

Joseph Herl notes that “of all Luther’s hymns, only one, *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her*, is known to have had a secular origin. He altered it from the popular song (not drinking song) *Ich kumm aus frembden landen her*. . . . At first the original tune was used, but Luther apparently had second thoughts about this, as he wrote a new tune for the 1545 [Babst] hymnal.”⁶ One of Oettinger’s achievements is to shed light on the use of secular music in the early decades of the German Reformation, music that is largely absent from Luther’s repertory of chorales.

This volume is well produced, with generous use of reproductions to bring the reader closer to some of the primary sources (broadsides and pamphlets) that Oettinger discusses. Errors are few and do not affect the substance of the author’s argument.⁷ By engaging with primary sources that previously have not received sustained musicological attention, Oettinger has provided musicologists and historians of the Reformation with a look at musical activity in sixteenth-century Germany that simply has not been known previously in any substantive way. Oettinger’s book is an important addition to musical studies of the German Reformation, and we are in her debt for an altogether admirable and most impressive study.⁸

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La traviata: Melodramma in Three Acts, by Giuseppe Verdi, libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, edited by Fabrizio Della Seta. The Works of Giuseppe Verdi, ser. 1, Operas 19. 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Milan: Ricordi, 1996. Introduction and score: lxxv, 525 pp., 5 plates; critical commentary: viii, 158 pp.

Casa Ricordi and the University of Chicago Press initiated the monumental endeavor of publishing the complete critical edition of Verdi’s operas in 1983, beginning with *Rigoletto*, edited by Martin Chusid. At the time such a project

6. *Ibid.*, 21.

7. For the record, Maria Laach is not the co-author with Robert Skeris of an article cited in footnotes 13 and 15 of the Introduction; rather, Maria Laach is the Benedictine abbey in Germany where Skeris worked. On page 172 Oettinger refers to “Church fathers Didache, Justin, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen”; in fact, Didache refers not to a person but to an anonymous early Christian writing sometimes translated as “Instructions of the Apostles.” Footnote 13 on page 175 refers to OCLC as “The Online Catalog of the Library of Congress,” but OCLC is the Online Computer Library Center, whose “WorldCat” is a union catalog listing holdings from thousands of libraries.

8. See also two subsequent studies by Oettinger: “Ludwig Senfl and the Judas Trope: Composition and Religious Toleration at the Bavarian Court,” *Early Music History* 20 (2001): 199–225; and “Thomas Murner, Michael Stifel, and Songs as Polemic in the Early Reformation,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 22 (2003): 45–100.

needed some justification, not only because the establishment of academic musicology had not yet completely abandoned the traditional preconceptions about nineteenth-century Italian opera (generally considered a lowbrow genre for its still unabated emotional grip on the general public), but also because of the widespread idea that there was no real need for a critical edition of a repertory that seemed to have reached us through an uninterrupted tradition. Indeed, the modes of dissemination and reception of these works were seemingly similar to the original ones, and the musical notation had changed only marginally, so that philologists did not believe it necessary to acquire any new and specific paleographic skill. These days it is generally recognized that critical editions have contributed substantially to our knowledge of nineteenth-century opera. Their contribution is twofold, informing both performance practice and critical understanding of the historical context. On the one hand, these editions made reliable texts available to performers and scholars alike, and in so doing stimulated more rigorous opera studies. On the other hand, the intellectual activity involved in the production of critical editions resulted in a positive chain reaction: the need for close examination of documentary evidence (historical, literary, iconographic, and musical) allowed a better understanding of the complex system of opera production—its creative processes of composition, conventions, and formal structures, as well as its informing aesthetic principles. Subsequently, the vast collective endeavor necessary for the production of critical editions of Verdi's, Rossini's, Bellini's, and Donizetti's operas nourished a renewed interest in this repertory on the part of the international community of scholars, so that many old biases against it have finally been eradicated.

The edition of Verdi's operas, which was begun in 1983, is still in progress; the volumes are appearing about every two years. Like the other volumes, the critical edition of *La traviata*, edited by Fabrizio Della Seta, is the product of a long and painstaking effort, as one can see from the quantity and density of documentary evidence taken into consideration, the careful historical contextualization, and the thoughtful critical interpretation of the sources, all of which make this edition worthy of our highest praise.

Among the other critical editions of Verdi's operas, *La traviata* presents a few particularities worth mentioning. First of all, the opera belongs to a crucial period of Verdi's creative life and in the history of Italian opera in general: a period in which significant changes occurred in the system of opera production and, most important, in the idea of making opera, which transformed the score created by the composer from an incomplete text, expressing authorial intentions only partially, into a much better defined text, on which the composer exerted greater control. In the case of *La traviata*, more than in the case of other operas, it is indeed easier to ascertain the composer's intention: Verdi worked on two different versions, but intended the second as the ultimate and definitive one, and did not replace any piece after completing the second

version. As is well known, he insisted that his operas be performed without additions, cuts, or even transpositions. Unlike many earlier operas either by Verdi or by other composers, *La traviata* reflects the principle, which was emerging during those years, of the untouchability of the text fixed by the composer.

A second peculiar aspect of this edition has to do with the extraordinary success of the opera. It is well known that the wider the dissemination of an opera and the longer its presence in the repertory, the more likely it is to be corrupted. It is true, as we have already stated, that in the case of *La traviata* Verdi left behind a reliable text strongly informed by his unequivocal authorial intention, but it is also true that after a century and a half of uninterrupted performing tradition, the text has been subjected to a great number of alterations resulting from changes of tastes, style, and vocal and instrumental performance practices.

Finally, the critical edition of *La traviata* differs from the preceding editions of Verdi's operas in that the editor was able to take into account Verdi's sketches and drafts preserved in Sant'Agata. The importance and interest of these preparatory documents, especially for the understanding of Verdi's creative process, are such that they have been published independently.¹

Like all the critical editions of Verdi's operas, the edition of *La traviata* consists of two separate volumes: the main volume with the score and a second volume with the critical commentary. The musical score is preceded by an introduction in three parts, in which Della Seta discusses the historical events related to the creation and performance of the opera, describes the most important sources used to prepare the edition, and finally addresses editing and performing issues. In this introduction one also finds facsimile reproductions of a few pages from Verdi's autograph; there are also two appendixes to the score. The volume is very large in size (which, to tell the truth, makes it a little cumbersome), the paper is of excellent quality, the binding is impeccable, the graphic resolution is extremely high, and the music score is carefully formatted and comfortable to read.

In the broad historical overview in the first part of the introduction, Della Seta provides a full account of the events related to the genesis and performance history of *La traviata*, starting with the earliest negotiations with the commissioning theater, and proceeding with the creation of the libretto and with the various phases of the composition, the premiere, and the later history of the opera.

The description of the sources that follows takes into account primarily the autograph score, preserved in the Ricordi archive in Milan. This autograph source is the version prepared for the Teatro San Benedetto and performed on 6 May 1854 (the version that Verdi considered definitive) rather than the orig-

1. Giuseppe Verdi, *La traviata: Schizzi e abbozzi autografi*, ed. Fabrizio Della Seta (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 2000).

inal version, which was premiered at the Teatro La Fenice on 6 March 1853. Like all Verdi's autographs, the manuscript of *La traviata* presents a degree of stratification as a result of the various phases of its composition. At the first stage (the so-called skeleton score), the composer completed only the vocal parts and the bass line, while jotting down occasional ideas for instrumental parts. Later he proceeded with the orchestration, writing the instrumental parts in the lines that he had purposely left blank. Subsequent revisions by the composer occurred during the rehearsals and, probably, even after the premiere. A further phase resulted from Verdi's own revisions made on his autograph for the 1853 productions. At the beginning of 1854 five original autograph pieces were sent to Verdi, who was in Paris at the time, so he could revise them. Sometimes Verdi ripped out a few pages, or even entire fascicles, and replaced them with new ones; more often however, he chose to make corrections directly on the existing version, superimposing the new version on the old one. Therefore, the extant autograph score reflects the version updated for the 1854 production, and if this were the only surviving manuscript source we would not be able to reconstruct the 1853 original version in its entirety. However, a manuscript copy of the complete score for that production still exists: as was customary, it was made by the copyists of the Teatro la Fenice during the days immediately before the premiere. This source, which has remained unchanged ever since, allows us to retrieve the sections that Verdi eliminated for the subsequent production, and it is the only source attesting to the original version of *La traviata* in its entirety. In the appendix, the critical edition presents the originals of the sections that Verdi modified or rewrote in 1854, so that the two versions can be compared, or, if desired, the original 1853 version could even be re-created on stage.

The first printed edition of the score, although it cannot be considered a reliable source on which to base the critical edition, is nonetheless of great relevance for the understanding of the performance tradition of *La traviata*. This is the first printed score published with vocal and instrumental parts by Ricordi immediately after the 1854 Venetian production, in order to limit as much as possible the dissemination of illegal copies. This printed edition, however, did not have Verdi's autograph as its immediate source, nor was it ever approved by the composer; nonetheless, for a long time this has been the universally accepted text of *La traviata*. Later Ricordi produced other printed editions, all based on this first one, correcting errors by conjecture and without consulting the autograph score, so that each new edition added mistakes and alterations to the older ones, according to the changes in the performance tradition.

The last part of the introduction deals mainly with issues of editorial decisions and performance practice. Here Della Seta not only illustrates the main problems of understanding Verdi's intentions (problems encountered by any other editor of Verdi's works); he also tackles issues of mid-nineteenth-century performance practice—from staging to vocal and instrumental performance

styles, to traditional cuts in the performance history, and to characteristics of period instruments—giving the modern interpreter some helpful advice.

Particularly challenging are the problems related to the nature of the orchestra and to specific original instruments. At the present time, because of the paucity of documentation and of studies on the characteristics of nineteenth-century Italian orchestras, many problems are still unresolved. The percussion instruments, in particular, present questions on both their construction and their original performing technique, and in a few cases these affect the critical edition directly. One example will suffice to make the point: we know that the timpani players in the Italian orchestra until the late nineteenth century used only two kettledrums, which were tuned respectively to the tonic and dominant. When a sudden modulation occurs without leaving enough time for re-tuning one or both instruments, Verdi does not hesitate to call for dissonant notes for the timpani, a problem which he could have easily avoided had he had access to three kettledrums. In this type of situation, Della Seta with good reason resists the temptation to adjust the original version, even if he is certainly aware that a modern timpanist would be able to “correct” the dissonances. This is what happens, for example, at mm. 179–81 of the *Introduzione*, at mm. 218–33 and 266–70 of Germont’s aria in the second act, and elsewhere. However, in a short passage of this same aria, at mm. 287–91, Verdi prescribes three notes for the timpani, here tuned in B flat: the tonic, the dominant, but also the subdominant, E flat. This is obviously the result of a momentary distraction on the part of the composer, and it is surprising that Della Seta here chooses to reproduce the slip in the critical edition without amending it and without providing an alternative solution that would be more compatible with mid-nineteenth-century performance practice.

The score volume ends with two appendixes. The first one is an edition of the first version of Violetta’s romanza “Addio del passato,” which was heavily revised during the preparation of the autograph score.² This aria had a particularly troubled genesis, as is apparent from the remarkable number of variants, which the composer kept erasing and rewriting. Della Seta retrieves the first versions and, in the critical commentary, offers a detailed reconstruction of all the variants between the first and the definitive versions. The second appendix presents the original versions of five pieces that Verdi modified for the 1854 productions. For the sections that are no longer extant, Della Seta’s main source is the manuscript copy of the score produced by the copyists working for the Teatro La Fenice.

The smaller separate volume with critical commentary presents a broader and more detailed description of the sources. Here the editor acknowledges and illustrates the differing readings in various alternative sources; in the case

2. The most important of Verdi’s alterations in his own autograph score has been analyzed by James A. Hepokoski in “Genre and Content in Mid-Century Verdi: ‘Addio, del passato’ (*La traviata*, Act III),” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1 (1989): 249–76.

of problematic situations, he justifies any addition or correction to the text, tracking down the different stages of composition and the composer's alterations of his own text. (On many occasions documenting the different stages of composition turns out to be helpful in establishing the definitive version.) The most important differences between the primary source and the critical edition are indicated in the score by means of footnotes that immediately call attention to the problem and direct the reader to the more detailed notes in the critical commentary.

The libretto deserves a separate discussion. In any critical edition, the text set by the composer, reworked and transcribed in the score below the notes, is generally considered to be a different entity from the text that the librettist wrote and published as a printed libretto. The latter, although it retains a certain poetic-dramatic autonomy, is intended to be set to music, and therefore its autonomy is restricted.³ This is why the critical edition of *La traviata*, like any other critical edition of Verdi's operas, establishes the version that was actually used and transcribed by the composer in the score, supplementing it, when necessary, with the punctuation from the printed libretto. Understandably, Della Seta does not establish a critical edition of the libretto and its genealogy, leaving this chore to the literary philologist. What is not understandable, however, is why at least the printed libretto of the premiere, which would certainly be useful to the reader, is not included in the critical edition of the opera. This shortcoming in the Verdi edition as a whole, which has not passed unnoticed,⁴ undercuts the edition of this opera as well, because it is undeniable that the libretto is in fact an organic text with its own laws and conventions (the organization of lines and stanzas, the graphic layout, etc.) suggesting operatic forms and structures. It is too bad, then, that the reader of the critical edition does not have access to this text, since the original libretti, which are not always readily available, are never faithfully reproduced in the most recent editions. In the specific case of *La traviata*, even a simple diplomatic edition would be extremely helpful, since, as Della Seta points out in the introduction to the score, the words in the text published as a printed libretto and those appearing in Verdi's score are not always the same, and in some cases there are major differences between the two versions of the same text.

The principles regulating the complete edition of Verdi's works—outlined in the preface of each volume—were established in the context of the first launching of the project, more than twenty years ago.⁵ Today these principles

3. See Stefano Castelvocchi, "Sullo statuto del testo verbale nell'opera," in *Gioachino Rossini 1792–1992: Il testo e la scena*, ed. Paolo Fabbri, 309–14 (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1994).

4. Lorenzo Bianconi, "Hors-d'œuvre alla filologia dei libretti," *Il saggiautore musicale* 2, no. 1 (1995): 143–54.

5. A report of the roundtable discussion at the outset of the project can be found in the proceedings of the conference held on the occasion of the first performance of *Rigoletto* based on the critical edition of the opera edited by Martin Chusid: *Nuove prospettive della ricerca verdiana*:

and premises need to be reconsidered. I will take into consideration these general norms more than the specific decisions made by the editor of *Traviata* for two reasons: first of all, because this will allow us to think about what a critical edition of an operatic text involves in general; second, because an accurate assessment of all the specific editorial decisions taken in this edition (on which the editor always has a certain margin of autonomy) would require as a prerequisite the same painstaking study of the sources examined by the editor.

The general editorial philosophy informing the Verdi edition has two main purposes: faithfulness to the original sources, and functionality (the realization of an easy-to-use performing edition). In other words, the accomplishment of a philologically correct text has both a scholarly and a practical function. What does it imply to be faithful to the original sources? Certainly not only to conform to Verdi's autograph, emending only blatant slips and mistakes. The autograph of a nineteenth-century operatic score, in fact, was never a text ready to be printed. Rather, it served the immediate and practical purpose of providing the music for the first few performances. It is generally a hasty text, full of abbreviations and internal references, stenographic annotations, and blanks to be filled in. Its immediate reader, in other words, is the professional copyist or the editor of a publishable printed edition. The notation of the autograph is never precise; in fact it is often incomplete and ambiguous: indications of dynamics, articulation, and expression are vague; contradictory indications may appear in the instrumental parts; and repeated or analogous passages may be notated inconsistently. In short, the composer relies on the ability of others (the copyist, the interpreter, the editor) to fill in the blanks, so that the intention that he has only partially indicated in the autograph can be fully realized. The successful completion of this kind of operatic text depends on a system of widely shared knowledge, on procedures and aesthetic tenets shared by both composers and interpreters at a given time in history. For the modern editor of a critical edition it is not enough to establish the correct version of the text according to the performing tradition; the editor also needs to restore the original score, starting from the intentions clearly expressed by the composer and proceeding with all the necessary implementations, interpretations, and even creative additions when critically motivated and supported by secondary sources.

What does the practical utilization of a critical edition entail? Most simply, a critical edition that also has a practical function requires the editor to take into account the needs of modern performance practice. In most of the cases this task involves purely mechanical adjustments, which generally do not result in any substantial change in the text: the vocal parts are notated in modern clefs,

Atti del convegno internazionale in occasione della prima del Rigoletto in edizione critica (Vienna, 12/13 marzo 1983), ed. Marcello Pavarani and Marisa Di Gregorio Casati (Parma and Milan: Istituto di Studi Verdiani and Ricordi, 1987); see especially the essays by Philip Gossett, David Lawton, and Martin Chusid.

alterations and repetition marks are updated to current notational procedures, abbreviations no longer in use are written out in full, the vocal and instrumental parts are arrayed on the page as in a modern score.⁶ In other instances, additional marks complement the original text, or provide direction to the modern performer, who may find many passages ambiguous or incomplete. In Verdi's time, in fact, as in any other epoch of music history, many conventions and practices were so ingrained in the performing tradition that there was no need to write them down. There is also a need to interpret equivocal marks, resolve inconsistencies, and bring the musical text into conformity with the text, as in the case of indications that clearly apply to all the parts even when they appear only in one or a few.

A critical edition conceived for the scholar and the performer alike entails, therefore, not a few compromises, since there is a potential conflict between original sources and current practice. On the one hand, a reliable scholarly edition allows the reader to identify the editor's changes. On the other hand, a modern performing score needs to be consistent and easy to read and to use. Thus, the question is, to what extent does the edition need to make the editor's alterations visible? Is it enough to document and justify only the most subjective and questionable decisions, or it is necessary to document any alteration or addition to the original text, including the mechanical and obvious ones, i.e., the cases in which implicit information in the original score is made explicit in the critical edition?

The answer provided by modern Verdi editors is a radical one: any alteration or addition must be graphically differentiated, *always*. Consequently, Verdi's critical scores display a vast and multifarious palette of graphic signs. Those additions that extend markings already present in the original source are differentiated in various ways: notes, rests, staccato marks, accents, and fermatas are printed in smaller size; slurs and crescendo/diminuendo hairpins are notated using a broken line; dynamic indications, as well as words and syllables in the text, appear in italics. Moreover, any addition or correction that is supported by sources of secondary importance is also graphically differentiated (the sources are ranked hierarchically). Indications found in autograph sources by Verdi other than the principal autograph appear in angle brackets, those found in reliable non-autograph sources are enclosed in parentheses, and those not physically present in any source appear in square brackets.

In this regard, the edition of Verdi's operas is slightly different from the critical editions of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, which are inspired by a different editorial philosophy, based on the principle that all the signs and marks that are imprecisely or incompletely notated in the original sources—but

6. The only exception in the Verdi edition is for the piccolo part, which appears below the flute part as in a nineteenth-century score, and not above it as in a modern score; this is because in nineteenth-century Italian orchestras the second-flute player used to play the piccolo too, shifting from one instrument to the other during the same piece.

whose interpretation is unequivocal—are notated without any typographical discrimination. The reason behind the distinctive approach of Verdi's editors is easy to understand: compared to other nineteenth-century opera composers, Verdi displays a higher degree of precision, reveals a stronger authorial intentionality, and expresses his intentions more clearly, displaying an awareness of the status of *opus* of his own compositions.

The problem remains that a page dense with differentiated typographical signs is cumbersome and impedes clarity and legibility—a problem that could have been minimized by omitting superfluous typographical differentiations. Let us take into consideration the case of the dynamic markings. In those cases in which Verdi writes different dynamic indications for different orchestral sections at the same time, or repeats the same passage changing the dynamic indications, it is important to proceed with great care when making the text uniform, since extending a dynamic indication that Verdi prescribed for one specific orchestral section to other instruments is more often than not a controversial procedure. In certain cases, however, the extension is absolutely obvious and is required for reasons of editorial consistency, as in the case of the dynamics in an orchestral *tutti*, which the autograph always indicates sketchily. In these cases, the urge to differentiate graphically the dynamics present in the autograph from those added by the editor seems a little pedantic. In other instances this editorial rigor creates paradoxical situations, as in the case of the first and second violins, or of the pairs of horns notated on contiguous staves. If these instruments are assigned similar parts, Verdi writes a single dynamic indication *between* the two lines, implying that the marking applies to both. However, it is a principle of the critical edition that “some performance markings (crescendi, dynamics, etc.) shall not be assigned unequivocally to one staff or another in the context of an orchestral *tutti*. The *Works of Giuseppe Verdi* nonetheless prints them as if they were associated with a single part” (pp. vii–viii). This directive compels the editor to assign the dynamic marks in the regular font to the first, and not to the second violins, whose part bears the dynamic mark in italics.

In general, the critical edition of Verdi's operas seems to lean toward the needs of the scholar more than to those of the performer. It is unquestionably desirable to respect the integrity of the autograph and of the composer's intentions expressed in this source, and one can only admire the editor's attempt to allow the reader to reconstruct the reading of the autograph from the critical edition. However, the suspicion arises that this respect may degenerate sometimes into a form of fetishism. One should keep in mind George Thomas Tanselle's point that the autograph shall not be considered the author's *opus*, or his “work of art,” but more simply the *artifact*, the artistic object that represents what history has preserved of the author's intention.⁷ To a certain ex-

7. George Thomas Tanselle, *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

tent, publishing a critical edition entails rewriting the work so that the performers are given the opportunity of accomplishing the best possible interpretation (meaning the most faithful to the composer's intentions), but because the critical edition is the result of a process of rewriting, it is itself a historically bound artifact, inescapably subjected to critical interpretation and to contingent performing needs.⁸

Paging through the score and the critical commentary of *La traviata*, one will notice that this edition often diverges from the traditional version that we know from the various published editions. This should not surprise us, since the "traditional" scores, which have been printed for practical purposes (such as to be rented to theaters) and have been reprinted several times, have gone through an uninterrupted layering process of anonymous alterations. Some of these alterations consist of simple notational and typographical changes in order to make the text uniform; others are interpretations of ambiguous or uncertain details; and others are simplifications of parts of the text that originally departed from the norm for expressive or dramatic reasons and which are erroneously interpreted by the editors as mistakes. Still other alterations are introduced in order to update the opera according to changing musical tastes and performing styles. In all these cases the critical edition emends the text of these alterations, which are often imperceptible to the listener. But it would be a mistake to think that this edition differs from the traditional editions only in small adjustments of dynamics, articulations, and other details hardly noticeable to the vast majority of the opera goers. There are, in fact, macroscopic divergences as well. Let us take a few examples into consideration.

In the *Introduzione* (no. 2), at the beginning of the waltz played by the *banda* on stage, Violetta feels faint and needs to sit down. At this point the libretto prescribes that "everybody" ("tutti") reacts unanimously by singing the words "Oh ciel! . . . ch'è questo!" ("Heavens! . . . What can it be?"; p. 50, mm. 412–13). In every modern edition, these words are sung by all the characters, namely Flora, Gastone, the Baron Douphol, the Marquis d'Obigny, and the doctor (the only characters who do not sing this line are Alfredo and Violetta, for obvious reasons). Verdi, however, who always paid great attention to even the smallest details in the drama, had originally excluded the doctor from the *tutti* as well, indicating rests in his line; this is because the doctor is the only character aware of Violetta's condition and therefore it would not have made sense to have him express surprise. The critical edition finally recognizes this important detail by dropping the doctor's line from these measures.

8. See Roger Parker, "A Donizetti Critical Edition in the Postmodern World," in *L'opera teatrale di Gaetano Donizetti: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studio—Proceedings of the International Conference on the Operas of Gaetano Donizetti, Bergamo 17–20 settembre 1992*, ed. Francesco Bellotto, 57–68 (Bergamo: Comune di Bergamo, 1993).

Elsewhere, the critical edition restores the original version of passages that have been “made banal” in later editions, clarifying passages that reveal, in fact, a special sensibility for distinctive timbres. At the beginning of the third act, when Violetta sings “Addio, del passato” (no. 8, p. 333, mm. 129ff.), the voice is sustained by an extremely light accompaniment of strings only; the double basses mark the downbeats, while violins, violas, and cellos play on the offbeats. In the autograph, only the cellos are asked to play *pizzicato*. In modern editions the *pizzicato* indication is transferred to the double basses and in the repetition of this passage the indication is entirely omitted. However, this unusual and sophisticated effect that Verdi obtained so carefully did not pass unnoticed by contemporaneous critics such as Alberto Mazzucato, who wrote in the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, “quei cupi *pizzicati* de’ violoncelli, che *pianissimo* sembrano i lontani, lontani rintocchi di una funebre squilla che suoni l’agonia della Traviata” (“those gloomy *pianissimo* pizzicatos of the cellos, seem to be the far, far away funeral tolls announcing the final struggle of the Traviata”).⁹ In this case too, the critical edition restores the *pizzicato* marking to the cello alone.

A similar example can be found in the *Andante mosso* of the Violetta-Alfredo duet in the third act (no. 10). “Parigi, o cara” is the emblem of the so-called lyric prototype, i.e., regular and symmetrical singing, incorporated in tonally closed, regular paragraphs, defined by predictable harmony and typical guitar-like accompaniment. In the climactic point of the melody, when Alfredo sings “sospiro e luce tu mi sarai, tutto il futuro ne ardirà” (“you will be my light and breath, the future will smile upon us”; pp. 334–35, mm. 94–101), the entrance of the woodwinds, as often happens in Verdi, has the purpose of emphasizing the vocal melody. Surprisingly, in this passage the clarinet part appears out of phase with the parts of Alfredo and of the other instruments, generating conspicuous dissonances for a couple of measures. There is no doubt that Verdi was seeking this particular effect: the autograph score, indeed, reveals that this passage is a revision of a previous version, which Verdi has erased and rewritten. Furthermore, the dissonant notes in the clarinet part are emphasized first by an accent and then by a *crescendo* marking. Della Seta provides an explanation for this peculiar effect, stating that “it is a revelation that the almost surreal simplicity of the melody is the expression of a dramatic situation alienated from reality, a situation in which the characters indulge in a moment of comfort that they, as well as the audience, know very well to be illusory. The dissonances generated by the clarinet are a warning, almost at a subliminal level, of the inescapable tragic ending.”¹⁰ The earliest musical

9. *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* 52 (28 December 1856): 412.

10. Fabrizio Della Seta, “Varianti (d’autore e non) ne *La traviata*,” in *Napoli e il teatro musicale in Europa tra Sette e Ottocento: Studi in onore di Friedrich Lippmann*, ed. Bianca Maria Antolini and Wolfgang Witzemann, 417–35, Quaderni della Rivista italiana di musicologia 28 (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 426–27.

sources (the orchestral parts and the first printed score) follow the original version, while scores published in the second half of the nineteenth century display handwritten corrections of this passage, which was obviously considered erroneous by copyists and editors alike so that the normalized version, void of dissonances, has finally prevailed in the modern editions, starting at least with the 1914 Ricordi score, and has become the founding text of the modern performing tradition. The critical edition reinstates the original version, documenting in a footnote the modern version, for the benefit of those who still prefer to consider the original version a mistake.

This careful approach would have been advisable also for at least one other instance in which the critical edition adopts a variant remarkably different from the traditional version. In the *brindisi* of the *Introduzione* there is a passage (pp. 42–43, mm. 324–39) in which the repetition of an instrumental episode is indicated by a repeat sign. Later, Verdi decided to eliminate a measure in the accompaniment; this revision resulted in the anticipation of Violetta's attack, "La vita è nel tripudio" ("Life is euphoria"), after the choral reprise of the *brindisi* motif. Verdi cut this measure after completing the score and probably after the premiere. Indeed, there is no such cut in the manuscript score that the copyists of La Fenice made in Venice in 1853, using the autograph as their direct source. In most of the earliest manuscript and printed sources, which followed the definitive version of the autograph, the measure is missing, although in some of these early sources the measure was already reinserted. The measure was finally and permanently reinstated in the later versions of the piano-vocal score and the orchestral score, as well as in the individual orchestral parts, and therefore this passage has entered the tradition without the cut. The reason Verdi's cut was ignored is quite easy to guess: the one-measure omission produces a violently deforming effect by breaking the rhythmic symmetry of the regular waltz phrases. Consequently the disorientation of the listener occurs on two different levels: first because one can easily perceive the incongruity with the first exposition of this section, which has no omission; second, because the cut alters the rhythmic uniformity of a dance that proceeds with an absolute regularity of binary phrases all throughout (the *brindisi* is written in $\frac{3}{8}$, although it is conceived in $\frac{6}{8}$). The sudden stumbling produced by the cut explains the irresistible temptation to reinsert the measure.

From a strictly philological point of view, Della Seta's decision to edit this section without the measure eliminated by Verdi is unquestionable. Upon closer examination, however, the autograph shows that in this particular case Verdi did not express his intentions in his usual resolute and unequivocal way: the original version was corrected after the score had been completed in all its details, probably during the rehearsals in the theater if not after the first performances, and the correction appears anomalous and hasty. But even if there were no doubts about the actual intention of the composer, in this particular case the critical edition fails to preserve the trace of a tradition that slowly

developed as an attempt to offer an acceptable solution to an obvious problem. Therefore, it would have made more sense here to offer the performer the opportunity to make a decision between the two versions. There is no need to apply the most radical ideas of *Rezeptionsästhetik* to the practice of music editing, but it is always advisable to acknowledge the importance of certain transformations of the text through its long life in the performing tradition, transformations that the editor of a dramatic text cannot dismiss as plain corruptions. This is especially true for an art form in which the composer's intention is strongly conditioned by practices of musical and dramatic performance. The resulting continuous stratification of textual changes, operated by both performers and editors, seems to invite the philologist to maintain a more open and flexible approach in order to preserve the composer's intention and the historically documented performing tradition.

Apart from the few problematic aspects outlined above, for the most part Della Seta's editorial decisions are hardly questionable. They are clearly the result of an extremely thorough analysis of the editorial problems and of a careful study of a plethora of different sources, including the recently published sketches and preparatory drafts, which allow scholars to follow Verdi's creative process from the earliest to the last stages of composition. Della Seta has demonstrated the importance of these sketches for editorial purposes. Although only in a few cases can they provide definitive solutions to controversial or ambiguous passages, they allow the editor to formulate viable hypotheses about the composer's intention when the chronological sequence of differing variants is not clear from any other type of evidence. Like all the other critical editions of Verdi's operas, Della Seta's edition of *La traviata* opens a window on the aesthetic convictions of Verdi and his dramatic and musical world, making his compositional process more understandable. This edition, like the publication of the sketches, allows scholars to gaze at the innermost aspects of Verdi's creative process, a gaze that can be so penetrating and indiscreet as to leave us with the impression of violating a secret space that Verdi has always fiercely defended against external intrusions.

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(Translated by Pierpaolo Polzonetti)

The Sounds of Early Cinema, edited by Richard Abel and Rick Altman. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001. xvi, 327 pp.

In *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, editors Richard Abel and Rick Altman have compiled an impressive selection of essays based on papers delivered at the fifth biennial Domitor conference. Founded in 1985 at the silent film festival in Pordenone, Italy, Domitor has grown into an international association of