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Giuseppe Verdi, Antonin Dvorak

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If an opera were a spoken play, yet music is still necessary, the result is stage music. Or, put another way: music actually perceived by the characters of an opera as music is stage music. There is a great deal of stage music in Dvořák's late operas, for example in *Rusalka* and *Armida*; but in *Čert á Kača* (*Kate and the Devil*) and *Jakobín* it assumes crucial importance for the plot. In the first of these, Kate is ignored by the male villagers at a dance and initiates the principal dramatic action of the plot by commenting that she would dance even with the devil. The devil Marbuel instantly appears and dances her to hell (Act I). In Act II she dances out of hell. Stage music is even more important in *Jakobín* where three of the principal characters are musicians; there are rehearsals and performances of music in the course of the story; and, in the last act the dramatic climax of the work hinges on a lullaby sung off-stage to the accompaniment of a harp. Furthermore, the opera opens with choral singing in church, and the first words of the hero, Bohuř, is "Hear the Czech singing". Dvořák's correspondence with his librettist, Marie Cervenko-Riegrova, indicates that it was the composer's idea to insert a reference in the opera's first scene to the climactic lullaby of Act III. In fact, some of the text of this scene actually derives from the composer. In toto there are 17 examples of stage music in *Jakobín* as well as a duet by Bohuř and his wife, Julie, extolling the virtues of music.

The body of the paper consists of an analysis of two scenes from the opera. The first, Act I, Scene 2, consists of a village dancing scene, and the second is the dramatically crucial scene with the lullaby in Act III, Scene 5. Dvořák's harmony is examined with particular reference to his penchant for avoiding progressions by falling fifths, sometimes even at

cadence points. Instead he prefers deceptive cadences and, especially, chordal successions whose roots are related by third or, less often, by second.

The structures of the two scenes are a rondo, the dance scene, and strophic song form for the lullaby. It is significant that the songs of operatic stage music are usually organized strophically (e.g. Don Giovanni's *Serenade* and Desdemona's *Willow Song*), reflecting an affinity with folk music which often makes use of that structural approach. Dvořák also uses strophic form extensively, and not only in those compositions qualifying as stage music. It is by far his favorite form for arias in all four late operas. The structure of the earlier scene analyzed in this paper is a rondo, a popular form for dances that are stage music as well as for many that are not.

As a pendant to the paper it was noted that a minuet in Act I of *Jakobín* resembles closely the minuet from the *Festa da ballo* opening *Rigoletto*. As a young man, Dvořák played viola for ten years in a theater orchestra, much of it under Smetana's direction. During that time he played for the first performances in Prague of Verdi's most popular operas including *Rigoletto*. It was also observed that both minuets ultimately derive from the famous minuet in the finale to Act I of *Don Giovanni*. In all three instances the dramatic situation is similar, the pursuit by a lecher of an attractive young woman who is engaged, or married, or in love with someone else.

In closing it was observed that the prolific and innately musical Dvořák was inspired by stage music to write some of his finest operatic music in much the same way that Schubert was inspired to write some of his best songs, that is, by texts relating to music.

* Paper read at a joint meeting of the AIVS and the Greater New York Chapter of the American Musicological Society, February 22, 1992.