

Sidrit Tushe

Dramatic Structure of the Music of Rigoletto

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Culture and Arts

Degree Programme in Music

Thesis

Date 22 November 2017

Author Title	Sidrit Tushe Dramatic Structure of the Music of Rigoletto
Number of Pages Date	33 pages 22 November 2017
Degree	Bachelor of Music
Degree Programme	Degree Programme in Music
Specialisation option	Musician
Instructor(s)	Juha Karvonen, MA Annu Tuovila, DMus
<p>This thesis examines the dramatic structure of the music in the opera <i>Rigoletto</i>.</p> <p>First, I introduce the historical background of this opera, how it was created as well as the changes between the original text <i>Le roi s'amuse</i> on which this opera is based and the libretto.</p> <p>Secondly, I analyse the musical dramaturgy of this opera based on the analysis of Marcello Conati and Martin Chiusid.</p> <p>Finally, I discuss the findings of my analysis in comparison with Conati's interpretation. This analysis will help performers and directors to have a more detailed interpretation of the musical dramaturgy. A more detailed understanding of the opera is helpful in learning the piece as well as making the right interpretative choices.</p>	
Keywords	Rigoletto, Giuseppe Verdi, opera, musical analysis

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1 Introduction

According to Julian Budden, among the works of Verdi, *Rigoletto* has the same revolutionary role as the *Eroica Symphony* of Beethoven (Budden 1985, 526). In fact, *Rigoletto* was the first opera in his career to fully realize a particular dramatico-musical concept, distinguished from that of the previous and his contemporary composers. *Rigoletto* marked the beginning of maturity in Verdi's music.

The opera was premiered on the 11 of March 1851 in Venice at "La Fenice" theatre. I chose this subject because an understanding of the dramaturgy of the opera will help me in a better interpretation of the opera in my role as a conductor or as correpetiteur.

Although the compositional elements are more or less traditional, they are not used schematically, but as a basis for a new concept that is in service of the dramatico-musical intentions formulated by Verdi in this opera.

There are two elements that distinguish *Rigoletto* from Verdi's previous works:

- 1) The integration of recitatives and arias is fluid. They are semantically related, they follow each other without interruptions and there is coherence between the melodies of recitatives and formal singing parts (arias, cavatinas, duets, etc.)
- 2) Unlike the traditional opera form, *Rigoletto* lacks the ensemble scenes at the end of the acts. The only occasion of such ensemble work occurs at the end of the very first scene of the first act, which set it apart from the traditional format that dominated the period.

Obviously all this results from a conscious choice by the artist, who created an organic work that stands on its own, and it is easily distinguished from Verdi's previous works. In a letter to Francesco Maria Piave the composer speaks of a revolutionary work, comparing *Rigoletto* to *Ernani*.

2 Modification to the Original Text

The libretto of *Rigoletto* is based on a play by Victor Hugo, *Le Roi s'amuse*. The play was premiered at the Théâtre-Français in Paris in 1832, but it was banned by the French Government and it was not staged after the premiere until 1882 despite Hugo's appeal to the court of Tribunal de Commerce.

In 1848, Verdi had proposed Hugo's story to the composer Vincenzo Flauto and the San Carlo Theatre in Naples. After a year, Verdi recognized the possibilities that this story could offer for himself and since he was already under contract to create an opera for La Fenice Theatre in Venice, he proposed the project to librettist Francesco Maria Piave. The Republic of Venice had become part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a result of the Campoformio treaty of 1797. Verdi had to get a permission to perform Hugo's story from the Austrian Government, which was problematic because of the subject matter and the fact that Hugo was a republican. Austrian censorship would not allow the King to be represented as a libertine who goes to taverns and kidnaps young girls for his pleasure. Furthermore, Rigoletto was an atypical main character, because he was a hunchback, which provoked more opposition from the police. At the time, it was unheard of to make an unattractive character sing.

Another incomprehensible act of hostility against the production was not political at all. In the third act, there is a sack containing the body of Gilda. First, the police wanted to ban the sack for security reasons, but this dispute was resolved later and the sack stayed in the story. In a letter, Verdi wrote, "I don't understand why the sack is omitted. Why does the sack matter to the police? Are they afraid of its effect?" (Verdi's correspondence to Marzari, 14th Dec.1850).

The compromise was to make some changes to the original text:

- 1) The action was moved from that of the French court to an Italian ducat, that of Mantova.
- 2) All the names of the characters in Hugo's drama were to be changed.
- 3) The scene in the bedroom of the duke is omitted.
- 4) The duke is tricked and does not act on his will in the tavern of Maguelone.

Moreover, I have noticed that different from Hugo the King-Duke does not participate in the kidnaping of Gilda.

2.1 Other Differences

There are other cuts for esthetical and stylistic reasons, or for necessity of musical procedure:

- 1) In the entrance of Rigoletto there are a series of teasings, typical of his character, that in the opera become more compact and transform to a single phrase; that against the Count of Ceprano. (Rigoletto: *In testa che avete, signor di Ceprano*; Act 1 N.2 scene II bar 232)
- 2) A single phrase also summarizes the relationship of the daughter of Monterone with Duca and the reason of his relationship with him. "Rigoletto: *Voi congiuraste contro di me signore...*" (Act 1 N.2 scene VI bar 463)
- 3) The first act of the tragedy in Hugo's drama ends when the Count Monterone is taken away but Verdi proceeds and concludes the scene with the comments of the courtesans. (Choir: *O tu che la festa audace hai turbato*, Act 1 N.2 scene VI bar 522)
- 4) In the second act, Hugo's scene ends with "*No, Vecchio t'inganni, un vindice avra*" but Verdi, for reasons of musical form and to resolve dramatic-musical problems, continues with the cabaletta "*Si, vendetta, tremenda vendetta,*". (Act 2 N.10 scene VIII bar 195)
- 5) In the third act Hugo tells that a month has passed during which Blanche (Gilda) was the lover of the King (Duke) while in the opera this is resolved with the verse from Rigoletto: "*tempo guarirne t'ho lasciato*". (Time for healing I gave to you) (Act 3 N.11 scene I bar 10)
- 6) The omission of the scene in the bedroom of the Duke (Act 2 end of 2nd scene) is also very interesting. Although Verdi wanted to put a duet to represent the scene and the confrontation between Gilda and Duca, he could not do it. As he writes to Borsi in the summer of 1852:

"You asked me an aria for that opera. In fact where to find the place for it? One place would be, bud God save us. We would be whipped for that. We would need to show Gilda with Duca in his bedroom. In any case, it would be a duet." (Verdi's correspondence to C. Borsi, 8th Sep 1852, in CL, 492-3)

The result that this omission of scene creates in the opera says to us only that Gilda is dishonoured. It does not describe, as in the play, the scene in more detail: the man who just pronounced "*il serto mio darie per consolar quell cor*" (Act 2 N.8 scene II bar 176) at

the rejection of the feeling Blanche/Gilda (who then locks herself in another room) triumphantly pulls out another key from his pocket and enters the room laughing.

The character of Duca is lightened and the rape that happens is perceived only if taken to account the drama of Hugo and the fact that Verdi, who in letter to Piave, writes that although the scene is censured is necessary to maintain the intention of the original drama.

3 The Drama

The key word and the core that constructs the drama is the malediction, the curse. *The curse* was also the first title that the composer gave to the opera.

The principal character, Rigoletto, according to Verdi a character worth of a Shakespearian tragedy, is the creator and the driving force of the opera. A dual character and extremely enigmatic, (as in the line of the Duca: *“misterioso un uom v’entra ogni notte”*, (Act 1 N.2 scene I bar 78), he is one without name and a hidden past (“Gilda: *ch’ella conosca la sua famiglia* – Rigoletto: *Tu non ne hai*. Gilda: *qual nome avete?* Rigoletto: *A te che importa?*”, Act 1 N.4 scene IX bar 110-116). He is deformed and ill.

He lives in hate towards people, inciting the Duke to the crime and violence and he has a secret: a mysterious past in which he was a person and from which the only thing is left is his daughter.

Hugo, in his appendix writes: “Triboulet has two students, the king that addresses to vice and his daughter that brings up to virtue. The first destroys/loses the second. Triboulet wants to kidnap Madame de Cosse for the king and is her daughter that he kidnaps. He wants to assassinate the king, to take revenge for his daughter and is his daughter that he assassinates. (Hugo; Pavolini, 1962 255-7)

In a certain sense, the opera resembles a Greek tragedy: man cannot escape his fate. It is as if the fate, the curse, is the real central core and not the character Rigoletto with his virtues and his weaknesses.

It is a fate, a process that Rigoletto cannot change; as he cannot change the fact that he is deformed and has to be ridiculous despite that he manifests profound affection: the one towards his daughter.

4 Synopsis of the Drama

Characters:

Duca di Mantova (Duke of Mantua)	tenore
Rigoletto, suo buffone di Corte (The duke's jester)	baritono
Gilda, figlia di Rigoletto (his daughter)	soprano
Sparafucile, sicario (an assassin)	basso
Maddalena, sorella di Sparafucile (sister of Sparafucile)	contralto
Giovanna, custode di Gilda (Gilda's Nurse)	mezzosoprano
Il conte di Monterone (Count of Monterone)	baritono
Marullo, cavaliere (a gentleman)	baritono
Matteo Borsa, cortigiano (a courtier)	tenore
Il conte di Ceprano (Count of Ceprano)	basso
La contessa di Ceprano (Countess of Ceprano)	mezzosoprano
Un usciere di Corte (A court usher)	basso
Un paggio della duchessa (A page)	soprano
Cavalieri, dame, paggi e alabardieri (Courtisans, damas and page)	coro

Table 1. Characters of the opera.

In the duchy of Mantua, renaissance era.

Act I

The duke of Mantua, a libertine, is hosting a party in his palace. While he is leaving with Ceprano's wife, Rigoletto the court jester, as well as cripple and vicious person, mocks the jealousy of her husband. Marullo, a cortisan, revelas to the guests that the jester has a lover and Ceprano sees the possibility to take revenge on him. At this moment Monterone enters the scene and demands to know why the duke dishonoured his daughter. Monterone ends up imprisoned. Rigoletto is morose: also he has a daughter. A daughter Marullo has mistaken for his lover and who he keeps hidden from the court. None the less, this does not stop him from mocking Monterone, who then curses Rigoletto. Being affected and horrified by the curse, on the way home, Rigoletto encounters Sparafucille. He is a foreigner who offers to Rigoletto his services as a sicario. To his daughter (Gilda) and her nurse (Giovanna), Rigoletto recommends to keep the door closed and not trust any strangers. However, when he leaves, the Duke, undercover as a student and with the aid of Giovanna, seduces Gilda. She is infatuated with the young lover and starts dreaming about her feelings for him.

Marullo and the courtesans arrive near the house wanting to kidnap the one they think is Rigoletto's lover. Rigoletto discovers them but they deceive him by saying that they are there to kidnap Ceprano's daughter who lives in the nearby palace. The jester offers to help them. Blindfolded, he holds the ladder to help the courtiers but when they are done he realises that it is his daughter that he has helped them to kidnap. The curse of Monterone is unfolding.

Act II

In his palace, the Duke is mourning the loss of his lover. When the courtiers tell him they are the ones who have kidnaped her, he enters joyously the room where Gilda is locked.

Rigoletto arrives to the palace in search for his daughter. Between jokes and implores, he harbours revenge. When Gilda comes out of the Duke's room, she weepingly tells how she was seduced. Rigoletto, full of pain, is then sworn to take revenge and to kill the Duke, while at the same time Monterone is lead to the gallows.

Act III

Rigoletto has hired Sparafucille to kill the Duke. Maddalena has lured the Duke to her tavern but, as she has taken a fancy in him, convinces her brother to kill the first one who enters the tavern and to consign his body to Rigoletto. Gilda has stayed in Mantova against the will of her father to see the Duke. She overhears the conversation between Sparafucille and his sister and decides to sacrifice herself to save the Duke. In men's clothes she knocks on the door of the tavern and is straight stabbed by Sparafucille.

At midnight, Rigoletto comes to receive the sack with the corpse of the Duke inside it. He takes it and when he is leaving the tavern, he overhears in the distance the Duke's voice as he is amusing himself with Maddalena. A sinister premonition creeps upon him. He opens the sack to find his daughter inside, at the last moment of her life. She dies in his arms. The curse is realized. (Verdi-Piave Libretto, 1992)

5 Use of Characters

The deployment of the characters occurs simultaneously in the text and in the musical dramaturgy. The text and music are one thing together: they cannot be divided from each other after the composer has forged them together in to a symbiotic relationship.

For the musical project, Verdi writes: "To write well, ought to write in one breath, leaving for latter, to dress up and clean the general sketch; without that, there is the risk to produce an opera in long periods, with music as a mosaic without style and character."(REFERENCE HERE)

We can see in these phrases the way in which Verdi wrote music. First a general conception of the entire opera and then afterwards a dressing up of the first conception. As a matter of fact, from the first sketch to the completion of the arias, a long period of time will pass. This is documented in the fact that Verdi's annotations go from renaming the characters from King and Blanche to Duke and Gilda, in addition to when the problems with the censure got resolved.

Numerous analysis have tried to enlighten the formal project of Verdi. One among these in regards of Rigoletto, is that of the scholar Martin Chiusid (The tonality of Rigoletto, in Analysing Opera. Verdi and Wagner 1989). Marcello Conati (1992) bases his point of

view on Chiusid's analysis in regards to the dramatic-harmonic structure in his book: *Rigoletto Un analisi drammatico musicale*.

The fact is that when we talk about the profession of a composer, as in the way in which he composes music, we must not leave out what school he belongs to or in a certain sense, *the atelier* in which he is formed.

First, the way and the necessity to write a certain type of music is very different from the way and the aim of a musicologist. Second, the point of view is different. The composer will always see his work from inside, from its germination, and the musical analyst is forced to categorize what he sees from outside.

Some analysis have even found a *Grundgestalt* (based on Schoenberg theory: a principal nucleus-concept that contains in its self the motif, melody and harmony from which the entire piece is generated) in the operas of nineteenth century and among these, also in *Rigoletto*. Certainly, a *Grundgestalt* can exist in *Rigoletto*, in my opinion, but we have to take to account that of what was the craft of the opera composer in the nineteenth century.

Before seeing if there is a *Grundgestalt*, or even a Schenkerian conception of the piece, we have to see what were the canons and the clichés of the period. We have to look in what were the basic forms that permitted the composer and the public to communicate with each other with well-defined signals. It was very important, especially in the 19th century, that a composer who wanted to make his living from its craft, would respect a certain general signals and clichés of the musical theatre. That he would respect the basic forms already assimilated by the public at the time. These would have to be taken to account as much as the existence of a will for a formal project by the composer.

5.1 Traditional forms of the Italian melodrama

Abramo Basevi, in *Studio sulle opera di Giuseppe Verdi* (1859) writes:

“The musical work is often wrongly compared to a statue, to a painting, where the whole thing is considered at first glance before anything else. In music, we will search in vain for a determined idea, such as to group together around it many separate pieces, as if it was a complete entity. The music finds its support in the general concept of the drama, a certain idea where the several pieces that constitutes the opera converge, more or

less, according to the ingenuity of the composer. Then we have what we call the colour of the composition or “tinta generale” (Basevi, 1859 114-115).

Basevi (1859) identifies a fundamental praxis in the melodrama of the nineteenth century that is, in a certain sense, part of those consolidated signals between the composer and the public. He identifies in the “solita forma del duetto” (“a conventional form”, an expression invented by Basevi) five fundamental stages:

- 0) scene
- 1) Tempo d’attacco (where occurs the exposition of the characteristics of the character)
- 2) Adagio o Andantino (expression off the feelings)
- 3) Tempo di mezzo (similar as tempo d’attacco, explores the characteristics of the character)
- 4) Cabaletta

In a letter in 1852 Verdi writes: “I have conceived Rigoletto without arias, without finals, with a string of endless duets, because I was convinced so. (Verdi’s correspondence to C. Borsi 8th Sept, 1952)

I have noticed that the five parts, which Basevi (1859) says are at the base of the duet, correspond to:

N.4 Act I scene VIII

- 0) scene - *Pari siamo!*
- 1) Tempo d’attacco – scene IX bar 69
- 2) Adagio o Andantino - bar 125
- 3) Tempo di mezzo – bar 126
- 4) Cabaletta – bar 243 (Bellinian scheme a1 a2 b a2)

N’5 Act I scene XII

- 0) scene – bar 1 *Giovanna? Ho dei rimorsi*
- 1) Tempo d’attacco- bar 39 *T’amo ripetilo*
- 2) Adagio o Andantino - bar 70 *è il sol dell’anima*
- 3) Tempo di mezzo- bar 141 *Che m’ami deh ripetimi?*
- 4) Cabaletta – bar 171

N. 10 Act II scene V

0) scene - *“Mio Padre! Dio! Mia Gilda!”*1) Tempo d’attacco – bar 34 *Ite di qua voi tutti!*2) Adagio o Andantino- bar 69 *Tutte le feste al tempio*

3) Tempo di mezzo - bar 173

4) Cabaletta – bar 195 *Si, vendetta tremenda vendetta*

While in the duet “Quel vecchio maledivami”, N. 3 belongs to a different behavior chosen by the composer.

Here is the scheme which Basevi (1859) identifies in the Italian operas of the 19th century:

Grand Duet	Aria/Cavatina	Central Finale
0. Scena	Scena	Chorus, ballet, scena, aria, duet, etcetera
1. “Tempo d’attacco” Stanzas, dialogue		“Tempo d’attacco” [kinetic]
2. Adagio	Adagio	Pezzo concertato [static]
3. “Tempo di mezzo”	“Tempo di mezzo”	“Tempo do mezzo” [kinetic]
4. Cabaletta	Cabaletta	Stretta [static]

Table 2. Melodramatic structure, three normative types.

As illustrated in table 2, these are the three types of schemes Basevi (1859) identifies in the Italian opera of 19th century.

5.2 Considerations

This is the “form” that is also at the base of the certain dramatic-musical choices of the composers of the period, as for example that of the sonata form in the countries of German speaking language during the classical and romantic period.

Also, we could say that this “tinta generale” and the idea of a musical dramaturgy are born before the writing of the single pieces (arias or duets) and later these are refined and settled with the contribution of the single pieces but being influenced by the “tinta generale” and the musical dramaturgy of the opera.

Verdi himself proves this: in one of the first letters written to overcome the censure of *Le Roi s'amuse*. The letter was written much earlier than when the opera's title was changed in *Rigoletto* and before they writing of the single arias.

In August of 1850, Verdi writes to Carlo Marzari, the director of the theatre *La Fenice*:
 "The uncertainty that *Le Roi s'amuse* is not authorised puts me in unconformable feeling [...] I, trusting in your poet, starting to study it, to think deeply and the idea, the general color (tinta musicale) was found in my mind."

In my research, I have aspired to understand the musical dramaturgy of this opera and have tried to point out the key places that hold this opera as a one, or in other words, the general color "tinta generale" of the opera.

In my analysis, I try to find the answer the following questions:

- 1) What kind of dramaturgy forms the "Tinta generale" of the opera?
- 2) How does a single piece contribute to the "tinta generale" of the opera?

I will base my analysis on the score of *Rigoletto* and present examples which I think are the most important for understanding the dramaturgy of the opera.

6 Analysis

Verdi, in a letter of the 14th Dec 1850, writes to Marzari:

"My notes, as beautiful or ugly that they might be, I never write at random, I always procure them a character."

My analysis of this opera is explained through its Prelude, which usually, as all overtures, are written at the end of the composing process and condense the musical materials that later on are elaborated and expanded during the course of the opera.

These 34 bars of the Prelude contain in themselves all the principal elements of the drama. Like didactic spoken signals, these elements depict the settings of the story, its tragic ending, the deception and the court (represented by the tonality of A flat Major).

Prelude bar 1.

Figure 1. Prelude bar 1.

As seen in figures one and two, these repeated C notes, which open the Prelude and tragedy, are the same ones in which present for the first time the character of Rigoletto and contain in themselves the tragedy.

Figure 2. Act 1 scene II, bar 232-234.

Its tonality is that of C minor also when this character is described for the first time from the Duke (see figure three).

Figure 3. Act 1 scene I, bar 78-81.

The tonality is the same as his pain and anger against the entire world that bursts in "Cortigiani, vil razza dannata". The tonality of the C minor is the feeling of the father's distress and pain:

Andante mosso agitato $\text{♩} = 80$
 Rigoletto
 Cor - ti - gia - ni, vil raz - za dan -

Andante mosso agitato $\text{♩} = 80$

Figure 4. Act 2 scene IV, bar 77.

The pattern of repeated C is used also in the entrance of Monterone:

Ch'i - - o gli par-li. Il vo-glio.

Figure 5. Act 1 Scene VI, bar 441-445.

And, at the end, it marks the curse of Rigoletto:

(Quel vec-chio ma - le - di - va - mi!)

Figure 6. Act 1 scene VII, bar 10-13.

The pattern of repeated notes is present several times during the course of the opera. It plays an important role in the coherence in the dramaturgy. Martin Chiusid (1989) points out that the scale “C-D-E flat” is the basic motif of the character Rigoletto:

1. "Misterioso un uom v'entra ogni note" (see example above, figure three: Act 1 scene I, bar 78-81)
- 2.



Figure 7. "Mi coglierà sventura" Act 1 scene VIII, bar 65-66.

- 3.



Figure 8. "A te che importa?" Act 1 scene IX, bar 115-116.

Prelude bar 2-3

In the second and third bar of the prelude, there is a double appoggiatura which resolves (F sharp to G; A flat to G):

Figure 9. Prelude bar 2-3.

Marcello Conati (1992) bases his analysis on the one of Chiusid (1989). He points out that the F sharp is in tritonus relation to the C and on the opposite axe of that of Rigoletto. The tonality of G-flat (enharmonic F sharp) is the same one in which Duca sings " Parmi vedere le lagrime":

Duca *Cantabile*
Par - mi veder le la - grime

Viol.
V-le
Vc.
Cb.

Figure 10. Act 2 scene 1 bar 60.

Another function of this axe, quite far from C minor, is that of the portrayal of the sinister or the dark part of the opera.

1. In the cavatina of the Duke:

Ob.
Clar. in Do
Fag.
Corno I. in Mi b
D.
Viol.
V-le
Vc.
Cb.

mi tor-na gra - di - ta,

Figure 11. Act 1 scene I bar 138-139.

2. Rigoletto:

Non do-ver, non po-ter al-tro che

Adagio

R. ri-de-rel..

Viol. *pp*

V-le *pp*

Vc. *pp*

Cb. *pp*

Adagio

Figure 12. Act 1 scene VIII, bar 24.

3. Rigoletto:

Rigoletto *f*

Tu non ne hai..

Viol.

V-le

Vc.

Cb.

Figure 13. Act 1 scene IX, bar 113.

4. Rigoletto:

R.
Pa - dre ti so - - no, e

Viol.

V-le

Vc.

Figure 14. Act 1 scene IX, bar 169.

5. Gilda:

Trbni

Cimb.

Gil.
che qui ri - spon - dami!

D.

Viol.

V-le

Vc.

Cb.

Figure 15. Act 1 scene XII, bar 47-48.

Prelude bar 4-5

This double appoggiatura forms also the chord (A flat-C-E flat-G flat) that is V 5/6 of D flat minor - the tonality in which the opera ends and it is an omen of its tragic conclusion:

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Fagotti, Corni (in Mi b and in Do), Trombe in Do, Tromboni, and Cimbasso. The score is in 3/4 time and features a double appoggiatura in the first half of the phrase. The dynamic marking is ppp (pianissimo) throughout.

Figure 16. Prelude bar 4-5

The second half of the phrase of the Prelude is where the deception is depicted. This is comes through the cadence, which has the same name (the deceptive cadence) that brings us to the chord of A flat Major. The tonality (A flat Major) is in the scene of the court. The deceptive cadence is a dramatic instrument used by Verdi also in “Non dover, non poter altro che ridere”. This is illustrated also before in figure 12 (Act 1 scene VIII, bar 24).

Prelude bar 7-8

In the second phrase of the Prelude the repeated c blooms in the chord of Monterone (figures 17 and 18:

Figure 17 shows a musical score for a prelude, bars 7-8. The instruments listed are Fagotti, Corni (in Mi b and in Do), Trombe in Do, Tromboni, Cimbasso, and Timpani. The Trombe and Tromboni parts are marked with 'I.' and 'p'.

Figure 17. Prelude bar 7-8.

Figure 18 shows a musical score for Act 1 scene VI, bar 445. The instruments listed are Coro (Monte-ro-ne!), Viol., V-le, Ve., and Cb. The V-le and Ve. parts are marked with 'pp'.

Figure 18. Act 1 scene VI, bar 445.

The chord is also diminished VII of G minor, the darkest moment of the opera. When Rigoletto incites the duke to kill the Conte di Ceprano:

Banda int.

D. - fo - ne. Al -

R. (indicando di farla tagliare) - lo - ra ... al - lo - ra la te - sta. Ceprano

Figure 19. Act 1 scene V, bar 336-338.

And the phrase of lying, which holds a strong dramatical point when the duke tells Gilda that he loves her “Io t’amo”:

D. te? Io t'a - mo ...

Viol.

V.le

vc.

cb.

Figure 20. Act 1 scene XII, bar 61.

Prelude bar 9-10

This chord of Monterone is also a diminished VII of E flat. And the next cadence of the Prelude falls exactly on E flat Major:

Figure 21. Prelude bar 9-10.

This tonality of E flat major appears when Rigoletto sings “Veglia o donna”. In it Rigoletto manifest his love and concern to keep Gilda safe. The E flat major is also present in the “Zitti ziti, moviamo a vendetta” (see figures 22-23).

It is a premonition that from the chord of Monterone (that resolves in E flat), the curse will resolve in Gilda and the action is done by the court:

Figure 22. Act 1 scene X bar 242.

The Monterone chord present in the Prelude, in the entrance of the character Monterone “Si, Monteron...La mia voce qual tuono”, plays between the changes of A - A flat. In addition, with A flat becomes (A flat – C - E flat - G flat), that is V of D flat. (Figure 25) Budden (1985) writes in his book on Verdi’s operas that this is one of the most studied or revised pages by Verdi in his manuscript. However, Budden (1985) does not give a reason to this statement. I think that this interchange between A – A flat is the reason for this, as the chord (A flat-C-E flat-G flat) that is V of D flat where D flat is intended as the conclusion of the opera (Figure 26)

The image displays a musical score for Act 1 scene VI, bar 448. It features vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Sostenuto assai" with a metronome marking of 88. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The vocal lines include the following lyrics: "sando il Duca con nobile orgoglio)", "Si, Mon-to-ron,...la vo-ce mia qual tuo-no viscuo-te.", "Chi'o gli parli.", and "rà do - vua - que.". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as "pp" and "ff". The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at bar 448. The tempo marking "Sostenuto assai" appears at the beginning and end of the system.

Figure 25. Act 1 scene VI bar 448.

The image shows a page of a musical score for the end of an opera. The score is arranged in a system with multiple staves. The instruments and voices listed on the left are: Fl. (Flute), Ott. (Oboe), Ob. (Oboe), Clar. in Do (Clarinet in C), Fag. (Bassoon), In MiB (Violin in B-flat), Cori (Cori), In Lab (Trumpet in B-flat), Tr. in MiB (Trumpet in B-flat), Tr. in B (Trumpet in B), Cimb. (Cymbal), Timp. (Timpani), Gr. C. (Gong), 2 Viol. I. (Violin I), 2 Viol. II. (Violin II), 2 V. le. (Viola), Viol. (Violin), V. le. (Viola), Vo. (Voice), and Ch. (Chorus). The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The music is in a dramatic style, with various dynamics and articulations. The page ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Figure 26. End of the opera.

Prelude bar 11-14

Another important element is the chromatic scale (ascending or descending) that in the Prelude (bar 11-14) concludes to F sharp (the opposite axe of C) and is used in the opera as to illustrate moments of drama:

The rage of Monterone (chromatic descending scale):

(a Rigoletto)

ti! S'ancia - r'el ca - no a le-on mo - ren - te è vi - le, Du-ca... e tu sur-

Fag.

Corni
in Mib
in Lab

Me
- pen - te, tu che d'un pa - dre ri - di al do - lo - re, s

Viol.

V.le

Ve.

Ob.

Figure 27. Act 1 scene 7 bar 506-519.

Rigoletto's panic (ascending chromatic scale):

guarda! (Po-trian se-
-guir-la, ra-pir-la an-co-ra! Qui d'un buf-fo-ne si di-se-no-ra la fi-glia e se ne

R.
Viol.
V.le
Ve.
Cb.

pp

Figure 28. Act1 scene VIII bar 222.

In the *Prelude* this ascending scale blooms in the Monterone's chord. Repetition of the same cadence.

Follows a lament with the pedal on the Dominant (bars 19-24) that does not resolve but falls again on Monterone's chord.

Bars 29-34 conclusion of the *Prelude*.

7 Considerations

Marcello Conati (1992) writes in his book on Rigoletto that the opera is constructed in an arch scheme that goes from C minor to D flat minor with internal symmetries to these last tonalities:

do - do - reb (reb) reb reb reb reb reb

«Vendetta a chiedere al mondo, a Dio»

«Sii maledetto»

«Ah siate entrambi voi maledetti»

Quartetto

Scena e Terzetto

Duetto

è molto piccola

Quar

Figure 29 (Conati 1992, 158).

He also formulates a prospect of notes/ tonalities belonging to the various characters (Conati 1992, 161). I have tried in my analysis to point out what I think is important for understanding the dramaturgy of the opera and what are the main principal characteristics that help to achieve that.

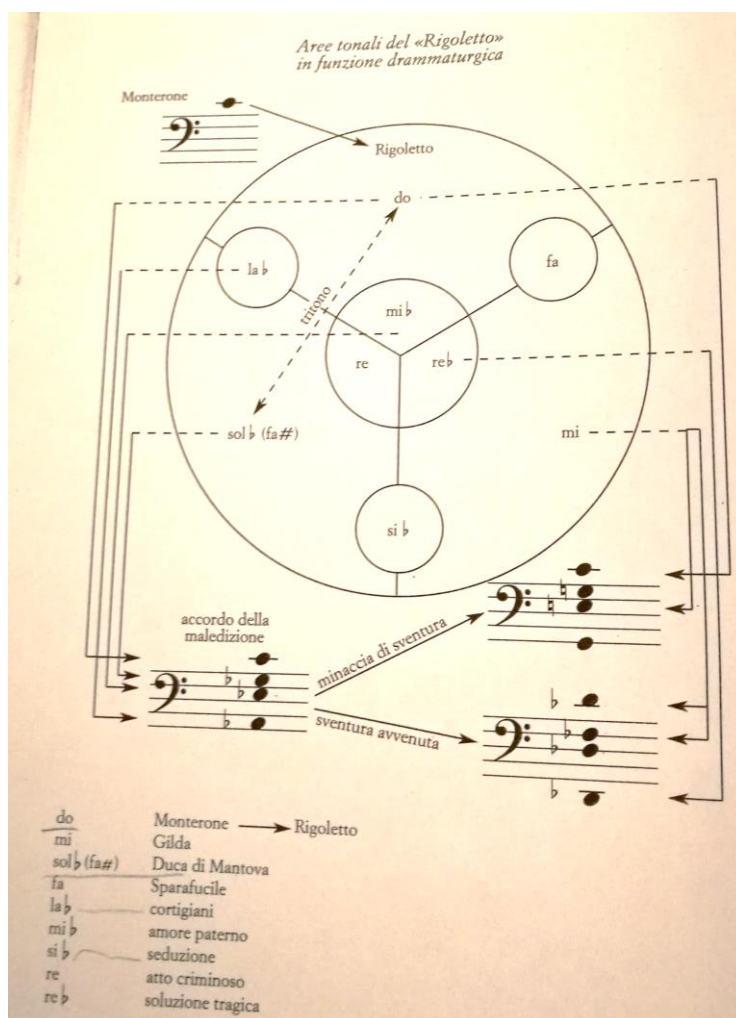


Figure 30 (Connati 1992, 161).

However, I do not share Connati's opinion that there is a corresponding tonality to each and all of the characters in the opera.

Conati assigns the note/tonality of (Fa) F to Sparafucile. Why is this so? Is this tonality of F not important also for Monterone when he sings "*Novello insulto*"?

Trombi
 Clmb.
 Timp.
 Gr. C.
 Mon.
 Viol.
 V. lo
 Ve.
 cb.

No-vel-lo in - sul - to!

Andante sostenuto \downarrow 89

Figure 31. Act 1 scene VI bar 477.

Could we see this F minor as a relative major of the A flat major, the tonality of the court scene, as the court with their action gives birth to the sorrows of Monterone?

Allegro con brio \downarrow 112

Banda interna
(senza Gr. Cassa)

DUCA
(Festa da ballo; musica interna)

BORSA

brillante

Figure 32. Act 1 scene 1 bar 1.

Let's take another example: The *Perigordino*.

PERIGORDINO
(esce)(intanto nella sala si ballerà il Perigordino)

R. va.

Viol. I

Viol. II

V.le

Cb.

Figure 33. Act 1, scene III, bar 254.

In the original sketch, Verdi had put another dance in F Major in the place of the currently existing one. The actual *Perigordino* is in C major. What does that mean? Is there any relationship between this dance in this tonality with the other pieces of the opera? Is there a relation with the C major of the duet Gilda-Rigoletto?

Figlia! Mio padre!

Fl. I

Ott.

Ob.

Clar. in Do

Fag.

In Fa

Corni in Do

Cimb.

R. (entra nel cortile)

Viol. I

V.le

Vo.

Cb.

Allegro vivo 138

Figure 34. Act 1 scene IX bar 69.

In my opinion, the relationship is weaker if we compare it with the necessity for Verdi to create a variation from the five themes that are played in the court scene:

- 1) A flat Major
- 2) E flat Major
- 3) C minor
- 4) A flat Major
- 5) D Flat major

8 Conclusions

I am of the opinion that the musical drama develops from the consequences of the development in the musical material. However, this process proceeds only from left to right. It cannot have still points, neither can it develop in retrograde (unless there is a clear intention from the author to do so). What I see in the tonality of F Major of Sparafucille is a choice of a parallel Major of the F minor in the “novello insulto” sang previously by Monterone.

The scene where Rigoletto encounters Sparafucille, “*nell’estremità più deserta di una via cieca*” and the entrance of this new character in the opera is not represented from the tonality of F major. Instead, it is given its character more from the use of lower register instruments and as Julian Budden (1985) says, “... A macabre humourism that reminds of the behaviour of the opera buffa”.

Therefore, in my opinion, the other choices for the other tonalities are also similar: by contrasting to other pieces. The purity of Gilda is brought out from the crystalline E Major in an act where almost everything is in tonalities with flats. The closest feeling to this purity is that of the joy of seeing her father, which is presented in C major.

However, in an above tonality of the ingenuity of Gilda (E major), is that of the Duke (B Major). It starts with an idealized love, which maybe he himself had believed in, as can be seen in the tonality of E major “Ah due che si amano sono tutto un mondo”.

However, this love is now distorted and has passed through the opposite axis, that of G flat major in “parmi veder le lacrime” which comes before he rapes Gilda. This G flat is the same tone of the “*dimonio*” in the opera, which reaches a sterile extremity that brings

us into a hypocritical as well as banal “*La donna è mobile*”. I think that the high F sharp repeated many times in this aria (“*La donna è mobile*”) doesn’t have a malign character as Connati (1992) claims. Instead, it is a part of an irresponsibility, a lightness brought to the extreme by the duke and results in a simple, carnal banality.

This tonality of B major it is equidistant to G flat (enharmonic F sharp), the tonality in which occurs the violence, as well as to the E major of the “*Caro nome*”. (Act 1 scene VIII bar 1)

The “*dimonio*” is not the Duke. It is not even in *Rigoletto*, or the curse.

The “*dimonio*” is a factor outside the characters and which they cannot escape.

Man cannot escape his destiny, this is the motor of the opera.

My analysis of the opera helped me to better understand the musical material of this particular work. In order to have a good interpretation and performance of an opera, it is necessary to understand the choices of the composer and the reasons behind them as well as how the musical materials interact with each other. Reading my work will surely benefit those who wish to understand these aspects in more detail and through this develop a better interpretation of the work.

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