

Example 47. Act II. Violetta's response to Germont (doubled by flutes and solo oboe)

(p. 155)



She must plunge from *g* flat¹ to *B* flat, metaphorically descending to reality as she concludes that on earth, ‘l'uomo implacabile per lei sarà’, (mankind will always be unforgiving) only God being capable of mercy (Ex. 48).

Example 48. Act II. Violetta sees herself as the unforgivable fallen woman (p. 157)



The singer will also be faced with the prospect that Verdi could be merciless in his continuing denial of what he expected from her vocally in Act I.

Thoroughly demoralized and shamed, Violetta may only look outside the space of the material world for solace. She appears to believe that Germont is privy to God’s will and that salvation lies in doing what he asks of her. Meekly she embarks on a tearful message to Germont’s daughter which should soften the most implacable of hearts. In

E-flat major, supported by woodwinds and strings, and with a shadowy cantabile version of her former compound duple metre, she dedicates the sacrifice of her ‘unico raggio di bene’ (one ray of light) from ‘una vittima della sventura’(a victim of fortune) (Ex. 49).

Example 49. Act II. Violetta’s message to Germont’s daughter (p. 158)

Germont encourages Violetta’s tears with repeated upward semitones on the word ‘Piangi’ (weep) and goes so far as to invite her into his own social space by using the familiar ‘ti’ in ‘Ch’ora ti chieggio’ (which I ask of you now). They repeat this until with *un fil di voce* Violetta concludes her reiterations of ‘e che morrà’ (and who will die) knowing that she has little time left. (Ex. 50).

Example 50. Act II. Violetta’s final submission (p. 164)

Violetta’s death will happen in spite of Germont’s exhortations on the theme of courage and the victory of a noble heart. The singer of Violetta is being subtly subordinated to the insistent repetitions of Germont’s vocal part. Verdi uses the musical strategy of finally placing Violetta’s line in the conformity of parallel tenths

with Germont's. Its consonance reveals the irony of Violetta's *posizione* as one who is asked to use all her strength of purpose to encompass her own subjugation while her very will to live appears to be broken. Sounding as parallel thirds, the passage both recalls and contrasts with the irony of Violetta's duet with Alfredo in Act I when she was skeptical of his constancy and he rhapsodized about love's 'cross and delight'. Its present irony is in this latest seduction which ignores her cries and literally puts her 'in her place'.

After a pause, Violetta simply requests Germont to command her. She will do whatever he asks of her. This *sostenuto* exchange in quadruple time is interspersed only with *pizzicato* strings. One of the quietest moments in the opera is also a turning-point at which Germont's social space is shown to be the more ruthless and Violetta's the more susceptible to filial devotion. Germont simply sings 'Non amarlo ditegli' (Tell him that you don't love him) and though Violetta is prepared to obey him in denying her love for Alfredo, she knows she will not be believed and that Alfredo will follow her if she leaves him (Ex. 51).

Example 51. Act II. Excerpt from recitative of Violetta and Germont with first violins
(p. 164)

The musical score for Example 51 shows three staves: Violin (Viol.), Voice (V.), and Bassoon (G.). The score consists of four measures. The Violin part has two measures of pizzicato. The Voice part sings 'Im-po-ne-te!' in measure 1 and 'Non amar-lo ditegli.' in measure 2. The Bassoon part has two measures of sustained notes. The vocal parts are in E-flat major, while the Violin part is in E major.

As they begin to take their leave of each other, Violetta seeks to have Germont embrace her as a daughter. The key moves from E-flat major to E major in an *Allegro*

surrounded by urgent string and woodwind rhythms with tension borne of intensely rising chromaticism followed by the falling chromatic line as Violetta begins to take charge of her own defeat (Ex. 52).

Example 52. Act II. Excerpt from Violetta's *parlante* amidst intense chromaticism (p. 165)

The musical score consists of five staves. From top to bottom: Flute (Fl.), Clarinet in D (Clar. in Do), Bassoon (Fag.), Violin (V.), and Cello (Viol.). The vocal part (V.) has lyrics: "flit - to oltre o - gni di-re... A suo con - for-to di co-là vo-le - rete." A dynamic instruction "(indicandogli il giardino)" is placed above the bassoon staff. The score shows various musical markings including sharps and flats on the staves.

This is augmented to a *forte* orchestral *tutti* as Violetta resolves on a plan which she refuses to divulge to Germont. He praises her generosity and offers to do anything for her except to give back what she lives for. As she turns to him again with the word 'morro' and asks him not to let Alfredo curse her memory, the key shifts from E major to G minor (Ex. 53).

Example 53. Act II. Modal change as Violetta fears that Alfredo may curse her memory (p. 169)

The musical score shows the vocal line for Violetta (V.). The lyrics are: "- rò!.. mor- rò!.. la mia me - mo - ri-a non fi - a ch'ei ma-le - di - ca, se". A dynamic marking 'pizz.' is shown below the cello staff. The score indicates a shift to G minor.

The *Allegro moderato* tempo becomes *animando con molto passione* as Violetta begs Germont to let Alfredo know of the sacrifice she has made for him. There is a crescendo to the pause with *tenuto* direction for Violetta and the woodwinds doubling her line to emphasize the word ‘suo’ when she dedicates her final breath as Alfredo’s (Ex. 54). The courtesan-singer is looking at that moment in the future when all display is forfeit to the isolation of death.

Example 54. Act II. Violetta wishes Alfredo to know of her life’s sacrifice for him (pp. 170 – 171)

Germont attempts to reassure Violetta that her sacrifice will be rewarded and in apparent haste to justify himself, adds the words ‘si, si, si’. His voice and Violetta’s join again in the ironic tenths as they repeat their words, she of death and he of noble sacrifice (Ex. 55).

Example 55. Act II. Germont and Violetta consolidate their agreement (p. 172)

Their voices soon separate when Violetta's more disjointed line begins to leap in desperately rising but gradually smaller intervals, supported by what becomes a climactic orchestral *tutti* at which point Germont and Violetta are in unison although singing as with one voice could not possibly mean that they are of one mind (Ex. 56).

Example 56. Act II. Violetta and Germont conclude in unison. She bids him to leave (p. 177)

v. cor.
G. -lor.
Quigiunge alcun: par-ti-te!
Ah grato vè il cor

When someone is heard arriving, Violetta notably commands Germont to leave her space, but their *recitativo secco* farewells are *Adagio a piacere* with embraces as they wish each other happiness. After their first utterance of the word 'Addio' there is a long pause and then a tearful repetition of Violetta's previous entreaties. In a strange distortion of the Act I duet between Alfredo and Violetta, the affair which joined them and was sealed with the word 'Addio' is now dismantled with the same word uttered by Violetta and Germont in the euphonious but distant tenths of their relationship (Ex. 57).

Example 57. Act II. Violetta's leave-taking echoes that from Alfredo (p. 180)

v. sia - te... Ad - di - - o!
G. sia - te... Ad - di - - o!
(esce per la porta del giardino)

The sense of dislocation and deprivation continues during the *Scena* which follows. It is begun with a hesitant *Adagio* still in G minor and underpinned by rising quaver and demisemiquaver figures in the strings, suspenseful in their semiquaver rests and sudden drops in pitch. The recitative exchange between Violetta and Annina hints at Violetta's plan to detach herself from Alfredo (Ex. 58).

Example 58. Act II. Excerpt from Violetta's recitative with Annina (p. 182)

(suona il campanello) **Allegro.**

V. Si;

Annina. Mi ri-chie dese?..

Viol. *p*

Violetta then begins to evade Alfredo's uneasy questioning. She pretends that Germont is yet to appear and that he could not wish that she and Alfredo should be separated. The metre is *alla breve* and tempo *Allegro assai mosso* with insistent quaver rhythms in the strings as the clarinets double or harmonise Violetta's anxiously repetitive line in thirds (Ex. 59).

Example 59. Act II. Excerpt from Violetta's agitated *parlante* with Alfredo (p. 186)

Clar. in Do
V.
Viol.

suo mi gette - rò di-visiei più non ne vorrà... sarem fe - li - ci... sarem fe-

The violins and flutes add deceptively flippant trills when Violetta attempts to reassure Alfredo that her tears are no more than a therapeutic release and she can smile at him. She will always be in that space near him among the flowers (Ex. 60).

Example 60. Act II. Violetta seeks to reassure Alfredo (p. 189)

Fl.
Ott.
Clar. L. in Do
Fag.
V.
Viol.

(sforzandosi)
ve - di?... orson tranquilla... ti sor - ri - do... Sa - rò là, tra quei

Example 60. Continued (p. 189)

The key changes abruptly to F Major and Violetta launches into her sustained plea *con passione e forza*. Above long string tremolos alternately *fortissimo* and *piano*, she commands him to love her. The singer-courtesan uses descending and soaring lines which still restrict themselves to an upper limit of *b flat*¹ (Ex. 61).

Example 61. Act II. Violetta commands Alfredo to love her, before she flees (pp. 190 – 191)

This time the word ‘Addio’ is hers alone and after a held semitone rise, falls despairingly to the tonic. *Amami, Alfredo* is the brief but powerful moment in which Violetta leaves the idyllic space and time she has shared with Alfredo for the social

space of her former life. For the singer this is a release from the pervasive sense of restraint with which her voice has almost been censored.

There is irony in Alfredo's next words and actions as he sings 'Ah, vive sol quel core/ All'amor mio!' (Ah, that heart lives for love of me alone), complacently sure as he is of Violetta's devotion. He also picks up a book as the opera's last vestigial reference to the sacrifice for love, *Manon Lescaut*.⁴⁸⁷ After his exchange with Germont in which the father's appeals for filial loyalty are rejected, Alfredo's actions will later occur as an aggressive invasion of Violetta's social space.

The frivolous world of parties and pleasure-seeking is just as Violetta left it. The Finale to Act II takes place at the salon of her friend the courtesan, Flora Bervoix. The salon is brilliantly lit and richly decorated, ready for a night of gambling and masquerade. Some of the women guests perform a dance and song disguised as dangerous women who live beyond even the world of the courtesan. They pretend to be gypsies who can foretell the future and see into the minds of others. Some of the men respond with a dance in triple metre as bull-fighters, equally exotic characters, who emanate danger and allure. Their bull-fighting also refers obliquely to the time of Mardi Gras and to an older ritual of sacrificial feasting which preceded the austerity of Lent and the Christian sacrifice.⁴⁸⁸

Alfredo ensconces himself comfortably at the gambling table and receives general praise for his casual attitude to separation from Violetta. She enters on the Baron's

⁴⁸⁷ Verdi, *La Traviata in Full Score*, p. 192.

⁴⁸⁸ de Van, *Verdi's Theater*, p. 189.

arm. It is she who appears to be encroaching on Alfredo's social space at this point.

The key changes to

F minor and the characteristic compound duple metre signals that the *posizione* of Violetta has now come back into focus. In this febrile *Allegro agitato* doubling of waltz-time, strings and woodwinds make liberal use of *acciaccature* and semiquavers (Ex. 62).

Example 62. Act II. Excerpt from prelude to Violetta's entrance to the gambling party at Flora's (p. 280)

Allegro agitato
(Gastone si pone a tagliare, Alfredo ed altri puntano)
Clar. in Sib
estremamente piano
Viol.

The compression and constriction of time values are reminders that Violetta is running out of time and space, caught as she is between the Baron and Alfredo. As courtesan-singer she is allowed hurried utterances as she attempts to keep them from confronting each other openly. She is, however, also permitted the recurring lament which rises by step in dotted crotchets from c^1 to g^1 and then cadences to the tonic f above c (Ex. 63).

Example 63. Act II. Violetta's refrain of distress at the impending confrontation (p. 283)

283)

Violetta (da sè) Ah per chè — ven - ni,in - cau - ta! Pie-tà, gran
Dio, pietà, gran Dio, di me!

Not having expected to find Alfredo at Flora's, Violetta first sings this line as she regrets her own action in attending the party. On two later occasions, as the tension builds between Alfredo and the Baron, she repeats the vocal line to exclaim that she feels as if she is dying. Each time she ends with the words 'Pieta, gran Dio, pietà di me!' (Mercy, great God, have mercy on me!).

There is a respite when supper is announced. Violetta has the opportunity to be alone with Alfredo to urge that he leave before the Baron kills him in a duel. The key moves

to D major, the metre is *Alla breve* and the tempo *Allegro agitato assai vivo*. Her urgent conversation with Alfredo is punctuated by semiquavers followed by crotchets and a semitonal see-sawing between *a flat*¹ and *g*¹ which emphasize the dangerous situation (Ex. 64).

Example 64. Act II. Violetta converses with Alfredo (p. 298)

She has taken the initiative of speaking to Alfredo. No longer trusting in the power of her own voice, with which she sings an extended *a* flat¹, Violetta knows that Alfredo's hatred of her will draw his attention (Ex. 65).

Example 65. Act II. Violetta is aware of Alfredo's hatred (p. 300)



During their exchange Violetta's vocal line ranges between *e* flat above and that *a* flat¹ which occurs when she orders Alfredo to leave, 'momento' (at once) (Ex. 66).

Example 66. Act II. Violetta urges Alfredo to leave (p. 306)



The key gradually shifts into E major when Violetta drops from *g* sharp to *e* as she falsely confesses her love for the Baron and Alfredo counters with the same notes in an ascending challenge (Ex. 67).

Example 67. Act II. Violetta's false admission of love for the Baron, prompting Alfredo to insult her in the presence of the other guests (p. 308)



The singer is still denied all opportunities for *bravura* but must retain the stamina to produce powerful notes and carry the dramatic momentum. Her presence on stage has already been required for a considerable proportion of the Act. She cannot afford, however, to tire at this point.

What follows is Alfredo's public insulting of Violetta by his throwing of money at her feet.⁴⁸⁹ This is the moment at which the wealth and brilliance of the courtesan's life is exposed as nothing more than a sordid financial transaction. Alfredo's action offends the assembled company because what must be ostentatious yet invisible to polite society must also remain unspoken in the shared social space of courtesans and clients. As Violetta faints, they close in to defend one of their own, denouncing Alfredo for killing her tender heart. This is done *Velocissimo*, with a resounding orchestral *tutti* supporting full chorus and male principals (Ex. 68).

⁴⁸⁹ Verdi, *La Traviata*, p. 313.

Example 68. Act II. Chorus and principals with orchestral *tutti* denounce Alfredo (p.

313)

(getta con furente sprezzo una borsa a'piè di Violetta,
che sviene fra le braccia di Flora)

SCENA XV. (in questo momento entra Germont)

qui, che qui pa - ga - tao l'ho.

Gastone

Barone

Dottore

Marchese

Sop.

Ten.

Coro

Bassi

Giorgio Germont has followed Alfredo to a place he has only entered from dire necessity. He remains silent until given an opportunity to confront his son in the Finale. He makes it clear that no woman, whatever her transgressive social space, deserves such an insult. Alfredo is horrified by what he has done and the Baron is determined to punish him.

The Finale to Act II is a *Largo* in quadruple time. There must be a belated melding of propriety and empathy as Germont's world begins to deal with Violetta's in common humanity. This is subtly indicated by the introduction of continuous triplet figures as the conversation between father and son grows to a full ensemble of all principals, chorus and orchestral *tutti* with the exception of the prostrate Violetta. The courtesan's waltz is no longer pressed into compound duple metre, but expanded into compound quadruple (Ex. 69).

Example 69. Act II. Excerpt from ensemble as they sympathize with Violetta (p. 324)

From the end of Act I until this point in the opera the singer of Violetta has been required to exercise great restraint. Moments of lyric *cantabile* have alternated with breathlessly urgent *parlante*. Violetta has had little time off stage after Act I. Her presence has demanded continuous dramatic intensity and conviction with neither the intense vocal stress nor the vocal opportunity engendered by coloratura display. It has, however, required powerful projection continually subordinated to, or eclipsed by, the voices of others. In this way, Verdi has removed Violetta's power of seduction and the danger of her siren voice. His music has allowed a paradoxically demanding rest for the singer and emphasized the failing power of a sick woman whose brilliant outburst in Act I can be seen as unnatural and necessarily shortlived.

The time comes when Violetta revives from her faint, surrounded by all those of her world who profess to be her friends and defenders. She gradually finds her voice again in sufficient strength to express both her mild reproach and intense love for Alfredo. Metre and key remain the same as Violetta begins to sing in a range which will not allow her to drop below the *f* sharp and will rise to the *b* flat¹. The *tessitura* consistently moves around *c*¹ as Violetta is literally supported by and rises above the entire ensemble. The sustained slow pace, the soaring line which must penetrate through the vocal and orchestral texture, and the recurrent *fortissimo* passages including the final bars, demand great control and stamina from the singer (Ex. 70).⁴⁹⁰

Example 70. Act II. Excerpt from *Largo del Finale*. Violetta and ensemble (p. 338)

The musical score consists of ten staves. From top to bottom, the vocal parts are labeled: V., F., Al., G., Gt., B., D., M., and Coro. The ensemble part is on the bottom staff. The music is in B-flat major and common time. The vocal parts sing in unison or with slight variations, while the ensemble provides harmonic support. The music includes dynamic markings like ff and ff, and vocal techniques like 'rasciuga il pianto'.

This is not a demonstration of the vocal virtuosity found in Act I, but a measured attempt to maintain resolve in her personal sacrifice, now asserting moral power over

⁴⁹⁰ Private communication with Joan Carden, 23 May 2009.

the lover who has insulted her. This Finale brings Violetta to the last moment in which she can exert any substantial power over the society of the courtesan-singer.

Act III

The Prelude to Act I opened in E major with music in complete contrast to the hedonistic atmosphere which would eventually emerge. It was a declaration of Verdi's *posizione* with regard to his sympathy for the character of Violetta. The same poignantly sustained chromatic line is played *Andante*, now a semitone higher, but in C minor by the strings, *estremamente piano e assai legato* as Violetta lies asleep in a sparsely furnished sickroom stripped of the crowded opulence of her former life (Ex. 71).

Example 71. Act III. Excerpt from orchestral opening as Annina attends to Violetta (p. 342)

This is the Violetta on whom Verdi has maintained his focus throughout the opera. Her social space now reduced to one room, she has only the company of her maid Annina. The *Scena ed Aria* is first encapsulated within four walls and the four beats of quadruple metre, so uncharacteristic of Violetta's world. She and Annina exchange commonplaces which manage to show Violetta as newly sympathetic for the needs of others. The opening orchestral motif supports the quiet activity of Annina as she

prepares Violetta for another day. Violetta insists on receiving Doctor Grenvil decorously from the sofa rather than in bed. She speaks to him of the consolations of religion and is not deceived by his false reassurances. When the doctor has left, telling Annina that Violetta has no more than hours to live, the recitatives between Annina and Violetta continue. When she learns that Paris is celebrating Mardi Gras, Violetta is worried only that she can do so little for the poor when others are celebrating.

When Annina has left on an errand, Violetta takes out a letter and begins to read *con voce bassa senza suono ma a tempo*. The quadruple metre of recitative gives way to 3/8 and C minor moves to G-flat major. Tremolos in the middle strings softly accompany the familiar melodic signifier of Alfredo's original serenade played by two solo first violins (Ex. 72).

Example 72. Act II. String accompaniment to Violetta's spoken reading of the letter
(p. 352)

252 *Andantino (♩ = 88) (con voce bassa senza suono ma a tempo)*
*(Violetta trae dal seno una lettera e legge) „Tenete la promessa... La disfida ebbe luogo... Il barone fu
 ferito, però migliora... Alfredo è in strano suolo. Il vostro*

SCENA IV.

*sacrificio io stesso gli ho svelato. Egli a voi tornerà pel suo perdono;.. io pur verro... (con voce
 Curatevi... mertate un avvenir migliore... Giorgio Germont...., E sepolcrale)*

The audience is reminded of Alfredo's rapturous sentiments which are conveyed as being also in the mind of Violetta as she reads. The letter is from Alfredo's father. It tells her of Alfredo's travels after the duel in which the Baron was wounded. More importantly, it tells her that Alfredo knows of her sacrifice.

Verdi's inspired strategy is to have Violetta speak the words of the letter. In opera of the *seria* genre developing from the eighteenth-century Arcadian academic reforms (and as opposed to *opera buffa*, for example), and the serious *dramma per musica* type to which *La traviata* is heir, all monologues and conversations are sung

throughout. The expectation for singer and audience is that the conventions will be obeyed. In this case although precedents had been set for spoken declamation of letters to differentiate writer and singer the singer transgresses convention as observed up to this point in the opera. The effect can be stunning for an audience suddenly brought close to the ‘real’ voice of a Violetta who has no need to display musical power for which the strength is leaving her. Played by an actress who avoids excessive melodrama, it has the potential to contain sixteen of the most vocally expressive bars in the opera without a note being sung. Verdi’s notion that ‘anyone’ could succeed as Violetta is again temporarily reinforced.

The shock of speech gives way to the return of pitched voice after a transition over an F minor seventh harmony to A minor. In recitative, Violetta laments that the awaited return of Alfredo as also promised in the letter is not happening. The chromatically rising notes in the strings and her own finally ascending notes in preparation for a sudden octave drop, signal her anger and despair at the death of hope (Ex. 73).

Example 73. Act III. Excerpt from recitative preceding *aria* (pp. 352 – 353)

The musical score consists of five staves. The top staff is for 'Violetta' (soprano), with lyrics in parentheses: '(si alza)', 'tardi!.. Atten-do, at - ten-do, nè a me giungon ma-i!..', and '(si guarda nello specchio) Oh co-me son mu-'. The second staff is for 'Viol.' (Violin). The third staff is for 'V-le' (Viola). The fourth staff is for 'Vc.' (Cello). The bottom staff is for 'Cb.' (Bassoon). Dynamic markings include 'tutti' and 'ppp' (pianissimo). The score shows a transition from a spoken recitative to a vocal line, with the strings providing harmonic support through sustained notes and rhythmic patterns.

Example 73. Continued (p. 353)

v.
Viol.
V.le
Vc.
Cb.

-ta-ta!.. Ma il Dot-to-re a sperar pure me sortal!.. Ah con tal morbo ogni speranza è mor-
col canto

Adagio

Fatalistically she begins the aria *Addio del passato, Andante mosso* in compound duple metre. This is not the frenetic metre of the past but more fitted for a lullaby, *dolente e pianissimo, legato e dolce* (Ex. 74).

Example 74. Act III. Violetta begins the aria *Addio del passato* (p. 353)

Andante mosso (♩ = 50)
I.

Ob.
v.

ta!
Ad - di - o — del pas - sa - to — bei —

dolente e pp *legato e dolce*

It is yet another farewell in which she sings ‘Addio’, this time on a rising minor sixth, taking up in resignation the same ascending interval with which Germont began his destruction of her hopes in Act II. She takes leave of the youthful dreams of the past which had been revived in Act I and had become a momentary reality in Act II. Verdi’s music takes Violetta and the singer back to the provincial simplicity of the tuneful verse and refrain over strummed chords which might be found in any

Neapolitan song. Woodwinds carry the melodies accompanied by the *pizzicato* chords made by the strings in the transformed waltz's triplets of 6/8. Violetta's music is now no more than that of an innocent peasant girl who, having aspired to a bourgeois respectability and fulfillment now mourns the tragedy of her loss. Having performed this aria, I can attest to the simple, viscerally keening quality of its strophes, broken as they are by the interruptions of the plea to heaven and the fatalism of their final lines.⁴⁹¹ Abbate sees this aria's couplets as an *hommage* to its formal French origins and also as a manifestation of the composed work's control over the singer.⁴⁹² Violetta no longer has Alfredo's love to sustain her. In death she will not rest in consecrated ground because of the life she has lived. Each verse expresses these thoughts in A minor. The implication is that not even heaven will have space for her. The refrain, however, shifts to A major as Violetta prays that God will smile on the wishes of 'la traviata', the one who is lost and thus in a sense without any *posizione* at all (Ex. 75).

Example 75. Act III. Modal change for refrain of *aria* (p. 355)



The end of each refrain reverts to A minor as the singer climbs from *a* to *a*¹ (Ex. 76).

⁴⁹¹ Arthur Groos, “‘TB Sheets’: Love and Disease in ‘La traviata’” in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 7, Number 3 (November, 1995), pp. 233 – 260.

⁴⁹² Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 44.

Example 76. Act III. Reversion to A minor in *aria* as Violetta sings of all being finished (p. 356)



This is directed to be sung *pianissimo* with *un fil di voce*, a feat which, in the experience of the writer, takes great control. It is, however, possibly even more dramatically effective if the vocal thread happens to break in the process. In this case, the singer may further identify with the physical frailty of Violetta's character.

The space in which Violetta exists is seen to be distanced from the world by being contrasted with the carnival revelry outside her window. A chorus of masquers sings a *Baccanale* as they lead the fat ox, garlanded for sacrifice and celebration. Violetta is now excluded from normal pleasures and again obliquely identified with the sacrificial victim.⁴⁹³

The *Scena e Duetto, Signora ... Che t'accade?* is Violetta's final active part in the world. It opens with an expectant *Allegro assai vivo* recitative exchange in G major. Annina returns from her errand with the news that Alfredo is coming back. The string orchestration, with hesitant first violin punctuation, adds woodwinds as the first violins move to insistent dotted rhythms filling all four beats of the quadruple metre (Ex. 77).

⁴⁹³ de Van, *Verdi's Theater*, p. 189.

Example 77. Act III. Rhythm intensifies as Violetta expects Alfredo's arrival (p. 368)

The dynamics increase from the muted *pianissimo* of the sickroom to burst into an impassioned *fortissimo* when Alfredo and Violetta finally meet. The ascending interval on which Violetta and Alfredo sing each other's names is a major sixth. It is no longer the minor interval with which Germont undermined hope of a lasting love or that of Violetta as she bade farewell to youthful dreams. Their ecstatic reunion reveals the shared *posizione* in which they are one, singing the same melodic line at the octave their repetitions of the beloved's name. (Ex.78).

Example 78. Act III. Violetta and Alfredo are reunited (p. 369)

In their exclamations of joy, forgiveness and self-blame they answer or repeat each other's musical phrases. Violetta follows Alfredo with the vow that 'Null'uomo o demon, angiol mio, / Mai più dividermi potra da te' (No man or devil, my angel has the power to separate me from you again) (Ex. 79).

Example 79. Act III. Violetta and Alfredo pledge that nothing will part them (p. 372)

They repeat each other's words, 'mai più, no' (will ever, no) (or 'never more, no'), following from 'no man or demon') at increasing pitches. The promise that nothing will part them is sealed in emphatic thirds descending, in Violetta's case, from a now surprising b^1 (Ex. 80).

Example 80. Act III. Violetta's reassertion of physical power (p. 373)

The tumultuous welcome is separated from their following conversation by a woodwind modulation from E major to A-flat major. Focus on Violetta's own feelings is signalled by a change of metre to 3/8 (Ex. 81).

Example 81. Act III. Change of metre and key. Duet between Violetta and Alfredo (p. 374)

It is Alfredo who first sings of another attempt to escape the Parisian turmoil for an idyll which will cure Violetta. The delicate *pizzicato* strings keep a peaceful *Andante mosso* tempo. Violetta repeats Alfredo's words and music. They believe that the social space against which Violetta railed in the Finale to Act I is what has brought her near to death. As their conviction becomes stronger, Alfredo sings in harmony with Violetta's vocal line and then his own becomes ornamented. The idea of recompense for past sufferings is taken up by Violetta almost playfully in a chromatic line of *staccato* semiquavers accompanied by divided first and second violins (Ex. 82).

Example 82. Act III. Recompense for past sufferings. Duet between Violetta and Alfredo (p. 377)

It is repeated several times until both Alfredo and Violetta sing *pianissimo* in harmony, of healed hurt and revived health (Ex. 83).

Example 83. Act III. Violetta and Alfredo hope for healing (p. 386)

After the gentle *Allargando* which ends their duet, Violetta embarks on a recitative exchange with Alfredo. She wishes to give thanks for their reunion in church. Her social space must now be one sanctified by God. This section is an *Allegro* in quadruple metre, later *più mosso*. String tremolos and trilled woodwinds come and go as Violetta attempts to deceive herself and Alfredo with her own trills that his return has cured her (Ex. 84).

Example 84. Act III. Violetta attempts to reassure Alfredo of her recovery (p. 388)

She wishes to dress, but cannot remain standing long enough to do so. Her final demand to go outside the confines of her room is followed by a last frustrated attempt to dress accompanied by a sweeping chromatic climb in the strings. It ends *fortissimo* as she cries out to God that she does not have the strength to go on; ‘Gran Dio!.. Non posso!’ (Great God! I cannot). The force and length of her exclamation implies that she is physically unable either to complete the simple task of dressing or even to continue living. It is a defeat which must also be embraced by the singer. (Ex. 85).

Example 85. Act III. Violetta is physically defeated (p. 390)



At the order of a horrified Alfredo, Annina leaves to fetch the Doctor. Violetta, echoing the imperious courtesan of her past, sends a message that she must live again because Alfredo has returned. The hopeful quavers of the strings and Violetta’s own demanding crotchets are cut through *con tutta forza* by a long and sepulchral note from the brass, in particular the trombones associated with Hades since long before, in the *Sinfonia* of Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo* (1607) (Ex. 86).⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ Claudio Monteverdi, *L’Orfeo: Favola in musica*, 1607, ed. Denis Stevens (London: Novello, 1967), p. 70.

Example 86. Act III. Brass emphasis of the situation's gravity (p. 392)

The musical score shows a section for brass instruments: in Sol, Corni, in Do, Trbe, in Do, Trbni, and Cimb. Each instrument has a sustained note on the staff. The dynamics are marked as *ff*. The vocal line is by V. (Violetta), with lyrics: "cor, che vi - ve - re an - cor vo - gli'i-o...". The vocal dynamic is *pianissimo*, indicated by *pp*. A bracket above the vocal line is labeled "(Annina parte)" and "(ad Alfredo)". The vocal line continues with "Ma se tor-

This introduces Violetta's realisation that though she now has something to live for, it cannot stop her from dying. Sustained *pianissimo* strings accompany this until a *fortissimo* upward sweep runs in semiquavers to a final sustained orchestral *tutti* chord. Violetta's sudden impossible rise from the sofa, together with her sustained g^1 marks the transition to the fatalistic last section of her duet with Alfredo (Ex. 87).

Example 87. Act III. Violetta desperately attempts to rise (p. 393)

The musical score shows a vocal line by V. (Violetta) and a cello line (Viol.). The vocal line includes lyrics: "da-to.", "(sorgendo impetuosa)", "Ah! Gran Dio!.. morir si", and "pizz.". The vocal line is marked with *legato con espress.*. The cello line consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern. Dynamics include *ff*, *pizz.*, and *f*.

An inexorable quadruple metre rhythm of crotchets only momentarily relieved by minims or quavers is ticked off to the accompaniment of *pizzicato* strings marking each second as Violetta's life slips away (Ex. 88).

Example 88. Act III. Violetta's attitude becomes more fatalistic (p. 393)



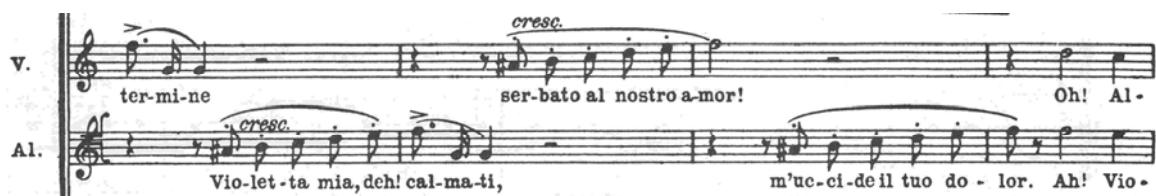
She is shocked at her own credulous hopes and bitter that her constancy has not saved her. This hardening of attitude gives the courtesan-singer a final opportunity to utter a *fortissimo a¹* on the word ‘armato’ (armed) (Ex. 89).

Example 89. Act III. Violetta attempts to assert her strength (p. 394)



Alfredo uses exactly the same music, however, to plead for Violetta’s constancy and continued hope, this time with the *fortissimo a* used on the word ‘speranza’ (hope). Their music may be similar, but they are beginning to part company. Violetta sings a descending line lamenting her fate. Alfredo repeats it, asking her to be calm. She continues her thoughts on an ascending run (Ex. 90).

Example 90. Act III. Violetta and Alfredo reflect each other’s thoughts (p. 397)



He echoes her with a gentle reproach that her grief is destroying him. They repeat their own words at the interval of a third. Violetta returns to her fatalistic crotchet

refrain against Alfredo's sustained efforts to calm her until they come together in harmony of pitch but not of thought, in a preliminary cadence (Ex. 91).

Example 91. Act III. Violetta and Alfredo's voices form V⁷ – I cadence with double bass (p. 399)

[V⁷ – I]

There follows a *più mosso* section in which their voices chase one another. They then join together in a sustained octave with orchestral *tutti*, reaching again for the major sixth in defiance of the connotations of defeat found in the minor sixth. For this Violetta must make the supreme effort of holding an *a*¹ for more than six beats before she collapses and they both descend, she to *c*¹ and he to *c* (Ex. 92).

Example 92. Act III. Violetta collapses after a sustained effort to remain in control (p. 403)

The singer, either reclining or seated, should experience some stress at this passage.

There has been only sporadic preparation for sustained vocal exertion which requires both height of pitch and the lower larynx of dramatic power.

Allegro assai vivo chromatic runs and tremolos in the strings introduce the *Finale Ultimo* as Germont enters joyfully satisfied at being able to keep his promise to embrace Violetta as a daughter. She continues their recitative against ticking quavers, as if her time is now being measured a little more urgently, with her own philosophical reproach that he has come too late. Relentless woodwind and string passages sweep upwards to prepare and emphasize the descent of Germont's remorse as he realizes what he has done (Ex. 93).

Example 93. Act III. Germont is overcome with remorse (p. 407)

The musical score for Example 93 shows six staves of music. From top to bottom, the staves are: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in D (Clar. in Do), Bassoon (Fag.), Alto (Al.), and Violin (Viol.). The vocal parts are labeled "I. Solo" above the oboe and clarinet staves. The vocal line for Germont (Bass) starts with "ve - di, pa - dre mi - o?..." followed by "Di più non la - ce - rar - mi, troppo ri-". The vocal line for Violetta (Alto) consists of a series of eighth-note patterns. The score is marked with dynamic changes (p, f, ff) and performance instructions like "p" and "ff". The page number 407 is located in the top right corner of the score.

Violetta wishes to share the space and time of Alfredo's future by leaving him a reminder of her former beauty in a miniature portrait. She wants the bride he may later have to know of her benign presence and prayers in a spiritual space outside the

temporal world. This *Andante sostenuto* passage in D-flat major is a recitative in simple triple metre. Violetta's waltz has slowed and the quaver-demisemiquaver accompaniment is stereotypically funereal. Verdi gives explicit instructions that although the full orchestra is being used it must execute these rhythms *pianissimo* (Ex. 94).

Example 94. Act III. Violetta presents the miniature portrait. Excerpt shows woodwinds, brass and percussion (p. 409)

Andante sostenuto (d=56) Questo squarcio benchè a tutta orchestra dovrà eseguirsi pianissimo

(cupo)

Prendi... quest'è l'im-ma-gi-ne de' miei passa-ti

Alfredo and Germont refuse to submit to Violetta's fatalism but she completes her instructions to Alfredo, momentarily in E major and then in a returned D-flat major as she ascends to what now seems a miraculous *fortissimo* b flat¹ when she refers to herself as being among the angels (Ex. 95).

Example 95. Act III. Violetta's high note now defines her as aspiring to a new space outside the world (p. 420)



The funeral pace moves to *Andantino*, the metre to 3/8 and the key to A major.

Pianississimo string *soli* in each part support a final return of Alfredo's serenade beneath Violetta's sudden exclamation (Ex. 96).

Example 96. Act III. Violetta believes she is reviving and Alfredo's theme is heard (p. 421)

Her words, ‘È strano,’ are the same as those with which she first recognised the possibility of genuine love. Although Violetta believes that she is recovering she sings a monotone of demisemiquavers in *parlando* and catches her failing breath in rests between the short utterances as she becomes more agitated. Trilled flutes and piccolos above string tremolo quavers signify this fluttering revival. Violetta, the courtesan-singer, cannot be allowed the excesses of her Act I Finale high *d* flats², but finally falls after the emblematically hopeful leap of a major sixth to the *b* flat¹. Violetta’s last word is not the ‘Gioire’ of her Act I Finale resolution to ‘enjoy’ the social space of the singer-courtesan. It is instead the word ‘Gioia’ (joy) with which she appears reconciled to the spiritual space now earned by her sacrificial love. The singer of whose voice so much has been asked and from which so much has been withheld, must utter this almost anticlimactic phrase which subsides from the major sixth, not to the minatory or despairing minor sixth, but by one full tone to the perfect fifth before she falls silent (Ex. 97).

Example 97. Act III. Violetta dies (p. 422)



Verdi leads Violetta and the singer who performs the role through a series of strategies which can confound the expectations of those who might be seduced by display. In doing so, he uses aural cues which serve as agreed metaphors for the conflicts and resolutions which take place as Violetta’s posizione develops. Most prominent amongst these are the contrasting metres which represent Violetta’s social space as opposed to that of Alfredo and Germont; the chromaticism which can

delineate tension or resignation; the ironic juxtaposition of melodic or rhythmic shape or articulation with contradictory text or line; the divergence and convergence of line as characters play out their conflicts; and the minor and major sixths with which Violetta shares her despair with Germont's warnings and her hopes with those of Alfredo.