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**Dramatic exposition and musical structure in Puccini's operas**

**Greenwald, Helen M., Ph.D.**

**City University of New York, 1991**

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**Dramatic Exposition and Musical Structure in Puccini's Operas**

by

**Helen M. Greenwald**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate  
Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
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York.**

1991

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**Abstract****Dramatic Exposition and Musical Structure in  
Puccini's Operas****by****Helen M. Greenwald****Adviser: Professor Allan W. Atlas**

Nearly every aspect of Puccini's operatic canon--whether scene type, set piece, or orchestral interlude--is represented in his first acts. Puccini's first acts project in the microcosm the musical catalogue of an entire work, much in the same way that the smaller details within those acts can be shown to project the macrostructure of the scene or the act in its entirety. And it is in the first acts that Puccini grapples with and solves in a most individual way some of the most important problems of the drama, be they musical or spoken: how to capture the interest of the audience, how to introduce the main characters, and how to present the argument. Puccini was equally at home in his one-act operas as in his full-length operas, and

he realized his own powers of musical and dramatic invention just as completely within these tighter, smaller structures.

This dissertation uses Puccini's first acts and one-act operas as a laboratory sample for the study of tonality, rhythm, vocal discourse, texture, and time as they pertain to the large-scale musical and dramatic organization of his works. The first part of the dissertation is topical and deals with all of the works. It quite literally begins with the first event of each opera--the beginning--and grows progressively from a discussion of the opening curtain to consider the structure of the entire first act or one-act opera. There are individual chapters on beginnings, rhythm, tonality, vocal discourse, time and light, and, finally, texture and the macrostructure. The second part of the dissertation is a detailed study of Acts I and II of La Bohème. In addition to examining the combined structure of the two acts and shedding some light on the details of its genesis and composition, this section of the dissertation demonstrates how the discussion and methodology of the first part may be applied to a single work.

## Preface

Puccini's operas have probably been too popular for their own good. Indeed, many of them are so well-known to both trained musicians and the general opera-going public that they are nearly household names. His heroes and heroines are characters we are likely to have met as students, since La Bohème is often the first opera introduced to young children as well as to undergraduates in a music appreciation course.<sup>1</sup> I used it in my own music appreciation classes, long before the notion of a doctoral dissertation that would concentrate on it was part of my conscious existence, and I have continued to use it. Such popularity, however, can discourage scholarship, even though many of the basic tools for research into Puccini's operas have been available for some years: autograph manuscripts of all the operas, except for La Rondine, are housed in the Archivio Storico of G. Ricordi & C. in Milan, as are the copialettere, copies of correspondence between the publishing house and the composer.<sup>2</sup> Piano-vocal scores of all

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1. Moreover, Puccini's works have become almost ubiquitous in the movies (e.g., Moonstruck, Fatal Attraction, New York Stories, A Room with a View, Serpico) and television (usually as background to advertisements for a wide range of things from wine to floor covering).

2. G. Ricordi has been most generous in making these materials available to scholars.

the operas are widely available, as are orchestral scores for most.<sup>3</sup> There are also currently available various collections of letters,<sup>4</sup> a major English-language biography,<sup>5</sup> a preliminary analytical study,<sup>6</sup> and a bibliographical work.<sup>7</sup> The taint of success, however, can be a very powerful impediment. According to Roger Parker, "this same success is the cause of automatic suspicion, the suggestion usually being that the composer must have cut artistic corners in the pursuit of immediate effect."<sup>8</sup> It is an attitude that

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3. See Scores and Librettos, pp. xxvi-xxviii, for the editions of the scores I have used in my study.

4. The major ones include: Eugenio Gara, ed., Carteggi pucciniani (Milan: Ricordi, 1958); Giuseppe Pintorno, ed., Puccini: 276 lettere inedite: Il fondo dell'Accademia d'Arte a Montecatini Terme (Milan: Nuove Edizioni, 1974); Arnaldo Marchetti, ed., Puccini com'era (Milan: Edizioni-Curci, 1973); Giuseppe Adami, ed., Epistolario (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1928; translated by Ena Makin as Letters of Giacomo Puccini (London: J.B. Lippincott, 1931; revised edition London: Harrap, 1974.)). Additional letters have been discovered recently in Piacenza by Jürgen Maehder.

5. Mosco Carner, Puccini: A Critical Biography, 2nd edition (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1974; rpt. 1988).

6. William Ashbrook, The Operas of Puccini (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968; rpt. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

7. Cecil Hopkinson, Bibliography of the Works of Giacomo Puccini (New York: Broude Brothers, 1968). Hopkinson's work needs updating to include, for example, the collection of manuscripts in The Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

8. Quoted from Parker's Foreword to the 1985 edition of Ashbrook, The Operas, p. v. This suspicion, however, is not the product only of contemporary thinking. It was born during Puccini's lifetime, and fostered, in particular, by the polemics of Fausto Torrefranca, Giacomo Puccini e l'opera internazionale (Turin: Fratelli Bocca-Editori, 1912).

has cast a shadow on serious criticism of Puccini's works and inspired such negative (and unsupported) observations as that made by Donald Jay Grout: "Puccini's music. . .often sounds better than it is. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Yet condescending statements about extremely popular works of art have hindered research into the work of many other important composers, including both Verdi and Tchaikovsky. But Verdi's operas, once judged by the intellectual elite as too popular to merit study, are now closely scrutinized by many in what has become a rich and popular field of inquiry. Puccini, however, the heir to Verdi's legacy and the long-time subject of lightweight criticism and little more than reminiscences of friends and acquaintances,<sup>10</sup> is only now beginning to receive attention from serious scholars. There is a "new wave" of Puccini studies fostered mainly by well-established scholars seeking untapped resources. Although still comparatively few in number, current publications include opera guides that appeal to both laymen and scholars and several more serious and focused studies on specific problems in individual works.<sup>11</sup>

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9. A Short History of Opera, 2nd edition (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 445.

10. The list of such efforts is lengthy.

11. See, for example, Mosco Carner, Giacomo Puccini: 'Tosca', Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, Giacomo Puccini: 'La bohème', Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Within these volumes two essays are particularly noteworthy: Roger Parker, "Analysis: Act I in perspective," Tosca, pp. 117-42, and William Drabkin, "The musical language of La bohème," La bohème, pp. 80-101.

Despite this "new wave," however, there is still much to be done, and I had the pleasurable, but sometimes difficult, experience of being faced with a nearly wide-open field from which to choose a topic. One obvious course that I rejected was to study some aspect of a single opera. I felt that the absence of any comprehensive analytical study of Puccini's works warranted a topic that would take in all of his operas and lay the groundwork for other studies.<sup>12</sup> The fact that Puccini wrote only twelve

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Recent musical analytical studies include those by Allan Atlas: "Puccini's Tosca: A New Point of View," Studies in the History of Music, Vol. 3: The Compositional Process (1990--in press), and "Crossed Stars and Crossed Tonal Areas in Puccini's Madama Butterfly," 19th-Century Music 14 (1990). Recent source-related articles include: Julian Budden, "The genesis and literary source of Giacomo Puccini's first opera," Cambridge Opera Journal 1 (1989), pp. 79-85; Arthur Groos, "Return of the Native: Japan in Madama Butterfly/Madama Butterfly in Japan," Cambridge Opera Journal 2 (1989), pp. 167-94; and Suzanne Scherr, "Editing Puccini's Operas," Acta Musicologica 62 (1990), pp. 62-81. Jürgen Maehder has made several contributions, including source studies of La Bohème and the collection of essays, Esotismo e colore locale nell'opera di Puccini (Pisa: Giardini Editori, 1985), which he edited. Furthermore, a new and "critical" edition of some of the operas is currently underway at G. Ricordi & Co. in Milan.

Among completed dissertations are Gennaro Anthony D'Ecclesiis, "The Aria Techniques of Giacomo Puccini: A Study in Musico-Dramatic Style," Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1961 and, more recently, Kii-Ming Lo, "'Turandot' auf der Opernbühne," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Heidelberg, 1988. Related works include Peter D. Wright, "The Musico-Dramatic Techniques of the Italian Verists," Ph.D. Dissertation, Eastman School of Music, 1965, which contains a single chapter on Il Tabarro, and Kenneth Schuller, Verismo Opera and the Verists, Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University, 1960. There is one other American dissertation currently in progress at the University of Chicago: Suzanne Scherr, "Puccini's 'Manon Lescaut': Compositional Process, Stylistic Revisions, and Editorial Problems."

12. Both Carner, Puccini, and Ashbrook, The Operas, contain critical analyses of all the operas. These observations are often useful and

operas improved the feasibility of such an undertaking. Furthermore, I wanted to explore a single principle through the composer's complete oeuvre. It had to be a topic that also combined musical and dramatic analysis.

In my search for the right idea I took particular notice of remarks by Giuseppe Adami, one of Puccini's librettists, friends, and biographers,<sup>13</sup> Mosco Carner, Puccini's principal English-language biographer, and Joseph Kerman, who has written about opera, but not sympathetically about Puccini.<sup>14</sup> Adami recalls that Puccini repeatedly worried about how to begin his operas.<sup>15</sup> while Carner, in discussing Puccini's dramaturgy, notes that:

The full measure of Puccini's dramatic mastery is seen in those difficult openings where he has to deal with a group of characters and where the action shows constant variations in momentum and mood.<sup>16</sup>

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perceptive, but they are generally superficial and not intended to be thorough.

13. His librettos include La Rondine, Il Tabarro, and Turandot. Adami wrote two biographical works about Puccini: Puccini (Milan: S.A. Fratelli Treves Editori, 1935; 2nd edition, 1938) and Il romanzo della vita di Giacomo Puccini, 3rd edition (Milan and Rome: Rizzoli, 1942).

14. See Opera as Drama, revised edition, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), which contains well-known and even infamous remarks about Puccini.

15. Adami, Puccini, p. 103. Puccini's remarks are quoted in full in Chapter One.

16. Puccini, p. 286.

Kerman's remarks, in his newly revised Opera as Drama, however, deal with larger issues. He notes, "there has been no attempt at a systematic presentation of music's role in operatic dramaturgy." He admits that his own methodology is "ad hoc."<sup>17</sup>

Such pointed remarks about Puccini's interest in his operatic openings, together with Kerman's comment about the absence of a systematic analytical approach to music and drama in opera, led me specifically to Puccini's first acts and, eventually, to his one-act operas. I realized that not only did Puccini's curtain-raisers combine tradition and originality, but also that his first acts--his expositions--contain the most abundant examples of his gifts as a composer and dramaturge. It is here

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17. Opera as Drama, p. 214. There are some studies on the structure of individual scene types in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century works, but the problem of the progress of the drama and its musical setting in late-nineteenth-century Italian opera needs further attention. See, for example: Philip Gossett, "Verdi, Ghislanzoni, and Aida: The Uses of Convention," Critical Inquiry 1 (1974), pp. 291-334; Jay Nicolaisen, Italian Opera in Transition, 1871-1893 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); John Platoff, "Music and Drama in the 'Opera Buffa' Finale: Mozart and His Contemporaries in Vienna, 1781-1790," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1984; Scott Balthazar, "Evolving Conventions in Italian Serious Opera: Scene Structure in the Works of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi, 1810-1850," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1985; and Harold Powers, "'La solita forma' and 'The Uses of Convention'," Acta Musicologica 59 (1987), pp. 65-90. Martin Chusid, A Catalog of Verdi's Operas, Music Indexes and Bibliographies (Hackensack: Joseph Boonin, 1974), is very useful as it provides the nomenclature Verdi used to designate various numbers and scene types, and Gossett, 'Anna Bolena' and the Artistic Maturity of Gaetano Donizetti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

that he grapples with and solves in a most individual way some of the most important problems of the drama, be they musical or spoken: how to capture the interest of the audience, how to introduce the main characters, and how to present the argument. I became interested in the expository act as a totality, a comprehensive, integrated structure. And I gained an incentive to follow this line of thought when I learned that most of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas shared a singular structural feature: a division into two parts.<sup>18</sup> I soon came to the conclusion that most of the one-act works were fashioned after first-act models and that they bore not only the characteristic division into two parts, but also employed many of the form-defining techniques that were evident in the first acts of full-length works. I began to see that I had the material for a study that could not only satisfy the need for a "grass-roots" piece of research on a still-neglected composer, but one in which I might also explore a rigorous approach to the musical and dramatic analysis of late nineteenth-century Italian operas that deviate from primo ottocento forms. Furthermore, the topic raised an aesthetic issue that interested me very much--that of beginnings: what happens in the theater at the moment that the silence is broken or when the curtain is raised?

I rejected an opera-by-opera approach early on in my research, since I found that by treating the subject topically (at least initially), by discussing

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18. It is a feature that Carner, Puccini, pp. 287-88, has noted, but has not discussed in much detail. See Chapter Six of the present study, in which these divisions and their defining features are summarized.

individual compositional procedures or musical and dramatic elements, I could cover the most ground and create the most interesting and useful discourse. At about the same time, during my analysis of the exposition of La Bohème, I found convincing evidence--both musical and documentary--that even after Acts I and II had been separated (they had originally been conceived as two parts of one act), Puccini continued to think of them as a single unit as he composed the music. La Bohème was a watershed for Puccini, and my analysis of the musical structure of its exposition, and its opening in medias res, suggested that I had found an appropriate and interesting subject for the in-depth study of the techniques I wished to discuss in my topical chapters.

The dissertation is thus divided into two parts. The first part quite literally begins with the first event of each opera--the beginning--and grows progressively from a discussion of the opening curtain to consider the structure of the entire first act or one-act opera. In this "exposition" I establish the characteristics of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas that are common to most, if not all of his works. My presentation in each chapter begins broadly and then centers on selected works that either demonstrate a particular point or make an exception to it. My choice of topics for these initial chapters was based upon my consideration of: (1)

Puccini's personal concern with the opening curtain,<sup>19</sup> (2) simple musical premises, and (3) basic components of opera and the theater. There are individual chapters on beginnings, rhythm, meter, vocal discourse, time and light, and, finally, texture and the macrostructure. In the second part of the dissertation, I apply the methodology of the first half to the examination of a single work, more specifically, the first two acts of La Bohème, which, as I shall argue again, were thought of as a single structural unit.

My concept of structure in opera generates from basic principles that apply to any configuration in nature or in art: "form" is determined by repetition and contrast. I found this axiom, combined with my ongoing consciousness of the "classical" precepts of music and the conventions of primo ottocento opera, to be most useful when dealing with the musically continuous structure of most of Puccini's single acts. My approach to these works began with a structural analysis of the libretto, using methodology established by scholars of the theater.<sup>20</sup> My musical analysis is based in

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19. See Luigi Ricci, Puccini interprete di se stesso (Milan: Ricordi, 1954), pp. 13-14, who quotes Puccini as having said, "Il sipario inteso come musica." [The curtain is understood as part of the music.] Puccini's concern in this matter also extends to the closing curtain. See also, Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 149.

20. See, for example: Manfred Pfister, The Theory and Analysis of Drama, translated by John Halliday, European Studies in English Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), originally published as Das Drama (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977); Bernard Beckerman, Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Method of Analysis (New York: Drama-Book Specialists, 1979); and Jackson Barry, Dramatic Structure: The Shaping of Experience (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

part upon Schenkerian principles, modified to accommodate the needs of the longer narrative form of opera. The graphs thus represent both an application and a modification of these theoretical concepts. The bass-line graphs are employed to exhibit motion over a large space, while upper voices are provided only where they enhance a more detailed study of a particular section. Furthermore, the graphs provide an ideal format in which to represent visually the simultaneous course of two linear art forms--music and drama. Thus, I was able to illustrate in what I hope is a clear and simple fashion the coordination of such elements as, for example, lighting and important tonal events. And finally, my conclusions are based almost entirely upon the "finished" operas. I have used almost exclusively the widely-available piano-vocal scores that are listed under Scores and Librettos. Mine is not a study that deals with orchestration, and I have enlisted orchestral scores only occasionally, as a point of instrumentation reinforces my argument.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, although the autographs of the operas added a dimension to my own personal knowledge and experience of Puccini that is profound, my work is not a study of these sources. I have used them specifically for support and enhancement, as my study of

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Press, 1970).

21. Others have dealt with Puccini's orchestration. See, for example, Norbert Christen, Giacomo Puccini: Analytische Untersuchungen der Melodik, Harmonik und Instrumentation (Hamburg: Wagner, 1978); and Hartwig Bögel, Studien zur Instrumentation in den Opern Giacomo Puccinis, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tübingen, 1977.

La Bohème, in particular, demonstrates. Most of all, I listened to Puccini's operas, and, when possible, I performed them--not only recently, but over the course of my career as a professional cellist. I have also played some of Puccini's instrumental works, and it is especially through this experience that I became aware of his innate sense of formal symmetry and balance, the natural "ear" for musical structure (even without text) that he brought to the composition of his operas.<sup>22</sup>

Many critics, even his supporters, have come close to apologizing for Puccini. Typical of this type of defense is Grout's remark:

Puccini was not one of the great composers, but within his own limits--of which he was perfectly aware--he worked honorably and with mastery of his technique.<sup>23</sup>

I offer this work without apology. It is the culmination of my life of listening to opera. And in the many happy hours in the last three years that I spent listening to and studying Puccini's operas I became increasingly convinced that his music is every bit as good as it sounds.

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22. Some analysts have noted Puccini's propensity for fashioning his works as instrumental structures. See especially, Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 36, and George Bernard Shaw, Music in London 1890-1904 (London, 1950), vol. III, p. 219.

23. A Short History of Opera, pp. 444-45. See also, Carner, Puccini, p. 245, who notes that "he was a potentially great dramatic composer who was prevented from attaining his full stature by the limitations and contradictions in his make-up."

## Acknowledgements

When I was beginning my Master's work, one of my professors told our musicological methods class never to choose a dissertation topic that we could not face each morning with enthusiasm. I got that part right. Working on Puccini's operas has been a labor of love--an effort I looked forward to every day. The other piece of advice that this same professor might have offered, but didn't, was to choose the right adviser and the right committee. I got that right anyway. I wish to thank them for challenging me and giving me the confidence to let myself go: Allan Atlas (adviser), Carl Schachter, Judith Milhous, Siegmund Levarie, Roger Parker, and Leo Treitler. I feel especially privileged to have been, at every stage of my work, in their demanding and devoted care. And if this project has fallen short of the mark in any way, it is due to my own shortcomings, not theirs.

A great many people assisted me in my work. Jürgen Maehder has shared generously with me his own work on Puccini. I am also extremely fortunate to have had the guidance and good counsel of Francesco Degrada. Julian Budden was consistently thoughtful and generous with his advice. The staff of G. Ricordi and C. has been most gracious, responding to numerous requests and granting me access to the Puccini autographs. I wish to thank Signora Mimma Guastoni, Signora Teresita Beretta, and, especially, Signora Luciana Pestalozza, Direttore Produzione e Marketing

Edizione. It was also my privilege to work in Milan with Maestro Fausto Broussard and Maestro Carlo Clausetti, both of whom took time from their own work to find materials for me and to help me decipher the vagaries of Puccini's hand. Further and invaluable assistance was provided by Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell and Maria Teresa Confalonieri.

I wish also to thank William Ashbrook, Barry Brook, Henry Burnett, Martin Chusid, Philip Gossett, Rufus Hallmark, David Lawton, Joel Lester, Harold Powers, David Rosen, and Elvidio Surian for loaning manuscripts, answering questions, checking Italian prosody, and providing help at various stages along the way. I am especially grateful to Howard Cinnamon, who offered friendship, read drafts, and listened patiently to ideas. Edgar Dittmore also provided continuous support as Chairman and friend. And I am particularly grateful to Albert Tepper for responding to my numerous impulsive phone calls. Deborah Kessler has been an especially tolerant friend and interested listener throughout the course of my work.

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I am especially indebted to Dick Beck for taking the time from his own work and family to spend hours and hours with me, making the dissertation look right. Sheila, Michael, and Amanda also contributed patiently to the often tedious proceedings. I wish also to thank Theresa Henninger, Kim Ward, Sharon Boyle, and Susanne Roelle for holding down the fort while I worked.

I actually don't know precisely why my mother brought home those first recordings of opera stars--Renata Tebaldi, Joan Sutherland, and Jan Peerce--but I am truly grateful to her for having done so. And while other kids were visiting the zoo, James Harnett took our entire sixth-grade class to the Metropolitan Opera House at 39th St. and Broadway--to a Saturday matinee yet, not a special "children's" performance. It had a profound impact on me.

Most of all Steven and Julia and Sashi never faltered in their support--they even went to the opera with me. I hope that they are proud of me, because I love them very much. It is to them that my work is dedicated.

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## Scores and Librettos

### Scores

- Le Villi. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1956. Pl. no. 49457.
- Edgar. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1987. Pl. no. 110490.
- Manon Lescaut. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1979. Pl. no. 97321.
- Manon Lescaut (orchestral score). Milan: G. Ricordi, 1980.  
Pl. no. P. R. 113.
- La Bohème. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1986. Pl. no. 115494.
- La Bohème (orchestral score). New York: Dover, 1987.
- Tosca. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1985. Pl. no. 109916.
- Madama Butterfly. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1980. Pl. no. 129166.
- La Fanciulla del West. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1980. Pl. no. 113483.
- La Rondine. Milan: Casa Musicale Sonzogno, 1945. Sonzogno  
no. 2022; Vienna: Universal Edition, 1969. No. 9653E.
- Il Tabarro. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1984. Pl. no. 129782.
- Suor Angelica. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1987. Pl. no. 121612.
- Gianni Schicchi. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1987. Pl. no. 132848.
- Turandot. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1987. Pl. no. 121329.

I have indicated locations in the score by using rehearsal numbers plus or minus a certain number of measures. In multi-act works, references are to Act I unless otherwise indicated. Thus, if the measure to which I am referring is five bars before rehearsal number 12, it will be indicated as follows: 12-5. If it is five bars after, the reference is 12+5. If a measure occurs nearer to the beginning of an act than to the first rehearsal number of the act, I use exact measure numbers beginning with m. 1.

## Librettos

My analyses generally use the text as shown in the piano-vocal scores listed above. The following list of first editions and translated editions are sources that I also consulted. All translations in the dissertation, however, are mine unless otherwise indicated.

### First Editions

- Adami, Giuseppe. Il Tabarro. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1918. Pl. no. 116999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. La Rondine: Commedia lirica in tre atti. Milan: Casa Musicale Sonzogno, 1917. Pl. no. 9175-2/1917.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Renato Simoni. Turandot. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1926. Pl. no. 119773.
- Civinini, Guelfo and Carlo Zangarini. La Fanciulla del West: Opera in tre atti dal Drama di David Belasco. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1910. Pl. no. 113301.
- Fontana, Ferdinando. Le Villi: Leggenda in un atto in due parti. G. Ricordi, 1884.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Edgar: Dramma lirico in 4 atti. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1889.
- Forzano, Gioacchino. Suor Angelica. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1918. Pl. no. 116999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Gianni Schicchi. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1918. Pl. no. 116999.
- Giacosa, Giuseppe and Luigi Illica. La Bohème. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1896.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Tosca. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1899. Pl. no. 103052.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Madama Butterfly: Tragedia Giapponese. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1904.
- Manon Lescaut: Dramma lirico in quattro atti. G. Ricordi, 1893. Pl. no. 96313.

**Translated Editions**

Adami, Giuseppe. Il Tabarro. Trans. by Edoardo Petri. New York: G. Ricordi, 1918.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Rondine. Trans. by Robert Hess. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Renato Simoni. Turandot. Trans. by R.H. Elkin. Milan: G. Ricordi, 1986.

Fontana, Ferdinando. Le Villi. Trans. by Percy Pinkerton. New York: Boosey & Co., 1897.

\_\_\_\_\_. Edgar. Trans. by B. L. Scherer, in Puccini, Edgar, performed by the Opera Orchestra of New York, conducted by Eve Queler. Columbia Masterworks M2 34584.

Forzano, Gioacchino. Gianni Schicchi. Trans. by Edoardo Petri. New York: Franco Colombo, n.d.

\_\_\_\_\_. Suor Angelica. Trans. by Edoardo Petri. New York: G. Ricordi, 1918.

Giacosa, Giuseppe and Luigi Illica. La Bohème. Trans. by Ruth and Thomas Martin. New York: G. Schirmer, 1954.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tosca. Trans. by John Gutman. New York: G. Schirmer, 1956.

\_\_\_\_\_. Madama Butterfly. Trans. by John Gutman. New York: G. Schirmer, 1958.

Manon Lescaut. Trans. by Walter Ducloux. New York: Franco Colombo, 1965.

Weaver, William. Seven Puccini Librettos. New York: W.W. Norton, 1981.

Zangarini, Carlo and Guelfo Civinini. La Fanciulla del West. Trans. by R.H. Elkin. New York: G. Ricordi, 1910.

## Acknowledgment Page

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## Chapter One

### The Opening Curtain

Obsessed with how and when the curtain went up and with what was seen and heard at that moment, Puccini once remarked to one of his librettists, Giuseppe Adami:

La difficoltà è, per me, cominciare un'opera, trovare cioè la sua atmosfera musicale. Quando l'inizio è fissato e composto, non c'è più da aver paura: l'opera è decisa e cammina.<sup>24</sup>

[The difficulty for me is to begin an opera, that is to find its musical atmosphere. Once the opening is fixed and composed, there is nothing more to fear: the opera is determined and on its way.]

Nowhere is Puccini's desire to establish an ambience and musically serve the demands of the individual scenario more evident than in the opening stroke, "il motivo di prima intenzione."<sup>25</sup>

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24. Adami, *Puccini*, p. 103. Also partially quoted in translation in Carner, *Puccini*, p. 268. Adami notes further, p. 103, that these words were "una frase tante volte da Puccini ripetuta." [a phrase repeated many times by Puccini.]

25. Carner, *Puccini*, p. 286.

Puccini used diverse and often original strategies to capture the attention of the audience, and in his search for the right opening he often transformed or even rejected such conventions as the overture and the introduzione. Rather, he molded each starting gesture to the character and proportions of the individual work, defining its ambience, while projecting and clarifying the musical and dramatic course of what was about to unfold.<sup>26</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to explore broadly Puccini's techniques of beginning an opera by illustrating the individuality of these openings and demonstrating how they relate to one another and to convention.<sup>27</sup> I have divided the chapter into three

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26. See Parker, "Analysis," p. 119, who notes that the actual physical settings (Paris, Japan, Rome, etc.) of the operas were the fuel that fired Puccini's imagination and that the "musical analog" Puccini provided for them was so powerful that any change of locale (à la the Verdian Un Ballo in Maschera shift) would prove disastrous. See also, Maehder, Esotismo.

27. The small body of research on beginnings in the arts, particularly in music, includes: David Rosen, "How Verdi Operas Begin--An Introduction to the Introduzione," Verdi Newsletter 16 (1988), pp. 3-18, and L. Poundie Burstein, "The Non-tonic Opening in Classical and Romantic Music," Ph.D. dissertation, The City University of New York, 1989, which deals specifically with how the avoidance of the tonic chord at the opening of a piece of instrumental music can be understood as a logical point of departure. Leo Treitler discusses beginnings and endings as they relate to the reconstruction of Gregorian chant in "Homer and Gregory: The Transmission of Epic Poetry and Plainchant," The Musical Quarterly 60 (1974), pp. 333-72. The ambiguous opening of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is treated in Treitler, "History, Criticism, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," 19th-Century Music 3 (1980), pp. 193-210, reprinted in Music and the Historical Imagination (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 19-45, and in Maynard Solomon, "The Ninth Symphony: A Search for Order," 19th-Century Music 10 (1986), pp. 3-23, and reprinted in Beethoven Essays (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 3-34. Peter

sections: 1. Overtures/Preludes, 2. Introduzioni, and 3. Tonal Transitions

### 1. Overtures/Preludes

The power and prevalence of the convention of the early nineteenth-century overture was such that it became a standard by which to measure all change. A carry-over of eighteenth-century tradition, it was an independent, closed structure heard before the curtain went up, an all-purpose musical exordium to which many eighteenth-century critics had already objected.<sup>28</sup>

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Kivy, Osmin's Rage: Reflections on Opera, Drama, and Text (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 147-53, deals with the Handelian overture as well as some broader aesthetic issues. In addition, pertinent remarks may be found in the sections entitled "Beginning" and "Introduction" in Siegmund Levarie and Ernst Levy, A Dictionary of Musical Morphology (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983).

Outside of music, drama scholars have dealt with openings of plays and the points of attack in the story. Among the older works of scholarship are Gustav Freytag, The Technique of Drama, originally published in 1863, but freshly edited and translated in Elias J. MacEwan, Freytag's Technique of Drama (New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1968), and William Archer, Playmaking: A Manual of Craftsmanship (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1912; rpt. New York, 1960). More current studies include Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, and Paul Levitt, A Structural Approach to the Analysis of Drama (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), who deals extensively with the point of attack. Among works of literary theory there is Edward Said, Beginnings: Intention and Method (New York: Basic Books, 1975), and the classic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laocoön (1766), translated by William Steel (London: E.P. Dutton, 1930), who talks about the moment in time frozen by a sculpture.

28. See, for example, Francesco Algarotti, Saggio sopra l'opera in musica, in Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History (New York: W.W. Norton, 1950), pp. 657-72, and Christoph Willibald Gluck, Dedication to Alceste, also in Strunk, Source Readings, pp. 673-75, both of whom

And if, as Berlioz noted when attending the opera in Rome, such a piece was still "a kind of noise which theatre orchestras produce before the rise of the curtain, and to which no one pays any attention,"<sup>29</sup> its eventual integration into the body of the opera as the nineteenth century progressed was a consequence of composers seeking a more naturalistic, continuous, and musically economical structure without such excess baggage as would lessen the total dramatic impact of the evening. This assimilation

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viewed the contemporary overture as a "hackneyed" device that did not serve the drama. Indeed, it was, more often than not, a means of calming down a noisy audience. In the opinion of Gluck (p. 674) the function of the overture was "to apprise the spectators of the nature of the action that is to be represented and to form, so to speak, its argument." Kivy, Osmin's Rage, pp. 148-49, discusses the arguments of Algarotti and Gluck, and asserts some skepticism about the role music can play in forecasting the drama beyond the kind of vague generalities conventionally associated with various musical elements such as tempo (i.e., slow = somber). Kivy, p. 148, believes that even an overture such as that to Don Giovanni is able to project little more than a mood, and that it might function just as well as the overture to Faust, despite the use of thematic material from the opera.

29. David Cairns, ed., The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969; corrected edition 1975), p. 186, and also quoted in William Weaver, The Golden Century of Italian Opera from Rossini to Puccini (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1980), p. 19.

eliminated the need for an additional frame "outside" the opera<sup>30</sup> and set the pace for a more seamless total structure.<sup>31</sup>

The primo ottocento overture was thus something that came "first," something that would not intrude on the more important parts coming afterwards, on the "real" drama which began with the curtain.<sup>32</sup> With the advent, however, of the "attached" or tonally open-ended prelude (some early examples of which are to be found in Mozart and Gluck), this perfunctory role was nullified; the opera itself began with the musical downbeat. By the late nineteenth century, as Verdi (in Otello and Falstaff) abandoned the independent overture altogether, others either retained it,

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30. See Kivy, Osmin's Rage, pp. 152-53, who compares the overture "within" the structure to the frame within the painting that Seurat created by means of dots. Although, as Kivy notes, Seurat's paintings are still to be found with gilt frames in spite of the artist's efforts to internalize this element.

31. Of course, by the turn of the century, the overture in Italy was already disappearing, as is especially clear in Verdi's late works. But the Wagnerian influence also cannot be overlooked. Indeed, a work such as the "Prelude" to Das Rheingold, a paradigm of aural ambience, must have fired the growing Italian interest in the dramatic value of such aural first impressions. Das Rheingold premiered in Milan in 1903, but Italian critics, having attended the 1876 Bayreuth premiere of the Ring as invited guests, had already responded enthusiastically to Wagner's work. Puccini came under the Wagnerian influence very early in his career, having been involved with the Italian premiere of Die Meistersinger (1889). See also, Budden, "Wagnerian Tendencies in Italian Opera," Music and Theatre: Essays in Honor of Winton Dean, edited by Nigel Fortune (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 303-306.

32. See also, Nicolaisen, Italian Opera, 1980), p. 51, who notes that often an additional brief orchestral introduction preceded most opening scenes. Its purpose was to accompany the curtain raising and provide a buffer for the first recitative.

attached it, or created alternatives for it, as continuous motion, both physical and musical, became the key.<sup>33</sup> Puccini used all of these opening strategies, and often added to them a further dimension: the visual. In each case his choice was guided by the character, setting, and structure of the individual opera. His facility and creativity grew with each stage of his compositional maturity, and a direct line of progress can be traced from the self-contained prelude of his first work, Le Villi, his only real "number" opera, to the brief opening stroke of Turandot, a reinterpretation of that same tradition.<sup>34</sup>

We may begin studying Puccini's openings by asking two very basic questions: do Puccini's openings relate to conventions (specifically to the convention of the overture), and how do they announce and prepare the operas to which they belong? Puccini understood the different dramatic potential of each basic operatic component: orchestra, voice, text, and physical setting. He recognized that a purely aural beginning, meaning some sort of prelude heard with the curtain closed,<sup>35</sup> had a very different impact than music heard with an added visual dimension, one that tended both to

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33. See Kerman, Opera as Drama, pp. 58-79. See also Budden, "Wagnerian Tendencies," p. 306, who notes "a steady progress towards the concept of an opera as an organic unity," owing to the disintegration of the closed structure and the rising importance of thematic recurrence.

34. The overture to Le Villi is also the only introductory instrumental work to have the heading, "Preludio", a typical "number opera" designation.

35. I will be using the designation "prelude" to refer generically to any preliminary instrumental music, regardless of length.

subordinate the purely musical and to impose a more precise visual image. With this in mind, I have organized the openings of Puccini's operas according to first impression: sight or sound or the two simultaneously:

**Table 1: Aural vs. Visual First Impressions.**

<b>A. Aural (curtain closed)</b>	
1.	<u>Le Villi</u>
2.	<u>Manon Lescaut</u>
3.	<u>Tosca</u>
4.	<u>Madama Butterfly</u>
5.	<u>La Fanciulla del West</u>
6.	<u>La Rondine</u>
7.	<u>Suor Angelica</u>
8.	<u>Gianni Schicchi</u>
9.	<u>Turandot</u>
<b>B. Visual (curtain up before music starts)</b>	
1.	<u>Il Tabarro</u>
<b>C. Aural and Visual (curtain rises with downbeat)</b>	
1.	<u>Edgar</u>
2.	<u>La Bohème</u>

This division reveals that most of Puccini's works make an aural impression first, beginning in a traditional way with a prelude. The similarity among these works, however, generally ends there. For example, there is a great variance in the length of these preludes, ranging from the full-length "Preludio" of Le Villi to the three chords of Tosca.<sup>36</sup> Other variations on this "closed-curtain" prelude are to be found in Tosca (again)

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36. Budden, "Wagnerian Tendencies," p. 331, notes that such short motives typically generate Puccini's musical argument. See, also Atlas, "Puccini's Tosca."

and in La Fanciulla del West, both of which begin with a bipartite prologue in which the first part is purely instrumental, while the second part includes a pantomime. Table 2 (below) illustrates these and other such variances and provides more detail, such as the state of tonal closure in them.

In other strategies Puccini combined the visual and aural by raising the curtain on a musically accompanied on-stage pantomime, while in a variation on this he accompanied the tableau with sounds offstage, either a chorus or street noises or spoken voices. Puccini bypassed the preliminary music altogether and raised the curtain at the very beginning of three works, Edgar, La Bohème, and Il Tabarro, each an innovative composition. Edgar, Puccini's first full-length opera (and only complete failure), was also the first opera in which he raised the curtain on a pantomime or "dumbshow," whereas in La Bohème, his first collaboration with Giacosa and Illica, he took an entirely new tack. This time Puccini rejected tradition entirely, eliminated all standard preliminary gestures, and began the opera in medias res. The drama thus unfolded spontaneously and at a rapid and seamless pace that characterizes many of his later works. And finally, in Il Tabarro Puccini chose silence, specifying that the curtain be raised before the music begins.<sup>37</sup> The silence comes as a surprise, thwarts our expectations of hearing music at the beginning of the opera, and diverts our attention to a

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37. Such a gesture not only invites numerous interpretations, but also admits the visual element as a third party into the continuing battle over the superiority of music or words in opera.

more precise and realistic visual impression. At least momentarily, it subordinates sound to sight, and, as a result, we are nowhere more keenly aware of the musical downbeat than here.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps Puccini thought a musical opening would be too abstract a way to begin an opera in which shock is a principal ingredient, and wished instead to emphasize the banality of the visual setting before stimulating the imaginations of his listeners with the evocative, undulating music that follows. Moreover, the silence projects the silent void in the lives of the participants, as several key sentences within the text tell us. In the opening scene, Michele's silent musings unnerve Giorgetta who, noticing his pensive mood, asks (23 + 4), "O mio uomo, non sei di buon umore! Che hai? Che guardi? E perchè taci? . . ." [Oh, husband, you are in poor spirits! What's wrong? What are you looking at? and why so silent?]. Indeed, Michele breaks his silence in his monologue near the end of the opera, and notes with irony the silence within Giorgetta's cabin, as she awaits an opportune moment to signal her lover (86 + 2): "Nulla! Silenzio!"

Thus the silence at the opening of the opera also makes us wait, and the actual beginning of an instrumental prelude only seconds later is even more effective, as it underscores and reinforces the visual first impression,

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38. Especially if we perceive the beginning of a piece of music as the "interruption of silence" as defined by Levarie and Levy, *A Dictionary*, p. 86, or, as defined by Treitler, "History," p. 193, as "a reversal from silence to music."

a realistic setting enhanced by offstage car horns and tugboat whistles. The remaining elements--dialogue and chorus--come even later in a series of delayed entrances, overlaying and dovetailing one another to form a dense visual and aural counterpoint.

\* \* \* \* \*

The classifications of sight and sound can be expanded by our looking at them from another point of view. I have enlarged the scope of this basic premise in Table 2 by reorganizing the operas into four new categories: (A) tonally closed preludes (operas with tonally closed instrumental preludes during which the curtain itself is closed); (B) tonally open preludes (operas that begin with brief, open-ended instrumental preludes of various length and with the curtain opened or closed); (C) pantomimes (operas with preludes accompanying a pantomime); and (D) pantomimes with offstage sound (operas in which additional offstage sound accompanies the pantomime). Several things should be noted in Table 2: (1) some operas fall into more than one of these categories, usually because of the added visual element (Tosca and La Fanciulla del West, for example, both of which have introductory sections in two parts); (2) if the length of the prelude is significant, it is noted; (3) in most cases I have also indicated the position of the curtain; and (4) where the offstage sound is that of a chorus I have provided an asterisk (\*):

Table 2: Disposition of the Opening.

<b>A. Tonally Closed Preludes</b>	
1.	<u>Le Villi</u> (curtain closed)
2.	<u>La Fanciulla del West</u> (curtain closed)
3.	<u>Manon Lescaut</u> (curtain up at midpoint of prelude)
<b>B. Tonally Open Preludes</b>	
1.	<u>Tosca</u> (three chords, then curtain)
2.	<u>Madama Butterfly</u> (curtain up at midpoint of prelude)
3.	<u>La Rondine</u> (curtain closed)
4.	<u>Gianni Schicchi</u> (curtain closed)
5.	<u>Suor Angelica</u> (bells--three measures, then curtain)
6.	<u>Turandot</u> (9 measures, curtain rises at m. 7)
<b>C. Pantomimes</b>	
1.	<u>Edgar</u> (curtain open from beginning)
2.	<u>Manon Lescaut</u> (curtain rises on town scene before end of prelude)
3.	<u>Tosca</u> (curtain rises on Angelotti)
4.	<u>Madama Butterfly</u> (curtain rises on Goro and Pinkerton looking at house)
<b>D. Pantomimes with Offstage Sound</b>	
1.	<u>Edgar</u> (onstage peasants)*
2.	<u>La Fanciulla del West</u> (curtain rises after prelude on barroom scene and bartender, offstage voices and minstrel)*
3.	<u>Il Tabarro</u> (curtain up before music, main characters onstage, offstage street sounds, then stevedores)*
4.	<u>Suor Angelica</u> (curtain rises on empty stage, ray of light)*

Manon Lescaut is one of the operas that fits into two categories. In it Puccini continued working with the pantomime he first introduced in Edgar by using both a tonally closed overture and a dumbshow. The crowd of students and townspeople in Amiens, which we see as the curtain rises during the prelude, sets the stage for the first vocal entrance and provides

visual continuity even though the musical continuity is interrupted by the cadence at the end of the prelude.<sup>39</sup> With Tosca and Madama Butterfly Puccini arrived at the technique he uses in other works:<sup>40</sup> an open-ended introduction combined in some manner with a pantomime. In these situations the pantomime reinforces the link between the opening (and tonally open) instrumental statement and the body of the work by providing additional dramatic justification for the avoidance of closure. For example, in Tosca, after three chords, the extreme musical and dramatic importance of which is underscored by the closed curtain,<sup>41</sup> the curtain rises on the breathless Angelotti, seeking the key to the Attavanti chapel. Despite Angelotti's few lines of dialogue, the orchestra is still the musical leader and accompanies what is basically an action piece. Indeed, the entire sequence from the opening chords up to the Sacristan's entrance is really a two-part

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39. See 4-1 in the vocal score. Ricci, Puccini, p. 22, believes that Manon Lescaut does not have a prelude at all. He considers Edmondo's Madrigal (beginning 4) to be an interruption of one continuous section that begins with the musical downbeat of the orchestra. Although I tend to agree with Ricci's observation, I wish to point out that he does not take into account the cadence or the double bar which delineate the end of what I consider to be musical preliminaries. Rather, I consider the real adhesive to be the pantomime, an example of the kind of visual and musical cantilevering Puccini often used to good dramatic effect at both the micro and macro level. This is discussed in some detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

40. See Categories C and D in Table 3, which show that Puccini used a dumbshow at the beginning of seven operas.

41. The curtain eliminates any distraction, while the actual raising of it has a musical analog in the change of meter that occurs at that point--a move from 3/2 meter to 2/4, although, as Allan Atlas has suggested to me, the 3/2 is really heard more as an expansive "meterless" declaration.

prologue in which the orchestra and the pantomime are the principal elements. It is a cinematically contrived tableau, one of such intensity that words would diminish it. The verbal text is minimal, perfunctory, and unmelodic, and serves only to provide information that could not be communicated through mime.<sup>42</sup> With the Sacristan's entrance the torso of the opera begins, and the church returns to its normal quietude, an atmosphere in which one does not speak.<sup>43</sup> The Sacristan's pantomime not only reinforces this atmosphere, but also links the prologue with the body of the work and provides a cantilever for the two sections by continuing the silent movement begun in the prologue. The entire structure greatly resembles the bipartite introduction to La Fanciulla del West.<sup>44</sup> By contrast, the introduction to Madama Butterfly is much longer and thus approaches a more conventional overture. The curtain rises at about its midpoint, as Goro shows Pinkerton various details of the home the officer

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42. For example, that Angelotti is the brother of "L'Attavanti."

43. A less imaginative team of composer and librettist might have had Angelotti sing an aria in which he explained his predicament. Puccini communicates this through action instead. Of course, neither Angelotti nor the Sacristan has anyone to talk to, but that condition has rarely discouraged the singing of an aria in opera.

44. See Table 4, below, in which the structural similarities between the two openings become immediately apparent.

and his new bride will soon occupy. The end of the prelude is delineated by the vocal entrances and a change in tempo but not in meter.<sup>45</sup>

The only two works with true independent, instrumental preludes, Le Villi and La Fanciulla del West, come at very different points in Puccini's career. The full-length "Preludio" to Le Villi is thematic and is followed by a conventional "Coro d'introduzione," whereas Puccini's unusual opening for La Fanciulla is a consequence of his adaptation of Belasco's play,<sup>46</sup> which begins with two "Pictures." These are quite literally two silent visuals, the first showing Minnie's home on Cloudy Mountain and the second showing the exterior of the Polka Saloon, Minnie's "place of business."<sup>47</sup> In order to retain the identity of what would have been a unique opening in a spoken drama, Puccini created a two-part opening for La Fanciulla, the first part of which is tonally closed and followed by nearly two full measures of

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45. See 5 in the vocal score. These musical changes are also coordinated with the direction to the men to move forward on stage at exactly this point.

46. David Belasco, The Girl of the Golden West, in Daniel C. Gerould, ed., American Melodrama (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983), pp. 183-247.

47. Gerould, "The Americanization of Melodrama," in American Melodrama, p. 24, notes that Belasco's tableaux were the playwright's answer to the new genre of film. Belasco created his pictures on a "painted canvas rolled vertically on drums across the proscenium opening; the scenes depicted on it gave a moving, map-like panorama of the entire setting of the drama." And as Prof. Judith Milhous of the Graduate School of The City University of New York has explained to me, this "moving" panorama was a standard "entertainment" in America from at least the 1830s. Belasco changed it slightly by moving it from the back of the stage to the front.

silence.<sup>48</sup> The curtain then rises on the second picture, the second part of the prelude, and a completely new musical characterization. In this "picture" Nick readies the bar for the evening's opening as the shouting of the miners and the minstrel's song are heard offstage in the distance.<sup>49</sup> It is the longest of Puccini's openings, a two-fold introduction providing time for the viewer to absorb the setting: the sunset, the end of the miners' work day, and the saloon. Moreover, Puccini forced the action out into the wings, helping us to imagine the vastness of the outdoor setting, while the image is enhanced by the contrasting vocal textures: the minstrel's song against the miners' spoken "Hellos." The second tableau thus links the overture and the first scene, a more traditional type of introduzione in which the men we first heard from the distance are brought forward. It is a gradual enlargement of the scenario, a progression similar to that created by Wagner in the Prelude to Das Rheingold. Wagner, however, created an entirely musical illusion, as he began in the depths of the Rhine river (and in the depths of the orchestra) and increased the range and density of his sound gradually

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48. See 2-2 of vocal score.

49. At the end of the act Nick closes the bar, forming a frame that I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three and in the section on Time and Light in Chapter Five. Puccini was fond of introducing his players, both chorus and principals from the distance. He first used the offstage chorus for expository purposes in Edgar and thereafter most notably in Madama Butterfly, La Fanciulla del West, and Suor Angelica. Carner, Puccini, p. 286, likewise notes the offstage introductions of many of Puccini's leading females, specifically Mimì, Musetta, Tosca, and Butterfly.

until the aural and visual image is changed by the Rhinemaidens. La Fanciulla also has primal beginnings--in the high Sierras--and the transition from one musico-scenic environment to another is coordinated with the swinging open of the saloon doors as the miners enter the Polka. Thus in both La Fanciulla and Das Rheingold there is a sense of continuous motion from backstage to center stage (or from underwater to above), from darkness to light.<sup>50</sup>

The second "picture" of La Fanciulla del West is one of several instances in which Puccini compressed the prelude and introduzione by pairing an instrumental piece with an offstage chorus, a technique first introduced in Edgar. More economical still, is the opening of La Bohème (conspicuous by its absence from Table 2), in which Puccini dispensed with convention altogether.

## 2. Introduzione

Like the instrumental prelude, the introduzione, in its most conventional form, is part of a formal preface and fulfills an obligatory role within the standard formulaic structure of the "number opera."<sup>51</sup> The

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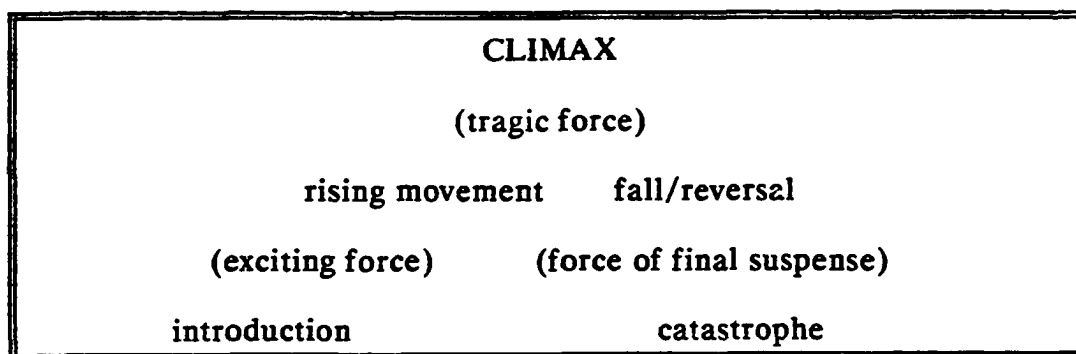
50. The contrast of dark and light in La Fanciulla is particularly rich as the fading sun is replaced by the artificial light that gradually takes over as Nick prepares the Polka for the evening's business.

51. Both Italian opera and spoken drama tended to be formulaic in the nineteenth century, and the standard opera libretto did not escape the influence of the so-called "well-made play" or pièce bien faite. Indeed, most

introduzione has been described as that which occurs after the overture (or prelude) and before the recitative,<sup>52</sup> with its "sine qua non" being the

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opera plots follow the "pattern of increasingly intense action and suspense, prepared by exposition" which is an integral feature of this genre; see Stephen Stanton, ed., 'Camille' and Other Plays (with an Introduction to the Well-Made Play) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. xii. The introduction to a play is also clearly defined in a pattern of dramatic progress devised by the nineteenth-century dramatist Gustav Freytag, in MacEwan, Freytag's Technique, pp. 114-15 (and cited by Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, p. 241). The course he proposes is not unlike the scheme of so many equally highly-structured "number" opera plots:



See also, Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, pp. 71-76 and 86-87, and Archer, Playmaking. For a detailed study of the master of the "well-made play," Eugène Scribe, and his role as a librettist, see Karin Pendle, Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979). The Italian melodramma in the first half of the 19th century is discussed in Patrick Smith, The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

52. Stendhal, Vie de Rossini (Paris: August Boulland, 1824), p. 66, n. 1: "On appelle introduction tout ce qu'on change depuis la fin de l'ouverture jusqu'au premier récitatif." See also, Rosen, "How Verdi Operas Begin," p. 3 and n. 4, and William Ashbrook, Donizetti and His Operas (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 243-44. I wish to thank Professor Rosen for sending me a pre-publication copy of his manuscript, which inspired much of my general discussion of the introduzione.

chorus.<sup>53</sup> With the chorus thus established as a prefatory signpost, I have devised Table 3 (below), which shows its presence or absence in Puccini's operas. I have applied the designation "chorus" very broadly to any instance in which a large group of people is either seen or heard in the first scene. I have noted, in addition, whether the chorus is onstage or offstage:

**Table 3: Presence of Chorus at Beginning of First Scene.**

A. Operas with Chorus	
1.	<u>Le Villi</u> ("Coro d'introduzione," No. 2, onstage)
2.	<u>Edgar</u> (onstage crowd, beginning; offstage chorus, 2-9)
3.	<u>Manon Lescaut</u> (onstage, 2+3)
4.	<u>La Fanciulla del West</u> (offstage, 2; onstage, 5)
5.	<u>La Rondine</u> (onstage, 2+9)
6.	<u>Il Tabarro</u> (offstage and onstage, beginning m. 1)
7.	<u>Suor Angelica</u> (offstage, 1; onstage, 2+6)
8.	<u>Gianni Schicchi</u> (onstage, 1)
9.	<u>Turandot</u> (onstage, 1-4)
B. Operas without Opening Chorus	
1.	<u>La Bohème</u>
2.	<u>Tosca</u>
3.	<u>Madama Butterfly</u>

One of the most striking revelations in this table is that the three collaborations of Puccini with Giacosa and Illica, La Bohème, Tosca, and Madama Butterfly, stand out as the only works that avoid the convention altogether. Of the three, only the first scene of La Bohème focuses on an ensemble, but one that consists of only four characters who do not even appear together on stage when the curtain rises, a condition that invalidates

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53. See Rosen, "How Verdi Operas Begin," p. 3.

any immediate impression of a relationship between it and the tradition of the introduzione. This ensemble of individuals, in turn, provided a model for the opening scenes of La Fanciulla del West, La Rondine, and Gianni Schicchi, all of which begin with large ensembles of individuals. These ensembles reduce the massed voices of the anonymous chorus to chamber-music proportions in which a very important feature--as a glance at the scores makes evident--is the identification of each character by name. In each of these works, however, the ensembles consist of many more characters than the four in La Bohème: ten in La Fanciulla (including Nick and Rance as well as the miners in the opening scene), eleven in La Rondine, and nine in Gianni Schicchi (ten, if we count Buoso's corpse), and they are all onstage when the curtain goes up. Such a picture relays a powerful visual image to the viewer who, at first glance, perceives the large ensemble to be a chorus. The opening scene of Gianni Schicchi, for example, is dominated by the large group of Donati relatives, who sing not only as individuals, but also in ensemble, as a family. They reveal themselves to be not only greedy but also snobbish, Zita having barred the union of Rinuccio, her nephew, and Laretta, the daughter of the farmer, Gianni Schicchi. A point of view is thus established for us in this

introduzione; and the main action of the opera as a whole does not actually begin until Schicchi himself comes on the scene.<sup>54</sup>

In most conventional introduzioni this expected chorus functions as a narrator, someone outside the action who introduces the situation at hand and distills the previous action and relays it to the audience. In such cases the operas tend to begin at a late point in the story.<sup>55</sup> And it is of some interest, perhaps, that the works that most closely relate to this classical form were composed at the beginning and end of his career, Le Villi and Turandot.

In many respects Puccini's first opera, Le Villi, with its independent prelude and introduzione, is an exemplary primo ottocento "number opera." Its opening scene, labeled "Cero d'introduzione," features the chorus as narrator and commentator. Puccini emphasized the "classical" objectivity of this chorus by divorcing it musically from the rest of the work through closure. Like the prelude, it is a tonally independent unit, sharing no musical connective tissue with its neighboring pieces. The remaining

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54. And it is worth noting here that Puccini even marked this point tonally by introducing with Schicchi's entrance the G-flat major that is to frame the remainder of the work. See 34 in the score and Chapter Three, in which this passage is mentioned as part of the discussion of Puccini's propensity for making large tonal statements that coincide with dramatic divisions.

55. This is a classical design, according to Levitt, A Structural Approach, p. 26.

numbers in the opera, although independent, are nevertheless bound to the adjacent pieces by dialogue or orchestral interludes.

Turandot, with its grand proportions, large choruses, and stock gestures, is the product of many traditions, including that of "number opera." Act I is entirely expository and features such identifiable, large-scale set pieces as a hymn to the moon, a funeral march, and an executioner's song.<sup>56</sup> The three Masks are also generated out of tradition, but that of a different genre: their scenes amount to a displaced eighteenth-century Venetian divertimento.<sup>57</sup> The traditional prelude is replaced, however, with a terse

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56. Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 215, compares the sections to the movements of a symphony.

57. And the injection of some color into the scenario, even if incongruous, was a process that was of some interest to Puccini. About the three masks, Puccini wrote to Adami (No. 178, n.d.):

Ma non voglio con questo mio grido influire su voi, sul vostro cervello. Potrebbe anche darsi che conservando con giudizio le maschere si abbia un elemento nostrano il quale in mezzo a tanto manierismo (poiché è) cinese porterebbe una nota nostra e soprattutto sincera. La fine osservazione di Pantalone e compagni ci riporterebbe alla realtà della nostra vita. Insomma fare un po' come Shakespeare fa spesso, quando mette 3 o 4 tipi estranei che bevono, bestemmiano e dicono male del Re. E questo l'ho visto nella Tempesta fra gli Elfi e Ariele e Calibano.

[But I don't wish this outcry of mine to influence you and your brain. It is just possible that by treating the masques with good judgement we shall have an Italian element which, into the midst of so much Chinese mannerism--because that is what it is--would introduce a personal and, above all, sincere touch. The keen observation of Pantaloon and Co. would bring us back to the reality of our lives. In short, doing a little of what

and dissonant nine-measure introduction, the strident chords of which mimic both the strokes of the executioner's blade and the sound of the gong, struck just before the Mandarin begins to speak. The gong itself is an integral part of the opera, a component that initiates the action and announces the reading of the proclamation as well as the appearance of Turandot and the executioner. The reading of the law, a preamble or invocation, thus assumes the preliminary function, a brief narrative that outlines the state of affairs as the curtain goes up. It is a stock gesture that suggests not only the structure forthcoming but, even to the uninitiated, the general outlines of the remainder of the story.<sup>58</sup> Like the gong, the proclamation is also a formal tool, repeated in Act II to initiate the "Riddle" scene, and again in Act III as the offstage heralds declare: "Così comanda Turandot: 'Questa notte nessun dorma in Pekino!'"<sup>59</sup> And on a much more subtle plane the

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Shakespeare often does, when he brings in three or four extraneous types who drink, use bad language, and speak ill of the King. I have seen this done in The Tempest, among the Elves and Ariel and Caliban.]

The three masks also bring to mind the Commedia dell'arte characters in Richard Strauss's Ariadne auf Naxos (1912), who intrude upon the mythical lives of Ariadne and Bacchus in a similar kind of cultural cross-pollination.

58. See Luigi Pirandello, "Introduction to The Italian Theater," translated by Anne Paolucci, in Eric Bentley, ed., The Genius of the Italian Theater (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), pp. 11-29. This volume also contains a translation of the Gozzi Turandot.

59. See Act III, 1+1, and Levitt, A Structural Approach, p. 55, who speaks about the effect on the audience of establishing patterns that anticipate the ensuing action.

reading of the law is an aid to characterization, establishing the Princess Turandot as cruel and merciless, an enigma whom we see but do not hear until the second scene of Act II.

It is an epic introduction that anticipates a work of epic proportions, an essential component of which is the chorus.<sup>60</sup> The chorus, which is elevated here to a leading role and which remains onstage for nearly the entire act, is the key to the designation introduzione, and as a lead character it plays a dual role. It acts conventionally at the opening of the opera, observing, relishing, and abhorring the execution of the Prince of Persia, but, by the end of the evening, it participates fully and spends the night seeking to learn Calaf's name in order to save its own collective neck. Even the three principals, Calaf, Liù, and Timur, are a part of this crowd as the curtain goes up, indistinguishable from the throng until Puccini brings them into focus. Turandot thus begins with three musico-dramatic conventions: a gong, a proclamation, and a chorus. The act also ends conventionally, with a grand concertato as the Prince sounds the gong--the sound and gesture that set the entire structure in motion at the beginning.

By extreme contrast to Le Villi and Turandot, several of Puccini's works eliminate the introductory function of the narrator altogether and

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60. See Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, pp. 71-76 and 86-87. The grand proportions of Turandot are in direct contrast with the smaller scale of such contemporary works as Strauss's intimate Intermezzo (1924).

unfolds the exposition with the action.<sup>61</sup> These operas are typified by an absence of narrative and are, as a result, the least likely to have a standard introduzione, although some still include the chorus either as a vestige of earlier practice or to provide local color. In such cases we witness both the cause and effect of the actions that constitute the opera, and past events or existing conditions are most often communicated through gesture and inference. In the first act of La Bohème, for example, there is no discussion at all of Mimì's illness, a condition we deduce by her cough,<sup>62</sup> while the disposition of the love affair of Marcello and Musetta is hinted at in Marcello's offhand remark about Musetta's icy heart. Similarly, in La Rondine Magda's decision to disguise herself and go to the dance hall has been inspired by the conversation at the beginning of the opera and the appearance of Ruggero, who will eventually become her lover. Il Tabarro also avoids the conventional means of exposition and unfolds the action over the course of the opera, again avoiding narrative where possible. In the opening scene, for example, the stevedores (a token chorus) sing a work song as they unload the barge, rather than a conventional chorus explaining

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61. See Levitt, A Structural Approach, p. 24.

62. This simple gesture is similar to the drops of Johnson's blood that fall from above onto Rance's hand in the second act of La Fanciulla del West. Gerould, "The Americanization of Drama," p. 24, notes that this type of small detail in the American theatre of the early twentieth century contrasts with the dramatic excesses of nineteenth-century melodrama, which included much larger scenic effects, such as flights across frozen rivers, fires, and express trains.

the end of the journey. Their actions inform us that the journey is over and replace the narrative which a less economically constructed libretto might have included.

### **3. Tonal Transitions**

Most often the transitions between the prelude and the opening scene are punctuated musically by a tonal shift, a change in meter or tempo, and vocal entries, and are coordinated with the raising of the curtain or some action on stage. As Table 4 shows, Puccini consistently linked the preface of an opera with the first scene either by a descending perfect fifth or a descending or ascending major or minor third, or by retaining the opening tonality. Table 4 also includes any other musical or scenic gestures that may accompany the transition:<sup>63</sup>

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63. The table also summarizes many of the features discussed in the previous two sections. In the entry for La Bohème I have designated "Nei cieli bigi" as "Scene 1" because it is the point of tonal arrival in the first act, the goal of all the preceding musical motion. The prefatory material is not so visually obvious in La Bohème as it is in other works. See Chapter Seven.

**Table 4: Intervals Between "Prelude" and First Scene.**

<b>Opera</b>	<b>Prelude</b>	<b>Scene 1</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>I. Fifth Relations</b>			
<b>Le Villi</b>	C (3/4)	F (2/4)	closure, curtain
<b>Edgar</b>	D	G	enter Fidelia
<b>La Bohème</b>	C-F	B $\flat$	"Nei cieli bigi"
<b>Il Tabarro</b>	G (9/8)	C (3/4)	drinking song
<b>Tosca</b>	B $\flat$ -E (3/2)		curtain closed
	G (2/4)		curtain up; pantomime
		C (6/8)	Sacristan
<b>II. Third Relations</b>			
<b>Manon Lescaut</b>	A	F $\sharp$	vocal entrance
<b>Madama Butterfly</b>	C	E $\flat$	vocal entrance
<b>La Fanciulla</b>	C (4/4)		closure, silence, then curtain raised
	E (6/8)		pantomime, offstage voices
		G (2/4)	miners onstage
<b>La Rondine</b>	C (B $\flat$ )	A $\flat$	curtain
<b>Turandot</b> (triadic unfolding in the bass)	F $\sharp$	D	curtain, gong
		B $\flat$	Mandarin
<b>III. No change</b>			
<b>Suor Angelica</b>	F	F	curtain
<b>Gianni Schicchi</b>	B $\flat$	B $\flat$	curtain

Third relations between scenes are the most common and seamless means of transition in late nineteenth-century opera.<sup>64</sup> Thus some comment is in order about the works that employ fifth relations, since these tend to emphasize the break between sections, throwing additional weight onto the point of arrival. When Puccini wished to emphasize an event or function in the context of the drama, he often marked that event or function with movement by descending fifth.<sup>65</sup> In Le Villi the fifth relationship characterizes two completely self-contained structures, first the "Preludio" and the "Introduzione," and then the "Introduzione" and the "Romanza" that follows it (No. 3). This isolation heightens the prefatory function of the prelude and the epic dramatic function of the chorus and emphasizes the objectivity of its narrative and its distance from the main action by the principal players. In Tosca Puccini separated the entire prologue from the first scene by a descending fifth (6+4) and joined the three chords and the pantomime by a third (1-11).<sup>66</sup> The falling fifth lends musical conviction to the stark change from the panicked mood of Angelotti's breathless search in the prologue to the return (with the Sacristan's entrance) of peace and

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64. A relationship commonly exploited by Verdi. See Parker, "Analysis," pp. 128-29.

65. This also occurs in some internal relationships.

66. However, he sets off the three "Scarpia" chords by raising the curtain only after they have sounded and by changing the meter (see n. 00, above). The Sacristan's entrance is also indicated by a change of meter to 6/8 and an easier pace than the urgent 2/4 of the preceding scene.

the more perfunctory business of the church. In La Bohème Puccini used a cycle of fifths to characterize the "in-progress" situation at the curtain, starting it on C and ending it at B $\flat$  (2-17), his point of tonal arrival and first moment of dramatic repose. The entire opening scene of Il Tabarro, a panorama of the Seine-side barge, is similarly set apart from the following focus on the principal characters by a fifth (7). And while adjacent parts of the opening of La Fanciulla del West are related by thirds, providing a smooth musical analog to the gradual motion towards the opening of the Polka Saloon and the introduzione, a triad unfolds, outlining a fifth<sup>67</sup> between the very opening stroke and the first full-fledged scene. Thus we may conclude that for Puccini the fifth relationship clearly differentiates formal sections (where function dictated), while at the same time, it accentuates the change from action to repose.

In the other operas, the transition from the opening instrumental statement to the first scene is less pronounced both texturally and dramatically, though the opening of Turandot requires some comment. There is a triadic unfolding in the bass in the opening of this opera in which F $\sharp$  is the first component. It is a presence that must be acknowledged because of its weight, a single chord approached from a fifth above and attacked Mosso fff (m. 3). The next move is to D (as the curtain is raised,

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67. This time, however, an ascending fifth, suggesting, perhaps, the drama about to unfold, rather than a dramatic change of events or ending that the descending fifth might imply.

m. 5), which is retained as a pedal tone until the Mandarin speaks, at which time the bass drops another third to B $\flat$  (1+3), thus outlining an augmented triad--(from fifth to root) F $\sharp$ -D-B $\flat$ --a dissonance characterizing the stridency and dramatic dissonance of the opening scene (a stridency that is acerbated by the A-major overlay of the Mandarin's speech).

The two operas in which there is no tonal shift have their very long opening scenes linked to their preludes. When the large-scale tonal shift does occur, however, it is by a third. In Suor Angelica there is virtually no dramatic change in the very long exposition which retains F-major as its main tonality (one of its flaws) until the arrival of La Zia Principessa, with a shift to A (39). In Gianni Schicchi the first large-scale tonal shift occurs with Schicchi's entrance in $\flat$  (34), again a transition down by a third from B $\flat$  of the opening scene.

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Puccini was extremely sensitive to the dramatic potential of both darkness and silence and was consequently very precise in his instructions for the raising of the curtain. He saved this event for the moment of maximum impact and thereby elevated the status of what might have been otherwise a perfunctory theatrical gesture. In a kind of dramatic polyphony, the curtain raising became an equal partner with the orchestra, chorus, solo voices, pantomime, and even silence. Like other artists at the end of the

nineteenth century, Puccini needed to react not only to Wagner but also to the current naturalistic trends in the theatre of his day, the ultimate realization of which was the advent of film in the twentieth century.<sup>68</sup> In response to all of this he discovered how to translate panorama and close focus into musical terms, define what might be called "theatrical counterpoint," and transform convention in order to generate a structure for each individual work that was continuous, spontaneous, and fresh.

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68. There is no evidence to confirm or deny Puccini's acquaintance with film, although many of his techniques may be described as cinematic.

## Chapter Two

### Rhythm and Meter

Puccini had an aversion to tempi that were too slow; they were worse than soporific. He considered correct timing in the theatre to be as fundamental as the biological rhythm that vitalizes a living creature; bad pacing was as calamitous to a performance as buckling legs are to an animal in motion:

La stasi è la negazione della musica, specie della musica teatrale. Anche un passo grave deve accusar la vita. La gazzella e l'elefante si muovono con la deambulazione che è loro propria: ma guai se piegano le gambe e stramazzano a terra.<sup>69</sup>

[Stasis is the negation of music, especially music of the theatre. Even a slow step has to testify to life. The gazelle and the elephant move in a way that is appropriate for them: but what a catastrophe if their legs should give way, causing them to fall to the ground. .]

Close examination of his works reveals that Puccini's sensitivity to timing relates to more than matters of tempo and pacing. Indeed, rhythm and meter were a means to shape clearly the parameters of scenes, delineate characters, and even express the cultural and psychological roots of the

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69. Quoted in Ricci, *Puccini*, pp. 11-12. See also, Levitt, *A Structural Approach*, pp. 67-70, for a discussion of dramatic rhythm and the creation of "beats."

drama. He often began his works with an invigorating rhythmic thrust, a signature figuration that would not only set the opera in motion, but that would, at times, also generate the musical and dramatic argument. It was a technique that came of age with the composition of La Bohème, its terse, well-defined opening motive supplanting with immediacy and surprise the more traditional operatic entrée. And finally, even the dance was a dramatic and structural device for Puccini. While still functioning as a divertissement in some works, e.g., Manon Lescaut, the dance is an emblem of the operetta genre in La Rondine, an essential narrative component in Le Villi, and a sexual gesture in Il Tabarro.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Puccini's rhythmic techniques, how he propels the openings of his works, defines form and character, and uses rhythm to create atmosphere. Beginning, once again, at the beginning, I have divided the discussion into four areas: 1. **Opening Motives**, 2. **Characterization**, 3. **Metrics in the Macrostructure**, and 4. **The Dance**.

### 1. Opening Motives

Carner once described Puccini's "motivo di prima intenzione" as "embodying the work's essential spirit."<sup>70</sup> What he was referring to, no doubt, was the rhythmically highly-charged opening musical stroke that sets

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70. Carner, Puccini, p. 286.

in motion so many of Puccini's operas.<sup>71</sup> The openings of his two earliest operas, Le Villi and Edgar, however, are noteworthy for their relative lack of rhythmic vitality. The absence of an energetic opening statement in Le Villi, by contrast to the later works, is especially surprising because it is a work in which rhythm and meter are at the heart of the musical and psychological argument. But, as shown in the previous chapter, Puccini was thinking in completely different formal terms when composing Le Villi, and the prelude was really a preface rather than a place in which to project the deeper psychological conflicts of the work. In Edgar Puccini was still not looking for a pace-setting motive, and the innocuous eighth-note pattern at the beginning is just an accompaniment for the bucolic opening scene. Indeed, the only other opening of Puccini's that I would characterize as rhythmically flaccid is that of Suor Angelica, the convent setting of which, however, really does not require the kind of metric propulsion that the other settings demand.

Aside from these early efforts (and Tosca and Il Tabarro, each of which is a special case, as is Suor Angelica), seven of Puccini's twelve operas begin with an intensely vital motive that seems to catapult the work into action: Manon Lescaut, La Bohème, Madama Butterfly, La Fanciulla del West, La Rondine, Gianni Schicchi, and Turandot. This list can be grouped

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71. See Budden, "Wagnerian Tendencies," p. 331, who notes, when speaking of Puccini's brief motives, that, because they are "incisive and theatrical," they "arrest the attention."

into: (1) works that begin with subdivided downbeats, what Curt Sachs referred to as "clustered upbeats,"<sup>72</sup> that (in Puccini's operas) do not have an integral function, and (2) works that begin with terse, well-defined rhythmic motives that do function integrally. Example 1, below, illustrates the openings of La Fanciulla del West, La Rondine, and Gianni Schicchi, each of which begins with a "cluster," an upward sweep of pitches:

**Example 1: "Clustered Upbeats."**

**(A) La Fanciulla del West.**

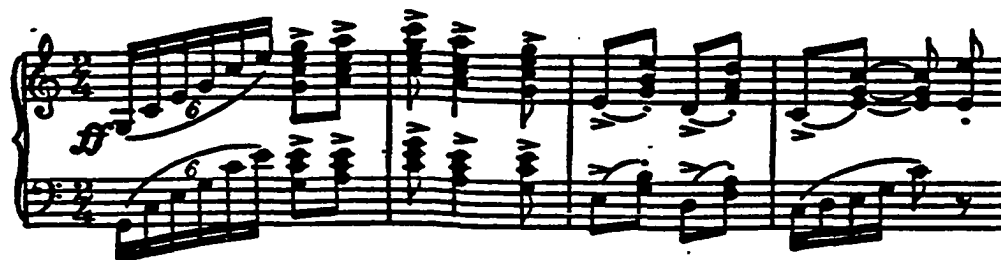
The image shows a musical score for the opening of La Fanciulla del West. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, in 4/4 time. The music begins with a piano introduction. A large, sweeping melodic line in the treble clef is marked with a fermata and the word "(corta)" above it. Below this line, the letters "m.s." are written. The bass clef part features a rhythmic accompaniment with various chords and notes. The score is written in a style typical of early 20th-century musical notation.

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72. Curt Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo: A Study in Music History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), pp. 348-52, who defines the "clustered upbeat on the downbeat" as:

an intensified upbeat in which the simple quarter note (or, for that matter, the simple dotted group) is replaced by a whole cluster of notes, a triplet, a quadruplet, or a dactyl.

Sachs notes further, pp. 351-52, that such phenomena reached a climax in the works of Mahler and Strauss (Puccini's contemporaries).

**(B) La Rondine****(C) Gianni Schicchi**

A musical score for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex, rhythmic melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. There are several dynamic markings, including 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano), and articulation marks like slurs and accents. The piece is characterized by its dense, propulsive texture.

In general, such "clusters" serve little dramatic purpose and are only as useful as they are propulsive, opening the opera with an "invigorating shock."<sup>73</sup> The most interesting of these examples is the opening motive of La Fanciulla del West. Puccini envisioned the vastness of the California setting, which he described in his letter of 26 August 1907 to Giulio Ricordi as "uno scenario grandioso, una spianata nella grande foresta californiana cogli alberi colossali" [a grand scenario, a clearing in the great Californian

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73. Sachs, *Rhythm*, p. 350.

forest, with some colossal trees];<sup>74</sup> this he recreated in a musically onomatopoeic statement that evokes the gusts of wind blowing in the mountains surrounding the Polka Saloon and Minnie's cabin. The effectiveness of the gesture is also reinforced by the held note at the top of the upward sweep, which, when released to (descending) *détaché* quarter notes, heightens, by contrast, the suddenness of the opening motion. The sweeping figure is articulated at different pitch levels four times in the Prelude, but Puccini then used it sparingly within the opera. In Act I it is heard again only at the end, just as the posse prepares to leave to search for Ramirez (Johnson). It initiates the close of the act (95), as Nick, the bartender, wishes the men good luck and begins to close the Polka Saloon, leaving Minnie and Johnson alone to carry on a more intimate conversation. The gust of wind returns in Act II in a similarly intimate moment, as it blows open the door during Minnie's and Johnson's first kiss (Act II, 27+3 and 29), contrasting their physical closeness with the infinity of the outdoors.

Manon Lescaut, La Bohème, Madama Butterfly, and Turandot each begin with some permutation of a "short--long" pattern, and are similarly energetic. Once in place, however, these patterns not only generate the initial pace for that particular work, but are often integrated into both the musical and dramatic structure. Furthermore, the rhythmic physiognomy of

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74. Gara, Carteggi pucciniani, letter no. 521 (hereafter CP).

these figures is very strongly drawn, so they could be identified, like some motives of Beethoven, in particular, on a single note:

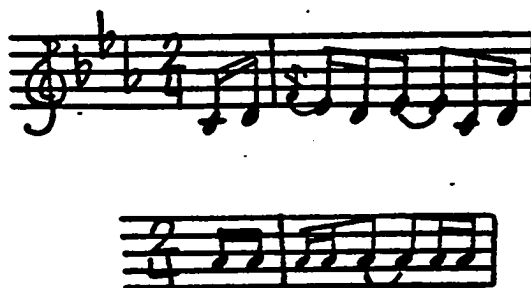
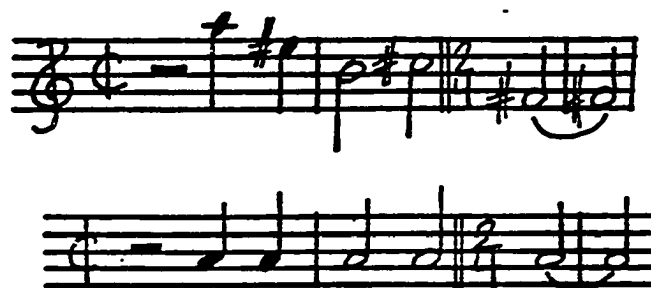
**Example 2: Four Opening Motives.**

**(A) Manon Lescaut**



**(B) La Bohème.**



**(C) Madama Butterfly****(D) Turandot**

The paradigm of such figures is probably the opening motive of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, especially noteworthy for its brevity and its missing "strong-beat" articulation.<sup>75</sup> These features are also the essence of the so-called "Bohemian" motive of Puccini, which is given again, together with that of Beethoven in the following example:

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75. See Donald Francis Tovey, "Symphony in C minor, No. 5, Op. 67," *Essays in Musical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 53-59.

**Example 3: Opening Motives of Beethoven and Puccini.**

**(A) Beethoven**



**(B) Puccini**



Both Beethoven's and Puccini's motives arose out of a need for musical economy and dramatic succinctness (as did all of the motives quoted in Example 2, above), the one within a symphonic context, the other within a vocal/narrative context. The Beethoven motive provides in its four notes the material for an extended (instrumental) musical argument, while the Puccini motive, because of the text and the visual setting, assumes a further role in the course of the opera, often identifying the Bohemians "at play." Thus Puccini avoided long-winded preliminaries in La Bohème, and, with this motive, initiated the action and set the pace for the drama.

We can see (and hear) that Manon Lescaut is really the first of Puccini's operas to begin with such a vital and energetic figuration, a real

change of direction from the relative rhythmic weakness of the openings of Le Villi and Edgar, and a move towards the concise, aggressive statements that later characterize La Bohème and Madama Butterfly.<sup>76</sup> It is really the first of Puccini's opening statements that may even be classifiable as a "motive." It is not only the longest of the four motives illustrated in Example 2 (occupying two full 3/4 measures), but also the only one that actually begins on the downbeat. It begins, however, with an "upbeat" downbeat that has an effect not unlike that of the motives of Beethoven and La Bohème illustrated above--a kind of "throw-away" figuration that shifts the stress onto the second beat of the measure. This is caused by the subdivision of the first quarter of the bar into a sixteenth-note pattern in which the first articulation is clipped to a thirty-second note. Moreover, every configuration in this first measure of Manon Lescaut is a kinetic one, as both the dotted eighth and sixteenth-note pattern followed by four sixteenth notes speed headlong to the next bar. This motive, however, unlike that of Madama Butterfly and some of the other figures cited above, has a very circumscribed function within Manon Lescaut: it accompanies the chorus in the opening scene, and disappears altogether at the end of the

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76. The opening motive of Turandot is a close relative of the opening figuration of Madama Butterfly, but is not nearly so vigorous.

first half of the act, as the action and tone of the drama take on a new, more intense direction.<sup>77</sup>

All three of Puccini's collaborations with Illica and Giocosa are remarkable for their propulsive and always dramatically meaningful opening statements. In La Bohème (see above) and Madama Butterfly, in particular, Puccini generated tremendous energy in very few notes, establishing the pace and introducing a rhythmic motive or metric relationship that characterizes certain people or situations throughout the score.

One of the central conflicts of Madama Butterfly is the juxtaposition of Eastern and Western values, and Puccini was able to establish this with great poignancy, subtlety, and immediacy in the opening measures. By taking a rhythm pattern that he apparently viewed as being characteristically Japanese, he made it the subject of a fugue, a compositional procedure that is not only immediately identifiable, but one that is unmistakably "Western." I am referring specifically to the anapest (♩) that forms the core of the fugue subject (see Example 2C, above, or 5A, below) at the opening of the opera, a figure that, while common enough in Western art music, is also typical of Japanese music, an association reinforced for the listener by the

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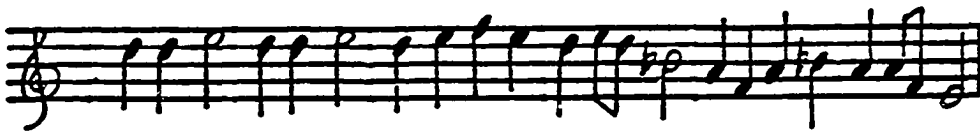
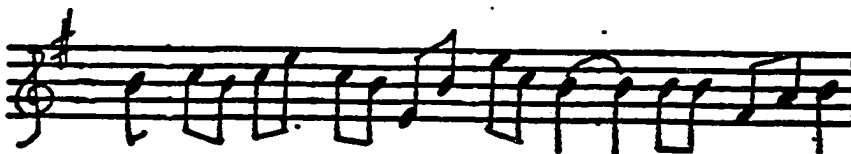
77. See 37 in the vocal score. Even A-major with which the motive (and the chorus) are primarily associated disappears, except for a final vestige at 52, at which point the focus shifts briefly to the chorus.

Japanese setting of the opera.<sup>78</sup> Example 4 illustrates several of the authentic Japanese tunes (all containing anapestic patterns) that Mosco Carner identifies as having been used by Puccini in the opera. I have removed Carner's meter signature and barlines in order to avoid any potential confusion between metric accent and agogic accent:<sup>79</sup>

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78. Japanese rhythm typically avoids downbeat accents and shifts the stress to what, in western music, would be a weak beat. According to Henry Burnett, "An Introduction to the History and Aesthetics of Japanese Jiuta-Tegotomono," Asian Music 11 (1979), p. 18, there are no barlines in Japanese music and "a sense of downbeat in a western sense is often missing." (I wish to thank Professor Burnett for his advice and guidance on this issue.) Francis Piggott, The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan, 2nd ed. (London: B.T. Batsford, 1909), p. 166, notes that "the rhythm of this music differs from Western music in working up to its accent, instead of starting with it," and William Malm, Japanese Music and Musical Instruments (Rutland and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959; rpt. 1983), p. 268, also notes that "Noh rhythm characteristically pushes forward, away from the first beat. . . ."

79. Carner, Puccini, pp. 385-86.

**Example 4: Authentic Japanese Tunes Borrowed By Puccini.****(A) Japanese National anthem****(B) Cherry-Blossom Song****(C) The "Nihon Bashi"**

**(D) Japanese Folk Song.**

What is interesting is that Puccini did not use any of these tunes for his fugue subject. He chose instead the self-contained anapestic figuration common to all of them, and made with it a more terse and subtly powerful opening statement than he could with a melody.<sup>80</sup> It is a motive he could mold and develop in the rest of the opera. And not only does the anapest permeate the entire opera, but, as the opera progresses, it sheds any and all Western associations it may have had in the beginning of the work (as in the fugue and in the love duet; see below). It is a musical development that parallels the dramatic course of Butterfly's realization of the impossibility of being assimilated into Western culture and her ultimate acceptance of and total surrender to her own heritage.<sup>81</sup> Example 5 shows a number of

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80. A melody is an inherently longer musical structure more usually identified by pitch rather than rhythm.

81. Butterfly's desire to be "westernized" was emphasized in the scenario of the original play by a "mixed bag" of Japanese and American paraphernalia, including a sword rack, men's slippers, a tobacco jar, cherry blossoms, a shrine, and an American flag. See Groos, "Return of the

instances in which the anapest figure is used. The examples are arranged chronologically and follow the course of Butterfly's personal odyssey:

**Example 5: "Butterfly" Motive and Some of Its Transformations.**

**(A) Original motive (m. 1).**

Allegro.  
*ff*  
*ff*

The image shows a musical score for the original motive. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Allegro.' and the dynamics are 'ff' (fortissimo) on both staves. The music is in 2/4 time and features a prominent anapestic figure.

**(B) Love duet (116).**

Butterfly  
 Andantino calmo  $\text{♩} = 62$

Pinkerton  
*p dolce* e l'ombra la quie-*ta*.

116 Andantino calmo  $\text{♩} = 62$   
*p dolce* Fin-*co* la *ce-re* E *ori* qui

The image shows a musical score for a love duet. It consists of three staves. The top staff is for Butterfly, the middle staff is for Pinkerton, and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Andantino calmo' with a metronome marking of 62. The dynamics are 'p dolce' (piano dolce). The music is in 3/4 time. The lyrics are: Butterfly: 'e l'ombra la quie-*ta*.' Pinkerton: 'Fin-*co* la *ce-re* E *ori* qui'. There is a circled number '116' at the beginning of the piano part.

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Native," pp. 170-71.

## (C) Love duet (116+5)

Butterfly *acc. un poco*

Pinkerton *So-lac-rin-ar-ga-tal... Rin-ar-ga-ta... so-la.*

*p* *pp acc. un poco*

## (D) Act II prelude (m. 1)

*Allegretto mosso*

*p*

## (E) Figuration accompanying humming chorus (Act II, 90)

*Moderatamente mosso*

*Soprano (a bocca chiusa) p*

*Tenore (a bocca chiusa) p*

⑨ *Moderatamente mosso* *ppp*

**(F) Prelude to Act III (Act II, Pt. 2, m. 1).****(G) The end of the opera (Act III, 58).**

The most "western" transformation of the motive is Example 5B from the love duet, in which the anapest is adapted within the context of 6/8 to the situation and to the suave, "westernizing" arms of Pinkerton. Yet we soon see that Butterfly is not entirely at peace as she yields to him. Her anguished cry, "Sola e rinnegata!" [all alone and outcast !], set in simple meter (3/4, Example 5C), contradicts Pinkerton's seductive 6/8 (Example 5B).<sup>82</sup> Puccini thus recognized compound meter as a purely Western

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82. In this same measure (Example 5C, 116+5), we hear a pentatonic variation of the original melody of the duet (cited in example 5B) that steadfastly asserts in its "easterness" the impossibility of the union. The pentatonic form of the melody is the result of the omission of half steps (a distinctly western function), which were part of the original statement at 116. See, also, Atlas, "Crossed Stars," who discusses the tonal structure of

phenomenon, whereas he reserved duple and quadruple divisions for the characteristic western representation of Far Eastern music. These simple divisions are also a reflection of Japanese dance music, which is characterized by symmetry, even steps, static movement, and a "square" metric organization in which "every group of beats can be divided by two for the next lower unit."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the East vs. West conflict, as expressed in simple vs. compound meters, is evident even in Butterfly's entrance, which begins offstage in simple 2/4 (37), and--as she becomes visible and gradually moves to centerstage--changes to 4/4 (39) and eventually to 6/4 (40).<sup>84</sup> This last and most "western" section of her entrance music is heard again in the F-major portion of the love duet, "Ah! quanti occhi fissi" (135-6). The anapest figure appears again in the Prelude to Act II (Example 5D), in the "Humming" chorus (5E), and at the beginning of the third act (Act II, Pt. 2), at which point the motive is much enlarged and completely stripped of any western context (5F). Finally, as Butterfly commits suicide and thus

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the duet.

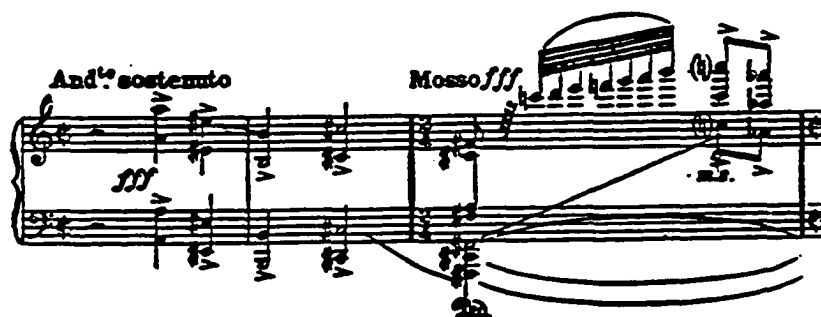
83. Sachs, *Rhythm*, p. 59. See also Carner, *Puccini*, p. 386, who points out that to western ears Japanese music may be most easily characterized in "short melodic-rhythmic patterns in lively two-four time."

84. Groos, "Return of the Native," p. 173, notes that in the opera the emphasis on the contrast of eastern and western culture is consistent up until Butterfly's entrance, at which point the cast is distinctively Japanese (but only initially, I believe), as Goro announces Butterfly's arrival to the borrowed melody of "Echigo-jishi." See also, Table 6 in this chapter.

surrenders to the East, the figure repeats itself over and over in the last measures of the score, unchallenged and tutta forza (5G).

In Turandot we can see that the pattern of the opening figuration is also an anapest, a relative of the "Butterfly motive." In Turandot, however, it is simply and broadly stated, much the same way we encountered it at the end of Madama Butterfly, but now devoid of deep psychological meaning, and functioning in an entirely different capacity: to establish local color. And even though the actual location of Turandot is mythical China, and not Japan, I believe this distinctive rhythm pattern summarizes Puccini's broad musical concept--or, at least, the rhythmic component of it--of things Oriental:<sup>85</sup>

**Example 6: Opening Motive of Turandot.**



85. Carner, Puccini, p. 476, suggests that the opening theme of Turandot was modelled after Iago's "Credo" in Verdi's Otello, and resembles tonally the Scarpia motive in Tosca. I believe, however, that Puccini, already acquainted with eastern rhythms through his work with Madama Butterfly, saw an opportunity to put a musical signpost to good use again. See also, Kii-Ming Lo, "'Turandot' auf der Opernbühne," especially VII.5, pp. 363-79, "Chinoiserie."

The opposing forces in Tosca, Scarpia and his political opposition, represented initially by the character of Angelotti, are established at the opening of the opera by two successive contrasting musical gestures. It is the only opening among Puccini's works to deal exclusively with characterization, and one of the slowest (at least for the first three measures). Its power lies in the relative weight and duration of the broadly-phrased 3/2 chords (outlining a tritone, B-flat to E) that define the character of Scarpia.<sup>86</sup> With his villain thus established, Puccini then characterizes Angelotti with a syncopated 2/4 pattern, as the two identities permeate the first act (and Scarpia, especially, the rest of the work):

**Example 7: Scarpia and Angelotti Motives.**

**(A) Scarpia.**



86. See Atlas, "Puccini's Tosca," who discusses the separate tonal planes of the various characters in the opera. See also, Hans-Jürgen Winterhoff, Analytische Untersuchungen zu Puccinis 'Tosca', Kölner Beiträge zur Musikforschung 72 (Regensburg, 1973), pp. 36-37, who, while assigning two motives to Angelotti, does not discuss the rhythmic properties of either of them.

**(B) Angelotti.**

So clearly delineated are these two figurations and their metric settings in Act I, that we may even speak of 3/2 as Scarpia's and 2/4 as Angelotti's. Indeed, the only 3/2 sections in the entire first act occur in connection with the "Scarpia" motive: at the beginning, and in the final nine measures of the act, where there are three full statements (again in 3/2) of this same motive (89). Similarly, 2/4 is not only reserved for Angelotti, but, more broadly, for the idea of opposition to Scarpia. For example, after its initial statement, there are no passages in 2/4 until Angelotti actually appears again (21+4). However, even after Angelotti has fled to Cavaradossi's villa, 2/4, with its characteristic syncopated figure, returns when a character is either thinking of Angelotti (as when Cavaradossi hesitates when Tosca asks him to meet her that evening at the usual place, meaning his villa, [27]), or when the thoughts or impending action of the character will have an impact on Angelotti. As each motive is repeated throughout the act, its initial characterization is retained (but not

necessarily its original rhythm pattern), even when (particularly in the case of the Angelotti motive) the pitches are transposed: Scarpia most obviously is always depicted as powerful and intractable, while Angelotti is consistently a (syncopated) man on the run.

The action in Il Tabarro is divided between land and water, with the central proceedings taking place on a barge anchored in the Seine. Only the peripheral characters (the organ grinder, the song vendor, et al.) remain on land, at dockside, along the quay. This is a very important distinction, because the lives of Puccini's main characters are spent almost entirely on the water. It is not their chosen existence, and both Luigi and Giorgetta actually state that "Noi non possiamo vivere sull'acqua!" [We are not able to live on the water!] (50+9), while Frugola and Tinca (who actually have another home on land) also long for a cottage in the country (47). Only Michele, Giorgetta's older husband, is at home on the river, resigned and in spiritual accord with the gentle drifting of his barge (81-2). Thus Puccini, wanting to portray in his first scene a monotonous and rootless river-bound existence, found his musical solution in the five-fold statement of a metric "cantus firmus," constituted entirely of changing compound meters. While portraying the continuous motion of the boat, these (somewhat isorhythmic) repetitions also accompany the repetitive action of the stevedores, who are

unloading the barge in the background of the scene. The initial statement follows in Example 8 (mm. 1-8):<sup>87</sup>

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87. This eight-measure phrase is an entirely expository device, and is heard only in the first half of the opera. There are several reprises of it after the first scene: (1) in two successive repetitions (41) as the last of the stevedores exit the barge, and (2) as a brief interlude between the two halves of the opera, this time vocalized on "ah" by an offstage soprano and an offstage tenor (56). See also, Chapter Six and Carner, *Puccini*, pp. 431-32.

### Example 8: Opening Statement of *Il Tabarro*.

*(IL VELARIO SI APRE PRIMA CHE INCOMINCI LA MUSICA)*  
*(Diorgetta è entrata a dirittura furente; odore alcuni pezzi suoi ad annegare; rare su arredo d'or.*

**Andante moderato calmo**  $\text{♩} = 58$

*qua dal furore soffio i suoi furo; ripetere la gabbia dei manovini.)*

*(Nischel, colle pipe aperte, è immobile presso il timone guardando il*

This may be reduced to:

**Figure 1: Metric Design of Opening Statement in *Il Tabarro***

12/8		6/8		12/8		9/8
3	+	1	+	1	+	3

The entire scene is built proportionately, organized by a succession of variations on the original pattern, with the length of each statement of the pattern (with a single exception) being mathematically related to both the prototype and the entire five-fold structure as a whole. Each successive statement thus builds upon the initial eight measures, with the penultimate statement (Statement IV; see Figure 2 and Table 5, below) pulling back asymmetrically, and the final statement being the lengthiest, as it accompanies the longest section of the action (including the stevedores' song and the entrances on stage of Luigi, Tinca, and Talpa). Figure 2 shows the number of measures in each statement:

**Figure 2: Number of Measures in Each Statement.**

I.	8
II.	12
III.	16
IV.	11
V.	36

Table 5 details the metric changes within each successive statement:

**Table 5: Metric Structure of Opening Scene of Il Tabarro.**

Statement	Structure							Location	
I	12/8		6/8		12/8		9/8	mm. 1-8	
	3	+	1	+	1	+	3		
II	12/8		6/8		12/8		9/8	1	
	3	+	1	+	1	+	7		
III	12/8		6/8		12/8		9/8	6/8	2
	3	+	1	+	1	+	10	+	1
IV	12/8		6/8				9/8		3+5
	2	+	1	+			8		
V	12/8		6/8				9/8		4-3
	2	+	3	+			31		

Certain details of this structure are noteworthy. For example, the first three meters of the first statement (12/8, 6/8, 12/8) are retained throughout the first three statements, with the sole variation (in these statements) being the expansion of the final 9/8 portion. The first real departure from this pattern occurs in the fourth statement, which shortens the first 12/8, omits the second 12/8 section, and goes directly to 9/8. Totalling eleven measures in all, it is the only statement of uneven length. And, significantly, there is a dramatic corollary to this departure: Giorgetta's remark to Michele, "Lo vedo bene: dalla tua pipa il fumo bianco non sbuffa più!" [I see that your pipe has gone out!], a line that is underscored by the conflict of duplets in the upper voices against triplets in the bass (3+7):

**Example 9: Metric "Discord" and Michele's Pipe.**

(bianco non sbuffa più!)

This is the most significant line of text in the exposition, since the peripetia is the relighting of the pipe, the match being mistakenly identified by Luigi as Giorgetta's signal to join her. The fifth and final statement brings the stevedores up from the hold as well as Luigi, Tinca, and Talpa, and the end of the introduction is marked by a change in meter from compound time to simple 3/4 time, as the cement, which has now been completely unloaded, is driven away and brings the next scene into close focus.

## 2. Characterization

Puccini took special care with the rhythmic characterization of his female characters. In general, he tended either to bring them onstage in compound meter or to typify them in meters that contrast not only with the meter of the previous scene, but also with an entire previously established metric norm. In addition, Puccini defined some of his leading women through their declamation, often set in meters that consistently contrast with

the declamation of other women or men in the opera. Table 6 illustrates the meters that either accompany the entrances and/or the declamation of certain of Puccini's main female characters.<sup>88</sup> An asterisk (\*) next to the meter signature indicates that the meter refers to the character's entrance. A double asterisk (\*\*) refers to the character's first solo recitation or aria. A coincidence of these events is indicated by a plus sign (+):

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88. Angelica and Turandot are noteworthy for their exclusion from this list, because neither of them is rhythmically distinctive in accordance with the guidelines I have set up (entrance music and declamation).

**Table 6: Rhythmically Distinct Women.**

<b>Opera</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>Meter</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Le Villi</b>	<b>Anna</b>	<b>6/8 (2/4) **</b>	<b>No. 3</b>
<b>Edgar</b>	<b>Fidelia</b>	<b>6/4 +</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Manon Lescaut</b>	<b>Manon</b>	<b>9/8 *</b>	<b>23-8</b>
		<b>2/4 **</b>	<b>28+5</b>
<b>La Bohème</b>	<b>Mimi</b>	<b>4/4 *</b>	<b>25+12</b>
		<b>2/4 **</b>	<b>27+1</b>
	<b>Musetta</b>	<b>9/8 *</b>	<b>Act II, 16</b>
		<b>3/4 **</b>	<b>Act II, 21</b>
<b>Tosca</b>	<b>Tosca</b>	<b>4/4 (12/8) *</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Madama Butterfly</b>	<b>Butterfly</b>	<b>4/4 +</b>	<b>39+1</b>
		<b>6/4 +</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>La Fanciulla del West</b>	<b>Minnie</b>	<b>12/8 *</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>La Rondine</b>	<b>Magda</b>	<b>3/4 **</b>	<b>12+4</b>
<b>Gianni Schicchi</b>	<b>Lauretta</b>	<b>6/8 **</b>	<b>40</b>

Puccini's tendency to characterize women in compound meter dates to the beginning of his career. In *Le Villi* Anna is onstage as the curtain goes up, but we do not hear her until her "Romanza," which is in both 2/4 and 6/8. Moreover, the duple vs. triple division of the beat in Anna's "Romanza" establishes the basic duple vs. triple opposition upon which the entire opera is based (see the discussion below).<sup>89</sup> Fidelia, on the other hand, enters in a true 6/4 near the very beginning of the opera, while

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89. The "Romanza" was a later addition to the score, and one that helped to clarify the unfolding conflict of the drama in opposing meters.

Manon Lescaut enters in 9/8 (23-8) after a lengthy scene set entirely in 3/4 time, an unusually long period of metric stability for Puccini.<sup>90</sup> Once the coach has been dispatched, however, the 9/8 is discarded, and the meter reverts to simple divisions, with both of Manon's solos in the first act, "Il mio fato si chiama" (28+5) and "Vedete? Io son fedele" (53), sung in 2/4, con semplicità.<sup>91</sup> And it is worth noting that in Act II, Manon, once ensconced in Geronte's house (and now not so innocent), no longer declaims in simple meters. Rather, she is accompanied in 6/8 as she fusses with her hair (Act II, m. 1), but later seeks "refuge" in simple meter (4/4 and 2/4) as she sings "In quelle trine morbide" (Act II, 6+6). More significantly, however, her final monologue, "Sola perduta abbandonata" (Act II, 7), returns to 2/4 (although the opera ends in 3/4).

Musetta, by contrast, enters (Act II, 16) with the utmost bombast in 9/8, a meter that has had virtually no place at all in the opera until this point.<sup>92</sup> It is a comic moment, since just as Musetta turns the corner, the

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90. This is probably one of the reasons for the comparative dullness of this first act as opposed to the openings of subsequent operas, especially La Bohème, the opening scene of which is characterized by rapidly changing eighth-note meters.

91. Puccini recycled the same metric characterization for Mimì, who begins "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì" (35) also con semplicità and initially in 2/4. Since Mimì's metrical characterization is so closely bound in with the metric structure of the act, I have reserved further discussion of this aspect of her characterization for the section in this chapter dealing with the macrostructure.

92. The exception being a single measure (19-4) in the Garret Scene.

Bohemians have at this very moment raised their glasses in a toast. Musetta's stylishness stands in stark contrast with the pomposity and fussiness of Alcindoro, who quite literally follows at her heels, as the music tells us in its dragging offbeats in the bass. Indeed, the shop women, who eye her with a bit of jealousy, are shown to be at odds with her in their duplets (Act II, 16+9), these pitted against her 9/8 "entrance" pattern, which continues until it is subsumed by the 3/4 waltz:<sup>93</sup>

**Example 10: Musetta and the Shopwomen.**

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system includes a vocal line for a Soprano (Sop!) and a piano accompaniment. The first system's vocal line has the lyrics: *Toi! Si! Lei! Mu-set - ta!*. The piano accompaniment begins with the instruction *subito pp*. The second system's vocal line has the lyrics: *Sis - me in au - ga!*. The piano accompaniment in the second system has the lyrics: *Che toe - let - ta!*. The music is written in 9/8 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets and slurs.

93. See also, Chapter Seven, Ex. 54.

In La Fanciulla del West, Minnie enters into an already tumultuous scene (rather than creating one), as Rance and Sonora are fighting over her (42). She snatches the pistol from Sonora's hand, and the entire texture changes, as the coarse articulations that accompanied the fight between the two men yield to the more lyrical phrases which characterize "the Girl." The miners shout "hello" to her, and we are reminded of their spoken "hellos," first heard offstage, in the second tableau, at the beginning of the opera.<sup>94</sup> Set in 12/8, Minnie's entrance harkens back again to the second tableau of the opening and the 6/8 of the offstage song (sung later onstage by Jake Wallace in simple meters), the only other instance of compound meter in the act until this point. From her entrance until the end of the act, however, the more frequent use of compound meter, as in Minnie's first encounter with Johnson in the Polka (6/8; see 73) and the 6/4 reprise of their Waltz (originally in 3/4), as it accompanies their closing scene and the closing up of the Polka (96), stands as a kind of rhythmic lyricism reserved specifically for "the Girl."

And, finally, there is Tosca, the most complex of these women. She is first heard offstage, not in the lyrical tones of a *Fidelia* or a *Butterfly*, but calling irritatedly, "Mario!" Yet when she enters it is to the most pianissimo

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94. Minnie's entrance is a major dividing point in the act, with the opening C-major recalled here as well.

lyrical melody, one in which opposing duple and triple divisions of the beat subtly vie with each other (25):<sup>95</sup>

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95. See Winterhoff, Analytische Untersuchungen, p. 34, who discusses this melody, but, again, not its rhythm.

### Example 11: Tosca's "Entrance" Melody and its Accompaniment.

(Tosca entra con una specie di violenza, guardando intorno sospettosa)

**ANDANTINO SOST.<sup>o</sup>**

CAV. qui

**ANDANTINO SOST.<sup>o</sup>  $\text{♩} = 56$**   
*dolcissimo e con tutta l'espressione*

25 *pp*

(si appressa a Tosca per abbracciarla) (Tosca lo respinge bruscamente)

CAV.

**TOSCA**

Perché chiuso?

(con simulata indifferenza)


CAV. Lo vuole il Sa - gre - sta - so...

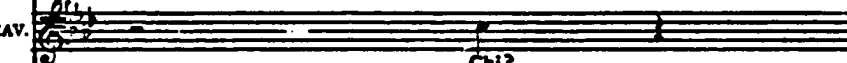
The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the Cavalletto (CAV.) vocal line with the lyrics 'qui' and the piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'ANDANTINO SOST.<sup>o</sup>' and the time signature is 3/4. The second system continues the CAV. vocal line with the lyrics '(si appressa a Tosca per abbracciarla) (Tosca lo respinge bruscamente)'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'pp' and includes a box with the number '25'. The third system shows the Tosca vocal line with the lyrics 'Perché chiuso?' and '(con simulata indifferenza)', followed by the CAV. vocal line with the lyrics 'Lo vuole il Sa - gre - sta - so...'. The piano accompaniment continues throughout.


T.    
 A chi par-la-vi? Al-tre pa-ro-le bi-sbi.

CAV.    
 A te!



T.    
 -glia-vi. O-vèz... Co-lei... Cael-la

CAV.    
 Chi?   
 Wao?



Puccini directs Tosca to enter "with a kind of violence, looking about her suspiciously" (25). She thrusts Cavaradossi aside brusquely, refuses to kiss him in front of the Madonna (26-1), and asks why he locked the door, all to a melody that might otherwise support a love scene. She is (next to Turandot) probably the strongest and most liberated of Puccini's women. Her more complex rhythmic characterization stands in direct opposition to the semplicità of Mimì and Manon Lescaut as well to the gentleness of Butterfly.<sup>96</sup>

### 3. Macrostructure

Puccini used rhythm and meter on a large scale as early as Le Villi, an opera in which the contrasts of day and night, spring and winter, and good and evil are reflected in the musical contrasts of triple meter and duple meter. After Le Villi, however, Puccini never again indulged in such substantial "psychological" metric planning,<sup>97</sup> though the influence of this line of thought on the structures of later works such as Manon Lescaut, La Bohème, and even La Rondine is very much in evidence.

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96. See Sandra Corse, "'Mi chiamano Mimì': The Role of Women in Puccini's Operas," The Opera Quarterly 1 (1983), p. 97. See also, Atlas, "Puccini's Tosca," who discusses Tosca's emotional instability and its reflection in her wavering between tonalities.

97. Except, perhaps, in Madama Butterfly, as noted above.

While the dance is pervasive in Le Villi,<sup>98</sup> it is the sense of metric opposition that stands as the principal musical resource for the expression of the drama. Except for transitional material and some recitatives, most of the first act of the opera is organized in either triple time or triple divisions of the beat. The dominance of this meter is such that it establishes a point of reference for the remainder of the opera: triple meter represents the perfect love of Anna and Roberto, a union sanctioned by God, while duple meter symbolizes the nether world of death and the witch dancers. By juxtaposing duple and triple in the introduzione (consisting of two parts: a fanfare in duple and a waltz in triple), Puccini establishes a musical relationship that reflects the psychological meaning and conflict of the story. Table 7 shows the main metric division of each number in the opera, and reveals that in Act I, when the lovers are together, the meters are primarily triple. The 1° Tempo of the parte sinfonica, "L'Abbandono," is a last flowering of triple time as the 3/4 meter is subdivided into triplets and sextuplets. Thereafter, duple meters are more common. In Act II, after Anna's abandonment and death, triple meters practically disappear; they reappear only in Roberto's scena drammatica, when the former love of

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98. See Budden, "The Genesis," p. 84, who notes that Puccini's "chief innovation is the genre itself--or rather the fusion of genres. Le Villi is subtitled 'opera-ballo', which was the normal term for a grand opera with a central ballet such as Aida or La Gioconda." See, also, section 4 of this chapter.

**Roberto and Anna is recalled, and in the finale, where there is a reprise of the Act I love duet:<sup>99</sup>**

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**99. My discussion includes both acts, since Le Villi was originally a one-act opera. The division into two acts was a result of expansion, rather than revision. Furthermore, the additions to the score add further support to Puccini's metrical dialogue (especially the "Romanza").**

Table 7: Metric Division in Le Villi.

Number		Triple	Duple	Triple/Duple
<b>ACT I</b>				
1.	Preludio	3/4		
2.	Introduzione Pt. 1		2/4	
	Introduzione Pt. 2	3/4 (valzer)		
3.	Romanza		2/4	sextuplets
			6/8	2/4 passages
4.	Duetto	3/4		
5.	Preghiera/ finale	3/4, with a single passage in 2/4 as Roberto is bid "addio"		
<b>PARTE SINFONICA</b>				
6.	L'Abbandono	3/4, Anna's funeral subdivided into triplets and sextuplets.		
7.	La Tregenda			2/4 (6/8)
<b>ACT II</b>				
8.	Preludio e scena		2/4 and 4/4	
9.	Scena Drammatica/ Romanza		2/4	
		3/4 (recollection of love)		
10.	Gran Scena e Duetto Finale		2/4	
		3/4 (reprise of duetto)		
	La Tregenda (reprise)			2/4 (6/8)
			2/4	

The opposition of duple and triple meters, established in the introduzione, is developed in the 2/4 introduction to Anna's Romanza: sextuplets are superimposed over simple duple divisions of the beat. This metrical conflict reflects Anna's inner turmoil over Roberto's departure.

Her phrase "Non ti scordar di me! io penso sempre a te!" [Don't forget me! I always think of you!] starts in 2/4 and ends in 6/8 (17-2) and summarizes the conflict of the aria. The roles are reversed in the main portion of the Romanza, where 6/8 defines the duple division of the measure and the normal triple division of the beat, while the text is interspersed with an occasional 2/4 phrase (as at 15-3). 2/4 and 6/8 are in similar conflict in "La Tregenda," where the metric battle is fought in full force. In the reprise of "La Tregenda," at the end of the opera, duple divisions take over in the final measures:

Example 12: Last Page of Le Villi Score

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system contains five staves: four vocal staves and one piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts are in a soprano, alto, tenor, and bass arrangement, each with the lyrics "-san - na! O - san - na! O - san - na! O - san - na! O - san -". The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with various dynamics and articulations, including markings for *string*, *g*, *stacc*, *g*, *alla*, *g*, *ff*, and *ff*. The second system continues the vocal parts with the lyrics "-na!" and the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the piano accompaniment concluding with a *rit.* marking and the text "Fin dell'Opera".

Fin dell'Opera

Although the pattern of meters in Le Villi reflects a dramatic point of view, Puccini did not cast entire scenes of the opera in one meter or the other solely for the purpose of defining their parameters (a technique he employed later on; see below); rather, he placed meters in opposition as the drama unfolded. With Manon Lescaut, however, Puccini seems to have become even more aware not only of the dramatic potential of opposing meters, but also of the usefulness of such a device in creating and delineating large-scale form. For example, with the exception of the arrival of the coach, which is in 9/8, the first half of the first act of Manon Lescaut is constructed entirely of quarter-note meters. Indeed, aside from Manon's "Il mio fato" (28+5), which is in 2/4, the entire first half of the act is in 3/4 time. By contrast, the second half of the act is cast almost entirely in 3/8 (beginning 37), the main exception being the 2/4 section devoted to Manon (as noted above, under "Characterization"). The only real change comes in the finale, which, as a reprise of "Tra voi belle" (sung by the chorus) with a new text, returns to its original 3/4 meter.

The first half of the act is much more slowly paced and contains the only set pieces, including, for example, both of Des Grieux's arias, "Tra voi belle" (15) and "Donna non vidi mai" (33). This more leisurely, conventional pace is abandoned as the change to 3/8 marks the beginning of what

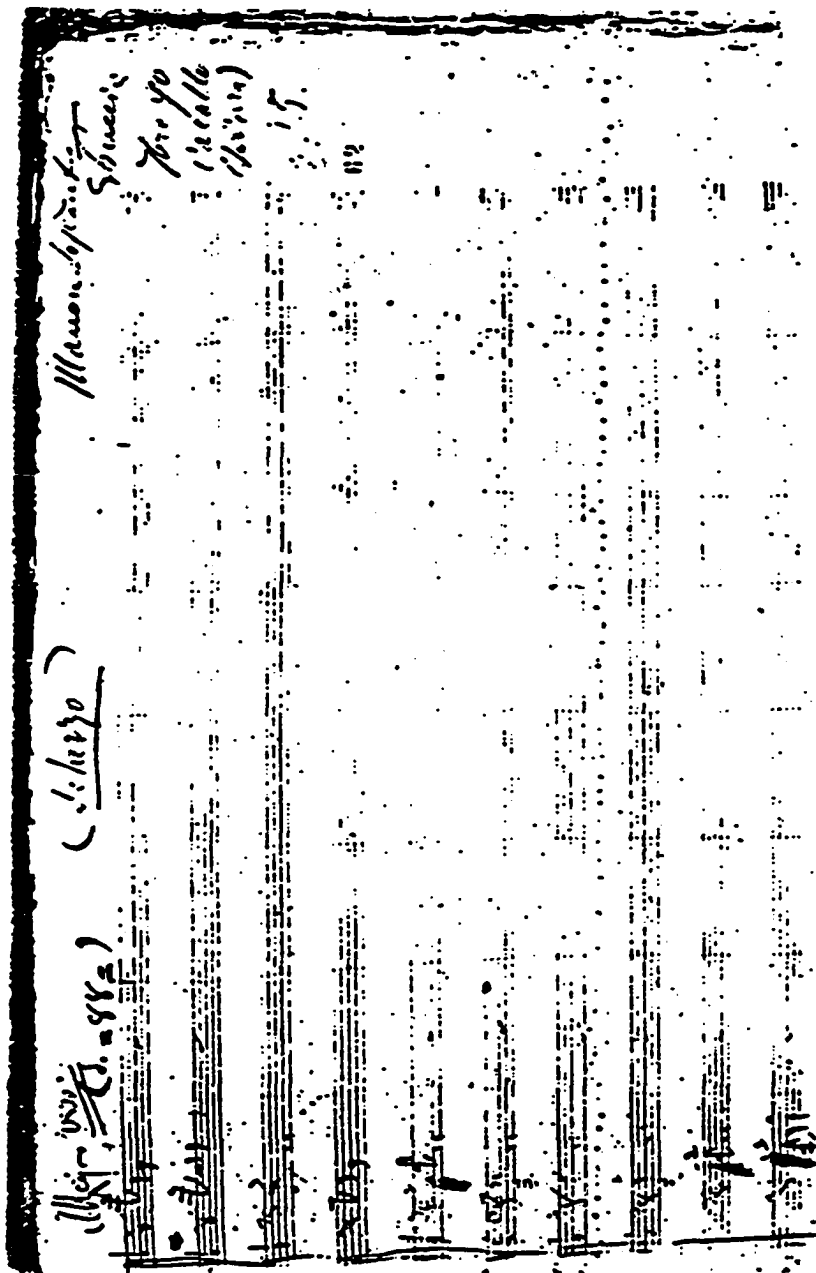
Puccini, himself, called a "Scherzo,"<sup>100</sup> referring in a Beethovenian sense to the tempo as well as to the "sport" about to begin, meaning both cards and the concurrent "games" of abduction (planned by Geronte) and elopement (planned by Des Grieux). The second half of the act is thus primarily an action piece, set at a proportionately faster speed. Illustration 1 exhibits the heading "Scherzo:"<sup>101</sup>

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100. Folio 62' in the autograph. See the illustration below. The move to 3/8 is also accompanied by a tonal move down a fifth; see Chapter One, Table 4, and the discussion following it.

101. Since only the lower strings are playing at this moment, they are not visible in the portion of the manuscript that is shown in Illustration 1.

Illustration 1: Manon Lescaut, Folio 62: "Scherzo."



In the Garret scene of La Bohème Puccini not only provided a musical-metrical analog for kinesis and stasis, but one related to characterization, and, ultimately, to scene divisions. For example, Puccini initially set Rodolfo, a poet, in a "complicated" 6/8, and Mimì, a seamstress, in a "simple" 2/4. Thus the first half of the Garret scene, dominated by Rodolfo and his friends and characterized almost entirely by movement, is set in eighth-note meters,<sup>102</sup> whereas the second half of the Garret scene, which is almost devoid of action, focuses on Mimì and is cast entirely in quarter-note meters (from the moment that Rodolfo is left alone; 25-5). The only triple division of the beat occurs within the climactic section (written in 4/4) of "Che gelida manina," as Rodolfo reveals, most fervently, his feelings for Mimì (32). Until this point, his declamation matches that of Mimì, who almost never sings in triple divisions until she yields to Rodolfo in their duet (42-8, a reprise of the "Che gelida manina" climax). Thus we can make the following division based upon meter in the Garret scene: Part 1: Kinetic-Compound-Rodolfo; Part 2: Static-Simple-Mimì.

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102. The single extended exception is in 3/4 at 19, as the Bohemians seek to "charm" Benoit in what is the most lyrical moment in this half of the Garret Scene. I would like to suggest a parallel here (based upon texture, meter, key, and character) with Musetta's "Waltz," a seduction of a different kind. Indeed, just as the men try to "seduce" Benoit, or distract him from their debt, by praising his virility in an extended 3/4 sequence, Musetta appeals to Marcello's libido in the most extended sequence in the Latin Quarter scene in 3/4 (and, it may be noted, both sequences are in four sharps).

#### 4. The Dance

The dance in Puccini's operas is a feature woven into the very fabric of the drama, as opposed to dances in French Grand Opera or such works as Aida, where they are really theatrical adjuncts.<sup>103</sup> What is interesting, however, is that many of these dances are not seen, and others are only implied by their rhythm. In fact, the only formal ballets Puccini ever included in an opera appear in Le Villi and La Rondine.<sup>104</sup> In Manon Lescaut, the second-act dancing lesson (a gavotte) is an obligatory scene type that serves at once to emphasize both the Parisian setting and the eighteenth-century ambience.<sup>105</sup> The opening choral number, however, sung to a 3/4 waltz-like tempo, only implies the dance and reflects the students' happiness at the semester's end. The many dance rhythms that permeate the first act of La Rondine are similarly never danced to, whereas the entrance of Butterfly and her Geisha friends, together with its pomp and ceremonial bowing, may be understood as a type of ritual dance. The second act of Tosca also includes a gavotte, but one that we do not actually see. Taking place on another level of the Farnese Palace, the gavotte filters down to us through the window of Scarpia's chambers and helps to establish time and place,

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103. Budden, "The Genesis," p. 84.

104. See Act II of La Rondine, especially the dances at 14 to 22, which Puccini designates as symbolizing spring (20).

105. See Michele Girardi, "La rappresentazione musicale dell'atmosfera settecentesca nel second'atto di Manon Lescaut," in Maehder, Esotismo, pp. 65-82.

while the actual location of the sound, away from the center stage, expands the confines of Scarpia's room and suggests action when there actually is none.<sup>106</sup>

The waltz seems to have been Puccini's favorite dance (at least for dramatic purposes). He used the waltz in order to give his characters an excuse to touch each other (whereas a dance like the gavotte, being more or less a group affair, does not invite close physical contact).<sup>107</sup> For example, the waltz to the off-key organ grinder in Il Tabarro, though somehow debased and sardonic, is, nevertheless, a way for Giorgetta and Luigi to have physical contact in public in an acceptable way, just as the Act I waltz in La

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106. See Atlas, "Puccini's Tosca," who discusses the implications of the respective tonalities of the gavotte and the cantata, royalist symbols, and how they relate to Scarpia.

107. Although, according to Curt Sachs, World History of the Dance (New York: W.W. Norton, 1937), pp. 388-89, the early gavotte, which had its roots in what he refers to as the "Age of the Galliard" (1500-1650), included a section in which

one couple stepped into the center, and the gentleman kissed all the ladies, and the lady, all the gentlemen. Either that was the end of it, or couple after couple followed the first with the same kissing procedure. At the conclusion the host's partner handed a bouquet to the person who was to arrange the next ball.

Paul Nettl, The Story of Dance Music (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), p. 253, in his discussion of changes occurring around 1801, refers to the gavotte and minuet as "artificial," the "dances of a now rejected, courtly and aristocratic civilization."

Fanciulla del West allows Johnson and Minnie to hold each other.<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, Puccini's most famous waltz--and perhaps sexiest--is not danced at all. It is Musetta's "Waltz," an alluring song, sung to win back Marcello, who, unable to stand up to Musetta's sexual warfare, surrenders entirely to her musical seduction. And finally, it is the waltz that provides the basic metric timbre for the whole of La Rondine.

William Ashbrook has characterized the first act of La Rondine as "all talk and no action."<sup>109</sup> Indeed, for a work in which dance rhythms are a seminal feature, the opening act is remarkably static. No one actually dances in Act I, and the frequent tempi di valzer and single polka (47) really only imply what is to come: the densely populated scenario of the second act and its fully-staged dances (in the garden in the rear of the stage). Thus Ashbrook's remarks are appropriate, since the curtain opens on a conversation that dominates the entire act, while almost no one comes in or goes out to provide variety. Ruggero's brief entrance and few lines are really too weak to provide a diversion from the seemingly endless chatter. It is really the musical score alone, consisting mainly of waltz and polka

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108. As Prof. Elvidio Surian has pointed out to me (in a letter of 5 October 1988), the waltz (following a nineteenth-century tradition) was a means for Puccini (and others) to "delineate and evoke erotic situations." Musetta's "Waltz," as described above, is an example of a waltz put exactly to that use, but knowingly and deliberately by the character herself.

109. Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 163.

rhythms, that must propel the act.<sup>110</sup> Act I, is, if anything, remarkable for its metric sameness, its consistently triple-time patina, with an occasional excursion into duple time either to accommodate the vocal line or to introduce a different type of dance, such as the polka. What is distinctive, however, is that the opera begins in 2/4, a kind of neutral metric territory, and it is not until we hear the first set piece, Prunier's new song, "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta" (9, sung by Magda), that we first hear triple meter. Indeed, Puccini made a point of 3/4 in both of Magda's arias (the other being "Ore dolci e divine," 23) by beginning them in 2/4 and then continuing in 3/4, a design that parallels the large-scale move from 2/4 to 3/4 in the background structure. Puccini thus associates the waltz rhythm initially with Magda, emphasizing in each of her arias the change to 3/4 and thereby giving that meter greater dramatic significance (which will be realized in the next act). The dance in Act I is thus an undercurrent, something subliminal that portrays not only a certain frivolousness of the characters and setting,<sup>111</sup> but also projects the flowering in the second act of Magda and

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110. The predominance of these rhythms is a characteristic of the Viennese operetta genre that Puccini tried to emulate in his score, although Carner, *Puccini*, p. 417, finds Puccini's waltzes to be more Gallic than Viennese, as does Ashbrook, *The Operas*, p. 164.

111. See Elvidio Surian, "Valzer: la conquista di un paradigma espressivo (da Weber a Puccini)," *'La Rondine': Programma di sala del Gran Teatro La Fenice* (May, 1983), p. 431.

Ruggero's love. Likewise, the recurring waltzes of the third act are only a "nostalgic reminiscence" of that earlier love.<sup>112</sup>

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As we continue to study Puccini's expositions, his musical and dramatic structures, it becomes increasingly clear that each part of the musical-dramatic structure is, more often than not, not only integrally related to the whole, but is generated out of some seminal gesture or conception. Thus, to say, when studying rhythm, that Puccini's operas are either lively or ebullient, that his rhythms are forceful or incisive, is really not enough. Rather, a closer look reveals the more intimate alignment of metric design with characterization, and, more importantly, with large-scale dramatic conception and musical structure.

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112. Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 165.

## Chapter Three

### Tonality

George Bernard Shaw described Manon Lescaut as being "symphonic," noting that with it, "the domain of Italian opera" had been "enlarged by an annexation of German territory."<sup>113</sup> It is an observation that was motivated by the integrity and continuity of Puccini's first act, a remark full of implications for the modern critic. Shaw's comparison of opera to symphony raises an issue that centers on whether or not the application to opera of the "traditional," largely non-operatic oriented apparatus of music analysis is valid: can we use and apply to opera analytical techniques generally developed and reserved for classically designed instrumental works or songs? The opposing arguments in this issue are fixed for the most part on the form-defining role of tonality in a structure that not only spans many sections and often many hours, but generates from a verbal seed, not a musical one.<sup>114</sup> At the extremes, one side asserts that keys govern the

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113. Music in London 1890-94 (London, 1950), vol. 3, p. 219. Shaw was reviewing a performance of Manon Lescaut that he saw on May 14, 1894. See also, William Weaver, Puccini: the Man and His Music (New York: E.P. Dutton [in association with the Metropolitan Opera Guild], 1977), p. 26.

114. The literature is legion. See, for example, the three-way dialogue that includes Siegmund Levarie, "Key Relations in Verdi's Un Ballo in Maschera," 19th-Century Music 2 (1978), pp. 143-47; Joseph Kerman, "Viewpoint," 19th-Century Music 2 (1978), pp. 186-91; Guy Marco, "On Key

overall structure of an entire opera, whereas the other side advances a more conservative cause, that the sense of key relations is apparent only when they are immediately juxtaposed.<sup>115</sup> Both of these views presume that tonal relations in opera must have the same clearly-defined structural function that they have in such classical instrumental genres as a symphony or a sonata, in which the number of tonal goals to be attained and requirements (of form, for example) to be fulfilled is much more circumscribed. In opera, however, even in one that is seemingly bound together like a symphony,<sup>116</sup> the structural role of keys (or any other

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Relations in Opera," 19th-Century Music 3 (1979), pp. 83-87. Also of interest are: William Drabkin, "Characters, Key Relations, and Tonal Structure in Il Trovatore," Music Analysis I (1982), pp. 143-53; Roger Parker and Matthew Brown, "Motivic and Tonal Interaction in Verdi's Un ballo in maschera," Journal of the American Musicological Society 36 (1983), pp. 243-65; James Webster, "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart," 19th-Century Music 11 (1987), pp. 175-93; Carolyn Abbate, "Wagner, 'On Modulation' and Tristan," Cambridge Opera Journal 1 (1989), pp. 33-58; and Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, eds., Analyzing Opera (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); and, most recently, Abbate and Parker, "Dismembering Mozart," Cambridge Opera Journal 2 (1990), pp. 187-95, and Webster, "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity," Cambridge Opera Journal 2 (1990), pp. 197-218.

115. This latter view is that of Donald Francis Tovey, Beethoven (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 28, who says specifically, ". . .no sense of key-relation arises except between keys that are in immediate juxtaposition." Tovey, of course, was referring to symphony and not to opera. See also, Tovey, A Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 1931), pp. 5-7.

116. Shaw, Music, p. 219, considers characteristically symphonic an episodic texture (as opposed to separate numbers) that is created by the substitution of "interrupted cadences for full closes."

musical element, for that matter) cannot be understood apart from the dramatic situation: "those factors making for musical unity must fuse with-- must be unified with--those making for dramatic unity."<sup>117</sup> And those features that make "for dramatic unity" in opera are themselves multivalent.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, if the elucidation of the text were the only goal, then opera might just as well be performed like a Lied recital, in front of the curtain and without the trappings of theatre--sets, costumes, lighting--and, most importantly, without movement. An opera composer must, therefore, be a pragmatist; he must interpret and accompany the drama, while accounting for the physical action as well as the intellectual and emotional substance. Puccini was just such a pragmatist.<sup>119</sup> P u c c i n i understood classical key relationships. He had a very clear idea of how to use the "powerful claims"<sup>120</sup> of tonality to underscore both the dramatic

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117. Edward T. Cone, "On the Road to *Otello*: Tonality and Structure in *Simon Boccanegra*," *Studi verdiani* 1 (1982), p. 73. See also James Hepokoski, "Musical technique and structure," in *Giuseppe Verdi: 'Falstaff'*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 96-98.

118. See Harold S. Powers, "'La solita forma' and 'The Uses of Convention'," *Acta Musicologica* 59 (1987), p. 67, who says "an opera is not in principle a diversification, an organic exfoliation from a single seed, but rather a synthesis, a unification of diverse strands."

119. See Parker, "Analysis," especially pp. 124-42.

120. See Hepokoski, "Musical Technique," p. 97, and Carl Schachter, "Analysis by Key: Another Look at Modulation," *Music Analysis* 6 (1987), especially 290-91, in which he discusses "The tonic as centre," and notes the various ways in which we become "aware" of it.

meaning and the action. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that he created tonal "unity"<sup>121</sup> in his operas. In fact, Puccini was inconsistent in his employment of tonal relationships toward a form-defining end: sometimes he used tonal relations to generate a structure organically, whereas at other times his tonal relationships seem to be schematic or unorthodox, or even, in some cases, to serve no large-scale structural function at all. He thus explored both traditional and untraditional ways of manipulating keys, often treating tonalities as individual sonorities, pitting sharps against flats to shade his characterizations. What I have found to be consistent, however, is that when tonal relations do seem to play a structural role in Puccini's operas, even in the later, more apparently "chromatic" works, those relationships tend to be based upon the simplest diatonic propositions.

I have divided this chapter into four sections, each dealing with some aspect of Puccini's use of tonal relations to define structure, form, and character. As in previous chapters, my point of departure is Puccini's opening gesture: how and when he establishes a key in an opera and what

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121. "Unity" is a word to which many commentators are sensitive. See especially, Kerman, "Viewpoint," p. 191, who speaks of "the current mania for 'unity'," and Abbate and Parker, "Introduction," p. 3, who chastise the "dogged" efforts of some analysts to "discover the hallmarks of autonomous structure, or coherence, or organic unity in a work," ignoring in the process, "a hundred rich contexts for their object." See also, Alan Street, "Superior Myths, Dogmatic Allegories: The Resistance to Musical Unity," *Music Analysis* 8 (1989), pp. 77-123.

consequences this has for the remainder of the exposition. The subsequent sections are, in a sense, subsets of the first section and go beyond the curtain into other expository problems. In the second section I develop the issue of the intervallic joints between scenes (especially opening scenes), a topic I introduced briefly at the end of Chapter One. I develop this further by showing how similar intervallic relationships exist at the main structural break in each of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas. My section on characterization deals with a single aspect of Puccini's technique, his tendency to establish a tonal sonority for a character or pair of characters. And even though the data in this latter area are not as clearly-defined as in sections 1 and 2, there is enough evidence to raise the question and open an avenue for further inquiry. The final section is a postscript in which I shall try to assess the meaning of some of the transpositions in Puccini's scores as they relate to large-scale structure: **1. Opening Tonalities and Large-Scale Key Relations, 2. Intervallic Relationships, 3. Characterization, 4. Transpositions and Conclusion.**

### **1. Opening Tonalities and Large-Scale Key Relations**

Puccini established his opening tonalities in many different ways, with the opening of *Tosca* exemplifying a situation in which he chose not to establish a key at all and delayed the point of tonal arrival (and its accompanying stability) in order to sustain a tense and active dramatic

situation. It is Puccini at his most pragmatic, with the B $\flat$ -E tritone at the opening of the opera, an interval normally fraught with "F-major" implications, fulfilling no such promise here at all. Rather, the tritone frames the three "Scarpia" chords that together have much more far-reaching structural and dramatic consequences than the actual first "real" key (C-major) that is finally established with the Sacristan's entrance (6+4).<sup>122</sup> The unresolved "Scarpia" chords give way (as the curtain rises) to the appearance of Angelotti in a second tonally unstable sequence, which eventually leads to the Sacristan and more solid tonal ground. This point of arrival, however, really serves more to separate the end of the introduction from the body of the work and relieve the dense chromaticism of Angelotti's breathless searching, than to establish a tonal course for the piece. But, as I have already shown, this opening is not at all without a structure, and we can still appreciate its contrasting intervallic and rhythmic underpinnings, even though it is difficult to say that the work actually opens in any particular key.

Puccini similarly delayed the tonic in other works--for example, La Bohème and La Fanciulla del West--to serve a specific dramatic purpose: in La Bohème to foster the sense of the curtain rising on a situation already "in progress," and in La Fanciulla del West to establish the vast out-of-doors through the repetition of an upward sweep of pitches. Still more

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122. See Atlas, "Puccini's Tosca."

exotic is the opening of Turandot, which avoids traditional means altogether by unfolding a dissonance in order to make a musical statement appropriate to the bloody proceedings that are about to take place as the curtain goes up. On the other hand, many of Puccini's operas do establish a key at the outset, with tonality often not serving any immediately apparent role in the exposition of the dramatic conflict.<sup>123</sup>

Given in Table 8 are both the opening and closing points of tonal reference of all of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas (omitting Tosca, for the reasons noted above). Because the intervallic relationship between keys is of such importance in establishing tonality, I have arranged the operas in groups according to the interval that separates the opening tonality from the closing tonality: (A) Acts that begin and end in the same key, (B) Acts that begin and end a descending perfect fifth (P5) apart, (C) Acts that begin and end an ascending perfect fifth (P5) apart, and (D) Acts that begin and end a descending major third (M3) apart.<sup>124</sup>

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123. See Schachter, "Analysis by Key," p. 291, who notes that "a piece that struggles to achieve its tonic presents a world of sound and feeling very different from one where the tonic is asserted as a given from the outset." See also, Burstein, "The Non-tonic Opening," pp. 5-10, who discusses the history of the non-tonic opening and notes (p. 8) that such a device "came into its own" in nineteenth-century music.

124. I treat Acts I and II of La Bohème as a single entity in this table as well as throughout the entire study.

**Table 8: Opening and Closing Tonalities.**

Opera	Opening	Closing
<b>A. Acts that begin and end in the same key</b>		
<b>Le Villi</b>	C	C
<b>La Bohème</b>	B $\flat$	B $\flat$
<b>La Fanciulla del West</b>	C	C
<b>B. Acts that begin and end a descending P5 apart</b>		
<b>Madama Butterfly</b>	C	F
<b>Il Tabarro</b>	G	C
<b>Turandot</b>	B $\flat$	E $\flat$
<b>C. Acts that begin and end an ascending P5 apart</b>		
<b>Manon Lescaut</b>	A	E
<b>La Rondine</b>	A $\flat$	E $\flat$
<b>Suor Angelica</b>	F	C
<b>D. Acts that begin and end a descending M3 apart</b>		
<b>Edgar</b>	D	B $\flat$
<b>Gianni Schicchi</b>	B $\flat$	G $\flat$

Not all of these pairings are meaningful components of some large-scale tonal plan. Nevertheless, even though I cannot connect the tonal beginning and end of the first act of Edgar, I can account to a degree for what happens in Gianni Schicchi, which also begins and ends in keys a major third apart. For example, the G $\flat$  that underscores Schicchi's triumph at the end is a revival of the G $\flat$  that first introduced him (34), whereas the opening B $\flat$ -major, a major third distant from the key of Schicchi's entrance (G $\flat$ ), frames the introductory material (m. 1 to 34-1). Similarly, I cannot

relate the end of the first act of Manon Lescaut to its beginning in terms of large-scale tonal organization, although the E-major finale may be noteworthy for its "sharpishness." But, the C-major close of Suor Angelica, also a perfect fifth above its F-major opening, may well be significant.

In general, compositions that either begin and end in the same key or in keys a descending perfect fifth apart are most likely to be suspected of having a tonal plan. Only two of Puccini's first acts, however, begin and end in the same key, whereas three of them, as well as Il Tabarro, a one-acter, end in keys a perfect fifth lower than the opening. In the discussion, below, I will concentrate on certain aspects of Turandot and La Fanciulla del West, because, despite their individual chromatic and dissonant veneers, each of these works has very simple tonal underpinnings. And even though Puccini treated them quite differently, each work has a tonal organization that is closely aligned with the words, the action, and the lighting.

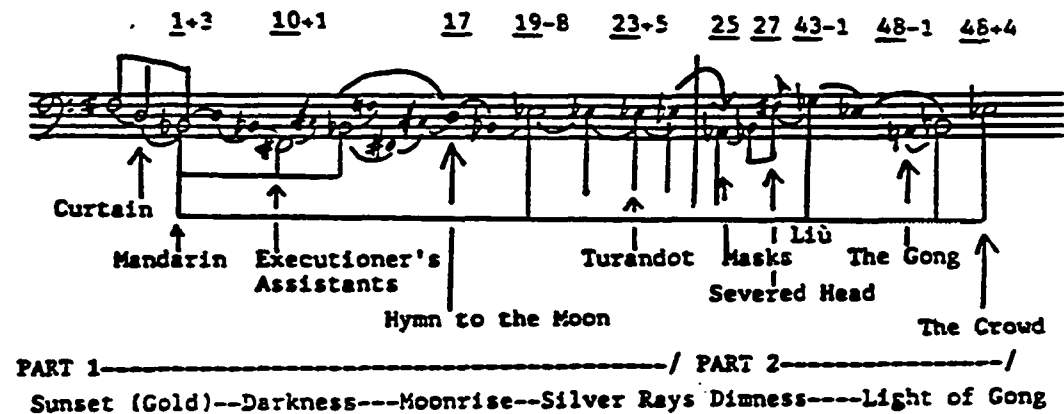
The opening B $\flat$  of Turandot is not a tonic in the conventional sense; rather it lies at the center of a threefold scheme--F $\sharp$ -B $\flat$ -E $\flat$ --the offspring of which are two fifths, one augmented (B $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ ) and one perfect (B $\flat$ -E $\flat$ ), which together comprise the main form-defining tonal structures of Act I.<sup>125</sup> These two intervals not only recur in dramatically significant places,

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125. Furthermore, as Carl Schachter has pointed out to me, the frequent use in the late nineteenth century of augmented triads as altered dominants suggests a dominant-tonic relationship between these two interlocking intervals, and, thereby, an even more "traditional" structural role for them in the tonal architecture of the first act.

but are also closely coordinated with another extremely important structural feature of Act I--a moonrise--the course of which spans the entire act from sunset to darkness. The augmented fifth, a dissonant unfolding from fifth down to root at the beginning of the opera (m.3 to 1+3; see also, Act II, beginning 40+4), is most often associated with the executioner's blade,<sup>126</sup> whereas, the perfect fifth, heard most often in descending form, B $\flat$ -E $\flat$ , defines the structural underpinnings of the act and underscores certain climactic moments, such as the appearance of Turandot and the rise of the moon. The graph in Example 13 illustrates the tonal and dramatic course of Act I:

**Example 13: Tonal and Dramatic Course of Turandot, Act I.**



126. Here is a case of dramatic context dictating spelling, with Puccini wanting the F $\sharp$ , with its bloody association, to be understood as a dissonance, rather than as a consonant G $\flat$ , providing the missing third between E $\flat$  and B $\flat$ . See also, Act II, 47.

After the opening sequence, in which B $\flat$  alternates with D in the bass as the Mandarin reads the law (beginning 1; see also Act II, 40+4), B $\flat$  returns in the bass as the focus shifts to Liù (8). It continues to hold the bass, changing to F $\sharp$  with the appearance of the Executioner's Assistants (10+1); who sing about sharpening the blade that will soon behead the Prince of Persia. The alternating sections of their song are supported in turn by ostinatos on F $\sharp$ -C $\sharp$  and B $\flat$ -F $\sharp$ , F $\sharp$  alternating with C $\sharp$ , and B $\flat$  alternating with F, creating a skeletal structure of F $\sharp$  and B $\flat$ . Once the blade is sharpened, however, the attention of the crowd is drawn to the gradually darkening sky, which inspires a hymn to the moon (in D, 17). The musical and dramatic climax of the hymn is the actual moonrise, supported by a straightforward, harmonically "uncluttered" E $\flat$ -major (19-8), approached locally by B $\flat$  (19-9). It is a consonant moment, outstanding in a texture that, until this moment, has been quite strident and dissonant. The climactic moonrise on E $\flat$  initiates the children's chorus (19), which is built on an alternating B $\flat$ -E $\flat$  bass line. And, as the hue of the background changes from gold to silver (21), the funeral march of the Prince of Persia (in E $\flat$ -minor) begins and eventually closes the first half of the act (25-1).<sup>127</sup> It is within this segment that we first see Turandot, an appearance not only underscored by E $\flat$ -major and illuminated by the moon's rays (23+5), but also brilliant, silent, and distant like the moon itself. The

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127. See also Liù's final scene (Act III, beginning 27, also in E $\flat$ -minor).

second half of Act I focuses on the three Masks and their futile efforts to dissuade the Prince from engaging himself in Turandot's bloodthirsty machinations, with the concluding scene returning to E♭-minor (42; see also section IV, below). In this section F# and B♭ have almost no role at all, except as the action relates to the execution of the Prince of Persia. Indeed, B♭ and E♭ underscore the Prince (Calaf) as he calls "Turandot!" (27-3), while he is answered by the Prince of Persia, who, in a final invocation, also calls out, "Turandot! (27-1)," with B♭ in the bass. And later in the scene, as the Executioner appears briefly on the horizon to display the severed head of the Prince of Persia, the Masks warn the Prince (41), "Così la luna bacerà tuo volto!" ['Tis thus the moon will kiss your pallid visage!]. It is at this moment, as the words and music of the Masks metaphorically tie together the beheading, the moon, and the Princess Turandot, that F# returns, given new emphasis by its high range and grace-note ornamentation:<sup>128</sup>

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128. I can't help but note here certain musical and dramatic similarities to Strauss' Salome, a work that predates Turandot and centers on an exotic Princess, a beheading, and a kiss, all accompanied by the smoldering glow of the moon. Indeed, even the reiterated grace-note figuration (in Example 14, below) is suspiciously near to certain passages in Salome, especially, in the final scene (324+5 to 329; see Richard Strauss, Salome [New York: Dover, 1981]). In this scene a grace-note figuration is articulated in a very high range by the flutes (just as in Turandot), as Salome receives Jochanaan's severed head. The scene climaxes with a kiss as Salome describes in graphic detail Jochanaan's lifeless visage.

Puccini heard Salome long before writing Turandot. In a letter of 2 February 1908 to Giulio Ricordi, Puccini described the Neapolitan premiere of Strauss's work:

### Example 14: F# and The Severed Head.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features vocal lines for Soprano (Soprano), Alto (Alto), and Tenor (Tenore) with the lyrics "Co-el la tu - na be - arri il tuo". Below the vocal lines is the piano accompaniment, which includes markings for "rall.", "a tempo, ma poco meno", and "rall.". The second system features vocal lines for Soprano (Soprano), Alto (Alto), and Tenor (Tenore) with the lyrics "O fi - glia, non dan - za que c'io". The piano accompaniment for this system includes the marking "(con cupplia disperata)", "pesante e sost. d x 54", and "rall.". The piano part includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Ieri sera capilai colla première di Salomé diretta da Strauss e cantata (?) dalla Bellincioni la quale danza a meraviglia. Fu un successo. . . Ma quanti ne saranno convinti? L'esecuzione orchestrale fu una specie d'insalata russa mal condita. Ma c'era l'autore--e tutti, dicono, fu perfetto (Adami, 100).

[Last night I was able to go to the premiere of Salome, conducted by Strauss, and sung (?) by Bellincioni, whose dancing is marvelous. It was a success. . . But there must be many who doubt the verdict. The playing of the orchestra was like a poorly spiced Russian salad. But the composer was there, and everybody says that it was perfect.

And finally, the F#-B $\flat$ -E $\flat$  scheme reasserts itself at a most critical moment in the second scene of Act II, as Turandot cautions the stranger not to tempt fate. It is a confirmation of its important structural role as first established in Act I: "Straniero! Non tentar la fortuna! Gli enigmi sono tre, la morte è una!" [Stranger! Do not challenge fortune! The enigmas are three, but death is one!] (Act II, 48-3). Puccini underscored this warning by stating F#-B $\flat$ -E $\flat$  successively in both the voice and in the bass, summarizing Turandot, herself: bloodthirsty, yet splendid, like the moon:

Example 15: Act II Revival of F#-Bb-Eb Scheme.

**TURANDOT**  
*(in presence of Prince)*  
 -go - - glio di-tes-to pu - ri - ta!  
*Stru.*

*(Corno-Francia 2.)*

**TURANDOT**  
 -nie-ro! Non ten-der la for-tu - - na! *Gl'e -*

**TURANDOT**  
 -sig - mi so - no tre, la mor-tè è u - - na!  
**THE PRINCE**  
*IL PRINCIPALE*  
*(con impeto)*  
 Ko! No! *Gl'e -*

48

We may use Act I of La Fanciulla del West to explore yet another way in which Puccini used tonal patterns (in this case keys) to frame and define structure within an act. At the time of its composition, La Fanciulla was Puccini's most dissonant work, and, as his most seamless opera, it is nearly devoid of traditional set pieces. It is a work with few extended tonally stable areas and long stretches in which the tonic is obscured by dissonances and rapid movement from key area to key area.<sup>129</sup> For this reason the few brief stable areas, as shown in Example 16, below, are exceptionally meaningful, both musically and dramatically, as they define structural points and certain individual scenes: the miners' entrance (5), the "Minstrel's Song" (20), Minnie's entrance (42), the "academy" scene (47), the Waltz (84), Castro's capture (88), and the closing scene between Minnie and Johnson (96, including a reprise of the waltz).

The first half of the act introduces the miners, establishes local color, introduces (through dialogue of other characters) the character of Ramerrez (Johnson), and builds up anticipation for Minnie's entrance. The second half of the act introduces both Minnie and Johnson and establishes their relationship, while also revealing both Rance's interest in Minnie and her dislike for him. A major dramatic and structural point in this second half is the capture of Castro, who not only informs the audience of Johnson's true identity by recognizing his "master's" saddle (88+12), but also takes

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129. See Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 146.

Rance and his men in a posse to nowhere and thus clears the Polka, leaving Minnie and Johnson to themselves.

From the cadence on C at the end of the orchestral prelude, at which point the curtain rises, a C-major triad is unfolded (C-E-G), linking the prologue to the main body (G) of the opera through a dumbshow (E). The main tonally stable musical events of the first half of the act progress in the following sequence: G (5, introduction), D-A-D (20, Minstrel's song) and G (27, reprise of introduction), D (33, Sid is thrown out) to G-major as Ashby describes Ramerrez and his outlaw band (38+2, allegretto moderato alla spagnuola), and briefly to C as Ashby says goodnight and the conversation turns to Minnie (39). A toast to "the Girl," however, quickly degenerates into a fight, and any sense of a tonal center is lost in the process (40+3). Stability is recovered (momentarily) at the beginning of the second half of the act with Minnie's entrance, harmonized by C, which, while overlaid at this moment with a seventh and a ninth (42), holds the bass until 44, at which point a move to E $\flat$  projects the "Academy" scene about to begin (47).

The second half of the act is longer than the first half and has even fewer tonally stable areas or clearly defined scenes. Even in the scene between Minnie and Rance there is little in the way of tonal repose, a musical condition denied, perhaps, by Minnie's aversion for him. It is only as Minnie joyfully recalls the love of her mother for her father that C-major

returns in the sustained chords supporting her words, "S'amavan tanto!" [How they loved each other!] (71). When she is first in Johnson's arms, however, they dance a waltz in an extended stable section in E-major. This is interrupted by the capture of Castro, which revives C (now in minor)<sup>130</sup> and looks ahead to the final C-major of the act, the preparation of which begins with Johnson's G♭ (F♯) expansion of the waltz melody ("Quello che tacete me," 104) and leads ultimately to G (112+5). The act ends with Minnie's entrance music (reintroduced at 114+7), a theme overlaid by a veil of dissonance and a harmony, not quite refined, like "the Girl" herself:

**Example 16: Tonally Stable Areas in *La Fanciulla*, Act I.**

130. See Carner, *Puccini*, p. 412, who believes that the end of the first half of the act is marked by the capture of Castro. Although I don't agree with him, it is noteworthy that he also chose a section of the act set in C. I do agree, however, that Castro's capture is a dividing point of some kind, a problem I explore further in Chapter Six.

As the graph shows, C frames the beginning and end of the act as well as its division into two parts. This C functions, however, not only as a musical proscenium arch,<sup>131</sup> but also as a more deeply entrenched structural support that unfolds itself (albeit across large spans, at times) in crucial dramatic places. Each of the "stable" scenes relates by perfect fifth to C- major, or up or down a third from C, as in the case of the Academy scene which is in E $\flat$  and the waltz which is in E (see also Example 17).<sup>132</sup> In general, however, most of these stable areas are not approached locally by their own dominants. Rather, such conventional pairings, or dominant-tonic implications, are removed to the background level, as Example 15 (above) illustrates. For example, the G-minor of the miners' entrance into the saloon, as the last component of the unfolded triad, is approached locally by third. At the background level, however, this same G-minor relates to the C-major of Minnie's entrance by descending fifth, as each tonality punctuates a major structural point in the proceedings. Minnie's entrance, on the other hand, is preceded locally by a very chromatic sequence, rather than its own dominant. It must be remembered, however, that Minnie is interrupting a fight when she walks in, and although her

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131. Although Cone, "On the Road," pp. 72-73, notes that if beginning and ending in a key were sufficient grounds for deeming a work to be in a key, "any opera could be tonally unified by supplying it with a prelude in the key of its finale."

132. Of course, the Minstrel's song, in D, also fits into this complex. It is merely removed one level, a perfect fifth away from G.

entrance is anticipated, she is not expected at this very moment. To be sure, the men would have, if anything, put on their "Sunday best" for her, rather than allow her to see them at their most violent.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, Castro's C-minor entrance is also musically and dramatically unprepared locally; his appearance is also an interruption, something unexpected, but important enough to command a tonal signpost. Indeed, the appearance of Castro and the return of C may be viewed as a long range tonal and dramatic answer to the description of the outlaw gang that Ashby first gave in G in the Allegretto moderato alla spagnuola (38+2) earlier in the act.

The only clear successions of tonic-dominant relationships in the act at a local level introduce the Minstrel's song (20) and the waltz, the only true set pieces of the act. The Minstrel's song is completely traditional: its middle section ends on A and is directed to die away "in an agonized silence" (24-1), as the homesick Larkens bursts out weeping. The final portion of the song closes on D and immediately thereafter (27) the opening G and theme of the miners' entrance return.<sup>134</sup> The entire waltz sequence and subsequent close of the act are together, however, a more extended

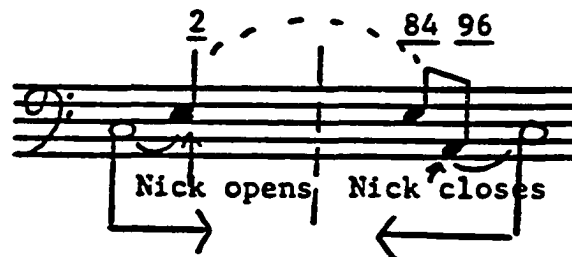
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133. At least three of the men (Sonora, Trin, and Rance) are in love with Minnie, two of them (not Rance) being assured by Nick, the bartender, that he is the one she has chosen.

134. It should be noted, however, that this time the G chord is inverted, placing D in the bass. The destabilization of the original harmony supports the growing intensity of the cardgame and the ensuing cheating incident involving Sid.

musical and dramatic event that requires more musical development, and thereby spreads its dominant-tonic structure over a longer period of time, one that extends across Castro's interruption (88). Begun in E at 84, the waltz returns in A at the beginning of the duet, near the end of the act (96), a resolution that is supported by the action: a dumbshow in which Nick begins to close the saloon by turning off the lights, one by one. It is a tonal and visual mirror image of the dumbshow at the beginning of the opera, in which Nick opened the saloon by turning on the lights in E-major (2). The graph in Example 17 shows how the beginning and end relate to each other and to the "framing" C-major of the act:

**Example 17: Tonal Framing in La Fanciulla.**



## 2. Intervallic Relationships

In Chapter One (see Table 4) I noted the practicality of third-relations between scenes and their ability to provide both pivot notes and

pivot chords.<sup>135</sup> It is one of the most seamless musical joints a composer can create, and we have seen, additionally, that in the works in which the Prelude is joined to the body of the opera by a third, there is often a cantilevering element, usually something visual that was introduced during the Prelude that continues into the opening scene and thus coordinates an equally smooth visual transition with the musical one. For example, in Madama Butterfly we already see Goro and Pinkerton inspecting the new home as the curtain rises during the prelude. It is their vocal entrance that differentiates the end of the prelude from the beginning of the first scene. And Puccini, wishing to delineate the change musically, but without making a dramatic statement where none is required, made the transition by third. The vocal entrance actually begins on B $\flat$  (with added 6th at  $\underline{5}$ ), and is linked to the end of the Prelude by a descending scale passage (beginning  $\underline{3+5}$ ).

When Puccini wished to punctuate a more extreme change, however, he used a descending perfect fifth, an excellent example of which may be found joining the two parts of the first act of Manon Lescaut. Here the first half of Act I features the chorus and centers on A-major, which contrasts with the D-minor of the second half ( $\underline{37}$ ), a tonal move that is accompanied by other musical and textural changes. Approached by a V chord, the D-minor initiates a complete change of pace, direction of plot, and

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135. See also, Parker, "Analysis," pp. 127-29, especially his graph on p. 128.

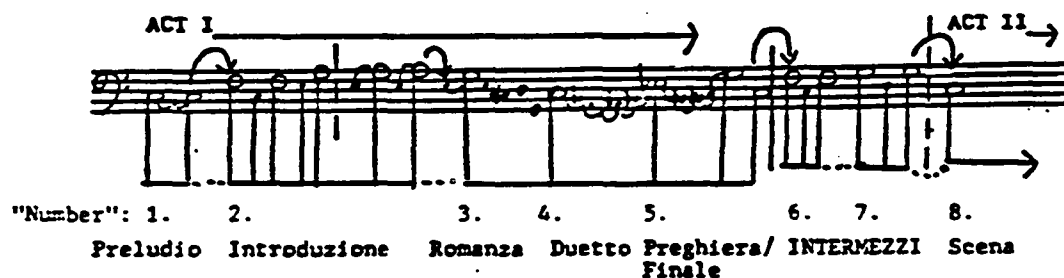
atmosphere, all closely aligned, again, with such non-musical directional features as the lighting.

Two more examples will illustrate broader concepts: how Puccini's use of descending perfect fifths defines the difference between the formulaic primo ottocento "number-opera" format and the later nineteenth-century operatic structure that emphasizes continuity and naturalism, and, consequently, the difference between a schematic tonal plan and a tonal plan that is more integrated. Specifically, Puccini's use of the descending perfect fifth in the openings of both his first opera, Le Villi, and that of a much later work, Il Tabarro, not only illustrates his acknowledgement of the primacy of the falling fifth, but also the changing role in the nineteenth century of such standard operatic expository conventions as the overture and the introduzione.

Puccini delineated the tonal and dramatic independence of the "Preludio" and "Coro d'introduzione" in Le Villi by closing them tonally and by separating them from each other and from the main body of the opera by perfect fifths. The conventionality of the introduzione in Le Villi is especially noteworthy because it features the chorus as a narrator, a collective somebody "outside" the action who relates to the audience the events leading up to the opening scene. Puccini underscored the classical objectivity of this chorus by "divorcing" it intervallically from the main action and by setting it in keys that he appears to have reserved solely for

"outside" functions. Thus the F-major of the first chorus<sup>136</sup> reappears only in the first of the two orchestral intermezzi which introduce the second half of the opera. And, like the F-major first section of the introduzione, the F-major intermezzo also is removed from the preceding tonally closed musical number by descending perfect fifth:

**Example 18: Perfect Fifths in the Exposition of Le Villi.**



The internal set pieces of the first act, the "Romanza" and the "Duet," while also tonally closed and set apart from each other by a perfect fifth, are, nevertheless, still bound together locally by recitatives and orchestral interludes, as the graph in Example 18 illustrates. Furthermore, the move down by fifth from the G of the "Romanza" to the C of the duet reinforces the large-scale structural role of C-major through repetition and may also be understood dramatically as the resolution (if only temporarily) of the misgivings Anna has expressed in her "Romanza." The duet (stage 1), and

136. The introduzione is in two parts, the second of which is in A-minor.

the following "Preghiera" and choral finale (stages 2 and 3), together unfold a C-triad in a succession of thirds, C-E $\flat$ -G until the final cadence on C.

In Il Tabarro, by contrast, Puccini compressed his introductory functions within the opera, condensing in the first scene (m. 1 to 7) his orchestral prelude, introductory chorus, and opening recitatives. This scene establishes the ambience and communicates the antecedent action. It also initiates the tonal prolongation that accompanies the increasing anguish and sexual tension that characterizes the work and finds resolution in death. And, unlike the "outside" Prelude and introduzione of Le Villi, this scene is an integral part of the large-scale tonal structure of the opera, an internal musical and dramatic organ. Introducing and prolonging G, it is tonally open and moves by a descending perfect fifth to C in the scene immediately following, a relationship that reappears motivically throughout the opera in dramatically significant places and parallels the motion from G to C in the macrostructure of the opera. And this large-scale tonal movement parallels, in turn, a dramatic course from the moment in the opening scene in which we first see Michele's unlit pipe, to the peripeteia, the lighting of the match, which Luigi mistakenly presumes to be a signal from his lover. Example 19 illustrates these relationships:

**Example 19: Movement from G to C in Il Tabarro.**

3+7      7      32+3      57      77+5      86+1      90 (The Match)

Intro/Prelude      Scene 1      Frugola      Giorgetta/Luigi      The Cloak      Morte!

"la tua pipa non sbuffa più!"

There is virtually no closure at all in Il Tabarro until the end, but the interval, G-C, pervasive throughout the score in dramatically critical places (even in the smallest details), provides an ongoing point of reference. Thus, for example, the two major statements of the so-called "Cloak" motive (77+5 and 86+1) are supported by G and C, respectively, while Giorgetta's remarks about Michele's unlit pipe (32+8) are underscored in the orchestra by a C in the bass with both G and D, together, above it. At the beginning of Michele's final monolog (86, as noted above) the "Cloak" motive is heard, outlining its motive, C-G, as Michele cries, "Nulla! Silenzio!" His words evoke the notion of the emptiness of the fifth itself and the silence at the very opening of the opera. The interval G-C is heard yet again as his emotions intensify (88-1 to 88) and he commands Giorgetta's as-yet-unknown (to him) lover to come and face him, "Su! su! su! Dividi con me

questa catena!" [Come! Come! Come! Share this chain with me!] The monolog ends at 90-1 with a cadence, G-C, as Michele declares that peace can only be found in death ("la pace è nella morte!"). The remaining section, a pantomime in which Michele strikes the match that Luigi both sees and interprets as an "all-clear" signal, moves again from G to C as Michele grabs Luigi by the throat (92).

\* \* \*

Most of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas have a single structural break that is defined by a combination of musical and dramatic elements and that splits the act into two main parts. With a single exception (Edgar), the intervallic relationships between these large-scale divisions are consistent with those that define other joints in these structures (as noted above):

**Table 9: Intervallic Relationships between Divisions.**

Opera	Part 1	Part 2	
<b>1. Recalled keys</b>			
<b>Le Villi</b>	C (major)	C (minor)	
<b>Madama Butterfly</b>	C	C	
<b>La Fanciulla del West</b>	C	C	
<b>2. Descending fifths</b>			
<b>Manon Lescaut</b>	A	D	
<b>La Bohème</b>	B $\flat$ --C	F	
<b>Tosca</b>	(x)--B $\flat$	E $\flat$	
<b>La Rondine</b>	A $\flat$ --B $\flat$	E $\flat$	
<b>Turandot</b>	F $\sharp$ --B $\flat$ -E $\flat$	A $\flat$	
<b>3. Ascending and descending thirds</b>			
<b>Suor Angelica</b> (3 parts)	F--A	C $\sharp$	A
<b>Gianni Schicchi</b>	B $\flat$		G $\flat$
<b>4. Tritone--Augmented second</b>			
<b>Il Tabarro</b>	G--B $\flat$		C $\sharp$

Recalled keys and descending perfect fifths seem to define most of Puccini's points of articulation, most of which are accompanied by musical or dramatic events that support the weight of the intervallic change between the parts. For example, the division in the first act of Manon Lescaut is one of the most musically emphatic junctures of all of Puccini's first act structures. The falling fifth is most forceful as it delineates the change of intensity between the two parts of the act together with several other musical gestures. A similar juncture or articulation is also generated in

Tosca, as a falling fifth (50) underscores the hasty exit of Cavaradossi and Angelotti, while the action seems to regenerate itself as the Sacristan returns to the scene, accompanied by a reprise of his "entrance" music (this time in Eb and recast metrically in 2/4). In both La Rondine and Turandot, however, the falling fifth is in itself less dramatic and stark, but nevertheless marks a distinct change in dramatic focus and musical texture. In La Rondine the act closes with a love duet, but not one between the principals, as one might expect. Rather, Lisette and Prunier--secondary characters--command the center of attention, and sing the love duet that is usually sung at the end of a first act by principal players (see La Bohème, Madama Butterfly, and La Fanciulla). Of course, a love affair between second-string players is a common feature of comic opera, and Puccini, not yet having begun the love affair between his principals--Magda and Ruggero--by the end of the first act and probably wanting to recycle a proven formula, thus rewarded the poet and the maid with a scene of their own. And the exchange is carried a step further as the maid leaves the house dressed in her mistress's clothes, while Magda leaves the house disguised as a working-class girl or Grisette.

Keys that are recalled seem to recognize other parallel relationships between the two parts (see above), as in both Le Villi and La Fanciulla del West. By contrast, there is no such relationship between the two parts of the first act of Madama Butterfly. The (brief) return of C-minor,

approached by a rallentando and accompanied by a change in lighting, is a musical-structural signpost to which I can attach little dramatic significance, whereas the A-major of the duet makes a more significant musical and dramatic statement.<sup>137</sup>

Puccini seems to have taken an alternate tonal route only in Il Tabarro, by beginning the second section on C#, a tritone distant from his opening key of G, and an augmented second higher than the B $\flat$  that closes the first half of the act. The autograph (f. 82<sup>v</sup>) clearly reveals that Puccini originally scored the piece in C-minor, a key more obviously compatible with the large-scale plan:

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137. See Atlas, "Crossed Stars."

Illustration 2: Il Tabarro, Folio 82: Giorgetta and Luigi's Duet.

Handwritten musical score for a duet between Giorgetta and Luigi. The page contains two systems of music. The first system has two staves, with the top staff labeled "Giorgetta" and the bottom staff labeled "Luigi". The second system also has two staves, with the top staff labeled "Giorgetta" and the bottom staff labeled "Luigi". The handwriting is in ink on aged paper.

And while any half-step alteration in an opera gives pause to the consideration of long-range tonal planning, I believe that this particular half-step adjustment was made to emphasize a dramatic point--to underscore by means of a dissonant intervallic relationship and the disruption of the original more "harmonious" plan the illicitness of Giorgetta's and Luigi's affair. Furthermore, C#, acting as a "surrogate" for C, "chromaticizes" the duet and makes it stand out in a largely "flat" texture (see Table 10), avoiding any tonal pairing (and its dramatic consequences) with Michele's C-minor monolog, one of the other two major musical and dramatic events in the second half of the opera. And even though it is approached locally by G# (Ab, 57-3) in the transition between the two parts, C# seems to be in direct conflict with the large-scale tonal scheme that is based upon the relationship G-C. C# is, finally, a leading tone to the D that governs the duet between Giorgetta and Michele,<sup>138</sup> as Giorgetta intones on C# at the end of her duet with Luigi (72-2), "Come è difficile esser felici!" [How difficult it is to be happy!].<sup>139</sup> Indeed, C#-minor stands in stark opposition both musically and dramatically to the more "benign" Bb of the earlier duet of Giorgetta and Luigi ("E ben altro il mio sogno!," 48) in which the two lovers describe their youth and happier days in Belleville. This duet is the

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138. The key signature here is one sharp.

139. See the graph in Example 19, above. It clearly illustrates that the C# is handled most adeptly and correctly, as Puccini uses it to initiate a move back towards G through D.

most completely innocent moment in the opera and is devoid of the raw passion of what is to come.

Such tonal "expatriation" is a technique that Puccini would use again in Suor Angelica, in which C# supplants C in the unfolding of an F-major triad, a displacement that also underscores the profound emotional power of the moment. In both operas C is restored in the denouement: for Angelica it is absolution and salvation, while resolution for Michele is in the revelation of his wife's lover and Luigi's execution.

I find it both interesting and significant that Puccini began to experiment with augmented intervals as a structural device only at the end of his career (in Il Tabarro, Suor Angelica, and Turandot).<sup>140</sup> From early on, Puccini's standard harmonic vocabulary had always included dissonant combinations--seventh chords and extended dominants, etc.--as it did whole-tone and pentatonic writing. As he matured, however, Puccini seemed more and more to avoid standard harmonic formulas and resolutions, usually with the intention of creating a more continuous texture. Yet when joining the parts of his works or when seeking to integrate the whole, he relied on classical relationships. And even though his maturity is reflected to a degree in this kind of experimentation with augmented intervals at a bass-

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140. See, however, Chapter Seven, pp.325-326. Puccini uses a tritone in the Latin Quarter scene of La Bohème as a stage prop, introduced for "shock value" in order to provide momentum towards the finish.

line level, their principal value lies in their relationship to the firmly rooted and most clearly defined classical relationships that surround them.<sup>141</sup>

### 3. Characterization

One of the most interesting things about Puccini's use of tonal relationships to characterize both individuals or pairs of lovers is his tendency to create a separate tonal plane for a character or pair of characters that contrasts with the large-scale tonal "ambience" of the scene or act. In general, Puccini accomplishes this by pitting sharp and flat keys against one another. Table 10 presents examples from four works and note in each instance the overall tonal coloration of the scene or act within which the relationship is established, the character(s) involved, and the hue of their individual tonal planes:

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141. Indeed, in his final work, Turandot, he regressed to a more conventional operatic macrostructure, organizing his first act around a chain of more clearly defined set pieces, and overlaying its rather basic harmonic structure with a dissonant veneer.

**Table 10: Flat and Sharp Characterizations.**

Opera	Scene or Act	Characters
<u>Manon Lescaut</u>	Act I/Pt. 1, sharps	Des Grieux, flats
<u>La Bohème</u>	Act I, flats	Mimi, Rodolfo, sharps
		Musetta, sharps
<u>Il Tabarro</u>	flats	Luigi, Giorgetta, sharps
<u>Suor Angelica</u>	flats	Principessa, sharps

Puccini's first used this type of tonal "planing" in Manon Lescaut by pitting Des Grieux in flats against a prevailing background of sharps, whereas in nearly every instance thereafter he worked out the distinction in sharps against prevailing flats.<sup>142</sup> For example, in La Bohème the tonal coloration of the entire Garret scene is largely (with several brief exceptions) on the flat side, yet in the climactic moment of the love duet (41) Puccini moved into sharps. He worked similarly in the Latin Quarter scene, setting the crowd in flats, while reserving A-major and E-major for the Bohemians and Musetta. And even though I have not included Tosca, Madama Butterfly, and La Fanciulla del West in Table 10 (because of the many exceptions in these works), it is noteworthy that Puccini began the first-act love duets of both Madama Butterfly (116) and La Fanciulla (96) in A-major and cultivated Tosca's jealousies in E-major (37).

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142. The case of Manon Lescaut is discussed in greater detail under transpositions, below.

Further evidence of Puccini's "sharp-edged" settings includes one of the most tonally "smoldering" scenes of all--the meeting in C#-minor of Giorgetta and Luigi (57)--probably Puccini's most sexually heated scene since Pinkerton's wooing of Butterfly. Yet the two are quite different: Giorgetta and Luigi's relationship is overtly raw and adulterous, whereas Pinkerton and Butterfly have at least the trappings of marriage, even if Pinkerton's intentions are not honorable. Moreover, while Giorgetta entertains no romantic illusions at all, Butterfly believes herself to be in love and legally married, reason enough, perhaps, for Puccini's having "abandoned" A-major for the more "neutral" F-major at the end of the duet in Madama Butterfly.<sup>143</sup>

Even more stark and sophisticated, however, is the tonal portrayal of La Zia Principessa in Suor Angelica. There are three main key areas in the opera: F, A, and C#, each of which seems to have some dramatic significance. F-major is the most prevalent key and is largely tied to events in and around the convent, including the opening prayers and most of the entire closing sequence, a miracle, which eventually "rises" to C.<sup>144</sup> The

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143. See Atlas, "Crossed Stars," who discusses the eroticism of A-major for Pinkerton, while noting that for Butterfly it is an area of "vocal-tonal inertia." Atlas notes further that the "neutral" key of F-major "allows Pinkerton and Butterfly to stand together momentarily as equals," a privilege, at least in her eyes, of marriage.

144. Puccini seems to have respected the "purity" of C-major in several instances throughout his works, perhaps in order to recognize certain institutions or rituals: the Sacristan enters in C-major (at this point a

miracle of the font is in A-major, and Angelica's plea to her dead child, "Senza mamma" (60), is divided into three sections, A (minor)-F-A, providing a tonal link between the real world and the more mystical plane of the font. C#-minor, however, is reserved solely for the Principessa, who not only makes her entrance in C#-minor (beginning 42), but also declaims her only (brief) aria in that key (50+3). The confrontation of the Principessa and Angelica is the climactic central scene of the opera, with the noblewoman introduced here as both the dramatic and tonal opposition, the far end of a dissonant unfolding of F-A-C#. After the Principessa exits, however, the augmented triad seems to "right" itself by reversing its course back down to F (through "Senza mamma") and unfolding again, this time F-A-C natural. Perhaps, we may view the resolution and salvation that Angelica finds in C-major as a kind of musical and dramatic relief of the C#-minor tension and angst that surfaced in her confrontation with the Principessa:

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neutral character viewed by the audience only as a churchman), the greatest possible contrast to the preceding chromaticism and signifying the peacefulness of the church (6+4); Butterfly and Pinkerton are married in C-major (82); and the will is made out in C-major (in Latin, yet) in Gianni Schicchi (70).

**Example 20: A Dissonant Unfolding in Suor Angelica.**

9+1 41 42 60 66+3 75 84

Convent Life  
La Zia Principessa  
Grief, Suicide, Miracle  
"Senza Mamma"

### 3. Transpositions and Conclusions

We generally cannot be as certain with Puccini as we can with Verdi of the motivation for the many transpositions Puccini made in his works, because neither letters nor other annotations exist to explain fully many of his most famous alterations. While it is very easy to assume that a specific singer is lurking behind any and all transpositions in an opera, in the case of Puccini there is enough evidence to create at least a little doubt.<sup>145</sup> As Table 11 (below) illustrates, there are actually very few transpositions in

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145. Some of Puccini's early sketches, indicating yet another tonal version of a particular section of a work, have been introduced by Groos and Parker, *La Bohème*, pp. 102-103, as evidence of his "cavalier" attitude towards tonality. I am speaking specifically of a sketch of the passage immediately preceding Mimì's "Sono andati?" in Act IV of *La Bohème* that shows the passage composed a whole step higher than it is currently known. I find such criticism, however, to be tenuous at best, since most of us would shudder at the prospect of being held accountable for early stages of our own work. See Chapter Seven, pp. 283-287, for comments on transpositions in *La Bohème*.

**Puccini's first acts and one-act operas. I have listed the locations of each transposed section as well as the original and revised keys or key signatures and the intervallic size of the transposition. I have excluded an eight-measure passage in the first act of La Fanciulla del West (beginning 83-8) that is both chromatic and transitional as well as a transposed version of Sister Genevieve's "Sì, lo confesso" (19-2) that appears in an addendum to the autograph of Suor Angelica:**

**Table 11: Transpositions in First Acts and One-Act Operas.**

Opera	Location	Old Signature	New Signature	Interval
<u>Manon Lescaut</u>	15 ("Tra voi belle")	5 sharps--6th added throughout	1 flat	down one half step
<u>La Bohème</u>	27+1-31	3 sharps (initially--see Chapter seven for full discussion)	2 flats	up one half step
<u>Il Tabarro</u>	57-73	3 flats	4 sharps	up one half step
<u>Gianni Schicchi</u>	28+1-35+3 ("Avete torto")	3 flats	4 sharps	up one half step
	34 (a 5-measure passage within the section as noted above) Schicchi's entrance	no signature--entire passage on G	2 flats carried over from previous section--but entire passage is in G $\flat$	down one half step
<u>Turandot</u>	42 to end	1 sharp	6 flats	down one half step

In several instances Puccini seems to have transposed more than was necessary to accommodate a single singer (especially in La Bohème and Turandot), making instead a tonal adjustment that would appear to "tidy up" the tonal structure of the score. For example, in the first act of Manon Lescaut, the autograph (f. 24<sup>r</sup>) shows that "Tra voi belle" was originally composed in six sharps (five written in the key signature and one consistently added in the course of the piece), a half-step higher than the final F-major setting of the piece. Since the adjustment in this particular

instance involves only a single singer, the half-step transposition might appear only to accommodate the tenor's tessitura, and in the absence of documentation, such an interpretation cannot be ruled out. In terms of the long-range ramifications of the alteration, however, it would appear that Puccini may have had something else in mind when making the change. The half-step transposition of "Tra voi belle" from F#-major to F-major joins the aria to a "flat" plane that includes the entrance of Manon's coach (F-major, 23-8) and "Donna non vidi mai" (B $\flat$ , 33), all couched within the opposing "sharp" plane of the chorus (A-major). Thus Puccini seems to have set Des Grieux on his own separate tonal axis, which works simultaneously with and apart from the structure of the exposition:<sup>146</sup>

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146. And it may well be that the B $\flat$ -major of the original finale to Act I was also part of this scheme. See also, Table 10 and the discussion (above) under "Characterization."

**Example 21: Tonal Axis of Des Grieux.**

And while I cannot entirely explain away the G major of the first duet, except to raise the possibility that Manon has not yet joined Des Grieux and cannot, therefore, join his key scheme, in the second half of the act she joins his "flat" world (which is already in the "flat" key of D minor) as they plan their elopement (62-5).<sup>147</sup> In view of this, one can argue that the transposition of "Tra voi belle" contributes to a plan of tonal characterization, one that seems to sustain itself even into the first-act

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147. Indeed, Puccini even continued in the second act to depict Manon as Des Grieux's lover in flat keys against the sharp keys of Geronte's world. See Nicolaisen, *Italian Opera*, pp. 230-35.

finale, which as a choral reprise of "Tra voi belle," now in E-major, thereby returns to the "sharp" plane of the chorus.

Other examples of transposition include that in Gianni Schicchi, in which Schicchi's entrance music (34) is transposed one half step down to G $\flat$ . By doing so, Puccini created an individual sonority for his main character that frames the main body of the work. After Schicchi's entrance, we hear the G $\flat$  only two more times, each associated with Schicchi's success: after the doctor exits and the relatives declare Schicchi's impersonation to be perfect (48+3), and at the very end of the opera (the G $\flat$  section beginning 84), as Gianni Schicchi triumphs by having captured the Donati fortune and found a nice husband for his daughter. And it should be noted that both of these instances appear in G $\flat$  in the autograph.

Similarly, in Turandot, Puccini's transposition of the finale of Act I, down one half step from E to E $\flat$  (beginning 42), would seem to have been an adjustment that just as readily accomodates the ongoing significant structural and dramatic use of E $\flat$  (see above) as it does the tessitura of the entire chorus and cast of main characters.<sup>148</sup>

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148. In his letter of 21 February 1924 (CP 884) to Renzo Valcarenghi, Puccini instructs him to notify the copyist (M<sup>o</sup> Zuccoli) to transpose the finale of Act I down a half step. We can only guess what Puccini means by "too high":

Avverto il M<sup>o</sup> Zuccoli che bisogna trasportare un [1/2] tono sotto tutto il finale primo, perchè così com'è troppo acuto.

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This discussion of Puccini's use of tonality is by no means comprehensive. My purpose here has been to suggest a method of analysis and illustrate the kinds of things that may be learned through it. In Chapter Seven, I apply these techniques in order to examine more thoroughly the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes of La Bohème. I believe, however, that we can safely conclude, even at this point, that, in general, Puccini appears to have been very conscious of traditional tonal relationships in his works. There is a sense of clarity at the background level in many of Puccini's expository structures, a series of diatonic relationships that reflect large-scale planning and esteem for the norms of classical harmony and the musical and dramatic relationships they support. The issue becomes more cloudy at the local or foreground level, where tonal and intervallic relationships seem to be more chromatic and less clearly defined, most often in response to a physical action onstage. In such situations we must acknowledge these more pragmatic aspects of opera--that openness and closure are analogous to action and repose and that chromatic and diatonic are akin to kinesis and stasis.

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I am informing M° Zuccoli that he must transpose the entire first-act finale down one halfstep, because as is it is too high.

## Chapter Four

### Vocal Discourse: Set Pieces, Character exposition, and Tradition

**Language** most shewes a man: speake that I may see thee. It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the Image of the Parent of it, the mind. No glasse renders a man's form, or likenesse, so true as his speech.

--Ben Jonson, "Timber or Discoveries"<sup>149</sup>

In opera the speech about which Ben Jonson speaks is constituted of specific vocal styles: recitative, aria, and their offspring, arioso and song. The assignment of these styles of discourse to various characters throughout the course of an opera as well as their role in the large-scale structure of the opera is not only a product of the composer's creative facility, but also of his service or deference to the demands of contemporary conventions, such as those developed during the primo ottocento. Thus how and when a character expressed himself or herself in Italian opera of the early nineteenth century was dependent upon (or even subordinate to) how a particular form operated syntactically within the structure. Moreover, even the dramatic content of such pieces was classifiable, with arias most often being contemplative (and consequently in a slower tempo), despairing (and

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149. The Works of Ben Jonson, vol. 8, ed. by C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 625; also quoted, with spelling modernized, by Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, p. 109.

consequently faster), narrative, or functioning as a divertissement.<sup>150</sup> The cavatina, or "entrance aria," for example, normally consisted of two contrasting sections, a cantabile and a cabaletta--one fast and the other slow--each reflecting different emotional states and joined to each other by dialogue, the tempo di mezzo. The poetic structure of these compositions was also predetermined, with versi sciolti (unrhymed and ungrouped lines of seven or eleven syllables) normally serving recitative, and versi lirici (rhymed lines of varying syllable count arranged in strophes) constituting the text for the aria itself.<sup>151</sup> The total design of the aria, with its combination of contrasting tempos, dialogue, and poetic structure was also a model for the duet and other larger musical sequences.<sup>152</sup> Each individual type of composition had its own internal design, the textual, musical, and functional parameters of which were drawn even more distinctly either by such titles

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150. Nicolaisen, Italian Opera, pp. 30-37.

151. See especially, Robert Moreen, "Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms in Verdi's Early Operas," Ph.D dissertation, Princeton University, 1975, and Martin Chusid, "The Organization of Scenes with Arias: Verdi's Cavatinas and Romanzas," Atti del I° Congresso internazionale di studi verdiani (Parma: Istituto di studi verdiani, 1969), pp. 59-66.

152. See Balthazar, "Evolving Conventions," especially Chapters 1 and 2. The duet, however, usually included a fourth section, a tempo d'attacco, dialogue preceding the cantabile section, a feature that was also common to some arias.

as Introduzione, Cavatina, or Finale, or by musical closure, or by both.<sup>153</sup> Thus, in the primo ottocento, as Jay Nicolaisen has pointed out, "the writing of a libretto had become something of a perfunctory exercise,"<sup>154</sup> a filling in of a formula full of numerous (and otherwise objectionable) incongruities that the public willingly accepted and even expected. Indeed, even in the mid- to late nineteenth century, Italian audiences still found it perfectly acceptable and even favorable "that a coloratura soprano and the savage, half-naked chief of the Aimoré would sing an Italianate duettino."<sup>155</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, however, the set piece became less and less structurally important, as textures became more continuous, a change in aesthetic that was manifested not only in the abandonment of the "number" structure, but also in the streamlining of individual forms. The multi-movement aria structure was shortened, and such simpler, one-movement forms as the romanza were adopted, while the continuous texture

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153. See Philip Gossett, Anna Bolena, especially Chapter 4, p. 21, in which he discusses how the composer's autograph manuscript itself can define these boundaries. For example, Gossett notes that Donizetti, when composing Anna Bolena, began a new gathering with each new piece. Though such features are not at all consistent in Puccini's manuscripts, similar indicators abound, including such headings as "Finale" in Tosca, "Scherzo" in Manon Lescaut (see Chapter Three, Illustration 1), a new gathering at Butterfly's entrance in Madama Butterfly (f. 42'), and a frequent blank page or heavily darkened double bar either preceding or following a set piece or new section.

154. Italian Opera, p. 11.

155. Nicolaisen, Italian Opera, pp. 11-12, with reference to Carlos Gomes' Il Guarany (1870).

was reinforced by avoiding closure or by aborting a set piece in progress and recalling it wholly or partially at another point in the work. Furthermore, the strict requirements of versification, together with other common textual features such as word repetition, became subsumed by a move towards more naturalistic declamation, a trend influenced by the contemporary tendency in Italian literature towards naturalism.<sup>156</sup> Yet "no Italian before Verdi in Otello had attempted to eliminate the set piece,"<sup>157</sup> and vestiges of the primo ottocento structure and syntax such as the introduzione and the cavatina survived either in fact or in spirit, a yardstick by which these later achievements could be understood and criticized.

This chapter is about how Puccini used traditional vocal forms in both traditional and untraditional ways. Its main focus is the introductory discourse of various characters and how it reflects the individual and relates to traditional operatic structural syntax. My discussion begins with a broad examination of how Puccini defines recitative, aria, song, and arioso in his operas and melds them to his structure: **1. Definitions, 2. Introductory Discourse and its Syntax: Traditional and Untraditional.**

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156. See Dona de Sanctis, "Literary Realism and Verismo Opera," Ph.D. dissertation, The City University of New York, 1983, to which I refer extensively in Chapter Seven.

157. Nicolaisen, Italian Opera, p. 161.

Puccini's first-act arias are traditional in many ways. They often serve traditional dramatic functions: "entrance" aria, narrative, soliloquy, "preghiera," etc., and they are almost always expressed in the first person, usually exposing a dilemma or deeply personal sentiment or conflict. Most of them are tonally closed, with such endings sometimes being completely separated from the next event by rests (and thus inviting applause). Many of these tonally closed arias, however, are not always independent, their cadences often being swept into the musical tide either by an inverted final tonic, a weak metric ending, or new material that dovetails with the closing statement. Indeed, it is more typical of Puccini to connect his arias both tonally and texturally to the material preceding and following. For example, even though "Recondita armonia" (Cavaradossi's "entrance" aria) ends on a root-position tonic (F-major), any potential sense of finality is undermined rhythmically by the Sacristan, who, having mumbled throughout the whole aria (nearly always on the tonic or dominant of F), continues to mutter through the cadence (19+6):

**Example 22: Conclusion of "Recondita Armonia."**

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a CAV. (Cantante) part with the lyrics "Il mio so - lo pen - sie - so," and a SAGR. SAC. (Soprano) part with the lyrics "che fan no con cor - ren - za al - le Madon - ne mandan". The piano accompaniment includes a grand staff with a 7-measure rest in the right hand. The second system features the CAV. part with lyrics "abbi mio sol pen - sier sei tu! To - sca sei" and the SAGR. SAC. part with lyrics "tan - so d'infer - so." The piano accompaniment includes a grand staff with a 2-measure rest in the right hand and a 2-measure rest in the left hand. The score includes performance markings such as *allarg.*, *rit.*, and *allarg. col canto*.

CAV.  
Il mio so - lo pen - sie - so,

SAGR.  
SAC.  
che fan no con cor - ren - za al - le Madon - ne mandan

CAV.  
abbi mio sol pen - sier sei tu! To - sca sei

SAGR.  
SAC.  
tan - so d'infer - so.

*allarg.*  
*rit.*

*allarg. col canto*

(motiva a dipingere)

CAV. *Al*  
tu!  
(accinga i pennelli levati, non osava cominciare a barbotare)

SACR.  
S.C.  
Scherza coi fan-ti e in-scia sta-re i san - - ti.

*dolcis.*  
*PPP*

Furthermore, these "mumblings" recall both dramatically and tonally the Sacristan's earlier scene, in which he says the Angelus (also in F; 13):<sup>158</sup>

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158. The F-major thread is sustained through Cavaradossi's aria to the cleric's exit, which is itself punctuated by an F-major cadence (21-4).

Example 23: The Sacristan's Angelus.

(come l'Angelus - Il Sacrestano si inginocchia e prega commosso:)

*And.<sup>te</sup> RELIGIOSO  $\text{♩} = 58$  LO STESSO MOV.<sup>to</sup>*

SAGR.  
SAC.

13

*And.<sup>te</sup> RELIGIOSO  $\text{♩} = 58$  LO STESSO MOV.<sup>to</sup>*

*pp*  
(Campana)

*pp*

An-ge-lus Do-mi-ni man-tis - vit Ma -

SAGR.  
SAC.

- ri-or, et con - ce-pit de Spi-ri-tu Sancto. Ecce an-nun-tia

(Campana)  
(Bell)

SAGR.  
SAC.

Do - mi-ni; Fiat mi-hi se-cun-dum ver - bum tu - um

(Campana)  
(Bell)

*rall.*

*pp*

*ppp rall.*

In general, the longest of Puccini's expository arias are his narratives, descriptive pieces that are often, but not always, autobiographical or biographical. These include the two narratives of Rodolfo and Mimì in La Bohème, Turandot's "In questa reggia," and, from Gianni Schicchi, Rinuccio's "Firenze è un albero fiorito," arias of tremendously disparate dramatic content. Frequently, however, the narrative is couched in less personal imagery that projects the singer's own conflict into a (possibly) fictional account of another situation and avoids the first person. A good example of this is "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta," (La Rondine), which enjoys the unique status of being narrative, autobiographical by projection, and a song.

Shorter, more diminutive forms, devoid of contrasting tempos, as compared to the lengthier primo ottocento forms, however, seem to be more prevalent in Puccini's expositions, with most of Puccini's more heavy-weight, crisis-inspired outpourings occurring in the second act.<sup>159</sup> Yet in his one-act operas, obviously, there is no second act, and Puccini had to work more efficiently. Thus the set piece is not at all a common feature of Il Trittico,

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159. Many of Puccini's best-known pieces, "Vissi d'arte," "Un bel dì," or "In quelle trine morbide," to name but three, do not appear in his expositions at all, even though the characters who sing them do. See Nicolaisen, Italian Opera, pp. 84-85, who notes further that Ponchielli consistently reserved one of two specific aria types for females in crisis, pieces that are, consequently, almost never heard in the first act (crises not being typical expository events). Puccini, as Ponchielli's pupil, obviously borrowed his teacher's practice.

with "O mio babbino caro" (Gianni Schicchi) and "Senza mamma" (Suor Angelica) being the only individual numbers in the three works that are at all excisable.

Puccini used many songs in his operas, sometimes to replace the "entrance" aria and always to enhance characterization. In general, these songs, unlike arias, are heard and perceived by other characters on stage as "real music" and not dialogue.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, a song is likely to be simpler in structure than an aria: "a short, simple vocal composition consisting of melody and verse text,"<sup>161</sup> having a more straightforward and more easily grasped musical and dramatic content, and thereby more stylistically "in tune" with the simpler structures that were more typical of late nineteenth-century Italian opera. Moreover, in Puccini's operas songs usually stand as independent pieces, whereas arias are more commonly joined to the texture. The song was thus, in one respect, a way for Puccini

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160. See Luca Zoppelli, "'Stage Music' in Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera," Cambridge Opera Journal 2 (1990), pp. 33 and 36, n. 15, who differentiates between the aria, which reflects the composer's point of view, and the narrative, which reflects the characters' point of view. Zoppelli does not mention Edward T. Cone's work in this area in The Composer's Voice (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), or, more recently, in "The World of Opera and its Inhabitants," in Music: A View from Delft, ed. by Robert P. Morgan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 125-38. See also, Alicyn Warren, "The Camera's Voice," College Music Symposium 29 (1989), pp. 66-74, who discusses how Cone's concept of "realistic song" (discussed by Cone in "The World of Opera" and in The Composer's Voice) applies to both stage works and film.

161. Rufus Hallmark, "Song," The New Harvard Dictionary of Music, ed. by Don Randel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 768.

to serve convention and sidestep it at the same time. For example, in Manon Lescaut, Des Grieux sings "Tra voi belle" at the behest of his friends. As the first formal piece that he sings, it fulfills an "entrance" function. He informs the audience that he is currently romantically unattached and, perhaps, even a little bitter about love in general. The song, however, also contributes to the local color, with Des Grieux's performance being amply rewarded by the "bravos" of his friends.

In contrast to both aria and song, the arioso is more of a stylistic designation, referring to a solo musical expanse that is lyrical, but less orderly than the other two more "shapely" forms. Even more significantly it is always tonally open. Siegmund Levarie and Ernst Levy describe it as a "rapprochement":

It combines in one piece elements of both recitative and aria. Syllabic treatment and absence of text repetition represent the former; melodic invention and richer texture, the latter.<sup>162</sup>

Since the arioso is often an extension of a recitative already in progress, it cannot stand alone as a concert piece, nor is it usually extracted from the body of the work for such purposes. Nevertheless, it occurs so frequently in Puccini's works, often forming the very fabric of entire scenes or even entire works (La Fanciulla del West, Gianni Schicchi), that it needs to be recognized as a separate genre.

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162. Levarie and Levy, Musical Morphology, p. 68.

## 2. Introductory Discourse and its Syntax: Traditional and Untraditional

### Traditional

Of course, Puccini neither eliminated the set piece from his works, nor eschewed tradition entirely. In many ways he still continued the dramatic tradition (if not the internal musical structure) of the primo-ottocento aria, often even using it as an introductory tool or an emotional discharge, an event arising out of the "necessity for uttering various emotional cries musically"<sup>163</sup> and usually having a more traditional "despairing" or "lamenting" content. His choice and placement of musical events, however, more commonly reflects the more general late nineteenth-century trend towards simplicity and "something more popular" and more natural.<sup>164</sup> And in Puccini's operas, at least, this shift of emphasis away

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163. D'Ecclesiis, "The Aria Techniques," pp. 13-14. D'Ecclesiis's study is primarily an examination of the various internal structures of Puccini's arias. See also, Torre Franca, Puccini, pp. 71-73, who makes clear his low esteem for Puccini's ability in this area. He describes the "aria dell'urlo," the legitimate Verdian ancestors of which he designates as "Di quella pira" from Il Trovatore and "Ah si vendetta" from Rigoletto. Torre Franca notes, with particular acidity, however, that the legitimate lineage of this tradition not only dies with such pieces as Leoncavallo's "Ridi pagliaccio," but falls into ignominy with the third-act finale of Manon Lescaut. No doubt, he was referring to Des Grieux's gut-wrenching plea to the ship's captain, "Guardate, pazzo son."

164. See Kerman, Opera as Drama, p. 121, who describes the nineteenth-century aria as being modeled on folk song. According to Kerman, composers, responding to the romantic demand for something more "immediate," wrote "'tunes' not 'compositions'." I suppose that Puccini is guilty of writing "tunes" (some rather good ones, in my opinion), but I fail to see that they are not compositions. See also, Grout, A Short History of

from structure to a more unstudied or less academic characterization is also evident in the shape of an individual character's vocal line, in which melody and rhythm provide as many clues to characterization as the text.<sup>165</sup>

The following table is a chronological list of those characters whose entrances are treated in a more or less traditional way, being given something "formal" to sing--an aria or a song--either soon after entering or near the beginning of the first act or exposition. The large number of pieces on the list suggests that Puccini retained the "entrance" function in most of his works, adjusting it with simpler forms and sometimes substituting songs for arias. But, as I will show in the course of my discussion, it is a superficial gesture towards tradition, since only one of these pieces actually supports a "number-opera" structure:

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*Opera*, p. 379, who discusses the freer interplay of operatic forms in the late nineteenth century.

165. That of the Sacristan, for example, whose "secular" mutterings continue the style of his "sacred" intonations. Furthermore, this "church" mode of declamation also serves to confirm his profession. Puccini used a similar style of musical speech in the recitative and aria of La Zia Principessa in order to establish her character and the environment in which she speaks.

Table 12: Introductory or "Entrance" Set Pieces.

Opera	Character	Aria	Song
<b>Le Villi</b>	Anna	"Se come voi piccina"	
<b>Edgar</b>	Fidelia		"O fior del giorno"
	Frank	"Questo amor"	
	Tigrana		"Tu il cuor"
<b>Manon Lescaut</b>	Des Grieux		"Tra voi belle"
<b>La Bohème</b>	Musetta		"Quando m'en vo"
<b>Tosca</b>	Cavaradossi	"Recondita armonia"	
<b>Madama Butterfly</b>	Pinkerton	"Dovunque al mondo"	
<b>La Fanciulla del West</b>	Jake/Miners		"Che faranno"
<b>La Rondine</b>	Magda		"Chi il bel sogno"
<b>Il Tabarro</b>	Frugola		"Se tu sapessi" / "Ho sognato"
<b>Suor Angelica</b>	Angelica	"I desideri"	
	Principessa	"Nel silenzio"	
<b>Gianni Schicchi</b>	Rinuccio	"Firenze è un albero"	
	Lauretta	"O mio babbino caro"	
<b>Turandot</b>	Turandot	"In questa reggia"	

Anna, Frank, and Turandot are the only characters who actually enter and sing a set piece, practically before engaging in any other kind of discourse. Frank's aria, an independent set piece in its tonal makeup and emotional content, seems, however, to be misplaced. After already having introduced Fidelia, Edgar, and Tigrana without having them sing a formal opening aria, Frank's almost "Verdian" outpouring seems dramatically

inappropriate and texturally out of step. It invites applause in a structure that has not permitted it thus far. Turandot's "In questa reggia," on the other hand, is a true "entrance" aria, introduced by a procession and performed under the most formal circumstances of any such piece in a Puccini opera. Of course, Puccini made a major alteration by delaying this event until the second scene of the second act, a dramatic ploy devised to increase curiosity about the enigmatic Princess, who has so far only been seen, but not yet heard. And even though the plot demands that Turandot make both a formal entrance and some kind of "public" declaration, such structural proceedings seem to be a form of regression for Puccini (at the end of his career), whose only other completely conventional "number-opera" structure was Le Villi.<sup>166</sup> In Le Villi Anna, who has also been seen but not heard in the introduzione, exits with the crowd and returns to sing her romanza, in which she reveals her misgivings about Roberto's journey (Ex. 24A). And although it is a typical late-nineteenth-century, one-movement structure, certain of its musical features look to the future. For example, its vocal line exhibits the kind of limpid, diatonic melody that will characterize nearly every aria sung by a female character in Puccini's subsequent operas. It moves almost entirely stepwise and almost studiously avoids chromaticism, as it has only one note outside the G-major scale, even

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166. Most interestingly, however, it is one more of the many ways in which Turandot seems to mirror Le Villi, but on a much grander scale, an issue I take up more fully in Chapter Five.

though the accompanying harmonies are more varied (see especially 14+5).<sup>167</sup> A particularly interesting exception to this diatonicism in the opening statements of female characters is the opening of "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì," in which Mimì, seemingly embarrassed and not really knowing what to say to her new acquaintance, literally fishes around for pitches before settling down (Ex. 24B):

**Example 24: Diatonic and Chromatic Vocal Lines.**

**(A) Anna: "Se come voi piccina."**

The image shows a musical score for Anna's aria "Se come voi piccina." It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system is marked "ANDANTE LENTO" and includes the lyrics "Se co-me vo-i pic-ci-na in-fes-sa va-ghi". The second system is marked "MOLTO" and includes the lyrics "for-se-mpre sem-pre vi-". The third system is marked "MOLTO" and includes the lyrics ".ci-na po-tre-i sta-re al ma-a-mar-". The score features various musical notations, including dynamics like "ppp" and "pp", and tempo markings like "ANDANTE LENTO" and "MOLTO".

167. See Nicolaisen, *Italian Opera*, p. 294, who also takes note of the main section of Roberto's aria, which contains only notes in the ascending or descending scale of B $\flat$ -minor.

## (B) Mimì: "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì."

The image shows a musical score for Mimì's aria "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì." from Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Bohème*. The score is written for voice and piano. The tempo is marked "Andante lento" with a metronome marking of  $\text{♩} = 40$ . The key signature has one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the vocal line starting with the lyrics "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì, ma il mio nome è Lu-". The piano accompaniment features a prominent triplet figure in the right hand. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "ci-a" and "La sto-ria mia è bre-ve". The piano accompaniment continues with the triplet figure. The third system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "A te la ga" and the piano accompaniment concluding with the triplet figure.

Puccini explored the potential that musical speech has for characterization throughout his career, with one of his most trenchantly portrayed individuals being La Zia Principessa, whose stiff and measured recitative carries over stylistically into her aria, "Nel silenzio." With a formal, "announced" entrance, she makes her first appearance in the central scene, the catharsis and climax of the opera:

Le due suore fanno ala e, fra le due figure bianche, che si curvano lievemente in atto di ossequio, passa un figura nera, severamente composta in un naturale atteggiamento di grande dignità aristocratica: la zia Principessa. Entra. Cammina lentamente appoggiandosi ad un bastoncino di ebano. Si sofferma: getta per un attimo lo sguardo sulla nipote, freddamente e senza tradire nessuna emozione. . .la vecchia protende la sinistra come per consentire soltanto all'atto sottomesso del baciamento. . .Suor Angelica, con gli occhi pieni di lacrime, non ha mai tolto lo sguardo dal volto della zia, uno sguardo pietoso, implorante. La vecchia invece ostentatamente guarda avanti a sè.

[The two sisters line the way, and between the two white figures, who bow lightly in a natural attitude of deference, passes a black figure with a severe deportment of aristocratic dignity: It is the Princess-Sister Angelica's aunt. She enters leaning on an ebony stick. She stops and, for a moment, throws a glance at her niece, coldly, and without a trace of emotion. . . . the old Lady merely stretches out her left hand as if consenting only to the submissive act of having her hand kissed. . . . Sister Angelica, with eyes full of tears, has never taken her glance off her Aunt's face, a pitiful, imploring glance, but the old Lady ostentatiously looks straight ahead. (p. 57)]

It is one of the lengthiest verbal descriptions of a character in all of Puccini's operas,<sup>168</sup> a visual sequence that sets the tone for what is about to be heard. Indeed, the Principessa speaks in a repetitive, chant-like manner that has several implications. She perceives herself to be a religious woman and thus speaks in the kind of hushed tones (marked in the score con

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168. Prose descriptions--sometimes lengthy--are found in several Puccini scores, especially La Bohème, which includes prefaces to each act, and La Fanciulla del West, which is prefaced by a lengthy description of the scene as well as Nick's opening of the Polka. There is even a part in Le Villi for a narrator, who summarizes the events that occur between the first and second acts.

*voce cupa* [in a hollow voice] that are appropriate to a convent setting. Her speech is centered mainly on E in the beginning and moves up or down only a third (44):

**Example 25: Chant-like Musical Speech of La Zia Principessa.**

The musical score for 'La Zia Principessa' consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked 'LA ZIA PRINCIPESSA' and includes the instruction 'con voce cupa'. The piano part is marked 'rall.' and includes a boxed measure number '44'. The second system shows the vocal line with the lyrics 'Prin.ci.pe Gualliero vostro pa.dre, la Principes.sa Clara vostra' and a piano accompaniment marked 'pp'.

More significantly, however, the uninflected intonations sustain the distance that had already been established between the two women from the moment the Principessa made her entrance. By looking straight ahead and not varying her speech, the noblewoman is able to remain aloof, conduct her business in the most efficient way, and make clear to Angelica that hers is not a social call. Initially, Angelica adopts her Aunt's monotonal expression (46 + 1), but both the ambitus and pitch inflections in her line widen as she

speaks of mercy and compassion, "luogo di clemenza, luogo di pietà!" (46+7). Nevertheless the old woman holds her musical and psychological ground, her speech unshaken by the young nun. It is only as Angelica accuses her of cruelty that the Principessa reacts. Her musical speech becomes chromatic (48+5 to 50-2) and reflects a personal involvement that she quickly sheds as she regains her composure and her defenses, and returns to the stiff, faintly modulated line of her earlier discourse. It is here that she begins her only aria, "Nel silenzio" (50+3), in which she describes her spiritual communion with Angelica's mother. The aria follows the style of the recitative in its restrained tones, and, as one of the least "tuneful" of Puccini's arias, it depicts its speaker both vividly and incisively. The opening line traverses the octave in a slow measured way, as it moves evenly in ascending perfect fourths on a steady rhythmic course. Her line stoically avoids the leading tone as it rises to the tonic, illustrating musically the Principessa's description of her own "rising spirit" (50+3):

Example 26: Opening of "Nel silenzio."

*LA SIA PRINCIPESSA*

-col - go.

*lento* **50** *rall.* *Nel si.*

*pp misterioso*

*len.sio di quei rac.co.gli.men . ti, il mio spi . ri . to per che sal . lev .*

*Andante molto sostenuto*  $\text{♩} = 52$

*(Columbo Ostinato)*

*pp*

*LA SIA PRINCIPESSA*

-la - ni e d'in . con . tri con quel di vo . stro ma . dre in col .

*pp espressivo*

Of Puccini's expository narratives, one of the most interesting is Rinuccio's "Firenze è come un albero fiorito" (30), which serves as a comic

introduction to the character of Gianni Schicchi, whom the young man proclaims to be the intellectual and spiritual equal of Giotto and the Medici (an historical impossibility, given the year). Even more importantly and subtly, the aria introduces another major participant in the opera: the city of Florence.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, nowhere is Puccini more specific about his dramatic setting than in Gianni Schicchi, as he notes the time to be exactly 9:00 in the morning, the year 1299, and the place Florence. The opera is larded with concrete references to the city and its environs: the Signoria, the Arno, Santa Croce, the Ponte Vecchio, Fucecchio, Figline, Quintole, as well as Signa and all of Tuscany. And beyond establishing local color, and getting it right (as opposed to the orientalism in Madama Butterfly),<sup>170</sup> these references help to convince us of the love and respect all the characters have for the city, making Schicchi's warnings about exile and being forced to beg like a Ghibelline even more credible ("Addio Firenze," 64). Moreover, our attention is drawn in the end to Florence itself: Rinuccio opens the window to reveal the city, "bathed in sunshine," proclaiming, "Firenze da lontano/ Ci parve il paradiso!" [Florence in the distance resembles Paradise!].

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169. Carner, Puccini, p. 444, likens Puccini's portrayal of medieval Florence to Wagner's portrait of Nuremberg in Die Meistersinger.

170. See Groos, "Return of the Native," pp. 167-72.

Several of the pieces listed in Table 11 are autobiographical. Pinkerton's "Dovunque al mondo" (21) is, perhaps, the most subtle, as it reveals more about his attitudes than it does factual information about his life. He makes clear his intentions, while reflecting an entirely jingoistic point of view in his romanticization and (consequent) sanitization of the "Yankee vagabond," who, as a species of roguish adventurer, might even be--in his view--someone to admire and emulate, and, most certainly, someone to tolerate and forgive. The interjections from Sharpless render the aria unsuitable for the concert hall, but provide a musical and moral counterpoint for Pinkerton's chauvinistic boasting. By contrast, Butterfly is accompanied by an entourage (as is Turandot). Her escorted entrance reflects culture as well as ritual: she is a bride being accompanied by her bridesmaids, but she is also a Japanese woman, who would probably not travel alone under any circumstances. Indeed, as Arthur Groos has pointed out, "Cho-Cho-san can be victimised because she is a woman, and an oriental, and a Japanese."<sup>171</sup> Thus she sings in concert with her friends, being denied the musical individuality afforded other Puccini heroines. She is not "privileged" with a formal entrance aria, while Pinkerton, the occidental, white male is.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, Puccini makes an even more purely musical distinction between the two by defining their individual

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171. Groos, "Return of the Native," p. 177.

172. Ibid.

Pinkerton's through the "Star Spangled Banner" (21) and Butterfly's through the "Echigo-jishi (37)".<sup>173</sup>

**Example 27: Ethnic Entrance Music for Pinkerton and Butterfly.**

**(A) Pinkerton: "Star Spangled Banner."**

21 *Allegro sostenuto con spirito. Lazz.* *Andante*

The musical score for Pinkerton's "Star Spangled Banner" is written for piano. It begins with a circled number 21 and the tempo marking "Allegro sostenuto con spirito. Lazz." The music is in a key with one flat and a 4/4 time signature. The score consists of two staves, with the right hand playing a melody and the left hand providing harmonic support. The piece concludes with a circled number 22 and the tempo marking "Andante".

**(B) Butterfly: "Echigo-jishi."**

*Allegro.*  
Pinkerton

*Me - so - so.*

37 *Allegro.* *Me - so - so.* *Al!* *Al!*  
*Es - ce! San giu - se al som - mo del pa - dio. Giu*

*Allegro. d = 124.*

The musical score for Butterfly's "Echigo-jishi" is a vocal score with piano accompaniment. It features five staves. The first staff is for Pinkerton, with the tempo marking "Allegro." and the name "Pinkerton" written below it. The second staff is for Butterfly, with the tempo marking "Me - so - so." and the name "Butterfly" written below it. The third staff contains the lyrics "Es - ce! San giu - se al som - mo del pa - dio. Giu" with a circled number 37 and the tempo marking "Allegro." and "Me - so - so." written above it. The fourth and fifth staves are for piano accompaniment, with the tempo marking "Allegro. d = 124." written above the right hand. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

173. Groos, "The Return of the Native," p. 173, notes further that the "rapid pizzicato version of 'Echigo-jishi' imitates the sound of Japanese instruments."

The notion of geographical distance and attitude is also evident in the texts of their individual opening pieces, as each makes reference to "near and far." Butterfly is the happiest girl in all of Japan, if not the world; her love is all-embracing (40-4): "Io sono la fanciulla la più lieta del Giappone, anzi del mondo" [I am the happiest girl in Japan, even the world]. Pinkerton, on the other hand, views the four corners of the world as a limitless international source of sex and adventure to sample freely and abandon upon satiation: "Dovunque al mondo lo Yankee vagabondo si gode e traffica sprezzando rischi./ Affonda l'ancora alla ventura." [The Yankee vagabond enjoys himself anywhere in the world, and carries on, disdainful of risk]. Butterfly's entrance music is arioso in style and culminates in the lyrical melody (40) that we will eventually hear again in the closing section of the love duet. And, like Tosca and Manon, it is not until much later on in the opera, only when she is in a crisis, abandoned for three years, that she sings a full-scale aria, "Un bel dì" (Act II, 12).

Puccini sometimes substituted an "entrance" song for an "entrance" aria, a very important and revealing dramatic gesture. In one respect it is the "'degree zero' of operatic stage music, serving to define a situation or ambience."<sup>174</sup> More importantly, however, it projects the point of view of the character who sings the song, while the act of singing itself tells us something about the person. Obviously, not every character is likely to sing

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174. Zoppelli, "Stage Music," p. 31.

a song. Scarpia, for example, would be an extremely unlikely candidate, while song itself is as emblematic of a gypsy such as Tigrana as is the lute she uses to accompany herself.<sup>175</sup> In Tigrana's hands, the song is sexual and profane. She uses it to offend the angry crowd of peasants that confronts her outside the church. And after having sung the blasphemous "Tu il cuor" (27) in response to the liturgical song of the peasants, which she hears emanating from within the church ("Dio non benedice," 24+8), she proceeds to tell the outraged group that she would much prefer to sing than to listen to a sermon (29): "Sia per voi l'orazion, è per me la canzon! Vo' cantar, vo' trillar" [A sermon is fine for you, but I prefer song. I want to sing, I want to trill.] The song is accompanied by lute-like broken chords, while the tempo proceeds in the improvised, erratic fashion of a spontaneous gypsy melody:

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175. Puccini describes her as carrying a dembal, an instrument that he notes in the stage directions as being a species of lute (12). It is not an instrument that I have been able to locate in standard dictionaries of musical instruments.

Example 28: Tigrana's Song and its "Lute" Accompaniment.

*AND.<sup>te</sup> MOSSO* *vif. a tempo* *vif. a tempo*

T  
Sia per voi... d'o - ra - zion, è per

**29**  
*AND.<sup>te</sup> MOSSO*  
*pp m.s.* *vif. a tempo* *vif. a tempo*

*vif. a tempo* *vif. a tempo* *vif. a tempo*

T  
- me la can - zion! Vo' can - tar, vo' tril -

*vif. a tempo* *vif. a tempo* *vif. a tempo*

T  
- lar!... Vo' can - tar, vo' tril - lar! Chi non vuo - le ascol -

*vif. a tempo* *vif. a tempo* *pp*

Puccini also associates song and sexuality in the character of Musetta, who, however, lacks Tigrana's lewdness. Puccini drew conceptually not only upon the legend of the Sirens by having Musetta sing a song, but evoked yet another traditional symbol of sexuality (at least in the nineteenth century) by making that song a waltz. It is all contrived by Musetta to make a last-ditch appeal to Marcello's libido. And it is clear that Marcello hears her, because Puccini has her seated and markedly addressing him (Act II, 21), thereby indicating that her waltz is a piece to be heard and understood as "real music." Furthermore, Puccini not only specifies that Marcello is "spellbound by Musetta's voice" (Act II, 24-8), but he has Marcello quote Musetta's melody (Act II, 25+9), complete with ornamentation, as he succumbs to her efforts, crying "Sirena!" (Act II, 26+3), the climax of the whole scene.

In quite a different way, Puccini first equated innocence with song in the character of Fidelia, who enters singing a simple aubade, a strophic, closed, "morning" song praising the April dawn and the year's new flowers. With its simple, even phrases, the song fulfills the "entrance" function and helps to establish the time of day and year as well as a certain quietude and peacefulness (that will soon be disrupted). Although the text of Fidelia's song tells us nothing about her directly, the use of the song itself does, as its high range and tunefulness also denotes youth and innocence. It is an image that Puccini revived in Madama Butterfly, as the married and

abandoned Butterfly still clings to hope and sings the "Flower song" (Act II, 71).

Magda, Puccini's other somewhat "tarnished" protagonist, uses a "real," freshly composed song to reveal her inner feelings under the guise of a narrative. And, like Fidelia or Cho-Cho-San, but in contrast to Musetta, who projected her sex appeal with a song, Magda exhibits a certain innocence in her rendition of "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta."<sup>176</sup> When Prunier is unable to provide a second verse for his song, Magda takes over spontaneously and "improvises" an ending into which she not only projects her own dreams, but forecasts the second act. The genre of song (as opposed to aria) allows the sophisticated and worldly Magda to express simple and ingenuous sentiments that might otherwise seem inappropriate or even ridiculous coming from a woman of her experience.

When Des Grieux enters in Manon Lescaut, it is into a scene of merrymaking and carousing in which song-singing is the order of entertainment, with Edmondo singing a madrigal, "Ave, sera gentile" (4), half in earnest, half in jest. Thus, when commanded to sing of an amorous adventure, Des Grieux, staunchly denying any such current involvement, agrees to the demands of his friends and sings the simple three-part song, "Tra voi belle." Puccini added a further dimension to this song by tying it

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176. It is one of two numbers Magda sings in the first act, the other being "Ore dolci e divine."

tonally and dramatically to the "real" aria that comes later, "Donna non vidi mai," thereby forming a question-and-answer structure. In the song Des Grieux poses the question, "Tra voi belle, brune e bionde si nasconde giovinetta vaga e vezzosa, dal labbro rosa che m'aspetta?" [Is there among you pretty brunettes and blonds, a young coquettish girl, whose lips await me?] He answers the question himself, after having seen and spoken with Manon Lescaut: "Donna non vidi mai!" [Never did I behold so fair a maiden!] Thus, while the song is Des Grieux's impersonal but jovial contribution to the celebration, the aria is its response, an inner revelation and a musical resolution.<sup>177</sup>

Puccini had a gift for manipulating crowds, a technique evident in his earliest works, and one that came to maturity in the Latin Quarter scene of La Bohème. In both Madama Butterfly and Tosca, however, except for isolated scenes, Puccini's interest in spectacle seems to have waned. But with La Fanciulla del West Puccini not only reactivated the crowd, but elevated it to the status of a main character in the collective person of the miners, who join with Jake Wallace in singing "Che faranno i vecchi miei, là lontano," the only set piece in the first half of the act (20).<sup>178</sup> "Che

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177. The relationship between the two pieces, the tonal aspect of which I discuss in Chapter Three, is recognized in their frequent pairing in concert.

178. And, I believe, it is significant that in three of the five works following La Fanciulla large ensembles become essential to the entire work.

faranno" is first heard in the prologue in the distance, its lead motive sung by a solo baritone (2+7), and then in its entirety by Jake Wallace and the six "named" miners, Trin, Harry, Joe, Sonora, Handsome, and Happy, as well as an additional small chorus of anonymous miners (tenors and basses). It is an offspring of the same genre of "tavern" song that Des Grieux sings, an appropriate divertissement for a barroom locale. Puccini, of course, took his cue from Belasco, who required that music be played within, without, and between the parts of his play, even during the intermission.<sup>179</sup> As a simple song that adds local color as well as a humane dimension to the character of the men who sing about their poor old mothers at home.<sup>180</sup> it provides a glimpse of a more tender and home-loving side to this otherwise rough-edged drinking, gambling, and gun-slinging crowd. And it is precisely this warmth and humanity that convinces us that such men, while they earnestly believed that Johnson should be hanged, could, out of love and respect for Minnie, release him. The song is something the audience can believe, and Puccini's largely unison and octave scoring of the men's voices here as well

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179. Belasco's play called for, among other numbers, a singer accompanying himself on the concertina in a rendition of "Camp Town Ladies," dance music by a country fiddler, the minstrel song, "Old Dog Tray, or Echoes from Home," and a waltz. In the opera Jake Wallace has a banjo. On "Old Dog Tray," see Atlas, "Belasco and Puccini: Old Dog Tray and the Zuni Indians" (forthcoming).

180. As Gerould, "The Americanization of Melodrama," p. 27, points out, remembering "mama" is common in melodrama, a genre that he calls "matriarchal in its pieties." Further evidence of this appears in Minnie's recollection of her mother's love for her father.

as throughout most of the score helps to portray not only their roughness and lack of artistry, but also a certain ingenuousness.<sup>181</sup>

### Untraditional

Many of Puccini's characters do not have a solo at all in the first act, with such an exclusion of a formal number itself being significant. It either suggests something about a particular character or reflects a larger textural plan that does not admit the kind of temporal suspension that an aria enforces: "stopping the action, as if the running of a movie were arrested on one frame."<sup>182</sup> The classic example of this is probably La Bohème, in which something so formal as an aria literally would have tripped up the rapid motion of the opening in medias res. In addition, both of the main characters of La Bohème--Rodolfo and Mimì--are introduced by arioso passages and not arias. These passages are of tremendous structural significance, as they both provide the tonal support beams for the Garret

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181. See Carner, Puccini, p. 405, who notes that "the chorus is purely male and is throughout treated in unison and octaves to convey the primitiveness of the gold-miners." This is not entirely true, however, because the men sing polyphonically as they receive their letters from the postboy (61+3), their individual lines dovetailing and overlapping. Puccini clearly recognized in this singular instance, in which the men do not react to something as a group, but rather as a group of individuals, the opportunity to write counterpoint. Thus he was able to have them sing harmonies without eroding the otherwise untutored and rough surface that his unison choral writing suggests.

182. Levarie and Levy, Musical Morphology, p. 67.

scene and link the two characters together through melody and orchestration. And the two autobiographical arias that Mimì and Rodolfo do ultimately sing ("Che gelida manina" and "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì") have less to do with "entrance" syntax than they do with characterization, mood, and texture.

Puccini really had no formula for introducing his characters, even though his arias and songs often seem to satisfy an "entrance" function. Rather, he took time to set the scene and generally subordinated the aria to his text.<sup>183</sup> This reflects his orientation away from "singers" opera, a practice for which at least one contemporary critic took him to task.<sup>184</sup> He was more likely to assign arias, ariosi, or songs to his characters according to the demands of the individual situation--even an "entrance" aria, where appropriate--but only as it could be bonded to his continuous musical dialog in which he carefully avoided both word repetition and tonal closure.<sup>185</sup> These tendencies--the absorption of the set piece into a continuous texture and the scaling down of its size--elevated the importance

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183. See Levarie and Levy, Musical Morphology, p. 68.

184. See Torre Franca, Puccini, especially pp. 63-64, who considered Puccini's rejection of convention to be at best "un-Italian."

185. See Parker, "Analysis," pp. 118-24, who discusses the rate of text consumption in Puccini's operas and the consequent absorption of the traditional set piece into a continuous texture. Using Act I of Tosca, he shows how the dissolution of the traditional poetic verse forms that determined the parameters of recitative and aria gave way to the emergence of "mutant" forms that obscured these lines. See also, the Excursus on the language in La Bohème in Chapter Seven pp. 263-266.

of the recitative as a tool for character development and fostered the arioso, a less structured type of extended solo arising out of recitative and generally functioning within the context of a larger scene or sequence of musical events. Such avoidance of big "numbers" tended to subordinate the "star" system in his operas,<sup>186</sup> while elevating the role of the ensemble and nurturing a different kind of musical dialectic, such as one finds in those works that feature large groups of people in important roles: La Bohème, La Fanciulla del West, La Rondine, Gianni Schicchi, Il Tabarro, and Turandot.<sup>187</sup> In these works, the set piece thus takes on an even newer meaning, providing textural contrast as in La Bohème, La Rondine, and Gianni Schicchi, or a change of pace, again, as in the Garret scene of La Bohème.

Puccini usually had a good dramatic reason for not assigning a first-act solo number of some kind to a character.<sup>188</sup> Two of the most

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186. Contemporary Italians also followed these trends, but none of them (Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Catalani, and, later on, Giordano) was able to create the nearly seamless continuity that Puccini mastered. And, furthermore, works such as Adriana Lecouvreur are still vehicles for the singer and achieve success only as far as the leading soprano can carry them.

187. Obviously, to a certain extent, the same is true in the works of Wagner and Strauss (and others). The major difference here, however, is that Puccini developed a kind of group repartee that is an individual characteristic of his own, rarely found in works of others.

188. Both of Puccini's collaborations with Fontana, Le Villi and Edgar, omit an aria for the lead tenor in the first act. And while this lacuna is a dramatic blunder in the case of Edgar, the omission of a first-act aria for Roberto in Le Villi seems to be less injurious to the dramaturgy, perhaps because we receive a satisfying dose of "tenorly" lyricism in his duet with

interesting cases are those of Scarpia and Tosca. Scarpia's most extended first-act passages, "Tosca divina" and "Va, Tosca," are bound closely to ensembles, the former to his dialogue with Tosca and the latter to the choral finale of the first act. Likewise, Tosca has no formal aria in the first act, with "Non la sospiri" being dramatically and tonally part of a larger sequence of events that culminates in the love duet, "Mia gelosa."<sup>189</sup> This seems to be a contradiction, because Tosca is, by profession, a singer: "stassera canto" [I am singing tonight], 27-7). Yet it is a side of her that is not revealed until the second act, when she does, indeed, "sing" as a singer in the cantata that is audible on an upper floor of the Farnese palace, through Scarpia's window. The first act, however is really not about Tosca, and we don't really miss a formal aria in the course of the fast pacing and arioso texture that characterizes most of the act. Indeed, the only set pieces of the act are "Recondita armonia," which cannot stand alone for reasons discussed above, and the finale, above which Scarpia's monolog is superimposed. Act I is primarily an exposition of the political intrigue and jealousies that guide Scarpia's hand. The relationship between Cavaradossi and Angelotti is the focus of the action, and Tosca is introduced as a potential instrument of their undoing. The unbroken pace is well-suited to

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Anna.

189. See also, Carner, Giacomo Puccini: Tosca, p. 104-106, who calls "Non la sospiri" an "arietta."

the intensity of Angelotti's escape, and Tosca's character is a single component within a continuum that unfolds, nearly uninterrupted, from the first act through the third. As part of this macrostructure, Tosca's character is slowly revealed over the course of the opera, and our initial impression of her is only that of a beautiful, but contrary and religious woman, not some one in whom Cavaradossi will confide. This, however, is only a hint of what is to come, as Puccini saves her first major aria for her crisis, the moment in which she feels forsaken: "Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore" [I lived for art, I lived for love"] (Act II, 51). The aria is even more subtly important as it corresponds in sentiment to Cavaradossi's "Recondita armonia," in which he also compares art and love. Thus in the first act Puccini sets up Tosca as contradictory, but extremely vulnerable--a potential victim of love and jealousy, and, consequently, of Scarpia. In the second and third acts, however, she gathers spiritual strength, as she seeks to protect herself and her lover. There is a sense of growth in her character that is reflected musically as she sings more independently, makes decisions, and acts on them.

Puccini's treatment of Tosca is an example of his general tendency to delay the "big" moments, especially those involving female leads, who, with few exceptions, seem to "mature" along with their musical substance. And since so many of Puccini's women undergo a spiritual metamorphosis (one that is often linked to sexual experience) in his works, they are more likely

to sing a song or an arioso in the first act and a more formal, internally-generated aria in a later act, after having been "initiated" in some way. For example, Fidelia sings only a song in the first act of *Edgar*, a symbol of pastoral innocence, while her most inspired (by grief) singing comes in her two third-act arias, "Addio, mio dolce amor" (Act III, 8) and "Nel villaggio d'Edgar" (Act III, 26). Likewise, Manon does not pour out her heart until she has been sexually awakened. In fact, she sings very little in the first act of the opera, as her part is restricted to several arioso passages, linked in every case to a dialog or duet with Des Grieux. Manon's self-introduction,

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however, may well be one of Puccini's most subtle statements. And the theme of her "Manon Lescaut mi chiamo" (27+8), while developed in various places throughout the opera,<sup>190</sup> is quoted most poignantly by Des Grieux, *con semplicità* (as originally declaimed by Manon), in "Donna non vidi mai" (34):<sup>191</sup>

**Example 29: "Manon Lescaut mi chiamo."**

**(A) Manon Lescaut.**

MAN. (*con semplicità e modestamente, alzandosi*)

Ma - non — Lescaut mi chia - mo.

D.G. - ma - te? ... Per - do -

*dolcissimo.*

The musical score is for the vocal line of Manon Lescaut. It is written in G major and 4/4 time. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'con semplicità e modestamente, alzandosi'. The lyrics are 'Ma - non — Lescaut mi chia - mo.' The score includes a piano accompaniment with a 'dolcissimo' marking. The vocal line is marked 'D.G.' (Dolce/Gentile).

190. See Carner, *Puccini*, p. 324, and Girardi, *Puccini: La vita e l'opera* (Rome: Newton Compton editori, 1989), p. 49.

191. See Ashbrook, *The Operas*, pp. 42-43, who calls "Donna non vidi mai" a "sort of tenor counterpart to 'Caro nome'."

## (B) Des Grieux's quotation.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line (D.C.) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "suo. va vi. ta l'alma mia si de - sta." followed by a fermata and the name "Manon Lescaut mi". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with a fermata and the instruction "P con amplexi v. all." above it. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "chia - mo!" and "Co - me que - ste pa -". The piano accompaniment includes the instruction "dolciss. armonioso" and "a tempo" above the bass line.

With her words ringing in his mind, Des Grieux has clearly perceived her name as having been inflected in a special way, if not actually having been sung. It is a fine nuance, given that Manon is not obviously engaged in singing an autobiographical "song."<sup>192</sup>

And finally, in both La Fanciulla del West and Il Tabarro the aria is replaced almost entirely by arioso. Indeed, both operas are alike and unique in that no principal character sings a set piece in the exposition,

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192. See Zoppelli, "Stage Music," p. 30, who calls such quotations "products" of the character.

whereas secondary characters do.<sup>193</sup> The omission of arias for both Minnie and Giorgetta, in particular, can be specifically related to Puccini's attitude towards women, as described above. Giorgetta, however, is an even greater exception, as she has virtually nothing individual to say throughout the course of the entire opera. As an adulterous wife, psychologically and physically subjugated by Michele and sexually enslaved by Luigi, she is musically characterized only through her duets with the two men.

On the other hand, Minnie has plenty to say, and although she is clearly in love by the end of the first act, she does not sing in a fully passionate way until the second act. Indeed, she even wistfully recalls the love between her mother and father, hoping that someday she will enjoy an equally satisfying relationship. In Act I, though, she is still innocent.<sup>194</sup> And we are convinced that despite her frontier existence and "streetsmarts,"

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193. These pieces, however, are mainly songs that play a unique structural role, an issue I take up in the next chapter.

194. See Gerould, "The Americanization," p. 25, who describes Minnie as follows:

A product of the frontier and gold rush, the Girl is naturally independent and self-reliant, with a strong sense of her own worth as a human being. Innocent but not ignorant, Minnie is quite aware of the physical side of love and knows exactly what the men who pursue her are after, but she makes them respect her because she esteems herself. And for protection of both her person and her property, she carries a gun and is ready to use it if necessary.

**Minnie has managed to preserve herself for the right guy. She even tells Johnson that she has yet to give her first kiss.**

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**Puccini has been accused of creating one-dimensional or even insipid females, interchangeable males, limply drawn musical characters.<sup>195</sup> And even though it is sometimes difficult to find a great deal of depth in some of Puccini's vulnerable, innocent women and less-than-heroic men, I don't find his portrayal of them to be entirely superficial. The developmental course of many of Puccini's characters appears to be closely related to the structural course of his works, the timing and genre of their musical discourse carefully selected to correspond appropriately to the musical and dramatic environment of the individual character. Puccini's strategy was different from that of his operatic predecessors, and perhaps stands outside the "Italian" tradition in this respect, though it is by no means entirely divorced from it. Rather, he considered aria, song, and arioso in terms of their individual traditional musical, dramatic, and structural associations--at least a century's worth of collected meaning--and then made his assignments**

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**195. See for example, Kerman, Opera as Drama, p. 15, who refers sarcastically to Puccini's women as**

**fragile butterflies . . . flirting, fluttering, carefully fixing their crinolines in garrets.**

**accordingly, suiting them to character and situation, tipping his hat to convention when appropriate, and melding them efficiently and subtly, but incisively to his individual operatic structures.**

## Chapter Five

### Time and Light

In opera time is marked primarily through music, as the most basic durational elements--rhythm and meter--propel the work forward in the most regular and systematic way. These measurable elements are in turn enriched by aria and song, elements that tend to control the larger sense of pacing: aria, a reflective function, analogous to that of the soliloquy in spoken drama, generally suspends time,<sup>196</sup> while song consumes "real" time. In both real life and the theatre (be it sung or spoken), however, time is not accessible to direct observation.<sup>197</sup> It is perceived only through its manifestations: natural phenomena such as the changes from light to dark or from winter to spring; signs such as the calendar and the clock; or activities such as meals, courtship and marriage, and seasonal rituals. The recreation of these manifestations in the theatre (and opera house) provides a chronology for the drama, while the "semantic" connotations that certain seasons of the year or times of day seem to possess establish both a mood and a set of expectations.<sup>198</sup> For example, tragedy is commonly associated with night and winter, whereas comedy is traditionally associated with day

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196. See Chapter Four and Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, p. 285.

197. Beckerman, Dynamics of Drama, pp. 38-44.

198. See Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, p. 282.

and springtime. Night is often perceived as being the realm of the supernatural, while day is thought of as the realm of the rational.<sup>199</sup> In both spoken drama and opera the passage of time may be suggested explicitly through aural signals such as offstage chimes or actual verbal references to time, each of which either concretely establishes the present or stimulates movement by referring to the future. Examples of such direct references would include the Bohemians' anticipation of their Christmas Eve celebration at the Café Momus (looking ahead to the Latin Quarter Scene) or the distant chimes proclaiming the hour in Il Tabarro, which, while designating a specific hour, also set an ominous tone for what is to come. Visual cues, however, constitute a more subtle means of creating a temporal illusion, and these are created on stage through lighting and physical activity.

The shape of many of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas can be discerned through lighting cues, annotations in the score that reveal a temporal framework that is both progressive and closed. In these works the lighting modulates perceptibly over the course of an act and thereby provides visual housing for the large-scale musical and dramatic motion.<sup>200</sup>

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199. Among Puccini's operas, Le Villi, in particular, is geared to these conventional associations.

200. Many of the musical points to be made in this chapter have been discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. The tables in this chapter are based on the more detailed illustrations I have provided in that chapter.

This chapter is about how Puccini uses time and light to initiate the drama, create ambience, and define the macrostructure of his first acts and one-act operas.

\* \* \* \*

While not all of Puccini's operas have a completely realized temporal course, most of them take place in a definable season or time of day. Six of them observe the classical unities of time and place: Tosca, La Fanciulla del West, Il Tabarro, Suor Angelica, Gianni Schicchi, and Turandot. In Table 13 I have noted the time of day and season or specific month of the year of each of Puccini's first acts and one-acters:

**Table 13: Temporal Settings of First Acts and One-Act Operas.**

Opera	Time of Day Beginning--End	Season
<u>Le Villi</u>	afternoon--sunset	spring
<u>Edgar</u>	morning	spring
<u>Manon Lescaut</u>	sunset--evening	spring
<u>La Bohème</u>	afternoon--evening	Christmas Eve
<u>Tosca</u>	midday	June
<u>Madama Butterfly</u>	afternoon--evening	spring
<u>La Fanciulla del West</u>	sunset evening (lanterns on-- lanterns off)	January
<u>La Rondine</u>	sunset (lamps on--lamps off)	spring
<u>Il Tabarro</u>	sunset--evening	September
<u>Suor Angelica</u>	sunset--evening	May
<u>Gianni Schicchi</u>	9:00 a.m.	spring (?)
<u>Turandot</u>	sunset--evening	?

Clearly, sunset held a particular fascination for Puccini. Not only do seven of the twelve operas specifically begin at sunset, but two more--La Bohème and Madama Butterfly--may also begin at or near sunset. In literature and the theatre (especially in the nineteenth century) the setting sun traditionally suggested either malaise or foreboding or, by contrast, provided a cover for lovers such as Tristan and Isolde.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, as a purely visual phenomenon, the sunset is the most colorful time of day, and it provides the maximum opportunity for creating special effects on stage. Puccini's sunsets gather in all of these conventional associations. And while he found the sunset to be a rich source of varying moods, he also found it to be a good starting place, and most often used it to initiate a temporal progression that provides a physical framework as well as a particular ethos for the scenario. This is especially clear in Le Villi, Manon Lescaut, La Bohème, La Fanciulla del West, Il Tabarro, Suor Angelica, and Turandot, all of which not only begin with the setting sun, but also follow a temporal

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201. Such associations seem to be more German or eastern European than Italian. See, for example, the Dracula legends or Grimm's Fairy Tales, in which the setting sun is often a condition of the plot, and most of the action (usually evil) occurs after dark. Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art (New York: Viking Press, 1984), p. 61, note, however, that

such symbols are so deeply rooted in ancient tradition, so pervasive in the entire culture, that their artificiality is no longer felt and they appear to be part of human nature.

See also, Beckerman, Dynamics of Drama, pp. 38-44, and Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, pp. 282-85.

course that is tied in with the psychology of the drama and closely coordinated with both the physical action and the large-scale musical gestures.

Of all of Puccini's sunsets, that in Le Villi is the one most fraught with conventional foreboding. The first act takes place in Spring, at a party celebrating the betrothal of Anna and Roberto. The setting sun becomes an issue only as the peasants exhort Roberto to make haste before the sun fades into the western sky (for one does not want to be caught alone in the Black Forest after dark). The gloom of the wintry night of the second act is forecast in this warning, and almost nowhere else in Puccini's works are time and season so clearly and traditionally defined as here. These contrasts are realized musically in both the major vs. minor tonalities, the triple vs. duple rhythmic structure, and even in the opposing dances of the two acts:

**Figure 3: Coordination of Light and Music in Le Villi.**

<b>Act I (Part I)</b>	<b>Act II (Part II)</b>
<b>HARMONY: LIFE</b>	<b>CONFLICT: DEATH</b>
<b>Light: afternoon--sunset</b>	<b>Dark: nighttime</b>
<b>Spring</b>	<b>Winter</b>
<b>Betrothal dance</b>	<b>Witches' dance</b>
<b>3/4</b>	<b>2/4</b>
<b>C-major</b>	<b>C-minor</b>

Puccini returned to a quasi-supernatural setting only at the end of his career, in Turandot, which not only begins with a "fairy-tale" sunset, but also adopts time as a condition of plot. This visual aspect of the plot is very carefully measured out (especially in the first act) through the modulating hue of the setting sun and the various stages of the moonrise. And closely coordinated with these visual changes are the most important large-scale tonal changes in Act I:

**Figure 4: Coordination of Light and Music in Turandot.**

	<b>Part I</b>	<b>Part II</b>
<b>Light:</b>	Sunset/Gold-moonrise-moonrays	Dimness
<b>Tonal Motion:</b>	(F#)-Bb-----Eb	A b---Eb

I find the parallels between Le Villi and Turandot especially interesting, not only because they are Puccini's first and last efforts, but also because they are his only fairy-tale operas. In each of them Puccini draws heavily on the semantic associations of day and night and of light and dark: in Le Villi evil triumphs in the dark, as Roberto is vanquished, while in Turandot goodness triumphs with the dawn, as the Princess is overwhelmed by Calaf's kiss.<sup>202</sup>

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202. The Prince even remarks upon the time of day as he claims his victory (Act III, 40+7): "È l'alba! E amor nasce col sole!" [It is morning! And love is born with the sun!]

The first act of Manon Lescaut opens on a sunset that has a different, but equally conventional association. Here it signals the coming of night, which is a time for partying and making love. The curtain rises on a group of students reveling at the end of the schoolterm. Edmondo praises the approaching night as the time in which pleasure seekers thrive: "Ave, sera, gentile, che discendi col tuo corteo di zeffiri e di stelle; Ave, cara ai poeti ed agli amanti. . ." [Hail gentle evening, you who descend with your cortege of breezes and stars; Hail, beloved of poets and lovers.] The text is most meaningful, as it anticipates the after-dark elopement of Manon and Des Grieux and reaches across the opera to the fourth act, in which the cover of darkness has quite a different role. The final scene of the opera is compelling, as Manon's life fades away with the descent of night, a stark contrast to the lusty anticipation with which darkness was first greeted in Act I. The pleasurable imagery of Act I is thus shattered as Manon cries (Act IV, 18-16), "Muio: scendon le tenebre. . . Su me la notte scende." [I'm dying: darkness descends. . . the night envelops me.] Of course, the equation of darkness and death is not an original idea, but the contrast of the image of darkness as a much-welcomed desideratum at the opening of the opera with the image of darkness that embraces the dying Manon at the

end is very powerful, and (to me, at least) mollifies some of the more stringent criticism of the usefulness of the fourth act.<sup>203</sup>

In yet another sense entirely, nightfall is linked to the theme of fate and fortune in Manon Lescaut, as the students anticipate the beginning of a serious cardgame with the coming of evening. And it is this cardgame which forms a scenic and psychological backdrop for the entire second half of the first act. Indeed, as evening takes over and the lamps are lit onstage, the game intensifies, and the dialogue of the gambling students and their companion, Lescaut, is periodically heard as a commentary on the main action, much in the manner of a Greek chorus (45-2). Moreover, the cardgame is an action that one associates specifically with an evening's entertainment, the intensity and potential danger of gambling being inappropriate to the quite literally more enlightened daylight hours.<sup>204</sup> It is a visual realization of the motif of chance and adventure that permeates the drama nearly from the time the curtain goes up, Manon having gambled

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203. "Sola, perduta, abbandonata!" was originally cut, but Puccini wrote to Carlo Clausetti in December 1920 (CP 781), to have it reinstated. Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 34, who calls Act IV a "miscalculation," notes further (p. 35 and, also, n. 54) that "Sola, perduta, abbandonata" was restored for the thirtieth anniversary production of the opera, conducted by Toscanini, and reinstated into the printed scores about 1923.

204. Of several cardgames in Puccini's operas (including the one in Manon Lescaut and three in La Fanciulla) only Billy Jackrabbit, in La Fanciulla del West, plays cards in the daytime. He begins a game of "Patience" at dawn and plays for the duration of Act III, oblivious to all (see the stage directions beginning at Act III, 6-5).

and lost by the end of the opera. The descending fifth between the two parts of the act emphasizes this change in both intensity and lighting, as does the rhythmic quickening from 3/4 to 3/8:

**Figure 5: Coordination of Light and Music in Manon Lescaut.**

	<b>Part I</b>	<b>Part II</b>
<b>Light:</b>	Sunset	Nightfall
<b>Action:</b>	Songs	Cards
<b>Tonal Motion:</b>	A	D
<b>Meter:</b>	3/4	3/8

The sunset at the beginning of La Fanciulla del West, on the other hand, is divorced entirely from any nineteenth-century supernatural or sexual ethos upon which the operas we have just looked at depend. The temporal setting of this work is especially interesting because it is one of the few things that Puccini altered from Belasco's original play.<sup>205</sup> Puccini retained the skeleton of Belasco's opening two pictorial tableaux, replacing the first with the prelude, and using the second as a backdrop to a musically supported dumbshow. There is, however, a major difference: while Belasco's original scenario makes it clear that the play begins with a night setting, complete with moonglow, Puccini begins his drama at sunset. Belasco's original scenario reads as follows:

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205. Puccini also compressed the action into less than a twenty-four hour period, while Belasco's fourth act takes place a week later. One other significant change is the transferral of Belasco's third-act academy scene to Puccini's first act.

(Act I.--In the Polka Saloon. Midnight). . .

The curtain rises to a glimpse of Cloudy Mountain, in the Sierras. The peak is white, the sky above very blue, and the moon, which seems strangely near, shines on the steep trail leading up to the cabin of the Girl. . .

This scene shifts to an exterior view of the Polka Saloon and the miners' cabins at the foot of Cloudy Mountain. The cheerful glow of kerosene lamps. . .<sup>206</sup>

Puccini's scenario as the curtain rises compresses the outdoors and the indoors into one scene, and replaces the midnight setting with a sunset:

Dalla grande porte del fondo e attraverso la finestra si scorge la valle, con la sua vegetazione selvaggia di sambuchi, quercie, conifere basse, tutta avvolta nel fiammeggiare del tramonto. Lontano, le montagne nevose si sfumano di toni d'oro e di viola. La luce violenta dell'esterno, che va calando rapidamente, rende anche più oscuro l'interno della "Polka." Nel buio appena si scorgono i contorni delle cose. A sinistra, quasi al proscenio, presso il camino, si vede rosseggiare la gragia del sigaro di Jack Rance.

[The big door in the background and the window command a view of the valley with its wild vegetation of elders, oaks and dwarf pines, all bathed in sunset-glow. In the distance the snow-mountains are tinted with gold and violet. The very strong light outside, which is rapidly fading, makes the inside of the "Polka" seem all the darker. In the gloom the outlines of things can scarcely be distinguished. On the left, close to the footlights, near the chimney-piece, the glimmer of Jack Rance's cigar is seen.]<sup>207</sup>

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206. David Belasco, The Girl of the Golden West, in Gerould, American Melodrama, pp. 185-87.

207. Translated by R.H. Elkin in Carlo Zangarini and Guelfo Civinini, The Girl of the Golden West (New York: Belwin, n.d.), p. 8.

It is an interesting change, since Belasco was a pioneer of modern staging and keenly sensitive to the dramatic potential of stage lighting. He once said:

Lights are to drama what music is to the lyrics of a song. No other factor that enters into the production of a play is so effective in conveying its mood and feeling. They are as essential to every work of dramatic art as blood is to life.<sup>208</sup>

Of particular interest in connection with this change is that Belasco himself had spent three months trying to achieve "the soft, changing colors of a California sunset over the Sierra Nevadas," a failed experiment that probably led to the nighttime setting of the final version of his first act. It would appear, then, that Puccini was following Belasco's original intention with his sunset, especially since the playwright himself assisted in the staging of the New York premiere of the opera.<sup>209</sup>

Puccini's sunset provides a frame of reference for the opera that is completely different from that of the play. For one thing, a sunset is a kinetic phenomenon, a part of a progression, whereas a nighttime setting is perceptually static. The saloon is already open at the beginning of Belasco's

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208. David Belasco, The Theatre Through its Stage Door (New York: Blom, 1919; rpt. 1969), p. 56; also quoted by Gösta M. Bergman, Lighting in the Theatre (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), p. 305.

209. Whether or not Puccini actually achieved what Belasco could not is unclear. Puccini had never seen a sunset in the Sierra Nevadas, and, perhaps, he was simply not as picky about the shade and hue of the sunset as was Belasco. See also, Ashbrook, The Operas, p. 138.

play, and even though Nick also closes the Saloon in the original play, putting out candles and closing the shutters, this ("closing") action does not mirror any previous action--his opening up at sunset--as does the closing of the saloon in the opera.<sup>210</sup> Thus the actual progression of time in the opera, together with the symmetry of Nick's opening and closing of the Polka (lighting and extinguishing the lanterns), provides a temporal framework for the act, with the opening sequence allowing Puccini more time to establish local color and create a mood. He accomplished this with the brief musical prelude and the dumbshow, deepening the perspective of the tableau with the offstage minstrel's song and miners' calls, while establishing a timetable for the action: the end of the work day and the beginning of the evening's entertainment. Furthermore, whereas Belasco's curtain rises on the action in medias res, Puccini creates a rather different scenario by beginning the action at the beginning of the men's evening, rather than catching it "in progress." It is an interesting adjustment, because Puccini had already dealt successfully with an opening in medias res in the first act of La Bohème. Moreover, the combination of Belasco's midnight opening and his reveling miners project a more obviously coarse image, whereas Puccini's early-evening time and long-distance "Hellos" seem to romanticize and soften the same setting and characters. Perhaps it is a "foreigner's" image of the American West.

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210. See the graph in Chapter Three, Example 17.

Finally, because the setting of Act I of La Fanciulla is interior rather than exterior, lamplight serves as the main visual indicator of time (i.e., lights on at the beginning and lights off at the end). In such exterior settings as those of Manon Lescaut or Turandot time is manifested more naturalistically through the gradual descent of darkness. Furthermore, in both of these last works, the main structural division of the act coincides with the descent of darkness, a visual event that is supported musically by a descending fifth (depicting quite literally a nightfall). The main break in La Fanciulla, however, is unrelated to light, and Puccini reacted musically by recalling a key rather than introducing a new one. Only the beginning and the end of the act reflect musically the turning on and off of the lights in Puccini's mirror-image intervallic changes.

Il Tabarro also begins at the end of a working day--that of Michele and his longshoremen. Time and light in this work are all-important, and not only as a frame in which to surround the action. The text is riddled with both direct and indirect references to time and light, with many of them being very specific. For example, Giorgetta notes both the sunset and the season in her remarks to Michele near the beginning of the opera (21): "Già discende la sera. . . Oh che rosso tramonto di settembre! Che brivido d'autunno! Non sembra un grosso arancio questo sole che muore nella Senna!" [Already night is falling. . . Oh, what a red September sunset! An autumn shiver! Doesn't the sun look like a great orange dying in the Seine!]

Light is also a property in *Il Tabarro*, as Giorgetta's very first words focus not only on the mesmerizing sunset, but more importantly on Michele's unlit pipe, which, when relighted, will quite literally "ignite" the opera's brutal denouement (3): "O Michele? Michele? Non sei stanco d'abbacinarti al sole che tramonta? Ti sembra gran spettacolo? Lo vedo bene: dalla tua pipa il fumo banco non sbuffa più." [O Michele, aren't you tired of staring at the sunset? Do you find it such a pretty sight? I see that your pipe has gone out.] Light comes into play even more subtly later on as Giorgetta considers the pleasure she has in lighting the match that will signal Luigi to come (68-7): "Mi pareva d'accendere una stella, fiamma del nostro amore, stella senza tramonto!" [It seemed to me I had lit a star, the flame of our love, a star that never will set!] And even Michele recalls, as Giorgetta refuses his advances, that to him night is also a time for love ("La notte è bella!," 83-1). At this moment a distant church bell strikes the hour (precisely eight o'clock; 83+6), and two lovers are heard offstage in the shadows (84+6): "O profumata sera. . . C'è la luna. . . la luna che ci spia. . ." [O perfumed night. . . There is the moon. . . the moon that spies on us]. Darkness has now taken over and the presence of lovers in the shadows seems to mock Michele. The mystery of his wife's lover is a darkness that must be torn away (87+5): "Squarciare le tenebre!" And, of course, the mystery is solved as Michele lights his pipe, as the opera ends brutally under the darkness of Michele's cloak, a place that once embraced a wife and child.

**In Suor Angelica light is a structural device that provides a changing backdrop for the action. As a manifestation of the religious and psychological makeup of the story and characters, it plays a central role in the two miracles that intersect one another in the opera: the miracle of the font, which is set aglow for three evenings every May, and the miraculous mystical light, which glorifies Angelica's vision of her dead son and the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, all of the main events of the opera are linked to the progression of sunset to darkness. For example, the Principessa arrives just as the golden-hued font reaches maximum intensity, simultaneous events that seem to suggest a more positive outcome for Angelica's meeting with her Aunt (40+10). The real meaning of the noblewoman's visit, however, is embodied in the darkness that envelops the scene as the Principessa prepares to leave and Angelica silently signs the document by which she relinquishes all her worldly possessions. When Angelica is left alone, only small lanterns on the tombstones in the cemetery beyond the scene illuminate the backdrop, with clouds eventually covering the moon and stars as she drinks the poison (76+7). And, finally, "il miracolo sfolgora" [the miracle blazes forth] (84+7), as the Virgin Mary appears with Angelica's child. This contrast of light and dark is realized musically, as I have shown, in the relationship between C and C#. Angelica's final vision, a profusion of light having nothing to do with time,**

is embodied in C-major, a "purification" of the C# that characterized the darkness of the Principessa's visit.

Several of Puccini's sunsets have no mystique at all. They simply establish a mood through color, and provide a starting point for a temporal progression that lacks the specifically supernatural associations of a Le Villi sunset or the sexual glow of the setting sun in Il Tabarro. The sunset of La Rondine serves just such a purpose. It enhances the scene visually, and affords Puccini the opportunity to "turn on the lights" literally and thereby create his only sophisticated, urbane, and contemporary setting:

Vicino al pianoforte una lampada a stelo con grande abat-jour. Altre piccole lampade velate da abat-jour a diversi colori, sui tavoli, diffondono una luce intima e sobria. Quando si schiude il velario i riflessi rossastri del tramonto illanguidiscono. (p. 4)

[Near the piano, a floor lamp with a large shade. Other small lamps covered with shades of various colors are on the tables, diffusing a muted and intimate light. When the curtain rises the red reflections of the sunset are fading away.]

In La Rondine time is not manifested in a series of visual changes. Light is used entirely to set the mood, and the hue of the scenario is altered only as Lisette turns out the lamps at the end of the act. The evening progresses into the next scene (Act II) at Bullier, the climax of the opera, in which Magda and Ruggero fall in love. It is a technique similar to that of La Bohème, in which a much more elaborate, visually presented time scheme spans both the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes.

The exact times at which both Tosca and Madama Butterfly begin are not specified either in the secondary text<sup>211</sup> or through direct verbal references. The time of each work must be deduced through other clues. Although in Tosca the historical backdrop--Rome, 1800--is stated at the outset, the exact time of day is not, as the precise visual representation of it is inhibited by the setting in the interior of the church. Indeed, Tosca is nearly devoid of any lighting cues at all. And while another composer might have had the church bells strike the hour (as Puccini does elsewhere),<sup>212</sup> Puccini operated more subtly here and provided indirect clues to the midday temporal setting with both the Sacristan's saying of the Angelus (an obligation to be met morning, noon, and night), and, more precisely, with Cavaradossi's empty lunch basket. Furthermore, the only direct references to time treat the evening as the future, as both Tosca's and the Sacristan's remarks about the cantata to be sung in the evening place the opening setting earlier in the day.

Madama Butterfly also begins somewhat ambiguously, with no specific lighting cues at all until the second half of the act. The first indication of a change coincides with the appearance of the Bonze, a turning point in the drama and the first juncture at which the time of day becomes an issue at

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211. Any text that is not dialogue or stage directions may be considered secondary text. This would include the dramatis personae, etc.

212. See Il Tabarro (83+6), at which point a distant clock strikes eight.

all. As the Bonze is ushered in by his accompanying lantern carriers, quite literally casting a pall on the wedding party, Puccini begins to draw on both an ominous and sexual late afternoon-sunset ethos (101). Indeed, as the relatives quit the scene, cursing Chô-chô San, Puccini indicates that evening has begun to close in (110-2). The stage continues to darken as the the sound of the relatives' voices decays in the distance, bringing the first half of the act to a close. From a musical standpoint, however, there is little to remark upon here, and the C-minor with which the opera began returns only very briefly with the coming of darkness at the beginning of the second half (112). Thus in both Tosca and Madama Butterfly Puccini began by avoiding a specific temporal designation at the outset of the opera (and thus the dramatically "loaded" associations that it could bear), and chose instead to initiate a sense of progression leading up to a significant temporal point. The night scenes that follow in each work, however, will have a completely individual and different ethos. In Tosca, the evening is a backdrop for intrigue and torture, whereas in Madama Butterfly (and elsewhere) Puccini drew on the seductiveness of evening and moonlight to enrich a love scene.

Finally, if Puccini shows a clear interest in beginning his works at sunset, his two works that begin in the morning (Edgar and Gianni Schicchi) are especially interesting. Puccini's first morning setting was the first act of Edgar, a tragedy that does not begin as one. The morning setting is part of a gradual progression towards visual and psychological darkness that

intensifies through the moonlit second act and the candlelit Requiem of the third act. This progression of time-light provides the most observable linear motion in the opera, as the music seems to be contained within a specific moment in time, and does not follow any perceptible linear course.<sup>213</sup> In addition, the morning setting at the beginning of Edgar provides a backdrop that helps to establish certain things about character that might not otherwise have been accomplished so easily. For example, it allows Fidelity to sing a "morning" song, and establishes her as fresh and innocent. At the same time the morning setting shows that Edgar lacks industry, as he continues to sleep while everyone else is either going off to work or to church. His character, then, comes under question from the very beginning of the opera.

Gianni Schicchi also begins in the morning, at exactly 9:00 a.m. While this is perfectly in keeping with the comedic ethos attached to morning,<sup>214</sup> it also provides several fields of play for Puccini, and allows him to experiment with the kind of interesting visual textures that enrich the other two operas of Il Trittico. For example, Puccini presents a paradox at the very opening of the opera by pairing morning and death, an event in the life cycle more traditionally associated with night. The visual image of the

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213. In Chapter Six, however, I show that Puccini did have a textural plan for the first act of Edgar. See pp. 00-00.

214. See Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, p. 282.

mismatch is heightend by the "mixed" lighting created by the combination of the sunlight coming through the window and the candlelight provided by the four candles surrounding Buoso Donati's deathbed (placed there by his would-be mourners out of "respect"). The point is driven home further as Simone, upon hearing Buoso's endearing terms of address as the real will is read aloud, reacts "in un impeto di riconoscenza" [in an impulse of gratitude] by lighting still another candelabrum (13+4). Yet after learning that Buoso has left everything to the friars, not only does Simone blow out all of these votive candles, but he also closes the bedcurtains in order to remove the corpse from sight (15). The lighting joke is played throughout the opera as the shutters in the room are alternately opened and shut to accomodate Schicchi's ruse, with the darkened room helping to conceal his identity from the doctor, the notary, and the witnesses. In the end, sunshine prevails, as Rinuccio throws open the shutters in a final gesture to reveal the city of Florence in brilliant light.

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In his outdoor settings, such "natural" occurences as nightfall provided Puccini with an event to which he could react musically by changing rhythmic or tonal gears. On the other hand, an indoor setting seemed to inspire Puccini to devise a more subtle visual organization, with light playing less of an overt structural role. And while it is true that Puccini took advantage

**of established conventions of time and season, he used both their visual manifestations and psychological associations to enrich his scenario, create texture, and reinforce the structure.**

## Chapter Six

### Texture and Macrostructure: The Coordination of Elements

The goal of this chapter is to introduce one final element--texture--and summarize and discuss the ways in which Puccini coordinated various combinations of musical and dramatic features to articulate the macrostructure of his first acts and one-act operas. In Table 14 (below) I have provided a collective reference for this discussion. In it I present a summary of the temporal organization and large-scale segmentation of each of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas (in chronological order). Within the entry for each opera I have included the musical and non-musical dramatic elements that help to define its macrostructure: tonality, texture, meter, time of day (and season), and entrances or exits of characters.

At its most basic level texture is understood to encompass such musical features as monophony, homophony, and polyphony. Texture, however, is really more complicated and also includes such features as "density" and "pacing" that are particularly meaningful within the context of opera. Density refers to the actual physical depth of the sound, a product of the number of characters who are singing at a given moment. At its most obvious, then, it is a matter of whether there is an ensemble or a solo. The density of a section may also be determined by the number of autonomous musical elements that are sounding concurrently.

Pacing is determined not only by the actual speed of the music, but also by the frequency of musical closure and the consequent interruption of the flow, frequent closure being characteristic of a conventional "number-opera" structure. Obviously, a string of independent set pieces will create a musical pace different from that of a succession of episodes that are linked together without tonal closure. I use the term "conventional" to denote sections that are either constituted mainly of set pieces or in which traditional operatic functions or discourse are the rule. On the other hand, I have designated those sections that are constituted mainly of recitative, and thus by and large lack such formalities, as "episodic." Episodic sections move continuously and progressively through a series of barely perceptible smaller divisions.<sup>215</sup> The terms "static" and "kinetic" may also be used here, as they have been elsewhere in opera analyses to denote scenes of action vs. scenes of stability.<sup>216</sup> The corresponding musical motion to the designations "episodic" and "conventional" may thus be described in the most simple way as chromatic vs. diatonic, or even more basically as open vs.

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215. See John Willett, ed. and trans., Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 36-37. In his discussion Brecht distinguishes between dramatic and epic theatre in relation to opera. Puccini's episodic mode of presentation is dramatic, a style that Brecht considers outdated.

216. See, for example, Philip Gossett, "The 'Candeur virginale' of Tancredi," The Musical Times 112 (1971), pp. 326-29; Powers, "'La solita forma'," pp. 65-91; and John Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale," The Journal of Musicology 7 (Spring 1989), pp. 191-230.

closed.<sup>217</sup> And finally, within the category of texture in the table, the term "ensemble" is used to indicate vocal chamber music--one person to a part. "Choral" refers specifically to massed voices, whereas "tutti" quite literally means everyone present--principal characters and crowd.

I have also noted tonal relationships in the table, including both the opening and closing tonalities of individual sections. Keys that are enharmonically spelled in my analyses are enclosed in parentheses, and if a section either opens or closes amidst chromatic flux, I have indicated this with an "(x)." Finally, I have provided space, labeled "MS," for remarks concerning any autograph evidence that might reflect Puccini's thoughts about the large-scale division of the act and that might, therefore, reinforce the divisions as I have shown them:

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217. Opera analysts have applied various terms to the musical corollaries of these contrasting scene types. Powers, "La solita forma'," p. 79, provides us with a glossary of his descriptive terms for "tonal states" as they relate to movement, versification, etc., ranging from "shifting" and "unstable" to "modulating," "structured," and "stable." Parker "Analysis," p. 129, defines the basic structure of Act I of *Tosca* as generating from alternating passages of "reflection" and "action," to which he applies the corresponding musical terms diatonic and chromatic. These concepts and their prototypes, aria and recitative, have also been applied to many post-Rossinian styles of opera, including Wagner. See, for example, Anthony Newcomb, "The Birth of Music out of the Spirit of Drama," *19th-Century Music* 5 (1981), pp. 38-66, especially p. 41.

**Table 14: Summary of First-Act and One-Act Macrostructures**

OPERA	TONALITY	METER	TEXTURE	TIME OF DAY	SEASON	ACTION	MS
<u>Le Villi</u>							
Pt. 1	C Major	3/4	tutti	sunset	spring	betrothal dance	titles on each number
Pt. 2 (No. 8)	C Minor	2/4	solo/duo	night	winter	witches' dance	
Comment: Two intermezzi: "L'Abbandono" and "La Tregenda"							
<u>Edgar</u> The first act exhibits few classifiable structural features. Its most interesting and logically formulated element is texture, a topic I discuss below (see pp.)							
<u>Manon Lescaut</u>							
Pt. 1	A	3/4	choral	sunset	spring	song-singing	"scherzo" (f. 62')
Pt. 2 (37)	D	3/8	solo - choral	evening		card game	
Comment: See Scherr, "Editing" for further comment on inks in the manuscript.							
<u>La Bohème</u>							
Pt. 1 (Act I)	B flat - C	6/8 - 2/4	small ensemble "episodic"	sunset-evening	Christmas eve	inside	See comment
Pt. 2 (Act II, m. 1)	F - B flat	2/8 - 2/4	"conventional"			outside	
Comment: See illustration 3, page 228, and Chapter Seven for a full discussion of the combined two acts.							

OPERA	TONALITY	METER	TEXTURE	TIME OF DAY	SEASON	ACTION	NS
<b>Tosca</b>							
Pt. 1	x--E flat	see comment	duologues	midday	June	inside	
Pt. 2 (50)	E flat		choral finale				"Finale" noted, f. 109 <sup>r</sup>
<b>Comment:</b> Most interesting rhythmic developments deal with characters (see Chapter Two). Cavaradossi and Angelotti exit at end of the first half. Second half focuses on Tosca and Scarpia.							
<b>Madama Butterfly</b>							
Pt. 1	Cm	see comment	ensemble	sunset	spring	wedding	
Pt. 2 (112)	Cm		duet	evening			
<b>Comment:</b> Rhythmic developments reflect the clash of Eastern and Western cultures (see Chapter Two).							
<b>La fanciulla del West</b>							
Pt 1.	x--C	simple/ duple	spoken "Hellos"; the men	sunset- evening	winter	lights on	
Pt. 2 (42)	C	12/8	spoken "Hellos"; duet		enter Mimie lights off	begins at top of follo	
<b>Comment:</b> See page 215 for a discussion of parallelism, and Chapter Three, page 103, for a discussion of tonal mirroring.							

OPERA	TONALITY	METER	TEXTURE	TIME OF DAY	SEASON	ACTION	MS
<i>Le Rondine</i>							
Pt. 1	A flat	3/4	ensemble	sunset-evening	spring	conversation	
Pt. 2 (50)	E flat	3/4	duet				
<i>Il Tebarro</i>							
Pt. 1	G	See Chapter Two, Table 5	ensemble	sunset	September	unloading the barge	See Chapter Three, Illustr. 2
Pt. 2 (52)	C		duet/solo	evening			
<i>Suor Angelica</i>							
Pt. 1	F--A	See Chapter Two, page 60.	ensemble	sunset	May	convent activities	
Pt. 2 (42)	C sharp		duet	evening		confrontation	
Pt. 3 (60)	A-f-C		solo	darkness/miraculous light		suicide and miracle	
<i>Glenn Schiechl</i>							
Pt. 1	B flat		ensemble	morning	spring	enter Glenn Schiechl	
Pt. 2 (34)	G flat						

OPERA	TONALITY	METER	TEXTURE	TIME OF DAY	SEASON	ACTION	MS
Turandot							
Pt. 1	B flat--E flat		chorus	sunset	?	formal procession	
Pt 2. (22)	A flat--E flat		small ensemble, then chorus	evening		enter masks, then reenter chorus	f. 61 <sup>v</sup> one sharp
Comment: Sunset and sunrise coordinated with musical action. See the discussion in Chapters Three and Five.							

The major division of these one-act structures into two (or occasionally three) parts results from a concerted change of elements.<sup>218</sup> Most consistent among these are textural changes, in which larger forces tend to yield to smaller ones. In general, the first half of the act includes more people, either a chorus of anonymous characters as in Le Villi and Manon Lescaut, or ensembles of individuals as in the Garret scene of La Bohème, Madama Butterfly, La Fanciulla del West, La Rondine, and Il Tabarro. The first act of Tosca stands as an exception to this pattern, since its texture, a series of "duologues," is more or less stable throughout and changes only in the concerted finale. In Gianni Schicchi and Turandot, however, the textures remain nearly unchanged from start to finish, as each opera is sustained throughout by ensembles. Yet Gianni Schicchi is almost completely "episodic," whereas Turandot, with its clearly defined set pieces is really very conventional. Furthermore, Turandot, a work on a grand scale, employs very large forces, and includes a full chorus that remains on stage for most of the first act as well as for most of the opera. Gianni Schicchi,

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218. See Carner, Puccini, pp. 287-88, who notes that

Most of Puccini's first acts show a clear division into two halves, the first half being lively, the second more static, preponderantly lyrical and closing with a love duet. . . This is especially true of his operas of the tragédie larmoyante type. In his 'grand operas'--Tosca and Turandot--the close is formed by a big choral scene of sinister grandeur and majesty.

on the other hand, is a miniature, and its ensemble of characters is proportionately smaller. Here, too, the ensemble remains on stage for the duration, supporting the structure and sustaining the level of excitement in the process. Indeed, it is probably this very aspect of the opera that is most potently funny, as Puccini capitalizes both dramatically and musically on this unusually large ensemble. By not varying his numbers significantly at any given moment, he is able to maintain a very rapid pace by volleying the dialogue back and forth among the players, much in the style of the repartee that characterizes the first half of the Garret scene in La Bohème. Furthermore, by eliminating the set piece almost entirely from the structure of Gianni Schicchi, Puccini cleared out any obstacles that would interrupt the flow.<sup>219</sup> Rather, he sustained the action by creating lots of verbal confusion, physical commotion, and peripheral doings (such as the bit in which Gherardino silently pleads to be taken to the toilet, beginning 2-8). And it is this constant clamor--the dis-unity of the Donati, each taking an "every man for himself" position in a greedy quest for Buoso's fortune--that allows Schicchi to take advantage of them. Moreover, if Gianni Schicchi has the least interesting tonal organization of Puccini's works,<sup>220</sup> being devoid

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219. The very well-known exception to this is, of course, "O mio babbino caro."

220. Although the opera is not without tonal coloration: For example, the G♭ that identifies Schicchi as he first enters the scene is recalled as he triumphs at the end.

of the kind of large-scale intervallic motion that segments other works, it is a result of Puccini's efforts to maintain momentum and sustain constant and uninterrupted activity throughout, such continuity and timing being the most important feature of comedy.

One of Puccini's most interesting textural techniques dates back to his first opera, Le Villi. In the first act of Le Villi Puccini began with a chorus in his introduzione, but then, as Figure 6 illustrates, he reduced his texture to a solo and then gradually rebuilt the forces through a duet and a trio to a final tutti. The "rounded texture" of the act is complemented by the return in the finale of the C-major first heard in the "Preludio" (and again in the duet):

Figure 5: Texture in Le Villi.

Preludio	Chorus	Solo-->	Duet-->	Trio	Chorus
		Anna			
			Anna/Roberto		
				Anna/Roberto/ Guglielmo	
	Tutti				Tutti
C-Major					C-Major

Puccini used this almost systematic gradation of forces again in Edgar. In fact, it is one of the few features that save the first act from being almost entirely formless. Edgar is a kind of "middle" child between Le Villi and Manon Lescaut. It struggles to define its form, and, failing to meet the

expectations of the older "number-opera" format of Le Villi, it does not replace them with new ideas developed in a satisfactory way. In Edgar Puccini clearly desired to effect a significant move away from the old formula, and he began to experiment with a continuous texture by avoiding closure between the still-present set pieces, adding more dialogue and more closely integrating the musical and dramatic action of the principal characters and the chorus. From the very first act, however, Edgar seems to lack a logical order of events. There is no apparent musical or dramatic goal that is propelled forward through some clearly-defined structure, be it tonal or temporal. Instead, Puccini provided large sections of dialogue that are sustained by overly rich harmonies, which, while functioning as adhesive between set pieces, are largely undirected musically. This dialogue is supported most often by agitated tremolos, successions of unresolved diminished seventh chords, and other uninteresting, aimless harmonic and textural figurations that make for often dull and formless listening. Indeed, this first act is rather disjunct in almost every way except for its gradation in texture. This textural change is manifested most clearly in Puccini's treatment of the chorus, which plays an important structural role throughout the opera, as it is heard offstage at the beginning of each act.<sup>221</sup> In Act I

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221. See Rosen, "How Verdi Operas Begin," p. 9, who notes that Verdi, in his search to vary or "undercut the framing function" of the chorus, moved it offstage, one of many strategies he implemented while looking for ways to avoid convention. Puccini seems to follow a condensed version of Verdi's progress in this respect, beginning in Le Villi with a thoroughly traditional

the chorus moves in a steady progression from invisibility to full visible participation--from offstage to full confrontation with Tigrana and Edgar. The movement of the chorus is a continuous action that is supported throughout by a gradual musical metamorphosis that begins with the simplicity of the reprise of Fidelia's "morning" song and progresses through the contrapuntal church music to the massive and bombastic concertato finale.

Another striking example of such systematic modification in the texture, but one compartmentalized into a single scene, appears in the Garret scene of La Bohème, in which Puccini added characters one by one in the first half and then removed them en masse, clearing the way for Rodolfo and Mimì in the second half:

**Figure 7: Texture in La Bohème Garret Scene, Pt. 1.**

No. of Characters	2	3	4	5
	Marcello/ Rodolfo	+	Colline +	Schaunard + Benoit

As Puccini matured, he was more likely to experiment with interacting elements, especially texture and tonality. When coordinated, texture and tonality articulate the macrostructure in several ways. Basically, it is the

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introduz:one-cavatina formula, and then experimenting with the offstage chorus in his very next work. In Manon Lescaut, he modified the convention by integrating the aria ("Tra voi belle") and chorus and expanding the whole unit. La Bohème dispenses with the convention altogether.

combination of texture and tonality that is most consistently responsible for the kind of clearly defined two- or three-part structures shown in Table 14. Sometimes, however, a tonality that unfolds over the course of an entire act may provide a large-scale cantilever for the main textural or intervallic division that occurs at a lower structural level.<sup>222</sup> This is most clear in Il Tabarro and Suor Angelica, in which long-term tonal goals, while accompanying various local textural and visual changes, tend to traverse these breaks through their more far-reaching organization. A similar situation exists in La Fanciulla del West, in which the first act, though clearly divided into two parts by the introduction of a new character and a change in meter, is held together by tonal recall, textural recall, and dramatic parallelism. After Minnie's entrance initially divides the act into two parts, the act is further segmented by the introduction of yet another new character--Castro--who provides a motive for everyone except Minnie and Johnson to leave the stage.

Suor Angelica can be shown to be a direct, but more mature descendent of Le Villi, Edgar, and La Bohème, as its texture decreases almost systematically over the course of the opera. The libretto of Suor Angelica is subdivided into seven titled segments, "La Preghiera," "Le Punizioni," "La Ricreazione," "Il Ritorno dalla Cerca," "La Zia Principessa,"

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222. This is especially true in the Latin Quarter scene of La Bohème.

"La Grazia," and "Il Miracolo."<sup>223</sup> These smaller segments, however, are really subdivisions of a larger tripartite structure:

(1) Introduction/convent life ("La Preghiera," "Le Punizione," "La Ricreazione," "Il Ritorno dalla Cerca"), (2) Confrontation with the Principessa ("La Zia Principessa"), and (3) Grief, suicide, and miracle ("La Grazia," "Il Miracolo").<sup>224</sup> This tripartite division is defined most clearly through the various textural phases of the opera, beginning with an ensemble and gradually thinning out to Angelica's final solo scene. And significantly, many of the facets of the tonal structure coincide with these textural divisions. Figure 8 illustrates how the augmented fifth that unfolds from F to C# (the entrance of the Principessa) is "corrected" at the end, as Angelica is redeemed. I have included some of the details of lighting in this Figure to show how certain details of the tonal unfolding are coordinated with this aspect of the structure:

**Figure 8: Texture and Tonality in Suor Angelica.**

<b>Texture:</b>	Ensemble-----Duet-----Solo			
<b>Action:</b>	Convent life		Confrontation	Miracle
<b>Light:</b>	Sunset	Font glows	Darkness	Heavenly light
<b>Tonality:</b>	F	A	C#---(A)	C (natural)

223. Of these, only the subtitle "Il Miracolo" appears in the score.

224. Carner, Puccini, p. 441, believes that Suor Angelica exhibits "the customary dichotomy" of Puccini's first-act structures.

In Il Tabarro the two sections of the opera are contrasted by the sheer numbers of people on stage. The first half of the opera is populated by the three principals--Michele, Giorgetta, and Luigi--the three secondary characters--Tinca, Talpa, and Frugola--plus the stevedores, a song vendor with his harp-playing accompanist, an organ grinder, and some midinettes. The second half of the opera, however, involves only Giorgetta, Luigi, Michele, and a pair of lovers who stroll by anonymously. The first part of the opera is also a texturally multi-tiered structure. Puccini increased the depth here by superimposing the surface dialogue over a chain of songs or dances, which is in turn superimposed over the equally independent orchestral accompaniment. One way to understand this dense contrapuntal texture is to imagine it in terms of a medieval motet: an instrumental "cantus firmus" in the bass,<sup>225</sup> a chain of songs in the tenor, and dialogue in the cantus. In another sense it resembles later polyphonic compositions, as the entrances of each element are staggered:

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225. I first used the term "cantus firmus" in connection with Il Tabarro in Chapter Two (p. 52) to describe the repeating metric configuration that forms the orchestral part of the opening scene of the opera. See also, Figure 1 and Example 8.

**Figure 9: "Counterpoint" in the Exposition of *Il Tabarro*.**

(2) <b>Cantus: Dialogue</b> -----/ (3)	ENTER FRUGOLA
(3) <b>Tenor: Songs</b> -----/ (4+4)	
(1) <b>Bass: Instrumental Cantus Firmus</b> -----/ (m. 1)	

The details of the song structure are as follows:

**Figure 10: Songs in the Exposition of *Il Tabarro*.**

Stevedores	Drinking Song	Waltz	Song Vendor	Frugola I & II
(4+4)	(7)	(13)	(19)	(32+3) (47)

All of the songs belong to characters of the working class and form a subliminal commentary on the central action. The stevedores' song, the waltz of the out-of-tune organ grinder, and the canzonetta of the song vendor, in particular, constitute a counterpoint to the surface dialogue. Indeed, Giorgetta, who has recklessly carried on an adulterous affair, practically in front of her husband, knows well (if only intuitively) that in a certain sense she is like the Mimì of the song vendor's canzonetta, "Chi ha vissuto per amore, per amore si morì." [Who lived for love, died for love.]<sup>226</sup> (25+5) It is a texture that Puccini used only once before (and much less extensively) in *Manon Lescaut*, in which the dialogue of the card

226. In a musical quotation from *La Bohème*, the vendor cites Mimì as one who lived and died for love.

game becomes a musical and dramatic counterpoint that also comments epigrammatically on the central action. The substructure of songs in Il Tabarro ends with the arrival of Frugola, who, as a ragpicker, is the embodiment of the raw, unrefined sentiments that had been expressed in these songs. She proceeds to sing two more songs,<sup>227</sup> in which, to a crude accompaniment, she describes her treasures and her contentment with her shabby existence. With her songs the hard reality of the waterfront life is brought to the surface.

A brief interlude (56)--a fragmented repetition of the ostinato opening of the opera accompanied by distant voices and a tugboat whistle--separates the two parts of Il Tabarro. And while the second half is focused more intimately on the three principals, the songs of the first half are subtly recalled in the little offstage love song in the shadows (84 + 4) that precedes Michele's monolog. At this point a distant trumpet call (85 + 1) also signals the end of day, and, perhaps, with its traditional associations, the end of something greater.

When the tonal design is superimposed over the large-scale structure, its reinforcement of that structure and its cantilevering of the division between the two parts is most apparent. As I have shown in Chapter Three, Il Tabarro is very clearly defined tonally. At the most basic level, a large-scale motion from G to C across the opera bridges the gap created by the

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227. "Se tu sapessi" (32 + 3) and "Ho sognato" (47).

extreme change in texture that divides the opera into two parts. Furthermore, as shown in Chapter Three, this intervallic gesture is paralleled motivically in the most minute details of the opera, thus integrating the two parts of the work both at a musical and at a dramatic level, as the interval G-C outlines the parameters of the so-called "cloak" motive, first introduced in the second half:

**Figure 11: Tonal Cantilevering in Il Tabarro.**

Part I (Tutti)	Part II (Duos-solo)				
Ensemble, dialogue	G-L	G-M	Cloak	M (cloak)	End
G	C#	D	G	C	C
(m.1)	57	72	77+5	86+1	100

Finally, one of the most interesting of Puccini's organizational techniques is structural parallelism. Puccini creates parallel structures by recalling or recycling a feature (or features) that had been introduced previously at a form-defining juncture in the act or scene. There are good examples of this in Le Villi, La Bohème, Tosca, and La Fanciulla del West. In Le Villi the parallels are mainly tonal, while in La Bohème such features are on a much grander scale and involve the macrostructures of both the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes as well as smaller details within each individual scene, matters I discuss some detail in Chapter Seven.<sup>228</sup> In

228. See especially, Figure 17.

Tosca the most obvious and interesting example of parallelism involves the Sacristan, whose entrances delineate the two major junctions in Act I: the beginning of the main body of the act and the beginning of the second half. The major division within the act occurs with the exit of Cavardossi and Angelotti and the subsequent reentry of the Sacristan (50), events that are supported musically by a motion downward by fifth from B♭ to E♭, an interval that Puccini tends to reserve for major separations. Furthermore, the Sacristan reenters to the same music (now transposed to E♭) that was used to introduce him at the beginning of the opera.<sup>229</sup>

The first act of La Fanciulla del West is a structure that contains parallel features that are both obvious and subtle. As Minnie enters, the texture shifts from the ensemble of men to a series of more intimate encounters: Minnie's interaction first with the miners, then with Rance, and finally with Johnson. The moment of her entrance is reinforced by the change in meter to 12/8, the return of C-major, and the miners' spoken "Hellos" to Minnie, which, while recalling the vocal texture of the "Hellos" first heard offstage at the beginning of the opera, also suggest a kind of "starting over" that is characteristic of parallel musical periods. As Figure 12 shows, many of the musical and dramatic events of Act I, Pt. 2, parallel

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229. See 6+4 for the Sacristan's initial entrance and 50 for his reentry. The only other time this theme is heard is when the Sacristan exits after his scene with Cavardossi 21-4. He is not seen again until the second half of the act.

the order and type of events in Pt. 1 to a great degree. In Figure 13 I have reduced each half of the first act to a smaller series of scenes and actions to show those items that occur in both halves in a similar sequence:

**Figure 12: Act I Parallels in La Fanciulla del West.**

<b>Pt. I</b>	<b>Pt. II</b>
<b>C-Major (Prelude) [2-6]</b>	<b>C-Major (Enter Minnie)</b>
<b>HELLO! (6/8 compound meter) [2]</b>	<b>HELLO! (12/8 compound meter) [42]</b>
<b>Card Game [7]</b>	<b>Academy Scene [47]</b>
<b>Set Piece: Minstrel's Song ("Real" Music) [20]</b>	<b>Set Piece: Waltz ("Real" Music) [84]</b>
<b>Enter Ashby (G-major) [27]</b>	<b>Enter Castro (C-minor) [88]</b>

It is noteworthy that in the beginning of the second half Puccini compresses into one gesture the change of meter, the entrance of a new character, the miners' "Hellos," and the return of C-major, elements that occurred in sequence in the first half. In each half there is a contained action (lessons, games, rituals, etc.), with the "Academy" scene in the second half replacing the card game of the first half, a displacement that seems to indicate that the men make a conscious effort to "clean up" their act for Minnie's sake. Similarly, there is no fighting in the presence of the "Girl," whereas in the first half of the act there are two fights--one over cards and the other over Minnie herself. Each half also has a set piece: the minstrel's song in the first and the waltz in the second. These not only involve the miners (and not the main characters alone), but constitute "real" music--

literally a song and a dance, since arias or other types of more traditionally operatic forms would have been inappropriate here to the exposition of time, place, and character. Furthermore, arias, with their more reflective content, would slacken the pace, whereas a song heard in "real" time reinforces the reality of the scenario by creating an illusion of actual time elapsed. The dance is similarly effective, as it maintains and even quickens the pace with its rhythmic thrust. The second half of the act is longer than the first, and the final duet between Minnie and Johnson follows the pattern of the Garret scene of La Bohème and the first acts of both Madama Butterfly and La Rondine, all of which end with love duets. In the last three works, however, the main structural break occurs just before the final duet, while the major division in La Fanciulla comes a good deal earlier, with Minnie's entrance. Nevertheless, Puccini did create another subdivision just before the duet by bringing in Castro, who serves to clear the stage for Minnie and Johnson to be alone.<sup>230</sup> This secondary division returns the focus momentarily to the outlaw, who is revealed by Castro to be Johnson. Castro's entrance also recalls C, but this time in minor. This return of the most structurally significant key in the act is also a tonal and dramatic answer to the question of the "Greaser's" true identity that was posed in G-

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230. See Carner, Puccini, p. 412. I would suspect that Puccini gave Johnson's entrance less structural clout in order to make it somewhat more casual and not reveal at the outset that he is, indeed, the bandit, Ramerrez.

major by Ashby in the first half of the act (38+2). The introduction of Castro is thus also a cantilever that supports the tonal structure and intensifies the action:

**Figure 13: Tonal Cantilevering in La Fanciulla del West.**

Part I (Ensemble)			Part II (Duologues--Duet)			
HELLO!			HELLO!			
Prelude	Men	Ashby	Minnie	Johnson	Castro	Minnie/ Johnson
C-Major	G	G	C-Major	E	C-minor	C-Major
2-2)	5	38+2	42	72+3	88	113

Puccini is known to have paid attention to detail, an observation that generally has referred to his interest in local color, as in his seeking out the right sounds for his cannon in Tosca or for the waterfront ambience in Il Tabarro (car horns, tugboat whistles, etc.). By concentrating on the very basic elements of musical and dramatic structure--opening gestures, tonality, rhythm, vocal discourse, texture, and time--I hope to have shown that for Puccini "detail" really meant the intricate coordination of music and drama. The examples discussed throughout the first half of this study and in this final "expository" chapter, are, however, only a laboratory sample, viewed with the widest possible lens. The subsequent discussion of the way in which Puccini fashioned the musical and dramatic interrelationships between the

Garret and Latin Quarter scenes of La Bohème will reveal much more exactly how finely tuned his eye and ear really were.

## Chapter Seven

### Dramatic Exposition and Musical Structure in La Bohème.

#### Introduction

Puccini's early development as a composer (1884-1896) shows extremely clear and steady progress from one phase to the next: a radical change from the "number opera" format of Le Villi to the more fluid, continuous, and nearly seamless texture of Manon Lescaut, a control of texture that would reach maturity in La Bohème.<sup>231</sup> With Le Villi Puccini began with a prescribed form which he manipulated by contrasting key, rhythm, and meter, an instrumental composer's sense of the mechanics of tonal relationships, and a finely tuned temporal setting. In Edgar, despite the first-time and, no doubt, overwhelming task of filling all four acts (ultimately pared down to three) and making sense of Fontana's garbled scenario, Puccini strove for a continuous texture with a heightened sense of how musical closure could hinder or propel the drama forward. And in

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231. See Nicolaisen, Italian Opera, p. 189, who notes the change in style to be most apparent between Le Villi and Manon Lescaut:

With each new opera a stylistic leap was apparent; and even knowledge of the 40-year interval between Le Villi and Turandot would not have prepared one for the enormous difference in style that separates the composer's first and last works.

Nowhere were these leaps larger than between the first three operas. Indeed within a period of nine years Puccini developed more quickly than had any other Italian composer of the nineteenth century, Verdi included.

Manon Lescaut, he overcame certain problems of balance and continuity by creating complementary levels of activity between principals and chorus and anchoring them against a clearly defined temporal and scenic framework.<sup>232</sup>

Thus to La Bohème Puccini brought a growing command of time and space, a theatrical sensitivity which he was able to coordinate with his musical abilities in a most precise way. The creation of La Bohème was not free of contention, as the many letters of protest from Illica and Giacosa to Giulio Ricordi confirm. La Bohème, nevertheless, proceeds with ease and facility. It is for Puccini a crucial dividing line, a watershed after which he is in complete control. The past is evident in La Bohème only as he chose to summon it, to manipulate it in order to mold a very new and personal musical and dramatic statement.

The following discussion begins with certain problems of the genesis of Acts I and II of La Bohème and then examines how completely Puccini was able to direct his musical and theatrical gifts with the utmost concentration, precision and economy, as he put to good use the lessons of Le Villi, Edgar, and Manon Lescaut. My discussion is divided into three

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232. The painful forging of the libretto and the musical revisions that plagued Manon Lescaut, however, were symptomatic of future acrimonious relationships with librettists and constant revising of musical details throughout his career.

main areas: 1. **The Genesis of Acts I and II: The Original Scenario**, 2. **Dramatic Structure**, and 3. **Musical Structure**.

### 1. The Genesis of Acts I and II: The Original Scenario

The original scenario for the libretto of La Bohème, as written by Luigi Illica in the summer of 1894, shows that the present-day second act, the Latin Quarter scene, was conceived as the finale to the first act. The original scenario, which also included a later-discarded "courtyard [cortile]" act, may be compared to the final scenario (Figure 14):<sup>233</sup>

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233. The original scenario is given in Ashbrook, The Operas, pp. 50-51. The present-day plan shown in Figure 15 is in Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, La Bohème [libretto] (New York: G. Schirmer, 1954), p. vii. The history of the "cortile" act is discussed and documented with the complete text (music was never composed for it) in F. Regina Psaki, Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, "Appendix: bohemian politics and the act that disappeared," in Groos and Parker, La bohème, pp. 142-81. See also, the same authors' citation of previous publications of this scene on p. 181, n. 1.

Groos and Parker, La bohème, p. 42, include a version slightly different and enlarged as compared with that in Ashbrook:

Act I,	scene 1	the garret: the Bohemians
	scene 2	meeting of Rodolfo and Mimì
	scene 3	Latin Quarter: at the Café Momus
Act II		at the Barrière d'Enfer
Act III,	scene 1	the garret: the Bohemians
	scene 2	the death of Mimì

An early version of the libretto, copied in Giulio Ricordi's hand (see Maehder, La genesi della "Bohème": Documenti e ricerche sulla formazione della drammaturgia musicale pucciniana [Florence, Teatro Comunale, 1987 (programma da sala)], p. 145, shows even more detail:

Atto 1, parte 1    La soffitta; i quattro bohémiens, poi Rodolfo e Mimì soli.

Figure 14: Original and Final Scenarios of *La Bohème*.

<b>Luigi Illica's original scenario for <i>La Bohème</i></b>	
Act I, scene 1:	the garret
Act I, scene 2:	the Café Momus
Act II:	the Barrière d'Enfer
Act III:	the courtyard of the house where Musetta lives
Act IV:	the garret
<b>Final scenario for <i>La Bohème</i></b>	
Act I:	A Garret
Act II:	The Latin Quarter
Act III:	The Barrière d'Enfer
Act IV:	In the Garret

The libretto was in progress in the early months of 1893, but not even its first act was finished by 19 May as Giulio Ricordi's complaints to Illica about the slowness and inefficiency of the labor indicate:<sup>234</sup>

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Atto 1, parte 2	Café Momus; i bohémien, poi Musetta con Alcindoro
Atto II	La Barrière d'Enfer; scena iniziale con cenciaiuolo e spazzacamino, poi Mimì, Musetta, Rodolfo, Marcello.
Atto III	Il cortile della casa di via La Bruyère 8; festa notturna nel cortile della casa di Musetta (appena sfrattata)-Mimì parte con il visconte Paolo.
Atto IV	La soffitta; i quattro bohémien (scena iniziale più lunga); morte di Mimì.

This version of the libretto was praised by Ricordi in his letter to Illica of July 28, 1893. Giulio, in addition to acclaiming the novelty and grandioseness of the libretto, foresaw frightful musical difficulties ahead ["difficoltà musicale...spaventosa!]. See Maehder, *La genesi*, p. 145.

234. This and several successive letters dealing with similar complaints (May 31, June 9, 24) are quoted in Maehder, "Paris-Bilder: zur

. . .ma intanto, poi, non si potrebbe finire il I° Atto e darlo a Puccini? . . .i giorni passano, ed inoperosi per lui.

[But in the mean time, couldn't you finish the first act and send it to Puccini? . . .the days are passing by and he is inactive.]

The first act to which Ricordi refers most probably included both scenes. That this plan was operative for nearly a year (if not more) is evident in further correspondence. As early on in the creation of the libretto as 6 October 1893 (CP 92), Giacosa wrote to Giulio Ricordi to complain of the difficulty of working with Puccini. Giacosa was suffering from "artistic impotence," and there were unsurmountable difficulties with the second part of the first act, presumably the Latin Quarter scene. Nearly a year later, on 13 July 1894, Puccini wrote to Giulio Ricordi from Torre del Lago to complain about the second act, the *Barrière d'Enfer* (CP 106). And on 7 September of the same year, he is still complaining about this same second act (CP 118).

The exact date of the separation of the two scenes is not known, but it is clear that the original function of the Latin Quarter scene was as a

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Transformation von Henry Murgers Roman in den 'Bohème'-Opern Puccinis und Leoncavallos," Jahrbuch für Opernforschung 2 (1987), pp. 116-17. The letters are part of the collection of the Biblioteca Passerini Landi in Piacenza. For further information on this recently discovered collection, see Maehder, "Paris-Bilder," p. 169, n. 5, and also Maehder, ed., Il Teatro di Giulio Ricordi: Edizione critica delle lettere di Giulio Ricordi a Luigi Illica, II (forthcoming).

concertato finale to the Garret scene.<sup>235</sup> More than likely, the elimination of the "cortile" act (see Fig.14, above), which, in its gaiety, closely resembled the character of the Latin Quarter scene, encouraged the move to separate the two.<sup>236</sup> Nevertheless, later correspondence suggests that Puccini still thought of the two acts in their original relationship to each other well after the opera was finished and premiered in Turin, on 1 February 1896. On 30 March 1896 (CP 159) Puccini wrote to Giulio Ricordi, expressing his continued dissatisfaction with the second act (now the Latin Quarter).<sup>237</sup>

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235. See Groos and Parker, La Bohème, p. 17, who define the concertato finale as the "most imposing of nineteenth-century Italian operatic forms. . . the grand sonic and scenic climax at the mid-point of a drama . . ."

I will refer hereafter to the present-day Act I as the Garret scene and the present-day Act II as the Latin Quarter scene.

236. The separation would thus allow for a spectacular scene with colorful crowds to be featured independently, a feature lost with the excision of the "cortile" act. The separation might also have been a question of not demanding that the audience sit too long, though the total time of the combined two acts (ca. 53 minutes) is comparable to the length of the first act of La Fanciulla del West (ca. 55 minutes) or that of any single member of Il Trittico (ranging from ca. 50 to 55 minutes). These timings are based upon performances at La Scala supervised by Puccini as noted throughout Ricci, Puccini interprete, and cited in Carner, Puccini, p. 286. Although Puccini seems to have demanded more endurance of his audience in later works, the lengthier first act of La Bohème would have been significantly longer than the 37-minute-long first act of his previous work, Manon Lescaut. Puccini ultimately did ask his audience to sit too long for Madama Butterfly, which underwent massive pruning after its unsuccessful premiere. Finally, it may well be that the demands of production precipitated the split. Yet it is interesting that the current Metropolitan Opera production omits the intermission between Garret and Latin Quarter, a move facilitated, no doubt, by the advanced stage technology of the house.

237. Puccini and his librettists had struggled over the Latin Quarter scene. The composer was adamant about his ideas. His letter of 21 July 1894 (CP 109, partially translated in Groos and Parker, La bohème, p. 44)

Indeed, from Act II, 34, to the end, the autograph displays an ending

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indicates the strained relationship between the composer and Illica:

L'irritazione di Illica mi sorprende e la trovo strana. . . Io devo ad occhi chiusi accettare il vangelo d'Illica?. . . Ora Bohème la vedo, ma col "Quartiere Latino": come dissi l'ultima volta che conferii con Illica, colla scena di Musetta che trovai io: e la morte la voglio come l'ho ideata io, e son sicuro allora di fare un lavoro originale e vitale.

[Illica's irritation astonishes me and I find it unusual. . . Must I blindly accept the Gospel according to Illica? . . . I have my vision of Bohème, but with the "Quartiere Latino": the way I described it the last time I conferred with Illica, with Musetta's scene which I invented: and I want the death to be as I have envisaged it, and then I am sure of producing an original and vital piece of work.]

In August of 1894 (CP 114), Puccini wrote to Illica about meeting together and organizing all the by-play and independent action of Momus. By 7 September Puccini wrote to Giulio (CP 118) in much higher spirits, his visit with the poet having been a success:

L'ultimo atto è bellissimo. Il "Quartiere", anche, ma difficilissimo; ho fatto togliere quel saltimbanco, bisognerà sfrondare dell'altro. Sarebbe bene che anche Lei gli desse una letta, per purgarlo di certe bizzarrie di cui non ce n'è proprio bisogno. Per es.: Il cavallo è il re degli animali, i fiumi son vini fatti d'acqua e molte altre alle quali Illica iene come ai propri figli (se ne avesse).

[The last act is very beautiful. So is the Quartier Latin, but very difficult. I have had the mountebank taken out. It will be necessary to eliminate other things. It would be a good thing if you would glance through it too, and rid it of certain extravagances of which there is no real need. For example: "The horse is the king of the animals," "Rivers are wines made of water," and many other such lines which Illica loves like his own sons (if he had any).] (See also, Groos and Parker, La bohème, p. 45.)

different from the one currently known. At this juncture (f. 142v), Puccini had originally wanted a slow curtain, a sense of continuing action after the curtain has fallen. Still thinking of the Latin Quarter scene as a finale, however, he wanted a more clamorous ending, one that would effect a more definitive close. In his letter to Giulio Ricordi of 30 March 1896 (CP 159) he described the type of ending he desired:

. . . Sono d'accordo con Lei, Tito, Illica, circa alla freddezza finale del secondo atto, ma il rimedio proposto non mi sembra quello che ci vuole. Così, a mio parere, si spiega di più scenicamente, ma si ottiene un ghiacciaio, perchè quelle poche parole di Alcindoro solo alla fine dell'atto sono una vera doccia. Ci vuole qualcosa più clamoroso e collettivo, allora si calerà la tela con effetto.

[I agree with you, Tito, and Illica about the chilliness of the finale of the second act, but the remedy you propose doesn't seem to me to be what is wanted. I think that although your suggestion is more scenic, the effect is chilling, because those few solo lines of Alcindoro at the end of the act are a veritable douche. We need something a bit more clamorous and collective, then the curtain will come down more effectively.]

A final piece of documentary evidence in favor of Puccini's ongoing consideration of these two scenes as a musical and dramatic unit, and, perhaps, the most striking, appears in the autograph of La Bohème. Puccini nearly always signed and dated the beginning and ending of each act of every opera as he composed it (often including time of day, place, and even weather!). He completed Act I, the Garret scene on 8 June 1895, 2:00 A.M.

(ore 2 di notte) and the Latin Quarter scene on 19 July 1895.<sup>238</sup> Yet he took pains to amend his inscription at the end of the Garret scene as follows: "Fine Atto I° (chiusa fatta dopo aver finito il 2° atto)."

The following photograph of the autograph displays the inscription as well as Puccini's signature, date, time and place:

**Illustration 3: La Bohème, Folio 90<sup>r</sup>.**



238. Groos and Parker, La bohème, p. 46 and p. 184, n. 16, refer to a graffito on the wall of Puccini's study in Val di Nievole near Pescia where the composer worked during the summer of 1895. The graffito records the completion of Act II as of 23 July. There is a photo of it in Marchetti, Puccini com'era, p. 224. The caption assigns the inscription to Puccini.

This is a unique inscription. Although we know that Puccini revised works long after their completion, there is no evidence elsewhere in his autographs to suggest that it was his common practice to leave an act incomplete before proceeding to the next one. Clearly, Puccini still felt and wished to express the partnership of these two scenes even after they were designated independent acts.

Close analysis of the musical and dramatic relationship between Acts I and II of La Bohème suggests, moreover, that Puccini continued to think of them as a unit throughout his composition of the music. The two scenes together constitute a single independent structure in which the sense of completion is supported by large-scale tonal planning as well as by parallels in the sequence and nature of the action in them. Here Puccini developed his ideas so thoroughly, and so completely brought them to their logical musical and dramatic conclusion, that we could, conceivably, leave the theater after the end of the Latin Quarter scene (Act II), satisfied that we had experienced a complete musico-dramatic event. Indeed, the Latin Quarter scene effectively brings to a conclusion a "boy meets girl, boy gets girl" situation without further complication. The close is marked by the appearance on stage of the whole cast, and there is a general feeling of

merry-making and harmony with the world that is appropriate to a joyful Christmas Eve celebration in the Latin Quarter.<sup>239</sup>

## 2. Dramatic Structure

### Plot, Characterization and Action

The libretto of La Bohème, based upon Henri Murger's mid-nineteenth-century novel, Scènes de la vie de bohème,<sup>240</sup> is, like its source, a collection of anecdotes or tableaux. The plot is a depiction in four quadri (tableaux)<sup>241</sup> of an episode in the lives of six people: Rodolfo, a poet;

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239. See Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, pp. 95-98, for a discussion of open and closed endings and how information is communicated at the end of a drama. Pfister (p. 95) notes that "the appearance of the whole cast, speeches that summarize the plot and look forward with anticipation to a secure future, dance and other festivities" are dramatic conventions that add "scenic" emphasis to closure. See also, Barry, Dramatic Structure, p. 154, who notes that "this great bringing together of characters has been satisfying theatre-goers from Greek times through the latest musical comedy." Barry also finds (p. 154) a "structural logic" in the balance that such a "moment of full and uncomplicated celebration" provides.

240. Henri Murger, Scènes de la vie de bohème (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, Editeurs, n.d.). An available translation is Murger, The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter (New York: Howard Fertig, 1984).

241. The title page of the first edition of the libretto, rather than noting a "four-act" structure, reads as follows:

La Bohème  
(Scene da La vie de Bohème di Henry [sic] Murger)  
4 Quadri  
di  
Giuseppe Giacosa e Luigi Illica  
Musica di  
GIACOMO PUCCINI

Marcello, an artist; Schaunard, a musician; Colline, a philosopher; Mimì, a seamstress; and Musetta, a coquette. The episode that threads through the four tableaux is the love affair of Rodolfo and Mimì. It is important to realize, however, that even as this love affair and Mimì's subsequent death form the core of the opera, we are still keenly aware that the boundaries of what we have just witnessed are not finite. The "carpe diem" tone of the Bohemian existence<sup>242</sup> is so well established early in the drama that it is not unrealistic to expect that the Bohemians will recover their forces and go on after the curtain goes down, albeit saddened by their loss.

This sense of spontaneity and continuity is greatly bound to the mode of exposition in La Bohème. There is an absence of narrative, such as one finds in a work like Le Villi, where all events leading up to the point of attack in the story are transmitted at the beginning of the drama by the chorus.<sup>243</sup> There is almost no reference to the distant past in the first act,

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As the arrangement in tableaux was clearly a novelty, and because the four segments do not follow Murger's novel in sequence, Giacosa and Illica explained (or defended) their work in a brief preface. They also included brief quotations from the novel--not to be read in performance--as introductory material to each tableau.

242. See Jerrold Siegel, "The rise of Bohemia," in Groos and Parker, 'La bohème', pp. 1-11, and de Sanctis, "Literary Realism," especially Chapter 3, "The Legend of Bohemia: a Literary Intermezzo," pp. 72-112.

243. See Daniela Goldin, "Drammaturgia e linguaggio della Bohème di Puccini," La Vera Fenice (Turin: Einaudi, 1985), pp. 347-48. Goldin notes this absence of narrative, citing Schaunard's retelling of his adventures with the Englishman and his parrot in Act I and Musetta's recounting to Rodolfo in Act IV of the events in Mimì's life after their separation as exceptions.

the single exception being Marcello's remark about Musetta's "heart of ice." Beyond that, the characters nearly always refer to actions recently completed or in progress. The expository information is thus bound to the action and emerges as the drama progresses in a "continuously evolving process."<sup>244</sup> The result of this mode of presentation is a work that appears to be self-generating. Yet it is clear that La Bohème is far from improvised.

### The Garret

One of the many special features of La Bohème is its opening. The curtain rises in medias res as Marcello works on his painting, "The Passage of the Red Sea."<sup>245</sup> The sixteenth chapter ("Le Passage de la mer rouge") of Henri Murger's novel, upon which this scene is based, clues us into the action before the curtain goes up, and reveals an appeal that, no doubt, captured the interest of the librettists.

In Murger's chapter, we learn that Marcel had reworked his picture many times. He retitled it, he added a pharaoh, he took away a Caesar, all

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She discusses this aspect of the libretto within the context of Illica's language. She believes that the language has a scherzo character, which a narrative style would inhibit. Dona de Sanctis, "Literary Realism," p. 135, describes the arias in Bohème as narratives that help to develop characterization. See also, the discussion of "Nei cieli bigi," below, especially the Excursus.

244. Pfister, The Theory and Analysis, pp. 87-88.

245. The in medias res dramatic opening is coordinated with a non-tonic musical opening. See the discussion, below.

in the hope of capturing the prize offered by an annual juried exhibition. He had entered the competition so often that the painting could "have gone thither of itself, if it had been put on wheels."<sup>246</sup> The masterpiece ends up as the signboard over a greengrocer's, with the addition of a steamboat in another artist's hand and a new title, "The Port of Marseilles."<sup>247</sup> Nevertheless, Marcel is very, very proud. For him it is a moment of triumph.<sup>248</sup> Clearly, Giacosa and Illica saw the humor in this situation and chose it in order to establish a witty and rapid tone for the opening of the opera.

At the point of attack in the story of the opera, we find Marcello, freezing from the cold, literally dancing in order to keep warm. Disgusted by professional failure and physical discomfort, he threatens to drown the Pharaoh of his painting, but instead he offers it to Rodolfo as fuel for the waning fire in their little attic stove. Thus within minutes of the curtain's

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246. Murger, *Scènes*, p. 175: "si on l'eut placé sur des roulettes, il eut été en état de se rendre tout seul au Louvre," trans. in *The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter*, p. 194.

247. In the third act of the opera the painting reappears as the signboard of the tavern in the Rue d'Enfer. It has a new title ("Al porto di Marsiglia"), but no steamboat, and it is now accompanied by a Turk and a Zouave (a French infantryman, with a huge laurel wreath around his fez), who flank the doorway.

248. Murger, *Bohemians*, p. 203.

rise a humorous tone and rapid pace is established.<sup>249</sup> We are instantaneously aware of the men's ability to improvise a solution to the problem at hand, even to the extent of sacrificing months of work for a few moment's comfort. Schaunard, however, saves the evening, as he enters triumphantly, strewing coins in his path, much as royalty might condescend to throw some pennies to the poor.<sup>250</sup> Colline is the least well developed of the quartet of men, yet it is Colline who tells us exactly when all of this is taking place. He is frustrated over his failure to pawn his most beloved possession--his books--and he mutters sarcastically about the pawn shops being closed in honor of Christmas Eve. Thus their suffering from the cold is heightened by the fact that it is Christmas--no one should suffer so on

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249. In his letter to Illica of 3 August 1894 (CP 113) Puccini described their common effort as "un capolavoro di umorismo e commozione" [a masterpiece of humor and commotion].

250. Puccini, was well aware of Schaunard's importance. During the composition of the work, he tried to find a point during which the musician could be featured. Perhaps he found it ironic that the character of a musician would not have an aria to perform alone. It had been proposed originally that Schaunard sing a credo against women, but it was ultimately determined that such lines were better suited for those who actually had been betrayed (Rodolfo and Marcello). For further discussion of Schaunard's proposed enlarged role in the fourth act, see Groos and Parker, La bohème, pp. 49-51, and Howard Greenfeld, Puccini (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1980), p. 93. The collected correspondence (translated into German) between Puccini, Illica, and Giulio Ricordi on the subject of a proposed "Toast" for Schaunard may be found in Attila Csampai and Dietmar Holland, "Giulio Ricordi: Die Auseinandersetzungen um das Trinklied des Schaunard," in La Bohème: Texte, Materialien, Kommentare, rororo Opernbücher, ed. by Csampai and Holland (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981), pp. 187-97.

Christmas. Still the Bohemians are able to face their situation with humor, knowing that any other approach would be of even less value. The occasion of Christmas inspires Schaunard to propose eating out, an idyllic thought to the four friends, who contemplate a celebration in the Latin Quarter. Their reverie is suddenly interrupted by knocking at the door. It is Benoit, the landlord, who has come for his rent. The ensuing episode is the dramatic and textural climax of the first part of the Garret scene. It brings the number of characters on stage to five and barrels forward to a close, as Benoit is ushered from the apartment and the door is slammed shut.<sup>251</sup>

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251. See Figure 19, below, which illustrates how stage noises serve to organize and segment this first scene.

The mode of declamation from the opening of the scene to this point has progressed gradually from individual lines to ensemble expression. With five characters on stage, Puccini now had more opportunity to have his characters exchange rapid volleys of words, a mode of discourse that characterizes *La Bohème* throughout. In his letter to Illica of October, 1895 (CP 136), Puccini discussed a *brindisi* in Act IV that was eventually to be eliminated. His description of the proposed discourse of this piece applies largely to the character and pacing of much of the ensemble declamation of the entire opera:

. . . fallo il brindisi con forma possibile e rapida botte e risposte, cioè: idee iniziate dall'uno e completate dall'altro personaggio.

[ . . do the toast in form and rapidly, with witty retorts, that is: with ideas started by one and completed by another character.

Even the autograph illustrates the definitiveness of this ending with its large double bar and thick blue line.<sup>252</sup>

**Illustration 4: La Bohème: Folio 51'.**

The image shows a handwritten musical score for La Bohème, Folio 51'. The score is written on multiple staves with various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The text "Meno" is written at the bottom left, and "Rit. - All. - (a tempo) Rit." is written at the bottom right. The score is enclosed in a large double bar and a thick blue line.

252. Puccini commonly used a blue pencil to make his corrections and emendations in the autographs.

The function of this first half is to establish time, place, and character. There has been no real move toward a plot, and as such no conflict has been created beyond those of life: the cold and the rent. The character and milieu so established become the seed out of which germinate the remaining three scenes of the combined two acts.

The transition following the exit of Benoit allows Marcello, Schaunard, and Colline to leave and for Mimì to find Rodolfo alone. Her first encounter is tentative. Everything about her is timid--her knocking at the door is nearly inaudible, as is her halting request for a light for her candle. She leaves with her relighted candle but returns within seconds to reclaim her lost her key. This is the point at which the action regenerates itself--the beginning of the second half of the act--the lost key providing the impetus for the ensuing scene. Their hands meet while searching for this key, and the brief, intimate contact and the darkness give both Rodolfo and Mimì the courage to reveal something of themselves to one another--and time is suspended as the audience also learns who they are.<sup>253</sup> Their idyll is

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253. See the discussion on lighting, below, and also, Chapters Four and Five. Puccini was especially pleased with the two biographical arias, and praised them in his letter to Illica of 23 April 1894 (CP 104). The arias are, of course, expository, and the information in them is transmitted in a way that Pfister, *Theory and Analysis*, p. 92, classifies as dialogical--expository information embedded in a dialogue between two people. See, Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, pp. 70-74, for further discussion of this scene in terms of the libretto.

interrupted by the trio of friends in the courtyard below, and, after a moon-light-inspired "epiphany of recognition"<sup>254</sup> in which they acknowledge their new love, they reluctantly leave the garret to join their friends at Momus. They exit arm in arm, and the close of the Garret scene is thus left open-ended, like their as yet unconsummated affair.

### **The Latin Quarter**

The opening of the Latin Quarter scene is a remarkable achievement in crowd control.<sup>255</sup> The various members of the crowd were conceived by

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254. Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 73.

255. Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 17, compare the Latin Quarter scene to the nineteenth-century central finale and note that Musetta's "Waltz" stands as a "central static moment of reflection." In serious opera, however, the "central finale" was closely related to other ensemble forms, particularly the duet, as Scott Balthazar points out in "Evolving Conventions," p. 162. Yet, the Latin Quarter scene also seems to resemble the buffo finale of the eighteenth century. Remarks by Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure," p. 197, can be related easily to the character of the Latin Quarter scene:

A finale invariably brings the action of the story to a climax, and the events leading up to it are most effective when presented in an atmosphere of confusion and turmoil. Much of the comedy in a buffo finale derives from the sense that the characters are overwhelmed by a rapid succession of events, and active passages convey a sense of breathlessness ideally suited to the action of the story.

However, Goldin, "Drammaturgia," p. 346, points out that, although *Bohème* is an opera without conflict, it does not quite qualify as buffa, because it lacks a constituent element of this category of opera--a principal victim of mockery. She astutely notes that neither Benoit nor Alcindoro qualify as such because they are not main characters and really function as

the librettists as separate, but simultaneous entities, with the Bohemians, the vendors, the general mob of citizens, students, and children, and the group at the cafe, all acting independently. The Bohemians are also divided, not yet united at Momus, as each pursues a different activity in the square. The libretto reflects this separation as the verses for Schaubard, Colline, Marcello, and the pair of lovers have individual, unrelated syllable counts and rhyme schemes (see Illustration 5, below). Marcello, for example, has an endecasillabo quatrain with an ABAB rhyme scheme, while the vendors are hawking their wares in an altogether different mode of expression, wherein most of their verses may be scanned as quinario doppio.<sup>256</sup> The depth of planning here is evident in the synchronization of Marcello's quatrain with the poetic scheme of the crowd. This makes good sense, since he is part of the crowd as he strolls about, looking at girls. Mimì and Rodolfo, who are also mingling with people in the square, have settenario lines, the same syllable count of the verses of the crowd. I have added the

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theatrical embellishment.

See also (among others), Balthazar, "Evolving Conventions," pp. 162-212, 506-51; Platoff, "Music and Drama;" Nicolaisen, Italian Opera, pp. 37-40, 96-100, 225-27; Philip Gossett, "The Operas of Rossini: Problems of Textual Criticism in Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera." Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1970; idem. Anna Bolena.

256. An endecasillabo is an 11-syllable line with an accent on the tenth syllable. A quinario doppio line is a double line in which the half lines generally do not rhyme, and a settenario is a seven-syllable line with an accent on the sixth syllable and one of the first four syllables. See Moreen, "Integration of Text Forms," especially Chapter III.

syllable counts and rhyme schemes to a photocopy of the opening page of the Latin Quarter scene as it appears in the first edition of the libretto (Illustration 5):

Illustration 5: First-Edition Opening of Latin Quarter Scene.

Quadro II - Al Quartiere Latino

LA VIGILIA DI NATALE

Un esercito di vole che nel luogo prende forma di piasale; butirghe, venditori di ogni genere; da un lato il Café Momus.

*Nella folla si aggirano Rodolfo e Mimi. Colline presso alla botte di vini rappacchiate, Schannard a una bottega di ferravacchi sta comprando una pipa e un cerneo, Marcello è spinto qua e là dal capriccio della gente.*

I Venditori Quinario  
*(col numero delle loro botteghe)* Doppio

SCHAUNARD

*(sella nel cerneo o un cerneo fuori sono erano)*

Re! Re! Re!... Falso questo re!...

*(torna nel fazzoletto)*

Pipa e como quanti è?...  
*(che fanno della rappresentazione che gli era entrato in testa di un cerneo come che egli ha appena comprato)*

COLLINE

È un poco usato  
ma è netto e a buon mercato...

*(pipa o distribuire con gli occhi spuntati i suoi del quali è carico tutto molto tanto del cerneo)*

MARCELLO

*(torna solo in mano alla botte, con un fazzoletto come bene che, partecipando la diavola di, la colla gli grida qua e là la bottega)*

A Io pur mi sento in vena di gridare:  
B Chi vuoi, donnine allegre, un po' d'amore?  
A Facciamo insieme a vendere e comprare il  
B Io do ad un soldo il vergino mio cuore.

*(Stabat a Mimi, o brando, entravano la folla eredita al seguito della medesima)*

RODOLFO

Andiam.

MIMI

Per la cuffietta?

RODOLFO

Tienti al mio braccio stretta...

*(torna dalla medesima)*

*(La folla si espone per le vie abbarbati. La bottega sono pieno di compratori che vanno a comprare MIMI per un sistema di recubitor, il recubitor aveva*

*Gran folla e diversa; Borghesi, Soldati, Fantasia, Ragazzi, Bambini, S denti, Sartine, Genidarmi, ecc.*

*È sera. La bottega sono adorno di lampioncini e fiammi accesi un gran fanale illumina l'ingresso del Café Momus. Il Café è affollatissimo e che alcuni Borghesi sono entrati a sedersi ad una tavola fuori all'aperto.*

Settenario  
La Folla.  
BORGHESI

A Quanta folla!

*(Dovve)*

*(Che chissai!)*

*(Strumenti e sartine)*

*(B Stringiti a me, corissimo.)*

*(UNA MAMMA (chiamando la sua figliuola))*

*(Lisa! Lisa! Lisa!...)*

*(BORGHESI)*

*(Date il passo.)*

*(A Emma, quando ti chiamo!)*

*(SARTINE)*

*(Ancora un altro giro...)*

*(STUDENTI)*

*(D Pigliam via Mazarino.)*

*(Dovve)*

*(C Qui mi manca il respiro!...)*

*(BORGHESI)*

*(D Vedi? Il Café è vicino.)*

*(SARTINE, (chiamando una bottega))*

*(E Oh! stupenli gioielli!)*

*(STUDENTI (colloquendo))*

*(E Son gli occhi assai più belli!)*

*(ALCUNI BORGHESI (sottovoce))*

*(F Pericolosi escippi!)*

*(G la folla oggi ci dà)*

*(ALTRI BORGHESI)*

*(F Era meglio ai miei tempi!)*

*(MONELLI)*

*(G Viva la libertà!)*

*(tempo necessario di present che venano, venano e il viceso del per una strada, del per archite, Poesia di)*

*(lungo di poggio, somministrano tempo.)*

— Andiam, qua, camerier!

— Presto!

— Corti!

— A me!

— Birra!

— Vaniglia!...

— Dunque? Presto!...

— Un caffè!...

— Resafà!

— Da be

— Presto, oh!...

— Un bicchi

The entire first part of this finale consists of rapid episodes, which alternately focus on the crowd and the individual Bohemians as they peruse the shops or mingle in the crowd before joining one another at Momus. If the motion could be slowed down and all the characters somehow be aligned and placed on a moving walkway, a gradual, but deliberate gathering together of people on their way to Momus could be viewed. This initial scene ends with a "close-focus"<sup>257</sup> on the Bohemians in the café, a calm before the "storm" that is Musetta's entrance. And as a discussion about love inspires a toast, the first half of the finale closes comically as the Bohemians are left standing with glasses raised, it would appear, in honor of Musetta who has just come on the scene.<sup>258</sup> Musetta's entrance initiates the second half of the Latin Quarter scene and parallels Mimì's entrance to the Garret in its structural location. It is, however, the dramatic antithesis of Mimì's timid knocking and hesitant discourse. And while

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257. I have adopted the term from Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 17. It describes with precision Puccini's cinematic technique of alternating between "panorama" and "close focus." Ulrich Schreiber, "Kikeriki und Beefsteak oder Der Alltagsmythos als Kleinkunst: Zu Text, Musik und Dramaturgie in Puccinis *La Bohème*," *La Bohème*, ed. Csampai and Holland, pp. 29-30, finds the "illustrative" characteristics of Puccini's score (especially the opening of Act III) to be a forerunner of film music.

258. A small, but interesting observation may be made: at the close of the first part of the Garret scene, the Bohemians were also standing after having toasted the man they are about to throw out of their house. In this first instance, however, their glasses are no longer raised, the contents having been consumed with great relish. In fact, Benoit's glass has been refilled as quickly as it was emptied in a deliberate effort to hasten the landlord's confusion.

Rodolfo was enchanted by Mimì's pale delicacy, Musetta's presence riles Marcello to the core. Nevertheless, the focus on Marcello and Musetta in the second portion of the Latin Quarter scene balances the meeting of the lovers in the first scene.<sup>259</sup>

In an effort to gain Marcello's attention, Musetta addresses her "Waltz" especially to him, and Marcello, unable to resist further, surrenders. The waltz escalates into a large ensemble, and the reunited lovers embrace fervently as Schaunard remarks, "siamo all'ultima scena!" He is quite right. The waiter brings the bill at that very moment. In rapid succession, the Bohemians search their pockets, the sound of the approaching Tattoo interrupts the scene, the stage fills with people as the band advances, and Musetta tells the waiter to combine the two bills and leave them for Alcindoro. The scene generates into a massive ensemble, as the Bohemians perceive the opportunity for an easy escape. And finally, the parade sweeps across the stage, gathering up everyone in its path, including the deadbeat Bohemians, who have left Alcindoro with the evening's wreckage: a never-to-be-worn-by-Musetta pair of shoes and a bill for a meal he did not eat.

The Latin Quarter scene is the final segment of Puccini's exposition. The main architectural difference between it and the Garret scene occurs at the break between its two parts. Whereas the first half of the garret

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259. In addition, Alcindoro is Benoit's counterpart, another lecherous old man, whose part is usually sung by the same bass.

scene ended with a completed dramatic action--the successful duping of Benoit out of his rent and his eviction (supported, as will be shown, by a definitive musical close)--the first part of the Latin Quarter scene, about to be rounded off by a toast to the happiness of the evening, is interrupted by Musetta.<sup>260</sup> By the end of the act, however, the conflict between Marcello and Musetta is resolved, and they form a pair of happy lovers complementary to Rodolfo and Mimì. The only other note of conflict in all of the two scenes, beyond unpaid bills,<sup>261</sup> is Mimì's cough. Yet even this is resolved in a satisfactory way. Love is clearly a potent medicine, and we don't doubt that Rodolfo will keep Mimì warm.

### Lighting and Staging

As in so many of Puccini's operas, both lighting and the offstage area play significant roles in La Bohème, especially between the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes. Here, the lighting plays a structural role, as it spans the length of the two large scenes, while the expansion of the playing area offstage is used variously for contrast and depth, to push the action forward, or to create parallels between and within scenes.

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260. These actions have consequences for the tonal organization of the two scenes.

261. By the end of the Latin Quarter scene, the Bohemians have managed to evade two bills in one evening. De Sanctis, "Literary Realism," p. 136, notes that "Bohème . . . makes lack of money rather than self-control the source of dramatic tension . . ."

As the two scenes together take place in the course of a single evening, the progress of the lighting helps us understand the passage of time from the opening to the finale and increases our perception of them as a single unit. The two scenes are thus bound together in "real" time, the passage of which is clearly marked by the progressive lighting that joins them. By contrast, the remaining two acts of the opera are separated from the Latin Quarter scene and from each other by indefinite intervals. The time factor within each is independent of other scenes, and the lighting within each is likewise self-contained.

When the curtain rises on the Garret scene, it is obviously still daylight, since Marcello is painting and Rodolfo is looking out of the window. Our sense that it is towards evening is not so much enhanced by dialogue as by the introductions of Colline and Schaunard, who are clearly returning after a day's work or other activities. By the second scene, natural light has been replaced by candlelight, which marks the passage of time and creates a new ambience. The scene between Rodolfo and Mimì, however, is played under various lighting, including candlelight, darkness, and moonlight. These various stages plot the course of their affair, as the need of a light brought Mimì to Rodolfo's door in the first place. The moonlight frames the pale Mimì in a nimbus, creating an effect that evokes Rodolfo's most poetic dream. "O soave fanciulla", he whispers ecstatically as they draw nearer to one another. The image both contrasts with and is dissolved

by the artificial light of the next scene. The huge lanterns of the Latin Quarter and the Café Momus enhance the sense of celebration which permeates the scene. The evening is in full swing, and the meeting of Rodolfo and Mimì as well as Christmas are being celebrated. The progress of the action may thus be traced through the lighting as follows:

**Figure 15: Lighting in the Exposition of La Bohème.**

Garret Scene:	Pt. 1: <u>Daylight</u> : Marcello paints, Rodolfo looks out the window
	Pt. 2: <u>Candlelight, Darkness, Moonlight</u> : Mimì and Rodolfo meet and touch
Latin Quarter Scene:	<u>Lamplight (Artificial Light)</u> : Street festivities

The setting of each scene is expanded into the wings in different ways. In the Garret scene Marcello, Schaunard, and Colline shout at the lovers from the courtyard below, and Marcello's sarcastic remark about the poet's discovery of poetry is barely heard in the distance as a counterpoint to Rodolfo's contemplation of Mimì in the moonlight. The effect underscores with great poignancy how distant from the rest of the world Mimì and Rodolfo really are at that very moment. Puccini carried it a step further both by having them sing their final words from the distance and by bringing the curtain down on an empty stage.<sup>262</sup> The vision of the dark,

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262. William Ashbrook, "Some Comments on Puccini's Sense of Theater," Critica pucciniana (Lucca: Comitato Nazionale per le Onoranze a Giacomo Puccini nel Cinquantenario della Morte, 1976), p. 12, notes that "the empty

empty room, accompanied by the distant voices of the lovers as they exit, contrasts sharply with the filled stage of the following scene, with its fanfare and bright lights.

There are many people on stage in the Latin Quarter scene, an outdoor setting that also facilitates the chance meeting of Marcello and Musetta. Toward the end of both segments of the Latin Quarter scene there is some parallel stage action, each of which involves an approaching "parade." In the first part, Parpignol, who personifies Christmas and gift-giving, enters gradually with his entourage and sweeps the stage of extraneous characters, so that we may concentrate on the Bohemians reunited at the Café Momus. After his episode with the children, he exits, taking all superfluous personnel with him. The tattoo in the second half serves the same function on a grander scale. First heard from offstage, like Parpignol, it approaches and also makes a clean sweep, taking everyone with it. The gradual approach, entrance, and exit of both Parpignol and the tattoo have the effect of expanding the wings to indefinite size. There is a sense of circular or continuous motion, of having begun at and continuing on to an undefinable location. In the case of the tattoo, the sensation is heightened because the characters on stage are hearing "real" music as it

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stage is further testimony of Puccini's sensitivity, and it is a subtle foreshadowing of the greater emptiness to come." I don't agree that the empty room foreshadows anything quite so profound. I believe, rather, that we are left to contemplate it more simply as the place they "left behind," a room of as yet unfulfilled possibilities.

approaches or moves away from center stage. This method of broadening the physical playing area was a favorite device of Puccini's for the duration of his career.

### **Architectural Design**

An examination of the dramatic structure of the combined two acts will reveal certain parallels between them that can be further explored in the musical discussion. Certain of these parallels can be shown by splitting each of the two acts into two parts.<sup>263</sup> Figure 16 shows the broad internal divisions of the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes, together with a descriptive term designating the type of movement that is prevalent within each. The texture, pacing, and segmentation of the action can thus be designated by the terms "episodic" or "conventional."<sup>264</sup> The second part of the Latin

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263. The smaller divisions of the first two acts of La Bohème in relation to each other fall broadly into Carner's categories of "lively vs. lyrical." Claudio Casini, "La Bohème: Zwischen Realismus und Pathetismus," in Csampai and Holland, La Bohème, pp. 210-11, finds all four acts of the opera to have a livelier first part and a more lyrical second part. However, I do not find Acts III and IV to be so clearly divided into two distinct parts as the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes, even though Casini's point about the more episodic openings of these acts (III and IV) is well taken.

The two larger units (meaning all of the Garret scene and all of the Latin Quarter scene) seem to fall into a reverse relationship, with the Garret scene being more lyrical than the livelier Latin Quarter scene. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two larger units parallels that between their smaller components in more ways than not.

264. Puccini was admittedly obsessed with an episodic mode of presentation. He reminds Illica of this in his letter of June 1893 (CP 85):

Quarter scene is divided into two parts, the second of which, because of its scenic and musical size and function, is itself a finale to the first:

**Figure 16: Broad Divisions of the Garret and Latin Quarter Scenes.**

<b>The Garret</b>	<b>Pt. 1: The Bohemians (episodic)</b> <b>Pt. 2: Mimi and Rodolfo (conventional)</b>
<b>Latin Quarter</b>	<b>Pt. 1: Crowd, Bohemians (episodic)</b> <b>Pt. 2: (a) Musetta/Marcello (conventional)</b> <b>(b) the Ritirata (conventional)</b>

Certain parallels between the two scenes are immediately apparent when they are juxtaposed in broad outline. Each individual scene falls into two contrasting parts, one episodic, the other conventional. The first part

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Caro Illica,  
sempre impressionato tua splendida tela verbale ti  
rammento episodi mia preoccupazione costante.

[Dear Illica,  
still impressed with your splendid verbal plot, I  
remind you of the episodes which are my constant  
preoccupation.]

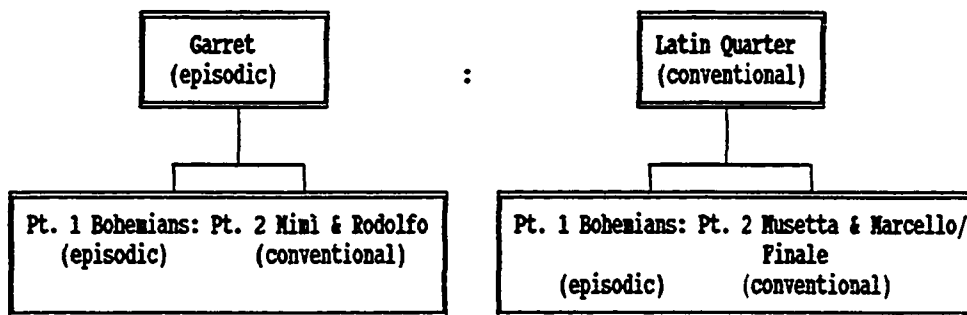
Of further interest in this area are comments by Dona de Sanctis, "Literary Realism," pp. 117-17, who notes that:

the episodic structure [of the four acts] has more in common with the short story than with the tightly organized, sequentially developed acts of a play. . . The libretto's apparent disorganization also resembles the randomness of "real life," a theme of literary naturalism that contributed to Bohème's modernity.

of each large scene focuses on the Bohemians as a group, while the second part introduces a leading female.

The "episodic" vs. "conventional" relationship also exists between the two large scenes. The whole Garret scene, by contrast to the whole Latin Quarter scene (a conventional finale), is essentially a series of dramatic episodes (to which Mimì and Rodolfo's scene may be attached). There is thus simultaneous parallel motion in both the microstructure and the macrostructure. Figure 17 clarifies this point:

**Figure 17: Parallels between Garret and Latin Quarter Scenes.**



A further dissection of the individual parts reveals a highly organized internal mechanism. Let us begin with the Garret scene:<sup>265</sup>

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265. My breakdown of the scenes within this section is based upon the first-edition libretto: G. Giacosa and L. Illica, *La Bohème*, Musica di G. Puccini (Milan: G. Ricordi, n.d.). Here, particularly in the Garret scene, the individual segments are clearly separated by captions denoting successive entrances. This arrangement has been abandoned in modern editions of the libretto, and neither Puccini's autograph, nor any modern editions of the score make such distinctions evident.

Figure 18: Internal Breakdown of the Garret Scene.

Pt. 1	Scene 1	Marcello, Rodolfo
	Scene 2	Marcello, Rodolfo, Colline
	Scene 3	Marcello, Rodolfo, Colline, Schaunard
	Scene 4	Marcello, Rodolfo, Colline, Schaunard, Benoit
<b>TRANSITION:</b>		Exit Bohemians, enter Mimi and exit
Pt. 2	Reenter Mimi for her key <b>Aria, Rodolfo: "Che gelida manina"</b> <b>Aria, Mimi: "Si. Mi chiamano Mimi"</b> Bohemians call them to Momus <b>Duet, M &amp; R: "O soave fanciulla"</b>	

Part 1 thus begins with two characters, Marcello and Rodolfo, and successively introduces Colline, Marcello, and Benoit, reaching an ensemble of five characters. Each individual entrance is also punctuated by some non-musical sound. The consistency of this mode of articulation has a structural function that may be diagrammed as follows:<sup>266</sup>

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266. Puccini is by no means the first composer to create ensembles or finales that grow progressively. Among the better known examples would be the Act II finale of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, the structure of which is discussed in Siegmund Levarie, *Mozart's 'Le Nozze di Figaro': A Critical Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952) and, more recently, John Platoff, "Music and Drama," pp. 67-69.

**Figure 19: Entrances Punctuated by Noise.**

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | <b>Rodolfo and Marcello</b>  |
| 2. | <b>NOISE: door bangs open, books thrown on table</b><br><b><u>Enter Colline</u></b>                                      |
| 3. | <b>NOISE: clatter of opening door, boys bearing wood, etc., coins clanking on floor</b><br><b><u>Enter Schaunard</u></b> |
| 4. | <b>NOISE: knocking on door</b><br><b><u>Enter Benoit</u></b>   |
| 5. | <b>NOISE: door slammed shut</b><br><b>END PART 1</b>   |

In the transition, the Bohemians exit and Rodolfo is left alone, but not for long. We soon meet Mimì, and the action begins again with two characters on stage, just as in the opening of the act. However, the pacing, texture, articulation, and mood contrast with the rapid motion of the first half. The difference is such that timelessness has now replaced tumult through the slower pace of the arias and duets. Thus, more conventional operatic discourse plays a new role, as it provides a new texture and a new atmosphere as well as an opportunity for vocal display.<sup>267</sup>

The Latin Quarter scene is no less highly organized, but more difficult to define because of its more numerous components. An early draft of the

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267. This represents something of a change from the so-called "number opera" of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in which a string of set pieces was an opportunity to vocalize, as well as to allow the characters to reflect upon their inner feelings. Such an arrangement would sometimes all but stop the action completely.

scene's structure, included by Illica in his letter to Giulio Ricordi of August 1894 (CP 115) provides us with a basis from which we may work:<sup>268</sup>

**Figure 20: An Early Draft of the Latin Quarter Scene.**

1°	Bataclan
2°	Riunione della bohème
3°	Duettino Rodolfo Mimì
4°	Ordinazione del pranzo
5°	Entrata di Musetta e Alcindoro de Mitonneaux, Consigliere di Stato
6°	Scena-dialogo-il conto
7°	Musetta manda Mitonneaux a fare delle spese. Suo ritorno alla bohème-i due conti sul piatto di Alcindoro
8°	Ritirata e trionfo di Musetta

This arrangement is very close in content to the final product, with only a few differences. Illica went on in his letter to complain that the entire scene, especially the segment involving the bill, was too long. As we know, this section was eventually pared down to move very rapidly from Musetta's "Waltz" (which does not appear in the scenario above) to the nearly simultaneous arrival of the bill and the tattoo. The duettino between Rodolfo and Mimì was also revised and turned eventually into the discussion about Mimì's new bonnet.<sup>269</sup> Illica's early divisions can be edited and combined with the broad outline in Figure 15 to show a more detailed breakdown of the Latin Quarter scene:

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268. Curiously, the Latin Quarter scene in the first-edition libretto reflects neither the obvious segmentation, complete with captions of the Garret scene, nor the titles as outlined above.

269. See Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 44, and Ashbrook, *The Operas*, p. 65, n. 19.

**Figure 21: Detail of Latin Quarter Scene.**

<b>Pt. 1</b>	
	(a) <b>Bataclan, then Schauvard, Colline, Marcello, Mimi, and Rodolfo in the square</b>
	(b) <b>Parpignol</b>
	(c) <b>Reunion of Bohemians at Momus, ordering of dinner, Mimi's bonnet, toast</b>
<b>Pt. 2</b>	
	(a) <b>Enter Musetta and Alcindoro: scene Aria (ensemble): "Quando m'en vo'," the bill</b>
	(b) <b>Choral Finale: The Ritirata (Full cast)</b>

The episodes of the first part do not appear on the surface to progress so geometrically and momentarily towards a goal as the cumulative action of the Garret scene, owing mainly to the multiple levels of activity that are going on simultaneously. But the contrast of tumult and speed in the first part with the more conventionally styled second part is clearly molded on the architecture of the Garret scene.

### 3. Musical Structure

#### Large-Scale Architecture

The graph in Example 30 shows the bass motion of the tonal framework of the combined two acts, together with some dramatic and musical details such as entrances and exits, arias, and episodes.<sup>270</sup> The bracketed half notes show that together the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes comprise a musical unit that begins and ends in B $\flat$  major. The large-scale background structure of the combined two acts is B $\flat$ -C-F-B $\flat$ , with each of the four pitches corresponding to the beginning or end of a scene. Thus, the Garret scene ends on a tonicized C, whereas the Latin Quarter scene begins on F and concludes on B $\flat$ :

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270. This graph contains many musical and dramatic details that will be referred to later in the text. All subsequent graphs may be viewed as subsets of this one, much in the way that insets show specific details of larger maps. I have employed a B-flat major key signature throughout in accordance with my basic premise that the two acts comprise a single, tonally unified entity. In certain individual cases, however, I have noted the tonal independence of a set piece by providing the appropriate key signature in the graph. These instances are noted as they occur. See also, the discussions of "Che gelida manina," "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì," "Quando m'en vo'," below.

**Example 30: Tonal Framework of Acts I and II.**

The diagram illustrates the tonal framework for Acts I and II, divided into two sections: **GARRET** and **LATIN QUARTER**. Each section is further divided into **PT. 1** and **PT. 2**.

**GARRET Section:**

- PT. 1:** Includes "Marcello, Rodolfo" and "Colline Schaunard".
- PT. 2:** Includes "Exit Benoit (22-2)", "Reenter Mimi", and "Interruption (30)".

**LATIN QUARTER Section:**

- PT. 1:** Includes "United at Momus (15)".
- PT. 2:** Includes "Tattoo (27)".

**Key Musical Elements and Events:**

- Drums of Momus (16):** A horizontal line spans across the transition from Garret to Latin Quarter.
- Exit M & R (43+10):** An event occurring during the Interruption in Garret PT. 2.
- Exit M & R (27+1):** An event occurring at the start of Garret PT. 2.
- Exit M & R (22-2):** An event occurring at the end of Garret PT. 1.
- United at Momus (15):** An event occurring at the start of Latin Quarter PT. 1.
- Toast (16-1):** An event occurring during Latin Quarter PT. 1.
- Toast (16-1):** An event occurring during Latin Quarter PT. 2.
- Quando m'en vo'' (21):** An event occurring during Latin Quarter PT. 2.
- Tattoo (27):** An event occurring at the end of Latin Quarter PT. 2.

**Vocal Lines and Lyrics:**

- "Nei cieli bigi" (2-17):** Located below the first staff.
- "Oh sventata" (27+1):** Located below the second staff.
- "Che gelida manina" (30):** Located below the second staff.
- "Si, Mi chiamano Mimi" (35):** Located below the second staff.
- "Quando m'en vo'' (21):** Located below the third staff.
- "Ritirata" Crowd 27+3:** Located below the third staff.

**Other Annotations:**

- ds:** A dynamic marking above the staff.
- Crowd (m. 1):** A marking below the staff.
- (16) Enter Musetta:** A marking below the staff.

This background pattern is miniaturized (Example 31) in the opening measures of the piece (m. 1 to 2-17), as the so-called "Bohemian motive" unfolds in a sequence of fifths (C-F-B $\flat$ ) that parallels the large-scale movement away from--and back to--the initial tonic. The Garret scene establishes itself in B $\flat$  major after this brief introduction as Rodolfo sings "Nei cieli bigi." Thus the sequence of fifths constitutes a type of brief prelude that projects in rapid order the tonal architecture of the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes as a whole.

**Example 31: Sequence of Fifths at Opening of Garret Scene.**

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The upper staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). It contains three notes: C (labeled (1-8)), F (labeled (2-22)), and B-flat (labeled (2-17)). The lower staff is a bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat. It contains four measures of music. The first measure is labeled (m. 1) and contains a C note with a handwritten '4+' and '2' below it. The second measure is labeled (1-8) and contains an F note with a handwritten '4+' and '2' below it. The third measure is labeled (2-22) and contains a B-flat note with a handwritten '4+' and '2' below it. The fourth measure is labeled (2-19) and contains a B-flat note with a handwritten '7' below it. Dashed lines connect the C note in the upper staff to the C note in the lower staff, the F note in the upper staff to the F note in the lower staff, and the B-flat note in the upper staff to the B-flat note in the lower staff.

The successive introductions of the Bohemians, together with important points of plot or characterization coincide with the unfolding of the B $\flat$ -major triad over the course of the two large scenes. In the Garret

scene there is an arpeggiation from B $\flat$  up to F as the men dream of the Latin Quarter, passing through D in Schaunard's long scene. The arpeggio descends through D as Benoit is thrown out and returns to B $\flat$  as Mimi reenters the garret for her lost key. Example 32 details this arpeggiation and the corresponding dramatic events:<sup>271</sup>

**Example 32: B $\flat$ -Major Arpeggiation.**

The tonicized C major at the end of the Garret scene supports the incomplete dramatic situation and prepares the F-major opening of the Latin Quarter Scene, which will eventually fall to B $\flat$  at its conclusion. F major arpeggiates to C in the first part of the scene as the focus alternates between crowd and Bohemians. It descends back down to A as the Bohemians gather at Momus. A is then prolonged by its own dominant (E),

271. As will be seen, Colline's entrance does not initiate a full-length scene; rather, it serves an extended transitional function.



**Our acceptance and perception of this large-scale tonal structure is conditioned primarily by our understanding of the pattern of descending fifths as the most simple and direct means of establishing a musical goal. Its presence in this structure, though not dramatically required, is indicative of a more meaningful musical intention. In addition, the initial establishment of B $\flat$ -major and its return in the Garret scene and at the end of the Latin Quarter scene must also be understood as both musically and dramatically convincing points of arrival. These points will be reinforced by a detailed discussion focussing on the establishment of B $\flat$ -major as the tonal basis of the large unit, the unfolding of the background structure across the two scenes, and its projection in details of the microstructure. I hope to show that Puccini was able to use the materials of music--keys, orchestration, rhythm--to enhance and illustrate dramatic structure, motion, and meaning in a way that does not deny or disturb our perception of traditional musical relationships.<sup>273</sup>**

### **The Garret Scene, Pt. 1**

**The Non-tonic Opening and B $\flat$ -Major as the Main Point of Arrival: Marcello and Rodolfo. Puccini responded to the witty and rapid tone of the libretto with the terse "Bohemian motive," which seems to erupt**

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273. Since the core of my discussion is the full exposition of the background structure and its supporting details, I have taken a chronological approach.

spontaneously from the bass of the orchestra as the curtain goes up (see Ex. 5, below).<sup>274</sup> However, La Bohème does not begin on a tonic.<sup>275</sup> Instead we hear several minutes of a cycle of fifths before a key is established. This non-tonic opening reflects both the action that has been going on before the opera and the in medias res situation as the curtain rises on Marcello painting "The Passage of the Red Sea" and Rodolfo gazing out of the window. The opening of the opera is thus a continuation of some previous action, an "in-progress" situation which Puccini clearly understood by setting it against a cycle of fifths--a progressive musical device that can be joined midstream and ended effectively and easily at any desired point.

The sequence of fifths (see Ex. 31, above) is initiated in the opening measures by the sustained F in the bass, which supports at the local level a dominant 4/2 chord that resolves measures later (1-11) to C major. It is this first point of arrival, together with the tonicized C major at the end of the scene that has persuaded some analysts that the Garret scene is in C, rather

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274. See Girardi, Puccini, p. 60. Walter Maisch, Puccinis musikalische Formgebung, untersucht an der Oper 'La Bohème' (Neustadt a.d. Aisch: P.C. W. Schmidt'sche Buchdr., 1934), pp. 26-27, notes that "Wie in 'Capriccio Sinfonico' [the early work from which the "Bohemian motive" was taken] weisen auch hier die einleitenden Takte überschriftartig auf den Inhalt des ganzen Werkes hin."

275. See Burstein, "The Non-Tonic Opening," p. 2, who notes that "It is quite possible for a work to be tonally unified even if the tonic chord does not appear at its outer boundaries."

than in the B $\flat$  which governs the larger, two-part structure.<sup>276</sup> F, however, becomes increasingly established as the dominant of B $\flat$ , and projects its imminent arrival. It is also significant that the first two successive sustained notes in the bass, respective characteristic parts of the repeated "Bohemian" motive; are F and B $\flat$  (this can be seen clearly in the excerpt from the score in Example 34, below). Marcello's first lines also arrive on C but dovetail the next segment of the sequence, V 4/2 of F leading to F. Marcello's lines in turn confirm the arrival on F. On F and C Marcello casually asks Rodolfo what he is doing ["Che fai?"], and this leads to the final segment of the introduction in which the initial bass note F is reinterpreted as the root position dominant seventh chord of B $\flat$ , resolving to B $\flat$  at the beginning of Rodolfo's *arioso* ("Nei cieli bigi"), the true tonal beginning of the work.<sup>277</sup> The V7 of B $\flat$  is the only root position dominant seventh chord in the sequence, a distinction that supports its role in dictating the goal of the entire motion.

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276. See Drabkin, "The Musical Language of *La Bohème*," in Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, pp. 80-101, who notes the tendency towards B $\flat$  in the Garret scene (p. 82). See also Carner, *Puccini*, p. 338, who felt the Garret scene to be largely centered in C-major, and Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 105, who also note that Act I begins and ends in C-major.

277. The absence of the B $\flat$  key signature until after Rodolfo's words "Nei cieli bigi" has, no doubt, caused some of the confusion between B $\flat$  and C (which appears as the opening key signature) as tonic. Key signatures, however, are not always meaningful in Puccini. They sometimes seem to be entered or not entered for pragmatic reasons. See Atlas, "Puccini's *Tosca*," who discusses conflicts of key signature versus sonority. Drabkin's comments in "The Musical Language," p. 82, are also noteworthy.

The quixotic 3/8 motive that opens this "prelude" also seems to echo the instability of the Bohemians' lives as it teeters on a dissonance (the seventh in the bass). Example 34 displays the opening of the opera up to and including the first few measures of "Nei cieli bigi." The points of arrival in the sequence of fifths are noted with arrows, and the progress of the bass note F may be traced as well as the arrival points of Marcello's dialogue.

**Example 34: Opening Section of the Garret Scene to "Nei cieli bigi."**

♩ = 108  
Allegro vivace

*ff ruidoso*

Piano accompaniment for the first system, featuring a treble and bass clef with various musical notations including slurs and dynamics.

Piano accompaniment for the second system, continuing the musical notation with dynamics such as *pp* and *rit.* indicated.

MARCEL *a piacere* *a Tempo*

*Que - sto Mar Ros - so mi ammol - li - sce e as - si - de - ra* *a Tempo*

*col canto* **1**

Vocal line for Marcel and piano accompaniment for the third system, including the instruction *col canto* and a first ending bracket.

Piano accompaniment for the fourth system, featuring a treble and bass clef with various musical notations including slurs and dynamics.

MARCEL

*co - me se ad - dos - so mi pro.*

Vocal line for Marcel and piano accompaniment for the fifth system, including the instruction *col canto* and a first ending bracket.

MARCEL

- ces - se in stil - le -

MARCEL

rall. a Tempo

Per con - di - car - mi af - fo - go un Fa - ra - on!

col canto p a Tempo

MARCEL

Al

MARCEL

Alti ce - sti

Che Jasi?

RUDOLPH *Lo stesso movimento*

di - gi guardo fu - rar dai mil - le co - mi - gnoli Pa -  
*Lo stesso movimento*

RUDOLPH

- ri - gi e pen - so a quel pol - tro - ne d'un

The image shows a musical score for the opera 'La bohème'. It consists of three systems of music. The first system is for the character Rudolph, with the instruction 'Lo stesso movimento'. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are 'di - gi guardo fu - rar dai mil - le co - mi - gnoli Pa -'. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics '- ri - gi e pen - so a quel pol - tro - ne d'un'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano).

"Nei cieli bigi": the language. "Nei cieli bigi" contrasts sharply with the musical material preceding it by its new time signature (6/8) and the structure of its text, which is comparatively more formalized than Marcello's unrhymed lines immediately preceding. Although all of Marcello's lines are technically classifiable as an *endecasillabi*, they do not follow the formal patterns of stress or rhyme that conform to traditional verse structures in Italian opera.<sup>278</sup> They belong to a grey area of line classification called

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278. See Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, pp. 55-79, for a discussion of the text.

versi rotti or broken verses, because each line successively shifts its stress with the final goal being the last syllable of the third line:<sup>279</sup>

**Figure 22: Marcello's Opening Lines.**

Questo Mar Rosso-mi ammolisce e assidera  
come se addosso-mi piovesse in stille  
Per vendicarmi, affogo un Faraon!

The push to the last syllable, however, is intentional, as it lands on F, which, doubled in the bass, soon becomes the dominant of B $\flat$  (see discussion above and the excerpt from the score in Example 34). These loosely structured lines contrast sharply with the rhyming verses that follow:

**Figure 23: Text of "Nei cieli bigi."**

Rodolfo:	Nei cieli bigi guardo fumar dai mille comignoli Parigi e penso a quel poltrone  di un vecchio caminetto ingannatore che vive in ozio come un gran signore.
Marcello:	Le sue rendite oneste da un pezzo non riceve
Rodolfo:	Quelle sciocche foreste che fan sotto la neve

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279. The excerpt in Figure 23 is adopted from Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 64.

**Excursus: Commentary on the language of *La Bohème* and of "Nei cieli bigi," in particular.** Giulio Ricordi, as well as many of Illica's friends, referred to such as Illicasillabi.<sup>280</sup> Fausto Torrefranca, however, especially disliked the text of "Nei cieli bigi":<sup>281</sup>

Ma, mentre Marcello gli domanda "Che fai?", egli risponde, come se la fantasia gli ballasse: "Ne' cieli bigi vedo fumar da' mille comignoli Parigi" con una musica che va ugualmente bene per "per questa sera vorrei dei maccheroni", o pure: "Penso che oggi ancor digiuneremo", o per qualunque altra cosa! Provate e datemi torto, se potete!

In quelle poche battute le parole si pigiano come tritumi di carne entro un budello da salciccia. Le parole accentate, ma di corsa, sono: bigi, mille e Parigi. Cieli e fumar, che avrebbero attirato l'attenzione di un vero musicista, sfuggono al senso musicale del Puccini, perchè la poesia ha i suoi diritti, è vero, ma la danza ha la sua logica ineluttabile, per la quale non v'hanno nè immagini nè metriche che tengano.

[But when Marcello asks him, "Che fai?", he responds, as though his imagination is bubbling over: "Nei cieli bigi vedo fumar da' mile comignoli Parigi" to music that would go equally well with "per questa sera vorrei dei maccheroni", or "Penso che oggi ancor digiuneremo", or with anything else. Try it and say I'm wrong, if you dare! In these few bars the words are squeezed like scraps of meat into a sausage skin. The accented words, though fleetingly so, are: bigi, mille, and Parigi. Cieli and fumar, which would have attracted the attention of a true musician, escape the musical sense of Puccini, because though poetry has its rights, dance has its ineluctable logic, from which neither images nor metrics can hold it.<sup>282</sup>

Groos and Parker interpret Illica's "anarchic" approach to language as a means of defining the "Bohemians' free-spirited independence of social

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280. See Carner, Puccini, p. 81.

281. Puccini, p. 75.

282. This excerpt, together with a larger quoted passage, may also be found in Groos and Parker, La bohème, p. 132.

conditions."<sup>283</sup> They refer us to the librettists' own preface to La Bohème in which they note that

'La Bohème' ha un parlare suo speciale, un gergo. . . Il suo vocabolario è l'inferno della retorica e il paradiso del neologismo. . .<sup>284</sup>

[Bohemia has its special dialect, a jargon. . .Its vocabulary is the hell of rhetoric and the paradise of neologism. . .]

Groos and Parker go on to remark that

The libretto of La bohème marks the final stages of a process that had begun as far back as the eighteenth century, in which the poetic text became subsumed by an increasingly fluid musical idiom and lost its pretensions as a separate literary entity.

De Sanctis notes that the dialogue in La Bohème

approaches the simple speech of daily conversation. . . Puccini's modification of opera conventions to accommodate the libretto's demotic language are the [opera's] most distinguishing characteristic.<sup>285</sup>

She directs us to Illica's letter to Puccini of 7 October 1907 (CP 528):

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283. Ibid., p. 65.

284. Giacosa and Illica, La Bohème and Ibid., p. 185, n. 8.

285. "Literary Realism," p. 131.

Un libretto non è che la traccia. E dice bene Méry quando sentenza: "I versi nelle opere in musica sono fatti solo per comodità dei sordi." Per questo io nel libretto continuerò a dar valore solo al modo di tratteggiare i caratteri e al taglio delle scene e alla verosimiglianza del dialogo, nella sua naturalezza, delle passioni e delle situazioni. . . . Il verso nel libretto non è che una abitudine invalsa, una moda passata in repertorio proprio come quella di chiamare "poeti" quelli che scrivono libretti. Quello che nel libretto ha vero valore è la parola. Che le parole corrispondano alla verità del momento (la situazione) e della passione (il personaggio)! Tutto è qui, il resto è blague.

[A libretto is nothing but a sketch. Méry puts it well when he says: "The verses in an opera are only there for the convenience of the deaf." I shall therefore continue to give in every libretto importance only to the treatment of the characters, to the cut of the scenes and to the verisimilitude, in its naturalness, of the dialogue, of the passions and situations. . . . The verse in a libretto is nothing but a prevalent custom, just as it is to call those who write a libretto "poets." That which has real value in a libretto is the word. The words should correspond to the truth of the moment (the situation) and of the passion (the character). Everything lies in that, the rest is blague (flummery)]<sup>286</sup>

Goldin defines the language in La Bohème as having a scherzo character. She also believes that rhyme had extreme expressive and theatrical value for Puccini.<sup>287</sup>

And finally, comments by Paul Robinson are worth noting as a lighter postscript to this excursus. Robinson believes that any attempt to interpret opera primarily from the libretto is undermined by the four great enemies of operatic intelligibility: "foreign language, the operatic voice, ensemble singing, and the full symphony orchestra."<sup>288</sup>

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286. See Carner, Puccini, pp. 80-81, who quotes the same passage in translation.

287. "Drammaturgia," pp. 347, 359-60.

288. "A Deconstructive Postscript: Reading Libretti and Misreading Opera," in Reading Opera, ed. by Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 328-46.

**"Nei cieli bigi": the music.** The quoted section of "Nei cieli bigi" (Figure 24) cadences on B $\flat$  at neve (2+7, see Example 35), at which point Marcello interrupts the arioso to complain of the cold. The meter changes from 6/8 back to 3/8 and the stable B $\flat$  is momentarily supplanted by a chain of seventh chords that recalls the opening of the opera thematically (but not tonally). This ultimately leads back to V of B $\flat$  and a return to the tonic and 6/8 as Rodolfo has an idea of how to solve the temperature problem (4+9): he tears off the first act of his manuscript for the fire, and at this moment the original melody returns in C major (5, a musical pun?). The scene ends with Colline's entrance as C major dissolves into G major, then G minor.

**Example 35: Structure of "Nei cieli bigi."**

As the graph in Example 35 demonstrates, the B $\flat$  cadence is articulated three times. It coincides each time with a repetition of the

opening phrase of "Nei cieli bigi." This theme is heard a fourth and last time in C major at the final point of articulation in the arioso as Rodolfo burns Act I of his drama. These four punctuations serve a long-range purpose beyond their local one of articulating phrases. By repeating the B $\flat$  cadences, reinforced by thematic recall, both the key and melody are anchored in our memories for future reference. In addition, the final recall of the theme in C major (occurring just before Colline's entrance, a new subdivision, see above) defines the large-scale background motion from B $\flat$  to C in "Nei cieli bigi," which parallels the large-scale movement from B $\flat$  to C of the whole Garret scene (see Example 35).

The introduction and first scene are thus highly structured. They project at the local level important motions that govern the larger structure of the Garret and Latin Quarter scenes. Puccini confirms B $\flat$ -major as the main point of arrival at the beginning of La Bohème through cadential and thematic repetition, metric change, and contrast in text structure.

#### **The unfolding of the B $\flat$ -major triad through successive entrances of characters: Colline, Schaunard, Benoit**

**Colline.** Colline enters as Rodolfo's manuscript is fully aflame and there is a shift to G minor which moves sequentially back to C and then to F. The sequence continues through an arch-shaped chain of 4/2 chords (8-12), crests at G $\flat$ , and ends at B $\flat$  (the bass note of a 4/2 chord, and

ultimately the root of a B $\flat$ -minor triad, 8-4). This is an even smaller-scale version of the same cycle of fifths (see ex. 36, below).

The next articulation, G $\flat$  (8+5), which gradually assumes importance, was heard first in the 4/2 chain (which ended on B $\flat$ ) and then as a triad (8-8). It underscores the discussion of the dying flames, and forecasts the revival of the fire as Rodolfo sacrifices the remainder of his drama to the stove, act by act (8+5). The flames of G $\flat$  are reinterpreted as F $\sharp$ , which moves to C $\sharp$  and finally D in preparation for Schaunard's entrance. Example 36 shows the detailed progress of the harmonic motion beginning with Colline's entrance and ending with Schaunard's entrance in D major. The detail of the repetition of the sequence of fifths is noteworthy:

**Example 36: Harmonic motion leading to Schaunard's Entrance.**

**Schaunard.** Whereas Colline had entered in the middle of an ongoing action (the burning of the manuscript), the arrival of Schaunard (and his

earnings) changes the situation.<sup>289</sup> This longer scene in D major is expanded mainly through sequence patterns, which are finally interrupted as Schaunard, absorbed in recounting the murder of Lorito (the parrot), realizes that his friends are about to consume the fruits of his labors. He exhorts them to greater pleasures on Christmas Eve at the Latin Quarter, and we hear a premonition of the music that is to open the Latin Quarter scene (16). It is in the same key (F major) and meter (2/8) we will hear later, but now it is scored for harp, strings, and winds. Beginning with violins and piccolo at the words "La vigilia di natale," Puccini gradually increases the size of his orchestra, reaching a climax on F as Schaunard demands "a little religion" from his friends (17-9). With the command to pour the drinks and then be off to Momus, the music again reaches for F:<sup>290</sup>

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289. Maisch, Puccini's musikalische Formgebung, p. 31, notes that Schaunard's scene is defined further by its new dance-like theme.

290. Cf. Example 50.

Example 37: Premonition of Latin Quarter Music in Garret Scene.

16  
Allegretto mosso  $\text{♩} = 132$

Fl. *pp legato*

C. Jagl. *ppp legato*

Cl. in Sib *ppp legato*

Cl. b. in Sib *ppp legato*

Arpa *ppp sempre arpeggiato*

SCRAU. *ben legato*  
*Qua. don. a' le. zo di frit. tel.*

V. 1<sup>o</sup> *ppp*

Vc. *ben legato*

16  
Allegretto mosso  $\text{♩} = 132$

Fl. *pp legato*

C. Jagl. *ppp legato*

Cl. in Sib *ppp legato*

Cl. b. in Sib *ppp legato*

Arpa *ppp sempre arpeggiato*

SCRAU. *ben legato*  
*le. im. bal. sa. ma le ves. chie stra. de.*

V. 1<sup>o</sup> *ppp*

Vc. *ben legato*

Fl.  
 Ob.  
 Cl. in G  
 Cl. in Bb  
 Fag.  
 Triang.  
 Arpa  
**RODOLFO** (Rodolfo, Marcello e Colline circondano ridendo Schenard)  
 La vi - gi - lia di Na - tal!  
**MARCELLO**  
 La vi - gi - lia di Na - tal!  
**SCHENARD.**  
 Là se-ra-ga-ne can-ta-no con-ten-te ed han per  
**COLLINE**  
 La vi - gi - lia di Na - tal!  
*divisi*  
*Via.*  
*Via.*  
*Via.*  
*fiss.*



Moderato

FL. *a 2*  *dolce* *1.* *accorde* *a 2*

Ob.

C. Ing.

Cl. *in Sib* *pp* *accorde*

Cl. *b.* *in Sib* *pp* *accorde*

Fag.

in Fa *Corai* *pp* *accorde*

in Fa *pp* *accorde*

Tr. *b.* *in Fa* *pp* *accorde*

Tr. *b.* *pp* *accorde*

Tr. *b.* *pp* *accorde*

SCHAU. *CAVALI* *pp* *accorde*

po' di ra.li. gioe, omi sti . guerri: si beva to ena, ma si pran . zi

Viol. *CAVALI* *pp* *accorde*

v. *lo* *pp* *accorde*

Vi. *pp* *accorde*

Cb. *pp* *accorde*

Moderato

1. Tempo (Allegro brillante)

Fl.  
Ott.  
Ob.  
Cl.  
in Sib  
Fag.  
in Fa  
Coral  
in Fa  
Tr.<sup>bc</sup>  
in Fa  
Tr.<sup>si</sup>

(Rodolfo chiude la porta a chiave, poi tutti vanno intorno al tavolo e versano il vino)

SCRAU.

fuor:...

Viol.  
V.<sup>lo</sup>  
Vc.  
Cb.

1. Tempo (Allegro brillante)

**Benoit.** The reverie is interrupted, however, as Benoit's knocking is heralded by an augmented-6th chord (17-4). After some commotion, the landlord is admitted and the tonal motion that follows is similar to a scheme we have heard previously. The tonal goal of the scene is D major and the movement to it closely resembles the motion from Colline's entrance towards D major in Schauvard's scene. The basic scheme is G $\flat$  (F $\sharp$ )-D $\flat$  (C $\sharp$ )-D. The final cadence punctuating Benoit's eviction (22-1) provides the first definitive sense of closure in the opera:

**Example 38: Benoit's Scene and the Close of Part 1.**

17    18            21-3    22-2

HA! HA!  
Door is shut

V I--End Pt. 1

It is generally Puccini's practice to maintain dramatic fluency and continuity by avoiding closure and moving rapidly through keys (moves often facilitated by enharmonic spellings). When Puccini stays in a key for any length of time, he will articulate phrases at the local level but will rarely terminate the scene with a cadence. This is why this particular moment is so

significant both musically and dramatically. The return to D major is logical because the situation has now reverted to its "pre-Benoit" state. This D, which is prolonged throughout the transitional episodes that follow, also prepares the structural return of B $\flat$  and Mimì's entrance.

**Transition: the Bohemians exit and Mimì enters.** The function of the transition between Benoit's exit and Mimì's arrival (22 to 27+1) is to get Marcello, Schaunard, and Colline offstage so that Rodolfo can be alone when Mimì arrives. Once again we are reminded of the Latin Quarter, as the tune with its close-positioned triads reappears over a sustained D (22). As Rodolfo decides to stay a few minutes to finish his journal article, the music passes through G $\flat$  (enharmonically respelled as F $\sharp$ ), B-major, and, as Rodolfo sits down to write, finally returns to D with Mimì's entrance:

**Example 39: Transition Between Parts 1 and 2 of the Garret Scene.**

22    25-1    25+12    27-1    27+1

Begin  
Pt. 2

Enter Mimì  
Exit Mimì

Reenter  
Mimì

D, however, is suspended over a 6/4 inversion with A in the bass. This musical (as well as dramatic) suspension is the characteristic sound for much of Mimì and Rodolfo's scene (see the discussion of "Che gelida manina" and "Mi chiamano Mimì," below). The use of the 6/4 chord underscores the awkwardness between the two characters, as well as their timidity and their lack of self-confidence. Their verbal exchange and its orchestral accompaniment are punctuated by rests as Rodolfo offers Mimì a chair and a little wine after she has a coughing fit. Restored, she thanks him and leaves, but returns almost immediately because she has dropped her key. The key to Mimì's chamber is most important, as without it, Mimì might very well have taken her lighted candle, bidden Rodolfo goodnight and continued on her way. The dominant-seventh chord that underpins her exit also arouses the expectation of closure (see ex. 10 and discussion below). The expectations are, of course, not fulfilled. Instead, B $\flat$ -major returns, almost unexpectedly. We have been set up musically one way, but the text--Mimì's association with Rodolfo--evokes another musical relationship instead, one more closely related to the macrostructure, rather than the dominant-seventh chord at the local level.<sup>291</sup>

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291. See Carolyn Abbate, "Wagner, 'On Modulation', and *Tristan*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1 (1989), pp. 33-58, who discusses this kind of "freer harmonic gesture," which is permitted in opera (p. 39), but not in pure instrumental music. What is interesting here is how Puccini acts freely at the local level, yet ties the gesture into the background level both tonally and poetically.

## The Garret Scene, Pt. 2

Reassertion of B $\flat$ -major and tonal and thematic parallels. Mimì's return to claim the key initiates the second section of the Garret scene as B $\flat$  major returns con agitazione (27+1), squarely on the beat, contrasting with the earlier passage of hesitant, disjunct phrases. The structural importance of the change is emphasized by the tempo change, un poco più mosso, as she cries, "Oh! sventata, sventata!"

The return to B $\flat$  relates back to the opening B $\flat$  of Rodolfo's "Nei cieli bigi" in several ways.<sup>292</sup> Mimì's melody closely outlines Rodolfo's as it likewise begins on 5 and moves down the scale from F to B $\flat$ . Even the similar scoring of the two sections tells us that they belong together. In "Nei cieli bigi," oboe and bassoon are featured against pizzicato strings. For "Oh! sventata!," Puccini softened the sonorities a bit, this time featuring the clarinet and bassoon against the pizzicato, doubling and accompanying the vocal part in the viola, and saving the upper voices of the flutes and violins for several measures later. Both ariosos are in duple meter, but the difference in the division of the beat is a subtle reflection of their contrasting personalities. Rodolfo is in a playful 6/8, as he is caught up in the view from his window, while Mimì's is in a straight 2/4. He is a poet

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292. Maisch, Puccini's musikalische Formgebung, p. 35, also believes that there is a connection between Mimì's reentry and Rodolfo's arioso at the beginning of the act.

**and she is a pragmatist, a seamstress. Both melodies and their scoring may be compared in the following example:**

### Example 40: Comparison of "Nei cieli bigi" and "Oh! sventata!"

#### (A) "Nei cieli bigi."

Lo stesso movimento

1. a.

The musical score for "Nei cieli bigi" is presented in two systems. The first system includes the vocal line for Rodolfo and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line features the lyrics "Nei cieli bi - gi guar- do su- per dai cieli - te - re." The piano accompaniment includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl. b.), Bassoon (Fag.), Horns (Co. 1 and 2), Violin (Viol.), Viola (V. 1), Cello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Cb.). The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "... mi - guai - so - ri - gi... e pen- so quel pa- tre - ce d'un ve- ro ab- ba- te - ni." and includes the piano accompaniment for the same instruments. The score includes various performance markings such as *p dolce*, *meno mosso*, *rit.*, *ff*, and *pass.*.

Lo stesso movimento

(B) "Oh! sventata!"

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system includes vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabbasso). The vocal lines have lyrics in Italian, such as "Oh! sventata!" and "Grazie!". The piano accompaniment features a prominent bass line with a circled '27' below it. The second system continues the vocal and piano parts, with lyrics like "Da per più amore". The third system concludes the piece with further vocal and piano notation.

"Oh! sventata!" also follows the tonal course of "Nei cieli bigi" to a great degree. The opening melody is heard twice in B $\flat$  (28), and the next important harmonic statement is C major, as Rodolfo, having found the key, mutters "in verità!":

**Example 41: Structure of "Oh sventata!"**

**Excursus: Autograph Evidence and the reprise of B $\flat$ -major in Act IV.** There is some additional evidence to support the structural importance of this place in the act. The section beginning at 27, the precise point at which Mimì returns and B $\flat$  reasserts itself and ending at 31, midway through "Che gelida manina" was originally composed a half step lower and subsequently transposed.<sup>293</sup> At the top of folio 64' Puccini wrote boldly: "\*da qui un 1/2 tono sopra fino al segno\*." At 31 (folio 71') he marked the score "In Tono" (Illustrations 6 and 7):

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293. Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 105, discuss this transposed passage (incorrectly cited as 26, Rodolfo: "Si sente meglio") mainly in terms of the effect of the transposed section of "Che gelida manina" on the overall key structure of the act. The transposed section only affects the beginning of the aria, whereas the second portion of the aria, in A $\flat$ -major, governing the other sections, remains unaltered in the autograph. Ashbrook, *The Operas*, p. 65, also mentions the transposition (also cited incorrectly as ending at 32).



Illustration 7: La Bohème, Folio 71<sup>r</sup>.

*In Tono*

The image shows a page of a musical score for the opera La Bohème, Folio 71r. The score is written for various instruments and voices, including Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The score is heavily annotated with handwritten markings, including a large circle around a section of the bassoon part, a large 'X' over a section of the double bass part, and various other scribbles and lines. The tempo marking 'Allegretto' is visible at the bottom left. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

It is possible that Puccini had in mind more than a particular singer's tessitura when revising this section. The new version makes an obvious musical connection with the opening of the opera. And there is additional

support for the importance of B $\flat$ -major in the link between this section and the point at 24 in the fourth act, where there is a reprise of the music of "Oh! sventata!" in B $\flat$ -major.<sup>294</sup> It is most appropriate, as the lovers recall various happy episodes in the early days of their relationship, including that of the lost door key and their first touch, "Che gelida manina," which we also hear in the original key. The orchestration is also recalled here in the featured clarinet obbligato over the pizzicato accompaniment in the harp and cello. Example 42 illustrates this reprise:

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294. This is folio 250<sup>r</sup> of the autograph. Puccini began the last fascicle of the opera here, as indicated by the change in paper (a different size, with printed instrumentation) and the start of a new pagination (1-28), which runs to the end of the opera. On folio 242<sup>r</sup> of the autograph, for example, he labeled and signed it "3° fascicolo atto IV° La Bohème G. Puccini." The final act thus contains four fascicles. In general Puccini did not make note of fascicles until his last acts. His stopping to do so represents a slowing down in production, a tendency to work in spurts when approaching the end. Maestro Fausto Broussard, of G. Ricordi & Co. in Milan, pointed out to me that this was characteristic of many composers, whose autographs would reveal a similar slowing down in the final act, as opposed to the more "seamless" opening acts.

Groos and Parker, La bohème, p. 110, correctly note that the Garret scene exhibits the least struggle in its physical state in the autograph, while Act IV seems to have occasioned the most revision, consisting of numerous different paper types used at frequent intervals (and clearly demarcated fascicles).

Example 42: Act IV Reprise of "Oh! sventata!"

The image shows a musical score for the Act IV Reprise of "Oh! sventata!". The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. in Sib), Arpa (Harp), Mimì, and Voice (Vo.). The second system includes parts for Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. in Sib), Arpa, Mimì, Voice (Vo.), and Cello/Double Bass (Cb.).

**System 1:**

- Cl. in Sib:** Marked with a circled 24, *All.<sup>mo</sup> un poco sost.<sup>to</sup> Justo*, *vall.*, and *p dolcissimo*.
- Arpa:** Marked with *pp*.
- Mimì:** Lyrics: *(tende a Rodolfo la testa; quasi lo moue la cuffietta)* *in min cu! - stot - ta... Ah! Te lo ram - men - ti*. *(fa vedere presso a lei Rodolfo e rimane con la carta)*
- Vo.:** Marked with *vall.*, *pizz.*, and a circled 24. *All.<sup>mo</sup> un poco sost.<sup>to</sup> Justo*

**System 2:**

- Cl. in Sib:** Marked with *I.* and *II.*
- Arpa:** Marked with *pp*.
- Mimì:** Lyrics: *appoggiata al di lui petto)* *quando ce-ne en-tra - ta la prima volta, in?* **RODOLFO** *Se lo ram - men - to!* *divisi*
- Vo.:** Marked with *pp* and *appena toccato*.
- Cb.:** Marked with *pp* and *pizz.*

Mimì and Rodolfo together: "Che gelida manina" and "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì." Once Puccini establishes the relationship between Mimì and Rodolfo through key and theme, he develops it by expanding a new tonal axis centered on A-major. As the leading tone of B $\flat$ , A-major demands musical resolution much as the drama seeks resolution (i.e., the consummation of the affair). The pitch A was first introduced as the bass note of the 6/4 chord we heard when we first saw Mimì (25+12). The A takes on new meaning as Puccini proceeds to develop the two characters,

one out of the other, as "Che gelida Manina" with its A $\flat$ /G $\sharp$  tonality leads into the A which dominates much of the bassline of "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì."

The resolution of A is diverted or delayed through C major (at the end of the scene) until it can reassert itself in expanded form in the Latin Quarter scene.<sup>295</sup> This diversion or rerouting is accomplished by interlocking A major with C major, gradually insinuating one key (C major) into the other (A major). This is a comparatively slow process corresponding to the lovers' reluctant acceptance that they must postpone their lovemaking and leave the intimacy of the Garret for the bright lights of the Latin Quarter. In the Latin Quarter scene Puccini revives A major and prolongs it through various episodes until he can generate the maximum excitement in its final resolution to B $\flat$ -major.

"Che gelida manina." The momentum towards A major begins with the A $\flat$ -major "Che gelida manina," which consists of two parts connected by a transition. The tonal scheme of the piece moves progressively: D $\flat$  (Pt. I)-[F-B $\flat$ ]-E $\flat$  (transition)-A $\flat$  (Pt. II), or simply put, IV-V-I.<sup>296</sup>

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295. See the graph in Example 30, in which the A-major in both scenes is illustrated.

296. See Maisch, Puccinis musikalische Formgebung, p.39.

**Example 43: Graph of "Che gelida manina."<sup>297</sup>**

The image shows a musical score for the aria "Che gelida manina". It consists of two staves: a vocal line on top and a piano accompaniment line on the bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The time signature is 6/4. The score is divided into measures, with markings above the vocal line: 30, 31+1, 32-1, 32, and 35-3. The piano part includes chord symbols: (IV) 6 4, b7, b7, V, I, V, and I. There are also some handwritten annotations, including a circled '2' above the vocal line and some numbers (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) above the final measure.

The accompaniment at the opening of the aria (D $\flat$  6/4 chord) parallels the 6/4 chord underscoring Mimi's initial appearance (see above). A $\flat$  is the main note at the beginning, and it dominates much of the vocal line, as well as the bass for the entire first half. It also anticipates the arrival of the tonic (A $\flat$ ) in the second half of the aria. The entire section is introductory in both its musical and dramatic content. Towards the end of the first section, Rodolfo tells Mimì: "Aspetti signorina, le dirò con due parole chi son, e che faccio, come vivo," and the A $\flat$  of the opening now becomes the dominant of D $\flat$  as he asks her, "Vuole?" (31-2). The passage moves down by fifths--F, B $\flat$ , and finally E $\flat$ --arriving at A $\flat$  at 32, where the

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297. Since "Che gelida manina" is an independent piece, often performed apart from the opera, I have used the key signature of A $\flat$ -major in the graph to indicate its integrity as such. I have likewise included a D-major key signature in the graph of "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì," and an E-major signature for "Quando m'en vo'," below.

orchestra reaches its climax in the very famous theme that will be heard again in their duet (see below). Without inhibition Rodolfo describes his dreams as a poet. The aria closes in  $A\flat$  major, and as Rodolfo expresses a wish to hear Mimì's story, his  $A\flat$ , respelled enharmonically as  $G\sharp$ , leads to  $A$ , which settles in near the beginning of "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì."

"Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì." Mimì also begins tentatively, on a more distant harmony ( $C7$ ), as if she is not quite sure exactly what to say. It is significant that neither of the two arias begins on the tonic, a musical condition that seems to express the uncertainty of both characters.<sup>298</sup> The bass line soon descends to  $A$ , which acts as a pedal note for much of this section, alternating between  $6/4$  chord and dominant seventh, and thus sustaining a delicate tension. The pitch  $A$  finally surrenders to  $D$  at the end of her story as, in a delicate parlando, Mimì tells Rodolfo that she has no more to say. Her thoughts are much more earthbound, as she describes her room, going to Mass, and the flowers she loves:

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298. As opposed to Musetta, who begins "Quando m'en vo'" squarely on the tonic and holds it for a full measure. See also, Chapter Four, Example 24.

**Example 44: Structure of "Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì."**

The musical score shows a transition from A major to C major. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 4/4, then to 12/4, and back to 4/4. Above the staff, measures 35+5, 37-4, 38, and 39-5 are marked. Above measure 39, there are fingerings 2, 4, 3, 2, 1. Below the staff, Roman numerals II, V, and I are indicated under measures 39, 40, and 41 respectively.

**The Close of the Garret Scene: the transition from A major to C major.** The brief silence before Rodolfo's and Mimì's idyll is interrupted from the courtyard by Rodolfo's friends, who want him to hurry. It is at this moment that the end of the act comes into sight both musically and dramatically. Had Mimì and Rodolfo not been disturbed, they might otherwise have stayed and consummated their affair. The interjections of the Bohemians make the initial move towards C major with the reprise of the "Bohemian motive" on V7 of G, the supertonic function of C (39+3).<sup>299</sup>

299. This same dominant-seventh chord was first heard as Mimì left the garret (before returning for her key). Clearly, Puccini had planned the tonal course of the close of the scene well in advance. The "planting" of such clues, together with the gradual "yielding" of A-major to C-major, suggests a long-range strategy.

**This is the beginning of the end of the act as C-major slowly begins to infiltrate the music, with C sustained in the bass:**

•

Example 45: C-major and the Reprise of "Bohemian Motive."

The musical score is arranged in a system with five staves. The top staff is for Marcel, followed by Schauvard, Colline, and Rudolf. The bottom staff is for piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' with a metronome marking of 100. The key signature is C major. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'col sesto' and 'Accidental pigro!'. The lyrics are in Italian, including 'O.è. Non san.H?', 'Eti! Rodol-fo!', 'Ro-dol-fo!', 'In-ma-ss!', and 'Pis-tu-ss-lo!'. A box containing the number '39' is located in the piano part.

MARCEL *a piacere* Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 100$   
*O.è. Non san.H?*

SCHAUVARD *a piacere*  
*Eti! Rodol-fo!*

COLLINE *a piacere*  
*Ro-dol-fo!*

39 *col sesto* Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 100$

RUDOLFE *Scritto.*

MARCEL

SCHAUVARD *In-ma-ss!*  
*Accidental pigro!*

COLLINE  
*Pis-tu-ss-lo!*

As the men depart, however, and the chants of "Momus, Momus" are lost in the distance, the motion towards C is momentarily diverted towards

**A-major. Rodolfo turns, sees Mimì framed in moonlight, and whispers ecstatically, "O soave fanciulla." They acknowledge their love for one another, and A-major finally asserts itself as the tonic at the climax of their duet (41+9 in Example 46, below), where they are joined by full orchestra and a reprise of the climactic melody of "Che gelida manina:"**

.

Example 46: Climax of Duet between Mimi and Rodolfo.

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The top section includes woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in G and Bb, Bassoon) and brass (Horn in F, Trumpet in F and Bb, Timpani). The Arpa (harp) part is written below the brass. The vocal parts for Mimi and Rodolfo are positioned below the harp. The score is marked with a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. Dynamic markings such as *cres. molto* and *fff* are used throughout. The tempo/mood marking *Largamente sostenuto* is placed at the top right and bottom center of the score. The vocal lines include the lyrics: Mimi: *Ab! con anima tu sei co...* and Rodolfo: *- guar! Pro... non già sei...*

The image displays a page of a musical score, numbered 291 in the top right corner. The score is arranged in a traditional orchestral layout, with various instruments and vocal parts. The instruments listed on the left include Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in G (Cl. in La), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. b. in La), Bassoon (Fag.), Horn in F (in Fa), Coral, Horn in F (in Fa), Trumpet (Tr. in C), Trombone (Tr. in B-flat), Arpa (Arpa), MIMI, R.D., Violins (Viol.), Violas (Vla.), Cellos (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score is divided into two measures by a vertical bar line. The first measure contains various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *pp* (pianissimo) and *meno forte*. The second measure continues the notation with dynamic markings like *dim.* (diminuendo) and *quasi*. The vocal parts, MIMI and R.D., have lyrics written below their staves. MIMI's lyrics are ". ma.na. dia. mori....." and "Tu sei co. man. di, a.". R.D.'s lyrics are ". l'a. ni. ma..... lo del. cia. se e. stro. me.". The string parts (Viol., Vla., Vc., Cb.) include performance instructions such as *progressivo* and *divisi*. The overall appearance is that of a high-quality musical score print.



The A is to play an equally important role in the Latin Quarter scene, where, as leading tone to B $\flat$ , it reasserts itself both motivically and structurally. Its failure to find B $\flat$  at the end of the Garret scene also strengthens the sense of the incomplete dramatic structure of the act.

**The transition from A-major to C-major.** A closer look at the transition from A-major to C-major at the end of Garret scene reveals an effective example of how Puccini seems to interlock one key with the next, making the transition nearly imperceptible (the graph in Example 48 and the excerpt from the vocal score in Example 47 accompany this discussion). After the interruption of the Bohemians from the courtyard, A-major had garnered temporary strength. A G7 chord insinuates itself, however, just as Mimì disengages herself from Rodolfo (42+1). This chord, weakened by the ninth, A, and the added sixth, E (42+1), is really part of a bass-line fifth progression that moves from A down to D (43-2), which will become V of G. The A lingers as a ninth in the G7 chord at the key change at 43, and two bars later the tonic 6/4 of C-major (43+3) follows closely, resolving to an "uncluttered" dominant-seventh chord. It is noteworthy that it is to this dominant seventh that a vestigial A finally yields (43+6) as Mimì, responding to Rodolfo's preference for remaining in the garret, reassures him that she will always be near.

Example 47: The A-major Duet and its Dissolution to C-major.

MIMI  
*rit:..... Calmo*  
 Vourez dir... ma non o - so.

REDOLFE  
*rit:..... Calmo*  
 si... a?

Se ve-nis - si con voi?

col canto

43 *poco affrett.*

REDOLFE  
*rit:..... Calmo*  
 Sa-reb - be co - st dol-ce ve-stir qui. C'è freddo

MIMI *rall:..... rit. molto.....*

RUDOLFE *È sta-rò ri-ci-no!*

*fuo-ri... rit. molto Eul-ri.*

*rall. e dim. molto*

MIMI *♩ = 58*

RUDOLFE *Cu-rio-so!... Obbedi-scu, si-*

*-for-no? Dammi il braccio, mi pic-ci-na...*

*pp* *pp dolciss.*

MIMI *sostenuto*

RUDOLFE *-gnor! lo sa-mol...*

*pp* *sostenuto*

*Che m'a-mi di...*

*sostenuto*

Musical score for the first system. It includes three staves: a vocal line for NINI, a vocal line for RUDOLFE, and a piano accompaniment. The vocal lines are marked with *pp* and *pprendenti*. The lyrics are "A-mor! A-mor!..... A.". The piano accompaniment features a *ppp* dynamic and a tempo marking of *allargando*. The piano part includes a *pprendenti* marking above the right hand.

Musical score for the second system. It continues the vocal and piano parts from the first system. The vocal lines for NINI and RUDOLFE are marked with *pp* and *pprendenti*. The lyrics are "-mor!.....". The piano accompaniment is marked with *pppp* and *molto rall. e dim.*. The piano part includes a *pprendenti* marking above the right hand.

Mimi takes Rodolfo's arm as they go to the door, each declaring love for the other as tonic and dominant of C-major rock gently back and forth.

Example 48 contains a graph of the second part of the Garret Scene:

**Example 48: Structure of Garret Scene, Part 2.**

27+1 30 39+3 42+2 43-2 43+6

Momus!

I/B flat Prepare C: (VI#) II V9-7 I/C

End Garret Scene

It is a reminder to the audience that we have come to a resting place, not a conclusion,<sup>300</sup> and the cycle has another lap to go before arriving home at B $\flat$ -major. The tension of their unfulfilled desire, as well as the premonition of the Latin Quarter, introduced by Schauvard in an earlier scene, undermines the notion of a final cadence or resolution at the end of the scene.<sup>301</sup> It is a phase of ascending tension which we are left to

300. Drabkin, "The Musical Language," p. 82, argues correctly that C-major is not the tonal resolution of what had previously occurred.

301. Puccini more than made up for interrupting Mimi and Rodolfo's lovemaking two operas later, in *Madama Butterfly* (1904). Pinkerton and Butterfly will consummate their love in the conclusion of the first act, the

contemplate during the intermission. Somehow we accept this interlude because it does not disrupt the sense of dramatic time that has been established in the first scene. We may even subconsciously perceive the intermission as "real" time, the time actually needed by Mimì and Rodolfo to get to the Café Momus. For this reason we don't lose the sense of musical continuity between the scenes, and we accept C-major as a component in the cycle of falling fifths which continues as we hear the F-major opening of the Latin Quarter scene.

#### **The Latin Quarter, Pt. 1**

**The relationship of F and B $\flat$ .** In contrast to the Garret scene, the Latin Quarter scene is a phase of descending tension created by the move towards closure--the movement from F major to B $\flat$ -major. The juxtaposition of C-major at the end of the Garret scene with F-major at the beginning of the Latin Quarter scene sets in motion the large-scale pattern of falling fifths that had already been established (on a smaller scale) at the opening

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sensuality of which is expressed in A-major. Atlas in "Crossed Stars" expresses it thus:

And with its overt, lyrical eroticism, A-major is clearly the key in which Pinkerton expresses whatever warmth--even if chiefly sexual--he feels for Butterfly.

Of course, even if Rodolfo's feelings for Mimì are on a higher plane, we cannot doubt that the same chemistry exists between them. In La Bohème, Puccini merely delays that consummation.

of the opera. The next logical large-scale move at the end of the finale, based upon previously established patterns, is B $\flat$ -major.<sup>302</sup> In addition, F-major yields to a key that has already been established as a musical and dramatic landmark in the Garret scene. The falling fifth relationship between the two keys adds further momentum to this return.

F and B $\flat$  are also tied together through orchestration, staging, and rhythm. The fanfare at the opening of the Latin Quarter scene is scored for three solo trumpets in F, a combination most often associated with the military (and the keys of F or B $\flat$ ):

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302. Drabkin, "The Musical Language," p. 82, calls this relationship into doubt, finding it ". . . difficult to observe in the score . . . a sense of progression from F to B $\flat$  in Act II."

Example 49: Trumpets at Beginning of Latin Quarter Scene.

ACT TWO

AL QUARTIERE LATINO

Un crocicchio di vie: nel largo vi prende forma di piazzale: botteghe, venditori di ogni genere - da un lato il Caffè Momma.

Allegro fucoso *J*: 112 (In 2)

<p>Flauto I. e II. Ottavino</p> <p>Oboe I. e II.</p> <p>Corno Inglese</p> <p>Clarinetti e Clarinetto basso in Sib</p> <p>Fagotto I. e II.</p> <p>I. e II. in Fa Corna</p> <p>III. e IV. in Fa</p> <p>Tromba I. II., e III. in Fa</p> <p>Tromboni e Trombone basso</p> <p>Timpani</p> <p>Triangolo, Tamburo G. Cassa e Piatti</p> <p>Arpa</p> <p>Carillon, Xilophon</p> <p>4 Pifferi (Ottavini in D)</p> <p>6 Trombe in Sib</p> <p>6 Tamburi (ascerdali in Sib)</p>	
--	--

**MARFARA DELL'EPOCA DI LUIGI FILIPPO. MITINATA FRANCESE.**

(a suo tempo)

**LA VIGILIA DI NATALE** - Gran folla e diversa: Borghesi, Soldati, Fantocche, Ragazzi, Bambine, Studenti, Sarti, Gendarmi, ecc. Nel largo del crocicchio Venditori Ambulanti gridano e squarcigola invitando la folla de' compratori. Separati in quella gran calca di gente si aggirano Rodolfo e Mimi da una parte, Colline presso alla bottega di una rappresentrice: Schounard ad una bottega di far ruvacci sta comprando una pipa e un corno; Marcello spinto qua e la dal opprimo della gente. Farcchi Borghesi ad un tavolo fuori del Caffè Momma. È sera. - Le botteghe sono adorne di lampioncini: fanali accesi: un grande fante illumina l'ingressu al Caffè.

<p>MUSETTA, MIMI</p> <p>RODOLFO</p> <p>MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD</p> <p>COLLINE</p> <p>ALCINDORO</p> <p>PARFIGNOL (vend. ambulante) ed Altro Vend. Ambulante</p> <p>Bambini, Ragazzi, Monelli, le Mamme, venditrici e Bottegale</p> <p>La Folla Dal Caffè</p> <p>Venditori Ambulanti</p> <p>Violini I.</p> <p>Violini II.</p> <p>Viola</p> <p>Violoncelli</p> <p>Contrabbassi</p>	
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in Fa  
 Coral  
 in Fa  
 Tr.  
 in Fa  
 Viol.  
 V.  
 Vc.

Fl.  
 Ob.  
 Cl. in Sib  
 Fag.  
 in Fa  
 Coral  
 in Fa  
 Tr.  
 in Fa  
 Tr.  
 Tromb.  
 Sop.  
 O.  
 A. FOLLA  
 A. Ter.  
 O.  
 MONELLI  
 Sop.  
 O.  
 (gridando) (sulimitare delle loro botteghe)  
 Bassi I. (tutti)  
 O.  
 VENDITORI  
 ANZULANTI  
 Bassi II. (tutti)  
 O.  
 Viol.  
 V.  
 Vc.

P. soli  
 Ah!  
 Ah!  
 Quan - ta sol - la! Che  
 A. Fan-ci, sin-nò! Cal - di mer - re-ni e car - mel - se! Ter -  
 A. Fan-ci, dai-te-ri! Cal - di mer - re-ni! Sin-nò, cre - di Ter -  
 A. Fan-ci, dai-te-ri! Cal - di mer - re-ni! Sin-nò, cre - di Ter -  
 divisi  
 divisi  
 divisi

①

The image shows a page of a musical score, page 302, featuring a full orchestral arrangement and vocal parts. The instruments listed on the left include Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in A (C. Jas.), Clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Sib), Clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Sib), Bassoon (Fag.), Bassoon in F (Fag. in Fa), Cor Anglais (Coral in Fa), Trumpet in F (Tr. in Fa), Trumpet in Bb (Tr. in Sib), Trombone (Tr. in Fa), Trombone in Bb (Tr. in Sib), and Percussion (Timp., O.C. e P.). The vocal parts include Tenor (Ten.), Soprano (Sop.), and Chorus (Coro). The score is marked with dynamic and performance instructions such as *staccato*, *forz.*, *arco. molto*, and *rit.*. The vocal parts have lyrics in Italian, including "abissos!", "re-mi!", and "Pa-re-mo-ri-ta-ta!". The word "VUOTA" appears at the end of several staves, indicating a rest or a specific performance instruction. The score is written in a standard musical notation with various clefs and time signatures.

This scoring of the theme with three trumpets is almost exclusively limited to the F-major return of the fanfare (tempo primo, Act II, 7+9), while other parts in the scene either omit trumpets entirely or relegate them to harmonic filler. Reprises of the theme or parts of it in other keys, as at Act II, 7, almost self-consciously deny the trumpets a significant role, the instruments being tied, perhaps, more to key than to theme.<sup>303</sup> Trumpets do not appear again in a featured role until the entrance of the tattoo, which consists of four fifes (pifferi), six B♭ trumpets, and six drums, also pitched in B♭.<sup>304</sup> The trumpets are thus closely linked to the large crowd segments that flank the Latin Quarter scene. They are engaged first in the syncopated 2/8 fanfare that underscores the festive Paris street scene in the beginning and then in the orderly 2/4 march performed on stage by the banda at the end. The militaristic "Ritirata" theme generates an excitement that gathers momentum as everyone falls into step behind the drum major, and close to the end we hear a reprise of the opening fanfare, but squared off in 2/4 time.

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303. An inconsistency arises at Act II, 15-4, where a segment of the theme is played by trumpets, but in A major. This might be understood as part of the dissolution of the scene into a close-up on the Bohemians, whose key is A major, the move to which is accomplished by a musical and dramatic elision. This passage is discussed further below.

304. It should be noted that it is the tamburi that are first heard in the distance. Although tuned to B♭, the combination of distance with the characteristic timbre of the instrument imparts a vague sense of the pitch, somewhat like a distant car horn.

Example 50: Trumpet Fanfare in 2/4 at End of the Act.

(35)

2 Fl. Coral  
2 Tr. I  
2 Tr. II  
Triang.  
Pia. II  
4 Pic. (sul palco)  
2 Tr. 1º (sul palco)  
2 Tamb. (sul palco)

(Intanto Alcide, su, con un paio di scarpe, ritorna)

BOD.  
MAR.  
SCHAU.  
COLL.  
Sordani  
Studenti  
Menzilli  
Sergenti  
Bott., ecc.  
Sergenti  
Viol. I

Glo - ria ed e - ner, e - ner e glo - ria del Quar - tier La - tin!  
Glo - ria ed e - ner, e - ner e glo - ria del Quar - tier La - tin!  
Glo - ria ed e - ner, e - ner e glo - ria del Quar - tier La - tin!  
Glo - ria ed e - ner, e - ner e glo - ria del Quar - tier La - tin!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!  
bel tambor mag - gior! Ec - ce - lo là! Che guar - da, pas - sa, va!

(grida del Coro internamente)

(35)



This page of a musical score, numbered 306, contains the following instruments and parts:

- Fl. (Flute)
- Ob. (Oboe)
- Cl. in C (Clarinet)
- Cl. in Bb (Clarinet)
- Fag. (Bassoon)
- Tr. in C (Trumpet)
- Tr. in Bb (Trumpet)
- Timp. (Timpani)
- Triang. (Triangle)
- Tamb. (Tambourine)
- G.C.P. (Gong/Cymbal)
- Viol. (Violin)
- Vi. (Viola)
- Vo. (Violoncello)
- Cb. (Cello)

The score is written in common time (C) and includes various dynamic markings such as *sf* (sforzando) and *cresc.* (crescendo). The notation includes notes, rests, and articulation marks across multiple staves.

**The arpeggiation of the F-major triad: the crowd, then the Bohemians.** The large-scale structure of the Latin Quarter scene is based upon the arpeggiation of the F-major triad (see Example 30, above), with A prolonged for much of the entire scene. Here F major arpeggiates to C in the first part of the scene and descends back down to A as the Bohemians gather at Momus. Beginning at the end of Part 1, with the Bohemians toast to gaiety, and continuing throughout Musetta's scene, with a climax at the "Waltz," A is then prolonged by its own dominant (E) to its B♭-major resolution at the end. The prolongation is significant, because there has been no definitive musical closure articulating the two parts of the Latin Quarter scene that exactly parallels the eviction of Benoit at the end of the first part of the Garret scene. The action at the end of the first part of the Latin Quarter scene, by contrast, is incomplete. The toast has been interrupted by Musetta's entrance, which is also the point of division between the two parts. Thus, a cantilevered effect, created by the dramatically divided scene over the prolonged A, helps to generate the commotion which mounts as the scene progresses.<sup>305</sup>

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305. See Abbate, "Wagner," p. 42, n. 27, who notes:

That tension (rather than agreement) can exist between operatic music and the poetry or stage drama it sets is an idea opera criticism would do well to nurture; it is this tension, perhaps, that raises certain operatic works above the ordinary.

Puccini was to create similar tension between the musical and dramatic divisions of an act in La Fanciulla del West.

**The Crowd.** The major articulations of the unfolding of the F-major triad occur mainly in the first segment of the scene, whereas the second half is a prolongation of A through its dominant, E, which is unfolded over the course of the scene. That most of the harmonic activity occurs in the first half of the scene is not surprising, because this is where most of the actual physical activity occurs on stage, as the various characters are brought together at Momus.<sup>306</sup> Once the Bohemians are well established at the Café, the musical motion becomes at once more focused and stable. This contrast in activity divides the first segment of the Latin Quarter scene into two parts of unequal length. The longer one focuses on crowd activity with the Bohemians as a constituent, while the shorter one focuses on the Bohemians away from the crowd, which participates peripherally. Some additional associations by key may be made here, however broadly, because these relationships are not so clear-cut at the local level. At an extreme background level, it would be correct to say that the crowd tends to move in an F-major complex (see the discussion above concerning the trumpets), while the Bohemians alone tend to center around A.<sup>307</sup> The relationship

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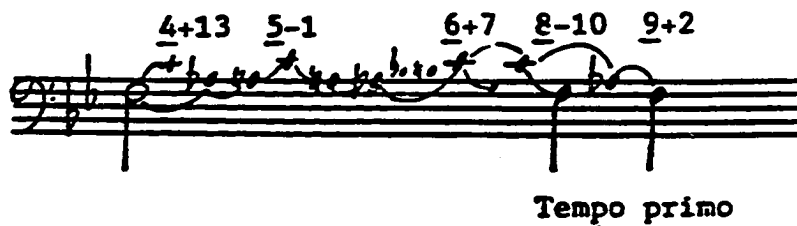
306. Parker, "Analysis," p. 125, notes Puccini's "short-term, pragmatic" harmonic patterns. As has been shown, the rapid alternations of key generally underscore activity, while, not surprisingly, the lengthier, more stable areas are reserved for more static scenes.

307. We should recall that Puccini reserved A-major and its lower neighbor (A $\flat$ -G $\sharp$ ) for the more intimate moments between Rodolfo and Mimì. In the Latin Quarter scene Puccini appears to have operated similarly, reserving A for the "close-ups."

between A and A $\flat$  is developed here (as in the garret scene) as the first tonal shift occurs rather abruptly to A $\flat$  at Act II, 3, when the composer wishes to focus on activity within the Café Momus (see Example 23, Act II, 17+7).<sup>308</sup> Thus A $\flat$  soon focuses on the individual Bohemians, engaged in various activities in the square, beginning with Schaunard and his horn (Act II, 4). E-major and A-major make a brief appearance as Schaunard, Colline, and Marcello come together in the crowd to head for Momus and thus provide a glimpse of what is to come (Act II, 5). A $\flat$  reasserts itself very briefly before moving on to C and ultimately the Tempo primo (with reprise of the opening), soon after which A $\flat$  returns, again playing briefly with F at Act II, 9+1. Thus the tonal movement up until the intrusion of Parpignol may be characterized graphically as a playful interchange between F-major and its mediant:

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308. This abrupt shift is exemplary of the kind of move that typifies verismo in opera. "There is little music in verismo that is not concerned with action on the stage," notes Wright, "The Musico-Dramatic Techniques," p. ix. That Puccini is a pragmatist when it comes to paralleling stage motion with harmonic motion is obvious. It is, however, debatable that such techniques are the exclusive province of verismo opera.

**Example 51: Alternation between F and A.**

**The Bohemians.** The activity of the crowd comes to a climax with the introduction of Parpignol, whose E will initiate the return to A-major and the close-up on the Bohemians. From the distance, Parpignol's E-minor is heard as an intrusion (Act II, 10-3). However, it is soon taken up by Rodolfo (Act II, 10+1), who has just reached the Café with Mimì, and is about to introduce her to his friends. The E is prolonged through E-major until we hear from Parpignol again, his E becoming the leading tone of F-major as he bursts on the scene, surrounded by clamorous street urchins. The "crowd" key (F-major) asserts itself (Act II, 12+3 to 13-1) as the episode moves through A (Act II, 13+3) and back to E at which point we hear the tritone E-B $\flat$ , together with D, as a whining child cries, "Vo' la tromba, il cavalin!" (Act II, 14-5). It is a scaled-down premonition of the dissonance that the B $\flat$  of the tattoo forms with the E-major of Musetta's

waltz, near the end of the act.<sup>309</sup> Here the Bohemian world of A begins to assert itself as Rodolfo asks Mimì what she would like to eat:

**Example 52: Parpignol's Scene.**

10-4 12+3 14-5 15

d5

Bohemians at Momus

Crowd "Vo' la tromba, il cavalin!"

Parpignol and his parade of followers exit, having performed a three-fold function. They have enhanced the local color, introduced the E which is to become the dominant of the Bohemians' A-major, and cleared the stage all at once. The remainder of the scene, in which Mimì talks about her bonnet,<sup>310</sup> is in A-major, the first tonally stable segment of the Latin

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309. The premonition is not surprising in light of Puccini's continuous employment in the microstructure of the devices of his macrostructure. The musical connection is even deeper, because the A-major to which this tritone resolves will be prolonged by E through the rest of the act, only to resurface through the E-B $\flat$  tritone at the moment at which the tattoo and the check arrive (see the discussion below).

310. It is significant that in adding the "bonnet" sequence, Puccini continued in A-major, thus expanding and adding greater emphasis to the first musically static point in the scene.

Quarter scene, apart from the opening pages in F-major. Mimì and Rodolfo continue the discussion by praising the sweetness of love, but Marcello notes that the taste of love may be honey to some, but it is "vinegar" [*fiele*] to others (Act II, 16-13). At this point, we hear an F in the bass, which supports an augmented-6th chord leading directly to the E dominant-seventh chord of the proposed toast, Marcello's shouts for poison, and Musetta's entrance. Example 53 also shows that in the upper voice the E of the toast yields to E $\flat$ , which, when enharmonically spelled, becomes E-D $\sharp$ , anticipating the incipit of "Quando m'en vo'":

**Example 53: Graph of Toast and Musetta's Entrance.**

ENTER MUSETTA

16-1 16 21

3/4 9/8

Toast! "Quando m'en vo'"

### Latin Quarter Scene, Pt. 2

**Musetta's entrance; "Quando m'en vo'."** Musetta's entrance is at once expansive, brilliant, and clumsy. The gay tune of the upper winds and strings is offset by the heel-dragging offbeats in the bass meant to depict Alcindoro, her pompous escort. That Musetta's presence is larger than life

is apparent in the abrupt shift of meter from 3/4 to 9/8, underscored by syncopations. If anything, her melody most closely resembles the dance-like theme assigned to Schaunard at his entrance, the latter also of a somewhat flamboyant character. She is clearly at odds with everyone at that moment, as the duplets in the other parts suggest.<sup>311</sup>

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311. See Chapter Two, Example 10. The same duplets against triplets characterize the Shopwomen's comments upon her entrance.

**Example 54: Musetta's Entrance.**

**RUDOLPH** *Allegro moderato*  $\text{♩} = 132$

*Oh! Mu-sci - ta!*

**MARCEL**

*Es - sa!*

**SCHACKARD**

*Oh! Mu-sci - ta!*

**COLLINE**

*Oh! Mu-sci - ta!*

**16** *Allegro moderato*  $\text{♩} = 132$

*ff brillante*

The musical score consists of five staves. The first four staves are vocal parts for Rudolf, Marcel, Schackard, and Colline, respectively. Each vocal line has lyrics: 'Oh! Mu-sci - ta!' for Rudolf and Colline, and 'Es - sa!' for Marcel and Schackard. The fifth staff is the piano accompaniment, starting at measure 16 with the tempo 'Allegro moderato' and a quarter note equal to 132 (♩ = 132). The piano part is marked 'ff brillante' and features a series of chords and melodic lines in both hands.

The entire scene in which Musetta unsuccessfully tries to win Marcello's attention is in A $\flat$ , which, respelled as G $\sharp$ , is part of an arpeggiation of E which was begun in the toast at Momus, and continues through the waltz. When Musetta finally confronts Marcello (Act II, 20), the meter reverts to 3/4 (from 9/8) and the B dominant-seventh harmony anticipates the piece to come (the Waltz). She is determined to win back Marcello, and as a last resort, she turns from brazenness to charm and attempts to woo him with a song. Thus the structure finds its way back to the E-major from which it started (see example 25, above).

"Quando m'en vo'." "Quando m'en vo'"<sup>312</sup> is the only set piece of the Latin Quarter scene except for the coro finale which follows it. As an aria it stands as an anomaly, since everyone present participates in it, nearly from the first phrase. It develops gradually into a large ensemble, which, as we know, will give way to an even larger one. The graph in Example 55 illustrates the structure of the piece:

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312. Groos and Parker, La bohème, pp. 110-11, discuss the whole issue of Puccini's having composed the waltz to nonsense syllables ("cocoricò, cocoricò bistecca"). They also include an early printed version of it as an illustration (pp. 106-109).

**Example 55: Structure of "Quando m'en vo."**

The shape of the piece is not extraordinary, having an exposition in aba form<sup>313</sup> and an overall structure that is also tripartite, ABA'. It has a marked tendency to move toward A-major, the goal of the previously aborted toast, and the key in which Puccini seems to want to place his Bohemians in close focus. This becomes apparent in the first three measures of the waltz which gravitate to A in the bass, as the melody does the same two bars later. The middle section of the exposition also cadences in A before the reprise of the main theme.<sup>314</sup> The eventual move to Bb

313. Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, p. 21, briefly discuss the structure of "Quando m'en vo'." See also, D'Ecclesiis, "The Aria Techniques," especially p. 33.

314. Puccini's tendency to move toward the subdominant is a general characteristic of his style, apparent as early as *Le Villi*. Nicolaisen, *Italian Opera*, pp. 194-95, and p. 281, n. 16, discusses the structural implications of this motion in *Le Villi*. In the "Waltz," however, our perception of the move

is foreshadowed as Musetta contemplates how to distract Alcindoro. Here the entire system moves a tritone away to B $\flat$ -minor (Act II, 25-2):

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to A-major is greatly influenced by previous events in that key. The subsequent shift to B $\flat$  later in the piece enhances our understanding of these relations. See also, Parker, "Analysis," p. 130.

Example 56: Move to B $\flat$ -Minor in Musetta's Waltz.

The image shows a musical score for Masetta's Waltz, divided into two systems. The first system includes vocal lines for Masetta, Nini, Schtaub, and Colline, along with piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal lines and piano accompaniment, featuring a key signature change to B-flat minor. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *molto*, *un poco assai*, and *a Tempo*.

**System 1:**

- MASETTA** *molto*
- NINI** *mf* non... non... non...
- SCHTAUB** *mf* quel... che... lo... fr... ar... ven... di... non
- COLLINE** *mf* in... la... stessa... bron... to... lo... no... m... de... ve... sti... a... del... co...  
*f* *molto*

**System 2:**

- MASETTA** *a Tempo* *un poco assai*
- NINI** *mf* ... (Or... in... la... ve... si... del... ter... cio?)
- SCHTAUB** *mf*
- COLLINE** *mf*
- Piano** *a Tempo* *un poco assai* (25)

Eventually, B $\flat$  leads enharmonically through A $\sharp$  to B-major, V of E. As Marcello and Musetta finally embrace, there is a soft reprise of the "Waltz" theme in the strings, a quietly passionate moment.

**The Bill, the Tattoo, the Tritone and the Finale.** The tattoo in the distance also intrudes upon the scene at this moment with its B $\flat$ . The clash of the E-B $\flat$  tritone is one of "maximal contrast,"<sup>315</sup> and it also contributes to the momentum towards the finish. However, it is mainly a foreground event, a stage prop introduced for shock value, and the clash we perceive is the result of numerous musical and dramatic events converging at that moment. Its effect results from a combination of actual surprise, radical change in instrumentation (fife and drum corps pushing out flute, clarinet, harp, and strings), and the interrupted reprise of the waltz, rather than from any truly irregular voice-leading procedures. Closer examination reveals that the interjection of the B $\flat$  anticipates the forthcoming "Ritirata" and creates a French 6th with E and G $\sharp$  which brings to the surface A (Act II, 26+11), which has been prolonged since the Bohemians' toast at the end of the first part (see also Ex. 24 above). As the leading tone of B $\flat$ , A follows its normal course of resolution. Example 57 illustrates the voice-leading from "Quando m'en vo'" to the finale of the act:

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315. Drabkin, "The Musical Language," p. 82.

**Example 57: "Waltz," Tattoo, and Finale of Latin Quarter.**

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains three measures: measure 26, measure 27, and measure 27+4. Measure 26 has a quarter note G4. Measure 27 has a quarter note A4, with 'ant.' written above it. Measure 27+4 has a quarter note Bb4. The bottom staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains three measures: measure 4, measure 6, and measure I/B flat. Measure 4 has a quarter note D4, with 'd5' written above it and an arrow pointing to it. Measure 6 has a quarter note G3. Measure I/B flat has a quarter note Bb2. The text 'End Latin Quarter Scene' is written between the two staves, centered under measure 6. The text '"Waltz" I/E' is written below the first measure of the bottom staff. The text 'Tattoo' is written below the second measure of the bottom staff. The text 'I/B flat' is written below the third measure of the bottom staff.

Marcello and Musetta, like Mimì and Rodolfo, must postpone their union for a later time. More urgent matters are at hand, like the bill for the evening's revelry, though no one seems to have any money. The approaching tattoo generates further excitement, drawing out shopkeepers, street urchins, and citizens. The large choral finale begins with the Bohemians and the crowd singing as two separate groups, the Bohemians observing the crowd and plotting an escape, the crowd straining to see the drum major leading the parade which is nearly in sight. As the tattoo crosses the stage and the two groups merge into one, all but Musetta are lost in the crowd and swept away beyond reach. The curtain is brought down definitively in Bb-major on

Christmas Eve as everyone shouts, "Onor e gloria del Quartier Latin!"<sup>316</sup>  
Of course, it isn't really the end, and when we finally do leave the theatre after the much sadder and real end of La Bohème, it is with the intense awareness that we have heard a thoroughly integrated work, one in which tonality, rhythm, vocal discourse, and staging have worked together to define character, generate the action, and establish atmosphere.<sup>317</sup>

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316. These words, added after the first edition of the libretto, were part of Puccini's new, more "clamorous" ending (see discussion in 1., Genesis, above). See also Maisch, Puccinis musikalische Formgebung, p. 48.

317. According to Kerman, Opera, p. 215, character, action, and atmosphere are the "three principal means by which music can contribute to drama."

## Conclusion

Puccini apparently poured the better part of his creative energy into his expositions. Nearly every aspect of his musical output--whether scene type, set piece, or orchestral interlude--is represented in his first acts. He seems to have been equally at home in his one-act operas as in his full-length operas, and he realized his own powers of musical and dramatic invention just as completely within these tighter, smaller structures. Puccini's first acts seem to project in the microcosm the musical catalogue of an entire work, much in the same way that the smaller details within those acts have been shown to project the macrostructure of the scene or the act in its entirety. His first acts may be seen, then, as a kind of structural menu. In his other acts he takes selections from this musical "bill of fare" and explores them more closely.

The question now arises as to how Puccini formed the central and final acts of a work. I cannot say with authority that the developmental acts in Puccini's full-length operas are as tightly organized as his expositions. There is, however, some evidence to assist us in forming some expectations. The autograph scores provide a few clues insofar as the presence of designated fascicles in central and final acts (as opposed to the absence of such designations in the first acts) suggests that Puccini may have lost some

momentum towards the end.<sup>318</sup> A slowing down of the compositional process, however, should not necessarily be equated with a loss of enthusiasm or energy.<sup>319</sup> Indeed, there is enough musical testimony to confirm that Puccini engaged in a certain amount of long-range planning across an entire work as well as across a single act. This is clearly demonstrated in the high degree of organization, from beginning to end, of the one-act operas, the result, as I hope to have shown, of the coordination of a great number of elements: tonality, rhythm, texture and pacing, lighting, etc. Thematic recall is also among the more obvious indicators of large-scale organization, though Puccini's reuse of themes tends to be both practical as well as associative.<sup>320</sup> And, as I have shown in La Bohème, Turandot, and Manon Lescaut, and other works, Puccini was also likely to make verbal, visual, and, often, tonal references in dramatically significant places. Finally, to come full circle, Puccini's concern with the opening

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318. See, for example, the fourth act of La Bohème, in which Puccini notes the beginning of the second fascicle at 15 and the third fascicle at 20-6.

319. Atlas, however, in "Puccini's Tosca," notes the breaking down in the last act of a musical system that he has identified in the first two and one-half acts of the opera.

320. Compare, for example, "O mio babbino caro" from Gianni Schicchi with "I desideri sono i fiori" from Suor Angelica. "O mio babbino caro" permeates Gianni Schicchi as the substance of Puccini's musical fabric and does not communicate any extramusical associations to the listener. In Suor Angelica, however, the motive first heard as Angelica cries "la morta è la vita bella!" [death is life made beautiful!] in "I desideri" (17+3) is heard only one more time, and in a much more meaningful way, as Angelica drinks the poison (77-5). See also, Budden, "Wagnerian Tendencies," pp. 331-32.

curtain--at least insofar as he expressed these concerns--also extends to the end of acts as well as the close of the opera. Ricci quotes him as having said, "Un sipario chiuso troppo presto o troppo tardi significa spesso l'insuccesso dell'opera." [A curtain closed too quickly or too slowly frequently means the failure of the opera.]<sup>321</sup>

My study is itself a beginning in which I hope to have piqued some curiosity and laid some methodological groundwork. Most of all I hope to have argued convincingly, through musical, dramatic, and documentary evidence, that Puccini thought cohesively on a large scale, and that all his attention to "the little things," his "mosaic" technique of composition, amounts to a good deal more than a series of "perpetually pregnant" melodies,<sup>322</sup> saccharine heroines, and colorful locales.

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321. Ricci, Puccini interprete, pp. 13-14.

322. See Grout, A Short History, p. 442.

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