The Revision of Recitatives from Il trovatore to Le Trouvère

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Keywords
Giuseppe Verdi, Il trovatore, Le Trouvère, compositional process, revision

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The Revision of Recitatives from *Il trovatore* to *Le Trouvère*

David Lawton, State University of New York, Stony Brook

In 1852 Verdi was involved in a dispute with Giovanni Ricordi over a French translation of *Luisa Miller* that the publisher had commissioned from Benjamin Allafre, without the composer's advice or consent. Although Verdi objected to the translation primarily for financial reasons, he also couched his opposition in artistic terms. In a letter of 12 September 1852 to Ricordi the composer proposed:

As far as *Luisa Miller* is concerned, Mr. Allafre should not have it produced until I return to France, so that I can have it performed under my direction, adding, removing, or changing everything that I think will be necessary. I only reserve a quarter of the author's rights for me, and, of course, the property of whatever pieces I might add. I am satisfied with only a quarter of the author's rights because I also wish that you come to an agreement with the Escudiers; they hoped to earn something from this opera, making a translation with me as was done with *Lombardi*, therefore I would be much obliged if you would throw them a bone to gnaw, as they say.

I warn you that I don't want to have any contact with Mr. Allafre: you should send the vocal score to me in Paris, and I'll take care of the rest.

Apparently these conditions were not met. When the Paris Opéra decided to perform the work in Allafre's translation, Verdi protested both to Roqueplan, the Director of the Opéra, and to Ricordi, largely on the grounds that he did not know the translation. In the end the Paris production was a fiasco. This bitter experience with *Luisa Miller* was one of the main reasons for which Verdi later insisted upon supervising the French translation of *Il trovatore* himself. For the purposes of the present inquiry, the most interesting aspect of the letter quoted above is the composer's concept of "translation." The idea of adding, removing, changing, and composing new pieces certainly goes far beyond what one would expect from a singing translation. In fact, Verdi was contemplating an adaptation along the lines of *Jerusalem*, his revision of *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* for Paris (1847).

Ultimately *Le Trouvère*, the French version of *Il trovatore*, must also be regarded as an adaptation, though not so radical as that of *I Lombardi/Jerusalem*. *Le Trouvère* was developed in two separate stages, and Verdi was directly involved in both. The first was the preparation of a French singing translation. The author was Emilien Pacini, and Verdi collaborated with him in Paris during November 1855. Léon Escudier announced the publication of the piano vocal score of this translation in *La France musicale* on 13 January 1856, and offered it for sale on 27 January. Though entitled *Le Trouvère*, this score, which bears the plate number 1542, is simply *Il trovatore* in French. About the same time, the Parisian publishers Michel Lévy Frères issued a generic libretto of this version.

The second stage was the adaptation, with significant revisions, that the Paris Opéra commissioned late in 1856. Emilien Pacini remained the translator, and his earlier text served as the point of departure for the revision, which is also entitled *Le Trouvère*. Michel Lévy Frères published a new libretto for the premiere, which took place at the Opéra on 12 January 1857. Escudier announced the publication of the new piano-vocal score in *La France Musicale* four days later, and offered it for sale on 8 February. The plate number for the new score is 1648.

The major differences between *Il trovatore* and the definitive version of *Le Trouvère* have been described elsewhere by Julian Budden, David Rosen, and the author of the present study. Here the focus will be on the process of translation itself, including changes in the vocal line that resulted from the application of a French text to music composed for an Italian libretto. These issues will inevitably require some consideration of the differences between French and Italian versification. Jeffrey Langford's ground-breaking article "Text Setting in Verdi's *Jerusalem* and *Don Carlos*" provides methodology and terminology that have proved useful in this investigation. Langford's study focuses on texts and music of set pieces. Here we shall concentrate on recitatives, which present problems of a different sort.

Verdi's revisions of recitatives are particularly revealing, because he was forced to confront significant dissimilarities between French and Italian approaches to recitative, not only in the verbal organization of texts, but also in the way that poetic construction is reflected in the music. Two passages have been selected for close scrutiny: the first from...
The Revisions of Recitatives from Il trovatore to Le Trouvère

Table 1: Il trovatore / Le Trouvère, Act I, Scene 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Il trovatore</th>
<th>Le Trouvère I</th>
<th>Le Trouvère II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(versi sciolti: 9 lines)</td>
<td>(11 lines)</td>
<td>(11 lines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 7</td>
<td>Alert(t)a</td>
<td>ert(t)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All'erta! All'erta! Il Conte Watch out! The Count</td>
<td>On guard! We must stay awake</td>
<td>On guard! We must stay awake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 11</td>
<td>N'è d'uopo attendere vigilando: ed egli Must be served with vigilance;</td>
<td>Le Comte en ce moment The Count at this moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 7</td>
<td>Talor presso i veroni Sometimes, near the balconies</td>
<td>Triste et fidèle amant, Sad and faithful lover,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 7</td>
<td>Della sua cara, intere Of his beloved,</td>
<td>Là soupire Is sighing there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 11</td>
<td>Parlo le notti. He spends whole nights.</td>
<td>En proie au sombre délire, Prey to dark delirium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rhyming couplet</td>
<td>6 7</td>
<td>En proie au sombre délire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gelosa li fieri)</td>
<td>7 6</td>
<td>En proie au sombre délire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealousy's fierce serpents</td>
<td>7 6</td>
<td>D'un amour trop jaloux The torment of too jealous a love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 7</td>
<td>Serpi gli avventa in petto! Are whirring in his breast!</td>
<td>Toujours le tourment le dévère. Consumes him constantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 7</td>
<td>Ned Trovator, che de giardini move In the Troubadour, whose song</td>
<td>Ce Troubadour, qui l'auront,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 11</td>
<td>Notturro il canto, d'un ralle a dritto Rises at night from the gardens,</td>
<td>This troubadour, who since dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 7</td>
<td>Ei teme. (Dalle gravi) He rightly fears a rival.</td>
<td>Ce rival le trouble encore. This rival still troubles him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to symbols:  = elision;  = primary accent (accento commune);  = secondary accent;  = unaccented syllable; || = césure; | = coupe.

the Introduzione to Act I, and the second from the Terzetto for Azucena, the Conte di Luna, and Ferrando in Act III. Each illustrates different aspects of the revision process. Taken together, the examples provide a sense of Verdi's priorities in a singing translation, and demonstrate why he considered his involvement so crucial to the result.

The original Italian text for Ferrando's recitative and the two versions of the French translations are laid out in parallel columns in Table 1. The English translation of Il trovatore is adapted from William Weaver; those of Le Trouvère are mine. Information is also provided on the number of syllables per line, the rhyme scheme (where appropriate), the accent patterns, and the location of césures or coupes in the French texts.

As is normal for a recitative, Salvatore Cammarano cast the Italian text in versi sciolti—unrhymed lines of seven and eleven syllables in free combination. The advantages of versi sciolti for recitative are worth recalling here. Seven- and eleven-syllable lines can be combined because they share similar rhythmic patterns: in a settenario the accents fall on syllables 2-(or 1)-4-6, while in an endecasillabo they are placed on syllables 6-10, 4-8-10, or 2-4-8-10. In both cases, the accents fall on the even-numbered syllables. Flexibility is assured because the librettist is not obliged to rhyme the lines (except for the couplets that invariably signal the end of a recitative, or an important internal articulation). In this example, only lines 4 and 5 rhyme: they are marked with a bracket on the table. Nor is it necessary to contain a single idea or thought within a line of poetry: in versi sciolti enjambment is virtually the norm. In this example, in fact, enjambment occurs between all of the lines. In terms of line endings, this text uses only the piano type, in which the accent falls on the penultimate syllable. The other two types—sdrucciole, in which the accent falls on the antepenultimate syllable, or tronco, in which the accent falls on the last syllable—are not present.

The middle column is the first version of the French translation. Clearly this poetry is organized according to principles that are quite different from those of the Italian text. First of all, there is no French equivalent for versi sciolti. Although lines of different length are freely combined, the syllable count of a given French line often does not match that of its Italian counterpart. Whereas the Italian text combines lines of seven and eleven syllables only, the French translation uses four different line lengths, two even (parisyllabiques: 6 and 8) and two odd (imparisyllabiques: 3 and 7). The total number of lines increased from nine in the Italian to eleven in the French.
The most striking difference between the two texts is surely the rhyme, however. The French text is organized into clear rhyme patterns: the first six lines are in *rimé plate*: AA BB CC, i.e., rhymed couplets. Lines AA and CC are in *rimé féminin*, rhyme that ends in a silent “-e” or its plural “-es,” while lines BB are in *rimé masculin*, in which the rhyming syllable does not include a silent “-e” or its plural “-es.” Since the sixteenth century, French poetry has required an alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes: if line A is masculine, line B must be feminine, etc.\textsuperscript{11}

Parenthetically, it is worth noting that the feminine and masculine line endings of French poetry are analogous to the *piano* and *tronco* endings of Italian poetry; and that there is no equivalent in French poetry for the Italian *sdrucciole* ending. In a French libretto, the silent “-e” or its plural “-es” of a feminine line ending is not included in the syllable count, although it is intended to be sung, and the composer usually sets it as a separate syllable. For that reason, in Table 1 the unaccented syllable marks over final “-e” or “-es” have been enclosed in parentheses.

Returning to the actual texts, lines 7-10 of the first French translation are organized by *rimé embrassée*: D E E D, in which the boundary lines 7 and 10 have masculine endings, while the internal lines 8 and 9 have feminine endings. The last line of the excerpt (11) rhymes with lines 8 and 9.

The right-hand column in Table 1 shows the revised version of the French translation. Although lines 1-2, 7-8, and 10-11 remained the same, the other lines were altered, mostly only in part. In the example, changes are indicated typographically in italics. The revisions affected the end rhymes in lines 3-4, and the syllable count of lines 5 and 6.

I have dwelt at some length on the differences between French and Italian versification, because they clearly have musical implications. That the French translations have

\textit{Continued on page 21}
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Example 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Trouv. II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>veille / en atten- duant l'au-be ver-miel-le. / Le Comte de Linn, notre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouv. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>veille / en atten- duant l'au-be ver-miel-le. / Le Comte en ce mo-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comte / n'it d'ope at- ten- der vi-gil-an-de, ed c'i gli / ta-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Trouv. II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maître, il est là. / Sous les balcons de sa belle il sou- pi- re. / En</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouv. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>triste et fidèle a- mat. / là sou- pi- re. / En</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lor, premo ve- ni / del-la sua ca- ra, in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Trouv. II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proie au plus sombre dé- li- re. /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouv. I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proie au sombre dé- li- re. /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>te-re / pas sa le not-ti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Coro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D'un a- mour si- trop la-loux / tou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Trouv. II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D'un a- mour trop la-foux tou</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20
more lines than the Italian text, that the number of syllables in corresponding lines often differs, that French lines end in rhymes where equivalent Italian lines do not—all these factors have a profound effect on the music, to which we now turn.

The three versions of the vocal line are superimposed over a piano reduction in Example 1. The lowest vocal staff is the original Italian setting, the middle one the Pacini translation of 1856, and the top one the definitive French version of 1857.

Before considering the translation, it will be worthwhile to examine the Italian setting in some detail. In order to arrive at the proper number of syllables per line in the text, Cammarano planned several elisions, indicated in Table 1 by a small curved sign below the affected syllables. Verdi's musical setting respects some of the elisions, but ignores others. In Example 1, elisions that he observes are marked with a solid sign; those he overrides are indicated with a dotted mark. In the opening line, for example, three elisions are necessary for the required syllable count of 7. Verdi sets Ferrando's twofold exhortation "All'erta!" with a repeated musical motive, separated by a rest in m. 29 where the elision should occur. The end of the line ("Il Conte"), which ought to elide with the last syllable of the
second "all'erta!", comes only in m. 36, after the full reprise of the orchestral tutti. The reprise sets off Ferrando's call to attention from the main body of his explanation. In order to appreciate Verdi's solution, one need only imagine a setting that honors the elisions and omits the reprise, as in Example 2.

In Example 1, Verdi also overrides the elisions at mm. 38, 41, and 50 with rests between the affected syllables. In mm. 38 and 41 the rests support the commas in the text, and in m. 50 the rest emphasizes the highly charged word that precedes it: "rivale."

In a similar way, Verdi's musical setting conceals the demarcation of the poetic lines in favor of musical groupings that support the meaning and syntax of the text. In Example 1, the locations of the line endings with respect to the music are shown by diagonal slashes after the final word in each poetic line. The line endings almost disappear in the musical setting. At m. 38, for example, the rest follows "vigilando," the completion of the thought, rather than "egli," the actual line ending; the same observation holds for the rest after "cara" in m. 41, instead of "intero" in m. 42. Moreover, important musical articulations often come in the middle of a line, underscoring the sense of the text (see especially mm. 43 and 51). As far as the prosody is concerned, Verdi employs the usual devices of metric placement and rhythmical duration for accented syllables. The primary accents—the accenti comuni—are placed consistently on the strong first or third beats. Other accented syllables fall on a strong beat or the strong part of a beat. Longer note values are used for accented syllables, shorter ones for unaccented syllables, etc.

In a lyrical setting such as an aria or in one of the static movements of an ensemble, the accento comune would receive the greatest musical emphasis through its special position and function within a phrase. That is not the case in the present recitative. Instead, certain key words are highlighted through various means: the two most strongly emphasized are "notti" at m. 43 and "tene" at m. 51, both of which coincide with tonicizing cadences, the first on f-sharp minor and the second on G major. Both arrivals also establish a new texture and tempo, and both elicit a choral response. Other words that stand out in the musical setting are "All'erta" in mm. 28-29, the first solo vocal utterance in the piece; "Il Conte" in mm. 35-36, the resumption of the solo voice after an orchestral interruption; "attender" in m. 37 through duration and register; "cara" in m. 41 through duration and the re-entrance of the orchestra on a new harmony; "petto" in m. 46 because of the chromatic alteration and the resulting diminished-seventh chord; "Nel Trovatore" in mm. 46-47 because of the re-entrance of the unaccompanied solo voice, and duration; and "giardini" in m. 48 through the prosodic appoggiatura and the support of the strings with a new harmony. Only two of these words coincide with the accento comune of a poetic line: "Conte" at 35-36, and "petto" at 46. Instead, the words that the musical setting marks for consciousness are the ones that actually define the dramatic situation: Ferrando's efforts to keep the men awake while waiting for the Count, who is away wooing his beloved; and the Count's jealousy and torment because of a rival, the Trovatore.

The first version of Pacini's translation—hereafter Trouvère I—succeeds admirably in many respects. The French conveys the basic sense of the Italian, and adheres closely to the rhythmic shape of the original. The translation preserves certain key words as cognates, some even precisely where they occur in the Italian text: "Alerte! alerte!" for "All'erta! all'erta!" in mm. 28-30; "attendant" for "attender" in mm. 36-37; "Troubadour" for "Trovator" in mm. 46-47; and "rival" for "rivale" in mm. 49-50. Other cognates are also present, though not precisely in their original positions: "Le Comte" at 38 for "Il Conte" at 35-36; "jaloux" at 44 for "gelosia" at 43-44; and "ses chants" at 48 for "il canto" at 48-49.

Departures from the rhythm of Il trovatore involve primarily the division of some durations into shorter values, as in mm. 38, beat 3, and 39, beat 3, or the combination of shorter values into longer ones, as in m. 40. Two prosodic appoggiaturas in the Italian setting disappear in the French version: m. 49, where "doux" replaces "canto," and m. 50, where "[ri]-val" stands for "[ri]-vale." Small differences of this sort are to be expected in any singing translation. On the whole, at this stage Pacini and Verdi attempted to retain the rhythm of the original wherever possible.

Although the translation is faithful to the sense and the rhythm of the Italian, its overall effect is curiously square in comparison. The main reason for this is the versification discussed earlier. The regularly rhyming French lines have a formality that contrasts pointedly with the prose-like quality of the Italian versi sciolti. Because the French lines
are fitted so closely to music composed for an Italian text, their rhymes strike the ear with even greater force. Where in *Il trovatore* Verdi had used rests to emphasize particular words or to set off groups of words that belong together syntactically, in *Trouvère I* the very same rests mark the beginnings and endings of poetic lines. Furthermore, in the Italian original, even though Verdi kept the *accento comune* on the strong first and third beats, he went out of his way to mask the lineation in the musical phrasing. In the French, all but one of the primary accents ("jaloux" in m. 44) fall on the downbeat, and the poetic lines are audibly synchronized with the musical phrases. Since the music does not change fundamentally, the factors that emphasize particular words remain the same in the French version, but the actual words are different. Taken as a group, the words highlighted in the French translation do not summarize the content so clearly as did their Italian counterparts. Moreover (and this is perhaps the most important point), almost all of the words singled out for emphasis in the French coincide with the primary accent at the end of a line. As we have seen, this was not at all the case in the Italian setting.

In the French translation, the way in which the musical setting interacts with the verbal organization differs fundamentally from that of the Italian version. Is this simply the result of applying a French text to music composed for Italian words, or is there another compositional tradition at work? Before turning to the

Example 3: Halévy, *La Juive*, Act I, scene 1

[Sheet music image]
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revision of the French translation, it will be useful to consider this question briefly. To that end I have examined some recitatives from operas composed to French texts by three of Verdi’s contemporaries: Halevy’s La Juive (Paris, 1835), Meyerbeer’s Les Huguenots (Paris, 1836), and Donizetti’s La favorite (Paris, 1840). An excerpt from the opening scene of Halevy’s opera will serve as a representative example (see Example 3 p. 23-24).

Eugène Scribe’s text comprises twelve lines, most of which are Alexandrines—lines of 12 syllables divided into two hemistichs by a césure after the sixth syllable. Only three are not: line 2 (mm. 9 with upbeat through 11), which is an octosyllabe (8 syllables); and lines 4 and 5 (mm. 14-17), which are both décasyllabes (10 syllables), each of which is divided into two hemistichs by a césure after the fourth syllable. The rhyme scheme of the text is MBBCACC DD, in which B and C represent masculine endings; all the others are feminine. In the example, the location of the line endings, césures, and primary accents have been indicated as before. Significantly, all but one of the primary accents at the ends of lines and the secondary accents before a césure fall on the downbeat. The only exception is the end of line 5, in mm. 16-17: a 10-syllable line. Further, the endings of most hemistichs and most lines are followed by rests. The few exceptions to this principle are easily explained. In m. 23 the lines overlap where Albert interrupts Leopold. In mm. 24-25, 27-29, and 33 the absence of a rest at the end of a line or hemistich is the consequence either of a weak césure—i.e., the lack of a break in the sense of the words—or an enjambment between one line and the following one. Finally, most of the time the orchestral punctuation either comes directly after, or coincides with the accented syllable at the end of a hemistich or line, lending special emphasis to that particular word. The Meyerbeer and Donizetti recitatives show similar characteristics. More research would be
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23

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she overtaken? She has been captured!

24

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

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Trouv. I

Fernand:

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Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

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Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?

Conse:

Trouv. II

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv. I

Fernand:

Was she captured?

Oui, c'est ta-sa.

Conse:

Trouv.

Fernando:

Was she captured? Have you seen her?
David Lawton
needed to confirm the hypothesis, but the evidence presented here suggests that the practice of emphasizing the poetic lineation in the musical setting was a French tradition.

Returning to Il trovatore, the 1857 revision of the French translation—hereafter Trouvère II—involves several changes in the text and some telling musical alterations. In example 1, the music for this version will be found on the top vocal staff.

In mm. 38-40 the modified text supplies important new information: the Count's name and his relationship to Fernand and his men, and the place where he is wooing his beloved ("sous le balcon de sa belle," corresponding with "presso i veroni della sua cara"). The additional text syllables are responsible in turn for some interesting musical changes in these measures. Other textual differences are the interpolation of the adverb "plus" in m. 42, and the substitution of "Trouvère" for "Troubadour" in mm. 46-47. The addition of the word "plus" in m. 42 had musical consequences. To begin with, the first version of the translation retains the prosodic appoggiatura, a on the downbeat of m. 42, originally intended to support the piano line ending "[in-]tere," even though the two final syllables of the Italian word were replaced by two monosyllabic words in French. In the revision, the appoggiatura, which no longer has any purpose, was removed. In addition, the rhythmic position of the following preposition "au" was shifted a half-beat later. The resulting durational increase gives more emphasis to the noun "proie," and the new rhythmic position for "au plus" sounds more natural.

There are several spots where the text remained the same, but the music was subtly revised. In m. 36, for example, the rhythm was changed in order to permit the elision between "veille" and "en." Because this elision occurs between the last syllable of one line and the first of the next, it is not strictly required. In observing the elision, however, the new musical setting clarifies the enjambment between the two lines. By removing the eighth rest after "veille," Verdi also masked the end-rhymes on the downbeats of mm. 36 and 38. The musical setting of the new text in mm. 38-39 similarly conceals the masculine
Example 5: Il trovatore / Le Trouvere, Act IV, Scene I

a) Trovatore

La incolpo superbo

Conte di malefizio, onde asseria

Còlto un bambin suo figlio... Essa bruciata

Venne ov'arde quel foco!

Ahi! sciagurata!

---

b) Trouvere I

Un seigneur orgueilleux

D'avoir sur un enfant

Jeter un sortilège!

---

c) Trouvere II

Un seigneur orgueilleux

D'avoir osé sur un enfant

Jeter un sortilège!

---

Table 2: Il trovatore / Le Trouvere, Act II, Scene 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Il trovatore</th>
<th>Le Trouvere I</th>
<th>Le Trouvere II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La incolpo superbo</td>
<td>Un seigneur orgueilleux</td>
<td>Un seigneur orgueilleux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conte di malefizio, onde asseria</td>
<td>l'accusa faussement l'accusa</td>
<td>faussement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Còlto un bambin suo figlio... Essa bruciata</td>
<td>D'avoir sur un enfant</td>
<td>D'avoir osé sur un enfant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venne ov'arde quel foco!</td>
<td>Jeté son sortilège!..</td>
<td>Jeter un sortilège!..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahi! sciagurata!</td>
<td>Ô sacrilege!</td>
<td>Ô sacrilege!..</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three musical settings of these texts are given in Example 6.
end rhymes "Luna" and "là." These details mitigate the effect of squareness that was so evident in the first French version, and as a result, the definitive French setting comes closer to the prose-like quality of the original Italian.

In mm. 48 and 49, the small musical changes remove some awkwardness in prosody that resulted, in Trouvère I, from the retention of the rhythms designed for the Italian texts. The new rhythmic shapes for "redit ses chants" in m. 48, and "ce rival" in m. 49 sound more natural, because they avoid inappropriate musical accents on the weak syllables "re-" and "ce".

In the recitative from Ferrando's narrative in Act I, we have observed Verdi attempting to achieve a more idiomatic French declamation through a combination of word changes – involving both replacements and additions – in conjunction with appropriate musical adjustments. In example 4 (pp. 25-28), from the Terzetto for Azucena, the Count and Ferrando in Act II, Verdi's well-known desire for brevity manifests itself in the revision of the translation, in which some words and music are removed.

The example reveals that Trouvère II is some three measures shorter than either Trouvatore or Trouvère I, but there is also an instance of textual economy where the number of measures is not affected. We shall focus on mm. 20-23, 24-27, and mm. 34-37, using the numbering of the Italian score.

In the first version of the French translation, mm. 20-23 adhered strictly to the pitches and rhythms composed for the Italian words. However, the content of the French text did not correspond exactly with that of the Italian. Important information was left out of the French, perhaps because of the requirements of rhyme. Thus the whole
reason for the pursuit of Azucena—the fear that she might be a spy—is missing. In its place is an overly wordy description of the pursuit itself. In the rapid tempo of the passage, the adjective “vigilant” and the adverbial phrase “de loin” only obscure comprehension. In Trouvère II, by compressing the text to the essential subject (“soldat”), verb pair and object (“court et l’appelle”), and by slowing down the rhythm of the vocal delivery, Verdi assured that the action would emerge clearly.

In mm. 24-27, the meaning of the text in Trouvère I closely matched that of Il trovatore, but the concluding line—Elle est sur ma trace—had no counterpart in the Italian. In all likelihood, this liberty in translation is related to the need for a rhyme with the following line, which ends with the word “grâce” in m. 29. In Trouvère I, mm. 24-26, the exchange “Et tu la vis?”—“Non; mais j’ai reçu l’avis” was derived from the Italian. In the context of the new line “Elle est sur ma trace,” this conversation is superfluous, and for Trouvère II Verdi deleted both the words and the music. Now “Elle est sur ma trace” follows “Oui certes” directly.

The revision of mm. 34-37 (using the numbering of the Italian score) reveals a similar concern for brevity. The first version preserves the rhythms of the Italian setting. However, the phrase “avec audace” in mm. 35-36 is unnecessary, and the imperative “ne vas pas me mentir” in mm. 36-37 lacks the force of the Italian “E trema dal mentir.” In the revision, an entire measure was deleted, removing the words “avec audace.” For the imperative, the new translation was brought much closer to the Italian. “Et tremble de mentir” retains not only the rhythm of the original, but even most of the same vowels and consonants. Indeed, the use of cognates in the revision restores the effect of parola scenica present in the original Italian, but compromised in the first French version.

Two additional aspects of the translation of recitative should be mentioned briefly. First, there are a number of cases in which Verdi remained satisfied with the translation, but felt compelled to revise the musical setting in the interest of more idiomatic delivery. In the scena of Leonora’s Act IV aria, for example, he made numerous small adjustments to the rhythm and contour of Ruiz’s opening line where retention of the music composed for Italian words had resulted in faulty French declamation (see Example 5, p. 29). Although no text was changed, the music of the final version sounds almost as it had been composed expressly for the French.

In Trouvère I the pitches and rhythms are identical to those of the Italian setting, except for the downbeats of mm. 12, 13, and 16, where the prosodic appoggiaturas in Trovatore were removed because of the masculine line endings in the French translation. In this first version there are several points where the rhythm of the vocal line spoils the declamation of the French text. Particularly noticeable are the undue emphasis on unimportant words (“de,” “le”) or weak syllables (“voi-ci,” and “su-bit”) on the third beats of mm. 12, 14, 15, and 16. Other problems in the declamation of this first version are the pitches of the setting of “C’est là”, in which the anacrusis is on a higher pitch, and therefore stands out somewhat in spite of its weak metric position and short rhythmic duration; the scansion of “victime” in m. 13; and the relative weakness of the accented final syllable of “prisonnier” in mm. 15-16. Verdi’s subtle manipulations of pitch and rhythm address and resolve all of these problems in Trouvère II.

Secondly, there are instances in which attention to problems of declamation led to further musical revisions. In the scena of Azucena’s great second-act narrative “Condotta ell’era in ceppli,” for example, the French text at the climax of Azucena’s last phrase did not fit the original music convincingly. With the addition of a few new words and several musical alterations, Verdi improved the declamation, but he did not stop there. He also rewrote both the remainder of the phrase after the climax and Manrico’s response.

The added words resolve a problem of declamation—a problem in the first draft of the French text that was the result of a too strict adherence to the music composed for the Italian text. Table 2 juxtaposes the Italian text with the two French versions. (see p. 29)

The Italian text consists of four eleven-syllable lines—the last four versi scoli in the recitative. Each line ends piano, the passage begins in the middle of a line, and the last two lines rhyme, as they usually do at the end of a recitative. In the first version of the French text there are five lines, not of the same length. The passage starts at the beginning of a nine-syllable line, in rime feminine with the preceding line. A line of 12 syllables follows, in rime masculine with the next line of six syllables. The passage ends with two lines in rime feminine, the first of seven and the second of five syllables. In the musical example it is immediately evident that French versification was the reason for the change in the rhythm of the vocal line. In the first version of the French text, the lack of two notes present in the Italian version—the b’ on beat 3 of m. 16, and the appoggiatura, a’ on the downbeat of m. 18—are also a consequence of French versification. In the Italian text the words had two syllables, and neither one was located at the end of a line. In the French text, on the other hand, both notes coincide with the end of their respective lines, which rhyme. Therefore, both the b’ in m. 16 and the a’ in m. 18 were superfluous in the French setting, and were removed.

The revision of the French text resolves a problem of declamation, and the solution leads to other musical
The Revisions of Recitatives from *Il trovatore* to *Le Trouvère*

changes as well. Even though the French language does not have the tonic accents of the Italian language, the agogic and dynamic accent on the first, relatively weak syllable of the verb "avoir" in the first French version (m. 17) was unnatural. After a small revision of two lines of the first text—the addition of the word "osé" in the first line and the change of a word from a participle ("jeter") to an infinitive ("jeter"); in the second one, Verdi added an upbeat of three notes to m. 17, displacing the poetic text so that the strong syllable of the word "osé" now coincides with the musical accent of the phrase. The revision of the end of this phrase, after the word "osé," is quite interesting. The substitution of the tied e for the passing e in m. 17 is a consequence of the new text. The replacement of c-b' by b'-a' at the end of the measure might also have its origin in the translation. As we have seen, the appoggiatura, a' at the beginning of the next measure already disappeared in the first French version, because of the versification. Perhaps Verdi sensed a gap in the melodic line between b' and g'-sharp. It is possible that the descent to the low a at the end of the phrase was made to favor the low register of Adelaide Borghi-Mamo's voice.12 Elsewhere in *Le Trouvère* Verdi makes use of the extreme low register in Azucena's part. The new version of Manrico's exclamation in mm. 20-22 was necessary to create a logical continuation with Azucena's revised melodic line.

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This essay has focused on recitatives, partly because they have received less attention in the literature, but mainly because the issues posed by the translation process are revealed so clearly in them. In his efforts to arrive at a satisfactory translation, Verdi was guided by many of the same artistic principles that he communicated to his Italian librettists: brevity and clarity, directness of expression, the use of certain key words—parole sceniche—that "sculpt" the dramatic situation, and so forth. In a translation, however, these concerns had to be addressed within the framework of different poetic and musical conventions. The process involved painstaking attention to minute detail at both stages, as we have seen. Although it is conceivable that someone else besides Verdi could have done the work, it is unlikely that the result would have turned out as well as it did. In fact, the final version of *Le Trouvère* enjoyed an enormous success in Paris. According to the French historian Théodore de Lajarte, it was the only translated work, aside from Donizetti's *Lucie de Lammermoor*, that truly succeeded at the Opéra.13 Of course, more than an effective singing translation was required for such a success, but it is clear that Verdi considered his direct involvement in the translation a crucial part of the larger task of adapting his Italian score to the requirements of the French stage. From what we have studied here, we can now understand why Verdi opposed so vigorously Allafre's translation of Luisa Miller in 1852, and also what he might have meant when he warned Ricordi in 1855 not to consent too readily to productions of his works in Paris: "You know through experience that my operas are impossible here without my help."14

NOTES

1 The present essay is a slightly expanded and revised version of a paper that I first gave at a conference on Verdi's French operas organized by the American Institute for Verdi Studies and hosted by Sarasota Opera during the 1994 season, on the occasion of that company's U.S. premiere performances of *Les vêpres siciliennes* in the original language. The original title of the talk was "Wrestling with recitatives in the translation of *Trouvère* ."


4 *La France musicale* 20, no. 2 (13 January 1856): 16.


14 "Tu lo sai per esperienza le mie opere senza il mio aiuto qui sono impossibili." Verdi to Tito Ricordi, 8 July 1855, in Franco Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan: Ricordi, 1998), II, 298.