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Keywords

Giuseppe Verdi, compositional process, *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *Un ballo in maschera*

Abstracts

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Compositional Emendations in Verdi's Autograph Scores: *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *Un ballo in maschera*

by James A. Hepokoski, Oberlin College

It is by now well known that Verdi's first task in producing a manuscript orchestral score of his mature operas was to lay out a "skeleton score." This is the basic framework or "skeleton" of what will be expanded into the orchestral score--a filling-in of only two or three staves of the large orchestral paper. Only later, and sometimes much later, would the composer return to this skeleton score and fill in the harmonies, their spacings, the instrumental doublings: the entire orchestration. Typically, as Verdi expanded his work orchestrally, he often revised it as well, erasing and scraping away his earlier ideas to replace them with new ones. In principle, then, one ought to be able to "rediscover" the skeleton scores within the autograph manuscripts by ignoring what are clearly later layers of composition and by restoring the relevant erasures and deletions when they are recoverable. This, in effect, retrieves an earlier draft embedded in the autograph score.

This paper concerns a few restored skeleton-score fragments (including restorations of erasures) that differ in provocative ways from their respective final versions in the

autograph scores of *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, and *Un ballo in maschera*. The *Il trovatore* examples deal with deleted ornaments and expanded phrases in Leonora's Cavatina, "Tacea la notte placida," and the Count's "Il balen del suo sorriso," and with an early version of the opening of the Act I "Scena Romanza e Terzetto," the first appearance of the Count di Luna. From the *La traviata* autograph score one may reconstruct an early version of Violetta's celebrated "Addio del passato" that differs in striking ways from the final version, most notably in its absence of oboe interpolations midway through the aria and in a different melodic line at the climactic words, "al desio, / A lei, deh perdona." And from the *Un ballo in maschera* manuscript an early version of Amelia's Act III *preghiera*, "Morro', ma prima in grazia," is recoverable. Here the numerous differences, particularly at cadential points, help to point out central structural relationships--e.g., an important *d* flat, *d* natural conflict--that are far more concealed, but no less central, in the final version. The manuscript scores of Verdi's operas provide a hitherto almost untapped source for evidence of his compositional emendations.