroine’s gentle phrases, as she seems to be taking heart after her relatives have abandoned her (Ex. 6.11b).
b. Butterfly, I (III)

The Oriental melody is completely absorbed here in a choral-like harmonization, and this loss of musical identity underlines Butterfly's decision to drown her own roots.

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" ("E. Butterfly, orribile destino, danzerà / per te?": see Ex. 6.1 (f), Strips-back). The section thus closes with an echo of the girl who cried out her refusal to return to her old job of geisha, preferring death instead (IIi, 6 before (b)). Having created a musical and dramatic connection between this and the preceding theme, 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, from Butterfly's enthusiastic acceptance of new, Western ways to the refusal to accept her fate, and to the realization that forces her to return to the Japanese code of honor, and so to hara-kiri. In fact, the motive linked to her father's suicide recurs in its original form only as the heroine seizes the knife (IIi, III). In that moment, there is a conscious breaking away from the American world in which Cio-Cio-San had invested her whole being, and destiny is fulfilled with the other theme, which, symbolizing the fate she vainly resisted, closes the opera with an inexorable ritual action (see below, Ex. 6.2c).

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 restatements, 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. 6.1.2a), and this significant adaptation contributes, beyond real evocation, to distinguishing the Western from the Oriental point of view. At the beginning of the second act the theme reverberates for four measures to its original harmonic structure, producing one of the most visionary moments of the score (IIi, (b)). While Butterfly stubbornly proffes the conviction that she is married in the American way, the music makes it clear that this is merely self-delusion. That unmistakable phrase belongs to her alone, and is like a glance at the outside world, but emerging only from her daunting inner understanding. Suzuki cannot restrain her tears, and as Cio-Cio-San consoles her, the orchestra underlines the difference between illusion and reality through the melody, now over reduced harmonies, expressed in a shimmering string tremolo (Ex. 6.1.2b). This is again a Wagnerian gesture, since the theme is altered harmonically and melodically, yet remains recognizable.

Example 6.12

b. Butterfly, II, 3 after (III)
Appearance and reality are distanced all the more, and this dualism is further emphasized when the theme is restated in the form of the duet before Butterfly presents her child to Sharpless (Ex. 6.13a). The prominence of this quotation almost seems to imply the biological aspect of the relationship outlined a little later: "E nato / quando egli stava in quel suo grande paese" ("He was born / while he [Pinkerton] was away in his great country"). The theme returns, much altered, in her last deluded moment, immediately before the cannon shot marking the arrival of Pinkerton's ship in the harbor (Ex. 6.13b):

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

At the end of the melody that accompanies the offstage exclamations of Butterfly's friends (Ex. 6.14a; cf. Ex. 6.1, A), there appears a brief, three-note motive in a pentatonic setting. Later, this acquires a character independent of the passage from which it derives, and is heard again in its entirety when the heroine describes her family's poverty to Pinkerton. The motive underlines, in particular, the central phrase of a meaningful analogy (the inexorability of her fate and her family's financial ruin, Ex. 6.14b). Thus Butterfly justifies becoming a geisha with a touch of poetry:

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 52), and second, at the beginning.
of the intermezzo. But Puccini treated even this very brief theme in the same way as the others. Looking at the structure (Ex. 6.14a) of the generative cell based on an augmented fourth (4), one can see immediately that the retrograde (9) is used as a specific dramatic sign. In this form (Ex. 6.15), the motive precedes the second appearance of the theme linked to the father's suicide (Ex. 6.10), while later, in more developed form, it will introduce melodically Cio-Cio-San's first words at the start of Act II (Ex. 6.15b).42

Example 6.15
a. Butterfly, I, 5 before [5]

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 returned after a period of indecision about the Consulate act.

42. Incidentally, Carter identified motive Ex. 6.14 as the theme of the father's suicide (Carter, 419).

Among the alterations made for the Brescia performances, there was the curtain drop after the hoppiness chorus, 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 Belasco'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 this scene, the composer used real-life sounds such as the birdcalls notated in the score (and a simple stage direction asks 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 Manon Lescaut, 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 the 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, imposed on a mythical 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 sparing 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 Manon Lescaut, 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 entries 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 soffitta" ("holding house")—in which ceiling and walls "vanno e vengono a prove / a norma..."
Example 6.16. Butterfly, I, 7 before [f]

Example 6.17. Butterfly, III, beginning

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 counter-subject, the first voice drops out, and through this formal anomaly the passage assumes a character quite different from that of the first:

All sense of dynamism has disappeared: the subject, in G minor, moves wearily 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 coda theme to be heard (see Ex. 6.9a). The juxtaposition represents the time that has passed since the heroine's solitude began, increasing the poignancy of the allusion 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.45 The model for the two endings was Cio-Cio-San's entrance with her friends in the nuptial 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),46 and is heard as Butterfly bows in submission before Pinkerton, making her friends bow with her. The same theme later accompanies the heroine's anxious 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

45: The harmonic logic is similar to that governing the sequence on the whole-tone scale on which Butterfly makes her entrance (Ex. 6.9b), where the music moves from the tonic to the sixth degree of the main, which is then used as V of the new key.
46: Puccini altered an otherwise perfect pentatonic background by introducing a C♯ supposition in the melody.
short arioso ends with an inverted chord (Ex. 6.18a: X), answered by the theme representing the father's suicide:

Example 6.18
a. Butterfly, I, 2 after [ii]

b. Butterfly, I, 3 before [ii]

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):


After these three restatements, the triad marking the first curtain (Ex. 6.19, X) acquires its own evocative power, signaling Butterfly's eventual submission. Puccini exploited this reference in the finale, using the inverted chord to end the opera. This time, it differs from the preceding passage by being joined to another preexisting motive (cf. Ex. 6.1, f), falling unexpectedly onto the final chords of the theme that accompanies the
The heroine's dying breath, the theme that recalls her fatal destiny, played noisily by full orchestra (Ex. 6:20, X). The contrivance is rendered all the more potent through its rhythmic asymmetry: the melody, which is strictly pentatonic, follows three times on the tonic triad (B minor) on an offbeat, 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 sonority.

Example 6:10. Butterfly, II, iii, [58]

The reminiscence comes after the play of symmetries has loaded the dramatic sequence with latent meaning—so much so that the ending of the first act comes to mind, in retrospect, as the premise of the now-completed tragedy. Once again, then, Puccini uses technical devices to give a sense of evolution to the drama made music; but they are also structural pillars that open and close the tragedy, almost forcing it down an obligatory path.

The effect of hearing a dissonance of a second is strong enough to have moved some scholars to add the addition of the note G to the B minor chord (Carosi, 4:17), or even an "added sixth, accentuated to the point of giving the sensation of savagery (C major versus B minor at the close of the opera?" (Benedetti, "La signora Pinkerton," 966). Such slips—now insignificant—by eminent scholars demonstrate the composer's skill.

"NOI SIAMO GENTE AVVEZZA / ALLE PICCOLE COSE / UMILI E SILENZIOSE"

With these three phrases ("We are people accustomed to small things, humble and silent") at the heart of their duet, Butterfly begs Pinkerton to love her. No words could better depict the geisha'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 "Donna non me male"). The American Consul reveals a greater humanity than his fellow countrymen, even though his warning to Pinkerton about the sincerity of Butterfly's love proves useless. A toast to their distant homeland dispels these troubling issues, and allows Pinkerton to explain why he is infatuated with his future wife:

Amore o grillo, dir non negre,—Certo costei
In'ha - dir sommesso—arti invocato.
Lieve qual tenue—vero solitario
alla suave—al portamento
sembra figura—da parvenza.
Ma dal mio bocca—sussurro di luce
come con sottile—mozzo al suolo,
qual farfalletta—velozza e poca
contal grazia—silenziosa
che ti rinchierrei—furan m'auge
se pure infanghine—devoi l'ale.

True love or fancy, I can't tell. I am only certain that she has ensnared me with her simple arts. Light as fragile blown glass, in her staring and hearing she seems like a figure on a screen. But from her shining background of lace, 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 crushing her wings.

The image is central not only because it clarifies the tenor's point of view in a definitive way, but also because, thanks to Giacosa's taste for miniatures and his refined stylistic sense (lyrical melodies, zitti steps with added sonorance), the figure on a screen acquires a seductive, poetic vividness, 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 statues of her ancestors are puppets, she herself little more than a doll,
which merely has the effect of infiltrating 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 sym-
bol in the nautile Garo, a light tenor who wears a bowler hat and acts as
bridge between East and West. He is one of the many characters who il-

dustrate 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 announces the couple, hastily recites a
simple formula, and everything changes. As Cesare Garbo aptly put in:

Butterfly is a ghost of little value and low price, who sells herself in mar-
riage; but, once married, the rite makes her a wife in all respects; a wife
determined to defend her status. To be a wife is, in fact, the only
thing that justifies her existence, and guarantees her reality.48

As soon as her uncle makes his gesture of disownment, the abysses of soli-
tude 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

Puccini carefully differentiated the two characters’ attitudes. The elab-
orate formal structure of the piece, which is divided into five sections,
moves the listener through the quality of the melody; but the characters
live in contrasting worlds. Their inability to communicate gradually be-
comes more obvious, and all Pinkerton’s lyricism cannot mask his super-

In the first section of the duet (Andante affettuoso), Pinkerton’s tone is
corporating (“Bimba non piangere,” I, II), echoes of the curse still sound-
from outside. The lights dim, and his voice becomes more persuasive
(“Vieni la sera,” II). Cio-Cio-San prepares for the night, and the verses of
the first duet (in fact, two subduets) dispel any ambiguity:

Butterfly

Quest’ohi pensosa
di scioglier mi tarda...

Pinkerton

Con modi di scorsoito
i nodi aletta e scioglie!

48. Cesare Garbo’s intense, perceptive, and elegant essay, “Simboli una figura di para-


His excitement, disguised as romanticism, continues to mount (“Bimba
dagli occhi pieni di malin,” a after II), but she persists in her restraint, as
if frightened by her own fate. “Stolta paura, ‘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 repeated in reverse order A-B-C-D-B-A).49

Within this frame, Pinkerton’s increasing desire is set against Butterfly’s
hopes and doubts. If in section B the curse theme appeared to disrupt the
narratives (Ex. 6.9a), in the corresponding F section the heroine’s words con-
nstructively associate her destiny with that of the butterfly (Ex. 6.9b).

At the center of the arch, Butterfly declares her admiration for her husband (I),
then yields for a moment (D): a violin solo accompanies her as she be-

ecakes a “bene piccolino” (“tiny favor”); but her need for tenderness “pro-
fonde” (come il cielo, come l’ondi del mare) (“deep as 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 impenetrable: the
clash recurs in “Viva dall’anima inquieta,” opens the fifth and final part
of the duet, in which the heroine’s entrance music is repeated (“Dolce
notte! Quante stelle!”). Not even the sounding unison of the great cantabile
melody can bring true harmony: Butterfly romantically contemplates na-

ture and the starry sky, Pinkerton draws her toward him, 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 fiorito sal” 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 version of

49. The measures are described by Carulli thus (4th, n. 2): A = “Stolta paura” (Pinkerton,
A major, E, II); B = “Addio fiorito sal” (Butterfly, B major, I); C = “Stolta paura” (Butterfly,
E-flat major, II), D = “Vogliono luce” (Butterfly, B-flat major, I), E = “Dicon
ciò che mi trae” (Butterfly, B-flat major, II), F = “Viva dall’anima in quieta” (Pinkerton, A
major, II).

60. The sequence begins in A major but, unlike the otherwise analogous earlier section,
steps one degree lower, lacking on F for the cantabile duet.
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, furiously becomes lost in the “amara fragranza” (“bitter 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 tormented journey, as the theme that closed Act I indicates (see Ex. 6.10). It was to this melody a few moments earlier that the heroine declared that she wanted to die, but which 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 resists to look reality in the face. Among the most touching is the reference to the robins’ nesting, which would mark the passage in which her husband promised to return. The orchestra accompanies her comment with an impressionistic brush stroke: major seconds in the oboes, flutes, and violins, chirping above a murmuring trill 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 mimics the arrival of Pinkerton’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, 43:

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-delusion 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, scorning 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 55), 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 Pinkerton’s letter. The B-flat major episode that accompanies their voices is one of the most poetic passages in the opera. Built from very spare 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 it is then developed in a higher register in longer note values—as though a fully-fledged melody—at the exact moment Butterfly sustains the first blow. “Non lo rammenerò” (“I do not remember him?”): three years of suffering are distilled into those three words (Ex. 6.22).

Example 6.22. Butterfly, II, 52:

51. The implacable pace of the tragedy will have been reflected clearly in the metallic lines of the heroine, who is progressively forced into wider and wider intervals.
The only thing that can keep Butterfly from collapsing is an unconscious refusal to understand the real content of the message, thus making Sharpless's efforts useless. The Council then raises the possibility that Pinkerton will never come back, and an obsessive oscillation, a semaphore, takes over. It is the first real contact with death ("Dove non potrei far"), a journey then adumbrated in the dramatic aria "Che tua madre," in which death represents the only way of avoiding dishonor.

The child shown to Sharpless, the son of Butterfly's brief love, will not be consolation, but a further catalyst in the tragedy. In order to defend her reputation, Cio-Cio-San flings herself angrily at Goro, who has been caught gossiping near the house. It is a demonstration of nervous force, of the heroine's temperament, as her father's knife gleams in her hand for the first time. The cannon sounds in the port, announcing the arrival of the Arikahams, and the geisha points the telescope to see herself vindicated; never has triumph been more tragic. The music from the aria "Un bel di" accompanies her, the American author setting the seal, and then, without break, comes the Brewer knot with Suzuki (II, II). In a room full of bright color, Cio-Cio-San makes three little holes in the screens, and air-crossed-logged to keep vigil, her back to the audience. Moonlight floods the stage while the music that accompanied the reading of the letter returns. The repetition of this piece brings the emotion to its climax: the broad, arching melody of the chorus—plantively doubled by a muted violin, harp, and flute—\(^{15}\)—hoisting a gentle liberty, hurling the heroine into a final, bitter moment of illusion. Butterfly has finally found a sympathetic

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\(^{15}\) To keep the offstage characters in tune, Puccini prescribed a viola d'amore, an instrument that would not be heard in the auditorium (Luigi Illica, Puccini interpretato da se stesro, 499). This is necessary, given that the vocal line rises in a broad arc to high B, dying away to pianissimo in the conclusion.

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**MADAMA BUTTERFLY: AN EXOTIC TRAGEDY**

As we have seen, *Madama Butterfly* did not acquire its present form in Brescia. To follow the process that led to the current version, we need to examine Puccini's second workshop, and to make the acquaintance of the director Albert Carrè.\(^{14}\) 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 Carrè, 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 *Léon* (1900) and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (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 decided 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 prostiutes' embarkation in *Manon Lescaut*, the Latin Quarter in *La Bohème*, and the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle in *Tosca*. 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 librettos.

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\(^{14}\) Carrè is right when he hypothesizes that Puccini composed the chorus first, then revised the music for the latter scene, since "Puccini, no doute, avait associé cette musique avec Butterfly's inconstancy and her unraveling faith in Pinkerton's love" (Carrè, 474). The composer in fact wrote a letter to Illica on 3 December 1902: "Pay attention to the last act, and that introduction, to serve as a chorus: we must find something good. Mysterious harmonious voices, for example" (Carrè, no. 156, 156). The insistence can having the opportunity to employ the chorus might suggest this, at least sensitively, Puccini had thought of its symbolic weight in the terms of historical tragedy.
But from *Butterfly* on, one notices Puccini’s increasing interest in different aspects of staging, not just to bring about *grandiose effets 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 he wrote to Illica:

I like the fact that it will be night, with that reddish light on the child—keep Suzuki’s wailing offstage, after she [Butterfly] examines the knife and is on the point of suicide, interrupted by the arrival of ‘Dolore.’

(Gara, no. 261, 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 1905, for instance, he recommended to Toscanini two lighting effects:

At the first hint of an »air du soir« in Act III, try to obtain the effect of lamps that fade through lack of oil, since the intermezzo, or scenic pause, is to be performed in its entirety. (Gara, no. 450, 289–90)

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 child 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. 451, 299)

Two musicians who were taking an interest in the staging: a good clue, useful for understanding the reasons for the final changes made in the work. The alterations originate from this heightened visual sense: the “broad beams of light” are a truly dramatic gesture, which shows the heroine into relief at the exact moment of the tragedy.

Illica 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 a new libretto, 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 Illica to Ricordi of 8 December:

I went with him and was present at *Butterfly*, performed in its entirety, and from the discouragement of themorning, I saw—little by little, act by act—not only the »hope and faith«, but Puccini become animated in the certitude of a great success. The staging is beautiful and logical. When certain Italian effects are not achieved, others are obtained: details, small inedible things, in good taste and artistically effective. *Butterfly* 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 Carré, 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 Carré the esteem and artistic respect he deserves. (Gara, no. 495, 333–34)

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In light of this recognition of the director's merits, it is worth considering the manuscript mise-en-scène of Madama Butterfly (hereafter MES), housed at Paris in the Bibliothèque de l'Association de la Régie Théâtrale, which exhaustively documents Carré'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 Carré and Puccini. The mise-en-scène, cited verses and pages of the score, shows all the musical changes made since the preceding version, and corresponds, save in a few details, with the current version of the opera (hereafter B4), also published in full score in 1907.

In the introduction to his description of the French score, Hopkins emphasizes Puccini's not being happy with the changes made by Carré, and considers them in the context of the caprices 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 couleur locale which were omitted in Paris, removing digressions from the drama and making it more coherent. Moreover, the loss of every scene of caricature reinvented dignity to the Japanese, contrasting them more forcefully with the Westerners.

The first cut (B3, pp. 50–51, 48 mm.; MES, p. 27) concerned the episode in which Butterfly described, at length, her uncle the bonze and the drunkard Yakushidé, as well as Pinkerton's mocking jokes about them ("Capisco un bonzo o un genzio—i due mi fanno il piazzo"); "I understand—a bonze and a simpleton:/—The two make a pair"). The second cut, a few pages later (B3, pp. 74–77, 60 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 come straight after the bitter observation on Cio-Cio-San's fifteen years—"L'età dei giochi" ("The age for games"), 1904 the Comsat: "Le de confetti" ("and for weddings"), finishes Pinkerton. This brings to the fore one of the main points of the tragedy: a young girl enters almost unwittingly into a situation that will eventually overwhelm her.

Finally, after the marriage, Pinkerton exclaims, "Sbrigiamoci al più presto e in modo onesto" ("Let's finish this up quickly, in a respectable fashion") A series of jokes with the drunken uncle and the corpulent nephew is omitted here, allowing the toasts to follow immediately ("Ip, ip": B3, pp. 90–95, 54 mm.; MES, p. 45). Here again, the drama gains in pace, not only because the music's importance to be alone with his wife is more obvious, but above all because it hastens the bonze's entrance, a central moment in the act. Carré's staging of this passage so pleased Puccini that he described it in enthusiastic detail to Giulio Ricordi in an important letter written on 23 November 1906:

"The bonze's arrival is brilliantly effective. From a rise, he launches himself onto the stage, crossing the bridge (over which Butterfly also arrives), and the curve is cast very effectively, since while the bonze speaks out his diatribe, the mother, cousin, aunt, and friends throw themselves in turn before him with pleading gestures; but they are violently pushed away from the formidable uncle until he approaches Butterfly. Then the..."
Sommo !

The final cut in the first act was the removal of a short arioso for Butterfly a little after the beginning of the love scene ("Pensose se qualcuno mi volesse...", B3, pp. 119-21, 117 min, MES, p. 49), which described her initial diffidence toward the American proposed for marriage by Goro. The passage altered the proportions of the duet (the arch form was thus constructed in retrospect), but above all introduced a narration 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:

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ical past with one of Butterfly's recent past, in line with the omission of the other episodes of _operau locale_. Puccini shows clearly that the heroine has acquired a "moralist" Western mentality, now refusing to return to prostitution. 66

Before discussing the new finale, it is worth reading the first part of the letter to Ricordi (25 November 1906) quoted above:

I have the score here, almost ready. Tomorrow it will be completed. Should I leave the mise-en-scène as is, 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 will have wonderful effects with the lighting and flowers.

(Ricordi, no. 93, 101)

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 emotionally typical of Butterfly. I would leave that scene with Prince Yamadori as it was, because it is pleasant 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 subsidy of the excellent Carré, but let him have it for his theatre, and not complicate things. This little business where the Prince enters—as we have always done it—is a very opportune means 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 8.17-19)

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. 66 But, while Carré's good reasons for keeping Yamadori outside have

66 "The flower scene is almost all dialogued" (Adami, no. 93, 101): this involves the solo ad libitum of eighteen orchestral bars (Ex. 7.17, from figure 48), which accompanies the action mimed by Butterfly and Suzuki while they become the room (MSS, 73).

67 One gathers from the mise-en-scène (MSS, 73) that the passage was effecitively deleted, to be reinstated 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. 67

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 ready logic: think of a very short scene, finding all the necessary paths in Kate's few words to Butterfly—as in Butterfly's terseness and silence (silences are needed for Butterfly). (Gara, no. 199, 233)

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, B1). In the current version she merely turns to Sharpless with a desperate awareness (B2):

Example 6.14. Butterfly. II.ii. 8 before [B]

Immediately after, Kate tried to approach her, and was pushed away before showing emotion with the powerful phrase "È triste cosa" (Ex. 6.15, B3). Now these measures, with changed text, are given to the Consul and Butterfly (B1) (Ex. 6.15).

66 Puccini also cut a brief dialogue between Butterfly and Suzuki after the Americans' exit (B3, 717-18, MSS, 113), in which the heroine sings a bitter song: "È venne alla sara porta, / pensò il punto di morte—e gridò—/ e nulla vi lasci, / nulla, forse la morte." ("He came to the door, / took the place of everything—and went—/ and left nothing, nothing—dead!""). The scene happens without pause toward its tragic epilogue.

67 Crescetti rightly concludes his detailed analysis of the libretto by saying 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 origin, when it was decided to abolish the Consulate scene ("La signorina K. B. Pinkerton") (87-88).
CHAPTER SIX

Example 6.25. Butterfly, II, i, 8 after (i)

A brief cut of seven measures (B3, pp. 266–67) attests Kate's humanness further, as she reaches for Cio-Cio-San's hand. Her cruel and unfeeling demand to Sharpless is particularly prominent: "E il figlio lo darai?" ("And she will give him the son?") is said from a distance, but cuts through

Butterfly like a knife. The heroine reacts with tragic resignation, well illustrated by some final revisions to the melody, which changes from recitative (Ex. 6.26, B3) to arioso (B4):

Example 6.26. Butterfly, II, i, 1 before [i]

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 traumatic denouement: when Butterfly finds herself with Kate, she will 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 unmoving 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 intimate 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 essence of the drama—Butterfly's isolation—the director's alterations received Puccini's full approval, and with a few brush strokes the last adjusted the framework perfectly to usher in the final stages of the tragedy.

Butterfly dismisses everybody, asking that "Fra mezz'ora salite la collina" ("In half an hour you climb the hill"; see Ex. 6.9d) with the melody

64. In commenting on this version, Smith inexplicably states that "Kate Pinkerton, in early version an inaccessible woman who is always ready to use her intoxicating charm to achieve her aims, is transformed by Carré's alterations into a genuinely compassionate lady understandably reluctant to intrude on the bitter grief of Butterfly" ("Madama Butterfly," 154).
that has, throughout, represented her fate. A visionary hope during the aria "Un bel di vedremo" (Ex. 6.9c), 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 (3 before 36) a two-note figure in staccato sixteenth notes appears (timpani ostinato, with a heroic character): it is the sign that the geisha has found her dignity once more. Grandiose music accompanies her; as she blindfolds the cloud, a threnody 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, pianissimo, 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 pity and compassion.

69. This timbral arrangement anticipates the march to the scaffold of the Prince of Persia in Turandot (violins with trumpet). The extract confirms Puccini's virtuality in accompaniment music for recitative-like passages think of the second finale of Tosca, and Cavalleria's conclusion.

**Chapter Six**

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 audience, less sweet sentimentality—that is, less of it in quantity—and more drama of the "dichiarare" type. I don't think anything medieval: however much I have read, I am never moved by it. (To Valentino Soldani, 28 June 1904; Gara, no. 387, 277-78)

(b) This evening I feel like writing an opera buffa, but buffa in the real sense, Italian buffe, without a shadow of history or morals at the end for anyone: comic, light, cheerful, carefree, not comic; but to make the world, which goes agitated and "wound up" dealing with the feverish cares of life, split its sides laughing. Any idea? (To Luigi Illica, 2 March 1904; Gara, no. 406, 287-88)

(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 Vandini, 3 May 1906; Gara, no. 473, 317)

(d) Don't desert me after the second hurdle. . . . I don't want the kind of realism that you could approach only painfully, but a "quid medium" that consumes the listeners through sad and somber means, which would occur logically and glimmer in a radiant halo of the poetry of life more
than of a dream. (To Gabriele D’Annunzio, 16 August 1906; Gara, no. 425, 428)

(6) The whole world is expecting an opera from me and it is about time for one too. Enough of La Bohème, Battice, 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 West as a 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 see. (To Tito Ricordi, 18 February 1907; Gara, no. 500, 340–41)

(7) I am reading, chucking, writing to Gara, Serio, Belasco. D’Annunzio is offering his services again and this morning I received a letter from him saying that his old nightingale has awakened with the spring and would like to sing for me. I get plans and librettos every day, all the stuff of junk dealers. Colantti would like to find the material pearl for me. . . .

My God, what an awful world the theater is, in Italy and abroad. (To Giulio Ricordi, 4 April 1907; Gara, no. 501, 341)

(8) 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 plays 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 reworking and redoing, and then you could get something good from them. There is the idea di sera [school for idios] 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 out-of-doors—for example, outside the house with a great extending roof. But it’s winter and things don’t happen outdoors! What to do, these? When you’ve read the play, I’ll say it en to (Zangarini). In short, read it and tell me immediately what you think. (To Giulio Ricordi, 25 August 1907; Gara, no. 418, 351)

(9) 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, but we’ll need to have 8 or 10 horses appear onstage. Zangarini is now in the incubation period; he’s hope be hitches safely. FS. Silica sent me an awful first act of M[aria]

Alfonnetta). I’ll write to you about it. (To Giulio Ricordi, 26 August 1907; Gara, no. 512, 353)

(10) I’m reading La fanciulla and think Zangarini has done well, of course some scenic and literary points will have to be corrected, and I’ll put my observations in the margins. I’m already avertor the moment I’ll finally get to work. I’ve never before had such a fever! (To Giulio Ricordi, 2 February 1908; Gara, no. 538, 361–64)

(11) . . . undeniably The Girl is more difficult than I thought—it’s an account of the distinctive and characteristic features with which I want to endow the opera that, for the time being I’ve lost my way and don’t go straight ahead as I should like. (To Sybil Seligman, 23 June 1908; Carnett, 177)

(12) Those librettists are a disaster. One has disappeared, the other doesn’t even reply to my letters! . . . This first act is long, full of details of little interest! (To Giulio Ricordi, 11 July 1908; Gara, no. 547, 368)

(13) The opera emerges splendidly, the first act a little long, but the second act magnificent and the third act grandiose. Caruso is magnificent in his part. Denza is not bad but he needs more energy. (To Ricordi) the second—broad, good, admirable. In short, I am content with my work and I hope for the best. But how tremendously difficult it is, this music and the staging. (To Elvira Puccini, New York, 7 December 1908; Carnett, 204)

(14) So, did the harmony in La fanciulla surprise you? Never fear. With the orchestra, everything is leveled out, softened, dissonance with different timbres is very different from what you hear at the piano. (To Alberto Cerechi, 8 January 1911; Gara, no. 576, 384)

(15) As you’ll see, the raise-en-tête has a special importance if new paths are to be explored. I’ve seen some shows [directed] by Reinhardt and was won over by the simplicity and power of the effects. Also, one can succeed in making a subject that’s not very new (and what in the world is new?) seem original with new staging. (To Luigi Illica, October 1912; Gara, no. 566, 404)

This was a crisis that, as we have seen, had been put off but was inevitable; a crisis on which Puccini’s great twentieth-century works would depend. Although Puccini’s falling in love with Belasco’s Madame Butterfly had been instant, after an intense but relatively brief period spent trying out every possible opera subject, this was not the case for La fanciulla. When he wrote to Tito Ricordi from the United States (6), he had already seen The Girl of the Golden West, which it seems was brought to his notice in Paris by Count Antonini; before he embarked for New York (to be
that he searched in every different direction, yet always remained perfectly cognizant of the trends of European opera.

Puccini explored every possibility. Even though it had not yet become fashionable, he himself was unconvincing, he considered setting an opera in the Middle Ages, making inquiries about *Merope Vomana,* a play by Masterlicker set "in medieval Tuscany of the great conductors" (March 1903; Gara, no. 309, 236) and gave more thought to Marguerite de Cortona, "an early thirteenth-century subject" by Valentino Soldani (February 1903).

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 *Le Foujolier de Notre-Dame* he had thought of

A type of prologue like that in *Mefistofele.* . . . *Notre-Dame* the dead, of night. . . and then, gradually, organ, chorus, children's voices (chords rather than single notes in the bell). A suspense musical scene, new, grandioso, with fugue à la Bach. (To Ellica, June 1904; Gara, no. 383, 179)

Besides planning unusual somberous 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 1903 he read some stories by Gorky, with the idea of deriving 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 (1905). He bombarded Ellica in September 1904 with requests and pleas ("I insist on the three meet. Read now and The 36 for One and the story The Gypsy at the third"); Gara, no. 395, 183.

For some time he even entertained the idea of addressing Gorky directly:

As for The Raft, [Bremond] has told me the staging problems. . . . I ask you again: write the letter to Gorky. We might get the third [subject] we need from him, the idea, the poetic, the sentimental, or the tragic—tremendously tragic. (10 September 1904; Gara, no. 396, 183)

A third work was needed, then, but despite the great interest stirred by a first reading, the story *The Raft* did not lend itself to theatrical adaptation.

*2. Messiaen's Le Foujolier de Notre-Dame* (1903) anticipated a long series of Italian and foreign works set in this period, from Mascagni's *Il Viaggio in Italia* (1901) and Puccini's *La bohème* (1903) to Zandonella's *Il prigioniero di Caracena* (1917)."
After having decided on the genre of an opera buffa (b), in March 1905 Puccini summed up his final stance on the projected triptych: "have you thought of anything buffa? . . . Three acts, either comic or serious, but no more, no less" (Gara, no. 409, 290). A little later Deubner's Tartarini sur les Alpes, rejected five years previously, came once more to mind: "It's an idea, and I believe that there it potential for unusual comedy and variety" (Gara, no. 411, 190). And perhaps this was his ideal blend: "Tartarini for the opera buffa, Gorsky for the seria" (Gara, no. 412, 290). That Puccini was looking for something powerful in literature with a social message is not only affirmed by his attraction to Gorsky's stories, but also by that for a play by Octave Mirbeau written in 1897, about which Illia voiced his uncertainty to Ricordi:

He has sent me Mirbeau's Les Mauvais Béguins? Just think L'Asuraiti adapted for the stage! Strikers, preach on both sides! (May 1905; Gara, no. 421, 294).

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 Il trittico became a reality less than ten years later, the first part was Dido's Gods (La Hungrybeard, a piece more in which social injustice and misery play a fundamental role, and the final one, Gianini Schichi), was his sole entrance into the buffo genre. And what can one say, when one reads a reflection on Oprettas? At least if it were operettas, I could do it while traveling. An oprecht is merely a question of twenty little pieces, and for abroad (London) it would be big business. (To Illia, 8 May 1905; Gara, no. 418, 291).

We know that La randaze, at least originally, was conceived as an operetta, although for Vienna rather than London. For Puccini, then, this was a period of contrasts, in which new perspectives emerged, but current problems were left unresolved.

4. The Socialist Party newspaper. (Trans.)

5. Subjects considered before l'amante, other than those discussed in the text, were The Tell-Tale Heart; a short story by Poe; Le peregrine, Valverde, and Louisa Malli, historical subjects by Illica; Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet; Le Cid; La rue, a collection of poetry by George Rodenbach; a drama by Gioacchino Rossini called La Signora di Chiaravalle; a short story by Mares Baudin, the title: the Commedia dell'arte di Luca del 1649 e 1654 by Giovanni Serenati; I Capuleti ed I Montecchi by Vincenzo Sforza; El candido, a novel by Don Pablo de Segura; a narrative novel by Francisco Quesada y Villagas (in the); Rammazzini, a short story by Godoy; Rossini's opera (a character from the Divine Comedy), Il barbiere, and Turandot by Sartori, The Light that Failed by Kipling; a short story by Mirandola; Tolstoy's Anna Karenina; Karamzino, a novel by Léon Bouchard, Arja by Thomas, The Death of a Teacher by Wilde; Le Coeur de mes vers; and The Last Days of Pompeii.

Puccini in the Twentieth Century

Puccini began to consider the works of his fellow composers with renewed interest, trying even harder than usual to keep up to date with every stylistic novelty, the significance of which he appraised carefully. A long-standing admirer of the French, and in particular Massenet (whose inspiration was, however, running dry), he was aware of an affinity with Debussy's sound world from his very first exposure to it. This fact must be considered in relation to La fêlille, which, as we will see, was accused by the critics of being influenced by Debussy. It is, perhaps, more accurate to speak of a coming together of two languages, given that harmonic procedures very typical of Debussy—from the use of ninth chords on secondary scale degrees to the utilization of the whole-tone scale, pentatonic scale, and Gregorian modes—can be seen in Puccini's very first works, from the Mass to Edgar. But while in Tair such techniques appear quite independently of Debussy, in many parts of Butterfly the similarities are more obvious, even extending to certain orchestral blends (in particular, combinations of harp and clarinet with other instruments). This was probably a result of Puccini's acquaintance with Pelleas, an opera which, although expressing a conception of theater diametrically opposite to his, attracted him musically. After having heard it in the theater the first time, Puccini wrote:

Debussy's Pelleas et Melisande has extraordinary harmonic qualities and the most delicate instrumental effects. It's really very interesting, but it never carries you away, lifts you; it is always somber in color, as uniform as a Franciscan's habit. The subject is the interesting part—it serves as a background for the music. (To Cialdi Ricordi, 16 [15] November 1906; Gara, no. 495, 315).

It is certain that Puccini knew Debussy's music well (it would seem, in light of certain passages, that he was more familiar with the piano works than with those for orchestra); but the declaration he gave to the issue of The Musical Times in July 1918 commemorating the composer, who had died the previous March, will suffice to dispel any residual doubt about the extent of his reflections:

Debussy had the soul of an artist, capable of the rarest and most subtle perception, and to express these he employed a harmonic scheme that at first seemed to reveal new and spacious and premature ideas for the musical art. When nowadays I hear discussions on Debussyism as a system to follow or not to follow, I feel that I would like to tell young musicians of what I personally know concerning the perplexities that assailed this

6. Puccini probably read the vocal score of Pelleas, which was published in 1902 (the orchestral score came out in 1905).
Chapter Seven

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 bewildering 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 fervent admirer of Debussy, I anxiously waited to see how he himself would assail Debussysum; 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 animating 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 Charpentier (Louise, 1905)—made him think that he never had competitors in France, merely detractors such as Bruneau, Lalo, Debussy, and Dukas, who, driven primarily by chauvinism, 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, Mahler was unable to give the opera at the Imperial Theater in Vienna, and the Austrian premiere was prepared and conducted by Strauss, was given in Graz on 16 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 that:

Mahler and his wife have left; they send you cordial greetings. The Italian composer Puccini also came especially from Pisa, and there were several young people from Venice, their only hand-luggage the piano score. 9

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 Leandvi, who had been his pupil for some time:

Dear Ervin,

Salome is the most extraordinary, terribly challenging thing. There are some brilliant musical effects, but in the end it's very tiresome. Extremely interesting spectacle, though. 10

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 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 Gymnich, who did Strauss on this occasion of his desire to sing Salome (and to perform in person the famous Dance of the Seven Veils). 11

An acclaimed performance of Verismo works (she was the first Santuzza, as well as Fedora opposite Caramus) and of late Massenet (Sapho), Bellincioni, now at the end of her career, was the main reason by which Strauss's operas entered Italy. She was Salome for the first time at the performance in the Teatro Regio of Turin, conducted by the composer on 23 December 1906, while La Scala produced the opera around the same time under Toscanini, with Selma Kretzschmar in the title role (16 December). Kretzschmar was Butterfly in the Brescia revival of May 1904, and would take the lead in the Italian premiere of Bohème in Milan on 6 April 1909, just three months after the world premiere. Thus began a sort of consensus between performances of Puccini who would go on to excel in Strauss, and vice versa. We need only recall that Maria Jeritza, acclaimed as Tosca (1912), Minnie (1913), and Giorgetta (1910), starred in the world premiere of Ariadne auf Naxos (1911) and Die Frau ohne Schatten (1919), and performed successfully in Salome and Der Rosenkavalier (Oksana) at the Met from 1911. Emmy Destinn, who created Minnie in New York in 1910, was also a renowned Salome; Selma Kurt exchanged Zerbinetta in the revised version of Ariadne (1916) for Tosca (1913), and the great Lotte Lehmann, Sophie in Rosenkavalier in Hamburg (1914) and then a memorable Arabella (1913), was in

footnotes:

8. Jules, Chausson's scored opera (1903), is merely a feeble continuation of Louise. It is rather less ignoble to recall the presence—confirmed by reliable sources—of an embattled guest, the future artist Adolf Hohen.
the 1920s a stupendous Sior Angelica, also excelling at Manon at Vienna in 1927 ("I can honestly say that I have never heard a comparable fourth act of Manon" was Puccini's comment). Torca, and Lib (opposite Jeruzza as Tancredi in 1926).

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 2 February 1908, resembles the antipathy that Mahler had many times shown for him:

Yesterday I went to the premiere of Salome by Strauss and sung (?) by Bellincioni, whose dawning was wonderful. It was a success... But how many will be convinced of that? The orchestral performance was a type of badly dressed Russian salad. But the composer was there and everyone says it was perfect.... When Strauss was rehearsing, trying to animate the orchestra to a course, violent performance, he said, "My dear gentlemen, this is not a question of music! It has to be a zoo. Come along, blow your instruments!" Truly memorable! (Adami, no. 100, 110)

Fortunately, Puccini was not always this harsh, but his opinion of Strauss was never very friendly; for as long as he lived, however, he followed Strauss carefully, judging him to be his only serious competitor. Puccini took A Fiorentine 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; Gar, no. 495, 312).

The figure of the restless princess loomed again when he described to Illica the finale 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 Narraboth] 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; Gar, no. 496, 313)

In spite of obvious differences in harmonic technique and orchestration, Strauss and Puccini shared an almost exclusive focus on feminine protagonisms and mastery of leitmotifs; but above all, they had a similar sense of drama, an instinct for the coup de théâtre (though applied to subjects of a totally different nature). Fundamentally, Puccini and Strauss, together with Janácek and Berg, were among the last composers to possess a real instinct for narration in music, conveyed in a series of works that represent an extreme act of fidelity to the traditional genre, which they continued to the point of exhaustion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Puccini in the Twentieth Century

Another Crisis: Marriage

Neither was Puccini's private life easy in the years leading up to the premiere of La fanciulla del West. He had just ended his relationship with the mysterious Cornelia, but this did not mean that he had lost his habit of falling in love. While in London for an important revival of Manon Lescaut at Covent Garden (17 October 1904, with Ada Giachetti and Enrico Caruso, conducted by Cleofonte Campanini), the composer dined with a well-to-do English couple, Robert and Sybil Seligman. He was an important banker; she cultivated her talent for art by taking singing lessons with one of Puccini's best friends and colleagues, Francesco Paolo Torri. The latter, famous for his popular romanzas, had moved to London in 1875, and in 1880 had been named singing master of the royal household. Photographs testify to Sybil's exceptional beauty, and it was inevitable that Giacomo should fall in love with her. Their passion did not last long, partly because of the distance between them, partly because she preferred to keep her marriage intact rather than be satisfied by occasional nights of passion with a famous and notoriously volatile man. As early as summer 1906, the Seligmans were guests of the Puccinis at Boscolungo Abetone, where they returned the following year. The fact that the English couple were cordially welcomed into the family implies that any adulterous passion was now over.

But the relationship yielded to the only real friendship that the composer ever had with a woman. Sybil became his comfort in the most difficult of times, and remained at his side—figuratively or in fact—until his death. She was his preferred advisor, suggesting numerous opera subjects to him, and cultivating better artistic connections with English impresarios than Tito Ricordi himself did. Their correspondence is massive: in twenty years Puccini wrote Sybil 700 letters, 500 of which were collected by her son Vincent and arranged in the form of a biography. They are of

13. 22 December 1913; Scheide, 126, 137. Puccini thanked Lablache warmly for having rendered an incomparable service to his music.

14. After having been present at the Milan premiere of Eberle, Puccini confided to Seligman, "Eberle! A heresy! Salome pearls, but Eberle is so much!" (16 April 1909; Seligman, 177).
enormous importance in understanding Puccini’s ideas on art, and many subtle details of his psychology.16

Elvira was not jealous of the relationship between her husband and Sybil Seligman, perhaps because “the English signora, who was so beautiful, so refined, so cultured, of such a high class (so different from Elvira, in fact), made her feel very awkward, oversaw 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 unfortunate woman, taken into service after Puccini’s car accident (February 1905) to care for the composer. Doria Manfredi, 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. Elvira, 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, Doria was slandered daily by her employers. But suddenly, in autumn 1908, something inexplicable happened. Elvira, 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, Doria was slandered daily by her employers. But suddenly, in autumn 1908, something inexplicable happened. Elvira, 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, Doria was slandered daily by her employers. But suddenly, in autumn 1908, something inexplicable happened. Elvira, 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, Doria was slandered daily by her employers. But suddenly, in autumn 1908, something inexplicable happened. Elvira, 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, Doria was slandered daily by her employers. But suddenly, in autumn 1908, something inexplicable happened. 

His [Doria’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 herself. In a word, poor Doria, faced with Hell in her own house and dishonour outside, and with Elvira's insinuation ringing in her ears, in a moment of desperation swallowed three tablets of chloroform and died after five days of atrocious agony.

You can imagine what happened at Torre: Elvira left for Milan the day of the poisoning, everyone was against me, but even more against Elvira. In order of the authorities a medical examination was made in the presence of witnesses, and she was found to be pure; then public opinion turned round entirely against Elvira... But Doria’s family have brought an action against Elvira 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, Elvira will never be able to go back to Torre—or she would be lynched. (6 February 1909; Carner, 197–98)

We do not know for certain the extent of Puccini’s relations with Doria, and despite everything, we cannot exclude the possibility that there was intimacy of some kind.18 The lawyer Carlo Naz, charged with representing the composer's interests, expressed his initial doubts quite frankly:

I will not conceal from you that the rumors were a grave worry for me (and I have a letter that will show you what I am talking about), rumors...
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, 350)

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 house; 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 Bianca and that she did not—as they say in Hungary—look with a good eye on Bianca's most ingenious letters. But this tale with Doria is very strange. (Marchetti, no. 356, 352)

On 6 July 1909 Elvira was sentenced in absentia by the tribunal in Lucca for defamation, injury, and threat of 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 resolving the conflict 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 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 in the years to come).

Elvira's reasons for attacking Doria are still unclear, given that she had been betrayed numerous other times, and had been aware of it by direct and indirect means. The principal trigger would have been the transactions. Unlike Puccini's other women, Doria belonged to the same social class, 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 was the sole person capable of usurping the only role left to Elvira, that of attending to the material needs of the man with whom she lived, but who had not loved her for many years.

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 31 January 1909 Elvira had expressly 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 say. I am crushed, humiliated, finished. (To Ramirez Puccini; Marchetti, no. 351, 350)

But in a sadomasochistic relationship no victim can do without his torturer, and in the case of Giacomina and Elvira the roles were interchangeable. Only death would divide them.

To NEW YORK

Among events that made the genesis of La fanciulla problematic, Giuseppe Giacomo's death on 1 September 1906 was certainly significant: a fundamental element was removed from the small forge in which Puccini's operas were gradually forged. 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 talents, 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, Ilicas 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 Antonieta on several occasions, partly because the subject was particularly dear to Giulio Ricordi. After the initial refusal, the subject had been suggested unsuccessfully first to Mascagni and then to Montemezzi. Puccini reexamined the scenario in May 1905, while he was interested in the three short operas based on Corly, and wrote to Illica that "the structure of the opera seems to me frighteningly 'immense' and, in my opinion, beyond hope of success" (Gara, no. 420, 294). This was, in short, his stance; but he remained abreast of the discussions, concluding in the end that "I already have Butterfly, an opera around a single woman—I wrote to the librettist in January 1906 that Maria Antonieta should be set aside" (Gara, no. 456, 313).

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 at the turn of the century when a collaboration with Puccini was first mooted, the poet discussed his ideas with the leading composer of the day. After meeting, both men seemed convinced that an agreement could be reached. Puccini:

His ideas 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 Clametti; 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 minstrel poem, of such clarity that the spectator will immediately understand the action. (23 February 1906; Gara, no. 468, 319)

The composer turned down Partenope 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 Cyprus of the Lusignani, 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 love and war. (Gara, no. 486, 314)

It was August 1906. A little later D'Annunzio wrote to Puccini, who was taking a holiday at Bocchigno Abetone. 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 dawn, and to the gentle sound of the sea the rising sun of daily life was beginning to wake. A cock crowed, another rooster—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-do, calmer, without force but with sweetness. 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 Bocchigno? You need to take down the two themes, the short and the long one... Pick up your ears to the roosters' song. (7 August 1906; Gara, no. 481, 315)

We do not have Puccini's reply, but it is unlikely that he put his head in his hands at reading this lofty prose, complete with technical advice. His reply aroused 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 coveted, was established. I now receive your unexpected letter... Do you believe that the more-or-less patchwork romanticism of your old librettos has spiritual power?... You have the beauty of the image before your eyes, yet do not realize that the real virtue of my lyric fiction is the "human element" in its eternal essence. (9 August 1906; Gara, no. 484, 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.

10. Mascagni set Partenope to music 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 _Chanson de Bilitis_ (1897) to music, and had considered—the year before Puccini had the same idea—basesing an opera on the novel _Aurélia_ (1896). Louys's second novel, _La Femme au pantin_ (1898), is dominated by a fascinating and ambiguous woman, Conchita Pérez, 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 Mateo (the pantin) is so overpowered by his physical attraction to Conchita that he completely debases himself. He described the project to Clauetti:

1st act: the tobacco factory at Seville, a frenzied picture, full of colors and little episodes; meeting of Mateo and Conchita;
2nd: Her house, in the garret with the Mother, a fairly comic character;
3rd: the Balé, a café concert in the slums of Seville. Strange scene,intro audience; Conchita's dance in front of the English, practically nude. Strong and gentle final scene.
5th (but 4th): Patro Grile Scene, terrifying!
6th (but 5th): the last, Mateo's house, the tragic scene of the hearing, ending in an erotic duet, tremendously powerful, the two rolling about on the ground.

There you have the basic outline of the opera, and I assure you that Vaucaré's French libretto is wonderful. (13 September 1906; Gara, no. 487, 118–19)

Puccini worked with Maurice Vaucaré on the dramatization of _La femme au pantin_ in August, and then during his subsequent long stay in Paris for the staging of _Butterfly_, from October to December 1906. 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 put 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 sense 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 pulses of body and soul into convulsions! (Letter to Puccini transcribed for Giulio Ricordi, October 1906; Gara, no. 488, 130)

This "true passion" was precisely what was lacking in the intellectual relationship between Louys's leading characters; Mateo 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 Vaucaré's sketch. And perhaps it was a comparison of these versions that drove Puccini to renounce the subject while still in Paris. He justified his decision to Giulio Ricordi on 11 April 1907: he had no fear of the "prud­eri­or of Anglo-Saxon audiences in Europe and America" (demonstrated by the violent protests about _Salome_ at the Met in New York in 1907), but of the last scene which, as it stands (and I don't mean the violent part), is impossible to do; or rather, impossible to do onstage in an acceptable way without giving a theatrical spectacle so "natural" that not even Aretsino himself would have dared do it, and none that this finale is not possible otherwise (I had thought of having an opportune darkness descend on the coupling). (Gara, no. 504, 143)

Vaucaré's libretto, adapted and translated by Zangarini, was passed on to Zandonai, who set _Conchita_ in 1911.21

After the long interval 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 tenderhooks, 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 Sysfar (Seglmam, 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 pleads for his freedom—everyone being against her except Dick [Nick]. Finally the cow-boys are stirred to pity, and she bids a moving farewell to all—there is a great love duet as they move slowly away, and a scene of grief and outburst.

21. The opera was not a great success, but marked the beginning of a friendship between Tito Ricordi and Zandonai that was transferred very quickly into artistic support. This would play a huge role in the dissemination of music between Puccini and his publishing house. To us, the best adaptation of Louys's novel is Luis Buñuel's last film, _Un Chien Andalou_ (1929).
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 Saloon 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 sensitivity and culture, Sybil was not a professional librettist, 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 strengthened up. The second act is nearly finished and, as for the third act, I'm going to create that magnificent scene in the great Californian forest of which I spoke to you at Abetone. (Seligman, 150)

But things changed all too soon, and Puccini became aware that he was dealing with an incompetent. He had already begun to compose, but in March 1908 there was still no sign of the third act:

I'm doing the hunt [scene] and the prelude, but Zanga is being lazy [fa il perdonare]. Will the famous third act ever arrive? I'm beginning to doubt it. (To Luigi Pirelli, 13 March 1908; Gars, no. 533, 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've convinced that this man has no sense of danger—not one good idea, not even the most simple, well-delineated scene.22

But in the meantime Puccini had taken remedial measures, and the diligent Tino Ricordi put him in contact with the Tuscian poet Giulio Cimini, in whom Puccini hoped in vain to find his new Giaconda. 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

CHAPTER SEVEN

Puccini in the Twentieth Century

Orchestral textures. Finally, what other theater could guarantee a cast like that of the premiere on 10 December 1907? Emilio Destin (Mimmi), Enrico Caruso (Rodolfo), and Pasquale Amato (Rance) were supported by a very respectable cast of minor roles, including the faithful Antonio Pini-Corsi (Happy). Above all, there was Arturo Toscanini, now one of the top conductors in the world. Puccini, who went to the United States accompanied by his son Tonio and by Tito Ricordi—who was supervising the staging—received a very warm welcome. The premiere was a popular triumph: forty-three calls on stage, 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 of all conceptions of what the lyric drama could 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 to the orchestral 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. (New York Times, 12 December 1910, 3)

Others, however, criticized the lack of realism in many elements of the play, and emphasized Debussy's influence on Puccini's harmonic style. Here is Lawrence Gilman:

They are, doubtless necessarily, Laietanized Americans whom Puccini exhibits to us; but it is none the less disconcerting to the stickler for dramatic verity to see a stageful of red-shirted miners seated 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. (Harper's Weekly, 17 December 1910, 199)

The critic at 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 taken by Berlioze and Richard Strauss—operatic success does not lie. We shall be very much surprised if "La Fanciulla del West" is a success in any European country. (The Nation, 15 December 1910, 280)

La fonicinla was immediately revived in many American opera houses, from Philadelphia to Chicago (27 December, conducted by Cleofonte Campanini), Saint Louis, and Boston (17 January 1911). The European premiere took place at Covent Garden on 29 May 1911, with Destin, Anmedeo Bassi, and Campanini. The opera was not performed in Italy until 12 June, at the Costanzi in Rome. Unfortunately Caruso—for whose voice Puccini had composed a real passion—was unavailable and had to be replaced by Anmedeo Bassi; Eugenio Burzio sang Mimino, 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, in the first act, and to find out whether the indifferent attitude of the Italian critics toward him had changed over time.

26. A selection of critical opinions is printed by Gara, 180–81. To add to the baffling array of journals does, a direct relationship between Berliner and Strauss is impossible; as well as provincial, display of emotion.

27. In London in 1897, almost at the beginning of his career, Caruso sang La Bohème, the opera with which he made his Scala debut in 1900, obtaining a phenomenal success after the first night, in which he sang disappointingly because he was ill. He sang Puccini's operas in all the major opera houses of the world (at Covent Garden from 1903, at the Met from 1907), quickly becoming Puccini's favorite singer. In 1909, following an operation to cure a hypertensive disorder that grew, the color of his voice became darker than previously, and his middle range gained the quality that made his voice unique and unmatchable. Johnson is the first one that Puccini wrote expressly for Caruso, and the tenor, above all else, that of the brief solo "Ohi ohi ohi" in "La Fanciulla," seemed specially designed to emphasize his gifts. After his return to Italy following his triumphant premières, in January 1910 Puccini sent the never seen poetic lines of gratitude, highlighting the roles in which Caruso excelled (Mimi, La Bohème, Tosca, Fanciulla). "It was a great honor and I won't rest. . . . I'll send you cards and postcards, and I'll sing you songs. . . . Good luck, Rodolfo and Mario, and you, Johnson, and Rosina. . . . On my heart and soul I love the echo of your divine voice. . . . Dear Mimi give my love to your family. . . ." (Postcard undated, to Rodolfo, Rodolfo, and Mario, and to my extraordinary Johnson) (Marianetti, n. 190, 209)

28. A little 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 here.
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” (Gastano Cesari in Il Secolo) 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 œuvre, 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, Ramon, Dick, and their fates, readily run to some catastrophe, or to a figure on whom the very world depended: Alexander, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Waterloo, Cannes, 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.⁵⁹

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 pressured a return to “costume” opera, in which legend and fable predominated. Mascagni set the trend, with the dramatic legend Fanciulla (Buenos Aires, 2 June 1917) on a libretto by Ilici: the emphasis on the king’s daughter forced to ride naked would, according to Levi’s reasoning, be completely pertinent—as would the bombastic, forced rhetoric in the orchestra and voices of Zandonai’s Francesca da Rimini (1914), based on the play by D’Annunzio. In reality, these works were travesties of a verismo by now important and drained of blood.

La fanciulla was altogether different. Puccini experimented with intimate types of expression in characters who went the bounds of verismilitude and, increasingly, converged on an aesthetic already apparent on the contemporary European stage. Increasing the distance between the characters’ social conditions and the musical expression of their states of mind resulted in a productive rift. Late-Romantic sentimental, passionate subjects were set on a “realistic” canvas, a “realism” that was by now merely nominal. Description of the setting, so important in the “American” score, became more intense at the crucial points in the plot—particularly the poker game and the manhunt—so as to generate unbearable levels of tension at the most important moments. These passages anticipate later points of contact with early expressionism (although contact mediated by differences of culture and tradition). Common scores are found in fin-de-siècle theater, which had turned with renewed interest to the human soul as a source of passion and perversion, a trend that in turn encouraged composers to choose subjects in which the text was a mere vehicle for interiority.

In La fanciulla Puccini made only a first step in this direction, but captured the ferment in the air. On the surface, there seems to be faith that a conventional relationship between text and music was still possible, while the detachment between the event acted on stage (especially in Act I) and its musical expression is, in fact, the most modern trait of the score. To understand this was beyond the capabilities of contemporary criticism, which would, very soon, and in the name of a revival of the “genuine” Italian tradition, produce Fausto Torrefranca’s furious attacks on our “international musician.”

A Drama of Love and Redemption

One point on which scholars agree, albeit viewing it from different angles, is that Puccini was incapable of bringing about a real renewal of his own poetics in the years between Butterfly and the end of his career. It is worth making a rapid summary of their argument: “as much as Puccini experienced love as sin, and saw it as the main subject of tragedy that had to be ex-}
Every measure assailing. Very special sounds. Not a shade of limelight!
And mine is a first-hand impression. I have to say I really liked it.10

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 makes the correspondence between words and music artificial and unattainable. In consequence, the music assumes a type of emblematic quality devoid of the Romantic brilliance that permeated Puccini's operas up to Butterfly.21 In confronting the subject, however, the composer acted as he had always done, even though he had to struggle with the hopelessness 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 these lively discussions that were essential for him to put the structure of the opera in focus, as in the golden days with Ilicas 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. Guelfo Civinini 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 1910. The poet complained of Puccini's lack of respect for the most elementary dramatic rules,22 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 points, he altered the plot significantly by compressing the last two acts into one. He replaced the action in Act III with the spectacular scene of the main un-act.1

Thus he succeeded in creating a much greater tension than in the original, in particular increasing the credibility of the ending. He also distilled 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 Manon Lescaut was avoided.

His decision to replace Old Joe Miller's Jokes, the text of the lesson that Minnie teaches Belasco's miners, with the Bible, open at Psalm 31, is particularly significant: the theme of redemption this introduced as prominently as is needed, ready to be exploited in the finale, where Puccini uses 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 operas... 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.23

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 an audience that shared his originality; audience expectation 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 located 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 fail for the same reasons as those, say, that caused such a disastrous reception for Carmen.24 The prime concern was rather that a composer 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 its effectiveness, and

10. Letter of 25 March 1918, quoted by Franco Stagi, "La storia in prosa e versi" in Puc- cini a Maggio, ed. Valentino Brusati (Quaderni della Fondazione Fondiali Pucciniani; Milan: Puccini, 1996), 18–20. The original is in the Library of Giacomo (Monte Division), Washington. My thanks to Teresa Muscedere (Arnold Schoenberg Institute) for having allowed me to see a copy of it.

11. This is, in essence. the thesis proposed by Leonardo Pisani in his Puccini. Una vita (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1975), 214–25. Twenty years later, and after the more recent contributions of international musicology, one can document with how much self-awareness Puccini composed, and how he himself was aware of the distance between words and music, pointing out by Pisani, attempting to void it in ever more subtle ways.


14. The failure of Bitter's masterpiece (and French opera) was simply due to its collision with practices still prevailing in 1873 at the Opéra Comique, and especially the musical subject and the violent finale, which contrasted with the more potent tone observed by the most conservative of Parisian critics.
prepared a series of dramatic and musical devices that are channeled in a coherent way toward the conclusion, reflecting the preliminary note in the libretto and score derived from Belasco: "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 blizzard 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."36

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 Le Villi, with a genuine prelude while the curtain is still down; in all the operas after Le Villi, 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 tremolo, become much more incisive (see Ex. 7.1).

The broad thematic sequence is intended to symbolize love as a redemptive force.37 The musical mimesis is obtained by having the two chordal phrases in the two dispositions of the whole-tone scale (Ex. mm. 1–6; they express an indescribable torment of the soul) followed by a brief

35. A shrewd examination of the way in which Puccini melded the aspect of redemption, linking it to nostalgia and separation, can be found in Allan Atlas, "Lamento—Tornare—Riflessione: Verbal Linkages and their Musical Resonance in Puccini's La Fanciulla del West," Studia musicologia 31, no. 1 (1980): 157–87. Atlas's analysis does not, however, deal with the development of the theme in the prelude. An examination of the theme in relation to this particular aspect of the finale appears in Michele Ganeri, "Il finale di La fanciulla del West e alcuni problemi di musica," Opera e Libretto 3 (1993): 417–37, on which portions of this chapter are based.

36. Ricci, Paesino interpretato di in stona, 149.

37. Paolo Arici did not catch the relation between the "whole-tone theme" and the "theme of sorrowful passion" when he compiled a list of all themes employed in the opera ("La fanciulla del West" di Giacomo Puccini: Gli studi e la critica all'opera [Milano: Mondadori, 1953], 41–50), and labeled each, like the first Wagnerian critics, but with even less sophistication (the mm. 17 is defined "Melancholy theme"). More illuminating hypotheses and analyses are found in Enzo Ruggiero, "L'opera," in Gli studi e la critica alla fanciulla del West (Turin: UTET, 1974), 109–98.

38. Compare example e, p. 376, n. 18 and mm. 1–1–6; example d and mm. 3–5. C is
Example 7.1. (continued)

**Example 7.1. La fanciulla, Prelude, 6 before II**

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 tradition, with its strong aura of a moral fable. Puccini

39. One cannot fail to recall the Goldberg's Cakewalk, which closes Delius's *Children*.
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 she the humanity of the Western, 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 Carrier 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 Siegmund and Sieglinde, indifferent to everyone and everything.

So far we have discussed elements that form the opus 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 Johnson, a four-note motive appears in the orchestra (Ex. 7.32). Its funeral-march rhythm then dominates the entire finale of Act II:

Example 7.3

1. La fanciulla, II, [20]

[Musical notation]

2. Schoenberg, Verklärte Nacht, mm. 95–98

[Musical notation]

Puccini here employs one of the most classic gestures of a twentieth-century composer: he uses the chromatonic motive that opens Wagner's Tristan (Ex. 7.33) as a recurring theme, offering the spectator a subtle reference to the opera that was the price 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: Cara, no. 357; see Ex. 7.33):

Wagner often divided it into two parts, so as to form two distinct themes. The descending chromatic cello phrase (1a) indicates more particularly Tristan's pain, while the upward motion seems to characterize Desire, as much that of Tristan as that of Isolda. 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 externally opposed in life?  

Puccini's reason for using this famous fragment, harmonized in F-flat minor, does not seem very different from Arnold Schoenberg's when he used it in Verklärte Nacht (1899), where the motive of Ex. 7.32 is connected with the verses of Richard Dehmel's poem, and announces the words of a woman who reveals her sin to the man.64 Similarly, Puccini's quotation is

64. For opinion deserves citation: "Nothing of Richard Wagner has died: his opera is the year of all contemporary music, and there is yet something to germinate, later, in happier artistic times. The modern, however, have condemned and libeled the supreme Master's tendentious toward overemotions and nausea. Perhaps they did this because of their lesser genius, but certainly it was because of the seventh sensation of things, of dreams and of love that characterizes our epoch; and also not to diminish emotional intensity by an excess of sentimentalism" ("In una altra d'Altempo").

65. Maurizio Scalfarotti, Tristano e Isotta di Riccardo Wagner: Nota e aggiunta (Turin: Bocca, 1902), 39–41 (original: Guida teorica e analitica di "Tristano e Isotta" (Paris, 1894)). We have often noted how Puccini's imagination was stimulated by the text. Even if he had not read that guide (although his passion for Wagner had always induced him to collect background information), while he was composing La fanciulla he complimented Claudio: "You are Tristan in a wonderful palisades. It is very interesting and very well composed." (5 January 1910: Cara, no. 355, 366). He refers to a little volume produced on the occasion of the Neapolitan premier of the opera conducted by Auber, which contains a lengthy essay on the theatre of the opera. Like a good Wagnerian, Claudi emphasized how the theme of desire returned many times in characterizing Tristan's delirium when he was dying in the third act. See Carlo Claudio, ed., Tristano e Isotta: Regia Tratto S. Carlo, Napoli, 2001 dicembre; MCMXXI (Milan: Ricordi, 1927), 48–50.

66. Dehmel's poem, taken from Dichter und Weise, was used by Schoenberg as a program for the scenes, and was published on page 2 of the score Verklärte Nacht (Berlin: Verlag Dreißig, 1909). The citation appears at the end of the initial section (m. 35), a little before the woman begins her speech to the man: "Ich trag ein Kind, und dir von Dir / Ich geh in Stunde neben Dir" ("I carry a child, and it is not yours / I walk with you in sin").
not merely a simple homage but a living, functional way of conceiving dramatics: the Tristan melody provides—to the knowing spectator—a psychological parallel between the ineluctability of the love between Tristan and Isolde, and that of Minnie, who prepares herself for a terrific trial to save the life of the man she loves, and who, like Tristan, is now wounded. The analogy is made stronger by the fact that Johnstone goes out unarmored to meet his pursuers, like Tristan, who allows himself to be wounded in the duel. Both are struck down by their important rivals in love, Rance and Melo. These references, however, beyond the grasp of the average listener, appear almost to couple, 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 school where Act I 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) rocked 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 arranging to meet for the evening are heard from outside; then a baritone sings the first phrase of the canzone della nostalgia (song of nostalgia). This is the first vocal melody of the opera, and a little later we hear it sung by Jack Wallace, the camp's hallied singer. It is also the first of the original themes that Puccini took from a collection of Indian songs43 and from other sources; here, however, the melodic exoticism is less important than the rhythmic syncopation, and does not bring about a dramatic contrast as in Butterfly, since it is limited to providing the score with a subtle but generic aura.

A few measures after the idea of redemption was cocked at the beginning, the other dominant sentiment of the work appears: nostalgia. The plot embarks on a detailed semantic journey.44 From this first episode on-

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43. Until a few years ago it was believed, on the basis of Monte Carlo's statement—socio-
sequently borrowed by later biographers—that the melody of the song was that of "The Old
Dog Tray," also known as "Echoes from Home." The melody probably arose because of a few
lines taken, with some alternatives, from Bekker's play, where a male quartet sings the popu-
lar song in the third intermezzo. But Allan Atlas has been able to show that the melody is
that of an Indian song, which Puccini could have read in the collection Traditional Songs of
the Zunis, with English Text. Second Series, Transcribed and Harmonized by Carlos Pope (New-
ton Center, Mass., 1906), 6-10; see Allan Atlas, "Belasco and Puccini's 'Old Dog Tray' and the
Zuni Indians," The Musical Quarterly 75 (1989): 361-98. For a list of American themes, see Car-
ner, 435-39.

44. A journey that, according to Atlas, unites the words "nostalgia—nostalgia—reloca-
tions" into a single musical—verbal unit (["La fanciulla—Terreina—Relazioni,"] 364).
wards the exposition of material follows a formal logic that enjoys an obvious autonomy, so much so as to make one think that the constructive nature 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 miners 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 (Ashby, agent for the Wells Fargo company), two character actors (Jake Wallace, baritone, and the Indian Billy Jack Rabbit, bass) and two generic part actors, the half-caste José Castro and the pony-express rider. A real crowd, then, with only one small female part—Woskgle, Billy's Indian woman—besides the heroine.

The situation seems almost like a dress rehearsal for Suor Angelica and Gianni Schicchi. Puccini pulled it off by giving the orchestra greater prominence than before. Such a decision involved a lessening of the communicative power of the main motives attached to individual roles. If we think of Teuma—the direct antecedent of Le fanciulli in its right interweaving of environment and characters in the context of an action-drama—where a dramatic variant is attached even to the Marchessa Artavanti, who never appears onstage, we can suggest a reason for this turn. The minute characterization of every member of such a large group would involve a loss of clarity, by developing the narrative line instead, the composer structured the dramatic material in broad but flexible sections of sung 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

45. Even from the point of view of secondary parts and singers (fifteen in total) and the nature of their roles, Le fanciulli is by far the most demanding opera produced by an Italian in the first decades of the century: Adriana Lecouvreur (1902) boasts seven, Silvère (1903) requires (although, unlike in Le fanciulli, many of these can be taken by the same singer), and Ippolito (1911) six. Among foreign works the piece undoubtedly goes to the forty-two characters (although many are triple roles) in La bohème (1903), followed by Ramek's twenty-five (1911); but here, as in Mascagni's La fanciulla (1905), the compact unity of the subject accounts for the number, and in the thirty-one in Salome (1905) and Eliseo (1908). Some have considered the presence of large crowds onstage a primary trait of verismo, perhaps thinking of Giacomo Puccini's Ipadinus (1911) and Andrea Chenier (1950); but in these two cases the number of secondary parts is directly related to the historical subject. One would, moreover, have to wonder what Richard Wagner, whose masterpiece seems with characters, has to do with verismo.

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their individuality—necessary in view of the last finale—through gesture. Each person'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 beat 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 symbolically, 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, Bello, and Harry (Allegro vivo, Ex. 7.5b), then that of Happy and Sid, and, finally, the action at the table (where they play cards); (7). The miners cross the stage like marines, improvising dance steps and singing a famous popular song, Doddo Day (Ex. 7.5b). This is provided with a melodic ending that gives their action grotesque imperatives:

Example 7.5

a. La fanciulli, 1 (7)

b. La fanciulli, 1, 6 before (7)

A further fragment of the cakewalk rhythm emphasizes the entrance of Sonora and Tim (Robusto e sostenuto, 8). 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 symphonic nature. The "grumbling" motive (Ex. 7.5b), treated as the theme of a broad round, 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 problems of the sightings, homesick Larkens (8). A new motive accompanies the boys' anxious inquiries about
Minnie’s amorous preference, and a chain of parallel ninths underpin Nick’s caustic 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 reati”, “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 elasso tenersi”, “At the horn she’ll weave”). This stage music is meant to show the miners’ good nature, but also to unleash Larkem’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 Larkem’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 cheating episode produces some necessary contrast and illustrates how camp life veers 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 chaser’s breast, and warning that if he touches cards again he risks the noose.

A third fragment of cakewalk ([3]) marks Ashby’s entrance, and he gives the first information pertinent to the progress of the plot by describing the dangerous bandit Ramerez, whom he is hunting: a short and sinister theme, associated with the band of Mexican, and which will reappear many times, characterizes 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: sentimentality, cruelty, danger, and solitude, outlined in brief scenes characterized by the topos 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: percutaneous ostinati shift from one section to another, the high instruments run repeatedly to the top of their range, the horns raise their bells, and with the trumpets sound a crescendo (marcato)

46. The stage direction of the score [I, [5]] indicates that the instrument slung on the minstrel’s arm is a guitar, after having specified that the harp has to simulate a banjo.

markings abound above the string tremolando. The bass drum is hit meta fort as before the explosion of Sonora’s gunshot, his arm deflected by Timp. At the height of the tension, Minnie falls on her favorite miner, matching the gun from his hand. At this moment her theme explodes in the orchestra, fixing the image of an authoritative and passionate woman (Ex. 7.7).

The passage is harmonically constructed on a major ninth on the tonic, with a short melodic fragment that spreads through the arpeggio, ending on a major seventh. The same sequence, repeated a minor third lower, comes to a halt on an augmented chord (♯4) headed with sensuality; then the melody rises by sequence to resolve on a dominant seventh. The bold passage closely resembles the music of Cio-Cio-San’s entrance, but the sonority of the orchestra (pitichi farinftsm), with horns at every octave, reflects the unusual situation of a woman disarming two men. This moment of emphasis is necessary to the action, but at the same time, more subtly, the two augmented chords reveal Minnie’s sentimental side, and bind this aspect of her character to the feelings expressed in the opera’s opening theme.

As the chord progression is restated, the sonority thins down to débris violins, and Minnie clearly voices her threat: “Non faro piti scolda” (“I won’t hold school anymore”), releasing the men’s tenderness, their gifts of ribbons the color of her lips, and other things. The rough miners could not do without this one precious opportunity to meet with a woman with whom they can share their worries and troubles. In this passage Puccini makes use of micro structures that fit into the complex musical whole both with dramatic and more strictly formal functions. Once the bylaw has died down, a
Example 7.7. La fanciulla, I, 8

A little violin theme is heard, with a curious motive at the end (Ex. 7.8a: 'F'). This reappears an infinite number of times in the score, causing various reminiscences. In the first finale, for example, when Minnie tells Johnson about her life to John (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. 7.8c). 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. 7.8c), and later at the moment of her first kiss. Cases like this demonstrate that Puccini was occupied by the drama as much as by the purely musical coherence of the fabric, making this function as a vehicle of dramatic meanings.

The schoolroom episode,57 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 music devoted to the "Classe di asilo," as the composer called it, continues to

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57. In the first edition of the score (1910, Pl. no. 75997.1, from 22 before [II] to 22 after [II], 91-97) the schoolroom scene had a brief appendix, in which Minnie tries to teach some good manners even to the Indian Billy Bobbie; noting that her efforts are in vain,

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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 Larkines scene, Puccini uses only the first part
of the sequence that at the beginning had united love and redemption (Ex.
7.9, A; cf. Ex. 7.1), connecting it with the words, and attaching the word
"love" to the song of nostalgia (Ex. 7.9, 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.

the idea that he marry Vittoria, who has borne him a son. The decision to cut the episode,
probably on Tramonti's advice, was opportune: in addition to immediately clarifying the action,
the passage showed the usual interrupted portrait of the heroine who speaks in hallucination, and
for this the second act was sufficient. Moreover, the note detracted from the effectiveness of
the sequence as Ex. 7.9.

Noble sentiments and drama also blend in the following pony-express
episode. Ashby has prepared a trap to capture Ramerez, thanks to infor-
mation from Nina Michelotorea, who is, according to Minnie, "una sirena
che fa consumo di azzurro per farsi Pecchio laugado" ("a siren who
spends all her time ogling men"). Meanwhile, the miners have a quick look
at news from the world from which they are isolated, and Joe drowns his
(presumably not too serious) sorrows at the death of his grandmother in a
glass of whisky.

Up to this point Puccini has outlined the relationship between the hero-
ine and the community. Now he briefly concurs on the figures of Min-
nie and Rance, left alone onstage. Ex-keeper of a gambling house turned
lawman (a common case in westerns, most famously with the ex bandit Pat
Garrett), the sheriff plays a role in the drama similar to Scarpia's: he repres-
ents power, and would like to make the heroine his. he will pursue Dick
Johnson, alias Ramirez, a gentleman-bandit and so an idealist like Cavara-
dossi. 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 union orchestral theme, which ac-
companies his dialogue with Minnie and will return with great effect
during the hunt for Johnson in Act III.

Example 7.9. La fanciulla, 1, 12 before [ ]

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Example 7.8. La fanciulla, 1, 41

Example 7.9. La fanciulla, 1, 12 before [ ]
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 aria 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 "Laggiò nel Soloced, 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 at the concluding lyric section of the brief aria is grand and unexpected, and its yearning seems the result of sincere conviction.

Example 7.12. La fanciulla, I

The orchestra promptly responds to this difficult vocal passage, one of the many Minnie faces in the course of the opera, by nobly 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 re-arrangement 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 usually 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):

The relationship with the words is weaker, and the musical devices in themselves capture the essence of the hero. The themes are superimposed to suggest the conflicts felt by the romantic bandit, signaling the journey he will have to undertake with Minnie. In this way the narration gains greater complexity. The entire sequence of Ex. 7.12 is taken up again in the following act, when Minnie, to her dismay, discovers the real identity of the man. Johnson will begin to explain himself on this melody, while the short rhythmic idea will serve as the basis for the tale told in "Or son set men" ("It is now six months"). The reference to their initial meeting thus provides credible motivation for his change, but also the sense of genuine, enduring emotion.

This very emotion is kindled in the subsequent exchange with Rance. The nonchalance behind which the tenor hides the purpose of his visit is contradicted by the clarinet's theme (Ex. 7.6), which follows a violin motive that recalls the romantic memory of the meeting with Minnie on the footpath to Monterey (Ex. 7.13a). From the very start, then, the music tells us that robbery was not the bandit's only sin. The motive is subtly manipulated to become the symbol of their meeting, so that in the solo "Or son set men" it embodies Johnson's vehement desire to flee with her, an aspiration borne exactly at that moment (Ex. 7.13b):
to begin the robbery is mined by the piccolo (4 after [5]), 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 forms: 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 her love increases. The brief introductory section fulfills the first aim ([5]), opening with the whole-tone theme. This precedes the reprise of the waltz in A major ([6]), 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 outburst with which the tenor expresses his love of life, and the comparison with Minnie’s world, still void of experience, descends directly from the initial saloon theme (Ex. 7.14b; cf. Ex. 7.14a, X); Minnie, for her part, after calling herself a “povertà fanciulla,” oscura e buona a nulla (“poor little girl, humble and good for nothing”), tries to raise herself to the man’s standing (Ex. 7.14d). The two voices touch Eb, for both of them a note that projects them toward the ideal:

Example 7.14
a. La fanciulla, I, 3 after [5]

b. La fanciulla, I, 7 after [5]

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 7.14
But the drama suddenly interrumpes, forbidding an idyllic development. The
third section is another extract from "real life": Nick warns that the Mexi-
cans have been on the track (the clarinets promptly make their pres-
cence clear), and the whistle preannounced by Castro is heard. We know al-
ready that the robbery will not take place, but a brief solo by Minnie dispels
any remaining doubts: she dramatically recounts the miners' life of hard-
ship and sacrifice, and rises to be-to express powerfully her will to defend
the gold earned by sweat and toil. 49 The fourth and penultimate section
of the duet immediately captures the effect of these words on Johnson. 50
The whole-tone theme (Ex. 7.16) is preceded by a diatonic variant (A'), and
for the first time is followed, as in the prelude, by the sequence represent-
ing the love that drives toward redemption (B). 50
Now that the change has taken place, the spottedly gradually shifts to
Minnie, eventually framing her exclusively. Her invitation to Johnson to
come up to her little house precedes a brief reflection on "Che che
avvenisse non niente" ("What we might have been"), then, muted strings
and delicate woodwinds accompany the restatement of her theme (6 after
10), the melody sung by fifteen oboe da caccia. The sonority thus gradual-
ly as Minnie muses on the words with which Johnson left her. Solo viol-
in and cello, the other strings drift, begin a harmonic journey that halts
for a moment on the major seventh, whose Minnie, in a reverse, repeats
"Avete un viso d'angelo" ("You have the face of an angel") Finally, a sud-
dden 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 orche-
strations is much more sophisticated. The chord on the tonic C laps off
through the last three measures, and at the end only the harmonics measure

49. These few measures are the direct counterpart of Luigi's monologue in Il tabarro,
which has a similar vocal line. See "Che che avvenisse non niente" (What we might have been"
which rises to the high register, well supported by the orchestra.

50. Johnson's phrases ("Ah, non cessi"; "Do not be afraid") are a premonition of what will
happen an hour later, since it anticipates the theme of his undersong during the poker game
(see Ex. 7.16).
CHAPTER SEVEN

A Poker Game

The construction of the first act of Puccini's long sections of static alternation 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 indissolubly 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 flicker of English horn and clarinet on the whole-tone scale alternates with a little staccato theme, before Wowkle sings a ballad on three notes for her son in her arms. Defined orchestral colors, and a dash of the grotesque in the duet ("Come il primo è il giorno", "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 superfluous of infinitives and "Ugh." An hour has passed since the end of Act I, 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 a variant of the whole-tone theme (Ex. 7.17b: A4); immediately after this, Minnie begins to put on her Sunday best, singing a fragment of the progression that evokes redemption through love (Ex. 7.17c: B):

Example 7.17
a. La fanciulla, II, 2 after [1]

53. Carter identified the melody sung by Wowkle as an Indian ballad (Carter, 4:39). The minuet's song concludes with the lines "sento l'asprezza al piano, / Vuole Marcello non morir!" ("I sense the bitterness in the piano, / Marcello does not want to die") and anticipates the sentimental-grotesque style of Fragnoli and Zelmayr in Il tabarro ("Ho sento una sorda", "I hear of a little house").

54. Atlas believes this melody to be a variant of the waltz theme, but does not mention that this song by Romance ("L'assunzione—Trecento—Redenzioni") 573-576.

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6. La fanciulla, II, 1 after [1]

b. on the waltz theme

The economical nature of the melodic material makes it possible to use these ideas quite flexibly, but formal logic converges with semantics—with which Puccini was scrupulously concerned—in an attempt to increase as much as possible the dominance of the principal concept of the opera.

The listener is by now familiar with the themes, harmonic progressions, and rhythms, and can follow the emotional plot outlined by the music rather than the bald conversation that Johnson, on his arrival, exchanges with Minnie. A chromatic scale of parallel minor seconds in the flutes (5 before [1]) depicts Minnie's reaction to Johnson's attempted embrace. All the deep feeling left unexpressed in the finale of the preceding act has to emerge in this duet. This time Puccini uses a more regular formal structure, a type of modified arch form that might be expressed thus:

B 12 M. "Oh! si capi:re?" A:
C 12 M. "Lo tesser!" D:
D 12 Ex. 7.186 C:
E 1 after [1] 3. "Minnie, the dole name" mod. var. on love theme (Ex. 7.126)
C 3 after [1] J. "lo co no ni l'ancro gia" Ex. 7.17: D:
A 12 J. "Maso" A:
A 12 A:

Thes: repris e of the waltz gives a sense of continuity to the conversation, but the hurried little portrait of Minnie, galloping about on her "piccolo pellicci" ("little coat"); Allegro mosso e giocoso, section B, is less logical, even though the orchestral accompaniment is a miracle of lightness. The atmosphere begins to acquire greater intensity in the third section, with the melody that will later play an important role in the finale (Ex. 7.186). Sung by Ranze in Act I (Ex. 7.186), it is repeated in the penultimate section of the duet, with an ostinato that intensifies the bandit's realization of the exact moment he definitively chooses love (Ex. 7.186):

Example 7.18
b. La fanciulla, I, 3 after [38]

Note.

U so sia ale ro \- ri \- di cu ssa con fon e su - no - re per - chè si in - veri can no!
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. 7.19a), derived from the cloche melody at the beginning of the opera (see Ex. 7.4, cells A and A'). When Minnie opens the door to dismiss Wowkle, another protagonist in the story of their deepening love, music surrounds them. Puccini depicts it with parallel fourths, sixths, and octaves that tumble down onto the low F pedal, reinforced by timpani rolls, lightly brushed cymbals, and the wind machine. 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. 7.19b), but as soon as the door has closed again, it assumes the diatonic form, unfolding intensely, languorously (Ex. 7.19c).

Example 7.19  
(a) La fanciulla, II [23]  
(b) La fanciulla, II [23]  
(c) La fanciulla, II [23]  

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 swifts and triplets; the love theme is heard so many times over the powerful tutti pedal. Dynamics fluctuate from the scarcely perceptible to very loud, and the depiction of the storm emphasizes the rhythm of stormy events. Three pistol shots ring out; a harp glissando over a timpani roll, the trumpets burst out with the band's cake-walk. The moments that really fire Puccini's orchestral imagination are those in which break-neck action prevails. The gunshots signal that the hunt for Ramerrez has begun. So he decides to stay, and the words "Chi non ti lascio più" ("I won't leave you anymore") acquire a symbolic import that goes beyond life and death. Passion reaches a climax in the penultimate 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' rapture, taking them to high C.57

While Minnie curls up on the beachside, ready to sleep, a brief coda in D major—the waltz, expressly scored—ends the piece. The "expansive" theme (Ex. 7.19d) rings out over the long harp glissando while Minnie asks her final question. "Conosci un mila Nina Michelotena?" ("Do you ever know Nina Michelotena?") The tenor answers her with a G♯, the tritone interval a clear indication that he is lying.

57. "I have added 16 bars to the second duet of La fanciulla that will be performed in Rome. They are without cause hers, which were later" (to Ricardo Schmieder, 9 October 1911: Gor. 113, p. 725). Puccini was able to hear the new music in Viareggio on 9 September 1913 (but the letter to Maria Billia on 12 September 1913). CP. 111. It is published in the current edition of the score (from 14 below [23] to figure [23]) but is always omitted, given the vocal difficulties.
But peace lasts no more than a measure, and, over the pianissimo 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, Ranze, and Ashby. Puccini deals quickly with the recognition episode (a few measures of recitative punctuated by thematic reminiscences). Ranze shows the portrait of Ramerrez 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 Ramerrez 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 unfolds over the music of his first conversation with Minnie ("Una parola sola," "Just one word"); see above, Ex. 7.124), which recalls his lies. The narrative "Or son sei mesi" follows this, underpinned by a rhythmic accompaniment (see Ex. 7.125): he explains that he became a bandit to sustain his family after his father's death, heir to an inheritance whose true nature he had not known until that moment ("una massa di banditi da strada," "a gang of highway thieves"). But his meeting with Minnie (see Ex. 7.130) 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 choice, an ardent passage that demands broad, forceful phrases from the singer.

Example 7.120. La fanciulla, II, 4 before [5]

\begin{music}
\makeatletter
\begin{musicframe}
\musicexamplelabel{7.120}
\newcommand\mysaero{\myinstrumentpiano}
\newcommand\myotherinstrument{\myinstrumentstring}
\newcommand\mytext{Non c'è da lamentarsi... Deb. buon sangue... No!}
\newcommand\mytextii{Oh Dio! Che il non sap-pia mai, non sap-pia mai la mia ver-
\newcommand\mytextiii{Ah! Ah! Ah! Non go-gu-ru mi a...}
\begin{musicnotes}
\newcommand\mywords{Non c'è da lamentarsi... Deb. buon sangue... No!}
\n\hspace{1cm}
\begin{musicframe}
\musicexamplelabel{7.120}
\newcommand\mysaero{\myinstrumentpiano}
\newcommand\myotherinstrument{\myinstrumentstring}
\newcommand\mytext{Non c'è da lamentarsi... Deb. buon sangue... No!}
\newcommand\mytextii{Oh Dio! Che il non sap-pia mai, non sap-pia mai la mia ver-
\newcommand\mytextiii{Ah! Ah! Ah! Non go-gu-ru mi a...}
\end{musicnotes}
\end{musicframe}
\end{music}

The picture of the archetypal gentleman-bandido is now complete. His last gesture is to throw himself, unarmed, into the snow to face his persecutors. An irregular rhythm represents Minnie's anxiety and growing anguish; the calls the wounded man back into her cabin. Puccini originally wrote this passage in triple time, but then rewrote it in 4 to avoid a monotonous succession of accords. This created such rhythmic difficulties for the singers that Ricci, on Puccini's directions, suggested dividing the vocal melody into (Ex. 7.21, X), while the orchestra is left in dupla meter.

Example 7.21. La fanciulla, II, 6 after [11]

38. "I wasn't---Puccini told me, perfectly aware of the inconvenience caused---I wanted to write the orchestra part in 4 and the vocal part in 4, but this does not fit into my system of writing. In some parts of my opera there such variation, which to the uninitiated could seem a poor" (Ricci, Puccini interpreta di se steso, 165). This prudent attitude does not invalidate the novelty of the original rhythmic conception.
Minnie’s will wins over Johnson’s denials, and the agitated passage—to the words “Sei l’uomo che bacia la prima volta. Non puoi morir!” (“You’re the man I kissed for the first time. You can’t die!”)—leads to the F-flat minor theme that echoes Tristan. This accompanies the laborious ascent to the loft where Johnson is hidden, and will dominate the finale with tragic force (see Ex. 7.3a).

The crux of the opera has now arrived. Rance is highlighted by the noble melody that portrayed him in Act I (see Ex. 7.10); now the avenger, he precipitantly 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 macabre brush strokes. First harmonics, then two flickering high arpeggios punctuated by the side drum (at after 88). 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, declamatory vocal line in irregular rhythm. Then Johnson comes down, accompanied by the E-flat minor theme—rupted off-balance by bass drum on the offbeats—and he faits on the table.

From this point, the ever-churning rhythm becomes a prominent protagonist, reflecting the onstage situation and the crudeness of the gestures. Minnie’s simple morality puts everybody on the same level—the gambling-house proprietor Rance, the outlaw Ramerez, even herself, “padrona di hettola e bianca” (“lady of a low tavern, a gambling-den”). A jarring 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 life. But she will not give herself to Rance “fredda, esanime e spoglia” (“cold, lifeless, and barren”), 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 152), and the vocal lines—apart from some melodic fragments—reduced to parlato as the game begins. The obsessive movement of the muffled lower strings, in a gradual crescendo, exacerbates the tension, as if it were both the tumultuous beating of Minnie’s heart and the inexorable passage of time. They reach a draw; and at the culminating moment Rance confidently reveals the decisive winning hand. The music is pure gesture and color:

Example 7.11. La fanciulla, II, [18]

\[\text{Example 7.11. La fanciulla, II, [18]}\]

But Minnie nearly has to feign illness to buy time to substitute a card pulled from her garter; she can then recover and show her “tre asse e un paio” (“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 \textit{note forz\`a}. The “wounding” theme, immanent
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 Tosca. It is created here with an economy of means and attention to scenic gesture 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 anguished cry. Nervous tension alone is not enough to explain this attitude, which borders on hysteria. The executive 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 characters in an almost pathological state of frenzy is complete” (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.

The Man Hunt, 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 insistence permeates the music that accompanies the brief opening conversation between Nick and Rance, which is based on a double-bass ostinato of an augmented fourth (A–E♭) over which a brief fanfare is heard (bassoon, then horns). On this sinister dissonant canvas, Nick sings a whole-tone melody, a musical theme spread over an icy winter’s dawn, with campfires that cast flickering lights on the colossal trunks of the redwoods. Rance’s melody (Ex. 7.10) accompanies the sheriff’s bitter reflections on his “atto cavalleresco” (“chivalrous act”). A week has passed since he left Ramirez 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 authorial confessions that would become more and more frequent in Puccini’s works from this point on.4 According to the tenor, “tutto il damano 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 seven strings).

This passage (Lento sostenuto, mm. 1–80) precedes, and acts as an introduction to, the great scene of Johnson’s pursuit, which ends in his arrest. It is in four movements, treated symmetrically:

- Andante mosso con espressione (mm. 81–185)
- Piu mosso (mm. 182–215)
- Allegro selvaggio (mm. 216–35)
- 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 encircling 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 at the basis for both the symphonic orchestral accompaniment (Ex. 7.15: X) and the motive sung by the miners’ offstage. To obtain a gradual increase in tension, Puccini widened, to a fifth, the intervallic range of the initial ostinato figure—which assumes the role of principal theme (Ex. 7.16: X′)—and gave the violins a perpetuum mobile in octaves.

Example 7.15

6a. Think of Magda’s “Onde dolci ed divine” in La bohème, the “Storia di Minnie” narrated by the song-seller in Gianni Schicchi, and the miners’ trio that opens the second act of Turandot, passed between irony and real feeling.

6b. “Cavalleresci, o Dio!” that Etel Adnan’s novel that inspired the libretto, suggested a similar imagery to that of the miners’ and Minnie’s pursuit.
A little later the horns sound out a vigorous theme in A minor (6 after E), followed by the reprise of Rance’s melody (D)—it 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 Scarpa in the Te Deum scene, but with very different connotations). The reprise of the principal theme (6 before G) 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,43 and cries of joy welcome the description of Ashby galloping off on the fugitive’s trail. The tempo speeds up to Piu mosso (D)—baroons and horses play the E-sharp minor melody with which Johnson swears to Minnie that he would not leave her again (see Ex. 7.13c), underlined by a cymbal struck with metal sticks. For a moment, the air is overpopulated by the persistent bandit’s destiny with death. When the theme moves into the violins, the sonority thins, allowing us to hear Sonora’s anguished cry announcing the capture. The miners give free reign to their savage joy, tinged the melody Como si (Allegro selvaggio in A-flat major, D), their caricatured movements set off by the celerity as they look forward, with bony fury, to the moment the bandit 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 laving, to delay preparing the moose. Finally, the orchestra takes up the initial Aadante at the moment Ashby returns on stage with Johnson and consigns him to the community, so that “Faccia eau giustizia” (“It can carry out justice”); the muffled pizzicato of the chime responds to him: “La fa” (“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 pursing 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 narration, and is tightly controlled by the formal structure.44 A considerable rhythmic variety, together with lively, original orchestral blends (from strings playing on the bridge combined with muted horns, Ex. 7.13d, to different combinations of percussion and celesta), makes a decisive contribution, helping to make this act one of the tenser, most striking in all Puccini.

Before moving on to the ending, Puccini gives us the only “scena and aria” of the entire opera, in order to throw the hero facing death into greatest relief. The summary trial is over in a few measures: Ramonnet 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 arioso “Ripararti lo sconfesso” (D), the tenero legato to earn the onlookers’ respect, enough to make Sonora define his rights when his request to speak of Minnie for the last time triggers a muttered protest.

“Ch’ella mi creda libero e fantorno” (“May she believe me free and far away”) has a dramatic position analogous to “È incerto il fedel” : a touching farewell to the hero’s beloved at the moment of death. Unlike Cavara-dossi, Johnson externalizes his feelings, preparing himself to die like a hero before everyone: the stage direction in the score states that he sings “con grande espressione, esaltando, ed vivo quasi sorridendo” (“with great expression, growing animated, almost smiling”). The entire melodic concept

43.鲁迅云，与与的siao位的tochiiro"The sound should gradually increase in intensity, from the piece of the first bass to the form of the first cues. For the first three solists (piano bemve, piano più vivace, mezzo fmr, pú; vivace assai) . . . turn toward the backdrop and make both hands into a cone at the time of the couch, a gradual motion (Puccini’s intentions ai teatro, 184–85).
of La fanciulla is distilled in these twenty-one measures of Andante molto lento. The voice moves ever upwards by step in G-flat major, reaching high B-flat 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 ballad, 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 32 has a very different character from Cavaradossi’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 funereal percussion strokes, has a magisterial feel, a long way from Cavaradossi’s intimate, suffering confession. When the imperious rhythmic gesture of the strings and woodwinds overlaps in counterpoint with the brass, behind the scene, and she gallops on stage, a pistol between her teeth:

Example 7.24. La fanciulla, III, 6 after [BN]

During the Molto mosso Minnie dismounts and shields Johnson with her own body. As her theme forcefully returns in its original form (C major ninth chord, 5 before III), she turns her pistol angrily on anyone who tries to approach her. The somberness thins, and the tempo shifts to Moderato metrico; the music based on the reprise of the Act I passage that accompanied the miners’ gift to her of ribbons (Ex. 7.8), here exploited to suggest Minnie’s gentle blackmail of her boys. The “redemption” progression accompanies the phrase “Il bandito che fu già morto lassù, sotto il mio tetto” (“The bandit that was already dead, up there under my roof”: Ex. 7.25a):

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 open), cutting into a musical texture carefully prepared for a positive ending.65

We have seen many times how Puccini tended to construct the endings of his works by excessive 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. 7.14b), 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. 7.25a). Together with Minnie’s theme, all these elements interact in the finale, which follows a rather traditional four-part structure, within which the music dictates the sense of the drama:

1. Molto mosso [chorus] from [BN]
2. Moderato metrico [lyric stasis] from [BN]
3. Andante molto sostenuto [arioso and concertato] from [BN]
4. Lento sostenuto [coda] from [BN]

65. Rescue operas were very popular in the Napoleonic period. Beethoven’s Fidelio (1805–18) is certainly the most famous in a long line that includes La schronza (1796) and Les Dames Kampani (1800) by Cherubini, Turandot (1887) by Boito, and Tannhäuser (1845) by Wagner. From the finale of Bellini’s Puritani in the Paris version (1833) belongs by right to this genre, from which Puccini’s Turandot was also very far extracted.
Minnie begins the concertato (Ex. 7.15b), and in the Andante molto sostenuto addresses the men one by one. From this point on, Puccini imposes a substantial, intentional sense of scenic and musical stasis, in order to bring about the climactic crescendo through thematic reminiscences, which gradually permeate the music in the buildup toward the anti-tragic denouement. Thus the soprano's principal melody twice takes up the "nostalgia" theme:

Example 7.16
a. La fanciulla, III, 4 before [E]

Example 7.17: La fanciulla, III, 3 after [H]

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 semantic clarity achieved just after the phrase "Fratelli, non v'è al mondo peccatore, 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. 7.18). This passage doubles the form of the prelude exactly, and makes manifest the secret moment in Act I (Ex. 7.16) when the change in Ramerrez occurred.

The gradual increase in passion in Minnie's vocal line, well supported by the orchestra, overcomes the miners' final resistance:

Example 7.18. Le fanciulla, III, 7 after \[\text{Ex. 7.18}\]

This clearly signals the decisive emotional crescendo that precedes the denouement. Even this brief concluding section, in which Sonnors hands Johnson over to Minnie, makes use of two reminiscences of the waltz and of the Act I duet (3 before \[\text{Ex. 18}\] "una nuova pace che dir non so"; "a new peace that I cannot describe"). In the touching final moments, the two lovers sing the melody that in Act II (Ex. 7.18) symbolized the crowning of their dream of eternal love, superimposed on the last fragment of the miners' nostalgic song. After the last arrounced rise to \[\text{Ex. 19}\], Minnie and Johnson move off into the distance, as if in a fade-out. The effect is obtained through a sophisticated use of timbre in the last six measures, the E-major triad sounding through an extreme range, from double basses (\[\text{E}\]) to the violins five octaves higher. The slow fall of the curtain is accompanied by low harp harmonics, and strokes on tam-tam, bass drum, and celeste. Each instrument enters pianissimo, the accompaniment becoming ever quieter: the first time in a Puccini opera that such an evanescent dynamic is instituted so far ahead (twelve measures) of the final chord.

The finale is thus managed with persuasive logic, and intended to provide intense emotion: indeed, one feels that Puccini was more interested in perfecting the techniques capable of making an impression than 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 treated. 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 love that can overcome every obstacle. Perhaps Puccini, in his own life, was also trying to convince himself of the necessity of affirming in a different way the feeling that had always inspired him.

In subsequent operas, Puccini never again recapitulated 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 modeled himself. He was no longer interested in achieving a merely generic communication, but in trying to distinguish what he owed to the public from what he 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, anxious happiness for the listeners; at the end she quite legitimately presents them with the bill for her devotion. She is not, then, so ingenuous. In the outlookers' happiness for her, which forces them to grant mercy to a redeemed Ramerrez, there is regretful yearning for an impossible contemplation: a commitment that Minnie, however, prepares to enjoy as she walks toward liberty in her lover's embrace.

"To Renew Oneself or Die?"

When choosing the new subject, Puccini had declared that he wanted to finish with the world of La Bohème, but scarcely had he begun work than La fanciulla was immediately compared to "a second La Bohème, but stronger, bolder, broader." In his Parisian masterpiece, Puccini underlined the coexistence of cosmic, 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 subjected to his by now 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 Bist...
MONTANA - besides that/J. M. Trarina Film: film. The cinema western had been using montage techniques since 1903, the year of The Great Train Robbery, directed by Edwin S. Porter, the grandfather of film. The figure of the lone female, headless of danger, also had a precedent - besides that offered by Belasco - is the romantic heroine of The Girl from Montana, produced in 1909, the year of the composer's first visit to the United States. Shortly after this, another "girl," Calamity Jane, would between 1912 and 1913 also become hugely popular. Lastly, the fact that Puccini was familiar with the stories of cowboy shows (and one should take this into account in relation to the idea of introducing horses onstage) is witnessed by the following passage, written on 24 April 1890 to his brother Michele:

Buffalo Bill has been here, and I liked it. Buffalo Bill is a company of North Americans, with a number of Redhuts andbuffaloes, who do splendid shooting tricks and reproduction for real scenes that were on at the frontier. In eleven days they made "130 thousand lives!" (Gara, no. 37, 38).

Puccini wanted to believe that, by blending elements from great romantic theater with those from fashionable shows, combining them with quotations and raw realistic elements, he had found points of new depart-

Wars, à la Operetta

Two Subjects, Two Projects

After La fanciulla del West had begun its journey around the world's theaters, Puccini seemed to become calmer. The anxiety that usually attended him as soon as he had written the last note of a work gave way to nurture and conscious research, a greater amount of time dedicated to reflection, and more thoughtful decisions.

Puccini found a valuable correspondent, which he had previously lacked, in Count Ricardo Schubn Ross, whom he had known since 1890. Schubn was a man of culture and wealth—his father's family was Austrian, his maternal family from Umbria—and a keen music fan. 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 Schubn 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 1920 he actively participated in the Vienna premiere of Der Riese, staging Sturm und Angelique (1920), a task that he then undertook for all three operas in Hamburg in 1921. Moreover, in the following years he fought at length for La rondine—not a particularly popular opera, but one very dear to the composer—to be revived at Monte Carlo. A deeply cultured man, he drew Puccini's attention to Gerhart Hauptmann's play Hannes Himmelrath (first performed in 1893), even taking the trouble to translate it into Italian to make it more attractive to the composer. Hauptmann had eliminated most of the realism of his style in this play, approaching the poetic symbolism perfected in subsequent works. His plays attracted Berg, who flirted with the idea of setting Und Pippa tanzt! (1906), and later also caught the attention of Respighi, who in 1927 set Die verzweifelte Glauche (1896). Puccini did not give much thought to Hannes Himmelrath, which he already knew in French translation, since the protagonist's mystic aspiration to discover love in death was not a theme that particularly attracted him:

I read and reread Hannes, 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–Schubn correspondence (Schubn, 15–17).
sacrifice, enduring? We are not looking for original departures, shocking 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 if we are more than fifty years old (6 October, 1912; Gara, no. 607, 404–5).

Another distraction was provided by the Quintero brothers’ comedy Amuse allegra, which the composer had seen in Milan in 1909. Puccini’s interest in comic theater—unlike in Oidipus—was very definite, and led him to ask Sybil:

Do you know of any grotesque novel or short story or play, full of hyperbole and buffoonery? I have a desire to laugh and to make other people laugh. (19 November 1912; Seligman, 211–12)

This project too was short-lived, but it led Puccini to meet the journalist and comedy writer Giuseppe Adamo, 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 inaccurate and often misleading). He was always ready to help, to do and humbly redo anything, to draft a hundred versions if necessary. After the disastrous experience of 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 Piave type was a necessity.

Moreover, he urgently needed to find someone in artistic circles on whom he could rely: on 6 June 1912 Giulio Ricordi died. The publisher’s death deprived him of an indispensable point of reference. Once he had overcome his deep personal sadness, he had to face more restricted, and almost totally unsteady, relations with Giulio’s son Tino, now head of the firm. At first Puccini was consolationed by discretion, but he pulled himself together by planning revenge, of which he wrote to Sybil a few days after the death of his second father:

Poor Signor Giulio [Ricordi]! You simply can’t imagine how griefed I am at his death! From now on everything is in the hands of Service [Tino Ricordi]—we’re in a nice fix! But on the very first occasions that he tries any of his tricks, I shall leave the firm—you can be quite sure of that, I promise you! (Carner, 143).

Among other things, Puccini was troubled by the idea that Tino 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 dauphin Riccardo Zandonai, about whom he had often expressed a low opinion.

In the meantime, however, he had to adapt; and, perhaps because of Tino’s preferences, D’Annunzio returned to mind. Probably Puccini received further stimulus from the fact that in 1912 Debesky had set Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien, a scandalous mystery performed by the dancer and mime Ida Rubinstein, and a work with which D’Annunzio had gained much success in the international musical world. Puccini asked him for:

Two or three更好 varied, theatrical acts, as passionate as possible—small acts—of gentle and small things and people, your Little Mammal! Leave ample room for visual effects; put at many characters as you wish onstage, have even three, four women. The female voice in a small group is beautiful; have some children, flowers, ravings, love. (27 August 1912; Gara, no. 601, 401)

In November, after another conversation with the poet at Arcachon, Puccini sent him an important timbral-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 head. I’ve already read a list, but there’s the problem that it is a kind of orchestra in the wings. Harmoniums, muted trumpets and horns, voices through chorus and paper, high and low flutes, violin, ocarina, glockenspiel, glass harmonica (sounds of glasse) and other things, things I can’t yet define, but one hour. But give me a great low voice. Is it possible? In this subject? And above all each act should have its own great emotion to ring at the audience. (Gara, no. 619, 43)

In spite of the ill-concealed irony with which Puccini approached D’Annunzio—a specialist in achieving effect at any cost—this time the poet seemed convinced that Puccini was willing to sequence, and proposed Le crociera degli insensati, a “very unusual [subject], full of pathetic force, passionate contrasts, illusions, and poetry” (5 November 1912; Gara, no. 615, 3).

4. After the London premiere of Gianni Schicchi in July 1912, Puccini subscribed himself to Sybil about “Serata’s great success as this young author, who does not lack talent but who at present hasn’t got the little something which is needed for the drama. And the libretto is one that I learned about—which seems to me to say something” (Carrer, 156).

5. The letter was written from Munich. Gara dates it 14 June 1913, but this is impossible because Puccini was in Paris at that time. Moreover, this letter refers to a collaboration in progress, and the Le crociera project had been abandoned by January. Documents show that Puccini was in the Bavarian capital between 11 and 15 November 1912. On Puccini’s relationship with D’Annunzio, see Marco Buccigrossi, “Quel Lago di Ammiraglione suonò, poierno di impressione” D’Annunzio—Puccini: Lettere di un secondo voi, nati, N010, no. 5 (1986): 605–15.
CHAPTER EIGHT

405. The plot was based on a historical event in 1212, when thousands of young people were taken aboard at Marseilles 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 Sybyl a few days later that "D'Annunzio has given birth to a small, shapeless monstrosity, unable to walk or live" (27 January 1913; Seligman, 116).

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 on 16 May 1912, as well as to meet D'Annunzio, he trolled the theaters as usual in search of novelty. It was probably on this occasion that he heard Scarlatti's music for the first time, when Peterkin, the great success of 1911, was playing at the Théâtre du Châtelet. Frequenting the boulevard theaters, Puccini came across Diderot's Le Hoangpendaré, 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 he now finally found something that matched his ideas: social poverty and injustices; passionate, adulterous 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 tunes, and spoke to Illica, who, at the time when Gorky had been the main interest (1905), had closely followed the original project:

I insist on Le Hoangpendaré (The Chase), 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; Gara, no. 619, 410)

The idea of an evening made up of single acts took firmer shape in the following June, when Puccini was able to inform Sybyl that "I think I have arranged for the three operas. One is Gold's Hoangpendaré; another with D'Annunzio, and the third (comic) with Tristan Bernard" (Seligman, 217).

Despite very poor relations with the supercilious D'Annunzio, Puccini began to see Il tabarro, entrusting the versification to the Tunisian poet Ferdi­nando Martini.

Just when everything seemed set for the best, something happened that suddenly threw plans into a disarray. While in Vienna in October 1912 to supervise the revival of some of his works and attend the Austrian premiere of La fanciulla, Puccini was approached by Siegmund Ebendorf and Heinrich Béetz, impresarios of the Car thirst, the main operetta theater along with the Theater an der Wien (where the composer had just seen the premiere of his good friend Lehár's Die Ideale Gastin). 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 keen, but he was obliged to rethink quickly when he realized that Tito's attentions toward him were so urgent that he had even sent a telegram for the important Austrian premiere of La fanciulla (Gara, no. 634, 415). Puccini wrote immediately (3 November) to one of his closest friends, Baron Angelo Eisner, who was to become his most important contact in Vienna:

"Typhus" 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 Monitor, to teach useful lessons."

He closed the deal a little later, asking for clarification as to whether one world rights of the score. It was a vital precaution, given that the unrest that subsequently led to World War I was already in the air. The fee offered was extremely generous: 100,000 Austrian crowns plus a clear share of the rights:

I would reserve for myself Italy, France, Belgium, England, North America. The rest of them: that is, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Spain, South America (Holland, Switzerland, etc., etc.). (To Eisner, 11 November 1913; Gara, no. 626, 416)

But there was a detail of prime importance in the agreement that Puccini had not clearly understood, and which he 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 slappy and banal operetta, with the usual East and West contrast; ball scenes, interludes for dance, without any study of character or originality. ... So what now? I shall never compose operetta: comic opera, yes; like Ramekmundler, but more entertaining and more organic. (14 December 1913; Gara, no. 638, 417)

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 Carlthaler, entwined to two professionals, Arthur Maria Willner and Heinz Reichert, and events took a turn for the better. Puccini agreed to discuss it, and gave Adami the task of preparing a libretto from which he strictly banned spoken dialogue. In the meantime, he worked hard with the librettist 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 brianca in summer 1914. Puccini, as Ashbrook notes, "had the slightest intention" of writing an opera:

Let my enemies all. Here it is also being said that I'm lowering myself to do operas like L'oiseau de feu. Never, ever, and then never again. I couldn't manage to do it like him even if I tried. (To Eitel; 15 March 1914; Gara, no. 646, 420)

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 with a subject that was light, 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 clause guaranteeing the composer plenty of scope in his choice of collaborator 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 Clausetti, assisting Ricordi 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'Amico has shown, Tosca was not given in Vienna during that period, nor was Francesca in 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 other reasons.

8. Willner's libretto include some of the most successful Viennese operas, from Die Entführung aus dem Serail (1909), a collaboration with Gotthold in Der Graf von Luxemburg (1909), Zigzumöchte (1910), and Einige Liebeslieder (1911, both with Bodansky). In 1912 Willner and Reichert would provide Libes with the text of Faustino.

9. Ashbrook, The Operas of Puccini, 157. See also Adami, Puccini, 139.

10. Up to that point Leoncavallo had produced two operas, Madama (1910) and La regina delle stelle (to a libretto by Faccio, 1914), as well as the four-act aria vuoto (1912).


Ricordi decided not to take Le rondine (the title was decided in May 1914) was probably the least that would have forced him to share the world rights (no 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 circumstances, 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, last 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 meant 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 involving intellectuals and artists: the protest against the German invasion of neutral Belgium (20 August 1914), in the form of King Albert's Book, which collected contributions from some of the main figures in contemporary culture, and a manifesto against the shelling of Rheims (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 arouse the anger of the German public, who demanded a boycott of his operas in German theaters. Puccini listened to publish an impromptu denial, 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 deploiring that the war is spreading its horror throughout the world, and also because I wish to remain within my shell and be discrete, according to the neutrality that our country has adopted. (Gara, undated, no. 665, 417-33)

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 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? (3 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 Berl, who, together with the other parties, rejects all 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 (not having yet found the third (sec) for Zoccati and without that third I am undecided) have settled down to compose La Hoappelade, but even for this a resolution is needed, to make the language more rough-hewn—it's too sugary at the moment—and thus I find myself at a bit of a standstill in a work that was taking good shape. Adam, however, knows all this and has promised to come to see me after 10 November. (5 October 1915; Gara, no. 683, 438–10)

The score of La rondine was already far advanced, and in the meantime Zoccati acted 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 Hoappelade and it's going very well; what a shame it's only one act. I hope to finish soon, but what's the point? This war doesn't end, what will the world want? (To Tito Ricordi, 16 December 1915; Gara, no. 685, 140)

Despite his good intentions, Adam had not succeeded in 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:

Nicodemi took La Hoappelade for reconsideration, I left him the original and the translation...it is not easy to give the necessary color to this drama in argent...In the meantime, also with Puccini, we are seeking

11. Puccini also believed that the agreement might be canceled because he thought that in its present form La rondine had little in common with the original project: "None of Wil-..." (letter to Tito Ricordi, 3 August 1915; Gara, no. 674, 436)

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 sprang from a single creative impulse, which had its roots in the first years of the century, and were part of a multistylistic 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 even more along the same lines as Busoni, who very soon (1917) would stage a single-act (Ariodante) and a two-act opera (Turandot) 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. 243, 137)

The front, 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 15%, this being his usual practice: Lorenzo Saponara. "It grieves me that this business could not end up with you," he wrote to Tito on 31 July 1916 (Gara, no. 690, 442), 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, unchanged since 1893 by the impresario and composer Raoul Gunsbourg, 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 (1885), Massenet's Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame (1903), and Don Quichotte (1910) were held there, as were—after Monte Carlo had become the fixed abode of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1912—Ravel's L'Enfant et les sorts (1912), Humperdinck's Judit (1912), and L'Aiglon, by Honegger and Berr (1915).

It was a triumphant gala. La rondine, the first swallow of the flower season, continues the tradition of success established by every work signed by this very great man: Puccini.
Thus was the premiere of the new work, conducted by Gino Marinuzzi, greeted by the Journal de Monde on 27 March 1917. Gilda Dalla Rizza, who was to become one of Puccini's favorite singers, was Magda, the great Tito Schipa her lover Ruggero; Francesco Dominaci was Prunier, Ines Maria Ferraris was Lisette, Gustave Huberdeau the banker Rambaldo. Despite inconveniences caused by the war, several leading Italian music critics crossed the border.

Italian music criticism, and a musicologist and composer Maria Ferraris was Lisette, Gustave Huberdeau the banker Rambaldo. Development of which coincided with the intensification of nationalist analogies, which we might find in the many novelties 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 "countess" Magda de Cavy, kept in high-society luxury by the banker Rambaldo, finds true love with a young man (Ruggero Lastouc) who has just arrived in the colorful Parisian world from the provinces (Montauban). Replace Magda with Violetta Valery, Rambaldo with Baron Donphol, Ruggero with the Provencal Alfredo Germont, and Second-Empire Paris with that of the mid-nineteenth century: the mold is obvious.

The subject Puccini set to music dearly 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 Ruggero nothing about her past, and because she is little inclined to be cooped up in a small house, tête-à-tête with her lover, protected 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 plot derived from Henri Cain and Arthur Berard's tripod, the libretto by Alfred de numerator. The tenor Jean de Cauw is also from the provinces, and like Ruggero falls in love at first sight with a worldly woman, whom he meets at a party where he is very ill in ease. Panny Legrand, stage name Sapho, is an earlier version of Magda, with more dubious purposes. She flees with the unwrapping 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 diaghil set in Avignon, at Jean's parents' home, in which
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 Saph in Paris, and begs her to return with him; but, realizing that he would never be able to forget her past completely, Fanny raids on tiptoe while he is asleep, leaving him forever. There are too many coincidences for them to be unintentional, and although Massenet's opera has, at key moments, a decidedly dramatic style churned by Puccini, it nevertheless seems legitimate to consider it a primary source for La rondine.

Looking more closely at the casting, it is, moreover, apparent that the influences on Willner and Reichert did not end there. La rondine has a double pair of lovers, one upper class, one lower class: Magda and Ruggero; and the maid Lisette and post Frunier; double soprano and double tenor; two lyric voices, a soubrette and a light tenor. The situation is very common in eighteenth-century comic opera: for just one famous example, think of Die Einhüflung aus dem Sexual. Other Mozart masterpieces, from Le nozze di Figaro to Carl von zu und Die Zauberflöte, are also enlivened by a contrast between two couples of different social standing.

If the roots of La rondine are thus set deep in the most popular operatic topos, it is equally evident that at least one situation in the plot came from a famous operetta. By taking herself off to Ballier in her mistress's clothes, Lisette acts in a similar fashion to 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 actions of Lisette, who believes she recognizes Magda despite the latter's attire as a grisette. And Lisette is unable to escape her mistress's 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 returned the subject to its origin, since the source of the Viennese masterpiece, Mallinck's and Halévy's Le Réveillon (1872), was set in Paris. But connections with the operetta end here; and those identified so far do not validate an interpretation of La rondine as a piece in that genre.

Similarly, the wholesale use of dance music—above all, the omnipresent waltz, whose apotheosis comes 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 climate of frenzy and joie 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-
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 tried and true technique of sung dialogue. \lissette has a chance to display her sharpness, expressing her simple point of view on galanterie: “Mi vuoi? Ti voglio? E fosti!” (“Do you want me? I want you! It’s done!”), before abruptly moving away from the group. \luniere pointedly describes the fashion “dell’amor sentimentale” (Puccini amusing himself by ironizing his own traits); the poet’s nonconformist view on accompany from the wings. Then he sings the first of the opera’s many Italy”;

Porter’s, Lisette’s lover—reveals the mockery Puccini, supported by Adami, aimed at Gabriele D’Annunzio, whose grandiose rhetoric was as renowned as his voracious erotic appetite. Magda vivaciously invites \luniere to sing his latest song, calling him “Il poeta \luniere, gloria della Nazione” (“The poet \luniere, glory of the Nation”)—D’Annunzio was “Vice d’Italia,” “Bard of Italy”); and the tenor, full of himself, does not seem to notice the good-natured teasing. He sits at the piano and strums arpeggios, 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 rictornello 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. \luniere’s narrative is the first anticipation of the love story that Magda will play out during the course of the opera: just

16. The effect of stage music was perhaps modeled on Fedora, in which Giudino employed a real pianist to play a nocturne during the Act II party in the heroine’s house.

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 romanticist: the lyrical melody unfolds in a languid slow waltz, reaching high C in the ritornello, and requiring great skill in the final moments, with its numerous high notes and large leaps. Attentive as ever 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 af intra il sole, / se il sole / è risonante / la felicità” (“What are riches, if at last happiness blossoms again”). From this point it becomes a symbol of the illusionary world of a heroine inclined to embellish the real one with poetic conceits. But reality is different, reading as it does in the matter-of-factness with which her gentle lover faces life: Rambaldo crushes every “dissolvo romantic” (“romantic devil”), giving her a gift of a precious jewel.

The conversation unfolds vacuously, lightly, over dance rhythms underpainted by harmonies more settled than usual. Yet there are opportunities for splashes of color: for example, when \lissette bursts in to announce that a young man is waiting for Rambaldo in the ante-chamber, her vivacious impatience is translated in the orchestra by marcatissimo minor accents. The superimposition of the two lines a semitone apart (woodwind and strings, beginning F against Fl, from [D] does not aim at homotony, but at heightening the atmosphere, preparing for the second, intense lyric section—“Dona! Niente altro che denaro!” (“Money, nothing but money?”), [D]—began by the heroine just a few bars after the first.

“One dolce e divino” (“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 Bullier, meeting a student whom she then left without reason. The area 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 merely 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 reexperience 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 riconcerto 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 Eugenio Lastone makes his entrance into the room (Ex. 8.2a). But the following lines should not go unnoticed, where the “voce bonana” (“far-away voice”)—perhaps that of a necessarily vigilant conscience—warns that “dei baci, i sorrisi, l’incontro ai paga / con stille di piombo” (“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 intimate when the Decadent Prunier lists the women worthy of him, fictional characters who stimulate his imagination. The brief list, which includes Poe’s disquieting Berenice together with the mythical Galatea and the adulterous Francesca (Dante’s Francesca, but certainly by way of D’Annunzio and Zanardini, more “da Rimini” than “da Polenta”), closes with Salome (Ex. 8.3). The tenor joins the English horn, which rapidly plays the princess’s theme from Richard Strauss’s opera—and not from just any moment, but exactly when the woman comes to after kissing the mouth of Jochanaan’s severed head (Ex. 8.3b). 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 8.3

Example 8.4. La rondine, I, 4 after (3)

In the second part of the act the music divides the stage into two settings. From one side, a skipping theme in G minor (Ex. 3), 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 moderate waltz that accompanied Magda’s dream underlines Ruggiero’s entrance and his exchange of pleasures with Ranibaldo. The two situations could not be better differentiated, and there is an anticipation of the minor trio in Feramors in the minuet-like music that accompanies the palm-reading. The subtlety with which Puccini makes these two pictures interact assures the greatest possible coherence to the action. Ruggiero 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 decadence 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:
When the two stage spaces merge, however, Magda never enters into Ruggiero'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 Gaussin, 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, nonconformist to the bitter end, demythologizes the legend of the city's charm with a fin-de-siècle-like solo (E♭) that is an ironic variant on the Melodramma (Puccini setting 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 (E♭), 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 Ruggiero has written the name Bullier; her face lights up, she leaves. The conclusion is a short duet for Lisette and Prunier. "T'amai... Mesié! ("I love you... You're being!") 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 cloak to the hat, even to the makeup. The music could not suit the situation better: for ninety measures we hear an ostinato motive that gravitates around the dominant of E♭ major, rises 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 descanted so low ("L'amai, l'atto... e non ragion!"). "I love her, love her, and do not reason!). But barely has Lisette come back with another hat than the sense of suspension is restored, as if the erotic desire that unites them in extreme simplicity, without pretenses, is destined never to be exhausted: not even when they have arm in arm after a resounding kiss do we hear the tonic chord. The orchestra, now reduced to chamber proportions, actively collaborates, never failing to add sublety and variety to the situation. Nearly every restatement of the motive has a different color, and is presented in the most varied blends—oblue with bassoon, violin, flute with bass clarinet; a translucent touch of harp harmonics here and there.

The harmonious naturalness with which the couple banish monotony emphasizes their difference from Magda: barely has the waltz come back onstage disguised as a gavotte than the waltz establishes the long-delayed E♭, and subtly contrasts her illusion to the reality of the two lovers who have just left. The ritornello of Dorucia's song fixes the image of a woman who is not very happy, and certainly very bored, trying to stray from the reality of everyday life a few moments of elation and happiness.

Many melodies, few themes (which clearly do not develop at all, and are used merely as reminiscences), two arias and a duet, many waltzes and other dance tunes La rouline is supported by this simple skeleton, in a search for transparency sustained by a traditional framework. This was no less than to regain the favor of a nostalgic audience, but has a particular dramatic function. The entire dramatic arch of the second and third acts is in fact constructed on the frame of those first two sets pieces, in a way that makes everything we will witness seem like déjà vu, an effect achieved through the cyclic reappearance of the same musical episodes. It is a subtle way of establishing an idea until the end, when Magda will be forced to choose her own future; she never lives in the present but in her nostalgia for the past, whatever that may be.

Meanwhile, the door of the great ballroom is thrown open to show all the usual extras of Puccini operas: artists, students, and grisettes. Bullier offers an extremely lively musical and visual picture, worthy of all its operatic predecessors in the skillful handling of the crowd, from which many chosen members are separated to improvise little episodes, along with a sizable group of character actors. The extremely colorful orchestra makes its usual vital contribution, especially through ample use of the silvery bell-sounds and the vital, detached rhythms of the percussion; at the same time there are many concerted passages where the sonority is reduced to chamber proportions. The action in itself is slight, being nothing but an acting out of the Act I arias. But what we witness is the real-life development of a dream, and that is sufficient justification of its large-scale treatment.

To hear the grand concertato that begins as the curtain rises, and witnessing the coming and going of the crowds, it would seem that we have returned to the Latin Quarter. In the meantime, however, the ladies have now achieved as much amorous inscrupulousness as the men, joining with them to raise a hymn to "Giovinezza, eterno riso / fresco fiore che incorona / delio donze il dolce viso!" ("Youth, eternal laughter / a fresh flower that crowns a woman's sweet face!"). The women look about, trying to find company, and beautifully themselves with touches of powder. All of them seek momentary happiness, and know how to protect themselves from the mirage of eternal love. Ruggiero, at a table on one side and looking around with an embarrassed air, cannot go uncovered, and the music frames him for a moment as he protects himself from the grisettes' assaults (although he remains within the choreal texture). The entrance of an unknown woman with a bashful expression stirs equal interest, and she becomes the object of attention of the "studenti gaudenti" ("pleasure-seeking students"). But her musical notation is plain: the lively motive with which the opera began accompanies her to the table where Ruggiero sits, and abruptly juxtaposes the elegant drawing room with this place where love affairs last no more than an evening.
Chapter Eight

Puccini deals with the "dance" meeting by reinventing duet form, creating a mosaic-like scheme mixing orchestral and choral passages. Ruggero 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 mere semblance of that genuine passion for which Manon and Mimì gave their lives. The first sign of her real attitude is given by the "destiny" theme, which accompanies her brief apology to Ruggero 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, 10

The tenor promptly invites her to remain at his table, precisely because her modesty makes him think of his native region. The nostalgic evocation of the Monzaian girls awakens Puccini's orchestral imagination: he paints a charming picture in one-step rhythm (Ex. 8.5), colored by glockenspiel, celesta, and triangle. Ruggero's inability to respect Magda's real position, even though she has entered a place of dubious reputation 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 di Blanche" ("A strange adventure, as in days long ago"), narrates Magda. Only then does she abandon herself to the waltz for the first time ("Nella dolce carezza della danza," Ex. 8.5), in which the melodic outpouring takes us back to La Bohème, so beautiful that it does not seem true. The idea passes to the chorus while the couple blend into the crowd of dancers; the reappearance of the music of the Act I narrative (Ex. 8.5) 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 brio. The melodic profile imperiously reaches upward, the style becoming distinctly Viennese. Riemann, marked accents, ecstatic phrasing, proclamatory, and Luftpause at 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 apotheosis has the same centrality as has the waltz in Act II of Der 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 (Ex. 8.5c); music that will reappear in Act III to recall Magda's meeting with Ruggero.

Lisette's and Prunier's entrance once again has the task 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 Ruggero, dancing, return to the foreground. The narrative music is restated and, right on cue, Ruggero orders "due bocci" ("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 introduced herself with the false name of Pauline. But from the point Ruggero 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 Ruggero, "m'accoglienza come il desir mi portò" ("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 pungent comments by the chorus, is
Example 8.6. La rondine, II, 2 before [E]

Example 8.7
a. La rondine, I, 7 before [E]

Example 8.8
a. La rondine, II, 71

b. La rondine, II, 7 after [E]

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 reanimates 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 "pervasive" 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 debated the fashion of sentimental love (1 before [E]), in which they are now taking part.
It is the opportunity for a brindisi, which Puccini treats rather like the central concerto finale of a late nineteenth-century opera. The lengthy development, the tempo indication (Andantino mosso, [15]), 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) re-appears, Ex. 1.48 spreads to the soloists' quartet and the chorus, Magda reaches high C three times, imitated by Lisette and the soprano of the chorus. It is an enthralling piece, in Puccini's best lyric vein.

The brisk conclusion once more acts as a counterbalance. Baller 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 outburst embodied by a violin ascending passage that reaches high G. But the baritone accepts the situation easily, and offers her a very civilized farewell: "Postene non pentirivene" ("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 murmure. Over the syncopated string faux bourdon, the offstage soprano is heard, singing a pentatonic melody in G-flat that is doubled by a piccolo, mincing the whistl of a custom. It is a touch of exoticism at the service of the main idea of the opera, a message that belies the longevity of love. The faraway voice sings:

- Son l'aurora che nasce per fugare
  I am the dawn that breaks to dispense
- ogni incanto di notte luna!
  every moonlight enchantment!
- Nell'amor non fidar! 20
  Do not trust in love!

When Ruggero returns, the melody of the brindisi is restated in the orchestra in a delightful new arrangement. The cellos play it first, then pass it to the violins, pianissimo in the high register, while the bells sound together with the bass cello, the harp providing gente accompaniment. Magda clings to Ruggero, hiding her fears behind the thrill of happiness. Puccini has helped the listener to a full understanding of the action, illustrating in the music the real limits of the woman's feeling. But it is won-

20. A piccolo is indicated in the score, but a whistle may be used to give the episode more character.

The voice that expressed disenchantment echoes in our ears, and will remain a clear premise of the situation in the last act, toward which directors of La rondine aim most of their objections—which like those who initiated a commendable revaluation of the opera in hostile times. Mosco Carner took a first step toward restoring the work to a level more consonant with its true value, but was frustrated:

The last act, however, where the drama turns to pathos and where we should have expected the composer to achieve his inspired best, proves on the whole disappointing. He launches into phrases of intense passion but the real afflatus is lacking—possibly because Magda's renunciation carries with it no hint of catastrophe. (Carner, 471)

Critical doubts are, after all, confirmed by those of the composer himself, who subjected the opera to revision from the very year of the premiere. We shall consider these changes of mind later, since they derive from a different conception of the drama, connected to the original decision Puccini and Adami had made. The current version is, at least arguably, perfectly coherent with the perspective in which Magda's emotion is framed in the course of the work. The lack of a "real afflatus," although not absolute, is an essential component of the opera, reflecting the thoughtlessness with which Magda has flirted with the gradual emergence of her imagination's illusion. No friction could be depicted like the absolute love between Manon and Des Grieux.

Confirmation comes at the beginning of Act III, where the unoriginal setting of a balcony on the Côte d'Azur envelops the lovers, in an ecstatic state. Three months after the previous act, they are still intent on recalling their meeting, to convince themselves they live in the real world. But their dialogue unfolds over waltz time, reminiscences of Parisian life that are destined to rest their charm over the heroine. The music of the couple who danced in the spring accompanies Magda as she recalls the meeting at Bulli (15 after 51), when she had "sognato d'amore" ("dreamt of love").

The echo of the music to which she spoke to Rambaldo evokes that connection even as Ruggero describes their flight. But the conversation drags on wearily, between sugary blandishments, until one of the key moments in the act. The melody of the brindisi, now in F major (19), accompanies Ruggero's revelation: overwhelmed by doubts, he has written a letter to his family to obtain consent to marry Magda. He has discovered that she is not "l'Amante, ma l'Amor" ("his Lover, but Love"), a phrase that introduces his first and only air in the opera. "Dimmi che vuoi seguirmi alla mia casa"
CHAPTER EIGHT

("Tell me that you want to follow me to my house") in E major ([15]). The young man speakst of a house with an orchard, of his mother's blessed protection, the "piccola manna 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-C-A', as if to emphasize the tenor’s lack of imagination, his capacity only for insipid tenderness.

The sobbing with which Magda parts from Ruggero, 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 più dirgli... Che fare? / Continue a tacere... o confessare?": "What more can I tell him? What should I do? / Continue to say nothing, or confess?"; at [15]) last only a few measures, and are immediately counterbalanced by the entrance of Prunier and Lisette. Any slight hint of tragedy is quickly dampened by this alternation with the brilliant element, here emphasized by virtuosic orchestration, particularly when the theme is restated by three muted trumpets as the couple go up the steps (Allegro spiccato, 4 after [15]). The poet, turned Pygmalion, has attempted to launch Lisette on the stage in Nice; but it has not been successful, and the echo of the fiasco is caught in the music, with a very high piccolo G-voicing her obsession about the whistling of the audience. But Prunier is also here to inform Magda that everyone at Paris still remembers her and cannot believe her unexpected happiness. His lines recall the death of Manon ("l’amor mio... non muore;": "my love, do not die"), but allow the swallow to choose her own fate:

Perché la vostra vita non è questa,
fra piccole rinunce e nostalgia,
con la visione d’una casa onesta
che chiude l’amor vostra in un tombo.

Because your life is not this one,
living among little sacrifices and nostalgia,
with the vision of an honest house
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 Lisette, after yet another squabble with her lover, prepares to put on her maid’s pinefore, which she has sorely missed. She provides Prunier with an easy comparison:

Anche voi... come lei, Magda, dovete
se non oggi abbandonare
una illusion che credete vita.

Like her, Magda, you too should abandon, if not today,
an illusion you believe to be real life.

Rushaldo’s message, conveyed via Prunier, offers Magda an untraumatic solution to her little drama, as easy as the way the poet, with his usual simplicity, schedules a rendezvous with Lisette before leaving “con molta dignità” ("with great dignity”).

The orchestra anticipates Magda’s decision, taking up the little theme that throughout the opera has given voice to romantic illusion ([15]), the sentimental love that has enthrilled all Paris. To this same music Ruggero returns, clutching a letter that could represent the solution to all his problems. It contains his mother’s blessing: she not only allows the marriage, but speaks of the "maternità che rende sano l’amore” ("motherhood that makes love sacred"), sending a kiss to Ruggero’s chosen wife, which he places, weeping, on his beloved’s forehead. Now Magda 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 has led her to a collision with a reality that only now, deep down, she understands the cannot accept. She can only be Ruggero’s lover, not his wife.

For Ruggero there is time for just one final futile plea. “Ma come poi l’acquisti?” ("But how can you leave me,?"), Andante mosso in A-flat major, 2 after [15] is a nicely grandiloquent piece, with emotion kept on a superficial level. As the evening bells strike, he clings to Magda, sobbing, and she takes up the melody, with a final reference to La mauvaise that is loaded with nostalgia for mezzosoprano of the past. Magda justifies her decision as a sacrifice, to spare breaking the bond of family affections. But there is neither illness nor moral dilemma: the swallow “c’è il volo e la pena” ("there is 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 Magda, a final, suggestive offstage A-flat, adhered to by the bells and ending on the concluding tremolo Di chord:
BEFORE

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, Ruggero 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 Sonzogno 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 Ruggero’s parents’ house in Montauban. 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, Ruggero leaves to prepare the wedding (Alfredo Germont goes to Paris to pay his debts). Meanwhile, 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 quite quickly from nostalgia. So the swallow flies away, 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 on stage 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-

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11. Puccini wrote to Schnabl on 25 January 1918: “the third act is a real burden—’’d like to redo it in Montauban in the family’s house. Does this make you feel sick? It’s surely just nerves—take heart, we are close to getting it right” (Schnabl, no. 40, 68).
from the post office, does not clutch his mother’s letter, but an anonymous missive, which he reads quickly to Magda: “La donna che tu crederti degna della tua vita…” E Pamanite di Rambaldo” (“The woman you believed worthy of your life is Rambaldo’s lover”). The music, however, continues in the current version, save two small cuts of material superfluous in the context of the new words. Ruggero rails against Magda, and when she picks up the awkward gift left by Rambaldo, he believes he understands her real motives: “Il d’anzo! E il d’anzo!” (“Money! It is the money!”) This mistake allows him to seem a little less stupid than in the preceding version, but also nastier. The tedious aria[20] with which he had implored Magda not to leave him becomes hers, as she despair in vain. After the tenor has left, Lisette approaches her mistress and tries to ease her grief; the curtain falls to the claims of bells.[21]

There is no evidence that the version just described was not Puccini’s preference, only letters asserting his resolution to stage the opera in its new form as soon as possible; although Turandot was absorbing his creative energies, he remained concerned with La rondine until three months before his death.[22] 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 truly preferable. Six months before confessing his doubts about the third act, Puccini had written a very different kind of letter to Riccardo Schmahl, 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 Munich [Cannes] it turned out well and moved people, while it made them laugh at Bologna in that dead-end performance—I swear it was such, on the four gospels! (Schmahl, no. 36, 65).

These words invite further investigation. The letters written in the ten months after the premiere do not show a disagreeing composer; at most, he was cautious not to misrepresent Turandot in an edition that would be published in Vienna, unannounced rejecting the version just staged, as shown in a letter of 25 October 1912.

I am going to rewrite the Rondine for the third time! I don’t care for this second edition; I prefer the first—the edition of Monte Carlo. But the third will be the first with changes on account of the libretto, Adami has been here and has come to an agreement with the publishers and the Vienna librettists. (Seligman, 330)

Puccini was therefore convinced that a few textual changes would be enough to provide the necessary coherence to the action, as in the finale of Butterfly. And, broadly speaking, that was what happened: he suppressed much of the first conversation between the lovers, leaving only the evocative orchestral passage as a type of a prelude (with a few trivial adjustments), and padded out the duet with a more vigorous coda.[23] His intention was to remove excessive sentimentality, which would compromise the credibility of the different denouements. Attention was immediately shifted to the economic difficulties in which the couple struggled, through an episode in which three tendenze offer their merchandise to Magda, who politely sends them off at Ruggero’s request, as he is deep in the conversation is brusquely interrupted by Ruggero, just as he is about to offer her an embarrassing white swallow on a black background.[24]

From that point the situation changes drastically; the tenor, returning

22. La rondine was performed at Palermo on 10 April 1912, and at Vienna on 5 October 1912, conducted by Felix Weingartner. On the Viennese version, see Kuros, The Unreleased Puccini, 173–96, which publishes different versions of the libretto, with information about the circumstances of its performance. The current reduction for voice and piano, La rondine / The Swallow, Universal Edition (K. no. 1816) is—Com melodie Sonzogno (K. no. 1024), Vienna and Milan, 1917, 1945 (Benedetti R1), it is compared with the score published by Sonzogno, probably in 1921 (La rondine, Sonzogno, Milan, 1921–22; benedetti R3), the version discussed here. For a complete list of the scores see Hopenhaym, A Bibliography of the Works, 32–45.

23. Puccini added 40 measures from (R1) from 4 after (R1) from 3 after (R1) 299–303: “Non so se mi amo / Simpatico Scampolo / Benedetto l’amore”.

24. For this episode Puccini used a modus novus, which accompanied Ruggero’s confession by having written home (R1), from (R1) 163–64, with a cut of six measures (cf. R1, 316–16).

25. The Rambaldo episode explains the passages in the full version that accompanied Ruggero’s return on stage (R1): from (R1) 193–97, cf. R2, from (R1) 157–66).
was concerned about the performance, especially the conducting. From a letter to Giancarlo Fonzi off 8 October 1918, one deeply critical of Mignonone (so appreciated at the time of Tenes), we learn that Puccini considered respect for the delicate conceit of the opera vital to its success:

The papers say a lot of everything about La rondine. I haven't read them. Only the Corelli is good, but none of this bothers me, or upsets me much. What pains me is to see my work so badly performed! Mignonone is truly awful: no finesse, no nuance, so zeoplicts, three things so necessary in La rondine. Awful first act; the record confused, unbalanced, and inappropriate; the third act at the start and overwhelmed in the rest of it.

Then, between the warrors [Maria Frarnetti] (and my earlier misgivings about her were right), that square, inaccurate tenor [Berta] who has not a hint of bel canto, and Hino [Mignonone]: I've been butchered. Even the audience was too good for the opera. Renzo [Sonzogno] 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 displeasure if no provision is made for suitable performances. (Marchetti, no. 447, 443-44)

We can date the origin of Puccini's dramatically reticent through a valuable letter from Willner in Vienna, dated 12 February 1919, to the Sonzogno 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 very first project had been rejected by Puccini. When he wrote to Puccini, Williner had had "a piano reduction" of the opera for a few months by the composer. 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 Lisette should not have been part of the bourgeois group, nor should Rambaldo have entered a place of ill-repute alone. Williner proceeded himself unconvinced by the way in which Puccini moved Rigoletto 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 scenario where

An atmosphere presaging a stormy reign, which in fact gives way to a very dramatic showdown between Rigoletto and Maddalena (Magda), while Adami simply has his old mother's sentimental letter read. For a short

39. On 6 October 1917, the evening before the Milan premiere at the Dal Verme theater, Puccini complained to his niece Isabella del Rasetti: "Lucky for you that you don't have to deal with writer and conductor! La rondine goes on tomorrow. May God let everyone say all right dogs! dogs! Enough! Let's hope for the best" (Marchetti, no. 446, 443). He returned to the Mignonone problem on 15 April 1918, writing to Sibyl: "I'm very much afraid, and I certainly wouldn't give the Opera to Mignonone — it would ruin everything. Have you proof of that of the Sonzogno in Milan, and the version at Naples?" (Gellman, p. 26).

Apart from the understandable desire to resume work with Puccini, the last of Williner's points is of great importance, since it proves that he had suggested a climax similar to the one Puccini adopted in the third version. It is curious to note yet another similarity with the problems of the last revision of the Butterfly finale, where the librettist and composer were caught between two different possibilities in the subject. Finally, one cannot miss the fact that the present version of La rondine corresponds, mutatis mutandis, to the fifth act of Sapho, while the third reflects Massenet's third finale, further confirming that the text by Cahn and Bernside was considered not only by Adami, but also by the librettist.

Thus a question arises: why did Puccini not adopt the more dramatic situation at the time he set the original? That this was provided for in the original scenario is shown in a letter written to Adami on 18 November 1914:

Well, I have read and considered the act. It is new—this is its greatest defect. The overall effect is poor and it is too like comedy. I think that some new situations must be created; some friction caused by the appearance of the unpleasant Rambaldo. Although I'm not entirely happy about it, I believe that he must appear somehow in this third act— even if only to break the monotony. What do you think of an argument between the poet and Rigoletto? The end has to be reached more quickly, after the violent scene with the letter—not a telegram, because telegrams, besides being too unusual, are read at the office, and such serious things as this are not usually sent by telegram. (Adami, no. 120, 132)

31. Respigni, "La rondine solo leva un Angelo Eterno," 434-75. The letter is published with no indication of its importance.

33. Further proof of this comes from the idea of altering the finale of the second version in Montserrat. The fourth act of Sapho mixed plans in Shaw's parents' home in Aragona, and his mother intervened firmly to get rid of Finny, who has disturbed the family's serenity.
But the following day, Puccini was seized by even more serious doubt, which was probably decisive, since it completely changed everything. The problem was, yet again, caused by Ruggero's reactions:

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 saw and 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 dust and brutal, unconvincing ending... "La rondine is a real disaster," (Adami, no. 121, 125)

Puccini did not find the Willner and Reichert 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 histrioics, and the end is reached in a delicate fashion, without howling or insults from the orchestra. Everything is in tune. (22 August 1915; Adami, no. 126, 125)

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 for not having realized that Magda was no im-maculate lily. (27 September 1915; Adami, no. 126, 125)

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 Lioette and Prunier 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's letter she decides to go away. Take out the trio (ohe pero [who are you, what have you done]), and the subsequent conversation — that is, all the dramatics there at the moment. So only a few changes to the third 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, 125)

"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 preceding 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:

We need an aria, a piece characteristic of Prunier (to patch up the beginning) when Lioette returns to Magda's service. Prunier must say something about it to Magda. It is essential. Otherwise this character, more or less the philosopher among them, would cut a wretched figure as nothing better than the maid's companion. This won't do. He must find the opportunity to say to Magda: "Vous devez partir (I have to speak to you), he could say it when Lioette goes for the little white apron. Then he can say: "My dear, I know that they want 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 life. He can continue: "you can guess this young man, etc., etc." Do you understand? It's essential. Prunier has to be less mean at the end. (Adami, no. 129, 130)

Besides the idea of making the character actor's actions more realistic, it is significant that Puccini expressed himself so bluntly over the issue of the parents' 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 rondine" reveals a greater logic, and in conclusion I would like to examine the reasons for this. Magda leaves her love nest on 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 enticed her to flee to the coast. In the aria "Onde dolci e divini," she has, after all, recalled a "fairy voice" that said: "Fanciulla, è sboccato il tuo amor! / Dilendi, dilendi il tuo core!" ("Young girl, love has blossomed! / Despair, despair your heart!")

Her prudent attitude is not, then, surprising. The aria "Dissimi che vuoi regnarti alla mia casa," in which Ruggero reveals himself clearly for what he is, deals a severe blow to Magda's expectations. Clinging blindly to his mother, he offers his beloved a life of family affection, to be lived in the provinces until death. What woman of the world would take this step lightly? Were her judgment to waver, Prunier would surely shatter her convictions (or illusions) deliberately, reminding her that her love is too great to be confined within four cony walls and a tiny garden.

The picture of a real femme faralle emerges from this context: a mature woman, without superficialities or affectation, 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 external, the pleasure of renunciation is a sublime 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 doughty past has the ring of an excuse formed rapidly after her dismayed reading of that awful letter of
Blessing from his old mother, his 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 sentiments; Puccini, ready to take on his only Chinese princess. Le Rondiné 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 banality. 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. Rejection by the man would also contradict the centrality of the feminine world in Le Rondiné.

Rambaldo's return on stage is also damaging to his character. The Act II finale has left us with the portrait of a gentleman: "Puccini non pentirà" ("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 escapade was the whim of a moment, and at 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 civilised. 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 José, the Barone von Stings, 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 modicum of sentimentality is part of Puccini's mature style. "Torna a Nido il ronzino/la squilla torna a vegliare" ("The swallow returns to her nest and sings") with these words from the finale of La Bohème Puccini dedicated the score of his commedia lirica to Toscanini in 1921. Magda de Céyry seeks a pretext to find love, but in reality does no more than pleasurably relieve an adolescent escapade. Through her we seem to see a Puccini who regretfully renounces the past (almost echoed by a swelling bell, which sounds more from Luca than from France) to face a present that promises quite other adventures. His painful maturity was to produce extraordinary results in Il trittico and Turandot. Written in the context of the final masterpieces, Le Rondiné, with its brilliant, ironic music, sprinkled with cynicism, is a precious jewel that sparkles with its own light.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Experimental Dramaturgy

Two Acts "And We Will End the Charade" (Falstaff)

Puccini finished orchestrating Il tabarro on 25 November 1916, after seven months of happy creative work. Despite the fact that the project of the "three times" was still awaiting completion, he was anxious to hear the results of his efforts, and spurred Ricordi as the publisher to arrange the production of the opera, first in Monte Carlo and then in Rome. His greatest concerns centered around the singers, who were required to sustain exhausting tessituras and, at various points of tension, to compete with the volume of a full orchestra: The names he mentions imply an ideal "questa-spaghet" type: Carlo Gidei or Titta Ruffo for Michele, Giulio Crimi as Luigi, Rosa Raisi (who would later be the first Turandot) as Giorgetta (Gara, no. 701, 702).

The continuation of the Great War wrecked the project, and Puccini—although reconsidering the old idea of a trilogy, describing a clearly worked-out plan to Sybil Seligman in 1914—sought a two-act work to couple with Il tabarro: to this end he had in vain already approached Didier Gold as early as March 1916. On 1 January 1917 (Gara, no. 702), he suggested to Vandini the idea of using Le Villi to complete the evening. But a few days later he told his friend of a better idea: "I would give Il tabarro later on, together with Suor Angelica, another opera I'm thinking about" (25 January 1917, Syl. no. 705, 490).

The coveted project of a tripartite evening was finally taking shape, thanks to Giuseppino Forzano. The thirty-three-year-old Forzano was a man of many theatrical talents having made his debut very young as a baritone, he had abandoned the stage and found his way into journalism and writing libretti, achieving his greatest successes in his collaboration with Puccini. But his most important contribution to the theatrical world was...
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 apostles of D'Annunzio, skillfully moving between one and another of the memorable events celebrating Italian art promoted by Fascism, from the Vittoriele 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 Muller 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 Il trittico at La Scala in 1912 and direct the world premiers of Pizzetti's Debra e Januk (1921), Respighi's Belfagor (1913), Bottos's Nerone (1924) and Tirannus (1910). 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 crowded 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 bosom aboard 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 Spaventosa, giving reasons that reveal an intolerable conceit tinged with nationalist overtones:

"My dear Maestro," I replied to him, "my aim is to write a libretto for Giacomo Puccini on my own original subjects, not to adapt, at 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 theatrical effect, specialized expertise, and a ready inspiration that permitted him to solve the problem of the triptych's final "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 Giacinto Schichi, dei 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 theatrical milieu—with which he informed Tito Ricordi on 3 March 1917 that:

I sent the libretto of Suor Angelica to Maestro 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 Giacinto Schichi, Vous know the Maestro's opinion of this subject, which is rich in possibilities and whose comic nature is quite out of the ordinary: (Gaia, 10, 707, 457)

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 operas.

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 had done during the composition of Tosca, he enlisted the help of Pietro Panicelli:

I was writing a cloistered convent opera, so I need some Latin words for it. My knowledge does not go as far as your heavenly heights. I will need some of the words of the liturgy, for example: "Turris Eborac, Foederis Aqua," etc. (I don't recommend) but instead of the Ora pro nobis I need another response exalting 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 finest and some of their verses. So no pregia per me. Instead, it needs a Neutra Regina, or a 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 Maria reale della Madonna. Neither the Ave Maria Stella nor the Ave Maria, which I already have the music, is quite right for me. (1 May 1917; Gaia, 10, 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
daily life of cloistered nuns, he obtained a special permit to enter the restricted areas of the convent at Viceappule, where his sister Ima was mother superior.  

Puccini worked on Angelica while Forzano was writing the libretto of Schiacc, 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 compose it by the end of June, and was fully orchestrated by 14 September. The "European debut."

was sent to the composer in June 1918, (Gara, no. 732), in May 1917, and performed at the European premiere in Rome on 14 January 1919, and this time three singers took double roles: Carlo Galeffi, one of Puccini's favorite baritones (Michele and Schicchi), Edoardo Di Giovanni (stage name of the American tenor, Edward Johnson (Loigi and Rinuccio), and Gilda Dalla Rizza (Angelica and Lauretta). The cast, under the baton of Gino Marinuzzi, was completed by Maria Lausa (Gianni Schicchi). The reviews partially redeemed Angelica, and Schicchi was the initial triumph. The most serious reservation concerned the "theme of the opera" although its formal originality and magnificent orchestration were appreciated, the subject was criticized for "its almost aggressive realism." In his essay La trieste, Alberto Gasco returned to the idea that Puccini was an assimilator of others' languages, a point already raised in relation to Fanciulla.

In terms of harmonic technique, Angelica and Schicchi advance quite startling elements of novelty. Nothing that contemporary art has pro-

\* (1918). "Ora che m'hai, ma angel bella, dimmi, o quando potrò voler con te nel cielo?" Quanto potrò vederti?" ("Now that you know everything, beautiful angel, tell me when I will be able to fly with you in heaven?" When can I see you?" Tell me, and Tell me, When can I kiss you?"

\* (1918). "Che sento, mio caro?" Dimmi, o quando potrò voler con te nel cielo?" Quanto potrò vederti?" ("Now that you know everything, beautiful angel, tell me when I will be able to fly with you in heaven?" When can I see you?" Tell me, and Tell me, When can I kiss you?"

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excluded escapes the tedious and astute Giacomo Puccini. From Debussy to Stravinsky, every successful composer has been the fertile subject of his investigation. But (a miracle even more surprising than that of Saint-Étienne), one composer has lost none of his own personality through the assiduous contact with dangerous foreign composers, the feared storms of France and Russia; he has seized their secrets and used them to construct new and solid structures of a markedly national style. (13 January 1919)

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 Manon Lescaut, 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:

"One of the public," in "L'Idea musicale"

Although the reasoning is founded on a negative judgment, aimed at explicating the values of the romantic expression of feeling and the inspiration of the Puccini of Manon 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 during step taken before Turandot—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. Schicchi needed few revisions, almost all of them to Rimuzzi's arioso "Aveo torto" and the subsequent scurriolo "Ficazzia è come un albero fiero": these were shifted up a semitone (from E-flat to E major, and from A to B-flat major) to give the trio 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 monologue "Scorri, fiume eterno" from fifty-one to thirty-three measures. But 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 cabin: she isn't sleeping; I know that she isn't sleeping. And then a few desperate, lyric verses. In short, something direct, tough, 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 musicas disperse of four or six verses, but rhythmic and rhymed, and above all suited to a musical flight that I hope to find with the help of your words. That raging monologue damps, chokes the finale. (1 November 1921; Adami, no. 195, 179)

The new version was published in the 1925 edition, but the piece had already been performed by Carlo Guglielmi in the La Scala production on 19 January 1922. On this occasion Puccini also made a final decision about a large cut in the finale of Suor Angelica. Ever since the first performance in Rome, problems had been caused by the excessive length of Angelica's part. After "Senza mamma" (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.10 He tried to alleviate the problem by eliminating twenty orchestral measures in the 1919 reprint of the score, but it was not sufficient. The aria was probably not sung after the Milan premiere.11

The Unity of Il trittico

The word that today universally identifies Puccini's three operas was, according to an anecdote told by Muratori and Pagli, the subject of an animated discussion in Torre del Lago by the group of painters who met again during the Great War. A host of suggestions, from "triangle" and "tripod" to "crinity" and "tritonic", were all rejected; then someone exclaimed:

"Tripych!"

"But tripych," said one,

9. For some of the critics' opinions, see Giza, 471-76.
10. Il trittico (Milan: Ricordi, 1918, 1925, 1933), pl. no. 127, 104.
11. "The 'Tri' aria in diploia was an alternative I suggested for one evening—after that it was rejected, but will not happen again!" (16 February 1919; Schidl, no. 46, 77, my emphasis). Since, in the other two letters on the subject to Ada Dall'Armi (23 March 1919; Giza, nos. 749, 841) and Ricardo Schicchi (1 January 1924; Schidl, no. 91, 178, 183), Puccini insisted that the aria was to be performed, it is logical to suppose that contemporary practice was to omit it.
12. "The orchestral score (pp. 88-89) and the current version of the piano-vocal score (Suor Angelica [Milan: Ricordi, 1918, 1925, 1937]; R1944) still bear signs of this instruction, listing omitted numbers from [11 to 22].
"means," continued another, "three sides," added a third, "that unfold," completed a fourth.

The discussion became heated; we were all agreed on the impropriety of the word; nonetheless determining, despite La Crecia and the Four, to baptize the three operas: *Il trittico*.42

In homage to the friends' doubts, no printed music source calls *Il trittico*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Gianni Schicchi* by the title *Il trittico*; they were published separately as the current orchestral and piano-vocal scores, while the first two editions of the vocal score (1915, 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 *Tartaruz*.43 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: Gorky, and the atmospheric theme of the dispossessed. But there was little chance of finding in Gorky a short story on a comic subject, that contrast of static Puccini so wanted; besides, none of the stories really fulfilled his tragic ideal. On 19 March 1907—during another transition—enthusiasm for the three *tinte*—the composer explained to Carlo Gualani—what the problem had been two years earlier:

Some time ago I thought of doing three different sketches (3 acts) from: Gorky, taken from *The Playboys* and *In the Steeples*; I had chosen *The Reef* and *The 26 against One*, but was missing a strong and dramatic third for the finale of the evening, and couldn't find it in anything else of Gorky. Then I reconsidered, and I found the idea impractical: 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. (Gualani, 527, 547)

When he stumbled across *La Espequalita*, Puccini found precisely the strong subject that had been missing five years before. But by now it was twelve years since his first vague formulation of the project; things had changed. At that time the production of single acts had been stimulated in Italy by the Sonzogno competition, which had launched Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* in 1890. But that particular miracle was not destined to be repeated, and, scanning the more representative titles—and excepting Enrico Wolf-Ferrari's agreeable intermezzo *Il regno di Svezia* (1909)—we find only dim achievements like Mascagni's *Zanetto* (1886) and Luigi Mancinelli's *Paolo e Francesca* (1927), or unpolished works such as Giordano's *Maze marziano* (1910) and *Il Re* (1929), or Franco Alfano's *Madonna Imperia* (1927). Puccini believed that the single act was a form favored by verismo composers because it allowed them to unleash, in a restricted space, a tension unsustainable throughout three acts (Carner, 282). But the results illustrate that the Italians of the "Giovane Scuola" failed, through lack of technical skill, to find the appropriate measure of novelty in their organization of dramatic material. The better operas, in fact, all make use of the traditional three or four acts; the subject is treated like a fragment of painting reality, without any deeper examination of underlying motivation, while the atmosphere is characterized through passages of local color in closed forests.

By comparison, the single act was produced to very different effect in German-speaking countries during the first twenty years of the century, mainly thanks to Richard Strauss. His preference for the form is shown by the fact that out of a total of fourteen operas, eight are in a single act, including masterpieces such as *Salome* (1905), *Elektra* (1909), *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1911; second version 1916), and, finally, *Capriccio* (1912). While Zemlinsky skillfully kept to a traditional path (Fine florentinesische Tragödie, 1917; *Der Zerstörung*, 1922), Arnold Schoenberg demonstrated a quite different breadth of innovation in his two expressionist masterpieces *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*, composed between 1909 and 1913 but not performed until 1924. Emotional emotional tension is skillfully compressed into a total of fifty minutes. This picture was fittingly completed by some of Hindemith's more successful operas (*Semele* 1924; *Him und ihr*, 1927) and, in France, by Ravel's extraordinary *L'heure espagnole* (1911)

Perhaps Strauss's success encouraged Puccini to take up the old project once more. He proposed to concentrate the dramatic material of one long opera between more restricted boundaries, and faced the entirely new problem of conceiving a juxtaposition of different genres in one evening, going beyond contemporary European practice. The custom in Italy was to put together two or more short works by different composers, preferably in the same style or on similar themes, to achieve a full-length performance (not infrequently reviving the ballet, on the model of nineteenth-century practice): an exemplary case is *Cavalleria rusticana*, which from 1893 had begun to tour the world with *I pagliacci*. Similarly, the first success of Russian *sad* act in Paris, organized by Diaghilev, linked short operas to ballets as packages suitable for exportation, with eclecticism raised to a rule and subjugated to the primacy of dance and mise en scene in the dazzling seasons of the Ballets Russes (a cosmopolitan umbrella for the most disparate acts).

While working on the three acts, Puccini was unaware of Busoni's plans.
to stage Ariadne auf Naxos (whose premiere had taken place in Zurich in 1912) in a single evening; but the entity created by Busoni was not part of an organic project, a fact also true of Bela Bartok's Dipsych—despite the expressive and stylistic continuity between the masterpieces Bluebeard's Castle and the pendant ballet The Golden Prince, staged in 1918, the same year as Il trittico. Neither does the pairing of Hindemith's highly expressionist Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen and Der Noah-Nächt, a "play for Burmese Marionettes" (1931), appear particularly meaningful.

Il trittico was therefore unique in contemporary European opera, and because of this found unexpected, albeit resonant, admirers among composers such as Respighi and even Mahler (who decided any 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: he discussed the casting on the basis of the vocal characteristics of each role, accepting the minion of Giorgio 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 time, and thus that—paradoxically—the desired unity was created on the basis of their very contrast. Interestingly, in the final ordering of the acts he placed the "strong" subject at the beginning, although he had originally conceived it as the last—as if the thread uniting the "panels" were revealed by one of its most famous maxims:

There are fixed roles in the theater: interest them, surprise them, move them, or make them laugh. (Adami, no. 118, 177)

The expressive violence of Il tabarro interests and surprises; the delicate music and the nature of the drama experienced by the protagonist of Suor Angelica never falls to move. Gianni Schicchi is highly amusing, although the macabre elegance tarnishes the laughter slightly. The device functions perfectly, and the three "panels" could not be ordered differently. Their co-

18. Mahler once had considered these works avaliaingly, and derived his trilogy Of the three single acts (1931), Rapsody, in his turn, conceived Maria Ewing as a "tragedy as he played in one act divided into three episodes." Alfredo Casella also made a felicitous contribution to the single-act form: with the dance comedy La gara (1914), in the tradition of Daghiera. The form was revived by Luigi Dallapiccola (Via di mezzo, 1940, il principe and P, 1950), and Giacinto Scelsi (Pi Circadiano, 1940, La nova dell'aria, 1940). On the aesthetic problems of a single act, see Hans Peter Brandner, "Die erste Form: Theaterprobleme: Übergänge von der Probleme der Inflations," in Siegbart Döllinger and Winfried Kielch, eds., Glied von Drama und Opernsterben (Ludens: Ladeb-Verslag, 1991), 174-86. Discussion of Il trittico is inexplicably missing from this valuable volume.

Another characteristic of the three "panels" is their unified title, one that is often repeated in the course of a single performance: when three singers performed two roles each.

Experimental Dramaturgy

In the case of Suor Angelica, the ironic line, "I am a little child," is clearly perceptible in performance; Carner is quite right when he points out that "The few complete productions I have seen proved that the contrast between the three works lies in and by themselves as a powerful dramatic agent, reinforcing retrospectively for the listener the impact of each individual opera" (Carner, 473).

Carner is, however, less convincing when he compares the three panels to the Divine Comedy, even though he admits, "In this reading, the three episodes of the Trittico 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 similar lines, which concerns 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 of Il tabarro, Puccini begins a journey back through time, passing Suor Angelica, in which "the action takes place in a conven toward the end of the seventeenth century" (libretto and score do not indicate a place), and then leaping to 15,99, and Dante's Florence of the "falletto" ("tangle") Gianni Schicchi. It is undeniable that the emotions provoked by this progression of works evolve from absolute negativity in Il tabarro to the happy ending of Schicchi. In Il trittico, one again witnesses the decision to provide a happy ending as seen in La fenêtre, and the choice of entrancing the most remote subject—moreover, one from the Inferno—with the task of restoring the audience's spirits suggests another hermetic key. The beginning of moral standing on the part of the sympathetic swindler, full of nerve and cunning sense, whose—despite the convictions of his implacable censor Dante—aspects with the best of intentions, is a tribute not only to the Florence of "la gente nova," but, more generally, to the vitality 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 Luigi and Giorgio to clandestine love.

More specifically, the concept of time has a particular significance in each opera, so much so that it becomes vital to the general dramatic picture. In the first two works, the past is a necessary premise of the tragedy. In Il tabarro the imperfect tense regains supreme. "E l'anno scorso..." ("And last year... there were three of us"). "Ero tanto felice..." ("I was so happy..."), "when you loved me)—Michelozza: "Di mi dire un tempo" ("Yes, you tried to say to me")—Giorgio, in Angelica, in which happiness has never been experienced, the
opera is littered with references that gradually make one conscious of the slow passage of time. "Le tre sore della fontana d'oro" ("The three evenings of the golden fountain") are the only times the clustered nouns see the sunset, and lead the sisters to reflect sadly: "Un altro anno è passato" ("Another year has passed"). Sister Genovieffa's innocent desire ("Da cinquant'anni non vedo un agiellone"—"I haven't seen a 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 sono passati" ("Seven years have passed") since she entered the cloister. Temporal structures, then, must be recalled in order to contextualize the moment acted onstage. Gianni Schicchi is different because its only premise is Buoso Donati's death, and the action unfolds in the whirl of a present that, in Gianni's words, "È tal da sfidare l'eternità" ("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-turning from the contemporaneity of Il tabarro to medieval Florence creates a temporal counter-narrative, a shift from a time of memory and imotent nostalgia, to one of immobility, 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 characterizations 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 Butterfly: in these cases a symbolic relationship was established between drama and environment, achieved through long passages of pictorial music (the Te Deum and dawn in Zeffirelli, 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 fire of the elements in the first two acts, the imposing scene in which the mutiny takes place in Act III). And the "western" opera set the stage for further developments in Il trittico. At the beginning of the century, when Puccini was rummaging through literature, characterized by strong social concern—from the poetry of Cokely's Russia to that of Octave Mirbeau's Les Misérables—event 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 he had had in mind ever since he had become aware of the symptoms of the twentieth-century crisis.
Consider the opening theme of *Il tabarro*, which continues unperturbably while the action is played out, supporting the formal structure of three-fifths of the opera; or the insistent C-minor cadence that points a 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. Melodic ideas associated with the sacred permeate the work perceptibly and ironically, whether in the cloister or in Buoso’s room, where the greedy friars are opposed: “La mia felicità sarà rubata dall’opera di Santa Reparata” (“My happiness will be stolen by the good works of Santa Reparata”). Raimundo exclaims as the mirage of his inheritance fades, developing the incipit of “Regina virginitas ora pro eis,” which accompanies the miracle at the end of *Angelica*. Gianni Schicchi is the culmination of this way of organizing musical material, thanks to the extended function of rhythm; for example, most of the thematic variants that make the act a perpetually moving, restless organism derive from the initial ostinato.

This compositional method, which both quickens and enhances the action on stage, makes the impact of the three operas, when seen consecutively, one of the most overwhelming of all Puccini’s works. Unfortunately, after the first revival, *Suor Angelica* began to lose less than her sisters. After the premières at Covent Garden on 28 June 1920, 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 1921 Albert Carré programmed Gianni Schicchi in the Opéra-Comique (6 November), and later the next year *Il tabarro* was often omitted. Its greater popularity established, Gianni Schicchi went around the world paired with very different operas, from *Cavalleria rusticana* to *Salome* (Covent Garden, January 1937). Even though Puccini’s practical instinct ensured that he preferred his operas to lead separate lives rather than die altogether, there in no proof that he approved of the resulting split, except one brief comment to Adami during the staging at Bologna in October 1921.17 And despite the difficulties involved in staging the 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 these three operas! You would never believe it. In Bologna they seemed as long as a tremendous battle, it wasn’t any fault, though.” (1 November 1921; Adami, no. 197, 177). Raimundo exclaims that Puccini, after a revival at the Politeama in Florence (5 May 1901), authorised separate performances (*Puccini interprete di se steso*, 175–76). But letters after this date to Spyly (5 January 1921, 3 February 1921; Spylyman, 314–15) are the very least conclusive on this statement. What is certain, however, is that the Ricordi firm continued this type of circulation, given that separate editions were published after Puccini’s death (see Hopkinson, *A Bibliography of the Works*, 46–47).
achieved primarily through the mechanisms that cause the betrayal. Geor-
gatte 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 ragione; meglio non
pensare”). “You’re right; better not to think.” In which, unlike Louis, he ve­
hemently renounces the oppression that he and his colleagues suffer. The
brie y solo shows that adultery is an inevitable consequence of the miserable,
laborious stevedore’s life, one without help to
free himself from a sense of guilt. But Puccini’s
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unlike Louis, he vehemently renounces the oppression 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 help to
free himself from a sense of guilt. But Puccini’s

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 conscience of a socialist
nature to Puccini; but it is likely that his theatrical pragmatism and narra­
tive instinct would have led him, in his search for dramatic truth, to believe
Luigi’s words the most 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 sacks or rummaging through garbage. Luigi never becomes
resigned and raises his head to find a glimmer of light; but he is ultimately
tormented by his own primitive impulses.

The element in La Szappelaie that most attracted Puccini was the com­pletely new possibility of finding an idea to represent the river setting that is
the background for the action and determines its pace. This setting is vi­
tal to the musical structure, and is bound to the mise en scène more tightly
than ever before. While the Rome premiere of the opera was 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.

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, ballad singers
and “sudittere,” wandering singers, etc.) because all these figures either

In the opening thirty-two measures, this theme of parallel dyads (fourths and fifths) alternates regularly between $V_7$ and $I$. 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 muffled double bass pizzicato. Over the bass movement there is a soaring melodic idea (Ex. 9.1a) that functions as second theme, followed by a third motto, which the violins develop as a counter melody above the flowing principal theme (Ex. 9.1b):

By means of this regular structure, the monotonous flow of the river—inesorable as destiny and regular as passing time—is imitated with almost kinetic vividness. The direction in the score to raise the curtain before the orchestra begins, unique in Puccini’s operas, ensures that the river awakens identified with the action already going on, played out in expressive mimed gestures by the characters on stage; 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 concrete sounds of city life: car horns, tugboat sirens. 

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 musical connections between drama and background continue. For example, the pianissimo conversation between Michele and Giorgetta is based on an ostinato melody in G major (Ex. 9.2a) that unfolds in long note values (see below, Ex. 9.1.2a), and which also seems to come from the whirlpools of the river. Moreover, the scene 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 flinging him into the “gorge pis 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 supplied by rests that simulate hesitation and suspicion. It appears briefly in the first part, just after the melodores’ brindisi, and accompanies the sexual invitation to dance that Giorgetta extends to Luigi, who has called over a wandering organ-grinder (see Ex. 9.3a). The theme replaces the river music when the action moves toward its bloody climax, from the first furious conversation between the two lovers (Ex. 9.3b):

These additions aim to increase the realism of the musical setting. It is, however, worth recalling how musical counterpoint, in the works of Rossini and Franchi, had already been used on the stage after the use of “noise machines” had made a great sensation. Puccini used this “instrument” in La fanciulla del West, performed in Logroño in 1910. Without going as far as the fantasists, Puccini demonstrated, as Tippett Vercue would do sporadically, that it is possible to make a genuinely musical use of nonmusical sounds.
The opera's last important theme is linked to the key symbol of the opera, Micheile's cloak. It is made up of two half-phrases, each of which Puccini has endowed with a capacity to characterize, separating them at crucial moments. The consequent, three descending notes a major second apart in clarinet and flute, appears when Giorgetta describes to Luigi the sinister flame of their love (Ex. 9.4b: X). A little later, the theme is heard during Michele's nostalgic recollection of last love to his wife (Ex. 9.4c: X). The motive belongs to a type always associated with death in Puccini, from the melody of Orient demi heard during Mafioso's last moments to the march that accompanies Cavaradossi's execution; it is a clear sign of the turning point that will lead to the tragedy.

Example 9.4

a. Il tabarro, 3 before [25]

Ex. Puccini

Leotamente

b. Il tabarro, 3 after [27]

Ex. Puccini

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 Pari
dian scene; the second, centered around clandestine love and Micheile'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 La fanciulla, 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. 1–12); 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 cyclical structure that aims to make the drama more coherent. At the very end, the repeated "cloudy" cadence is twice fitted into the rapid action dominated by the cloak theme, stated in a much faster tempo (see below, Ex. 9.120). On the broader level, one cannot miss the strong similarity to a three-movement symphonic form: broad Macchial opening, central Allegro non troppo, 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 unnoticed in the theater. The development of the plot is clearly articulated according to the scheme exposition, peripeteia, catastrophe, and in the corresponding three sections there is a perfect equilibrium between thematic episodes, of "musica di scena" (stage music, marked below with an asterisk [*]) and "musica in scena" (onstage music, marked by two asterisks [**]), while a duet and solo pieces are never treated as traditional arias or duets:

Part 1: Exposition (mm. 1–869)

1–54 the river (three themes)
54–59 song of the stevedores

19. Evidence that Puccini thought of his single act in unphrased formal terms comes from a letter to Ricordi of 16 September 1896, where the final touches were being added to the orchestration: "Il tabarro will soon be finished. I have nothing left to orchestrate:except two movements of the opera and to finish the final scene" (Giau, p. 69, 444).

20. On the distinction, see above, p. 20, n. 21. In the following analysis the themes are abbreviated as follows: theme = KT; ability theme = AT; cloak theme = CT;
CHAPTER NINE

60-83  2nd and 3rd RT
84-124  introduc.*
125-130  "AT"
131-136  "moderno waltz*"
137-149  2nd RT (varied)
150-405  song of the song seller**
406-48  Frugola-Giorgetta episode
489-533  Frugola's 1st song
534-612  1st and 3rd RT
613-73  "brindisi" (reprise)
734-701  Luigi's solo and 2nd RT
702-704  Frugola's 2nd song
715-79  Giorgetta's "sinfonico"
793-830  "arioso reprise (Giorgetta - Luigi, a due)"
831-838  reprise of 2nd song (Frugola-Talpa, a due)
839-909  1st and 3rd RT (sopranino, tenorino, 3rd RT)

Part 1: Peripetia (870-1219)

870-937  duet, Giorgetta-Luigi: 1: "AT"
938-1023  1st, Allegro moderato
1024-1066  solo, Luigi: 2: "Andante"
1067-1096  3: "RT"
1097-1105  2: "AT"
1106-1163  duet, Michele-Giorgetta: 1: "Andante moderato"
1164-1212  solo, Michele: "CT"
1213-1251  duet, Michele-Giorgetta: 2: "Andante sostenuto"
1252-1219  3: "Andante moderato, 2nd RT"

Part 2: Catastrophe (1220-1439)

1220-1237  love duet and "sighs out"***
1238-1246  monologue, Michele: "CT"
1247-1249  2: "AT"
1250-1252  3: "CT"
1253-1254  pantomime and murder: "CT"
1255-1257  finale, Michele-Giorgetta: "AT"
1258-1260  "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 by a particular context. Michele, absorbed in contemplation of the setting sun, his spade pipe between his lips, seems almost to seek redemption from beyond the horizon; Giorgetta, on the other hand, is uninterested in nature, but is preoccupied by the labor of the men unloading the hold of the barge, toil she means 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 "Chanson à boire," a rustic waltz to which everyone, beginning with Talpa, raises his glass. From La traversata through Ondine to La rondine, the brindisi had always enjoyed a special place in operas, becoming finally an inevitable mark of realism with Turiddu's cry "Viva il viso spumeggiante!" ("Viva sparkling wine!). But what a distance lies between these examples and Il tabarro, where the wine does not recall "il viso dell'attentato" ("the face of a lover"), but is the only pleasure of those condemned to unhappiness by social injustice (Ticas says, "in questo viso a fogo i tristi pensieri")—"in this wine I drown sad thoughts".

The sentiment increases, providing an opportunity for Puccini to continue to transpose reality by musical means, after the brevity of the beginning. It takes little to raise the spirits of the damned of the earth; a passing organ-grinder's 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 (clarinets) that accompanies the clumsy steps of Giorgetta and Ticas:

Example 9.5, Il tabarro, 4 voci (97)

(Clarinetto e clarinetto basso)

(La traversata: first two bars on the sound of the first organ)

Critics generally cite the waltz in Il tabarro 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 Chopin's Op. 34 no. 1, one of his most famous waltzes.13 Meanwhile, the drama proceeds by subtle hints: when Luigi takes

12. The different tempo (Tempo di valzer moderato in Puccini—"Vivace in Chopin") could be disquieting, and the melody of Ex. 9.5 does not correspond exactly to the main theme of the waltz (mm. 15-31), but doubt not dispelled by comparing section B in the opera (from 1: "bello" (CH) with the end of the waltz in piano (battute a brillante, no. 141f). Among other things, the two pieces are both in A major. In La Falese, Smetana transposes the harmonies, giving the accompaniment in E-flat major to the harmonium, and the melody to B-flat major to the singer; cf. Parsifal (New York: Bonney and Hoyes, 1946), pp. 71ff.
over from the clumsy Tinca and dances with Giorgetta, who swings 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 (Ex. 9.7), 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 maidens. While the singer starts preparing to sell his "ultima canzonetta" ("last little song"), an argument flares between husband and wife, and as the harpist begins to play, their tone becomes harsher, corresponding to the words of the "venditore," which allude to the couple's marital unhappiness:

Example 9.6. Il tabarro, 3 after [27]

Unlike the cantata in Tosca, this canzone music does not interfere with the dialogue, but supplies a superficial counterbalance to the main characters' agitated recitative, simultaneously developing a parallel narrative, an

over the authorial reflection on love. Compared with Nick's entrance in Act III of La fanciulla, the sense of distance is sharper, and emphasized by a disillusioned quotation: the opening of Mimi's aria (Ex. 9.7):

Example 9.7. Il tabarro, 4 before [28]

Puccini's detachment from his old dramatic world is boldly stated, with an unexpectedly lively self-irony. Frugola 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 sapessi gli oggetti strani" ("If you knew the strange things"), a modal number in which Dorian and Aeolian alternate, the melody running through the gamut in a frighteningly mechanical manner, moving by small intervals and coming to rest forcefully on the final. D. Muted trumpets in the orchestral introduction lend a sinister atmosphere to the rag-woman devoted to worshipping her stubby cat, whose neurotic 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. Tiurn can go to the inn. His exclamation “Vai beno il vino ai sognati i pensieri di rivista” (“Wine is good for you! It drives 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. 9.19), which is heard as the young man describes the miserable able state of a staved-over exhausting work, lashes, sweat, secret amorous passions.

Forcina replies with dark pessimism, and talks of his aspirations, accompanied by strings ad legg. “Ho sogno una canzetta” (“I dream of a little house”), a solo in the Arcolian mood (Ex. 9.5), describes a pauper’s dream, tinged with the mordant in the final image of the two old people lying in the sun “aspettar così la morte, ch’è rimedio d’ogni male” (“to wait like this for death, cure of every ill!”)—words echoed by the querulous chirping of the coto 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 9.9. Il sabato, a firet (a)

most beautiful melody in the opera, and Luigi takes up her lyricism in a moving a due.

The choice not to have a duet (Giorgetta takes up the violins’ melody in a private expression, in which only Luigi is involved) isolates the characters, in a world where solitude and incomprehension reign supreme. And all hope is negated by the subsequent reprise of Forcina’s song, this time in unison with Talpa, as the two leave, singing of death calmly awaited.

On this sinister prophecy, the Seine music, this time sung by a light soprano and tenor, closes the first part of the opera. This image of innocence and happiness cannot be attained by the two lovers, who are now in direct conversation for the first time. Their fervent exchange is dominated by fear of being discovered, clearly conveyed by the adagio theme. When Michele returns, Luigi asks permission to be disembarked at Rouen: it is a gesture of jealousy, as he reveals to Giorgetta after Michele has retired to set out the lamps for the night. But Michele could return at any moment, and the fervent theme again intercepts the dialogue, making the jump; they establish the sign for their nocturnal meeting: the flame that is a “stella senza transito” (“star that never sets”), an omen of death (Ex. 9.40). The sense of mutual possession kindles a final outbreak of passion, and the language in which they relive their physical encounter is the more explicit in Puccini’s work:

Giorgetta Ma quando tu mi prendi è pur grande il compenso! Luigi Per il rubare insieme qualche cosa alla vita! Giorgetta La volonta è più intenso! Luigi È la gioia rapita fra spietati e puri...

Giorgetta In una strada senza... Luigi Fra grida soffocate...

Giorgetta In una strada senza... Luigi Ma quando tu me... the reward is great! Luigi Like stealing something together from life!

Giorgetta The pleasure is more intense! Luigi Is it joy stolen among sufferings and fears...

Giorgetta In an anxious embrace...

Luigi Amid stifled cries...

The sensuousness draws the tenor to a final declaration of jealousy. His long, high phrase is supported by violin and viola tremolos and flutes and piccolo trills, while the brass, woodwinds, and lower strings play the adagio theme in a shuddering crescendo (Ex. 9.10). The passage marks the peak of the tension, and adds the last touch to the image of the inevitability of death that casts its shadow over the opera, through the sinister embellishments on the word “stelle” (“stars”), almost crying drops of blood.

The contrast could not be greater when, after Giorgetta has murmured “Com'è difficile essere felici!” (“How difficult it is to be happy?”), the lyrical theme in G major begins in the cellos (Ex. 9.11a). Michele’s reappearance
begins a long interlude dedicated to nostalgia for love that can never return, feelings emphasized all the more by the baritone's melancholy song (Ex. 9.11a; an echo may be caught of the music that precedes Cavaradossi's arrival on the battlements of the Castel Sant'Angelo): 21

The melody repeats cyclically, like a lullaby modeled on the rhythm 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. 9.49). But when Giorgetta prepares to go back to suspicions

21. Michele's phrase shares many similarities with the violin melody played during the dawn scene in Act III of Tosca (Ex. 9.52), and shows how Puccini meticulously depicted similar feelings in similar melodic ideas.

22. This important detail is not sufficiently emphasized. The listener can only assume that the son is dead, and that this has contributed to the couple's estrangement.
CHAPTER NINE

Example 9.21 (continued)

b. Il tabarro, [5]

Not understanding, however, why the young man requested to disembark, Michele can do nothing more than vent his impotent fury, which grows to a paroxysm. 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, [6]). Here are the final quatrains of the two versions, the first sung to the Seine, the second to the ghost of the lover:

1918:
Lava via la tua pena e il mio dolore,
si pur tua la mia sorte!
E se non puoi la pace,
allor darrai la morte! 24

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. 9.34), provides an introduction and accompanies a very short mime scene. Michele lights his pipe, Luigi sees the match, believing it to be Giogretta's signal, he jumps onto the boat. In a convulsive scene, the baritone relives his dream. The tenor tries in vain to draw the knife he had previously brandished: Michele's hands tighten around Luigi's throat until he chokes, with extreme realism. The impact of this episode is strong, but that of the macabre shock finale is even more so. When the tenor has gasped his final breath ("L'amore!", "I love her!") Giogretta's voice is heard from the cabin. The baritone just has time to hide the corpse in the folds of his cloak before his wife approaches him nervously, asking her husband to hold her tightly. Michele's question has a sickening: "Where? In my cloak?" Giogretta answers: "Yes, closer, closer" (Ex. 9.13b):

Example 9.22

b. Il tabarro, [5]

The cloak hides neither joy nor sadness, but a murder; and as Michele throws open 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 striking dramas.

So a murder ends Il tabarro, just as it does the verismo 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 Canio act in order to protect their honor, the curt-driver more aristocratically fighting an offenstage duel, the clown releasing his fury on the point of a knife, running through both Nedda and Silvio in quick succession. Michele, on the other hand, cares nothing for honor: he acts under the influence of an uncontrollable impulse brought about by the rem-ent of lost love, a love that is flesh and blood and at the same time the only redeeming feature of a life filled with bitterness. His murderous fury is mo-tivated by an existence deprived of light, immersed in those mists over the Seine which envelop all the characters of the opera. While Canio and Alfio eventually regain their dignity by evenging a wrong, obtaining the under-standing of their audience, Michele degrades himself through the mur-der, reaching the lowest possible point when he throws open the clonk, a tragic gesture sullied by black (irony, which demands neither creature nor absoluction.

**Suor Angelica:** "Another year has passed"

Masett's *Le Triagle de Notre-Dame* (1902) is set, like *Suor Angelica*, in a cloister. It also has other traits in common with Forziano's second panel of *El trovador*. The uniformity of vocal range is similar (Masett's is an entirely male cast, Puccini's an entirely female one) as is the ending in which the Virgin intervenes (offering her blessing to the poor minister, and her for-giveness to Angelica). The closing mystical apparition echoes the medieval tradition of the miracle play, and in both cases the protagonists expire to prayers sung as the curtain falls. Puccini interprets the event as the blind-ving vision of a dying woman, while Masett very simply constructs an au-thentic miracle. Jean offers his juggling skill to the Madonna, and is re-war ped with entry into the ranks of the elect. The Virgin in the miracle of Maurice Maeterlinck's *Suor Blandina* (1901) is much more active: for the entire second act she weares the clothes of the heroine, who has fed the cloister for love, an authorizes the miracle in the name of her protégée. 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

12. Gino Pascali's interest in Maeterlinck, we may suppose, is due to his book *Jean de Ru-ino*, published at the beginning of the century with other plays of the Belgian writer (*Maeter-linc, Théâtre*, vol. 1, Rome, 1900). The work supplied the subject for operas by Grechina (1911), Wall (1914), and Rameau (1900), and set (1906). The sequel of the miracle play was part of a general vogue for the Middle Ages, manifestations of which were D'Annunzio's play and Debussy's *Le Martyre de St. Sébastien* (1912).

**EXPERIMENTAL DRAMATURGY***

fervent theme of his central creative phase: love, whether guilty (*Manon Lescaut*) or misunderstood (*Madama Butterfly*), experienced by a female protagonist. Manon is destroyed by her impulses, and comes to realize her own negativity only as she staggered agonizingly through the sands of the American desert; Cio-Cio-San sees suicide as her sole means of redeem-ation. Angelica is profoundly different: after having experienced completely unqual love she is now deprived of it. The two earlier heroines have an active role in determining their own fate; Angelica, on the other hand, is forced to endure the opprobrium of her aristocratic milieu, and is exiled within the convent walls to hide what is wrongly called a "sin." Her right to motherhood is denied for the sake of the bigoted conventions of her class, although a powerful biological instinct enables her to survive, sus-tained by the thought of another life that is continuing even though time has stopped around her. The brutal revelation of her child's death takes away her only reason for living, and her suicide comes as a direct conse-quence of the contraction of dramatic time. Seven years' waiting is distilled into three phrases skillfully punctuated by the cruel Princess's blow so sud-den and violent that it causes Angelica to lose her reason completely.

With rare exceptions, even the more perceptive biographers do not un-derstand why the first part of the drama moves so slowly. They seize on this point with the audience, which has never appreciated the minute de-scription of cloistered life on which, according to Carné, "the spectacle of mo-tolatry" (Carné, *48*) is Incumbent. Although praising the craftsmanship of the music, Carné criticized *Suor Angelica* above all because the plot did not offer Puccini one of his principal means of inspiration, "erotic love and insens suffering" (Carné, *48*). Too attracted by the special setting of the cloistered sisters, the composer did not realize that his imagination would be fatally curbed.

Although pessimistic, this opinion does not take into account the ab-solute necessity of this move, which is made up of six main strokes and subdued colors (above all, blends of woodwinds with harp). The musical de-scription of the atmosphere is not in any sense realistic, nor certain teach us that become functional reactions of heightening the heroine's per-sonal drama—the songs in praise of Christ and the Virgin, for example, and the bells. Puccini probably derived the passage of the Marian liturgy, which had been in use since the first years of the nineteenth century, from his study of the masses at Vichy—solo that would have been familiar to any Italian who had attended services during the month of May before the Second Vatican Council. The idea permeates the score right up to the final apogee (Ex. 9:14). But visits to the clouter above all deepened Puccini's understanding of the psychological reactions of those leading an enclosed life, and helped him realize how to convey the sense of renunciation of earthly things that contrasts vividly with Angelica's passionante nature.
As in Il tabarro, the action begins at sunrise 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 sopranos 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 gloriosa virginitas.” Puccini knew how to avoid any sense of timbral uniformity, putting his experience in La fanciulla to good use. He often isolated small groups from the context, treating them like a chamber choir, and gave solenian phrases to the higher-ranking sisters (three mezzo-sopranos). He also made use of a second soprano with a lighter voice, Sister Cenovieria, for some “character” passages. But above all he knew how to fuse voices with orchestra, gauging the sonorities and the colors, skillfully exploiting bells, glockenspil, celesta, and triangle in long concerto passages together with the upper woodwinds and strings, often adding muted trumpets and horns.

Sister Angelica has a firm structural base, organized through the juxtaposition of episodes. The broad outlines on which Puccini worked are not specified in the score, but are clearly indicated in Forzano’s libretto, and are marked in the music by clear pauses: it is a Via cruze (Way of the Cross) in seven stations:

1. prayer
2. penance (from [2])
3. recreation (from [3])
4. return from alms collecting (from [2])
5. the Princess (from [2])
6. grace (from [2])
7. the miracle (from [3])

The orchestra moves delicately within a drama made of subtle decoes and melancholy, displaying a great variety of rauces, 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 dissonant web, a vivid echo of organ techniques, a small offstage choir from the little church in the background sings the Ave Maria, with a melismatic piccolo counter-melody 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 mine, which shows her humility and subservience; immediately afterward, her personality is summed up in the monitress sister’s first phrase, when the little group in white habits comes onstage: “Sisters in humility, you missed quiescence, as Sister Angelica did, but she has made full adjustment.”

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; thus Puccini returned to leitmotivic techniques. One notices, for example, the way he molds, from a cell of the monitress’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 the boy sopranos (Ex. 9.16: X’), immediately helped by Sister Angelica, who reminds the nurse of the bitterness of the position (Ex. 9.16: X’), a clear metaphor of the hidden torment in her soul.

No less rich in implications is the monitress's second half-phrase (Ex. 9.17: "Y"), which emphasizes Angelica's humble gesture of contrition: from the derive two exact reminiscences directly intended to reconstruct elements of the time that precedes the action. The sisters' phrase supplies our first information about Angelica's past (Ex. 9.17: "Y"), a past that reappears tragically at a crucial point in the conversation with the Princess (Ex. 9.17: "Y"), when the nun thinks of her younger sister, who was an adolescent when she left but is now about to marry:

Example 9.17

a. Suor Angelica, [II]

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 "son passar sent'anni" ("seven years have passed"), Puccini isolates a portion of the time of her enclosed life at the beginning of the third "station" of the opera. The orchestra breaks into the rarefied atmosphere of penance, and for a few measures, a world full of color suddenly breaks out. Arpeggios and staccato chords, above a legato melody on muted horn and cello (E), 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. 9.18a) accompanies the merriment 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 tre sere della fontana d'oro"; "the three evenings of the golden fountain") can they see sunlight. The event allows for a contextualization of time, and leads to the sisters' melancholy reflection as they remember the death of one of their companions:
Thesi Jim

A serene hymn to death. It is a swift but intense gesture from the context of the little things that encircle her, for example the exany desires, as contact among Osmina along these coordinates. In the episodes that demonstrate the harsh rules of the cloister are invested in reconstructing, gesture by gesture, even down to minute details, life in the convent: a limbo where every nunute lasts an eternity.

The heroine's endurance of a life that drags on, always counting the days she has left behind her. Behind the tiny organs—untouched by tritones in the lower voices (Ex. 9.18)—that echo the nun's 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 devoted to 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 monstress punishes Osmima 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 mistress admonishes a little later. "I desideri sono 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 encircle her, for example the expectations of the ingenious Genevieve, who misses the lambs she looked after when she was "a shepherdess" (an affected passage accompanied by woodwinds, trilling in imitation of bleating: [32], or the fat Dolcina's appetites: "La gola è colpa grave!" ("Greed is a grave sin!"): a little knot of sisters cries out. They are also ready to gossip about Angelica, who denies having desires: "Che Gesù la perdona, ha detto una bugia!" ("May Jesus pardon her, she has told a lie!") Allegro con agitazione, [33], answers the nuns over a chromatic progression intensified by minor seconds in the clarinets and bassoons, before a sinister diminished-fifth variant of the Marian theme in the woodwinds (see Ex. 9.18d) 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 cures 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 [34] to [35] before [36], 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—the original includes the suppressed "acidi 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. 9.18a–b), they contain an even more important brief recitative sung by the nursing sister (Ex. 9.19). In the final version the heroine sings those same words at the end of the short intermezzo, clarifying her intentions with lucid self-awareness while she prepares the poisonous potion (Ex. 9.19b); but even before this a variant of the phrase appears when the abbess calls Angelica into the parlatory (Ex. 9.19a), and it suggests a disturbing link between flowers and death.
“Il ritorno dalla cura” (“The return from seeking alms,” fourth “station,” 24) concludes the first part of the opera on a famous note. The laying out of food excites Doelema, 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 parlatory. It is the visit the heroine has awaited so long, and which marks 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. 9.16b), begins to play music that will be heard many times later in the opera, but is here scored very differently (Andante mosso, 25). The sisters crowd around, all hoping for a visit, but seeing Angelica’s anxiousness they pray to the Madonna to grant her wish. The rhythmic variant of the theme that reminds us of the flowers (Ex. 9.19a) makes the wait for the call exhausting, and sounds like a premonition of death, to which six 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 triad for two measures (Ex. 9.22b). This contrast between the two harmonic areas, repeated on different degrees, gives a sense of sinister and implacable power. The lower strings recreate 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 parlatory (Ex. 9.16c).27

Example 9.19 (continued)

In the gallery of great Puccinian torturers, 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. 9.20a) that is recalled at the center of her solo (Ex. 9.20b). The vocal style is mainly declaratory and moves, scale-like, by step, creating the image of a motionless figure whose time has frozen in a past full of hidden rancor. The recitativo is full of chromaticism (see Ex. 9.16c), which strains the harmonic texture, absolving the delicate anatomy of the modal background that has dominated until then, while gradually the imperious behavior of the aristocrat is revealed in the large intervals that end her phrases, plunging downwards. In a raptified atmosphere, she announces the purpose of her visit: the division of the estate in order to allow the marriage of Angelica’s younger sister. The Princess shows anger only when her niece balks at the decision, whereupon she is coldly reminded of “la colpa di cui macchiasti il nostro bianco stemma” (“the sin with which you blackened our pure house”). But the sun immediately resumes an impassive aspect, singing a cruel arioso in C-sharp minor, “Nel silenzio di questi raccoglimenti” (“In the silence of those recollections”, Ex. 9.21c). 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.

Example 9.20

27. The range direction, the longest in any Puccini score, describes in detail the contrasts’ intensity and the heroine’s anxiety at the moment they meet.
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 "È morto?" while cellos and double basses play an ostinato bass in which the tritone is once again prominent. When the old woman bows her head in a sign of ascent, flutes and bass clarinet are added to the lower strings, and the violins play a motive that has the ring of a cruel and deformed children's song (Ex. 9.2b). 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 melodicly by the violins in a passionate outburst (from §7). The transition through these fourteen measures from hypnotic stability to a late romantic harmonic flux gives an almost physical image of the heroine dissolving into suffocating sobs.

This passage is, perhaps, the emotional summit of the score, and prepares the atmosphere for the sixth "station," 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" (§2) moves like a murmur 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 breathless passage that accompanied the summons to the parlor (the rhythmic scheme of which is the basis of the last section, "Dillo alla mamma" [§3]). The reuse of these three passages is intended to characterize Angelica's psychological development: evoking the death of her son, she immerses herself in a past she can never regain. On the other hand, the modal writing (Aeolian 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 section she throws herself lyrically into a visionary world. The F-major melody (Ex. 9·16) 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, violas, and harp), recalls the parlor episode, the present time. It is as though the protagonists were rejecting her own reality, falling into a trance-like state. Even more harrowing is the return of the Aeolian mode in the last section, when the voice moves lightly across wide intervals, beginning an imaginary conversation with the child. The melody stands out gently against the rarified sonority of harmonics 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.18 Puccini had no qualms about adding a further

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18. The structure of the solo, as performed in New York, can be seen from a proof copy of pages 129 and 130.

19 (60). "Senza mamma," mm. 1-41
20 (61). "Ora che tuto sei, angelo bello," mm. 21-33

The piece was based, like Michele's monologue, entirely on the progression that appears at the opening. My thanks to Gabriele Dottin, who made these pages available to me before
repetition of music that had already been repeated eloquently in the intermezzi; he probably used it to the drama to reinforce 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 cyclic 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 imagination.

There is no mistaking that the composer is not very perceptively, the reference to areas that were both Catholic and Protestant was not at all simple, as it was proven by some of the judgments of the New York critics, who drooped in, not very perceptively, the reference to Suor Angelica, a drama that is anything but ingenuous.

Suor Angelica is mock-Maeterlinck, that is mock turtle mysticism. The Belgian poet's "Sister Beatrice" is expiator. 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, Sunday, 13 December 1918, 21)

There are at least two possible reasons that the score is constructed as it is. One is the connection between the parts of the work as far as possible, and to strengthen the emotional temperature. The other is the need to create an atmosphere of static obsession, almost as though Angelica's soul were gradually engulfed by imagination. The cyclic 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 imagination. The cyclic 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 imagination.

The problem surrounding the omission of this aria was raised by Federico D'Amico in an article of 1966 (revised 1975): he suggested that it was removed from the score, under duress, to satisfy Puccini's "entourage," who believed that it both showed the action and, above all, hated "the affective flow that, until this point, ran through the veins of the work." The second concerns the solo "Amici fiori." The problem surrounding the omission of this aria was raised by Federico D'Amico in an article of 1966 (revised 1975): he suggested that it was removed from the score, under duress, to satisfy Puccini's "entourage," who believed that it both showed the action and, above all, hated "the affective flow that, until this point, ran through the veins of the work." The second concerns the solo "Amici fiori." The problem surrounding the omission of this aria was raised by Federico D'Amico in an article of 1966 (revised 1975): he suggested that it was removed from the score, under duress, to satisfy Puccini's "entourage," who believed that it both showed the action and, above all, hated "the affective flow that, until this point, ran through the veins of the work." The second concerns the solo "Amici fiori."

The second concern is that of estrangement, given that the second of Malipiero's "La setta esamnisi," which constitutes a rough model, D'Amico intended to shed light on Puccini's evolution toward "more modern styles, namely anti-barberianism and, at least in a broad sense, decadence," as well as to establish a connection between the two poetries, one that would suggest that they were converging. We can agree with his judgment about the modernity of the piece—of this there is no doubt. The vocal part is written in transposed Dorian, but the sense of the "final" on F is completely negated by the pedal with Qq, a chord that cannot be adequately explained in terms of vocal harmony. In the current score, there is a reminiscence of this situation at the moment the poison starts to take effect (Ex. 9.144).

D'Amico has every reason to maintain that this aria produces an effect of estrangement, given that it is very clearly detached from the prevailing
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 predicted by the dates of composition (Malipiero wrote La sette coseane the year after Il trittico, and they were only performed, as part of the Orfeide trilogy, in 1952). We might, however, believe that Puccini differentiated his compositional style to such an extreme 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 “Amore” (“Delectable nightshade”) and “flora viperina” (“poisonous hemlock”). She thus brings to its end, in a radical way, that disattachment from reality initiated in “Senza simulare” (when the echo of the Princesse’s absorption in prayer, and the transformation 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. 9.22a) 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 apparition of the Madonna is a message of peace and serenity; 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 presumably complained about the staging of this finale),² 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 Schnabl that “the wasps section will also be performed here” (21 January 1922; Schnabl, no. 92, 1928). The connection between the insertion of this episode and the removal of the “aria dei fiori” 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 “Suor Angelica ha sempre una ricetta buona fatta col fiore” (“Sister Angelica always has a good cure made from flowers”) constructs a large arc between the first part and the finale, and gives her gesture a bitter self-irony. After this, the “flora aria” had to be removed: details of the suicide could not appear twice.¹²

“Ammi Sono!” 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 hear the tragic irony in the sisters’ cheerful remarks as they return from the cemetery: “Sarete contenta sorella, la Vergine ha fatto la grazia” (“You happy, sister, the Virgin has granted you grace”). Angelica sings “E grazia a divee sia unica,” 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 of the aria, and the ensemble continues until the end."

¹². Puccini was not happy with the staging in Rome, but thought the Vicenza 1920 premiere exemplary. In view of the Hamburg premiere of Il trittico (February 1921), he recommended to Schnabl: “For the miracles, where she can’t do what they did in Vienna, we should keep in mind ‘that’s simple and ironic’—the Madonna, two angels, a crown of tiny little wasps—l’s the whole atmosphere of the scene—you have it” (Schnabl, no. 72, 125).

¹³. In a November 1919, the Teatro Comunale di Bologna staged Il trittico, in a joint initiative of Casa Ricordi and the director Ricardo Chailly, including the “aria dei fiori.” It was very successful, although nothing survives 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 (29 January 1922). But this is unlikely, since it would not have made sense both to reverse the wasps episode and to eliminate 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 Politeama in Florence, as D’Amico states ("Ch’ignorar seppia multiplicità," 6—9).
of the central section of the aria for the last time. Angelica reappears, transfixed, holding the bowl of potion in her hands, and she bids her final farewell to the place where she has suffered for seven years. The serene farewell turns into a desperate cry: "Ah, sono dannata!" ("I am damned!"); a mysterious offspring sound responds.

The mixed choir is supported by a cold, brilliant orchestral combination: high strings on two pianos over the long-held organ chords, fanfares on three trumpets, light strokes of cymbals, bell claves (not tubular).38 The timbre in itself suggests light, but also enhances the effect of the beam of light coming from the little chapel. The orchestra doubles Angelica's farewell to the place where she has suffered for seven years. The serene melody line, reaching up to high C, with sparkling glockenspiel and celesta; and ecstasy makes Angelica cry out in an exaltation that sounds almost erotic (untuned descending portamenti from high G). The reprise of section B, which was heard before the intermezzo, with the addition of the litanies sung at the beginning (see Ex. 6.14), closes the dramaic circle in a logical way. The reminiscence continues, in fact, to the moment when the heroine, seized by mystic exaltation, cries "La grazia è dacea dal ciclo" ("Grace has come down from heaven"). Reality and hallucination thus interweave, far derived from "pasteboard religiosity" (Carner, 494), 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 wish she has.

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 operas, which also happened to be the last work he completed. Many passages in La forza del destino (not to mention the unjustly underrated Un giorno di regna) testify to a genuine inclination to comedy on the part of Verdi. Puccini, however, despite the brilliance of large sections of La Bohème and Puccini interprera di in treno, 385.

38. Ricci draws a plan showing the exact arrangement of the instruments in the wings in "La rondina, never inclined toward truly cathartic laughter. The thoroughly humorous mood 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 haritone for the leading role to the sentimental interweaving of the soprano–tenor plot—love opposed by the lovers' families—and to the box that leads to the denouement.

Boito effortlessly centered his plot on Falstaff's double deception, creating at the same time a base for the keen humiliation that the wives of Windsor inflict on Ford, second baritone and, perhaps more importantly, a traditional jealous husband. Despite the women's pleadings, it is Ford's deception that allows the comic happy ending, with a marriage blessing pronounced over the two lovers. Forzano'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 plots, Verdi states: "Tutti gabbati!" ("Everyone mocked!"); Puccini, on the other hand, recognizes Gianni Schicchi's "extenuating circumstances," and we are all ready to do the same when he claims them on stage. Falstaff's is a more pointed reality, one that at the end means expression in real eight-voice fugue. Verdi, albeit 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 humour draws mainly on the sense of absurd that distinguishes the dead man's relative so violently.

Puccini's idea of comedy was wicked, often bordering on the grotesque, and staged by the master: Buoso Donati's corpse is presented 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 of Florence for impersonators is amputation of a hand; this threat fascinates the unscrupulous group around him, just as the "testa mozza" (decapitated head) of the moon will baffle the people of Peking into a hypnotic sleep in Turandot.

The primary source for Gianni Schicchi is a few lines of the Divine Comedy. Gianni is suddenly attacking the neck of another condemned to hell,
and suffers the same punishment as Mirra, since both are guilty of being “falsatori di persone” (Inferno, XXX, lines 31–33, 40–45):

E l'Areit, che rimase, tremando, mi disse: “Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi, e va rubbioso altrove conceendo.

Quanta a poco con esso non venne, falsificando sì in altri forme, come l'altro che li ven va, sostenne, per guarfar la donna della tomba, falsificar in sé Buoso Donati, remando e dando al testamento norma.”

And the Areitine who remained, trembling told me: “That goblin is Gianni Schicchi, and in his rage he goes treating others so.

She came to him with him by counterfeiting herself in another’s shape, just as the other who goes off there,

to gain the queen of the herd dared to counterfeit in 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 terta la capitella” 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 Forman in fact began from a much more detailed source, courtesy of the far-sighted philologist Pietro Fantastri, who in 1866 edited an edition of the Divine Comedy that included in an appendix a commentary transcribed from a manuscript attributed to a fourteenth-century “Anonimo fiorentino” (“Anonymous Florentine”). The passage deserves quotation not only for its charm but because it documents the true nature of the librettist’s work:

This Schicchi was one of the Cavalcanti of Florence, and this is what they say of him: Buoso Donati, struck by mortal illness, wanted to make a will,

but though he should make some bequests to others. Simone, 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 as 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 testify, saying: “I leave 20 soldi to the works of Santa Reparata, and 5 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 Sticchi.” Simone said to Buoso: “This does not need to be put in the will; I will give it to him as you prescribe.” “Simone, let me do with my money 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 mule to Gianni Sticchi” (because Buoso had the best mule in Tuscany). “Oh, Buoso,” said Simone, “he doesn’t care that much about the mule!” “I know what Gianni Sticchi 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 Sticchi the 100 Bezants that I am owed by my neighbor: and of what remains, with this clause I make Simone my heir universal. He must execute each of these bequests within fifteen days, otherwise all the income goes to the Franciscans of the Holy Cross monastery.” And the will being made, everyone left. Gianni got out of bed, and put Buoso back, and they started crying, and said that he was dead.”

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 dampens Simone’s rebellion. There is also the “opera di Santa Reparata” (“Works of Santa Reparata”), which benefited by exactly “cinque lire” from the bequest; and one of the juiciest morsels in the inheritance, “the best mule 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 "et così viene distribendo per Dio, ma più chissà per altri" ("this giving to God, but only a very small amount"), from which was derived the wive maxim "Buono" dispenses when the notary objects to the meager sum left to the religious orders:  

Chi cerca e lascia mala so 
alla segreteria si fa fretta 
fa dire a chi rimane 
"Eran quattrineli rubati!"  

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 stimulate 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 Poli in before the libretto was sent to press. 32 There is the sad fate of the faction opposing the Giudini, pointed out by Gianni as a warning to the Donati family if the deception were to be uncovered ("E voi randagio come un ghibellino", "Esilarato e ghibellino"). There is also, and above all, the homage to the "Genio" in the reprise of Rinuccio's "Tuscani immortal" the tenor sings an ode to the Arno, which "prima di cortesia alla forza, confastando l'universo Santa Croce" ("before running to the sanctuary, sings as it kisses Santa Croce square"), comparing its flow to the procession of illustrious men into the city:  

E di val d'Arca, più di Castello 
ben venga Arnolfo e far la torre 
bellissima 
e venga Giusto dal Miglio 
volevole, 
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 ge-  

32. "I received a letter from Paul Boci in which he says that he must urgently see me about the O.C. — For ghezzi's sake don't send it for painting until I have spoken to Forzano. When but he found that it is so important, some modern files" (Puccini, 20 September 1911, Mussati, vol. 498, 493).

ographically from the Valdarno, where the properties coveted by the Donati family are wrested (starting from Figline and ending with Firenze, passing through Quincone, Siena, and Empoli, with a short journey to the north-west to reach Prato). For her part, Laura would go willingly in Porta Rossa (a competitor of the "Porta Rossa" to Porta Rossa to buy the ring"), since after having had her first kiss in Firenze, she and Rinuccio have seen the city with different eyes:  

Firenze de lauana / Florence in the distance  
1' pare il Paraldu... / seemed Paraldu to us!  

Puccini's excursion into the world of comic opera reflects his unswerving resolution to compose a work more entertaining and organic than Die Räucherstube,33 that is, less weighted toward sentimentality, and more compact. The programmed tendency toward a concentration of musical material was facilitated by the decision to extend the number of received origins from the one in the source to eight: the members of the Donati family act cohesively united in the sin of taking possession of Buoso's best possessions — and Rinuccio is different only because he is motivated by love for Laura. The family members are multiple emulations 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 noise a striking 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 E-flat major, its range restricts to a fifth (Ex. 9.15, 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 combats perfectly the irresistible flow of the plot, the only formal delimiter possible in an opera where everything evolves with stunning rapidity.  

33. See the conclusion of the letter to Elster quoted above, regarding Le nozze. "I will never do an opera; music opera, yes, but the Räucherstube, but more entertaining and more organic" (14 December 1915, Gasa, nn. 618, 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 (IL): 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. Andantino (2 after IL), “Andato? (Perché stanno a lagrimar e?)” (“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 Schicchi warns the Donati family of the risks they are taking;

3. Andante sostenuto (10 after IL), “Oh... stete qui” (“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 hypocritical lament 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 ransacking 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 tempos; 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 corri dal notaio” (“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 melodies on the words

\[ \text{Example 9.25} \]

Gianotti Schicchi, 8 after IL

\[ \text{Example 9.26} \]

a. Gianotti Schicchi, 8 after II

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. 9.21, B) just as flexibly. 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 also recurs many times in its original form (or through its generative cell; see Ex. 9.25, 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 and the augmentation of the intervals in the original ascending phrase (see Ex. 9.17b). After having punctuated the entire first 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 Lauretta (Ex. 9.17b). Finally, with irresistible effect, the theme is sung in a variant of the initial form, as an adulatory chorus by the three women of the family after they have dressed Gianni (Ex. 9.17b: B’).

Example 9.17
a. Gianni Schicchi, 6 after 12

Example 9.18
a. Gianni Schicchi, 8 after 12

b. Gianni Schicchi, 1 after 12

c. Gianni Schicchi, 12

Gianni replies to them: “Vi servirò a dover! Contento vi ropono” (“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 arrogantM redolity; 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 triads (Ex. 9.28b), which imprint on our minds the words “Moteggiatore! bufoggiatore!” (“Mocker! scoffer!”). From here on, this sequence will remind us of the protagonist’s real nature, in contrast to his false identity as Buoso. For this reason, and unlike the other motives, it maintains its original form when it returns, except when it echoes Pinellino’s emotion (seeing Buoso, he almost bursts into tears); here it appears in minor, marked at the beginning by the pungent inversions of half-diminished seventh chords (Ex. 9.28c: C’).

The music of the tenor’s eulogy of great Tuscaners (Ex. 9.28d: C’), a homage to the roots of Gianni’s spirit, originates from the meter of this ringing fanfare (Ex. 9.28c: C’).

Example 9.19
a. Gianni Schicchi, 9 after 12

b. Gianni Schicchi, 1 after 12

c. Gianni Schicchi, 12

d. Gianni Schicchi, 1 before 12

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 and the augmentation of the intervals in the original ascending phrase (see Ex. 9.17b and 9.17c: B’). After having punctuated the entire first 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 Lauretta (Ex. 9.17b). Finally, with irresistible effect, the theme is sung in a variant of the initial form, as an adulatory chorus by the three women of the family after they have dressed Gianni (Ex. 9.17b: B’).
Meter and rhythm connect many other situations: not only the Donati theme (Ex. 9.15, B) but also Rinuccio’s stornello, like entire sections of the ensembles, is based on ostinato; and in the concerto that follows Gianni’s solo (“Schiacci! Schiacci!”) one can clearly perceive a derivation from the initial theme. A brief fragment of ostinato is also inserted into the cadence that appears when the Donati family open the parchment will (Ex. 9.19a). The theme will later be recalled when Spinellaccio boasts at the wrong moment of the merits of the Bologna school (Ex. 9.19b); and, in Schicchi’s solo (Ex. 9.19c), it refers to the notary, as whose entrance it then reappears with great pomp (1 after 25). 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, 1 before [3]

b. Gianni Schicchi, 7 before [3]

 Pelosi

Il men-ti do il fu-turo, e mol-te bo-va-gne, tu!

Bi. Cb. Stringi

In addition to 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 coloring the numerous caricatures that form the hub of the opera. A good example is when Spinellaccio asks the relatives whether Buoso “Ha avuto il Beneficio?” (“Did he have a bowel movement?”), a picture of Dantean frankness (recall Barbariccia’s closing gesture in Canto XXI of the Inferno), the bassoon playing a rapid descending scale down to C:

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,” (16). The Donati family pace the room, enraged, bursting into “risa sardoniche che esplodono come uva di dannatì” (“Sardonic laughter, which explodes like boys of the condemned”). As their anger gradually increases, the orchestra underlines every significant word: violas and second violins clash, exchanging quadruplet sixteenth-note figures, and the first violins play pizzicato on the offbeats, with a staccato 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 horns, and violas rhythmically sound seconds; piccolo, flute, and violins in the highest register give the texture a tautness 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 astringent when the macabre side of the situation is emphasized, the percussion underlining this element in caricatured fashion, from the moment the obsessive, funeral side-drum strokes are heard over the initial theme of the opera (1 before 1). The most intense moment comes unexpectedly when Gianni, after having examined the will, sets about explaining his plan to the Donati 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 dato il fiato?” (“No one knows that Buoso has given up the ghost?”) (Ex. 9.32). The somberity grows thinner, and all melodic movement halts as Schicchi clears the bed of its cumbersome burden: the cello shadows the faux bourdon of the
EXPERIMENTAL DRAMATURGY
double basses, creating an atmosphere full of suspense (Ex. 9.32b) 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 figures the voice of the dead
man (a cell that comes directly from the grave, Ex. 9.32a).

In this way Puccini created an important association between the
grotesque business around the corpse, and Gianni's gesture, which resuscitates
Bruno for Spinellozzo's benefit. The emancipated dissonances produce a
ghostly sonority that throws a sinister light on the episode, in which
even death is not spared irony.

Example 9.31
a. Gianni Schicchi, 4a before [E]
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 understanding the subtle malice of the insults they fling at one another). Each one demonstrates greed and cynicism in the desire to achieve his aim; the corpse of Buooso 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 litany. While they daydream of the inheritance their voices take on a prismaticizing tune, but when the bells ring again for the death of the baptized infant (an event that for some moments puts Schicchi's plan in danger) they mumble a lapidary “Requiescat in pace,” set faux bourdon 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. 9.336). A few measures later, this takes on

40. Gianni Schicchi and his daughter Lauretta (soprano) are five and twenty-one respectively. Among Buooso's relatives, the oldest is the most important: Simone (ticket buyer), secretary, and Zita (contralto), called “La volante” (“the old woman”), acts; Rinuccio (first tenor), twenty-four, is his nephew, while Muzio (bass) marries in Cines (tenor-spinto), is Simone's son. Completing the picture are Buooso Donati's son Gherardo (second tenor), his wife Nella (second soprano) and their son Gheraldino (contralto), and also Buooso's brothers-in-law, Beno di Sola (second bass), the dandy poor pensioner, melancholy and of uncertain age. The course of the opera, other character entries appear from time to time: the doctor from Bologna, Masser Spinola (tenor), and the doctor of Davide Salvestrini, the cantor-dia dell'arte character associated with Bologna, and the notary Ser Antonio di Nicolò (bass_), who draws up the will dictated by Schicchi, witnessed both by Pinellino the shoemaker and Duccio the dyer (both basses).
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 sarà rubata dall'opera di Santa Reparata" ("My happiness will be stolen by the work of Santa Reparata"). This will be repeated at the end of the strident concertato, and appears in a three-trumpet fanfare during the declaration of the false will, as if to mark the danger that has been avoided (as before). The young man stands out from the context, however, with his solo "Avere torto," replying sensibly to the relative's hysterical protests against a mismatch between a Donati and "la figlia di un villano! / D'un seco a Firenze dal comodato!" ("the daughter of a peasant come to 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 set pieces given to the three principal characters, and this fact becomes particularly interesting both in comparison with the other two "panels" of Il trittico, and, more generally, with Puccini's style from La fanciulla onwards; but above all, in light of Il trittico. There is no sense of recapitulating a "neoclassical" tone, but rather of a formal decision taken in order to create the necessary detachment between the leading characters and the connective tissue given to the little family choir. Considering the structure, one might think that Puccini had wanted to recreate eighteenth-century models, in which the aria was as integral a part of the dramatic action as the recitative. The large-scale use of thematic threads associated with Schicchi (see Exx. 9.17a, 9.25a), which appear in the first part as the tenor describes the character, strengthens this idea. The first atrope of "Firenze è come un albero fiorento" ("Florence is like a flowering tree"); Andante meso, [12] ends with a lyric orchestral melody, which translates into music the portrait of the Florentine palaces and towers created by Rinuccio ([33]). It is repeated at the end of the piece just before Gianni and his daughter knock at the door (see Ex. 9.17a), and, most importantly, provides the germ for Lauretta’s famous aria "Oh! mio babbo caro" ("Oh, dear Daddy"); [33], in which the girl pleads with her father to help make her dream of love come true. Puccini used the melody of the nunnella to assure continuity of action, and constructed this brief, sentimental expansion in A flat major in order to associate the sense of family love, which the Donati family completely lack, with the "genio nuovo" earlier sealed by Rinuccio.

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 quarter where he addresses Zita in extremely strong language: "Vecchia zazzara! Stupidt conna! Sporco stridore!" ("Old hag! Stupidl mouth! Filthy shouting!"). A heavy little march, built on the second theme of the opera, accompanies his reflections as he explains the will (Ex. 9.17b: B); the lovers reply by echoing the phrase that sym-

EXPERIMENTAL DRAMATURGY

bolizes their love (Ex. 9.34b), and which twice voices their disappointment before Gianni gives them a glimmer of hope. Then, "non mi potrem sposare per il Calendimaggio!" ("we can't get married on May Day!"") becomes "Perche mi sposteranno per il Calendimaggio!" ("Perhaps we'll be married on May Day!")

Example 9.34

a. Gianni Schicchi, a time [52]

b. Gianni Schicchi, a later [52]

The title character acquires more vivid outlines from other people’s misery, as if he draws ever greater life from it. He is the stereotypical shrewd character who can profit from every opportunity; one understands why the only motive that is truly his own is the one that describes him as "Morteggiatore" and "Buffeggitore" (Exx. 9.18a, b), the other two (Exx. 9.25; B: 9.27a) being derivatives connected with the situations he will have to face. His solo "Si corre dal notaiol" ([33]) is constructed like Rinuccio; the first part is laced with thematic anticipations and reminiscences that color the explanation of his plan to the Donati family. But his uttering cantabile in C minor has a very different character ("In testa la capellina"); "The nightcap on his head," Andante moderato e sostenuto, [33] - The orchestra
accompanies with pianissimo string chords, while the baritone melody is doubled by stracatto 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. Gianni suggests his idea of the disguise is such as "fadde l'eternità" ("to defy eternity"), the dissolute orchestra interjects his cadence on high G, with its ironic intertextual reference to Dante, who reserved him a place in hell.43

The same music is heard again just after the frenetic concertato, when the Donati family hand him the dead man's clothes and promise him payment in return for the best items. "Addio, Firenze" acts as the necessary premise 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 designed not to awaken sympathy for a heroine, but laughter and admiration for this representative of the "gente nuova." There are no troublesome misses to overcome, since the rigid musical construction has made the dramatic structure quite clear, the denouement easily predictable. The themes of the hoax, and Schicchi's abundant vitality, show him to be representative of the newlybourgeois class of the period in which the opera is set, and also of the time in which Forzano wrote the libretto. The spectator willingly accepts that Schicchi will bequeath himself the most precious belongings of dead Buoso Donati, the only possible happy ending, since he brings about the union of Rinuccio and Lauretta, which had been prevented by an insipid and corrupt aristocracy.

As the name Gianni Schicchi is written in the will, the relatives' irritation grows to a paroxysm, reaching its peak when the fate of the Signa nulls is decided. To ward off the Donati family, Schicchi is forced to alternate his dictation with the song "Addio Firenze," the harmony becoming more and more sated because of dissonance. Puccini was hired at the waltz in Il tabarro, but Stravinsky himself, with good reason, pointed out a reference to his ballet in this strange passage (Ex. 9:35: X).44

As soon as the notary leaves, the atmosphere turns into complete farce: while the long list of relatives rage, Gianni cheats the Donati family out of the house with his stick, trying to retain the precious objects that the greedy swindlers would take away from him. Then the stage energies and,

**Example 9:35**  
*Schicchi: see figure*  

**EXPERIMENTAL DRAMATURGY**

Excerpts from the score of *Puccini's* give an idea of the use of the orchestral love music of Lauretta and Rinuccio, which open the window, allowing the middle sun to flood the room where the macabre performance took place. Their love, like that of Nazaret and Fenton in Falstaff, redeems all human weakness, including that of Gianni Schicchi, who returns onstage clutching the belongings snatched from the Donati family.

At this point, the opera should really end, time remaining only for the *lierea* (Lit., license) that closes every respectable opera buffa.45 Even Verdi...
ended Falstaff with "a chorus," but he cast it in the strictests of forms, an orchestrally accompanied fugue 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 libretto over held chords in the orchestra:

Ditemi voi, Signor!,
se i quattrini di Buoso
potrano far meglio di così!
Per questa bussia...

"che non cacciate all'inferno... e così sia!"

...con licenza del gran padre Dante,
se avete di sante divertiti,
concedetemi voi...

"Si, il genio di apprendere!"

Povero gentiluomo!

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

(reproach a slapping action)

exterminating circumstances!

(less gradually)

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.

Hence of the subject. To see them together in a double bill, as sometimes happens, is an excellent opportunity to confirm Berlioz's judgment, confirmed by Giacomo Carissimi, on Puccini: "Buoso's ist ferro" ("He was our brother").
travel the world, he met the thirty-one-year-old German soprano Rose Adler, who between 1921 and 1923 was, probably, his last lover. This choice reflected his desire to return to the old days of flirtations with his performances, as always an apt mirror of his inner artistic self; it was the one way, perhaps, of generating the impression that time was not passing.

On 19 January 1919 the Peace Conference after World War I began in Paris, and on 28 April the final constitutional articles of the League of Nations were presented to the assembled, with the declared aim of promoting international cooperation and respect for human rights. In Italy, meanwhile, the future oppressors of freedom were coming to the fore on 21 March Renato 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 Inno 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, 483), 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—unlike 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 great faith in the remedies of the Fascist action squads.

Here the facts, 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 [October 1921]; Schinas, no. 113, 201)

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 1923 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 1924, but death prevented him from straining on the same benches as the instigators of Giacomo Matteotti's assassination, which had been carried out on 10 June.²

The slow but inexorable journey toward death was brightened only by creative activity. A renewal of his friendship with the Veronese playwright

1. The only known love letter from Puccini to his is to this singer, dated 14 May 1921 and published by Mugi, Deer Puccini, pg. 4. As in the preceding relationship, the worldly-wise Riccardo Schinas covered for his friend's unorthodox manners epistolary (see Schinas, no. 81–84, 241–44).

2. In an essay given in the Chamber of Deputies on 19 November 1924, Mussolini stated that the composer had asked for membership of the P.N.F. (National Fascist Party) some months before dying. See, however, Puccini's remarks in Puccini: Una vita, 169.
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 historic 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 Tosio and Carlo Clausetti, Puccini traveled to Brussels, and a few days later the X-ray examination at the Institut de la Couronne began, directed by Professor Ledoux. The operation on 24 November was carried out with only local anesthetic because of the delicate condition of Puccini’s heart. Ledoux inserted seven radium needles into his thorax. The final days were terrible, but his physical condition seemed to offer some cause for hope, and on November 27 a slight improvement led Ledoux to declare: “Puccini on serum” (“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 21:30 on the morning of 28 November (see Marchetti, no. 471, 473), with Tosio, Fosca, Sybil Seligman, and Carlo Clausetti at his bedside. On 1 December there was a funeral in Brussels; on 1 December a solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated in the cathedral in Milan. Toscanini conducted the orchestra and choir of La Scala in the Requiem from Edgar.

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 finale scene. The opera was performed at La Scala on 24 April 1926, with Rosa Raisa, Maria Zamboni (Liù), Miguel Fleta (Calaf), Giacomo Rimini (Ping), Emilio Varrassi, and Carlo Clausetti at his bedside. On 1 December there was a funeral in Brussels; on 1 December a solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated in the cathedral in Milan. Toscanini conducted the orchestra and choir of La Scala in the Requiem from Edgar.

Toscanini’s many merits, therefore, was also the fact that he prevented Puccini’s triumph from being sullied by such an outrage.

**AN INTERNATIONAL COMPOSER**

I live in Germany, where I do nothing but fight for Italy in music, and yet, Italian in Italy, cada Strametz, Steurer, Debussy? Yes inside! Puccini, disowns Verdi, and prospere perseguito—a Romani—to Germany, where I write his music. —Pietro Mascagni (letter to Casella, 21 July 1913)

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 for 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 nourished his taste 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 Fausto Torrefranca 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

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5. Arnaldo Fracassaci, Giovanni Puccini in confidenza e mistero (Milan: Ricordi, 1957), 211.

6. Reviews may be read in Gara, 559–61.
intensified their activities transcribing the music of Italy's glorious past). In his pamphlet, Torrefranca advanced the proposition that "opera cannot be, since it has never been, the ideal of [Italian] national musical culture," and continued:

In Puccini the truly personal search for the new is absent: he applies, does not discover, works cautiously on what has already been done, assimilates from the French and Russians, 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, contented by success and given value by fashion. After having criticized foreign audiences for contributing (more than Italian audiences) to the spread of Puccini's operas, Torrefranca drew the logical conclusion of his destructive premise:

Puccini is thus the manipulator par excellence of "international opera." The ideal condition of international opera is merely to have music that can be adapted to any tradition, in any language of the world, that is neither Italian, nor Russian, nor German, nor French.

The subversive nature of this pamphlet is amply illustrated by its arguments and the way in which they are treated: Torrefranca turns from "Puccini's femininity" to his creative laziness, and from his supposed "dramatic coarseness" to the specimens demonstration of how he is not a real composer, "since he lacks musicality, because he is not a musician, because he does not make art." The goal of these arguments—which earned Torrefranca a professorial chair, and found numerous adherents from Gianmario Bostanielli (though with some differences) to Alberto Gasco—was to demonstrate "the impotent 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 Vandiini: "Have you read our dear Torrefranca? He deserves a good beating" (Gara, no. 668, 433). All things considered, the idiosyncrasies of an aspiring academic bothered him little. Nor was he very interested in those young savors of the homeland evoked by Torrefranca, the members of the so-called "Generation dell'Ottanta." 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 Malipieros and Pratesi and all the others who don't want to have ideas. (23 December 1920; Schnabl, no. 67, 112)

He paid more attention to Ottorino Respighi, who moved into the spotlight during this period with his symphonic poem Le Fontane di Roma (1920), and whose orchestrations of Russian and Rachmaninoff pieces had already demonstrated his mastery of the orchestra. Beethoven Pizetti, on the other hand, a fervent apostle of the new dramatic gospel, interested Puccini very little, and on the premiere of Debora e Jasio he expressed a firm opinion:

You'll hear 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 1921; Schnabl, no. 117, 209)

Besides drawing away from the new generation, Puccini took note of Mascagni's regression:

After the excesses of il pastore [Mauel] (I wonder how the Gowon from Leverono would like this qualitative diminished!) my country makes me sick. — It may be beautiful but it has no quality of poetry or refinement — And this in the country of La Farte del destino, of Pagliacci and Compare Alfio! and of long, grand duets! (7 June 1921; Schnabl, no. 79, 136–37)

I am enclosing a clipping from Il Giornale d'Italia. They have discovered the "most noble" creator of Italian music! Velli will at least be famous! And all this after that grand Revolution — of the stomach! (To Signori and Adams, 20 June 1921; Gara, no. 803, 506)

Riter words, coming from 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 colleagues, 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 Pavesse in the Théâtre du Châtelet. Puccini, a large and
handsome but rather too dandified man, was immediately very kind to me. He had told Daghiler and others that my music was horrible, but that he was also very talented. I had talked with Debussy about Puccini's music, and I recall—contrary to Mosco Carneri's biography of Puccini, incidentally—that Debussy expected 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 distance between us was any obstruction to our friendship.

In May 1913, Puccini, together with Debussy, had been among the supporters of La Soire du prêtresse when the audience in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées had viciously attacked the work. Echoes of Stravinsky can be caught in Puccini's later operas, particularly at a crucial moment in Turandot, the aria "Tu, che di giò sei cia." 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 1910 he attended the Austrian premiere of Stravinsky's Die Frau ohne Schatten in Vienna, and in 1921 he saw a revival of Pfitzner's Palestrina in Munich. In June 1912 he asked Schiörl for news of the two latest Stravinsky works, the baroque 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 Palazzo 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, greeting Schoenberg, and talking with him amicably for about twenty minutes. His admiration for the Pierrot lunaire was immediately obvious, as he had never before been exposed to any modern works of that description. In the course of a conversation Puccini corrected Casella about his pronunciation of "Pierrot lunaire" and the English name of the composer, and even suggested that Casella should know more about his music. Puccini's remark to Casella may have been of more than personal interest, as he had the impression that Casella knew nothing about him and his music. Puccini's opinion of Casella's music was highly regarded by Puccini, who had never before been exposed to any modern works of that description. In the course of a conversation Puccini corrected Casella about his pronunciation of "Pierrot lunaire" and the English name of the composer, and even suggested that Casella should know more about his music. Puccini's remark to Casella may have been of more than personal interest, as he had the impression that Casella knew nothing about him and his music. Puccini's opinion of Casella's music was highly regarded by Puccini, who had never before been exposed to any modern works of that description. In the course of a conversation Puccini corrected Casella about his pronunciation of "Pierrot lunaire" and the English name of the composer, and even suggested that Casella should know more about his music.
After Il trovatore Puccini received all sorts of operatic proposals, but he took only one of them into serious consideration: Forzano's suggestion of writing a libretto around Christopher Sly, a character who appears in the prologue of The Taming of the Shrew. But Puccini turned down the project with few regrets, having decided (in a meeting with two others, probably in March 1920) to set the theatrical fairy tale Turandot by Carlo Gozzi (1763). Gozzi was suggested by Renato Simoni, a specialist in Venetian theatre and author of a successful play dedicated to Goldenen's enemy, which demonstrated to the composer "the improbable humanity of fairy tales." Puccini voiced his intentions clearly on 18 March 1920:

I have read Turandot; it seems to me that it would be better not to put this subject. Yesterday I spoke to a foreign lady, who told me about a production of this work in Germany with a mise-en-scène by Max Reinhardt that was very curious and original. . .I personally would advise keeping to the subject. Reduce the number of acts [in the play] there were fire and rereock it so that it is swift and effective; above all, lighten Turandot's enormous passion, which for so long has been stifled under the ashes of her great pride. In Reinhardt Turandot was a very thin woman, surrounded by tall men, chosen on purpose, large chairs, large furniture, and this tiny little viper of a woman with the strange heart of a hysterical. . .In short I believe that Turandot is the most normal and human play in all Gozzi. Finally: a Turandot via the modern mind, yours, Adami's, and mine. (To Simoni; Gara, no. 766, 490)

Puccini had not, then, seen the work in the theatre, as some biographies state. 18 This is important, because we have seen on other occasions how his imagination was kindled in the absence of facts—in this case, the fact that he had not seen a staging that stirred his curiosity. Gozzi's masterpiece around his interest as "the most normal and human piece of theater" of a "reactionary" author whose world of fairy tales and commedia dell'arte contrasted with Carlo Goldoni's realistic, enlightened universe. It was, however, precisely the dominance of the fantastic element that had attracted the German romanticists in their turn, the importance of the setting increased, and the irony that had dimmed the Venetian work was diminished. 19

Puccini did not have the original play to refer to, but used Andrea Maffei's translation of the German version of Turandot. 20 Friedrich Schiller had prepared this version in 1804 for the court theater at Weimar, putting Clemente Wehr'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 Destouches. Weber was the first of several composers, two of whom Puccini knew well, to choose this subject. Giuseppe Giacosa had written Il trionfo d'amore in 1875, and Antonio Bazzini had written La turandot, on a libretto by Guazzelli, which failed sensationnally at La Scala in 1867.

But Puccini's most important predecessor was undoubtedly Ferruccio Busoni, who had been working on Turandot since 1904, when he wrote a suite in eight movements. In 1911 he had the opportunity to adapt it for the stage, with two further additions, when Max Reinhardt decided to revive Gozzi'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 Zürich on 11 May 1917 together with Aida. We can assume that Puccini heard talk of the opera, but the different aesthetic conceptions of the two Tuscan composers make this irrele vant. Busoni agreed to a neoclassical detachment from his subject matter, something confirmed by his choosing the form of simplified. His work, moreover, was devoted to reproducing the spirit of the original text as faithfully as possible, and it contributed to renewed interest in Gozzi by other composers. 21

Puccini, however, as we have seen, reconceived in twentieth-century eyes the nineteenth-century perspective accumulated through the versions of Turandot by Reinhardt, Werthes, Schiller, and Maffei; and thus his own version assumed a different physiognomy. Gozzi had created a stylistic difference between the main characters, who speak in blunt verse, and the stock characters of the commedia dell'arte (the "masks"), who were

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18. Forzano's libretto was subsequently set to music by Wald † e (1917).
19. Adami, Puccini, 174. Simoni had written the play Carlo Gozzi in 1903, and had given an excellent demonstration of his capacities as a librettist in Madame Sans-Gène for Umberto Giordano (1913).
21. Wagner drew the subject for Die Funf (1833–35) from La donna serpente in a similar way, while many German composers, including Dori (1846) and Reimiger (1841), composed operas on Turandot. See Xin-Ming Liu, "Turandot" and der Operntext, Perspektiven der Opernszene, 3 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996).
23. Allaini Czeli derived La donna serpente (1913) from the folk tradition of the same name, while Prokofiev set The Love for Three Oranges (1921) and Henze Ring Hérich (1955).
given a rough draft in prose. 24 In the Schiller-Maffi version, all abbreviations were realized, and the masks also speak in verse; moreover, the story is set in more pathetic tones, enriched 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. 25 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 body and soul to the new opera, he was assailed many times by discouragement, deserted the work, returned to it, forced the librettists to prepare at least five versions of theasion's were realized, and division of the plot—and attempted in vain to beat death to its completion. It was certainly not a gestion devoid of problems, but this was, after all, normal for him. It is not correct, therefore, to interpret the periods 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 act [act]. For the third, I was thinking of another ending—I thought her death would be more meaningful, and I would have wanted 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 1910; Adami, no. 181, 168)

Important novelties were introduced gradually as the project assumed more definite outlines. Puccini decided to add the character of Liu in August 1919. The "pierroti donna" finds a partial model in Gozzi's Tartar princess Addelina, 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 proemio, a volunter outline of a dramatic event that provided the basis for an important performance, was a stock format of the commedia dell'arte. (Trans.)

25. The origins of the legend of Turandot go back directly to the Thousand and One Nights. The prince who tried to find his princess was inspired into the West in the eighteenth century, thanks to Le Mille e un sor, collected in the Corso pareri published by Pizzi de la Croix (1770); finally, the story was transferred to the Far East by Jean Claude Caliler, in the opera comique La Princesse de Chine (1799).
TypeError!
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 pleases me. Is this a good sign? I think so. (Adami, no. 228, 1971)

It was March 1924, eight months before his death. Four months later, Busoni would also be dead, leaving incomplete the final of his most ambitious operatic project, Doktor Faust. In 1911, Mahler had died leaving his Tenth Symphony incomplete; in 1923 death would prevent Berg from finishing the third act of Luïka. 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 scene and character, figures or narratives of a story, with an exactness that seems to make them real, is the composer, while he imagines an opera he has still to write. —Syracuse Bussotti

It is highly significant that Puccini turned to an oriental subject for the opera that would constitute a decisive turning point in his career. While in Madame Butterfly East and West are contrasted through two different stylistic "manifests," 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 sees the action "in Peking in legendary times.

To depict the atmosphere, Puccini used the method successfully tried out in the Japanese tragedy; he found four melodies that suited his requirements in J. A. van Aalst's Chinese Music (Shanghai, 1884), obtained for him by Claudiozetti on request: "The first is heard at the end of the Prince of Petru's funeral march (Ex. 10.14); the others all characterize the music of Ping, Pong, and Pung, first at the beginning (Ex. 10.18), then toward the end of the Act II terzetto (Ex. 10.24), and finally in the third act, when the dignitaries offers kakis. watering overflows with precious jewels to Calaf, to try and make him abandon his quest (Ex. 10.25)."


30. "I will also find ancient Chinese music and information and pictures of various instruments, which we will put on stage (not in the orchestra)" (n.d. [ca. 21 March 1912]; Adami, no. 195, 1966. For Puccini's questions to Claudiozetti regarding the molding of van Aalst's book on 12 June 1911, see La "Turandot": i: Mauro Carletti identified the four melodies in Ex. 10.1 from the same source (Carisi, 63-67, respectively Ex. E, G, C, H). Being a didactic, Sinott may have had the idea of calling the "pikado donna" the name made up from the sounds that correspond to the degrees of the Chinese scale (Liu)."

Another three melodies come from a more unusual source: a music box owned by Puccini's friend Baron Fassini. From this precious souvenir Puccini took the idea for one of his most exquisite chromatic, patterned, mechanical tunes (a change of meter at every measure) that accompanies the masque's entrance on stage (Ex. 10.15). He reserved a second
The motive is constructed on the pentatonic scale, which later appears in the chorus "Ai mi pi de pi piatriani" (II, 2 after 48). But the most important of all appears after the rising of the moon invoked by the people (Ex. 10.1): this theme, a melody called Mi-Lì-Hài (familiar 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 10.16, make use of the pentatonic scale, which is then harmonized tonally. Mi-Lì-Hài uses a different method of musical mimicry:

Example 10.2

a. Turandot, I, 48

b. Turandot, I, 48

c. Turandot, II, 11 after 48

The motive is constructed on the pentatonic scale G, Bb, G, F, Bb, but As and Db, notes that complete the transposed Mixolydian mode, appear in an ostinato bass. The use of a "Gregorian" aura serves to distance the listener, who instinctively notices archaisms but cannot identify it.

With an eye to the riddle scene in Act II, particularly the section in which Calaf takes 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 dreaded setting repeats three times his desire to measure himself against Turandot.27 The passage opens with the "sacred bronzes" (offstage trumpets and trombones) II, 52 outlining the Mixolydian mode, the same scale that, transposed down a tone, is used for the first repetition of "Distilla unum
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 timbre 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 has its maximum complement, and many more instruments are required for stage music: six trumpets, four trombones (one a bass), wooden side-drum, and low gong. There are also two alto saxophones, used very rarely in opera of this period.28 Their mysterious, sweet timbre blends with the children's chorus, doubling them in the wings in Acts I (Ex. 10.2) and II (453), before moving on stage, hidden, just before the princess enters. Finally, they play onstage the music that accompanies the emperor's exit (II, 2 after 48). Puccini used a massive percussion section with many bell-like sounds in a rhythmic texture dominated by ostinato figures. Chinese gong, 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 interlude that accompanies the crowd's entrance in Act II (9 after 453), and particularly in the subsequent march that introduces the emperor (1 before 453). Two harps playing double glissandi, woodwinds, and celesta in dizzying arpeggios (seventeen thirty-second notes in two quarter notes), xylophone glissandi, and glockenspiel chords are superimposed on the horns melody. As the banner passes, the effigies move in a new sonority to the passage, just after the percussion has come together in polyrhythmic figurations.

27. We might guess that Puccini had in mind the judgment episode in the first scene of Act IV of Aida, where Verdi gave the "Pirouette," an exotic clarinet by using Gregorian formulas, then interrupting the audience's unconscious reference to the Catholic tradition: "The Egyptian prince declared to the lower gods level" and begins a real dramatic final: accusations repeated three times in antiphonal manner, accompanied by the bells.

28. The xylophones, used by Blumenthal for the stage music in L'Abbaye (1913), had up to this period appeared in the work of some French composers, from Thomas (Hantet, 1880; Fontaine de Biot, 1891) to Massenet (Dell'Arca, 1874; Victor, 1893); and by Debussy (Pelléas, 1892). The instrument was later popular in Kraus's Fanny spade aff (1927) and was used by Schoenberg in Von Heine auf Margin (1939) and by Berg in Lulu (1933–37).
Bass drum, wooden side-drum, and tam-tam are prominent in the most barbaric passages, but Puccini also uses them for particular effects such as the bass drum strokes that punctuate Timur's sad opening narrative to his son, immersing him in an aura of legend (I, II); or the cymbal stroke with drum stick over the flute and muted first horn chord which evokes the sound of Turandot's physical and mental distance as she begins "In questa smania..."

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, in Turandot's aria, in Liu's Act III music. But the composer, in his efforts at mimicry, 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, Pang, and Pong enter in a group of seductive odalisesques, and offer them to Calaf. The four notes of the sequence (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 grandiloquent 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 cruel princess is placed at the culmination of a symbolic juxtaposition of colors, suggested by changing timbre: the different stages of the day progress before our eyes, and the metamorphosis of Turandot arrives with the white of dawn, then intensifying into the golden rays of the first sun. The opera opens with the reddish colors of sunset, projected onto a gold background (sharp rhythms, continuo movement, extensive 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 beheld. 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 permission to hurry to the huge gang 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 scene 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, detached cymbalism of the masks, broadens out into an enormous passage whose grandiose effect recalls the tableau of grand opera. After the clouds of incense diffused earlier have dissipated, the legendary

35. Puccini reflected on this moment at great length, writing to his collaborators that: "We need a scenic 'stop' for this moment." He sketched a "loose circle surrounded with masks," which "the masked characters play on ac rather than suit on, or sit about. I'm not exploiting myself very well, but I know that in Strauss's Der Rosenkavalier did something similar with the masks." (October 1924, Puccini, no. 253, 194). As ever, his concern for events elsewhere in Europe was acute.
emperor appears at the top of the staircase that dominates the scene. This
distant figure presents an exceptional panorama: white and yellow flags,
gerish costumes of blue and gold combined with warm tints, everything
lit by numerous multi-colored lanterns, intense brush strokes of color
that give a dream atmosphere. The staircase is a fundamental element in the
 ensuing context, the princess descending at each riddle correctly answered
by her suitor, as if to illustrate her progressive insecurity. She finds herself,
finally, just above Calaf; the trembling chorus makes her desperate reac-
tions to the victory of her adversary almost futile.

The final episode is the much-longed-for dawn, the boundary within
which Turandot, in her turn, has to solve the riddle of the name posed
by the unknown prince. But first there is the night scene in the palace
garden, whose sweet fragrance is almost tangible in the tense aria, "Nessun
dorma!": the golden colors and the sinuous movements of the female slaves
precede Liù's terror in front of the wide-eyed people of Peking. These
are the last supreme moments of the act, before the white light of
dawn consigns a beautiful woman to her inevitable defeat. The two climb
the stairs the princess descended in the previous act, and the glittering rays
of the sun illuminate the lovers' final embrace.

Puccini was never able to see his Opera, the enormous court arrayed
in front of the two lovers on the staircase, but the stage directions in the score
clearly show that he aimed at the full interaction of all the parameters of the
spectacle, the most daring undertaking he had ever attempted, as difficult
to realize now as it was then.

**Macro Structure**

Puccini never writes a score too many. His acts are a perfect length. He
has a predilection towards the scenic. And to the effort he went to obtain
his use of the orchestra is admirable. — Edgard Varese 36

Analysis of Puccini's final opera reveals a complete coordination of numer-
ous musical parameters, which ensures optimum coherence. The problem
of its structure is particularly delicate, since alongside its thematic and sym-
phonieic canvas clearly emerges a completely independent framework, a suc-
cession of separate numbers. This fact might seem to support an argument
advanced by Antonius Tirone, who sees Turandot as a conscious opus
placed by Puccini on the grave of Italian melodramma. In the use of arias
and ensembles he locates an attempt at "neo-antique revival that gives Tu-
randot its raison d'être." 37 Much more thoroughly and convincingly, Ash-
brook and Powers have recently traced the outlines of "Turandot as a


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Number Opera," the indispensable premise for their definition of it as
"The End of the Great Tradition." 38 The two scholars refer to the lineage
of Italian opera from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards,
locating the aria and concertato set piece as the main structures of a cen-
turies-old edition. Consequently, the journey from La fanciulla convive is
logically seen as a gradual change of mood on Puccini's part, an attempt
to rediscover the essence of that glorious past. 39

It is just as legitimate, however, to suggest that the twentieth-century
assessment had initiated a long experimental phase in Puccini's career, that the
composer was set on finding the connection between the "apparatus" of
melodramma and the more advanced European theatre experiments of his
time. His unceasing reflections on genres and forms involved constant
study of atmosphere and different styles, and had found its most intense expres-
sion in the compact unified through juxtaposition in *Il trittico.* It is in this
context that we will try to find some effective ways of reading his last, in-
complete masterpiece.

**Ambience**

The last Puccini score that made use of a symphonic structure was *Il
teatro,* the first was *Manon Lescaut: a chronological arch over a quarter-
century that might encourage us to consider the technique almost a con-
stant in his work. Carner sees in the first act of Turandot a "design broadly
resembling that of a symphony in four continuous movements held to-
gether by a central mood" (Carner, 514). His analysis may be outlined as
follows: 40

1. **INTRODUCTORY DIDO**
   *Andante* (slow)
   39 **ALLEGRO LARGO** (slow)
   Allegro — Large slow (55) — All (279)
   Appoggiata slow section, (55)
   Second section — Barcarolle (313)
   Finale — Andante (55)
   Allegro — Allegro
   427 **MELODIES WITH TWO FORMS**
   (2 sections, 2)
   All, piano — And, Lento (577)
   (Sonata form) — Allegretto (580)
   Allegretto mod. (590) — Allegro moderato (611)
   Allegro (611) — All (641)

38. See the section on "Turandot as a Number Opera," in Ashbrook and Powers, Turan-
dot, 15–18.
39. Ibid., 6.
40. The last column indicates the measures number, the second the formal title suggested
by Carner (in capitals), followed by the rehearsal number, and the tempo markings in the
score. The third column indicates the characters, key (if new is made clear; in capitals if ne-
cessary) and time signatures.
A. Sunset: awaiting the execution
1. The Mandarin’s proclamation (II, 11)
2. Recognition (II, 55)
3. Interlude (II, 95)
4. Executions’ chorus (II, 126)
B. Moonrise: the Prince of Persia; first entrance of Turandot (II)
1. Moonrise chorus (184)
2. Children’s chorus (II, 342)
3. Funeral cortège for the Prince of Persia (II, 360)
4. Insertudo (II, 477)
C. The three Ministers and the unknown Prince (II)
1. Entrance of the ministers (475)
2. Interludes (II, 577)
   a) Chorus of Turandot’s handmaids
   b) Ministerial warnings
3. The ghosts of Turandot’s former suitors (II)
4. Conclusion (II)
   a) The Ministers try again
   b) The severed head of the Prince of Persia
D. Finale (3 after II)
1. Transition (682)
2. Aria of Liú (III, 469)
3. Aria of the unknown Prince (III, 709)
4. Concertato (II, 753)

As can be seen, this outline also divides the act into four sections, each in turn composed of four sections corresponding to "la solfa 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 concerto (texted 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 solos and ensembles in which the framework of a nineteenth-century "number" is clear (from the duet between Manon and her brother in the prostitutes’ embarking scene, to the final passages of La fanciulla). Adopting such an analytical outline need not, however, imply the rejection of a network of relationships through thematic elements, since each section, except the last two, uses melodies that will play a role in the following acts: a theme in the Largo introduzione (in the first chart) with a recurring harmonic setting; the dissonant clash heard under the Mandarin’s declaration of Turandot’s law; two melodies in the following section (I, II and I after II) as well as a large body of metric material; and another particularly important theme in the Andante (see Ex. 10.28). 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. 10.10 and following), and as such permeates the score until Liú’s death. The act thus seems to be constructed through the juxtaposition of episodes, each complete in itself. It is this aspect that Franks Stott has emphasized, after having recognized the numerous similarities that link various sections of Puccini’s score to the work of other European composers, from Ravel to Bartók, 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 setting in a temporal sequence the "boxes" or separate panels whose uniform character is derived from their specific and particular textual principle.41

This way of thinking about the form, 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

between symphonic structure and "number" opera, perhaps initiating a new and more fertile period of discussion of Puccini's last masterpiece.

"Bitonality"

Many commentators have noted the harmonic modernity of Turandot, clearly evident in passages such as the dissonant little march of the onstage trumpets, 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 ostinato in A-flat minor:

Example 10.4. Turandot, II, 1 after II

Beyond the particular interest of this example, it is important to note the functionality of the technique employed—which belong to an advanced musical language—with respect to the theatrical perspective the composer wished to create. The "bitonal" 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, Bartok, 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 tonalities are suggested, they are never fully established.

At the beginning of Act I (see below, Ex. 10.10, Z), when the Mandarin announces Turandot's law, fifths on Cl and A are superimposed on the triads of D and B minor; by contrast, the music that introduces the trio of mates uses a sequence of major triads (E5, D6, and A), the bass moving in parallel motion at 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 rereading of the proclamation two-thirds of the way through the middle act, just before the onstage boys' chorus and the princess's entrance. "Bitonality" 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 protagonist. The role of the chorus transcends 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 concertato passages.

Fragments of the two themes of the first section (see Carrara's analysis) ricochet from pit to stage. The growing furor is depicted by the high choral tessituras, and the soloists pierce the texture like instruments playing outside their natural range: the soprano climbs up to high C4, ending the chorus "Ungi, arrota!" ("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 psalm-like opening, in soprano, then tenor, then basses ("Perciò tarda la pestsa"); "Why does the moon delay?" (II), the
uncompai/e/ thought, continually changeable, 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 Tragic and the Grotesque: Three Masks

As we have seen from his letters, Puccini considered Turandot's three ministers essential to the renewal of his dramaturgy. Their only precedents can be found in opera buffa, and this includes their vocal ranges: Ping, a baritone, is the principal, while Pong and Pang are light 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 instant reality that surrounds them. Their position is expressed by the use of unison, or simple canonic forms. Their melodies—authentic chiameries, 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 macabre-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, II


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**Frank Thiess, Giacomo Puccini: Versuch einer Psychologie seiner Musik (Vienna: Paul Sobotka, 1925), 147.
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 section without a scenic presence, and so almost academic" (14 April 1923. Adami, no. 213, 185). He succeeded nevertheless in treating this very long trio (more than 400 measures) in a varied, interesting way, but it obviously needed a very clear formal scheme. Ashbrook and Powers analyze it according to "la solfa forma": 46.

Example 20.5 (continued)

The central axis of the structure is not only clear in this scheme, but is also perceptible to the listener. Yet the form is permeated by a kaleidoscopic play of reminiscences, from the executioner's assistants' "Unghi,

46. Ashbrook and Powers, Turandot, 186, 200. Although on the whole agreeing with their analysis, I would add some internal sections to indicate more clearly how the outline and thematic functions are significantly broadened. The suggested cuts in the score should be borne in mind: A-B (15 mm.) from 5 after (21) to 27 before (25) E-G (12 mm.) from 4 before (21) to 7 after (21)

azota," when the ministers recall the previous visitors' sad ends (II, 43), to the self-quotation of the preceding "schéma" ("Turandot, come tutti quel circolati, "Turandot, like all simpletons," I, 49), when they calculate the number of victims according to the Chinese calendar (II, 43), while a completely new theme (g before (21) see Ex. 10.1c) underlines their wish that this time the princess will lose the contest. 44 These passages are further proof of how the form is rooted in the connective musical tissue, as in Gianni Schicchi, thus acquiring infinite complexions. The vocal writing is varied, and achieves a delicate balance in melodic moments, from the "sala nell'Elisma" ("house in Honan") to the "giardino presso l'Hisma" ("garden near Illy"); the two tenors echo the barton in a brief chorus balanced between sincerity and irony revealed by the harp's sighing glissandi. "Addio stirpe divina" ("Farewell, divine race"); 2 after (42) ends in recitativo, and the three voices blend in a rapid chatter (g after (21)) before singing the final section, where the two tenors hum an accompaniment to the baritone: then the masks are rapidly absorbed into court officials and, at the sound of the distant onstage march, resign themselves "goderii l'e Bene noble supplizio" ("to enjoy the unpunished torture"). In Act III, involved in Turandot's threats of death, they invoke the people first against the unknown prince, and then against Lih.

The fusion of the three masks with the basic events in the drama—one of Puccini's principal objectives—is thus realized. They play an active part in the drama, and are more intense; moments abandon their cynical, marionette-like behavior (the only role given them by both Gozzi and Rusconi) to reveal sincere feelings. On the other hand, they are just as quick to transform themselves into hysterical tyrants, only to repent when confronted with the corpse of the sacrificial victim; their final music is a lament for Liù's death (4 after (42) on a phrase of the aria "Tu, chi sei sei cinta," absorbed once again into the impersonal mechanism of a collective rite.

The Heroic: 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

46. In the finale this theme will accompany Turamir's vow to embrace the prince at dawn in his new son (II, 2 after (21).

47. Rodolfo Celletti, " Vallese: from 'Verdi' to 'Puccini': la formazione," FP, 30.
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) necessitates 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") on the theme that characterizes the crowd's pity for the condemned young man ([2]), thus emphasizing the perversity of a love born from seeing a woman condemn a man to death. After the court revue has left, Calaf falls into a feverish state of love, and is unquestionably the most prominent character in the first finale (except of course 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 on different pitches, finishing on high A, before the final striking of the gong. [4]

In the scene of Calaf's invocation of the challenge, he himself becomes part of the ritual environment that dominates Act II. The real action then begins with the opposition of Calaf and Turandot in the cola 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 ideality of the heroine is the first premonition of their eventual union. Faced with her bewilderment in the face of defeat, Calaf offers an escape route: to guess his name. The difficult trial overcome by the unknown prince is recalled by the three chords that characterize the scene (see below, Ex. 16.15), 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. 16.6a).

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 resoluteness of Calaf's love.

The famous solo "Nessun dorma!" as 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. 16.6b).

48. When planning the structure of the finale, Puccini suggested that he would "finish after Calaf's duet (like the trio from Fidelio) with a strike on the gong" (6 December 1921 Adami, 179). The heroic role played by the prince here may be compared with Wagner's ascendant cry at the end of Gurnemanz: "Augen pura, seba radiana, / Porten mos lene ai tem des ciem!" ("Pure and radiant angels, / Carry my soul to the bosom of heaven!").
restricted dimensions, she is, to all intents and purposes, 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 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 a eighth note and two sixteenth notes (Ex. 10.7b: A), which appears in the first phrase within a descending fourth:

Example 10.7

a. *Turandot*, III, 1

b. *Turandot*, III, 1

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 onto herself the anger 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. 49 There is also a brief descending phrase, with which Calaf vehemently threatens the torturers

49. "Signore ascolta" (III, 1) "Tanto amore segreto" (III, 2), and "Tu che di gel sei cinta" (III, 2), of vs. 44, and 57 measures respectively.

50. Ashbrook and Powers (*Turandot*, 35-37) analyze this scene according to the "adagio format".

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**CHAPTER TEN**

(Turandot, III, 6 before **H**)

Example 10.8

a. *Turandot*, III, 1 before **H**

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Notwithstanding 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 che di gel sei cinta." He prepared this moment with utmost care, and at the climax of the drama he reused all the elements of which he had constructed Liù's character, as if ritualizing 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 themody, based for almost seven measures on the interval of a fourth and on rhythmic cell A in various forms, brought together in the ostinato accompaniment:

1. Tempo di mezzo (Ex. 23) "Tu che di gel sei cinta"
2. "Tu che di gel sei cinta" (Ex. 23)"Amor non è morto"
3. Tempo di mezzo (Ex. 23) "Tu che di gel sei cinta"
4. Liù's suicide and funeral motive (Ex. 23) "Tu che di gel sei cinta"
In this way, Puccini achieved a powerful formal cohesion, which, even though the opera remained incomplete, strongly influences the development of the action, and the music makes the following scene seem more natural. Undoubtedly, the considerable weight that now accrues to Liù’s suicide would have been exploited by Puccini, who had carefully planned his finale. A delicate orchestral veil is sketched through the use of extreme registers (in the piccato, B♭ in the double bass) as the funeral procession exits.

Turandot: The Tritone and the Riddle Scene

As was his usual habit, from La Bohème to Tosca and through Il tabarro, Puccini presented the most significant theme of the opera in the first measures (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), is linked to the image of Turandot as cruel executioner of her suitors, and draws the spectator into an atmosphere of tension:

The theme looms large during the Mandarin’s reading of the edict, stated insistently over the “hiss” chords. The music conceals the dramatic situation through the sinister character of the theme, produced by the augmented fourth between the first (A) and the second cell (B). Puccini often made use of the tritone, the most extreme example being in Tosca; but 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 whole system.

Like Liù’s perfect fourth, the tritone is present at every level, saturating the musical texture with the important presence-abscence 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 TristanCadence (2 before Ex. C–G) 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, she is echoed by the
Mel-Li-Hia (F)—the melody that represents Turandot's naive, uncontaminated
beauty. We then immediately hear from offstage the voice of the
most recent condemned man, the prince of Persia, answered in contrast by
the theme that represents Turandot's cruelty. The broad downward
motion from the high register is almost a macabre imitation of the head falling
from the block (X).

The tritone appears in one of the more "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 an anticipation of the double role it will assume in the riddle scene
(Ex. 10.12).51

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, G), while in the treble there is a ninth chord on the submediant 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 "crudele" (I, 5 after 5); the tritone appears between F and B♭, 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 "In questa Reggia" ("In this royal palace"). When Turandot, recounting the fate of her ancestor Lo-ung, sings the word "uomo" ("man"), she turns directly to Calaf; and at that moment the previous accompaniment of parallel sevenths is reduced to dyads of diminished fifths (Ex. 10.13). Immediately afterward, a wonderful violin melody initiates 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 sensual side: the juxtaposition almost seems to reflect the Freudian identity between negation and affirmation.

The riddle scene is the apex of this "strategy of terror," set in motion by Puccini to sculpt the negative image of the neuropic 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 E-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 horn. This extreme stasis, 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 offstage trumpet blasts at the beginning of the contest. 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: three chords in the theme, three riddles...
Example 10.15. Turandot, II, 3 before [I].

(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 cello 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 sponged expectation of his reply to the second riddle. Their phrases are accompanied by the repetition of the opera's first theme, the theme establishing Turandot's law, where the tritone recurs in the form that underscores the entire scene (Bb–A–E):

Example 10.16. Turandot, II, [E].

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 Turandoc, though still denying herself love, revealed her passionate side in her grand aria, a potential humanity that is confirmed by the melody of Mè-Lù-Hùa sung a 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.

Example 20.17: Turandot, II, 4 before c2

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 unfolds in company with Mi-La-Hi-Had, a further sign of what will shortly happen in the drama.

DEATH OR INTERRUPTED FUTURE?
Only ten months have elapsed since the unhappy passing of Giacomo Puccini, struggling against fate to complete his Turandot. As there was then no new figure 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 audiences by the ears.

Grottesque it would sound to speak of the composer of Bolshoi, "Butterfly" and "Tosca" 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.57

57. The sixty variants of high C for the tenor, although making sense in that it enumerated the thematic aspect of the conflict, is less profitable than the ending shown in the example, which brings the theme to a close. After having orchestrated most of the work, Puccini became aware of how difficult the melodic line was: "But who will sing this opera? It needs an exceptional woman and a solid tenor. Enough, we'll see, singers can be born. Stars have been born with new operas in the past. and it will happen again." (Carlo Chiarini, 1 February 1924, Geco, nos. 890, 547-54). The answers to the riddles in the opera are "Hope," "Blood," and "Turandot" respectively; in the source they are "Lua," "Eua," and "Ponghorse" (Turandot /呵护群星). 2.42f.

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 Marco Carner posed at the end of his critical biography: are these scenes by Puccini or not?

This final riddle may now be solved, thanks to Jürgen Mascheder'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 so long as his constantly declining physical condition permitted. In July 1924, Carlo Chiarini and Renzo Valerangeli, directors of Casa Ricordi, entrusted the task of completing Turandot to the Neapolitan composer Franco Alfano. Arrivo Toscanini, perhaps influenced by the recent success in Bologna of Alfano's exotic opera La leggenda di Sabina (1924), was crucially influential in the decision. Alfano, then director 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 publishers expunged from the first edition of the vocal score the measures that were unrelated to the sketches.58 This was more than a quarter of the total 777 measures.

The numerous imbalances one finds in the finale derive from these errors, 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 (1925), and then staged in New York (1926), Rome and Bonn (1928), Rotterdam (1929), Saanenbrücken (1931), Salzburg (1934) and most recently in Basel and Stuttgart (1957). The real problem posed by the ending, however, has not yet been resolved: the original completion is more coherent, but Alfano's creative imagination was very different from Puccini's. Moreover, it poses extreme difficulty for the two singers; who are required to sustain extremely high tessituras, sometimes against the weight of the entire vaster orchestra. The current version, with all its imbalances, at least has the merit of brevity.

55. See Jürgen Mascheder, "Studien zum Fragmentenmaterial von Giacomo Puccinis Turandot," Studien musikwissenschaftliche 24 (1984): 197-239. Mascheder published seven tables with reproductions of numerous sheets of the sketches, numbered from 1 to 35 with indications of text and text and words: 37, 37, 37, 33, 33, 33, 35, 38, 38, 35, 39-40. Italian transcriptions (studs conclusers delle Turandot di Giacomo Puccini), QP 2 (1935), 79-86. Subsequent references are to this version. The topic had previously been addressed in 1925 in two articles by "Giuliano Celli ("Sequentia in melodia" and "Calendario musical", of which a updated version is now available with annotations added in 1974 (Giuliano Celli, A Giuliano per Turandot, Giuseppe Celli, who was born before Turandot."

56. The first version of Alfano's final version is the first vocal score published by Ricordi (Milan, 1915, P.L. 115477), readily available in numerous libraries. Subsequent editions like those offered by copyright, have fewer pages (except in the first Georgio edition), and different plates numbers; see Hopkinson, A Bibliography, 25-35.)
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 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 11 to 6 before 8), and correspond to Alfano's second version as follows:69

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sketches</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-19</td>
<td>&quot;Principessa di morte...&quot; (Cal.), 17, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>&quot;Che mai od straniero&quot; (Tur.), 18, 18, 19, 19, 19, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-47</td>
<td>&quot;La tua anima è in altro&quot; (Cal.), 19, 19, 19, 19, 19, 19, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-65</td>
<td>&quot;No, mai nessun in 'amore!&quot; (Tur.), 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57-64</td>
<td>&quot;Sacrilegio&quot; (Tur.), 9 after 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-71</td>
<td>&quot;Oh! Mio fior matrimonio!&quot; (Cal.), 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-75</td>
<td>&quot;Come vincere?&quot; (Tur.), 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-100</td>
<td>&quot;Oh! Non essi incomincia&quot; (Cal.), 1 before 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-158</td>
<td>&quot;Del primo piacere&quot; (Tur.), 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159-184</td>
<td>&quot;Di questo male&quot; (Tur.), 5 after 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185-205</td>
<td>&quot;Il mio mistero? Non ne hai più&quot; (Cal.), 21, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177-209</td>
<td>&quot;So il tuo nome&quot; (Tur.), 2 after 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210-15</td>
<td>Interlude, 21 (chorus theme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216-50</td>
<td>Interlude and chorus, 7 after 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-57</td>
<td>&quot;Amori!&quot; (chorus), 3 after 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258-68</td>
<td>&quot;Luca del mondo è amore&quot; (chorus), 2 after 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 deriving from the other acts.69

The sketches are drawn on three staves in a torqued hand, and are difficult to decipher. There are some excellent melodic ideas, like that of "Oh! Mio fior matrimonio," as the unknown prince turns to Turandot after the first kiss; the music lends sensuality and grandness to the gesture that functions as the premise for Turandot's revealing.

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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69. This table is based on appendice II, "Tabulazione degli appoggi di Puccini," compiled by Masetti in "Studi sul crittografico di Toscanini," 140, with some additions. The first column shows measure numbers, the second the first phrase of text followed by the repeated number, the third the reference to the twenty-three sheets of sketch material used by Alfano. 57. Specifically, from the "middle" theme (mm. 17-20), the Act II theme (mm. 21-24), the "principessa" theme (mm. 15-20), the "nomi" theme (mm. 15-20).
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 anachronistic display of Wagnerianism: the entire brass section sounds out a fanfare, while the highest register is filled out with violin, clarinet, and piccolo trills. The orchestra abruptly introduces the Act II tableau, repeating at full volume the music of the chorus "Ai tuoi piedi ci prostram," but with a tardiness impossibly distant from the compact and highly colored timbres used by Puccini. The sketches, unfortunately, merely show an intention to reuse the modality to which the prince had posited his riddle (II, 39, see Ex. 10.6b) at the moment the princess sent him there 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! Véla! Eternità!"); "O san! Life Eternity!" (II, 39) in D major, he mobilized a highly conventional harmonic arsenal (ninth, sevenths, augmented chords, continual enharmonic changes), superimposing on the dominant pedal a progression based on the melody of Turandot's first aria, 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 (25 September 1920, Adami nos. 182, 169). But he began to orchestrate long before he had finished composing, and this was not his usual habit (Verdi 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 11 March 1922, when he was writing the ministers' trio in Act II (Gatti, no. 830, 513),
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" (21 December 1923; Adami, no. 221, 188). He finished the second act in February 1914, and on the following 17 March informed Serafini 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 counters, for example, a certain persuasiveness so that proposed by Claudio Serafini, who began 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 Puccianism, to restyle himself. He preferred to die, to abdicate. Thus 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. 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 reprise of the Mei Li-Huai and the possible connections between the first and second acts (see Ex. 10.18)—we can guess that he would have invented derivations and references to show how the childish, cruel princess was already potentially the new woman everyone waited.

Liù'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 1921 he had composed some "music of a certain character" ("Coarse-sounding music"), but put the idea aside, expecting to use it later.65 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 constituted a point of transition from the old to a new poetic, no one better than the composer himself would have been able to find suitable verses for the passage. Ashbrook and Powers have compared the beginning of the true finale (the theme that recurs in the orchestra as the unknown prince declares "Princess of eternal love") with the melody of Liù's aria (4 after 38), demonstrating convincingly that the new motive is nothing but a variant of the preceding one.66

Let us turn for a moment to the Mei Li-Huai, the melody that represents the innocent side of Turandot, paying particular attention to the beginning (Ex. 10.23). This is characterized by a daesyle figure that, given the number of occurrences of the theme—the last of which precedes the beginning of Liù's torture (see Ex. 10.8): —was already imprinted 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. 10.7), is prominent, along with the interval of a perfect fourth (see Ex. 10.9). Here is a first, strong point of contact between the "little woman" and the Princess destined to "shave", a musical contact that thanks to Liù'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 music of Liù's final aria from the fifth settenaria, we can see that three melodic shapes are derived from it, each associated with a different character in the opera:

63. Serafini, Puccini, 29.
64. Commenting on the first sketch of "Tu, che il gel osè omero," Celli mentioned: "Gli abbracci," 64) that the aria was composed just before Puccini sent the verses of it to Adami (November 1922). Box a letter of 30 March 1921 refers to this sketch (Adami, no. 168, 175).
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 "omissive" narrator. This time, however, the narrator wanted to say something above all to himself. I do not in any sense believe that Turandot was conceived as an epitaph to place on the tomb of his beloved Nicostratra. Rather it would appear that Puccini was attempting something titanic, projecting himself toward a future that was and had always been his goal. He did not complete his final masterpiece, but had he lived, he would have strived to eliminate every incongruity, as he had done many times in the past. A splendid fragment remains, unusually substantial, and produced by an artist in full intellectual and creative control; he completed something in parts tormented, in parts cryptic, but of infinite potential.

Puccini died without heirs. Liù's death scene, leaving aside its dramatic biographical circumstances, marked the end of a certain way of composing opera in Italy; this type of opera was dying, attacked on all sides by other types of theater that competed for the same audience. Soon it would be affected by debts that would make it necessary to reconsider the entire system of opera production. In 1911 La Scala had begun its transformation into an "Ente autonomo" (State-subsidized corporation); other leading Italian theaters would gradually follow its example. Puccini had often admired the merits of this new system in many European opera houses, particularly those in German-speaking regions; it would have guaranteed him a future less dependent on the need to fill the auditorium at all costs. It is regrettable that he was not able to experience this new phase, that it is impossible to know where his desire for renewal would have taken him, which techniques he would have adopted, whether his example would have lessened the distance between experimentation and communication with the public.

And such regret is only sharpened by analysis of the Turandot fragment, which induces me to affirm that Puccini left no small legacy to those Italian composers emerging from the dark years of the dictatorship, experimenting with new ideas as radical as they were necessary; he brought Italian opera — in the face of contemporary alienation, postwar crisis, and a newly emerging patriotic rhetoric — closer to the greatest contemporary music of Europe.

Example 10.19 (continued)

(B) Turandot (II, 6 after 35)

(C) Calaf (I, 4 after 35)

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 Pong have a cause-and-effect relationship. Liù is enduring the torment threatened by Turandot, and wearily closes her eyes (Ex. 10.19, A). The passage in which the princes explains the reason for her tortures 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 contest is thus announced: the love offered by Calaf, a Tartar prince like the Tartar who murdered Lo-u-Ling, will redeem an ancient wrong (Ex. 10.19, B). The tenor'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. 10.19, C); this too is love, but it belongs to a time long ago, older than the emotion that drove Turandot into Calaf's arms, erasing the memory of the "notte atroce" ("terrible night") when the "urlo accese" ("irresistible voice") of her ancestor was silenced: Liù's feelings were ones that Puccini had experienced in the now-distant past; the soprano's death forms part of an extremely complex rite, constructed around his last music, which testifies to his arduous and conscientious commitment to leave the past behind him.

66. "Fu quando il Re dei Tartari in serata fuostantemente digiungia" ("It was when the King of the Tartars displayed his seven harem") does the people comment on Turandot's narrative in Act Il (5 before 35).
CATALOG OF WORKS

OPERAS

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 La rondine 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 Willi; 1852).
   Premiere: Milan, Teatro Dal Verme, 31 May 1884.

   (b) Le Villi, opera-ballo in two acts
   Premiere: Turin, Teatro Regio, 26 December 1884.
   Second version, altered and revised during subsequent performances; VS © 1944, 41617.
   List of characters: Guglielmo Wulff (Bar), Anna, his daughter (S), Roberto (T), villagers, willis, spirits. The Black Forest.
   Orchestral Score (for hire): Milan, Ricordi, © 1944 (pl. no. 116797).
   Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 CL, 2 Bb, DBn, 4 Fh, 2 Tpt, Piston, Ct, 3 Tbn, Cinballoso (BTbn), Timp, Trg, BDt, Cymb, PT, CT, Harp, Strings.

2. (a) Edgar, dramma tragic in four acts
   Libretto by Ferdinando Fontana, after Alfred de Musset (La Coupe et les Etoiles, 1833).
   Premiere: Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 21 April 1889.
   The prelude published by Elkus & Vogel in 1878 correctly attributed to the Madrid revival in 1863, belongs to this version, VS © 1890, 41776, which corresponds to the version performed at Lucerne on 3 September 1890.
(b) Edgar, dramma lirico in three acts
Premiere: Ferrara, Teatro Comunale, 28 January 1892.
Second version, with cuts, corrections, and large additions; VS © 1892, 53785.

(c) Edgar, dramma lirico in three acts
Premiere: Buenos Aires, Teatro de la Opera, 8 July 1905.

List of characters: Edgar (T), Gustave (B), father of Frank (Bar) and Fidelia (S), Tigrana (Me), villagers, guests, courtiers, soldiers, monks, crowd, children, pages. Flauti. 1892.

Orchestral Score (for hire): Milan, Ricordi, © 1905 (pl. no. 126765).
Instrumentation: Ptc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, 2 Cl, BcI, 2 Bn, DBn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BTbn, Timp, Trg, T-T, BDr, Cymb, Car, Camp, Harp, Organ, Strings; on stage: 2 Pft, 4 Dr.

3. Manon Lescaut, dramma lirico in four acts
Anonymous libretto, worked on by (in chronological order) Marco Praga, Domenico Oliva, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Luigi Illica, Giuseppe Giacosa, Giacomo Puccini, and Giulio Ricordi, after François-Napoléon Prévost (Histoire de Chrétiens Deux Grecques et de Manon Lescaut, 1773).

Premiere: Turin, Teatro Regio, 1 February 1893.
The original Act 1 finale was altered for the revival at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples on 11 January 1894; other revisions were made to the second and fourth acts during the following years; VS © 1893, 91567 (repr. 1913).

List of characters: Manon Lescaut (S), Lescaut, sergeant of the King's Guard (Bar), Chevalier l'Étame Des Grecques, a student (T), Geronte di Revol, Intendant General (B), Edmondo, a student (T), the Innkeeper (B), the Dancing Master (T), a Singer (Me), Sergeant of the Royal Archers (B), a Lamplighter (T), a Naval Captain (B), a Barber (maître), girls, townswomen, students, musicians, old gentlemen and abbots, courtiers, archers, naval officers, sailors. Second half of the eighteenth century.

Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1915; P.R. 113 (repr. 1920).
Instrumentation: Ptc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BcI, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BTbn, Timp, Trg, T-T, BDr, Cymb, Car, Camp, Harp, Strings; offstage: Fl, Cr, Camp, Tamb, Strng bell.

4. La Bohème, scene lirico in four “quadri”
Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after Henri Murger (Scènes de Bohême, 1845–48; La Vie de Bohème, 1849).
Premiere: Turin, Teatro Regio, 2 February 1896.

Substantial revisions to Act II, with the addition of a scene and the reworking of the finale; VS © 1896, new ed. © 1898, 90000.

5. Tosca, melodramma in three acts
Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after Victorien Sardou (Tosca, 1887).

Slight cuts and revisions in the second and third acts; VS © 1899, 103950.

List of characters: Floria Tosca, a celebrated singer (S), Mario Cavaradossi, a painter (T), Baron Scarpia, Chief of Police (Bar), Cesare Angelotti (B), the Sacristan (Bar), Spoletta, a police agent (T), Sciaramone, a gardener (Bar), a Jailer (B), a Shepherd Boy (boy soprano), a Cardinal, a Judge, Roberti (an executioner), a chorister, an officer, a sergeant (soldier), soldiers, police agents, noblemen and women, townswomen, artisans. Rome—June 1800.

Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1900; P.R. 111 (repr. 1920).
Instrumentation: 3 Fl (2 also Picc), 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BcI, 2 Bn, DBn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BTbn, Timp, Trg, T-T, BDr, Cymb, Car, Camp, Harp, Strings; on stage: Fl, Via, Harp, 4 Hn, 3 Tbn, Camp, Organ, 2 Dr, Bfl, Cb, Bn.

6. a) 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 Pietro Lorenzetti (Maddama Chikuzenbune, 1887).
Premiere: Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 17 February 1904.

Revised: Venice, Teatro La Fenice, 14 March 1901; VS © 1904, 110000.

(b) Madame Butterfly, Japanese tragedy in two acts
Premiere: Brescia, Teatro Grande, 28 May 1904.
Division of the second act into two parts, cuts and insertions, changes in melodic lines; VS © 1904, 110000.

(c) Madame Butterfly, Japanese tragedy in two acts
Further cuts; VS © 1906, 110000.
(b) Madame Butterfly, Japanese tragedy in two acts.
Premiere: New York, Metropolitan Theatre, 26 February 1907; VS © 1907, P.I.
in two acts, the second divided into two parts.

List of characters: Madame Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) (S), Suzuki, Cio-Cio-San’s servant (Mz), Kate Pinkerton (Mz), F. B. Pinkerton, Lieutenant in the United States Navy (T), Sharpless, United States Consul in Nagasaki (Bar), Goro, a marriage broker (T), Prince Yamadori (T), Cio-Cio-San’s uncle, the bome (B), the Imperial Commissioner (B), the official registrar (B), Cio-Cio-San’s mother (Mz), her aunt (S), her cousin (S), Doore (silent), relatives of Cio-Cio-San, servants. Present-day Nagasaki.
Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1907, P.R. 112 (repr. 1979).
Instrumentation: 3 Fl (one also Picc), 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tps, 3 Tbn, BTbn, Timp, Trg, Tbnh, T-T, IDr, Cymb, Glock, Si, Reg, Harp, Strings; on stage: Camp, Tub bell, Via d’amore, Bird whistles, T-T, low T-T.

7. La fanciulla del West, opera in three acts
Revision of the instrumentation, 16 measures added to the second-act duet in 1921; VS © 1921; new ed. © 1911; 113300.

List of characters: Minnie (S), Jack Rance, sheriff (Bar), Dick Johnson (Rambaldo) (T), Nick, hangman at the Polka (T), Ashby, Wells-Fargo agent (B), Sonora (Bar), Trim (T), Sid (Bar), Bello (Bar), Harry (T), Joe, Happy (Bar), Larkin, John, Billy Jackrabbit, a Red Indian (B), Wowkle, his squaw (Mz), Jake Wallace, a traveling camp miner (B), Jose Castro, one of Rambaldo’s bond (T), the Pony Express Rider (T), man of the camp. At the foot of the Cloudy Mountains in California—a miners’ camp during the Gold Rush, 1849-1850.
Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1910; new ed. © 1911, P.R. 116 (repr. 1986).
Instrumentation: Picc, 3 Fl, 3 Ob, Eng hn, 3 Cl, BCl, 3 Bn, DBn, 4 Hn, 3 Tps, 3 Tbn, BTbn, Timp, Trg, Tbnh, T-T, IDr, Cymb, Cel, Glock, a Harp, Strings; offstage: Tub bell, Wind machine, Harp; on stage: Fonica.

8. (s) La rondine, comic opera in three acts
Libretto by Giuseppe Adami, from an outline by Alfred Maria Willner and Heinrich Reichert.
Premiere: Monte Carlo, Théâtre du Opéra, 27 March 1917.
First version: VS, publ. by Sonzogno, © 1917, M 1921; St, publ. in 1921 with front matter in German (© 1917; new ed. © 1929, FU 6953, E & B 231) and in 1966 in an Italian-English version, now current (VS © 1917; new ed. © 1945, Sonzogno 2022, UF 6953, E & B 231).

List of characters: Magda (S), Lisette (S), Ruggero (T), Prunier (T), Rambaldo (Bar), Péchand (Bar), Gobineau (T), Cachou (Bar), Yvette (S), Bianca (S), Sony (Mz), a Butler (B), Rabonnier (Bar), a Singer (S), a griette (S), a young woman (S), other young women (S), Adalfo (T), members of the bourgeoisie, ladies, painters, elegantly-dressed ladies and gentlemen, griettes, flower girls, dancing girls, waiters. Paris during the Second Empire.
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 1 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tps, 3 Tbn, BT, Timp, Trg, T-T, IDr, Cymb, BHar, Camp, Cel, Harp, Strings; on stage: Camp, Fono, Picc.

(b) La rondine, comic opera in three acts
Premiere: Palermo, Teatro Massimo, 10 April 1926.
Second version: Prunier becomes a baritone; changes in the plot; an aria for Ruggero added to Act I; passages in Act III revised. Premiere in German with further revisions at Vienna, Volksoper, 7 October 1926; VS publ. by ETH Live Music & Berté, © 1920, E & B 231.

(c) La rondine, comic opera in three acts
Third version: substantial alterations to the structure of Act III; revisions to the music; Prunier in the tenor range; VS publ. by Sonzogno in 1921, © 1917, M 2022; S. Missing part of Act III orchestrated by Lorenzo Ferrero.

9. Il trittico
Il tabarro, opera in one act
Libretto by Giuseppe Adami, with passages by Ferdinando Martinoli and Dario Niccodemi, after Diderot Gold (La Hangarde, 1910). Michel’s original monologue replaced in 1922 by the current one; VS © 1918, 117404.
List of characters: Michele, a large owner, aged 50 (Bar), Luigi, stevedore, aged 20 (T), "Tina," stevedore, aged 35 (T), "Talpa," stevedore, aged 55 (B), Giorgietta, Michele’s wife, aged 25 (S), Francesca, Talpa’s wife, aged 40 (Mz), a song seller (T), two lovers (S, T), stevedores, mandolin, an organ-grinder.
Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1917, 1918, P.R. 118 (repr. 1980).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BThn, Timp, Trg, Tamb, BDt, Cymb, Glock, Cbl, Harp, Strings; on stage: Cc, Car horn, Harp, Siren, low Camp.

Suor Angelica, opera in one act
Libretto by Giacomo Puccini.

List of characters: Sister Angelica (S), Zita Principessa (A), the Monseigneur (Mns), the Mistress of Novices (Mas), Sister Ganovella (S), Sister Ommia (S), Sister Dolcina (S), the Nursing Sister (Mns), the Alms Sisters (S), the Novices (S), the Lay Sisters (S, Mas).

A convent, towards the end of the sixteenth century.

Orchestral Score: Milan, Ricordi, © 1918, P.R. 115 (repr. 1990).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BThn, Timp, Trg, Tamb, BDt, Cymb, Glock, Cbl, Harp, Strings; offstage: Picc, 2 Fso, Orgn, 3 Tpt, Camp, Cymb, Wood Blocks.

Gianni Schicchi, opera in one act
Libretto by Giacomo Puccini, after Commedie dell’Arte di Firenze Conventual del Secolo XV (1866).

Einleitung solo “Vivente morire… Firenze è con un altro giorno” raised by a semitone in 1879. VS © 1918, 12796.

List of characters: Gianni Schicchi, aged 50 (Bar), Lauretta, aged 11 (S), Zita, called “la vecchia,” Buoso’s cousin, aged 60 (A), Rinuccio, Zita’s nephew, aged 24 (T), Gheraldo, Buoso’s nephew, aged 40 (T), Nelli, his wife, aged 34 (S), Ghirardone, their son, aged 5 (A), Berto di Signa, Buoso’s brother-in-law, poor and badly dressed, of uncertain age (B), Simone, Buoso’s cousin, aged 70 (B), Marco, his son, aged 45 (Bar), Ciesca, Marco’s wife, aged 38 (Mas), relatives of Buoso donati, Marcele Spinettenlocco, a physician (B), Ser Amandio di Nicolao, a notary (B), Pinnolato, a cobbler (B), Gucioso, a dyer (B), Florence, 1299.

Orchestral Score, Milan, Ricordi, © 1918, P.R. 114 (repr. 1998).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BThn, Timp, Trg, Tamb, BDt, Cymb, Cbl, Harp, Strings; offstage: low Camp.

Tosca, dramma lirico in three acts
Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, after Carlo Gozzi (1787).

Premiere: Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 25 April 1871.

The opera was completed by the short and final acts written by Franco Alfano; VS © 1926; new ed. © 1977, 1981.

List of characters: the princess Turandot (S), the emperor Altoum (T), Timur, the exiled king of Tartary (B), the Unknown Prince (Calaf), son of Timur (T), Lie, a young slave girl (S), Ping, Grand Chancellor (Bar), Pang, Grand Vizier (T), Pong, Chief Cook (T), a Mandarin (Bar), the Prince of Persia (T), an executioner (mimes), Imperial Guards, the executioner’s men, children, priests, mandarins, dignitaries, wise men, Turandot’s handmaidens, soldiers, standard bearers, musicans, ghosts of the dead, the crowd. Peking, in the times of fairy tales.

Instrumentation: 3 Fl (one also Picc), 2 Ob, Eng hn, 2 Cl, BCl, 2 Bn, 3 Hn, 4 Hn, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BThn, Timp, Trg, Tamb, T-T, Chinese Gongs, BDt, Cymb, Glock, Xylo, Xylo, Tab bell, Cc, Harp, Orgn, Strings; on stage: 6 Sax (A), 6 Tpt, 3 Tbn, BThn, Wooden drum, low Gong (T-T).

SONGS AND OTHER VOCAL WORKS

1. “A te,” song for voice and piano (ca. 1875).
Kaye, 3-11.

2. Puzzati populi, four-voice motet for chorus and orchestra (1877).

Premiere: Lucca, 29 April 1877.
Orchestral Score (for hire): Milan, Ricordi, © 1992 (pl. no. 156013).

3. Cruda è la solitudine, chorus, and orchestra (1878).

Premiere: Lucca, 11 July 1878.

Inserted into the Messiah: MS L-LI (copy).

4. Vespro Regis, anthem for male choir and organ (1878).
Text by Venanzio Fortunatus.

5. Miserare, vi sono per armonia for soli, chorus and orchestra: 1878.

Premiere: Lucca, 11 July 1880.
Autograph: Lucca, Museo Casa Masci.

The music of the Kyrie was used in Edgar, the Agnus Dei in Messes Leoninae: VS © 1941 (Ricordi & Mills), 132127 (repr. 1984).

Orchestral Score (for hire): Milan, Ricordi, © 1975 (pl. no. 113131).
Instrumentation: Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, 2 Cl, 2 Bn, 2 Hn in B, 2 Tpt in E, 2 Tbn, Ophicleide, Tamb in A, Strings.

6. “Salve del cial Regina,” for soprano and harmonium (ca. 1884).
Used in Le Filho: Kaye, 30-33.
7. "Menta l'aviuso," recitative and arioso for tenor and piano (1881)
   Verses by Felice Romani.
   Used in *Mano Loano*; Kaye, 174-44.

8. "Ad una morta," song for baritone and piano
   Verses by Antonio Ghislanzoni.
   Used in *Le Fili*; fragments; Kaye, 218-22.

9. "Storiella d'amore," melody for soprano or tenor and piano (1883)
   Verses by Antonio Ghislanzoni.
   Used in *Edgar*; *La musica popolare* 2, no. 40 (1883); Kaye, 50-4.

10. "Sole ad amore," *mattinata* for soprano or tenor and piano (1888)
    Anonymous text, perhaps by Puccini himself.
    *Used in La Bohème*; *Il Paganinni* 2, nos. 23 (1889); Kaye, 38-39.

11. "Avanti Urania!," song for voice and piano (1896)
    Verses by Renato Fucini.
    One melodic idea used in *Madame Butterfly*; Florence and Rome: Gesenio
    Venturini, 1899; Kaye, 66-68.

12. "Tirso a Diana," for voice and piano (1897)
    Verses by Carlo Abenacar.
    *Sant'Urbano* (Illustrated New York edition), 1898; Kaye, 72-88.

13. "E l'uccellino," *kakabibi* for voice and piano (1899)
    Verses by Renato Fucini.
    Milan: Ricordi, 1900; Kaye, 82-84.

14. "Tierra e mar," song for voice and piano (1901)
    Verses by Enrico Panazoelli.
    *Novissima* 1901, annual arts and letters album, 1901; Kaye, 88-89 (from
    the autograph).

15. "Canzono d'anime," album leaf for voice and piano (1904)
    Verses by Luigi Illica.
    Written for the phonograph, recorded on a 38 by Gramophone &
    Typewriter Ltd. 53497; Kaye, 107-9.

16. Requiems for three-part choir, viola, harp, unison or organ (1905)
    Performed at Milan, 27 January 1905.
    Elkan & Vogel, 1906.

17. "Casa mia, casa mia," song for voice and piano (1908)
    On a traditional text.
    Kaye, 117.

18. "Sogno d'oro," *kakabibi* for voice and piano
    Verses by Carlo Maralli.
    *Used in Le vendite: Nata e il mondo* (Christmas and New Year's edition), 1913.

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    Verses by Giuseppe Adami.
    Used in the second version of *La roulotte: album illustrato per la C.R.I.*
    Milan: Ricordi, n.d. (1927-28); Kaye, 123-76.

20. "Inno a Roma," for voice and piano (1919)
    Text by Fausto Salvatorius.
    Performed at Rome, 5 June 1915, orchestrated for band by Vessella, and
    for orchestra by Fierdia; *Inno di Roma* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1913); Kaye, 136-41.

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**INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC AND EXERCISES**

1. Prelude a orchestra in E minor/major (1876).
    *First modern performance:* Lucca, 6 October 1909.
    *Autograph score:* Lucca, Museo Casa Natale, pp. 1-4, 7-17 (pp. 5-6 are
    missing); "Giacomo Puccini att 5 agosto 1876" written on the last page in
    Puccini's hand.
    *Instruments:* Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, 2 Cl in C, 2 Bn, 2 Hn in E, 2 Tr,
    3 Timb, Ophicleide, Timp in E-B, Strings.

2. *Adagio* in A major for piano (ca. 1881)
    *Used in Le Fili*; *MS: I-L."

3. Largo *Adagetto* in F major for orchestra (ca. 1881-83)
    *Used in* Edger; fragment (only the first part completely); *MS: I-L."

4. *Prelude a sinfonia* in A major for orchestra (1882)
    *Performed at Milan, 15 July 1882.
    *Used in Le Fili and in the first version of* Edger.
    *Instruments:* Picc, 2 Fl, 2 Ob (first also Eng ha), 2 Cl in A, 2 Bn,
    4 Hn in E, 3 Tpt, 3 Tbn, Ophicleide, Timp in A, BDR, Cymb, Harp,
    Strings.

5.7. Fugues for string quartet (ca. 1882)
    *Andante poco mosso* in C minor; *Andante soave* in A major,
    *Andante mosso* in G major.
    *MS: I-L (copied)."

8. *Scherzo* for String Quartet in D (1885)
    *Reduction by* Michele Puccini for piano, four hands (Giacomo Puccini / *Scherzo per archi* (all'arco tempo del Quartetto in Re) / *Reduzioni per piano e a 4 mani* / *Mi. Mauro Puccini* / *Laque Ombrino-Vincenzo 1923*; *MS: Museo Puccini*, Coll.)

9. *Capriccio sinfonico* in F major for orchestra (1888)
    *Performed at Milan, 14 July 1883.
    *Autograph:* Lucca, Museo Casa Natale, maggio portion and orchestral
    sketched; *I-L;* melodic ideas used in *Edger, La Bohème, Milan, F. Lucca, 1884 (for piano, four hands)."
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Orchestral Score (for hire): Milan, Ricordi, 1975 (pl. no. 133341).

Instrumentation: 2 Fl, 3 Ob (first also Eng ha), 2 Cl in Bb, 2 Bn, 4 Hn in D, 2 Tp, Cb, 3 Tb, Opdaticino, Tgl, Timp, BD, Cymb, Harp, Strings.

10. Three Minuets for string quartet (1884)
   Used in Mannes Lessons; Pugno, Milan, 1884 (repr. Ricordi, Milan, 1987).

11. Orientalini, elegy for string quartet (1860)
   Performed at the Conservatories of Milan and Brescia in
   February 1860.

12. Pianola tutor for piano (1899)
   Used in La Società drmo and orae. Genoa: Montorriano, September 1894.

13. Scena elettrica, march for piano (ca. 1890)
   Orchestrated for band, telegraph and voice. Como: Tipografia G. Cattalani, 1899.

14. Piece for piano (Calmo and molto lento, 1915)
   Turin: Associazione della stampa, November 1916.

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, I framenti pucciniani, 18-19. With the exception of no. 6, the numerous passages left incomplete by Puccini are missing from this catalog.

1. I figli d'Islanda bella, cantata (1877).
2. Dance Suite for piano in G (ca. 1880-81).*
   Allemanda, Corrente (fragments), Gavotta (used in Taras).

3. Four-voice fugue (ca. 1880-83).*
   Allegro moderato in G major; Largo in E minor.
   MS. I-11.


5. Scherzo in A minor for String Quartet (1881).*
   Rome, Bocaccini & Spada, 1882.

   Fragments I-11.

8. String Quartet in C (ca. 1886-87).*
   Rome, Bocaccini & Spada, 1883.

9. Salvevi, for voice and piano (1888).

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