
VERDI'S *LA TRAVIATA*:
STUDY GUIDE
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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This study guide is designed as a supplement to the publication of *La traviata* as part of the “Vox Imago” series issued by Electa and Musicom.it, sponsored by Intesa Sanpaolo. It contains general reflections and educational activities designed to introduce young people to the language of opera, even independently of the opera studied here. For this reason, we are repeating some of the preparatory activities already suggested in the study guide for Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* [The Magic Flute, 2012] with the necessary adjustments for this opera. The following is a selection of learning experiences focused on *La traviata*.

Opening Doors to Opera

It is probably unnecessary to point out to teachers the reason for an educational initiative such as this. Teachers already understand that the language of opera has enriched civilization for four centuries and continues to do so today, transmitting an extraordinary heritage of values—cognitive, emotional, ethical, and aesthetic—that are in no way inferior to those transmitted, for example, by contemporary spoken theater.

The “massification” of taste, a vital interest of the consumer industry, tends to exclude individuals from access to forms of communication outside the norm—in our case, neo-popular genres. That opera is one of these outliers is easily ascertained from popular interests. It is up to educational institutions to save the young from such a destiny of exclusion by giving them the opportunity to become acquainted with opera.

While the visual, and of course, the verbal languages already receive considerable attention in education, it is well known that the musical language characteristic of opera is the most neglected in our educational system. Teachers face a challenging task: to overcome the prejudice that keeps the vast majority of adolescents out of the opera house. The reasons have been stated many times and can be traced back to a basic lack of familiarity with the linguistic code of opera, its rules of operation, and its conventions. Above all, in sharp contrast to spoken theater, music plays a leading role in heightening the message of the text: there is music that surrounds the words—orchestral music—and music that “fills out” the words by substituting song for speech. Furthermore, words in opera take second place to music to such an extent that if one were simply to read the libretto of certain operas, they would seem laughable. Music actually makes some librettos acceptable that would otherwise be forgotten or even ridiculed.

Music’s “linguistic” nature is still an undeveloped conception for students, who may have experienced it in the music they love without being able to understand it in opera. For them, music essentially functions as recreation: for play, amusement, enjoyment, or relaxation. This is how they are able to take in and enjoy a song or a short, catchy tune. To them, the very idea that opera can have the same effect (and the same goes for everything that does not belong to one of the popular genres), would seem ridiculous. They would not enjoy *La traviata* the same way they would the latest hit show on television.

Opera in Relation to Ethical and Social Problems

An opera offers the teacher two paths of investigation: each is in inverse relation to the other, and each can be integrated with the other. The first path uses opera to deepen students' understanding of extra-musical issues of a social, ethical, or historical nature. The second uses the events in the opera, along with their social, ethical, or historical implications, to educate students in the language of opera.

The first path: *La traviata* presents an outstanding opportunity for discussions about the status of women in the mid-nineteenth century. For older students, there is material for reflection on women's issues that will always be current, one way or the other.

This volume of "Vox Imago" offers a range of information about Verdi's opera, its literary precedents, the society that first experienced the opera and its values, and the relationship between the work and the author's private life.

Let's make a quick review. A good introduction would be the acute reading of the opera by Mary McCarthy in "*La traviata*" by Giuseppe Verdi,¹ a long paraphrase of the story as dramatized by Francesco Maria Piave in his libretto. *La traviata* transposes the play *La dame aux camélias* for the operatic stage; produced by Alexandre Dumas fils in 1852, it was derived from his novel of the same name published five years earlier. Marguerite Gautier, the main character of the novel and the play, is a theatrical incarnation of the young Marie Duplessis, with whom Dumas had a tempestuous love affair. Duplessis had been the mistress of the Duc de Guise. After leaving Dumas, she married

the Count de Perregaux before dying of tuberculosis at only twenty-three years of age. In his novel, Dumas does not hesitate to use a more explicitly brutal term to define her: a prostitute. Today we would call her a high-class escort, or more accurately, a kept woman—handsomely compensated and made wealthy through costly gifts and money from her lovers and "protectors." The novel opens with the auction of the possessions of the young woman, recently deceased, and proceeds to tell the story in flashback, starting from the moment she first met Armand (Alfredo in the opera), with whom she would really fall in love.

The philosopher Catherine Clément tells the story in a book about opera that concerns the status of women:

Violetta Valéry lives in the luxury of kept women. During a brilliant evening at her home—or rather at the home of the man whose property she is—she suddenly gasps for breath. Her frivolous friends do not know she is "consumptive." Alfredo Germont, a young man of good provençal [*sic*] family, notices. He loves Violetta and offers his love to her, although she has never wanted to experience that pleasure. At first she refuses him, vaguely sensing some danger. But in the second act we find her spinning love's sweet dream with Alfredo in a little house near Paris, where the open air is curing her of her illness. Everything would be fine if Alfredo's father did not turn up suddenly to threaten them, convinced that Violetta is squandering the family fortune. He does notice, with some confusion, that Violetta is selling furniture to keep up the house.

Be that as it may; by means of blackmail he manages to induce Violetta to leave Alfredo. The motive is obvious: Alfredo's sister must marry and the family cannot put up with a lack of responsibility in one of its sons. Violetta, giving Alfredo no explanation, returns to her former life. Alfredo pursues her and humiliates her, provoking a scandal. In the final act, Violetta is dying, alone and impoverished. But she awaits Alfredo's visit. He comes, followed by his papa, who has forgiven her. They all make plans for the future... It is too late. Violetta spits out her life in a song of resurrection.²

La dame aux camélias [The Lady of the Camellias]: the title references an explicit symbol: the white camellias with which she loved to adorn herself each month, replacing them in the last week with red ones. Violetta Valéry, Verdi's heroine, will also offer Alfredo a white camellia near the beginning of the opera to indicate her availability. Art is certainly not life, and many ingredients that go far beyond life's experiences enter into an author's work. Dumas could not have forgotten a novel that had been written more than a century before by the Abbé Prévost on a similar story: *Manon Lescaut*, which would become the basis of the libretto for the masterpieces by Jules Massenet and Giacomo Puccini.

Historians wonder if, in Verdi's case—as with Dumas—there might also be connections between life and opera. For the past few years he had lived with the singer Giuseppina Strepponi, a woman who had nothing like the miserable and unhappy history of the characters in Prévost or Dumas; however,

together with her very presence, as well as their status as an unmarried couple, which was considered reprehensible in those days, she helped the composer feel the emotions that he would transfer to the leading lady of his opera.

Verdi's *La traviata* erupted onto Italian, and soon, European stages, abandoning the historical figures that had until that time dominated opera and offering the public a story that was uncomfortably topical: it provided a contribution to realism, which was beginning to find acceptance in European culture.³ The librettist Francesco Maria Piave faithfully followed the plot of Dumas's play (not the novel), except in omitting the entire second act. Another difference is that in the drama and *La traviata*, the heroine dies in the arms of her beloved, while in the novel her lover comes to the home of Marguerite Gautier after she has died and her belongings are being sold at auction.⁴

For older students, this opens up a variety of issues relating to the status of women in the nineteenth century. A woman who was abandoned by her lover was expelled from the social class to which she belonged, and would end up marginalized and destitute unless she could manage to get married. The loss of virginity meant limited alternatives to avoid utter destitution: marriage or prostitution.

Francesco Maria Piave's libretto avoids the derogatory terms that men use to call these women, so Violetta's past is left in shadow, suggested by vague, elusive hints. The woman presented to us onstage is admired and loved for her beauty by noble playboys, who contend, using jewels instead of weapons, for the company of a courtesan who is

fond of pleasures and luxury. In the novel, dozens of pages go by before Marguerite (really in love for the first time in her life) feels so in love with Armand that she goes to live with him in his country house. We will see that in the Piave's libretto, Violetta's love for Alfredo blossoms almost immediately after their brief encounters at the party in Violetta's house, which condenses events (the scene of the *brindisi*—the toast).

The novel and the opera offer the teacher significant documents of a subject that remains sensitive and topical. Today we no longer talk about the exploitation of women, or only talk about it in terms of the past; fortunately, public opinion is increasingly mobilizing against violence against women—and even murder.

Some passages from the Dumas novel would work well for discussion with students, always keeping in mind that the novel and its situations come from the mid-nineteenth century. They allude to a reality far from today's—but how far? Is it a reality that no longer exists, or might it have been reborn in new forms that are no less offensive to the status of women?

1. “Marguerite was a pretty woman; but though the life of such women makes sensation enough, their death makes very little. They are suns which set as they rose, unobserved. Their death, when they die young, is heard of by all their lovers at the same moment, for in Paris almost all the lovers of a well-known woman are friends. A few recollections are exchanged, and everybody's life goes on as if the incident had never occurred, without so much as a tear.”⁵

2. “Marguerite, a sinner like Manon, and perhaps converted like her, had died in a sumptuous bed (it seemed, after what I had seen, the bed of her past), but in that desert of the heart, a more barren, a vaster, a more pitiless desert than that in which Manon had found her last resting-place. [Dumas is referring to the title character in Prévost's novel, who dies in an American desert. Dumas's text frequently references *Manon Lescaut*.] [...] You pity the blind man who has never seen the daylight, the deaf who has never heard the harmonies of nature, the dumb who has never found a voice for his soul, and, under a false cloak of shame, you will not pity this blindness of heart, this deafness of soul, this dumbness of conscience, which sets the poor afflicted creature beside herself and makes her, in spite of herself, incapable of seeing what is good...”

3. “In this girl there was at once the virgin whom a mere nothing had turned into a courtesan, and the courtesan whom a mere nothing would have turned into the most loving and the purest of virgins.”

4. “Naturally we have no friends. We have selfish lovers who spend their fortunes, not on us, as they say, but on their own vanity. [...] We are not allowed to have hearts, under penalty of being hooted down and of ruining our credit. We no longer belong to ourselves. We are no longer beings, but things. We stand first in their self-esteem, last in their esteem.”

From Social Question to Opera

The topic of the status of women is an increasingly frequent subject for debate in our society. It can hardly be ignored, and teachers will be able to adjust the discussion according to the grade level of the students. This theme, which is always current, offers us the opportunity to study how Giuseppe Verdi treated it: the path to this investigation is the reverse of the previous one. Now we turn the class's attention to the music of Verdi, and the issue of women's status will be our way to get the student's attention: as we said, they are not acquainted with operatic language and are likely remain that way forever if we do not take action in the classroom.

Two Strategies

To get to the heart of the students' preparation for *La traviata*, the teacher can use two strategies. Basically:

A: start with the opera. Explain the plot, read the libretto, and listen to the opera, commenting on the aspects that are the most significant and interesting. This is the most traditional and customary strategy. Now let's take a look at the second strategy:

B: arrive at the opera. Get to know it through its most famous scenes or in its entirety after conducting a series of activities about the opera in a way that solicits students' creativity.

Try this introductory idea: without telling the plot of *La traviata*, list only the characters with a minimum of details about each. In groups, the students are invited to come up with a complete plot involving all of the characters. The opera's prelude (CD 1, track 1) can act as a generic background: it could

be played without announcing what it is, but it may also act unconsciously on the students' imaginations. In any case, it's a chance to hear Verdi's music again, making it more familiar than when we started working.

Here's an alternative to the previous activity: tell the story up to a certain point, for example, until the end of the second act. Let the students invent as many endings as they can think of. In groups compare different endings. Then listen to the original. What do the students think of the finale of *La traviata*?

Music in the Foreground

For students, the road to opera appreciation must begin with the realization that the music is not there just for fun or to entertain the listener, but to convey a message. Music is certainly a great source of enjoyment, but in opera it is primarily a means of communication that adds greater significance to the words than if they had been merely spoken. This is true not only in the theater, a place that students unfortunately rarely attend, but also in that most dominant medium—film, whether in the movie theater or through TV and related media. Cinema offers teachers an ideal opportunity to help students easily grasp music's communicative value in a production. No teen would laugh at the “alien” music that accompanies Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, for example. They will certainly not find this “fun” or “entertaining,” but they will also not reject it because they easily understand its expressive purpose.

A carefully thought-out exploration of movie soundtracks, at least those with good music, can be a good introductory activity to the orchestral component of opera.

As we will see, singing poses different problems and will require another kind of preparation, even though it is connected to the orchestral.

Studying soundtracks helps students realize the many functions that music can have in a film: to anticipate a situation, lend a consistent expressive tone to a scene, function as an external commentary, recall past events, evoke times and places, describe a character, depict someone's state of mind, link different episodes, create breaks within a single episode, and so on. This leads to the obvious conclusion—these same functions are used in exactly the same way in opera, as listening to *La traviata* will demonstrate.

Associations

Here is an activity that extends and reinforces the previous one. Once students are ready to experience the expressive contribution that music makes to stage action, ask them to use their imaginations to match up a series of images with musical selections. Five or six images drawn from very diverse subjects would do, along with music of different genres and emotional contents, from hard rock to a funeral march. It is good to hear the music twice: the first time to let the music sink in; the second time to make the final choices.

At the end of the “game,” review. You will be surprised by the variety of combinations the students will make. This is exactly what we want, and helps raise their awareness. Each combination has its reason for being, and each deserves to be explored and understood. Even an idyllic scene combined with music for a catastrophe has its relevance; if anything, it is up to the others to interpret it.

First Encounter with Verdi

The preceding exercise could now be carried out with the instrumental portions of *La traviata*, substituting, if desired, the images with verbal description of the scenes. It can be done after telling the students the original story, or even before they learn it.

Here are the purely instrumental passages of *La traviata*, after the prelude to Act I, which we will be considering separately:

1. Introduction to Act I (party at Violetta's house; CD 1, track 2)
2. The offstage band at the party
3. Introduction to the finale of Act II (the gambling scene in Flora's house; CD 2, track 4)
4. Prelude to Act III (Violetta's last hours; CD 2, track 7)

Put the scenes in a different order, for example:

- A. Violetta meets Alfredo
- B. Party at Violetta's house
- C. Violetta waiting for Alfredo
- D. Gambling scene

And now listen to the instrumental pieces that introduce the four scenes. The students should figure out which pieces match the plot events.

It may seem contradictory, but again no match is “wrong.” A combination differing from Verdi's would simply indicate a different interpretation of the scene, as you can explain to the students.

Obviously, since we are interested in Verdi, we want to understand why Verdi chose a certain piece of music for *Violetta meets Alfredo* that some student connected with

the *Gambling scene*—clearly giving a very different meaning from Verdi's to the scene. Listen to all of the pieces as many times as necessary. Remember that our understanding of a piece of music increases with the number of repetitions. Listen several times to Verdi's orchestral passages (as we will do later with the vocal ones) to make them “nice” and familiar to the students, just like a song or a theme from a movie.

Two Levels of Listening

The meanings that we come to ascribe to a piece of music are determined by its internal structure. The “what it says” of a piece depends on “how it is put together.” Our efforts to interpret (to attribute meaning) are the more reliable the better they are based—are justified and explained—on intelligent observation of the organizational processes of musical discourse.

It follows that teaching students “intelligent observation,” or the analysis of the structural elements of music, is the way to develop more advanced skills for understanding. Organizational processes, structural elements, means of expression, form, meanings, etc. These are various terms used in different schools of thought to designate the objectively identifiable dimensions of music, as opposed to the more subjective and intuitive kind of interpretation: the description of content, the attribution of meanings, etc.

Developing a student's comprehension of a certain type of music necessitates linking the two dimensions. It's hard to imagine a good outcome for teaching listening if one or the other is missing. To work on “meanings” without analyzing how meanings are

communicated will only stifle the student's imaginations. Conversely, an exploration of the expressive means as an end in itself without reference to the semantic universe to which music belongs, like any other human creation, becomes a useless exercise in cataloging, no less misleading than the above-mentioned investigation into musical techniques.

Examining the Prelude

The reciprocal relationship between the meanings and forms of expression, the understanding of the nexus between interpretation and analysis, is thus the basic criterion for teaching listening.

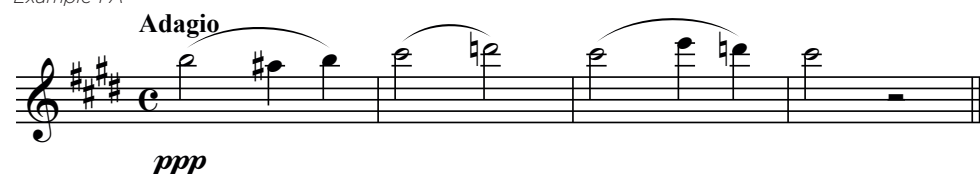
To start, set up a simple comparison between the first and second sections of the prelude to Act I of *La traviata* (CD 1, track 1). Note the differences in terms of dynamics (*pianissimo* in the first, *crescendo* in the second), tempo (*adagio*, with long note values vs short ones, which leads to a feeling of forward movement in the second part), melodic/harmonic (notes gravitating towards B, in b minor in the first; then notes outlining a descending scale, in E major in the second), instrumental (the first section, very sustained, beginning with solo violins that are then joined by other strings; the second beginning with an accompaniment by the winds, to which the melody is added: it is given to the first violins, and then to the darker colors of the clarinet, bassoon, and cello, while the violins layer on a playful tune characterized by staccatos and trills; the texture here is thinner vs thicker).

The prelude symbolically represents two aspects of the story, as well as two aspects of Violetta's personality, as some scholars

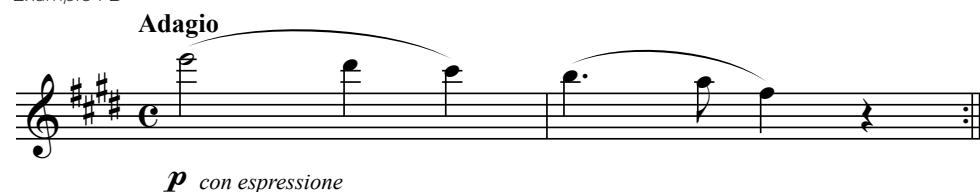
maintain: suffering and emotional sensitivity in the first section (A), and exuberance and love of life in the second (B).

Audio of the musical examples can be found at www.voximago.it.

Example 1 A



Example 1 B



The Composer's Toolbox

Dynamics, tempo, melody, rhythm, timbre: these are the composer's handiest "tools of the trade," part of the toolkit all composers use to create their works, to tell the theatrical story, and at the same time to give musical voice to their inner worlds.

The field is open for an exploration of these elements, one at a time, to see how (and how much) the meaning of the music changes if any of these elements is changed. You could try this if you have software that allows you to change the different parameters. Even without going that far, you could try this experiment with a song that the students already know. How would the meaning of John Lennon's *Imagine* change if you try singing it *piano* instead of *forte* (or *crescendo* vs *diminuendo*, etc.), slow as opposed to fast, and so on? We will explore this idea further on in *The Parameters of Song*.

Reasons for Singing

Throughout its history, opera has also had its famous detractors, coming—understandably—from the noble class of the literati. According to the scholar Ludovico Antonio Muratori (d. 1750), "Is it even plausible that an angry person, full of pain and rage, or confiding information about his affairs, would sing? [...] It is laughable to see characters, who represent important people in positions of political power, planning betrayals, attacks, and wars, go to their deaths, or lament and weep over their terrible misfortunes, or other similar actions [...], all the while singing so sweetly and warbling away, until they peacefully conclude with a very long and dulcet trill." Other scholars took similar stands: in Italy, Giuseppe Baretti, Francesco Algarotti, and

Francesco Saverio Quadrio; in England, Samuel Johnson and Joseph Addison; in France, Charles de Saint-Evremond.⁶ They all made fun of the fact that characters in opera have to communicate with each other by singing instead of talking. Literary culture alone is apparently not enough to produce a cultured person. What those writers lacked is the same we can easily see lacking in our students: an understanding of music's contributions to the drama in terms of semantics, communication, and expression. And it's not just instrumental music, but also—and above all—the music that fills the words and transforms speech into song. Song is a language in two dimensions—the verbal and the musical. Each interacts with each other, but independently; each follows its own rules, also independently but interacting with the other.

Until students understand this concept, their approach to understanding opera will remain problematic. These introductory exercises will be helpful for setting the stage.

The Parameters of Song

The first activity helps students see how the way a phrase is sung changes the meaning of the phrase. Let's take another look at our observations about *Imagine*. While it can be difficult to find the same text sung in different operas, they should be easier to find in other repertoires, especially in sacred music, where there are thousands of settings of such liturgical texts as the *Ave Maria* or the *Gloria*. The students can have fun with a process the ancients called *contrafactum*, or parody, because they already know how to change the words of a song while keeping the same tune.

Since no other composer has set Ger-mont's phrase, "Ah il passato, perché, perché v'accusa?" [Why must your past, why must it stigmatize you!], why not have the students do it, especially if you have time in your class for singing? There are infinite ways of singing it, and the important thing is to see how a change in the melody, rhythm, dynamics, tempo—any of the elements we discussed previously—changes the meaning of the phrase. Try the experiment with other phrases if desired.

From Song to the Spoken Word

The connections between spoken and sung text open up a particularly rich area for study. Let's start with a crucial observation so often made by composers, beginning at least with Vincenzo Galilei: that the musical setting of words should take into account how those words would be spoken. Diderot put it concisely when he wrote, "Song is an imitation—using the sounds of an artfully invented scale—of the accents of passion. Its model is declamation. It is necessary to think of declamation [or the spoken text] as a line, and the voice as another line that flows on top of it." The kernel of Diderot's concept is in the "artfully invented scale," for it is here that we find the specificity of musical language. While speech unfolds along a continuum of sound, song picks out a discrete gradation of sounds along this continuum—exactly what a "scale" means.

Each educational experience in prosody, which is training in controlling the various parameters of speech (chanting or melody, speed or tempo, intensity or dynamics, rhythm, pauses, tone of voice) becomes not only an experience that deserves to have

time devoted to it in school, and on which we can only spend a minimal amount of time here,⁷ but would be a springboard to access the semiotic universe of song.

A basic rule applies as much to the "music of speech" as to song: the more an emotion inspires a character's voice, the greater the pitch range from low to high; the volume is strong or highly changeable; the timbre is harsh and forced, and so on. At the other extreme, a monotone voice, kept to a level between *piano* and *mezzo piano*, with a steady motion and a light tone, is indicative of restrained emotion, indifference, coldness, callousness, and so on.

Expressing Emotions

At least try this one basic experiment with prosody: have the students read a few lines from the libretto; the first time full of rage, then deeply depressed. Each time ask them to describe what it was about *the sound* that changed.

Transformations

Let's transform a spoken phrase into song. Follow these steps, and make a recording of the results each time:

- choose a phrase from the libretto to set to music. For example, "Non sapete quale affetto vivo, immenso m'arda in petto?" [Don't you know the deep affection—immense—that burns in my heart?] (CD1, track 14) (Ex. 2)
- decide how the character who sings those words would feel, which will tell you the "tone of voice" he or she would use;
- experiment with different possibilities;
- using dashes, transcribe the rise and fall of the vocal line;

- while recording, try different ways to sing the phrases spontaneously while following the diagram with the dashes and using an appropriate tone of voice;
- listen to the recordings and choose what sounds best; if necessary, make some adjustments to create a definitive version.

An activity that does the opposite of the previous: transform one of Verdi's melodies into speech. We'll do the steps in reverse

order: listen to the melody several times; transcribe the rise and fall of the melody with corresponding lines; following the line diagram, find different ways of reciting the text. "Amami Alfredo, amami quant'io t'amo" [Love me, Alfredo, love me as much as I love you] (CD 1, track 17): the two phrases can be spoken in many ways, always remaining consistent with the shape of the original musical shape that curves from high to low. (Ex. 3)

Example 2

Agitato

Non sa - pe - te qua - le af - fet - to vi - vo im - men - so — m'ar - da in pet - to?

Example 3

Con passione e forza

A - - - ma - mi Al - fre - - - do

A - ma - mi quan - t'io t'a - - - - mo

Changes of Mood

The previous activities aim to make children aware of the meanings that a poem can take depending on how it is spoken and, more importantly for us, how it is sung. It is possible to analyze the entire opera on the basis of this idea, as has been done by several musicologists.⁸ Let's look at one example. The final scene of Act I shows us music's ability to express changes in states of emotion, or mood changes. The libretto clearly points to Violetta's uncertainty: first, she becomes aware of a new feeling: "È strano!... è strano!... O gioia ch'io non conobbi, essere amata amando" [It's strange! It's strange!... What a joy I've never known before, to love and be loved!] (CD 1, track 7); then she reacts by reaffirming her resolve to avoid really falling in love: "Follie!... follie!... Sempre libera degg'io trasvolare di gioia in gioia" [Madness! Madness! ... Always free, I want to run from one joy to another] (CD 1, track 8). Verdi, though, "reinvents" this change of mood, and this musical reinvention is what we want the students to understand.

He does this with a typical and frequently-used operatic structure: the succession of recitative-aria-cabaletta (an element that could be studied in depth by comparing this section of *La traviata* with those in other operas). Verdi's originality—what makes him great—is in the way he gives substance to the words. The recitative "È strano!... è strano!" begins without instrumental accompaniment; "in core scolpiti ho quegli accenti!" [His words are engraved in my heart!] refers to Alfredo's declaration of love for her. The strings interrupt on the word "accenti" [words], using repeated sounds [*tremolo*] to suggest Violetta's sudden emotion; the

recitative unfolds with this alternation of solo voice (the voice of doubt) and tremors in the orchestra (the voice of sudden emotion). And now the aria "Ah, forse è lui" [Ah, maybe he's the one] begins slowly [*andantino*] in minor mode with detached notes [*staccato*] to express Violetta's restless questioning; it becomes certainty with a melody that rises hesitantly until it explodes in "A quell'amor, quell'amor ch'è palpito" [To the love that is the heartbeat], repeating the melody of Alfredo's earlier declaration of love. It's a perfect example of how the poetic text pales in comparison to the intensity of the music. Read the text to the students: could any of them imagine reading such ordinary words with the expressive power Verdi gives to them? After another short recitative, with the same alternation of singing and orchestral tremors, we arrive at the cabaletta "Sempre libera" [Always free], an energetic and joyful explosion in which the full orchestra participates. Now comes an unexpected effect: the voice of the tenor singing "Amore, amor" from behind the scene (or "underneath the balcony" as indicated by Verdi, who was very involved with stage direction and sets; we could also interpret Alfredo's singing as Violetta remembering his declaration of love). Violetta pulls herself together and reacts with a soaring run and repeats the previous section, at the end of which Alfredo repeats his call to love. Now sung more decisively, it tells us that love will win.

Verdi's entire opera offers chances to explore how Verdi "reinvents" situations that were so modestly written by the librettist. The long duet between Violetta and Germont in Act II (CD 1, tracks 13-16) shows

an extraordinary richness of expression, in which Verdi contrasts the passion of Violetta with the stodginess of Germont.

Ah, the little invalid, how she argues! She sings spasmodic gasps, she cries out her love in the syncopation of music that skips beats, she utters her broken cries, to tell him that she is being asked to give up her entire life. Yes, that is what he wants. The father of the family hammers out his stubborn intentions in solid phrases, and she defends herself before him with sighs that would move stones and break hearts. The lily-white image of the other woman, the pure one, hangs there to trap the lost woman. Then, to extract the bargain from her, the father describes the future to her. She is young, beautiful, and loved. But later? She will never be the wife. And Violetta, while the other one reels off the words without a pause, keeps on murmuring, "È vero..." It is true. She will never enter the family. And it is at this moment that she gives up; her melody becomes sublime, now she surpasses herself. If she can no longer be the whore, and cannot be the wife, she can still take the role of a nun. Sacrifice; the word worked.⁹

This duet also allows you to introduce a different subject, which we will discuss in the next section: the contrast between Violetta's flexible musical form and the strophic form of Germont.

The Strategy of Comparison

A classic strategy for learning of any content is through comparison. In this case, we compare different solutions to the same

problem: within the same opera, or between different operas by the same composer, or between Verdi's operas and those by other composers.

We'll apply this strategy of comparison in the next activity, which concerns some of the fundamental characteristics of *La traviata*, which are well documented in the accompanying essays in the book and DVD. Teachers may need to consult outside sources when the exercises suggest comparisons with other operas.

Strophic Forms vs Forms Built on Contrast

Every art form, like any language, has its own rules and conventions, or better put, its own "blueprints" for construction. One of these forms is already familiar to the students: strophic form, in which the same melody is used for different verses. In *La traviata* there are several examples, although not all of them may appear in a performance: some are traditionally cut. Cuts are usually made to keep the action moving forward. Here are the best-known examples; the asterisk indicates the verses usually deleted:

In Act I:

- A. Alfredo: "Libiamo ne' lieti calici"; B. "Tra voi saprò dividere" (CD 1, track 3)
- A. Violetta: "Ah forse è lui che l'anima"; B. "A me fanciulla un candido"* (CD 1, track 7)

In Act II:

- A. Germont: "Di Provenza il mar, il suol"; B. "Ah, il tuo vecchio genitor" (CD 1, track 19)

In Act III:

- A. Violetta: “Addio del passato”; B. “Le gioie, i dolori”* (CD 2, track 9)

This is worth looking at because while you can omit the second strophe of Violetta’s arias in good conscience, which the composer himself believed, Germont’s second strophe is indispensable: he is fundamentally a pedantic and dull character, even though Verdi does give him some moments of pathos, such as “Piangi, piangi o misera” [Cry, cry, you unhappy woman] in the duet with Violetta. The repetition of this strophe reinforces his pedantic nature.

Another controversy, which is the subject of argument among musicologists, stage directors, and conductors, can be put to our students, at least to the older ones: in Act II, it is usual to omit Alfredo’s entire cabaletta, “Oh mio rimorso!... Oh infamia” [This is my fault! What a disgrace!] (CD 1, track 12), as well as Germont’s “No, non udrai rimproveri” [No, you won’t hear any reproaches] (omitted in our recording).

Are these cuts appropriate? A well-known scholar criticized them: “The omission of ‘O mio rimorso!...’ deprives the young Alfredo of his only opportunity to express his genuine moral feelings. [...] The same kind of cut, which is usually made in Germont’s strophes in the same act, creates a graceless conclusion to the scene in the country house [...]; this is simply dramaturgical sacrilege.”¹⁰ However, there remains one question: in his severe judgment, doesn’t the scholar adhere to Piave’s libretto—to the *words*—without taking the music into account? In fact, since in both cases the music doesn’t seem particularly effective, doesn’t it end up weakening the definition of the

characters rather than contributing to their characterization?

Same Music, Different Characters

Hector Berlioz, composer of the *Symphonie fantastique* and operas such as *Les Troyens* and *Benvenuto Cellini*, published a brilliant book of memoirs in 1860 which remains valuable as a resource, not only for understanding his personality, but musical life in the nineteenth century in general.

Strongly critical of Italian opera, he observed at one point, “What well-organized person with any sense of musical expression could listen to a quartet in which four characters, animated by totally conflicting passions, should successively employ the same melodic phrase to express such different words as these: “O toi que j’adore!” “Quelle terreur me glace!” “Mon cœur bat de plaisir.” “La fureur me transporte!” [O you whom I adore! I’m frozen with terror! My heart beats with pleasure. I’m transported with fury!]. To suppose that music is a language so vague that the natural inflections of fury will serve equally well for fear, joy, and love, only proves the absence of that sense which to others makes the varieties of expression in music as incontestable a reality as the existence of the sun.”¹¹

Italian operas offered Berlioz fodder for his criticism—even the early works of Verdi (although Berlioz admits on the same page that he doesn’t know his works). Was Berlioz always right? What if he had listened to Giorgio Germont—the same melody Violetta uses to express her desperation (“Morrò! La mia memoria non fia ch’ei maledica” [I’m going to die! Don’t let him curse my memory]) serves Germont to reassure her about

the future (“No, generosa, vivere, e lieta voi dovrete” [No, selfless woman, you must live and be happy] CD 1, track 16)? Or to a similar situation in Act III, when Alfredo urges Violetta to hope (“Oh mio sospiro, oh palpito” [Oh, my breath and heartbeat]) on the same melody she used for “Gran Dio! Morir sì giovine” [Dear God! To die so young] (CD 2, track 13)? Or how about in Act I, when Alfredo sings “Libiamo ne’ lieti calici” [Let’s drink from the happy goblets] to the same tune Violetta agreeably shares with him with her “Tra voi saprò dividere” [With you I will share] (CD 1, track 3)?

Berlioz might find even clearer cases in *Rigoletto*, for example in the finale of Act II, where Rigoletto vehemently exclaims, “Sì, vendetta, tremenda vendetta” [Yes, revenge, terrible revenge], and his daughter Gilda implores him to have mercy. To read the words, they are completely opposite sentiments, yet they are sung to the same melody, with Gilda’s line adapted to suit her soprano range. An analogous example is found in Act I, when Gilda responds “Quanto affetto! Quali cure!” [So much affection! What good care!] to her father, who asks the servant to guard his young daughter “Veglia, o donna, questo fiore” [Watch over this flower, o woman].

According to Berlioz, would these examples also be inconsistent? Ask the students again if Berlioz was right.

Another exercise in prosody at this point would probably suffice to show that Berlioz missed something important. Cry out, “Why didn’t you come?” in an anxious, agitated tone of voice; let’s say that the response would be something like, “Because I had something else to do.” What tone of voice

would the answer have? Perhaps it would be icy, as if the person answering wanted to maintain distance from the questioner. But maybe it could have a tone just as anxious and agitated as the question: perhaps in addition to having *contrasting* responses, a response *similar* in tone (of the music!) would satisfy the need of the person who asked the question.

By repeating her father’s melody, Gilda proves that she wants to *get in tune* with him, acknowledging his anger and begging for forgiveness in the first case, and soothing his anxiety in the second. The same expressive mechanism applies in the two scenes from *La traviata*. Both Giorgio Germont and then Alfredo are emotionally in tune with Violetta in an attempt to allay her despair. The emotion that the two characters demonstrate is just the same, or perhaps similar, and Verdi helps us understand by repeating the melody.

On the other hand, when it comes to expressing divergent emotions, any of Verdi’s works can demonstrate how sensitively Verdi knew how to express them. Violetta certainly does not respond with the same melody in Act I when Alfredo sings of his passion: “Un dì felice, eterea mi balenaste innante” [One day, happy and sublime, you appeared like a flash before me] (CD 1, track 5). The seven-syllable verses in both the strophes might indicate Violetta’s consent. But she had something entirely different in mind than accepting “quell’amor ch’è palpito dell’universo intero” [that love that is the heartbeat of the whole universe]: Violetta rejects Alfredo, not only with her words (“Ah se ciò è ver fuggitemi” [Oh, if that’s true, then go away]), but most importantly her tone of voice—in the melody,

which is graceful and sparkling, with its rapid thirty-second notes.

Melismas or Coloratura

Melismas [also called “runs” or “coloratura” in Anglophone countries and “vocalise” in Italian] are vocal phrases that consist of several notes sung over a single word; they are another element of operatic singing that can spark disapproval or even turn people away from opera.

In *La traviata* they certainly occur less frequently than in operas of the Baroque era through Rossini. But Verdi’s sparing use of them gives students a chance to understand their value. What could be a better response to Alfredo’s declaration of love in Act I (discussed above) than Violetta’s soaring melisma, which expresses her joyful surprise and derision at the same time? We’ll hear even more extensive melismas during the finale of Act I in Violetta’s cabaretta “Sempre libera degg’io folleggiare” [Always free, I want to run from one joy to another] (CD 1, track 8), and on the word “gioir” [rejoice] that precedes it. For a musical expression of joy, a melisma is an obvious device. A melisma “is a sound of joy without words, a voice that explodes in sounds of exultation that words cannot describe;” even St. Augustine, [writing in the fifth century,] showed his appreciation of the technique (the sacred song of his era was full of melismas).

Madrigalisms and Word Painting

In the same passage by Violetta, there is a good example for discussion when she sings “Gioire, di voluttà nei vortici, di voluttà perir!” [Celebrate, to die in a whirlwind

of pleasure!] On the word “vortici” [whirlwinds], the voice expands in a *whirling* melisma. (Ex. 4)

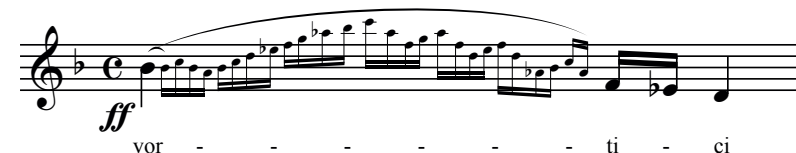
This passage evokes the meaning of the words in a sonic image, a technique that came into favor in late sixteenth century and continues through the present day (in his sacred music, Johann Sebastian Bach was one of the greatest exponents of this kind of singing). In the sixteenth century, composers of madrigals also made musical descriptions of the texts, generating the term “madrigalism.” In *La traviata*, another typical and memorable example comes at the end of this same scene on the word “volar” [to fly]: it is repeated over and over again on the dizzying rise and fall of the voice.

Another convention of operatic discourse is the presence of special musical figures that designate particular situations, people, or things. An example of large-scale usage is the *Leitmotiv* used by Richard Wagner, who associated musical motives with characters, events, concepts, and things. In Verdi, and in general in opera of the first half of the nineteenth century, we find particular rhythmic formulas used to introduce and accompany arias; each motive is intended to suggest a particular state of mind, emotion, or dramatic situation.

A frequently-recurring motive in *La traviata* is the “musical figuration of death,” as the previously cited musicologist Frits Noske calls it: a rhythmic figure in quick notes with the accent on the last, which Noske says has been in use since the early eighteenth century.

Verdi made use of them beginning with his first opera, *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*. Here are some examples suggested by Noske, from which teachers can choose

Example 4



Example 5

A.

(un anapesto)

B.

(un doppio
giambo risolto)

C.

(un peone)

A. (anapest)
B. (double iamb with ending)
C. (paeon)

if they want to explore this subject. (Ex. 5) In *Macbeth*, “the figuration of death expresses thoughts not expressed in words” by characters.¹² After serving this purpose in the funeral march of *Jérusalem*, we find other examples of the motive in *Luisa Miller* (1849) and *Il trovatore* (1853, the same year as *La traviata*).

In *La traviata* we find examples of one or the other of these motives at different times:

- in the finale of Act I, where the orchestra responds with this motive to Violetta’s words “Saria per me sventura un serio amore?” [Would it be so bad to have a serious love?];

- in Act II, when Alfredo discovers Violetta’s financial difficulties;
- when Violetta writes her farewell to Alfredo. With her return to Paris to a life more ruinous than before, Violetta hurries to her end;
- when the two lovers see each other again in Flora’s salon.

In all of the preceding examples, the rhythmic symbol of death is used as a “premonition.” In Act III, the premonition is substituted with reality: when Violetta is unable to rise, the strings play motive B. But even more telling is the end, when Violetta says “Prendi, quest’è l’immagine”

[Take this—it's the picture], we hear motive A repeated (CD 2, track 15).

The Semantics of Meter

It's not uncommon to see non-operatic audiences smile when they hear the “oom-pah-pah” rhythm of the waltz, which introduces and underpins many passages by Verdi (and widely used by many composers in the first half of the nineteenth century).

In technical terms, this rhythmic basis is called “ternary meter” or “triple meter” in English. “Meter” (a more precise term than the generic and multipurpose “rhythm”) designates the grouping (duple, ternary, etc.) of the pulse.

Verdi writes many of his most memorable scenes in triple meter. In *La traviata*, the *brindisi* [toast] in Act I (CD 1, track 3) fits naturally with the situation: the guests are dancing, as they should be, and no one could object to a waltz. Similarly, no one would object to the analogous situation in Act II; even if people are not dancing, the ternary meter suggests a festive atmosphere (although rendered ambiguous, as we will see, by the minor mode).

Let's consider the occasions after the *brindisi* when characters sing in triple meter:

- Alfredo: “Un dì felice, eterea” [One day, happy and sublime], to which Violetta responds: “Ah se ciò è ver sfuggitemi” [Oh, if that's true, then go away] (CD 1, track 5)
- Violetta: “Ah forse è lui” [Ah, maybe he's the one] (CD 1, track 7)
- Violetta: “Dite alla giovine” [Tell the young lady] (actually in 6/8, a compound duple time signature), to which Germont responds: “Piangi, piangi” [Cry, cry] (CD 1, track 15)

- Violetta: “Ah perché venni, incauta” [Oh, why did I come, the fool] (CD 2, track 4)
- Violetta: “Addio, del passato” [Good bye, lovely and happy dreams of the past] (another 6/8; CD 2, track 9)
- Alfredo, then Violetta: “Parigi, o cara” [We'll leave Paris] (CD 2, track 12)
- Violetta: “Se una pudica vergine” [If an innocent girl] until the moment she dies (CD 2, track 15).

All of these scenes are marked by a lyricism and pathos that is passionate and moving. You can lead the students to the discovery that the ternary meter is a decisive contribution to the lyricism. The choice of meter is therefore another fundamental expressive factor, a further “tool of the trade” to be added to the ones we discussed earlier. We can double-check the efficacy of the meter if we try singing any of the ternary melodies in duple meter. The change will have the effect of a real profanation; the pathos vanishes. (Ex. 6)

There are at least four scenes in ternary meter where instead of lyricism and pathos, the mood is celebratory. The first is the entire Act I duet between Violetta and Alfredo (CD 1, track 5), and the presence of the waltz is easy to explain: in the next room, the guests continue to dance, and its ternary motion pervades all of the dialogue between the two. A similar example occurs at the end of Act II: while there is no dancing, Verdi evokes a festive atmosphere. (It is rendered ambiguous by the minor mode, another “tool of the trade” that brings rich semantic aspects on which teachers can exercise their imaginations; CD 2, track 4). These last two examples are joyous, rather than poignant

Example 6

Andantino

ant—ternary rhythm doesn't always lead to pathos! The first (another 6/8) is Violetta's “Sempre libera” [Always free] (CD 1, track 8); the second is Alfredo's “Dei miei bollenti spiriti” [The fiery spirit] (CD 1, track 10); the words of the libretto themselves can be assumed as “interpretative”—in both cases the character gives vent to his or her own enthusiasm.

The semantic value of ternary rhythm is even more evident if we compare it (again using the comparison strategy) with its opposite: binary rhythm. The entire score of *La traviata* is full of situations in which the melody unfolds in two-beat or four-beat measures. Here we'll discuss only the most representative example, the marvelous duet in Act II. Let's offer a possible interpretation for the students to verify. Our way of walking and even our own body structure is binary: binary-ness in itself has something more concrete and physical than ternary-ness. Binary meter is inevitable for marches; in ternary meter, the third beat removes us from this physical reality. It suspends the step, so to speak, and delays the return of the downbeat on which the measure depends.

Giorgio Germont never expresses himself in


ternary meter! All of his recitative passages are in quadruple meter (an extension of binary), as well as his solos, “Pura siccome un angelo” [Pure as an angel] (CD 1, track 14), “Un dì quando le veneri” [Someday, when your desires] (CD 1, track 15), “Di Provenza il mar, il suol” [The sea and the earth of Provence] (CD 1, track 19).

Germont is revealed as “a square,” so to speak, with the double step of the music lending a military air to the character. It is not surprising that Germont's strong binary character drags Violetta along with him in their long duet; only in “Dite alla giovine sì bella e pura” (CD 1, track 15) does she evade the intransigent despotism of the old man in an act of supreme sacrifice. Germont always sings in binary meter except when the ternary meter of another character requires him to go along.

How would Germont's aria change if it were ternary? This experiment would make it easy for students to see that it would cause a brutal psychological distortion of the character, who would become a frivolous socialite like the other visitors to the salons—exactly the opposite of his true nature. (Ex. 7)

Example 7 A (original)

Andante piuttosto mosso




dolce

Di Pro - ven-za il mar il suol, chi dal cor ti can-cel-lò?

Example 7 B

Andante piuttosto mosso



dolce

Di Pro - ven-za il mar il suol, chi dal cor ti can - cel - lò?

An Elementary Prerequisite

The observations about meter that we make or solicit from the students require a prerequisite: the ability to recognize whether the music is flowing in a binary or ternary meter.¹³ It is an ability that could easily be developed in elementary school if teachers were dedicated to teaching it; unfortunately, this rarely happens. Starting in middle school, we could have the students practice with simple vocal or instrumental exercises, accompanying them with hand gestures: the classic up-down of binary; the one-two-three (down, sideways, up) of ternary; then without hand gestures. At first choose a melody; perform it first in two and later in three, or vice versa. For this exercise, the only variable is the rhythm (the rest doesn't change), and the students will understand.

A famous example of this transformation: the Scottish song "Auld lang syne" is in quadruple time (double binary). But in the 1940 film *Waterloo Bridge* it is transformed into a waltz for the last emotional farewell of the main characters. The "Waltz of the Candles" [*Il valzer delle candele*] had its origin in this old film. [Many performances of this iconic Italian version, which is used as a farewell song for the Boy Scouts, may be found on YouTube.]

Teach them both versions. Have them understand the differences in the character and spirit: the quadruple version more regular and deliberate; the triple version lighter and dancelike.

Again, practice marking the meter of the quadruple version in groups, perhaps beating time or snapping their fingers. Others

might improvise along with the melody, playing instruments or singing. For this experiment, it is essential that the improvisers keep a steady tempo, respecting the beat.

And now, make an important change: the group marking the beat divides in two, alternating one- and two-beat sounds (OOM-pah-pah, OOM-pah-pah); the others improvise, always respecting the beats. The difference from before is strong and obvious—we are now in ternary meter.

The next experiment is more advanced: ask the students to transform a song they know from binary to ternary, and vice versa. The song to be transformed should be memorized. One student marks the new beat into which the song will be transformed. This new accompaniment supports their recognition of the transformation.

As an alternative to accompaniment, movement is an excellent guide. Let's think about transforming a binary song into ternary, for example "Frère Jacques" (also known as "Are You Sleeping" and "Brother John").

Have the students move in a circle to a waltz rhythm. In silence, they try to "feel" "Frère Jacques" as a waltz. The first one who gets the feeling sings the song. Conversely, walking in march step would help get the feeling of binary rhythm for a song that was originally ternary.

Musical Memories

A musical procedure that Wagner developed systematically and that Verdi also recognized, as had others before him, is the *Leitmotiv* [leading motive]: the return of a melody that had been played or sung earlier that is intended to remind

the listener of the earlier situation. Verdi uses the technique at the end of Violetta's earthly existence (CD 2, track 15), giving the love theme from Act I ("A quell'amor, quell'amor ch'è palpito") to two solo violins. Just as Verdi had Violetta *speak* rather than *sing* at the beginning of this act to make her reading of Germont's letter more realistic (CD 2, track 8), at the end the composer wants to create a change in the expressive register by combining speech and music again [marked *parlando* in the score]: Violetta speaks again ("Cessarono gli spasimi del dolore" [My spasms of pain have stopped]), while the *Leitmotiv* in the strings expresses the pathos of the scene as it reminds us of the happy moments of the past.

Giacomo Puccini would have this finale in mind when his Mimì has to die at the end of *La bohème*: "Qui amor, sempre con te!... Le mani... al caldo... e... dormire..." [Here is love, always with you!... My hands... warming... and... to sleep...] Mimì expires on the same A-flat that Verdi uses when Violetta is filled with a false sense of "insolito vigor" [unfamiliar strength]. And just as in *La traviata*, the one-note vocal line is underpinned by the violins, who replay the love theme from Act I: "Cercar non giova" [There's no use looking] and then the motives of "Mi chiamano Mimì" [They call me Mimì] and "Mi piacciono quelle cose" [Those things make me happy]. The students should find a comparison of the two finales stimulating. They will discover a significant difference: while Mimì's final words are sung quietly on A-flat, Verdi asks that after "insolito vigor" on, there must be a *crescendo* of volume, tempo, and register that culminates in the

high note on “oh gioia!” [oh joy!]. Which female do they prefer?

Who is Violetta?

Once the students have become familiar with *La traviata*, at least having listened to the most important scenes in the opera, you can pose the most significant question of all—the one we asked at the beginning: who is Violetta? Is she a courtesan, as Dumas made so plain?

While the libretto by Francesco Maria Piave may evade the question, clouding it with vague allusions, Verdi's music is unequivocal. Violetta shows us nothing to reproach her for: she is a positive and passionate woman who is the victim of a selfish society that surrounds her—a society embodied by Giorgio Germont (and by Alfredo in his jealous rage in Act II)—a woman who sacrifices herself for the good of others and who courageously faces the death she knows is coming. Everything else (prostitution, unscrupulousness, inordinate love of

luxury) are found in the pages of the novel, not the opera. It is really the music that tells us—through the *divisi* violins that emotionally introduce the opera (CD 1, track 1) and return so poignantly at the end (CD 2, track 15) and the intensity of the melodies that communicates the heroine's emotions—the way no literary text ever could. In our capacity as *listeners*, where are we ever shown a prostitute in the opera? The social milieu in which the libretto sets Violetta is rather an opportunity for Verdi to create one of the most moving—and even virtuous—characters of nineteenth-century theater. Listening to Verdi, who would consider Violetta “misled” (*traviata*) anymore, as Piave and Dumas before him had labeled her? With his opera, the composer rendered his heroine synonymous with, or at least as the symbol of, the gift of love.

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NOTES

1. (Boston: Little Brown, 1983), with the caveat that the author confines herself to the libretto and does not concern herself with the expressive world of Verdi.
2. Catherine Clément, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women* (London: Tauris, 1997), 61. In an essay by Philip Gossett in this volume, the story is told more extensively.
3. A Spanish musicologist says that in Verdi's operas “it is the woman who decides the how things will happen—Violetta in *La traviata* or Azucena in *Il trovatore*—even if the woman in Verdi's operas seems far removed from the redemptive image of ‘the eternal feminine’ of German theater. In Verdi they have heroic wills. But they are not exactly ‘heroic’ because Verdi wants to get closer to a depiction of the reality of life, for this is what the artist feels, and in the reality of life there are sacrifices, renunciations, and punishments that are more or less inevitable—not at all heroic in the romantic sense.” In Adolfo Salazar, *La música en Cervantes y otros ensayos* (Madrid: Insula, 1961), 374–375.
4. Another significant difference between Dumas's drama and Piave's libretto: in *La traviata* Giorgio Germont is present at Violetta's death, although he is absent in Dumas. The opera gives Alfredo's father the opportunity to recognize his selfishness and to repent.
5. Alexandre Dumas fils, *Camille (The Lady of the Camellias)*, trans. Edmond Gosse (Springfield, Ohio: P. F. Collier, 1902), 10. The subsequent passages are found on pp. 24–25, 95, and 180–181.
6. This evidence appears in a historical paper on musical pedagogy: Carlo Delfrati, “La musica nella riflessione pedagogica: verso una teoria autonoma dell'educazione musicale,” in *Cultura e scuola*, 87, July–September 1983, 150–171; 88; October–December 1983, 133–154.
7. Interested teachers may wish to consult: Carlo Delfrati, *La voce espressiva* (Milan: Principato, 2001).
8. Valuable reading for everyone: Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi, II: From “Il trovatore” to “La forza del destino”* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).
9. Clément, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women*, 63.
10. Frits Noske, *Dentro l'opera* (Venice: Marsilio, 1993), 317.
11. Ernest Newman, ed. and trans., *Memoirs of Hector Berlioz From 1803 to 1865* (New York: Knopf, 1932), 184–185. For the original French, see Hector Berlioz, *Mémoires* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1969), 278.
12. Noske, *Dentro l'opera*, 207. The next citation is from p. 215.
13. I recommend further exercises in the textbook: Carlo Delfrati, *All'opera insieme/online* (Milan: Principato, n.d.)