

FRYDERYK CHOPIN UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC

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**Realization of the piano reduction in relation to orchestral sound.
Analysis in terms of agogics, dynamics, timbre and performance
tradition, based on the example of the contrasting operas by Giacomo
Puccini: *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*.**

translated into English by the author

A description of an artwork

Doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of
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Supervisor's Statement

I hereby declare that this dissertation has been prepared under my supervision and I confirm that it meets the conditions required for submission in the doctoral procedure.

Date: _____

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Author's Statement

I am fully aware of the legal responsibility and hereby declare that this doctoral dissertation titled „*Realization of the piano reduction in relation to orchestral sound. Analysis in terms of agogics, dynamics, timbre and performance tradition, based on the example of the contrasting operas by Giacomo Puccini: Suor Angelica and Gianni Schicchi.*” has been written independently by me under the guidance of my supervisor and does not contain content obtained in violation of applicable regulations.

I also declare that this dissertation has not previously been subject to any procedures related to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Arts.

Furthermore, I declare that the version of the dissertation presented here is identical to the attached electronic version.

I declare that the artistic work, which is an integral part of this doctoral dissertation, was realized under the following circumstances:

- **Date of realization/recording:** 04-06.2024
- **Place of realization/recording:** Studio S1, Fryderyk Chopin University of Music
- **Performers:**

piano: Aleksandra Janaszewska

Suor Angelica:

- *Suor Angelica:* Aleksandra Wittchen
- *La Zia Principessa:* Zuzanna Nalewajek
- *La Badessa:* Estera Wityńska
- *La Suora Zelatrice:* Izabella Fabrycka
- *Suor Genovieffa:* Izabella Fabrycka
- *La Suora Infermiera:* Aleksandra Królak
- *La Maestra delle Novizie:* Katarzyna Prokopczyk
- *Le Cercatrici, Le Novizie, Le Converse, suor Osmina, suor Dolcina:* Zuzanna Wrona, Ewa Szczypińska, Aleksandra Królak, Katarzyna Prokopczyk, Wei Qi

Gianni Schicchi:

- *Gianni Schicchi:* Mateusz Michałowski
- *Lauretta:* Maria Kopińska
- *Zita:* Roksana Maria Maciejczuk
- *Rinuccio:* Adam Walasek
- *Gherardo:* Przemysław Młyński
- *Nella:* Konstancja Molewska
- *Gherardino:* Mateusz Kulczyński
- *Betto di Signa:* Piotr Bujnowski
- *Simone:* Bartosz Kieszkowski
- *Marco:* Mateusz Kulczyński
- *Ciesca:* Anna Mielecka
- *Maestro Spinelloccio, medico:* Szymon Bołtralik
- *Amantio di Nicolao, notaro:* Mateusz Kulczyński
- *Pinellino, Guccio:* Szymon Bołtralik, Przemysław Młyński

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Introduction

The piano reduction, being a reduction of an orchestral score intended for performance on the piano, plays a fundamental role in musical practice. Its significance extends beyond a purely didactic function - it constitutes a working tool in the process of preparing an operatic performance, and in certain cases it even acquires an autonomous artistic value. Although in the history of music piano reductions were prepared by eminent composers and arrangers, and their role in shaping performance practice was invaluable, this issue remains largely overlooked in Polish musicological literature. The lack of detailed studies concerning interpretative challenges and practical aspects of performing piano reductions in the context of orchestral sound constitutes a significant research gap, which this dissertation attempts to address.

The aim of the dissertation is to present the performance-related issues of the piano reduction in relation to the original orchestration, with particular emphasis on aspects of tempo, dynamics, agogics, timbre, and performance tradition. In the author's opinion, this is an exceptionally interesting topic that deserves a separate place within the scope of academic research. The objective of the work is to collect and describe a wide range of issues related to performing an orchestral part on the piano by a single pianist - both the difficulties and the possibilities associated with it - as well as the challenges faced by répétiteur pianists collaborating with opera singers.

Due to the exceptionally broad scope of research in this field, the author decided to narrow it by selecting two operas by Giacomo Puccini, guided by the following criteria:

1. The author's fluent familiarity with both scores and experience in working on the above-mentioned operas at all stages of preparing an operatic production - from individual work and learning her own part - the orchestral part - through collaboration with the conductor and director during numerous rehearsals, to coaching soloists - singers - for the performance of specific roles.
2. Giacomo Puccini as the composer of both operas - one of the greatest and most outstanding opera composers, characterized by a unique style and compositional

technique, marked by a richness of issues related to the performance of his works. These factors provide a clear basis for conducting extensive research, which the author will present in the subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

3. The contrast between the works - the dramatic *Suor Angelica* and, in clear contrast, the comic *Gianni Schicchi*. It should be emphasized that both operas, as two parts of *Il Trittico* (alongside *Il Tabarro*), are in the vast majority of cases performed together and form a kind of “diptych” on opera stages worldwide.
4. Duration - both operas are one-act works, each lasting approximately one hour. In contrast to many other operatic works, which are significantly more extensive and longer, the coherence of their form and their character (briefly outlined in the previous subsection) provide opportunities and space to examine a wide range of diverse aspects related to the performance of the operatic piano reduction.

The novelty of the dissertation lies in approaching the piano reduction not only as a technical working tool, but also as an artistic phenomenon, requiring from the pianist a high level of musical competence and sonic awareness. Particular attention will be devoted to the role of the pianist as a partner to the singer, whose task is to create conditions similar to working with an orchestra, which requires both the ability to work with an orchestral score and an appropriate approach to the interpretation of the piano reduction.

The structure of the dissertation comprises four main parts. The first chapter presents a definition of the piano reduction, its historical and practical role, as well as the main issues related to performance practice. The second chapter discusses the history of the creation of *Il Trittico*, with particular emphasis on *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. The third and fourth chapters analyze examples of adapting orchestral texture for the piano in both operas, indicating interpretative difficulties and possibilities. These chapters also constitute an analytical commentary on the audio recordings of both operas made by the author. In this way, the theoretical part of the dissertation directly corresponds with its performance dimension, forming a coherent research-artistic whole.

The dissertation concludes with a summary, appendix and a bibliography.

Chapter 1 - Piano reduction - definition of the concept

1.1 Definition of the concept

In order to begin the analysis of the issues mentioned in the title of the dissertation, it is first necessary to pose the question of what a piano reduction is? What is its function and what role does it play in the process of creating an operatic performance? Is it merely a technical working tool, usually of a didactic nature, or can it also be treated as an object of creative work, and its final performance as a work of art?

Encyclopedic Dictionary of Music: University of Oxford provides the following definition of the term "piano reduction": *Reduction is a type of transcription, but differs from it in that it serves a practical purpose and has a functional character. Most often it is a reduction for piano, but it may also be a reduction for piano four hands or for two pianos. A piano reduction is a piano arrangement of a score intended for another instrumental or vocal ensemble.*¹ It follows that an operatic piano reduction is an arrangement for piano of the full orchestral score of an opera. Interestingly, the *Encyklopedia PWN* expands the definition of "piano reduction" with the following information: *In works containing solo instrumental parts (e.g. concertos) or vocal parts (e.g. operas), a piano reduction of the orchestral part is prepared; piano reductions are created mainly to facilitate familiarization with the work, e.g. for conductors, and its mastery, e.g. for soloists; in compositional practice of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the preparation of piano reductions was the first stage of creating an orchestral work, while the final stage was instrumentation reflected in the full score.*² It is therefore necessary to emphasize the fundamental role played by the piano reduction. Already at the stage of composing a work, for many composers working on their compositions "at the piano" it constituted the first, essential stage of the often monumental process of composing an operatic work, frequently for dozens or even hundreds of performers. However, this was not always the case - sometimes the transcription of a work for piano was carried out by another person, acting on behalf of the composer or the publisher of

¹ [*Encyclopedic Dictionary of Music: University of Oxford*, vol. II, L to Z, Paris, Editions Robert Laffont, "Książki" edition, 1991, entry "Piano reduction" p. 557]

² *Encyklopedia PWN*, entry "Piano reduction", <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/wyciag-fortepianowy;3998697.html>, accessed: 08.11.2023

their works. Marc-André Roberge distinguishes three basic categories of authors of piano reductions, while noting that they are not mutually exclusive:

- the first group consists of specialists in the field of piano arrangements, whose activity was focused almost exclusively on preparing reductions of scores, which often overshadowed other aspects of their artistic activity. This group includes, among others, Richard Kleinmichel and Otto Singer Jr., authors of numerous transcriptions of works by Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, as well as August Stradal, creator of over 250 piano arrangements of compositions representing the repertoire of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- the second category is formed by performers - especially conductors - who independently prepared reductions as tools for artistic and didactic work. Examples include Gustav Friedrich Kögel, author of transcriptions of operas by Albert Lortzing or Conradin Kreutzer, and Kurt Soldan, responsible for piano vocal scores of selected works by Giuseppe Verdi.
- the most numerous and most significant group consists of composers, for whom the practice of preparing both their own works and those of other composers was a common and socially accepted element of creative activity - often also at the highest artistic level.³

The number of composers engaged in creating piano reductions was exceptionally large and included leading figures of creators from various eras, nationalities and aesthetics. This phenomenon was so widespread that it is more difficult to indicate a composer who did not undertake this practice than one who did. Moreover, experience in the field of transcription and arrangement often had a direct influence on the formation of an individual compositional language. One of the most striking examples may be Franz Liszt and his famous, virtuosic operatic paraphrases, or Claude Debussy, who in *Hommage à Rameau* reinterpreted the Baroque idiom through the prism of impressionist harmony. In the case of Johannes Brahms, work on transcriptions and arrangements of works by classical composers contributed to the development of his contrapuntal technique, while in Maurice Ravel the bidirectional practice of

³ Roberge MA., *From Orchestra to Piano, Notes*, 2nd series, vol. 49, no. 3, 1993, p. 926, www.jstor.org, trans. by the author.

arrangements - both piano and orchestral - influenced the clarity and coloristic qualities of his style. These cases demonstrate that piano reductions fulfilled not only a utilitarian function, but also constituted an important tool for artistic development and aesthetic reflection for many composers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In the case of the piano reduction for both *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*, its creator may be classified within the second group - their author is Carlo Carignani, a contemporary of Giacomo Puccini and his friend since childhood; they also attended together the Istituto musicale Giovanni Pacini in Lucca. Carignani himself was not only a pianist, but also a composer, conductor, and a teacher of singing. He prepared piano reductions of all of Puccini's operas, from *Edgar* (1889) to *Il Trittico* (1918), as he died a few months after its premiere. His piano versions were intended to convey the atmosphere of the full orchestra, while at the same time constituting a practical didactic and performance tool for singers and instrumentalists. Carignani, being a comprehensively educated musician, was aware that the orchestral score should not be simplified in a way that would diminish the emotional charge of the work. Therefore, the piano reductions were created in such a way as to preserve the dramatic intensity of the original orchestration, while applying appropriate piano techniques in order to maximize the possibilities of recreating the sound of the orchestra. The reductions created by Carignani are therefore not only reliable transcriptions, but also artistic interpretations of Puccini's orchestration, at the same time leaving the performer space for further exploration of the material and its interpretative development. This type of approach to the piano reduction means that it does not become merely a practical working tool, but also an autonomous form of artistic expression.

However, regardless of whether a piano reduction is created by the composer of the work themselves or by a third party, the key role is played by the concern for preserving the greatest possible fidelity to the original. If a given fragment of the original score is not possible to transfer to the piano on a one-to-one basis (in terms of musical notation), substitute means as close as possible to it should be sought. This also opens up many possibilities for the pianist wishing to perform a given, already created piano reduction. In practice, it is permissible to make one's own corrections, to introduce one's own ideas, bearing in mind the constant improvement of the piano reduction by bringing its sound closer to that of the original. This activity may bring the pianist much satisfaction;

however, it requires their continuous work not only with the reduction, but also with the score and, in contemporary times, with recordings. It should be emphasized that throughout the entire nineteenth century, before the advent of recordings, which made access to symphonic or operatic music much easier for the average listener, it was precisely piano reductions that to some extent fulfilled this function, enabling engagement with a symphony or an opera in domestic conditions. Not without significance is the fact that in those times most educated individuals, coming from well-to-do families, could play or were learning to play the piano, and making music together was an extremely important part of domestic life. Transcriptions of various works for the piano were therefore ubiquitous.

1.2 Piano reduction - the most important performance aspects

1.2.1 The first stage of work with a piano reduction, or how to read a reduction

When beginning work on mastering the musical material, it is essential first to gain a comprehensive understanding of its musical structure through the parallel analysis of the piano reduction, the orchestral score, and recordings, which allows for a complete picture of the task from the very beginning of learning, thus making it faster and more effective. The ability to study the orchestral score and to make decisions based on it regarding interventions in the notation of the piano reduction is one of the most important skills that a répétiteur pianist must acquire.

The next step is to master the so-called “grey area,”⁴ which encompasses all elements not directly derived from the musical notation. Knowledge of the stylistic context and performance traditions related to a given opera is equally significant for the process of assimilating it as the technical mastery of the musical material. As the pianist and long-time opera coach Alan Montgomery observes in his book *Opera coaching: Professional Techniques and Considerations*, two main types of orchestral reductions can be distinguished: a reduction to what can realistically be played on the piano, and

⁴ Alan Montgomery, *Opera Coaching: Professional Techniques for the Répétiteur* (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 10.

a notation in a system consisting of two staves, encompassing almost the full content of the orchestral material, with text in black from notes written from top to bottom⁵. He simultaneously emphasizes: *this does not mean, however, that one should play only what is in the piano reduction. Listening to recordings and studying the orchestral scores can reveal major omissions in the attempt to reduce an entire score to something manageable for two hands.*⁶ This presents the pianist with a fundamental two-dimensional task: for a successful interpretation of the piano reduction, it can be both expanded and compressed. What is decidedly inadvisable, however, is the unreflective mastering of the material in its entirety solely for the purpose of playing all the written notes in a manner devoid of musical sense.

1.2.2 Between orchestral sound and piano reduction: limitations, differences, consequences

The differences between the orchestral score and its piano reduction are fundamental and immediately noticeable - both at the level of sound and musical construction. The orchestra operates with a varied palette of timbres, spatial depth, multi-layered texture, and independence of voices, whereas the piano reduces everything to a homogeneous sound and a limited number of layers that can be represented. These differences are not only fundamental but also easy to perceive upon first contact with the musical material. However, there are a number of detailed, and often problematic, performance aspects that deserve separate discussion:

- Multiple planes of articulation - the multi-layered nature of the orchestra naturally renders its individual elements independent of each other. One frequently encountered example of this phenomenon is the carrying of a *legato* melodic line by the violins or woodwind instruments, simultaneously accompanied by *pizzicato* realized by the cellos and double basses. This case represents only the most elementary example of a much broader phenomenon, whose possibilities are almost limitless. Of course, on the piano the performer can also effectively realize two distinct articulations by using the sustain pedal judiciously. However, it is crucial to avoid excessive use, which could cause the texture to become blurred, requiring

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶ Ibid., p. 11

greater emphasis on precise fingered *legato*. This is particularly significant in the context of performing a piano reduction, where the differentiated articulation of individual instrumental groups exerts an essential influence on the overall character and sound of the work.

The image displays a musical score for G. Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Act III, finale. It features vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal lines are in Italian, with lyrics: "pa - dre... las - sù... in", "cie - lo, vi - ci - na al - la ma - dre... in e -", "ter - no per voi... pre - ghe - rò.", and "Non mo -". The piano accompaniment includes a staccato flute line and a half-note string section. The score is marked with "pausa lunga" and "pp".

Fig. 1. G. Verdi - *Rigoletto* - act III, finale - example of two planes of articulation: *staccato* of the flutes and half notes of the string section (in the full score without *arpeggios*)

- Sound development: continuity of sound in orchestral instruments versus the decaying nature of the piano sound - this is one of the problems that constantly recurs in performance practice and is, in essence, impossible to fully resolve in a completely satisfactory manner. The pianist can partially compensate for this limitation through precise use of the pedal, control of dynamics within the context of the phrase, repetitions (delicate reiterations of the sound) and *tremolo*, as well as appropriate shaping of agogics and *rubato*, which allows one to visually “lengthen” the sound or enhance its perception. Although it is impossible to faithfully reproduce the orchestral continuity of sound, it is possible to create a convincing illusion of it. For example, the clarinet has the *niente* technique, which is not limited merely to gradually fading the sound, but above all allows it to emerge from complete silence and grow to full volume, thanks to precise control of breath and the positioning and tension of the lips (*embouchure*). The piano, due to the mechanism of hammers striking the strings, only allows for the natural fading of already played sounds, but is not capable of generating a sound that grows from absolute silence. Consequently, a pianist performing a piano reduction of an orchestral score encounters significant limitations in conveying the full spectrum of expression characteristic of wind instruments.

The image shows a musical score for a piano reduction of an orchestral work. The score includes a vocal line (Stefan) and several instrumental staves (Vln I, Vln II, Vla, Vcello, and Cbassi). The vocal line has lyrics in Polish. The instrumental staves show various dynamics and articulations. A red box highlights a specific measure across all staves, indicating a point of interest or a specific performance technique being discussed in the text.

Stefan: wnieśnym wta- dać pa- ła-szem, tak czę-sto nu- cił ten sar-macki śpiew! Sły - - szę tę piosn - kę

Vln I: *f* *p* *p* *f* *p simile*

Vln II: *f* *p* *p* *f* *p*

Vla: *f* *p* *p* *f* *p simile*

Vcello: *f* *p* *p* *f* *p*

Cbassi: *f* *p* *p* *f* *p*



Fig. 2. S. Moniuszko - Straszny Dwór - act III, Stefan's aria - discrepancy between the orchestral score and the piano reduction; the incorrect notation in the reduction does not convey the intended crescendo, preventing the pianist from properly supporting the singer at the climax of the phrase.

- Emotionality and reaction time - the orchestra is a large, complex organism, consisting of many independent instrumentalists, yet functioning as a cohesive whole. Consequently, its manner of response may differ significantly from that of a pianist, especially when the pianist's perspective is primarily defined through the prism of solo performance. The pianist is capable of reacting to the conductor's gesture almost immediately, whereas the orchestra's response occurs much more slowly. Each musician in the orchestra requires appropriate time to react to the conductor's gesture, which depends on the varied placement of instruments, the distances both between performers and from the sound source, as well as the physical properties of sound wave propagation in space, all of which are crucial for precise synchronization of performance.

This issue is also highlighted by the Canadian pianist and opera répétiteur Dr. Lucas Wong (currently known for his work on software that, using appropriate algorithms, will generate the most optimal version of a piano reduction of the score), who writes in his article *The Multifunctional Pianist: The Recipe for Orchestral Color and Playing: Each musician in the orchestra requires time to react. The physical space between musicians placed in the orchestra increases the time needed for the 'movement' of a response, because the speed of sound (i.e., the acoustic wave of the instrument) is much slower than the speed of light (i.e., the visual signal of the conductor's baton). This delay in awaiting the sound constantly places the conductor in the position of a 'truck driver.'* Additionally, although this was more noticeable in the past, American and European orchestras still play slightly behind the beat. Conductors feel greater control when the

*orchestra does not play exactly on the ictus, that is, at the moment the baton reaches the bottom of the gesture, but rather when the sound appears on its rebound - immediately after the ictus.*⁷

An experienced répétiteur therefore knows that during the performance of a *tutti* orchestral chord it is necessary to maintain a certain temporal gap between the movement of the baton and the actual emergence of the sound. Determining this time in precise, mathematical units is impossible, yet for the conductor the difference is immediately perceptible. This is also connected with another type of transmission of the emotional layer of the work. The orchestra, as a collective organism, conveys emotions in a complex manner, where expression results from the interaction of many independent voices and timbres. In contrast, the pianist performing a piano reduction of the orchestral part operates with a single instrument and their own direct sensitivity, which often results in a more intense emotional expression. However, this directness, although effective, can lead to overinterpretation - particularly when the pianist attempts to compensate for the lack of orchestral color or intensity with personal expression.

In the interpretation of the reduction, a subtle balance between fidelity to the original and individual perception thus becomes particularly demanding. This is especially significant in passages requiring both technical precision and emotional engagement from the singer. In a full orchestral setting, a balanced, though not devoid of emotional intensity, ensemble provides the soloist with a stable and supportive background. When the orchestra is replaced by the piano, there is a risk that an overly personal interpretation by the pianist - marked by excessive expression - will disturb this balance. This may result in a lack of grounding on the part of the singer, which directly affects their performance comfort and, at times, also the quality of sound and vocal control.

⁷ Wong L., *The Multifunctional Pianist: The Recipe for Orchestral Color and Playing*, Collab Corner, 2021, p. 430, www.nats.org, accessed August 12, 2025.

Piu moderato.

tu *ti* Ty bie-dna dzie-wka,
ti Ah! non scor-da - re,

Piu moderato. (♩ = 80.)

on pa-nieł twój! ty bie - dna
fol - le d'a - mor, *Che sei sua*

dzie - wka, on pa-nieł twój! pa-mię - tał
schia - ra *Che! t'è si - gnor!* *Ah! non scor-*

Fig. 3. S. Moniuszko - Halka - act II, Jontek's aria *I ty mu wierzysz* - passage with a high emotional charge, carrying the risk of excessive pianist expression at the expense of stable support for the soloist

- Tempo - for the orchestra, performing at a fast tempo usually does not constitute a significant performance problem. This results both from the natural division of parts among the various instrumental sections and from the different technical capabilities of each group of instruments. For example, rapid repetitions, often assigned to string instruments, can be executed with great ease thanks to alternating bowing techniques. Prolonged repetitions at a fast tempo on the piano are not only uncomfortable but also often technically inefficient, which may lead to a loss of performance freedom and, consequently, to unintended slowing of the tempo.

In the context of interpreting a piano reduction, maintaining a stable, fast tempo remains a key issue both from the perspective of fidelity to the composer's intent and in terms of collaboration with the singer. Tempo directly affects vocal phrasing and breath control - at a faster tempo, long phrases can be performed on a single breath with greater ease, which supports naturalness and fluidity of performance. For this reason, it is important to avoid habituating the singer to a reduced tempo during rehearsals, as this may lead to later performance difficulties in the concert or staged version with the orchestra. In practical performance, optimizing the piano reduction by eliminating unnecessary notes, replacing repetitions with tremolo, or introducing subtle rhythmic modifications may be necessary to maintain the tempo of the orchestral version and ensure interpretative coherence.

Caption for the figure on the next page:

Fig. 4. G. Verdi - Aida - act I, *Su! Del Nilo al sacro lido - Stretta* with incorrect tempo marking in the piano reduction ($J = 116$ instead of approximately $J = 150$); in the orchestra the tempo increases *più mosso*, forcing the pianist to seek an alternative realization of the building orchestral tumult.

RAM

rier! Guer - ra!

rier! Guerra!

rier! Guerra!

rier! Guerra!

rier! Guerra!

Più mosso ♩ : 118

RAM

guerra! guer.ra! guerra! guerra!

guerra! guer.ra! guerra! guerra!

guerra! guer.ra! guerra! guerra!

guerra! guer.ra! guerra! guerra!

guerra! guerra! guerra! guerra!

guerra! guerra! guerra! guerra!

ff

incis. sempre

[illegible]

RAM

...nio! ster - mi_nio al.l'in_va - sor! ster - ...

...sor! ster - mi_nio al.l'in_va - sor! ster - ...

...sor! ster - mi_nio al.l'in_va - sor! ster - ...

...sor! ster - mi_nio al.l'in_va - sor! ster - ...

...sor! ster - mi_nio al.l'in_va - sor! ster - ...

RAM

mi-nio al'in-va-sor! guer-ra! guer-ra!

mi-nio al'in-va-sor! guer-ra! guer-ra!

mi-nio al'in-va-sor! guer-ra! guer-ra!

mi-nio al'in-va-sor! guer-ra!

mi-nio al'in-va-sor! guer-ra!

ff

f

[illegible]

1.2.3. Conflict between excessive precision in performing the piano reduction and the singer's perception

In the interpretation of a piano reduction, a frequent problem is not so much the simplification of the material as the assignment of excessive weight to what is contained in the reduction. In many cases, the pianist, focusing on accurately reproducing the written notes, may overlook the fact that the reduction does not reflect the full hierarchy of importance of the elements present in the original orchestral score. As a result, a conflict arises: what is emphasized in the reduction does not necessarily correspond to what is most significant from the singer's perspective. Such disproportionate attention to detail can disrupt the performance balance and make it difficult for the vocalist to navigate the course of the work. This subsection will discuss the consequences of this phenomenon and strategies for adopting a more functional and conscious approach to the piano reduction.

The primary task of the pianist-répétiteur in daily work with a singer is to create conditions as close as possible to those encountered during rehearsal with the orchestra and to prepare the singer as fully as possible for such a working environment. Meanwhile, excessive focus by the pianist on technically difficult passages of the reduction, which from the singer's point of view are not leading or may even be inaudible in the orchestral texture, can disrupt the rhythmic and formal coherence of the performance. Attempts to faithfully reproduce every written detail often come at the expense of tempo stability, pulse, or articulation clarity - elements crucial for the singer's orientation within the work. Consequently, excessive technical literalness may not only hinder the singer's interpretation but also interfere with the adaptation process to working conditions with the orchestra.

The pianist must be aware that even seemingly secondary factors, such as the singer's position on stage relative to the orchestra, can significantly affect the singer's perception of the sound. Depending on the location from which the singer receives the sound, their acoustic experience changes - some instruments will be heard on the left, others on the right - and the pianist should also convey this information to the singer. Certain layers of the texture, such as chordal accompaniment, may not reach the performer at all. In practice, this means that for the singer, the most important elements are key, melodic

lines, and individual instrumental voices that they will actually hear during rehearsals and performances with the orchestra.

This does not, of course, mean that the pianist may reduce the piano score to a minimum; rather, the aim is to cultivate in the singer a sound imagination corresponding to the actual stage and acoustic conditions. The goal of such work is to reduce the element of surprise when engaging with the orchestra, and technical fidelity to the score in this context should not be the leading performance factor. Paradoxically, it is often the most technically demanding passages of the piano reduction - those that from the pianist's perspective consume the most time and energy in preparation - that prove to be entirely insignificant from the singer's point of view; moreover, their excessive exposure during rehearsals can disrupt the course of work, as they correspond to orchestral elements that, in performance with the full ensemble, are almost inaudible or entirely lost within the sound texture.

From the singer's perspective, significantly greater importance is attached to clearly outlined sequences of successive motifs or instrumental entries that occur prior to the vocal part. These serve an orienting function within the structure of the work, enabling the performer to follow the musical course consciously and eliminating the need for passive counting of measures or rests. In orchestral conditions, such auditory signals are often crucial for precise entries, and their absence in the piano reduction can lead to disorientation and loss of performance fluency. Therefore, when preparing a reduction of the score, the pianist-repetiteur should first take into account those elements of the texture that serve an informative function for the singer, even if their execution does not pose high technical demands. It is also necessary to remain attentive to the opposite situation, where the piano reduction does not include elements essential for the singer's orientation. Reductions frequently omit significant instrumental voices that in reality serve as reference points for the performer. The pianist's task is therefore not merely to read the piano reduction faithfully, but also to be aware of what is missing in it and to know how to supplement these omissions. Only such an approach allows the singer to be prepared for the actual sound they will encounter during orchestral rehearsals.

A pianist preparing a piano reduction for work with a singer must be aware not only of the limitations resulting from the score reduction but also of the specific qualities of orchestral sound, which possesses a significantly broader range of registers and timbres

than the piano. Mere familiarity with the notated notes is insufficient; understanding the overall texture and the role of individual voices within the course of the work is essential. Only a pianist who treats the reduction as a starting point for a deeper analysis of the score can provide the singer with thorough preparation for working with the orchestra. At the same time, the pianist must possess interpretive sensitivity, so that even a simplified piano score can gain musical depth and become a form of artistic expression rather than merely a didactic aid. A successful interpretation of the piano reduction is therefore the result of a conscious compromise between its technical executability and fidelity to the full score, enriched by interpretive sensitivity that gives the performance an artistic dimension.

1.3. Other aspects of the operatic pianist's work

One significant, though often overlooked or underestimated, aspect of the work of a pianist-repetiteur is the ability to simultaneously play and sing selected vocal parts during rehearsals. This task requires not only fluent mastery of one's own piano part but also detailed command of all the vocal parts present in the work being prepared. This obligation arises from two basic premises: first, the more comprehensive the pianist's knowledge of the overall musical material, the greater their competence in ensemble work; second, only on this basis is it possible to effectively support the singer in learning their part and shaping their interpretation.

Alan Montgomery aptly describes this issue: *Learning to play a score usually means also learning to sing a score. The reasons for this are clear. When a coach can sing a score, their knowledge of the score and the text are much deeper. A singer's mistakes, whether mistakes in the verbal text, rhythm, or pitch, will then jump out at the coach, because it is not what the singer has learned to sing. Coaches also must sing to toss out cues to singers during coaching sessions - this is the equivalent of „running lines” in a play. Learning the text and delivering it during coaching sessions with nuance and colors appropriate for the singer performing the role makes clear many shadings of the text. The nuances clarify motivations, and this is a wonderful way to explore the deeper drama in the words. The singer being coached can learn to react to a line far more*

*naturally if that line is delivered with the intended meaning, whether lighthearted or menacing.*⁸

This topic is closely related to another issue essential for the pianist, namely knowledge of foreign languages, particularly their phonetics and prosody. The melody of a given foreign language is crucial because it affects the naturalness and intelligibility of vocal phrases as well as their expression. For the pianist-repetiteur, this means taking into account the specific prosody of a language when working with the singer, especially regarding accents, rhythm, and intonation of the sung text. Conscious shaping of these elements helps the singer convey the authenticity of the expression and improve interpretation. Operatic composers most often composed both vocal parts and orchestral accompaniment with the prosody of the language in mind. A pianist preparing a reduction must be aware of this, understand the characteristics of the language, and lead the phrase according to its rhythm and melody. Problems arise in the case of translations and performances of an opera in a language other than the original, where the musical layer remains, but the melody of the language changes. Modifying the accentuation and natural speech rhythm relative to the original composition can affect not only musical interpretation but also the placement of breaths by the singer, which requires the pianist to adjust their execution accordingly.

Jerzy Marchwiński emphasizes the importance of the pianist's work with the text, repeatedly noting that it is a fundamental matter. The text is the key to interpretation and should not only be sung but also played in a logical and coherent manner. He also stresses the need for close alignment between the verbal and musical layers: *Learning to recite the text in a way that aligns with the articulation and logic of the language opens the door to an extraordinary surprise. It turns out that the logic and articulation of musical language most often completely correspond to the logic and articulation of the word. I imagine that the composer began creating a vocal work by reading the text. The reverse situation - meaning that the composer first creates the music and then someone adds the text - is probably rare. The word not only inspires the composer to create a work in a mood consistent with the text but also, and perhaps above all, its rhythm, melody, and articulation often encourage the composer to maintain the same rhythm*

⁸ Montgomery A., *Opera Coaching: Professional Techniques for the Répétiteur*, op. cit., p. 14

*and articulation of the sounds. I sometimes wonder whether this is not the most concrete element of creative inspiration.*⁹

The last significant issue that requires discussion concerns the terminology used to describe a pianist specializing in performing repertoire not originally intended for piano. In debates about the pianist's role in opera, the nomenclature applied to this specialization acquires particular significance. Terms such as accompanist, repetiteur, or coach are often used interchangeably, yet each carries a specific context and - frequently - potential misunderstandings. The pejorative use of the word *accompanist* is especially problematic, as it implies a secondary, merely supportive piano role rather than a partnership. Meanwhile, the term *coach*, although it may refer to a person with a broad range of competencies - including musical, linguistic, stylistic, and stage preparation - is sometimes narrowed exclusively to the function of a vocal trainer.

In professional practice, it is worth emphasizing that the simple designation *pianist* is fully sufficient and encompasses the diversity of roles a person performing this profession may undertake. A pianist is not only a soloist; career paths are varied and often stem from individual interests, passions, and artistic choices. Many combine solo, chamber, pedagogical, or operatic activities. Attempts to categorize pianists using simplified labels can distort the perception of their work and fail to convey its true nature. The designation *pianist-repetiteur* perhaps best reflects the specificity of this specialization, yet it is often restricted to a narrow group of musicians working in opera houses.

It must be remembered that this is a full-fledged artistic activity, just like any other form of musical performance, and not merely craftwork. To function as an opera pianist, one must approach each work with artistry, even if it was not originally written for piano and is therefore sometimes devalued by other musicians. *It is self-evident that the requirement for flawless execution of pianistic duties applies to all forms of activity, regardless of their nature, without any exemptions.*¹⁰

⁹ Marchwiński J., *Muzyczne partnerstwo*, Wydawnictwa Drugie, Warszawa, 2018, p. 83

¹⁰ Marchwiński J., *Muzyczne partnerstwo*, op. cit., p. 122.

1.4 Piano reduction in relation to orchestral songs in piano transcription

Both the piano reduction of an opera and the piano transcription of a song originally composed for orchestra represent a translation of the orchestral texture into the idiom of the piano. However, within the prevailing perception among performers and listeners, the former is often regarded as a utilitarian or functional construct, whereas the latter is considered a fully autonomous manifestation of chamber art. Such a dichotomy, entrenched through performance and pedagogical tradition, appears insufficiently justified and may even be inequitable toward the pianist, whose role in an operatic reduction frequently entails interpretive and technical demands comparable to those faced by a chamber musician collaborating in the performance of a song.

Traditionally, operatic piano reductions have been conceived primarily as rehearsal tools rather than as works intended for public performance. Their primary function is to facilitate preparation for soloists, choir, and conductor in the absence of the orchestra. Consequently, many reductions display a marked disregard for pianistic idiom - often presenting dense, “orchestral” textures that necessitate a high degree of sonic condensation and technical virtuosity from the performer. Yet it is precisely these attributes that render the execution of a well-crafted operatic reduction an act of interpretive artistry, requiring the pianist to reconstruct timbral colors, dynamic contrasts, and the overarching dramaturgy of the piece - in essence, the same level of musical sensitivity expected of a chamber musician within the art song repertoire.

Conversely, piano transcriptions of orchestral songs have historically been afforded the status of independent works, notwithstanding the fact that they too constitute reductions that compress the rich orchestral palette into the domain of the pianist’s two hands. Even in such arrangements, it is impossible to fully realize every element of the original score. The resultant musical text is therefore texturally and sonically less complex than a song originally conceived for the piano. Nevertheless, performance tradition has conferred upon these arrangements an artistic standing equivalent to that of their orchestral counterparts. This recognition derives from the enduring belief that the art song, even in its orchestral guise, preserves its chamber character and emphasizes the interplay between voice and piano as co-equal partners.

Meanwhile, the piano reduction of an opera can and indeed should be approached in an artistic manner. Although its origin is utilitarian, its realization requires the pianist to make a series of deliberate aesthetic decisions: choices regarding articulation, methods of imitating orchestral timbres, and the dynamic balance between the vocal line and the piano part. In a well-interpreted operatic reduction, not only the performer's technical skill but also their sonic imagination becomes apparent - the capacity to translate orchestral sonorities into the language of the keyboard instrument. Understood in this way, the performance of a reduction ceases to be merely a substitute for the orchestra; it becomes an autonomous interpretation of the operatic work, transposed into the realm of chamber music.

When comparing these two types of arrangements, it becomes evident that the differences in their evaluation arise more from tradition and convention than from objective musical characteristics. If a song with orchestral accompaniment, in its necessarily incomplete and simplified piano version, can function as a fully legitimate chamber form, then all the more reason exists for the operatic piano reduction - rich, complex, and demanding - to be accorded similar treatment. Both phenomena are united by the very act of transcription, differing only in their social status and assigned function.

A reconsideration of the role of operatic piano reductions in both performance and pedagogical practice appears warranted. When performed with sensitivity and artistic awareness, they can constitute not merely a means to an end, but an autonomous form of expression - revealing to the listener the dramatic and emotional richness of the opera in its purest, most concentrated form. Today, concert performances of operas in piano versions are increasingly common. If such performances are accepted as fully legitimate artistic events - and audiences respond to them with the same level of engagement as to orchestral versions - then what are they, if not a form of chamber operatic art? It becomes difficult, in this context, to maintain that the piano reduction serves solely a technical function. In these settings, it assumes the role of an expressive medium equivalent to the orchestra, with the pianist acting as a co-creator of the dramatic narrative.

Thus, equalizing the status of these two forms - the orchestral song in its piano version and the operatic reduction - would constitute not only an act of justice toward

pianists, but also a step toward a deeper understanding of the essence of music itself: its capacity to exist across different sonic dimensions without forfeiting its artistic value.

Chapter 2 - The genesis of *Il Trittico*, Giacomo Puccini's operatic triptych

The concept of combining three one-act operas, allowing for the presentation of three autonomous narratives within a single evening at the theatre, matured in the composer's mind over an extended period. As Piotr Kamiński notes in his opera guide *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, the composer's initial plans for an operatic triptych date back to the period of work on *Tosca* (premiered in January 1900), and the idea resurfaced once again following *Madama Butterfly* (premiered in February 1904).¹¹

Considering the fact that *Il Trittico*, comprising three operas of contrasting character - *Il Tabarro* (The Cloak), *Suor Angelica* (Sister Angelica), and *Gianni Schicchi* - was not premiered until December 1918 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, it must be emphasized that the broadly understood process of work on the entire composition spanned nearly two decades. The realization of this long-conceived and deeply desired project required the composer to overcome numerous adversities of both a personal and a historical-political nature.

In his private life, the composer experienced a painful loss: in August 1917, his sister Tomaide died. In the same year, he also encountered administrative complications - the consul in Lugano revoked a previously issued visa, thereby preventing his stay in Switzerland. Furthermore, as is well known, the years 1914–1918, encompassing the period of the First World War, were particularly difficult, especially for the European continent. The geopolitical situation had a direct impact on the course of preparations for the premiere of the work.

The performance requirements of the *Trittico* - particularly with regard to the vocal parts - are demanding and pose significant challenges for the ensemble. The successful assembly of a cast of uniformly high professional standard proved exceptionally problematic under wartime conditions, especially given that many singers, as well as other musicians and technical theatre personnel, were engaged in active military service. For this reason, Tito Ricordi had already strongly advised Puccini against organizing the premiere of the work in Italy, as he mentions in his letter to the composer dated 13 November 1917:

¹¹ Kamiński, P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM Edition, 2015, p. 1233

I know nothing new about Rome and Carelli, but from what I have heard, the reopening of the Teatro Costanzi¹² is far from certain. In any case, given the present circumstances - which, although no longer as grave, are unlikely to improve with the arrival of winter - I return to my earlier idea not to stage these two operas in Rome; that is, to wait for a more favorable moment and better conditions in order to present what you are working on in its complete triptych form - varied and unified.

Consider, dear Giacomo, that until our victory erases the impression left by the painful defeats we have suffered, I believe that it would be neither patriotic nor commercially advantageous to stage a new opera and expose it to public opinion - I held this view even when our military efforts were proceeding favorably - now I am even more convinced and determined to adhere to this course of action - and I have no doubt that you will now agree with me.

I wish you to continue your work on Gianni Schicchi with calm and confidence - just as we strive to work with calm and confidence.¹³

¹² former name of the present Teatro dell'Opera di Roma - author's note

¹³ www.digitalarchivioricordi.com, excerpt from a letter by Tito Ricordi to Giacomo Puccini, dated 13.11.1917, author's translation, online access date: 06.08.2025

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Carissimo Giacomo,

Ho letto la parte prima che hai indirizzato al Clausetti colle osservazioni da te fatte alla prima idea della scena. Tabarro, buttata giù dal Rota. Sarebbe indispensabile che ci trovassimo noi tre per provare finalmente la soluzione pratica di questa benedettissima scena - ma purtroppo il Rota, per le condizioni di salute della moglie, non vuole lasciare nemmeno per pochi giorni Milano - ed io, in questi momenti, debbo pensare e provvedere a troppe cose perché mi sia possibile di assentarmi dallo studio e dalle officine.

Al Rota ho dato la fotografia e la lettera del Forzato per "Suor Angelica". - Si mette subito al lavoro di abbozzare al lapis della scena, e fra pochi giorni potrei farti il suo schizzo.

I contratti per "Suor Angelica" e "Grammi-Schicchi" sono pronti, ma credo meglio trattenerli qui piuttosto che affidarli alla posta. Li firmerai quando verrai a Milano. Intanto ho disposto perché mensilmente, a partire già dal passato settembre, ti venga corrisposta la somma pattuita.

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Di Roma e della Carelli non so più nulla, ma da ora raccolte pare che l'apertura del Coblauri sia tutt'altro che decisa. In ogni modo date le circostanze attuali - che se non sono più così minacciose, non potremmo variare di molto col inoltrarsi dell'inverno - io torno alla mia vecchia idea di non dare le due opere a Roma; di attendere cioè tempi ed occasioni migliori e di preferire così il lavoro che stai compiendo nella tua forma di pittore, vario, complesso.

Pensa caro Giacomo che sino a che una nostra vittoria venga a cancellare l'impressione dei dolorosissimi rovesci subiti, io credo non sia conveniente né dal lato patriottico, né dal lato affare d'affrontare il giudizio del pubblico per un nuovo lavoro teatrale. Io ero di questo parere quando le nostre imprese di guerra andavano a gonfie vele - ora sono più che convinto, deciso a seguire tale linea di condotta, e non dubito un momento che tu ora mi darai ragione.

Ti auguro di proseguire con calma e con fede la composizione del "Grammi-Schicchi", così come noi cerchiamo e riterremo a lavorare col calma e con fede.

Ti abbraccio con affetto

il tuo
Tito Ricordi

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Fig. 5. Letter from Tito Ricordi to Giacomo Puccini, dated 13 November 1917.

The delay of the premiere in Europe resulted primarily from the difficult socio-political situation associated with the end of the First World War. Italy, as one of the Entente powers, suffered enormous human and material losses. Ricordi, Puccini's publisher, feared that in such an unstable period staging a new work might be not only artistically risky, but also inappropriate from the perspective of prevailing social sentiments. Ultimately, the decision was made to move the premiere to the United States, where organizational conditions were more stable - the *Triptych* was presented to the public for the first time on 14 December 1918 on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera in New York. The success was partial. The comic *Gianni Schicchi* aroused great applause from the audience and was received with enthusiasm (to this day it remains the most frequently performed opera of the *Triptych*). *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*, however, were received with reserve by New York audiences. In 1919, the European premiere of the work finally took place, conducted by Gino Marinuzzi in Rome, where *Angelica* was rehabilitated by the audience and enjoyed its appreciation, while *Schicchi* shared the success achieved overseas. *Il Tabarro*, by contrast, remained underestimated, becoming in the following years, up to the present day, one of the most marginalized and least known works of Puccini's output in general. The production nevertheless had the character of a high-ranking cultural event, and the choice of Rome as the venue for the European premiere carried symbolic significance: the capital of a devastated but victorious state was to once again become an important center of operatic life in the new post-war reality.

Sources have been preserved that attest to the fact that Puccini, from the very beginning, conceived the *Triptych* as an inseparable whole and treated it as an integral entity. Very soon, however, opera houses began the practice of staging the individual operas separately or in a diptych, which provoked the composer's indignation, as he mentions in his letter of 1921 to his friend, Sybil Seligman:

I protested to Ricordi because he staged Il Tabarro and Gianni Schicchi without Suor Angelica. Setting aside the best of the three works causes me pain. In Vienna, Angelica proved the most effective of all, together with the splendid Lehmann (a German,

admittedly), who is nevertheless a delicate and fine artist. Simple - without a prima donna aria, but with a voice as sweet as honey.¹⁴

2.1 The beginning of work on the Triptych

The first sketch to emerge was *Il Tabarro* (The Cloak). The composer drew inspiration from a play he had seen during his stay in Paris in 1912 or 1913¹⁵ entitled *La Houppelande* (Fr. cloak) by Didier Gold. Interestingly, Giovacchino Forzano, the librettist of the other two operas that would later comprise *Il Trittico*, was not interested in the subject of the first of the three works and declined the collaboration offer, which was ultimately accepted by Giuseppe Adami - he also created the libretti for Puccini's *La Rondine* (1917) and *Turandot*, the composer's last, unfinished opera (1926).

As Emiliano Sarti writes in his biography of Puccini, *Il mio mistero è chiuso in me. Vita e opere di Giacomo Puccini*, finding inspiration for the remaining two works, which together with *Il Tabarro* would form a kind of operatic triad of differing character, took considerable time. After an opera of a dramatic nature, such as *Il Tabarro*, a lyrical-elegiac and a comic subject had to be found.¹⁶ On this occasion, Giovacchino Forzano, then a young dramatist who had also become known as a librettist for other contemporary opera composers - Pietro Mascagni, Ruggero Leoncavallo, and Umberto Giordano - came to the composer's aid. He found the two missing stories for Puccini.

2.2 *Suor Angelica* (Sister Angelica)

The first subject selected was *Sister Angelica* - a nun condemned by her family to a cloistered life as penance for having an illegitimate child and for tarnishing the honor of a respected aristocratic family. Driven to madness by longing for her son, whom she had not seen for years, Angelica, upon learning of his untimely death, decides to take her own life.

¹⁴ Sarti, E., *Il mio mistero è chiuso in me. Vita e opere di Giacomo Puccini*, edizioni dreamBOOK, 2016, p. 179, author's translation.

¹⁵ sources provide varying information: according to Piotr Kamiński's opera guide, it was 1912, whereas Emiliano Sarti, in his biography of Puccini, mentions 1913

¹⁶ Sarti, E., *Il mio mistero...*, p. 168.

Puccini began work on the piece at the beginning of 1917. As Emiliano Sarti notes, the composer was from the outset strongly interested in the religious-liturgical subject, influenced by two factors. First, Puccini in his youth had worked as an organist in churches in Lucca, his hometown, which gave him thorough familiarity with religious ritual. The second, perhaps more significant reason, was that one of the composer's sisters - Iginia, to whom he was very close - had entered a convent and during these years served as Mother Superior at the Monastero del Vicopelago near Lucca. Puccini frequently visited her there and observed convent life.¹⁷ Nevertheless, in certain matters strictly related to liturgy in *Suor Angelica* (and also earlier in *Tosca*), he consulted with his priest and friend, Don Pietro Panichelli. Evidence of the composer's struggles can be found in one of the preserved letters from the correspondence between him and Don Panichelli, where he describes them as follows:

I am writing a cloistered-convent work. Therefore, I need a few Latin phrases ad hoc. My knowledge does not reach... up to Your heavens. I will therefore add a few words from the litany, for example: "Turris Eburnea, Foedris Arca"¹⁸, etc. (I do not remember), but instead of "Ora pro nobis"¹⁹ I need another solemn response, also addressed to the Virgin. To put you in the mood, I will say that [in the opera] there is the apparition of the Madonna, preceded by an angelic choir from afar, and I want to use the litanies and a few identical phrases. But not "pray for us". Instead, it should be "our Queen," or "Holy of Holies"; something that will repeat in the same way in Latin. Imagine that these are angels praising Mary. Later, at the moment of the miracle, I would like the Royal March of the Madonna. I am not very fond of "Ave Maris Stella"²⁰, nor of "Ave Maria", which I have already assigned for the nuns to sing previously.²¹

At this point, it is necessary to refer again to the excerpt from the composer's letter to Sybil Seligman cited by the author. It directly shows that the Maestro himself valued *Suor Angelica* above all the works of his *Triptych* and, as history has demonstrated and

¹⁷ Sarti E., *Il mio mistero...* p. 16

¹⁸ Translation: "Tower of Ivory, Ark of the Covenant" - excerpt from the Litany of Loreto to the Blessed Virgin Mary

¹⁹ Translation: "Pray for us"

²⁰ *Ave Maris Stella* (latin: Hail, Star of the Sea) - latin Marian antiphon from the 8th century

²¹ Sarti E., *Il mio mistero...*, p. 168–169, author's translation.

verified, his feelings were well-founded. In contemporary times, particularly over recent years, *Angelica* has experienced a true renaissance of popularity, especially within programs for young artists (Young Artists Programmes). Thanks to many of its pedagogical advantages - such as a large cast divided into numerous smaller roles of varying levels of difficulty - it offers many young aspiring opera singers the opportunity to participate for the first time in a staging of a Giacomo Puccini opera. Otherwise, this would not be possible, since the vast majority of female roles in his operas demand from the performer both vocal maturity, with appropriate volume, and interpretive skill.



Fig. 6. Angelica and Zia Principessa - illustration by Peter Hoffer for the cover of the *Suor Angelica* libretto (date unknown, Ricordi Archivio Storico).

2.3 Gianni Schicchi

As sources indicate²², Giacomo Puccini had intended to create a comic opera for many years (it is worth noting that in the operatic repertoire of the 19th and 20th centuries, *Schicchi* is one of the few operas with a lighter, comedic subject), yet for a long time he could not find a suitable story that would serve as the dramatic core of the opera. The subject of the final opera, which would complete the trilogy, took considerable time to emerge. Ultimately, the choice fell on the story of Gianni Schicchi - a Florentine nouveau riche of the 13th century, who, renowned for his cunning, intelligence, and resourcefulness, impersonates the deceased wealthy man Buoso Donati and, in the presence of a notary, alters his last will. The plot is devised at the request of the deceased's closest relatives, since Buoso had left his entire estate to the monastic brothers. His family, greedily coveting his fortune, hopes to enrich themselves with Schicchi's help. However, Schicchi outsmarts them - posing as the deceased Buoso, he bequeaths the entire estate to his "best friend" - Gianni Schicchi. In this way, he comes into possession of an enormous fortune: Buoso Donati's splendid house, his mill, and the most valuable mule in all of Tuscany - while driving the deceased's cunning relatives out of Florence.

This story is drawn from *The Divine Comedy*, the poem by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, written between 1307 and 1321. Interestingly, *The Divine Comedy* is also a triptych - it consists of three books and presents the poet's journey through the afterlife - Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Each part contains 33 cantos, each written in three-line stanzas - tercets. The story of the trickster Gianni Schicchi, who, as punishment for his misdeeds, is condemned to penance in Hell after death, is mentioned in Canto XXX of the Hell section (lines 31–33 and 42–45):

31 *E l'Aretin che rimase, tremando*
32 *mi disse: "Quel folletto è Gianni Schicchi,*
33 *e va rabbioso altrui così conciendo"*

(...)

42 *come l'altro che là sen va, sostenne,*

31 *A Aretyńczyk, który został drżący*
32 *Rzecz: „Ten upiór - jest to Gianni Schicchi*
33 *Tak to on, wściekły, innych oporządza"*

42 *Właśnie jak tamten, co już pobiegł dalej*

²² Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Warsaw 2015, p. 1233

43 *per guadagnar la donna de la torma,*
44 *falsificare in sè Buoso Donati,*
45 *testando e dando al testamento norma.*

43 *Który chcąc stada pozyskać Królowę*
44 *Zgodził się udać Buoso Donati,*
45 *Aby testament spisać i uprawnić.*²³

English translation by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

31 *And the Aretine, who trembling had remained,*
32 *Said to me: "That mad sprite is Gianni Schicchi,*
33 *And raving goes thus harrying other people."*

(...)

42 *As he who goeth yonder undertook*
43 *That he might gain the lady of the herd,*
44 *To counterfeit in himself Buoso Donati,*
45 *Making a will and giving it due form.*

For the purposes of this study, the author has chosen the Italian-to-Polish translation by Antoni Stanisławski, as it is, in her opinion, the closest to the original while using language comprehensible to a contemporary reader. Interestingly, there also exists an older Polish translation of *The Divine Comedy* by Julian Korsak, in which Gianni Schicchi appears as Jan Skika, accompanied by a footnote explaining:

*It is the spirit of Jan Skika - Jan Skika, from the Kawalkanci family, a native of Florence: he had the talent to imitate the voices and gestures of his acquaintances, which he often used for mischief.*²⁴

The opera's action is set in Florence, and this city itself - often called the Pearl of Tuscany - becomes one of its protagonists, on equal footing with the characters on stage, even possessing its own musical motif. It is worth noting that Giovacchino Forzano, the librettist, also came from Florence.

Puccini and Forzano faithfully quote two lines from Dante (lines 44 and 45), simultaneously making them the final phrase in Schicchi's aria *Era uguale la voce*. It is, however, uncertain who was first - whether the composer or the librettist - in drawing

²³Dante Alighieri, *Boska Komedja*, ed. Jan Żupański 1870, translation Antoni Robert Stanisławski, *Hell*, Canto 30, lines 31–33, 42–45

²⁴ Dante Alighieri, *Boska Komedja*, translation Julian Korsak, *Hell*, Canto 30, line 31, Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska, 2012.

inspiration from Dante and seizing upon this brief story, merely mentioned in the work of the great Italian poet, to serve as the framework for the opera.



Fig. 7. Buoso Donati surrounded by relatives - illustration by Peter Hoffer for the cover of the *Gianni Schicchi* libretto (1954, Ricordi Archivio Storico).

Chapter 3 - *Suor Angelica* - musical layer - examples of orchestral texture adaptation for piano

3.1 *Suor Angelica* - musical layer

Suor Angelica, as the second work of the *Triptych*, clearly stands out not only in comparison to its other parts but also within the entirety of Puccini's output. First and foremost, it is his only work written entirely for female voices. The central figure of the drama is the titular Sister Angelica - soprano - surrounded by a number of fellow nuns (including Novices, Convertites, Almoners, Sister Zelatrice, the Nurse, and the Abbess). Among them, Angelica's closest companion - Sister Genovieffa - also a soprano, stands out. The antagonist and symbolic figure of oppression is Zia Principessa - the Grand Duchess, Angelica's cruel aunt - contralto.

From the very first phrase, Puccini transports the listener into a world of religious stylization - the first four measures of the opera are church bells, whose gently descending melody in a ternary motif evokes a sacred procession. After a fermata, in the following four measures, the same phrase is harmonized by the composer: the bell melody is rendered on celesta, accompanied by softly sounding strings pianissimo.

The beginning of the opera is described in his monograph on Puccini by the British musicologist Julian Budden as follows:

Nevertheless, Puccini never attempts to create this atmosphere in the manner of Massenet, using an elegant pastiche of liturgical counterpoint. The simple sound of the bells lasting four measures, repeated by the muted strings and celesta, creates a texture of soft dissonances formed by the added seconds [in the viola and cello parts - editor's note]. At this moment, the Ave Maria, sung by the sisters inside the church, forms a counterpoint. A motif imitating birdsong on the piccolo flute offstage completes the image of a beautiful spring evening outside the sacred place. While the Ave Maria continues in the same regular phrases, with subtly altered orchestration strengthened by the participation of the organ, two nuns cross the stage and enter the chapel; behind them

*follows Sister Angelica, who kneels to kiss the threshold, after which, in a manner characteristic of Puccini heroines, we hear her singing offstage. (...) An extended perfect cadence concludes what is, in reality, a descriptive prelude.*²⁵

In combination with the clear, initially monotonous sound of the orchestra, the female voices may seem weakly individualized, which heightens the listener's impression of a world closed off to human weakness - pious, ascetic, and bound by rigid structures. The heroines, together with the central figure of Angelica, gradually emerge from this background. This is, of course, a deliberate device of Puccini - a master of dramaturgy and a true "man of the theatre."

The impression of this sacred stylization persists through the first several scenes, where we observe a series of events from the daily life of the nuns, seemingly insignificant for the progress of the main action. As Piotr Kamiński writes:

*Everything becomes clear from Angelica's brief arioso (I desidero sono i fiori), where a wide, expressive vocal line, crowned by the first fortissimo, together with the dense orchestra including brass, allows one to perceive that beneath this veil lies something beyond discreet piety. It is difficult to agree with commentators who accuse the work of excessive monotony, for this is a conscious gesture of the dramatist: to build a world that is rigid, smooth, and erases individual human features, before the thunderbolt falls from a clear sky and tragedy is fulfilled.*²⁶

This culmination is particularly significant because, for the first time (after Angelica's words *Ach, sister, death is a beautiful life!*), the orchestra introduces the motif of death - a dramatic phrase expressed with a broad gesture and profound emotional charge - which will return at the moment Angelica takes her own life. Immediately afterward follows another sequence of scenes depicting convent life, characterized by variety in tone and mood. Of particular interest is the way Puccini links events that appear

²⁵ Budden J., *Puccini*, Carocci editore, Rome 2005, p. 407-408, translation author's own. Budden compares *Suor Angelica* to Massenet because he, too, composed an opera set in a monastery titled *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*; however, unlike *Angelica*, it is written exclusively for male voices.

²⁶ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2008, p. 1236.

narratively and emotionally unrelated, consistently adapting the musical language to the development of the stage action. An example is the scene in which the almoner sisters return to the convent from shopping. The atmosphere softens. A banal dialogue among the nuns is reflected in music of a cheerful character, lightly lively, with diatonic harmony. The scene acquires a quasi-humorous tone, especially in the solo performance of the gluttonous Sister Dolcina; however, as the scene progresses, a gradual change occurs. The melodic line becomes more mysterious and tense, intensified by the composer's combination of oboe, flute, and solo violin timbres. Soon an *ostinato* emerges, in which the note G, persistently repeated by the flute, introduces a mood of expectation and creates a sense of something elusive yet unsettling. When Angelica learns that a richly adorned carriage has arrived at the convent gates, it is difficult to contain her emotions. Julian Budden describes this moment as follows: *soon the resonating ostinato resolves into an elaborated melody with a richly woven structure, signaling the beginning of the true drama, unfolding at an inevitable pace, faster than the text. This melody, the longest among all composed by Puccini, is essentially orchestral in character, though at certain moments it is supported by voices. In this passage the melody is extended over continuously pulsating sixteenth notes for more than seventy measures, and its trajectory moves from F major to A minor in three phases. The first phrase has a solemn, almost 'monastic' character, yet with an undercurrent of emotional tension; the second phrase expresses Angelica's desperate anxiety; the third is a short fragment intended solely for the orchestra, full of resigned foreboding*²⁷. It should be emphasized that from the melodic line of the passage under discussion, several pages later in Angelica's aria *Senza mamma*, Puccini weaves one of the opera's most beautiful phrases. The rushing phrase is interrupted only for a moment by the sound of a bell, announcing the arrival of guests at the convent parlour. This information disrupts the apparent calm and order within the convent walls, and all the sisters, in a state of excitement, await news of which among them will be allowed to meet with their family. Puccini conveys this joyful yet tension-filled anticipation through the rapid sixteenth-note passages in the strings, gradually building to a tutti sound. He also adds performance directions in the score: *misterioso e un poco agitato* (for the orchestra), and then *con ansia crescente* (for Angelica).

²⁷ Budden J., *Puccini*, Carocci editore, Rome 2005, p. 410, translation author's own

The Abbess approaches, and her motif, in its own way, announces the arrival of the Grand Duchess - Angelica's noble-born aunt. It is a melody in the string section, marked by the composer *cupo* ("dark" - editor's note), framed in a short, ascending phrase repeated several times, climbing higher with each iteration, even though its tension finds no resolution and ends instead on a minor chord played by horns, clarinets, and flutes.

The scene that exerts a tremendous influence on the course of the work, both musically and dramatically, is Angelica's encounter with the Grand Duchess, who has arrived to force her niece to renounce her rights to the family estate. This is the thunder of the unexpected visit mentioned by Kamiński, heralding the approaching tragedy.²⁸ It is worth emphasizing that the role of the Principessa is the only major part in the composer's oeuvre written for a low female voice (notated in the score as contralto, but in practice also performed by altos and even mezzo-sopranos). The composer's musical style in this scene plays a key role in building tension and conveying the character's emotions. Its weight distinctly stands out against the opera's preceding course, as Kamiński also notes: *Her scene with Angelica does not exceed 12 minutes, yet it overwhelms the entire opera; she is the figure of destiny, like a river in Il Tabarro. Puccini endowed her with a hieratic, icy speech, fused with the merciless march of the orchestra; against this granite, Angelica's powerless prayers shatter. A skilled ear can detect in the character's music the stubborn, desperate recurrences of the descending fifth, characteristic of Puccini's tragic heroines*²⁹. Indeed, from this moment on, the fate of the main character seems sealed. Puccini's music masterfully conveys the emotional tension and the weight of this scene, as well as its consequences for the subsequent course of events. The terrifyingly cold and indifferent figure of the Aunt, her cynicism, and her unwavering, emotionally barren demeanor form a stark contrast to Angelica's hopeful nature, not only on the dramatic level but also musically.

Puccini once again demonstrates his skill in combining tonalities in unexpected and innovative ways, achieving a unique orchestral color and richly textured sound that impacts the listener, heightening the music's dramatic and lyrical character. A significant example here is the introduction of E-flat minor into the Aunt's lines, a key the composer reaches for in moments full of pain, foreshadowing death or the fatalism and hopelessness of a situation.

²⁸ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera* op. cit., p. 1236.

²⁹ Ibid.

In this key, the Aunt conveys to Angelica the news of her younger sister's marriage - a piece of information joyous for Angelica, who responds by singing using the A-Lydian scale. This scale is unmistakably associated with brightness, hope, and optimism, reflecting Angelica's thoughts about the fate of her beloved sister, whom she has not seen for years. Its sound, full of radiance and openness, makes it particularly suited for expressing emotions related to love, joyful anticipation, and spiritual elevation. Puccini employs the Lydian scale to achieve a striking contrast with the darker tonalities in his operas, often at moments when characters express their desires, hopes, and dreams. However, it is worth noting that the composer uses it subtly, not exposing it in the foreground but integrating it as part of a broader harmonic structure, adding coloristic variety and emphasizing certain emotional states of the characters. The combination of the A-Lydian scale and E-flat minor in the context of this scene can therefore be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the emotional contrast between the two characters, their different worlds, and inner experiences. The encounter between Angelica and Aunt Principessa is a pivotal moment in which opposing feelings confront one another: hope and despair, love and rejection, and, from a broader metaphorical perspective, fullness and emptiness. The musical fusion of these tonalities thus reflects deep yet conflicting emotions.

Also noteworthy is the short arioso of the Aunt, *Nel silenzio di quei raccoglimenti*. This is the moment when her deep contralto resonates with full power. In it, the Duchess describes her devotional sufferings, and the melody, based on the interval of a fourth, has a solemn, ecclesiastical character. The Aeolian mode predominates, and the harmony is built on a chord progression of F-sharp minor - B major - C-sharp minor. This progression creates tension filled with emotional charge, which finds no release but transforms into a sinister, dissonant chord emphasizing the Aunt's words *Espiare, espiare!* when she tells Angelica that the only thing left in her life is eternal penance. After the fermata on a pause, the score indicates *Andante mesto*, reflecting the initial tone of Angelica's response. She expresses calm reflection on the unending penance she endures, emphasizing that all she possesses she has already offered to Mary. At the same time, she notes that despite this, she will be unable to forget or cease thinking about her son. In this moment, the nun abandons all conventions, and her melody, originally melancholic, transforms into an explosive, emotion-laden cry. The accompanying orchestral texture takes the form of a sobbing, repeated structure with

sharp, punctuated rhythm and a heavy, chromatic melodic line. When asked about her child, Angelica receives only the persistent silence of her mother's sister.

This scene marks the fulcrum of the entire work. From this moment, the orchestral part becomes restless, agitated, full of chromatic passages and dissonant intervals. Angelica's piercing cry is the culmination of the opera's action so far, and her despair at the news of her son's death resonates through the orchestra with the maximum force of cascading, falling, cacophonous seventh chords. Angelica collapses to the ground in anguish, and her hysteria, alongside the silent indifference of the Duchess, is accompanied by a short passage written for solo orchestra. As Julien Budden writes, *the three-note ostinato serves as a point of support to restore diatonic harmony*.³⁰ The sobbing motif that accompanied Angelica's questions gradually calms and fades away along with the Aunt, who departs without a word.

The direct consequence of the depicted event is the only aria in the entire work, *Senza mamma*. Angelica's reaction to the news of her child's death, charged with intense emotion, leads to a vivid depiction of her suffering, which Puccini conveys through a varied range of moods, fully reflecting the complexity of the character's inner experience. The aria combines elements of musical introspection - the longing Angelica has hidden for years finally finds release - with the dream of being reunited with her son, which soon drives her to the decision to end her life. In the orchestral part, the use of rhythmic delays in the form of syncopations reinforces the feeling of unease and boundless sorrow that permeates the entire aria. These musical devices contribute to the intense expression and emotional weight of the scene while providing the perfect backdrop for the soloist's melodic line, characterized by a broad, typically Puccinian cantilena that allows the singer to convey the full spectrum of the character's emotions. The orchestration relies primarily on the string section. Their sound is deep, rich, and warm, perfectly reflecting the melancholic mood of Angelica's utterances. The dark, profound tone of the cellos complements the vocal line while simultaneously enhancing the dramatic dimension of the emotions portrayed. It is worth emphasizing that for Puccini, music and text were inseparable, which led to exceptional orchestral solutions designed primarily to reinforce the emotional expression of the text and highlight the dramatic intensity of the scene. In his works, the orchestra not only supports the vocal

³⁰Budden J., *Puccini op. cit.*, p. 416

line but also plays an active role in shaping and illustrating the mood, often introducing musical ideas closely tied to the development of the narrative. In *Senza mamma*, this is particularly evident in the final measures of the aria, in which Angelica pleads to her son: “Tell it to mama, beautiful creature, with the faint sparkle of a star. Speak to me, speak to me, love, love, love!”³¹. This is a crucial moment in the aria, where the desperate Angelica addresses her deceased child directly, asking for any sign - even just a twinkle of a star in the sky. Angelica seeks consolation, and her cry for love becomes a voice of helplessness in the face of death.

In the passage under discussion, the orchestra shifts from a lyrical, melodic accompaniment to an ostinato funeral march. This change emphasizes Angelica’s inner transformation, as her hopes of being reunited with her child become increasingly tangible. Paradoxically, it is precisely now, when her child is an angel in heaven (*Ora che sei un angelo nel cielo...*), that she can finally feel his presence close to her. Puccini conveys the march character through a heavy, marching rhythm and specific orchestration: dotted-quarter groups followed by eighth notes are played by violins, violas, and French horns, while the accompanying eighth notes are assigned to cellos, double basses, harp, and timpani. This choice of instruments produces a sound with a pronounced mournful color, effectively illustrating the sense of loss, grief, and profound longing. The previously mentioned twinkle of the star is also reflected in the score. It is depicted by a thirty-second-note motif played by the harp and celesta in the second and third octaves, whose combined sound creates an extremely delicate, ethereal timbre. Together, these instruments amplify the sense of unreality - their sound is, on one hand, luminous, and on the other, subtle and mysterious - enriching the orchestral texture and creating an atmosphere of mysticism and transcendence.

Angelica’s rapture is interrupted by a single solo French horn note, which pulls her out of her reverie and returns her to the reality of the stage. Other sisters re-enter, assuring Angelica that Mary has heard her prayers. Filled with exaltation, yet without excessive dramatization, Angelica announces the descent of divine grace. An orchestral intermezzo, based on the melodic line of *Senza mamma*, serves as a kind of epilogue to the tragedy that has just unfolded. Once again, the melodic line slowly transitions into a calm march, imbued with a sense of oppressive weight. Against this backdrop,

³¹ author’s translation

Angelica resolves to reunite with her deceased child by taking poison. Before drinking the potion, she bids farewell to her fellow sisters and to her monastic life, accompanied by a syncopated rhythm in 12/8 time. When she carries out this final decision, the death motif returns; as the act is completed and Angelica becomes aware of the eternal consequences of her action, a menacing orchestral tremolo accompanies the dramatic melody of the wind section. This tension, rich in dissonance, then gives way to the “triumphal march of Mary,” mentioned by Puccini in his letter to Father Don Panichelli. The sound of grace descending upon Angelica represents the culmination of Puccini’s unparalleled orchestral and illustrative mastery. The careful choice of instruments and harmonies creates an aura of mysticism, enhancing the sense of spiritual connection and sublimity that defines this climactic moment. In contrast to both the previous scene of Angelica’s suicide act and the structure of finales in many operatic works, the orchestra here does not sound *tutti*. The delicate, fioritura-like melody is entrusted to the harp, accompanied, alongside the string section, by a set of offstage instruments: two pianos, organ, celesta, and a choir of angelic voices. This orchestration, combined with carefully constructed harmonies, allows for a texture of a very specific color, characterized by ethereality and lightness, evoking the image of a heavenly sound. This effect is enhanced by the singing of the offstage choir of angels praising the Blessed Virgin with the words: *O gloriosa virginum, sublimis inter sidera, qui te creavit, parvulum, lactente nutris ubere. Quod Heva tristis abstulit, tu reddis almo germine: in trent ut astra flebiles, coeli recludis cardines*. “O glorious Virgin, exalted among the stars, who feeds with your breast the little child. What sad Eve took away, you restore through the blessed seed. In the darkness where the stars weep, you fully open the gates of heaven.”³² Against this background, Angelica, in ecstasy, beseeches Mary for mercy. When her eyes behold her deceased child, she ends her vocal part with several sighs full of rapture. Despite committing a mortal sin, Angelica receives the grace of salvation and a reunion with her child, and the opera concludes with the continuing angelic chorus praising the Virgin: *Gloriosa virginum! Salve, Maria! Mater purissima! Turris davidica! Salve, Maria!* “Glorious Virgin, hail, Mary! Most pure Mother! Tower of David! Hail, Mary!”³³

Thanks to these devices, Puccini creates a scene of poignant depth and great dramatic intensity, while at the same time remaining faithful to the ascetic, religious stylization he

³² [author’s translation]

³³ [author’s translation]

adopted. Despite criticism of the opera, particularly its finale, by musicologists and the composer's biographers (the work is accused of a superficial musical layer, resulting from the fact that Puccini considered himself a believer but not a practicing one, so the criticism focuses on a lack of authenticity and insufficient depth in the miracle scene), it is undeniable that it exerts a profound emotional impact on the audience. The poetic qualities of the work - as is often the case in Puccini's oeuvre - play a key role in its reception.

As Wiarosław Sandelewski, the Polish biographer of Puccini, writes, *in some respects Suor Angelica could be placed alongside La Bohème. Here and there, the plot is of little importance, and poetry prevails over drama. It is therefore unsurprising that Puccini considered Suor Angelica the finest of the Triptych, as it was the most in tune with his temperament and managed to captivate him. In it, Puccini is most himself and expresses himself most freely. In the other two operas he may have been more interesting musically and dramatically, but he was certainly not more sincere and direct.*³⁴

3.2. *Suor Angelica* - adaptation of orchestral texture to the piano

An interesting challenge for a pianist seeking to reproduce Puccini's intentions as faithfully as possible is already the very beginning of the opera, namely the bells. Through appropriate dynamics, articulation, and the use of the right pedal, it is possible to produce from the piano a sound very close to the real resonance of bells. First of all, it is essential not to change the right pedal cleanly, but to allow successive notes to overlap, creating a kind of reverberation. The second issue is dynamics - or rather its absence. Bells are not capable of changing their intensity; once set in motion, they strike steadily and evenly. The final factor ensuring success is the manner of sound production, the finger - key motion should be quite fast, yet at the same time heavy, not excessively legato.

³⁴ Sandelewski W., *Puccini*, PWM, Kraków 1963, p. 232–233

Over the following four pages, the texture remains chordal, forming a slow progression in crotchets; however, the orchestral part, notated in the piano transcription in a traditional manner - as a single system, very quickly divides, creating three, and at times even four staves. This results from the emergence of a distinct piccolo flute melody, as well as an organ part. For an eye unaccustomed to reading a more expansive score, this may present a challenge; nevertheless, it is not advisable to dismiss one's chances from the outset by limiting oneself solely to maintaining a stable, regular chordal accompaniment. While the organ part may be successfully disregarded by the pianist, as it almost entirely doubles the voices carried by the strings and does not come to the foreground in the orchestral texture, the piccolo flute is of considerable importance. Its distinctive, high and penetrating tones alternately ascend and descend in a trill-filled, demisemiquaver phrase evocative of birdsong. This association is justified, as, according to the sisters' lines, the action of the opera takes place in May, when for only three days during the entire year sunlight reaches the convent garden, bringing the nuns a measure of joy in their ascetic, pleasure-deprived existence. From a performance perspective, it seems advisable to read the entire three-part system attentively, as the pianist's left hand may independently sustain the chordal accompaniment, while the right hand realises the piccolo part. Such a solution not only facilitates an effective interpretation, but also points to the intentional conferral of an illustrative character upon this passage. This aspect constitutes one of the key stylistic idioms of Puccini's oeuvre, renowned for its precise handling of tonal colour and its subtle imitation of sound phenomena drawn from nature. Puccini employed analogous techniques in his earlier works, frequently using orchestral means in a functional and semantically meaningful way to achieve specific sonic effects, in this case referring to nature. An example may be found in the opening of act II of the opera *Madama Butterfly*, where, likewise through the use of the flute, he creates a musical image of a robin weaving its nest.

(Le monache escono dalla chiesa a due per due. La Badessa)

E co-sì si - a.

E co-sì si - a.

(Ottavino interno)

p (Organo)

Fig. 8. *Suor Angelica* no. 2, bars 5-7 - piccolo flute part imitating birdsong

BUTTERFLY *pp* *ritenendo*

- re - na..... quando fa la ni - diata..... il pet - ti -

col canto

BUTTERFLY *ALL.^{ro} MOD.^{to} ♩ = 116*

- ros - so.

11 *ALL.^{ro} MOD.^{to} ♩ = 116*

pp *mormorio*

BUTTERFLY (calma e convinta si sdraia per terra) (insistendo)

Tor - ne - rà. Dillo con

SUZUKI (con incredulità)

Spe - riam.

Fig. 9. *Madama Butterfly* no. 11, bars 1-8 - musical illustration of the robin's song (It. *il pettirosso*), assigned in the orchestra to flutes and violins

The subsequent passage (in the score, from numbers 3 to 7 inclusive) does not present particular challenges in terms of interpretation or pianistic technique. Both the orchestral and the piano parts are confined to accompanying the conversation between the Mistress of Novices and the other sisters. Attention should be focused on highlighting the austere character of the superior, who enforces penalties without hesitation. Articulation ought to possess a weighty, decisive quality, and the execution must be appropriately attuned to the tone and musical content of the passage. It is noteworthy that in the piano reduction, within the sections accompanying the Mistress of Novices, a graphic articulation marking *tenuto* appears. This indicates that the notes should be sustained to their full value, with an emphasis on their continuity; consequently, each note must be rendered with complete resonance, without premature shortening. The musical texture here is economical, as the objective is to emphasise each note (while preserving its full duration) without excessive volume. Likewise, the dotted rhythm (no. 6) is intended to underscore the sharpness of the discourse and must be executed with full precision, avoiding any blurring of its clearly defined structure.

The next significant passage is the multi-system introduction preceding Sister Genovieffa's first entrance (no. 8). At first glance, the texture gives a seemingly pleasant impression, written in a very pianistic, comfortable manner. The left hand is assigned a sixteenth-note harp-like accompaniment, while the right takes the descending four-note figures of the string instruments. However, a single glance at the full score, or listening to a recording, reveals that the leading melody at this point belongs to the brass section - French horns and trombones. It is notated in a dotted rhythm - dotted minim followed by a semiquaver - and in the piano reduction occupies the middle register, between the left-hand harp part and the right-hand chords. An additional challenge is that the horn melody is divided between both hands of the pianist, necessitating frequent transitions between the two staves, while simultaneously maintaining the left-hand sixteenth-note harp figures and the descending string chords in the right hand. In such circumstances, the horn melody can easily become obscured, yet it must be brought to the foreground. This can be achieved by emphasising the dotted minims, sustaining them fully up to the moment of the leap to the chords, while avoiding any undue acceleration of the semiquavers, which form an integral part of the melodic line. To further accentuate this motif and reinforce its timbral presence, the horn line may be doubled in octaves, with execution alternating between the left and right hand as

appropriate to the passage. In this way, all three principal orchestral motifs are preserved without compromising any of them.

(Le figure bianche delle suore si sparpagliano per il chiostro e oltre gli archi. Suor Angelica
a Tempo ♩ = 63
(Andante calmo)

8

pp

espress.

zappetta la terra e innaffia le erbe ed i fiori)

rall. e dim.

9 a Tempo

pp

leggerissimo

Fig. 9. *Suor Angelica* no. 8, bars 1-7 - French horn melody in the middle register of the piano reduction

When Genovieffa joins the orchestra (nos. 9-10), her part is conducted with characteristic Puccinian *rubato* - introducing subtle agogic flexibility. If a conductor is present at rehearsal, great care must be taken to observe the suspensions and tempo changes indicated by them - which Puccini meticulously inscribed in the score multiple times (*poco ritenuto*, *cedendo un poco*, followed by *a tempo*, *ritenuto*, and again *a tempo*). If the pianist is accompanying the singer alone - for example during a lesson - it is essential to make clear that this passage is marked by a specific agogic character, also stemming from performance tradition, as the soprano - particularly if a young student - may not be fully aware of it.

In the subsequent passage, from no. 10 (from the transition to 3/4 time) through no. 14, the piano's chordal texture should reflect the uniform sonority of the string section.

Particular importance attaches to the indication *vellutato* - “velvety” - rarely employed by the composer and therefore exceptionally significant interpretatively. It denotes a manner of execution that must be delicate, soft, and imbued with a pronounced yet discreet sonority. The sound should be like velvet - fluid, homogeneous, with a subtly smoothed contour, free from any harshness or sharpness in articulation. This requires even, carefully controlled tone production and articulation free from abrupt contrasts, thus fostering a sense of elegance, calm, and gentle expression. It is only in no. 12 that, against the chordal texture, the oboe momentarily emerges to the fore. For the pianist, however, this poses no difficulty, as the brief oboe motif is notated in the highest melodic line of the piano reduction, allowing easy projection using the fourth and fifth fingers of the right hand. No. 13 introduces a rough, unsettling sonority of sevenths played by the flutes and clarinets. These sevenths must also be brought out in the piano part, maintaining particular attentiveness to the conductor’s interpretation, since the recurring motif is accompanied by a marked *rallentando* in 3/4 time, which may prompt some conductors to temporarily conduct these few bars in 6.

The brief six-bar passage marked no. 14 in the score features another interesting sonorous device employed by the composer. Only the string section plays, with the instruction *a ponticello*, which, unfortunately, is absent from the piano reduction. Nevertheless, it holds considerable significance in terms of the character of the sound produced, even though it naturally has no direct equivalence in piano technique *sensu stricto*. What is crucial, however, is that the tone produced in this manner by the string instruments acquires a more metallic and coarse quality. The *a ponticello* technique can sound cold and unnatural in comparison with the traditional, warmer sonority obtained from playing “on the strings” (i.e., farther from the bridge), thereby imparting a certain intensity and mysterious quality to the music. It should be emphasised that the entire passage under discussion forms a chordal phrase with the dynamic marking *ppp*. All of this renders the performance indications for the pianist quite clear - one must avoid thinking in a “pianistic” manner and concentrate on achieving the most uniform, cold sonority possible, devoid of dynamic fluctuation. The phrase concludes with the descent of the cellos, executed in parallel octaves *unisono*, which should be played as legato as possible, aiming to produce a dark, deep tone shaped through the left hand.

With the entrance of Sister Genovieffa (no. 15), the string section yields to the group of woodwind instruments, resulting in an immediate change of timbre and imparting a distinctly brighter character to the sound. The pianist should be mindful of this shift, while also remaining attentive to the soloist's singing, with particular regard to the breaths she takes, which, although natural for wind instruments, may not be immediately obvious in the pianist's phrasing. This brief scene concludes with a choral response from the remaining nuns, accompanied by *pizzicato* double basses, rendered in the piano reduction simply as *staccato* octaves (beginning of no. 16). Although the *staccato* alone cannot fully capture the sonority achieved through *pizzicato* technique, the effect can be reinforced by introducing a slight desynchronisation in the struck octave between the first and fifth fingers, thereby approximating the sound of several musicians plucking the strings simultaneously on their instruments.

Then, after a single measure of full rest (*vuota*), Angelica's short arioso *I desiderii sono fiori* (continuation of number 16 in the score) begins, in which, for the first time, a phrase unfolds in a broad cantilena, placing Angelica prominently in the foreground. Although this moment is technically very demanding for the soprano, it does not pose significant difficulties for the accompanying pianist. Once again, attention must be paid to maintaining a maximally legato line and Puccinian agogics (*sostenuto*, *poco rit. col canto*). Number 17 represents the first dramatic climax of the opera, where the orchestra playing *tutti* resounds with full force, presenting a motif that will later become the thematic signal of death. In the dynamic markings, *forte* appears on a larger scale for the first time, with a powerful crescendo extending to *fff*. This effect should be faithfully rendered in the piano reduction as well, while preserving the legato of the melodic line originally assigned to the wind instruments. Proper execution of this passage requires reconciling the violently changing dynamics with the continuity of the phrase and musical narrative, without giving the impression of harsh or brutalised sound.

The image shows a musical score for a scene from Verdi's *Madama Butterfly*. It consists of three systems of music. The first system is for Suor Angelica, with the tempo marking 'Largamente' and the number '141' in the top right. The lyrics are '-rel - la, la Mor - te è vi - ta bel - la!'. The second system is for the piano accompaniment, also marked 'Largamente'. The third system is for La Zelartrice, marked 'a Tempo' and '18'. The lyrics are 'Noi non pos - sia - mo'. The score includes musical notation for voice and piano, with various markings such as 'con passione', 'rubando...', and 'pp'.

Fig. 10. *Suor Angelica* no. 17, bars 1-7 - first presentation of the *death motif*

The first exaltation of the eponymous protagonist is abruptly interrupted by the intervention of the Mistress of Novices, whose nervous *parlando* (no. 18) restores order among the remaining nuns. The pianist's role is limited to accompanying her with a soft *tremolo* until the point where Genovieffa once again assumes the central focus (no. 19). Her lyrical phrase is highlighted by the bassoon melody (executed by the pianist's left hand), while the accompaniment, consisting of eighth notes on the weak beats performed by oboes and clarinets (right hand), provides harmonic support. Technically, this task is not demanding; the critical aspects remain maintaining the appropriate *rubato* and ensuring a dark, rich tonal colour.

A complete change of character occurs with the sprightly melody in 2/4, initially played in unison by the clarinets and oboes, later taken over by the string section (no. 20). This passage illustrates the playful conversation among the nuns regarding the

temptation of gluttony affecting one of them. In the context of adapting this orchestral texture for piano, certain technical challenges arise, as the distribution of notes across the keyboard is not optimal and does not naturally facilitate the required freedom of execution. Nevertheless, the desired character must be preserved, with lightness and precise articulation playing a key role. Four bars before no. 21, the conductor's handling becomes crucial, as it sometimes happens that the descent of sixteenth notes may be conducted in 4/4 to aid the singers, who enter on the weak beats in small subgroups. This, however, is not intuitive for the pianist and demands heightened concentration.

The passage requiring particular attention occurs when the nuns accuse Angelica of lying (no. 23). Puccini leads the phrase with remarkable vividness, employing chromatic third progressions in the violins and violas, as well as the horn (for the pianist, the right hand). The cellos and double basses, by contrast, execute octave-leaps of sevenths in quavers, played *pizzicato* (left hand). The articulation for the left hand in this passage is therefore rather specific: simple *staccato* is insufficient, particularly when the texture shifts to octaves. Striking the first and fifth fingers of the octave slightly asynchronously, with articulation oscillating between *staccato* and *portato*, ensures a sound that more faithfully approximates the timbral effect of the orchestral original.

Starting from number 24, the scene with *Sister Infermiera* - the nurse - begins. Particularly significant are the indications included in the score by the composer: *allegretto deciso* and, far more rarely encountered in musical terminology, *pel taglio*, literally meaning "with a cut." This marking usually pertains to the string section, though not exclusively, and signifies a style of playing with a particular articulation, evoking a "cutting" effect in the sound or a precise, slightly harsh strike of the strings. In practice, the motif opening this scene, executed by the bassoon, viola, and cello, exhibits distinct characteristics aligned with this description. Its rhythm is particularly noteworthy: a sixteenth-note rest is followed by two thirty-second notes, two sixteenth notes, two eighth notes, and a quarter note occurring simultaneously. Accurate performance of this rhythm, combined with strict adherence to the indicated articulation (including accents and *tenuto*), allows a faithful rendering of the orchestral accompaniment's rough texture on the keyboard instrument. In the further course of the scene with *Infermiera* (encompassing numbers 24-28), an additional point of interest is Puccini's double illustration of a swarm of wasps - another example of the composer's

characteristic fondness for musically depicting natural phenomena - achieved through the woodwinds and harp.



Fig. 11. *Suor Angelica* no. 25, bars 3-9 - musical depiction of a swarm of wasps

The placement of this motif in the two- and three-lined octaves, combined with crisp *staccato* articulation, allows for a convincingly effective rendition on the piano. Equally noteworthy is the passage in which Angelica converses with the Nurse regarding the remedy for the sister stung by the bees (no. 27). The orchestration is highly characteristic, featuring clearly audible *pizzicato* strings, momentary strikes of the timpani, and chords from the woodwind section. The repeated note played by the timpani can be transposed on the piano down to the contrabass octave, thereby achieving a markedly more percussive timbre. In the remaining layers of the texture, articulation again assumes decisive importance, enabling a subtle enrichment of the overall colouristic effect. For a piano performance, the precision of *staccato* is crucial, as it allows the performer to capture the dynamic shifts in timbre that mirror the

orchestral character. Such effects demand full technical control from the pianist to convey the motif's percussiveness, lightness, and intensity faithfully.

Following Angelica's conversation with the Nurse, a brief orchestral interlude functions as a transitional link between the two convent scenes (no. 29). This passage possesses a mysterious, even ominous character, initiated *unisono* by the cellos and double basses, whose dark timbre and low *tessitura* establish an atmosphere of unease. This tension is immediately intensified by the response of the violins and violas together with the woodwinds, realised as a sudden leap between two seventh-chord harmonies. From a pianist's perspective, this sonority is relatively straightforward to reproduce, provided that the natural colour of the instrument is employed across both the lower and upper registers, combined with careful attention to articulation.

The scene encompassing numbers 30–33 in the score brings, for a moment, a complete change of mood, even introducing a comic accent through the gluttonous Sister Dolcina. Once again, the sprightly melody previously presented in no. 20 returns, this time accompanying the sisters returning from errands, who distribute their purchases among the other nuns. The key interpretative challenge here lies in capturing and conveying this dynamic change of character, which shapes the transition between differing emotional states, both musically and dramatically, allowing a full expression of the shifting on-stage atmosphere. From no. 34, an exceptionally interesting moment begins, significant both for the stage action and the musical structure. This is a crucial scene, marking the true commencement of the opera's central action - from this point, events accelerate and move inexorably in one direction. Puccini delineates this shift with remarkable clarity, so much so that even the untrained ear of a less experienced listener can perceive it and comprehend its significance. Julian Budden draws attention to this passage, describing it as follows: *a short and cheerful melody sums up the general contentment, after which the music transforms into one of the most extraordinary and attention-catching transitions Puccini ever created. While the nuns busy themselves with provisions, the harmonic motion slows, until the moment when hazy, almost scattered phrases are played by flute, oboe, and solo violin. The climax is a piquant dissonance, spread across a wide space, orchestrally light yet full of meaning, with a sense of expectancy, strangely at odds with the randomness of the dialogue.*³⁵ Indeed, these

³⁵ Budden J., *Puccini*, op. cit., p. 412, trans. author.

descending phrases of flute and violin, with their slightly jagged texture and characteristic rhythmic structure - dominated by dotted rhythms, often taking the more emphatic form of an eighth note with two dots followed by thirty-second notes - even in the piano reduction, acquire a disquieting and enigmatic character. Although they accompany the seemingly trivial dialogue of the sisters, focused on the subject of a currant branch, the contrast between the stage action and the accompanying music serves to highlight the unusual nature of the situation. Such juxtaposition builds tension, introducing elements of ambiguity and mystery, which function as an important expressive device in the dramatic context. Four bars before no. 35 in the score, an ostinato passage begins, centred on the persistent repetition of the note G in the flute against a syncopated accompaniment from the other wind instruments. This device clearly underscores the underlying anxiety, barely restrained by Angelica. In performing this passage on the piano, it is particularly important to convey the enigmatic atmosphere through the very steady and uniform repetition of the G note, even though it occurs across three different octaves: descending from the treble-octave, through the two-lined octave, down to the one-lined octave. Due to the differing intensity of sound in these registers on the piano, careful balancing of each attack is essential to avoid emphasising any single note, except for those specifically marked with *tenuto*. Only such an approach guarantees that the ostinato musical structure will remain undisturbed - and that its dramatic function will remain integral. Additionally, one must be mindful of the soft accompaniment of the wind-group chords in the left hand, which, gradually rising with the *crescendo*, ascend ever higher, thereby intensifying the atmosphere of anxious anticipation. A seeming, momentary release of tension occurs with the arrival of no. 36, whose orchestral texture, when transcribed for piano, allows for the distinction of three layers - the principal melody played by the French horns, supported by harp, oboes and flutes; the sixteenth-note accompaniment assigned to the violins and violas (both in the right hand); and the harmonic foundation intended not only for the cellos and double basses *pizzicato*, but also for the bassoons in the left hand.

Crucial, therefore, in this passage, is the role of the right hand and the two functions it performs. Since the main French-horn melody can be played only using the thumb, maintaining its smooth character and legato continuity is not simple. This is, however, achievable - not only through appropriate use of the pedal (which must not blur the

entirety of this rich texture), but principally through economical hand movements and keeping the hand positioned as close as possible to the keyboard throughout the passage. This method of playing avoids excessive motion that would generate unnecessary accents, which could unduly emphasize the melody or bring the chords to the forefront (an effect that occurs naturally if the pianist does not focus on foregrounding the melodic line).

PRIMA SORELLA CERCATRICE
Andante mosso (*lo stesso movimento*)
- gno- ri. Cer- to a - spet- ta qualcu - no che è en- tra- to nel conven - to, e
Andante mosso (*lo stesso movimento*)
misterioso e un poco agitato
pp

PRIMA SORELLA CERCATRICE
forse fra un momento suo ne - rà la campana a parla - to - rio.

Fig. 12. *Suor Angelica* no. 36 bars 2-7 - French-horn melody in the middle voice, forming the melodic foundation for the subsequent aria *Senza mamma*

This richly woven sequence is abruptly interrupted just before the expected climax by the bell announcing the arrival of a guest in the convent parlour (no. 38). In both the full score and the piano reduction, its repeated C is written in the two- ledger-line octave; on the piano, it can be illustrated through octave repetitions spanning either the second and third or even the third and fourth octaves. Such a rendition produces a more penetrating tone, effectively capturing the bright timbre and high frequencies characteristic of the bell. Following this brief interlude, the previous chordal sequence returns, gradually

building toward the anticipated climax (no. 39), guided by Puccini's signature, broadly contoured phrase of lyrical, poignant melody. Its construction in the piano reduction results in a highly pianistic texture, convenient for smooth execution - the chordal accompaniment filling the structure is transferred to the lower register (originally played by horns in the one- ledger-line octave), allowing it to be managed entirely by the left hand, while the right hand freely leads the melodic line, parallel to Angelica's emotionally charged vocal phrase. This arrangement facilitates both technical execution and the effective projection of dramatic emotional content.

A complete change of character occurs with the arrival of the Badessa (No. 40), the convent abbess, who announces the visit of the Aunt. Her appearance on stage is preceded by an orchestral passage, in which its steady, rhythmic character predominates. The repeated eighth note with a sixteenth dot in the flutes and clarinets, supplemented by sixteenths in the horns, gives the situation weight and gravity. This overwhelming heaviness must not diminish when performing the piano reduction; on the contrary - its intensity, natural to Puccini's orchestration, must be preserved with particular care. The simplicity of the texture and the absence of technical difficulties can lead to rendering the rhythm too lightly and without reflection. To avoid this, when performing the dotted rhythm in the right hand, attention should be paid to the shorter value – the sixteenth note. The dotted eighth is indeed emphasized by *tenuto*, but it is precisely the sixteenth note, not released too quickly from the keyboard, yet held to the end of its duration, that allows giving the passage a heavy, slowly advancing character. The entire section ends with a relatively short fermata on the general pause, preceded by three chords, as heavy as the whole passage. They should be performed *stentando*, with a slight delay and a sense of pressure, which, after the steady march, gives the impression of gradually stopping or “exerting effort,” while avoiding excessive blurring on the pedal, so that they sound more *separato*, just as they are executed in the orchestra by the woodwind instruments.

The dark atmosphere is emphasized by the chorus of nuns, singing short, mournful *Requiem aeternam* for one of the recently deceased sisters (no. 41). It is accompanied mostly only by the string section *con sordino*, softly accompanying the lyrical melodic line. This subtle, velvety tone must also be conveyed on the piano, which can again be achieved through economical movements and maintaining proximity to the keyboard.

Next, with the appearance of no. 42 in the score, the Badessa, with her almost sepulchral, deep alto, announces to Angelica the arrival of her Aunt. For this moment, Puccini adds the indication *cupo* - dark, extremely important in the context of the character of the entire scene. Each subsequent utterance of the abbess is preceded by a slow approach of the entire string section, with a predominance of the sound of cellos and double basses. In the piano reduction, octaves are written to be played unisono by the right and left hands. To achieve the *cupo* effect, the line played by the fifth finger of the left hand, which corresponds to the lowest, darkest phrase characteristic of the double bass sound, should be particularly highlighted. The right hand should remain decidedly in the background relative to the left, in order to avoid losing the color in favor of the middle, relatively bright piano register. Alternatively, the entire passage can be transposed an octave lower, but such a solution does not always result in a satisfactory reproduction of the dark color; more often it only leads to a low, rumbling sound.

The fourth measure of no. 43 begins a short, dark orchestral passage heralding the arrival of the Grand Duchess. Once again, the leading role is played by the double basses *pizzicato*, whose successive phrases are concluded by a single chord struck by the horn. Despite the dynamic marked *piano*, when interpreting this passage on the piano, one must take into account the characteristic sound of the horn - even at the same dynamic, the horn's tone remains full and carrying, which makes it diametrically different from the *piano* of the double basses *pizzicato*, whose part is assigned to the left hand. The manner of striking the horn chord in the right hand should therefore be decisive and clearly audible, with a certain firmness at its onset. As the melody unfolds and the bassoons join the horn, precise use of the right pedal becomes crucial to achieve the appropriate sound on the piano. Excessive reliance on the pedal when connecting chords played by the right hand could result in a complete blurring of the *pizzicato* sound produced by the left hand. Therefore, its use should be limited to the bare minimum, with the primary emphasis placed on maximum finger legato, allowing the melodic line to remain smooth and continuous while preserving the clarity and distinctness of each executed element.

(La Badessa si incammina verso la porticina del parla-
-scol-ti. E co-sì sia.

Sostenendo

rit.

dim.

pp

LA ZIA PRINCIPRESSA

rall

pp

Lentamente con voce cupa

44

Fig. 13. *Suor Angelica* no. 43, bars 3-18 - articularity dualism of the right and left hand

Then, the cellos and double basses, now playing *arco* (no. 45), repeat the ascending motif that appeared shortly before with the entrance of the Badessa, while the horns and bassoons place successive chords with precise articulation and agogic markings: *tenuto* and *poco rit.*, *a tempo*, *sostenendo*. In the piano performance, the same principles as in the previous passage should be applied, simultaneously ensuring strict legato in the left-hand octaves, which corresponds to the *arco* part in the string instruments, in contrast to *pizzicato*. This orchestration character continues until the end of the first statement of the Aunt, changing with Angelica's response, which takes on a pleading tone (No. 46). Although the marching character of the steadily placed chords is maintained, their sonority undergoes a significant transformation. The chords are assigned to the harp, which executes them against a string *tremolo*. The harp and its soft, plaintive chords should be reproduced on the piano in the same way, as arpeggios, preserving similar

delicacy and clarity. Once again, against this background, Puccini introduces clear chords - this time even stronger, performed by the trumpets in a triumphant, fanfare-like dotted rhythm. Despite the *con sordino* and *pianissimo* markings, on the piano, as in the previous situation, the specific timbral character of the brass instruments must be taken into account. A strictly *pianissimo* execution is therefore impossible, as the sound would be lost against the arpeggiated chords and would lose its fanfare-like expression.

The first explicit confrontation occurs when Angelica accuses her aunt of ruthlessness (no. 48). The orchestral part becomes agitated, with interesting coloristic effects - the main, jagged melody is performed by the bassoons and violas, giving it an additional rough timbre, accompanied by the cellos and double basses in low *tremolo*. Moreover, pronounced accents emphasize the turbulence and dramatic intensity of the situation. When transferring this sequence to the piano, proper articulation is crucial: *quasi non legato* to highlight the rough tone, sharp accents, and small slurs reminiscent of sobbing.

In the score, no. 49 brings a momentary calm, only to give way shortly thereafter to the ecclesiastical monologue of the Grand Duchess, sometimes regarded as her *arioso* (no. 50). The harmonic progression of successive chords creates an atmosphere of reverent mood, which grows with each ensuing phrase. It is worth noting that in the orchestra, the intensity of this sequence evolves naturally, thanks to the sustained and developing capabilities of the string and wind instruments - something not possible on the piano. Therefore, the pianist must make particular efforts to ensure that the tension does not dissipate after each chord strike. The chords should be played not only as marked *espressivo*, but with even greater expressiveness - *espressivo piu possibile*. The same level of expressivity must be maintained in no. 51, where the climax occurs at the moment the word “*espiare!*” - atonement - is sung. The poignant chords, played by the orchestra *tutti*, require the pianist to render them *con forza*, with special emphasis on the vowel “A” in “*espiAre*”, in accordance with the prosodic rules of the Italian language.

After the fermata, Angelica’s response begins seemingly calm (no. 52), yet it quickly develops into a desperate monologue of a mother pleading for any news about her child (no. 53). The dramatic, chromatic leaps in the nun’s cries are supported by the orchestra, which - though apparently turbulent - actually maintains a strong *sostenuto*, emphasizing the extreme emotionality of Angelica’s utterances and allowing her to remain fully in the foreground. The rhythmic-harmonic structure (thirty-second note

groups of undulating phrases and the sobbing motif built from dotted-eighth–sixteenth groups) provokes a highly emotional interpretation, particularly in the piano transcription. The *tutti* orchestra is a complex organism, responsive to the conductor, and thus does not convey emotions as directly and intensely as the pianist can. However, one must avoid excessive exaggeration in this passage, because overemotionality would fail to provide the singer with the necessary support in this technically demanding moment. The pianist must therefore play with the weight of the entire orchestra, keeping personal feelings in check and following Puccini's explicit guidance, which consistently frames the emotions within precise bounds: *allegro moderato ma agitato*, *andante sostenuto*, numerous *ritenuto*, then *piu sostenuto ancora*, finally reaching *piu lento* and *piu lento ancora*.

The image displays a musical score for the character Suor Angelica, covering bars 2 through 9. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4.

Bar 2: The vocal line begins with the lyrics "fi - glio! Mio fi - glio, il fi - glio mi - o! Fi - glio". The tempo marking is "Allegro moderato ma agitato" with a metronome marking of 112. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Bar 3: The vocal line continues with "mio! La cre - a - tu - ra che mi fu, mi fu strap -". The tempo marking changes to "Andante sostenuto" with a metronome marking of 76. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

Bar 4: The vocal line has the lyrics "- pa - ta! Fi - glio mio, che ho ve -". The tempo marking returns to "Allegro moderato e agitato" with a metronome marking of 112. The piano accompaniment features a more complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth notes.

Bar 5: The vocal line continues with "du - to e ho bacia - to una sol vol - ta! Creatu - ra". The tempo marking is "Andante sostenuto" with a metronome marking of 76. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Bar 6: The vocal line has the lyrics "string. rit. string. rit.". The tempo marking is "Andante sostenuto" with a metronome marking of 76. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Bar 7: The vocal line continues with "du - to e ho bacia - to una sol vol - ta! Creatu - ra". The tempo marking is "Andante sostenuto" with a metronome marking of 76. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Bar 8: The vocal line has the lyrics "string. rit. string. rit.". The tempo marking is "Andante sostenuto" with a metronome marking of 76. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Bar 9: The vocal line continues with "du - to e ho bacia - to una sol vol - ta! Creatu - ra". The tempo marking is "Andante sostenuto" with a metronome marking of 76. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Fig. 14. *Suor Angelica* no. 53, bars 2-9 - melodic-rhythmic structure of the sobbing motif

After the fermata (no. 54), the tension does not subside; on the contrary, it rises toward a climax, which on the piano can also be expressed in *forte fortissimo* dynamics. Then, in no. 55, characteristic of the orchestral timbre are once again the cellos and double basses, which play alternately *pizzicato* and *arco*, with emphasis on the note played with the bow. This articulation must be faithfully reproduced on the piano, as it ensures that the atmosphere remains persistently heavy and ominous.

Finally, the climax of the entire scene occurs - Angelica learns of her son's death. Her desperate scream is accompanied by a cascade of descending chords spread across the orchestra (no. 56), which in the piano reduction are rendered as four - and three-note arpeggios, effectively illustrating the overwhelming avalanche of piercing pain and suffering crushing Angelica. Then, four measures before no. 57, the piano part in the reduction once again splits into three staves within a single system, necessitating prioritization and the selection of the most important orchestral sonority. Naturally, one can omit the sixteenth-note filling, focusing instead on the descending octaves, which overwhelm with their power and create a mournful atmosphere, while simultaneously restoring harmonic balance.



Fig. 15. *Suor Angelica* no. 56, bars 9-12 - example of the necessity to prioritize sonority

Sequence 58-59 already serves as a prelude to Angelica's aria, yet it continues to employ the *crying* motif (*lamentoso* in the score), successively entrusted to different groups of instruments. This results in a rich timbral palette, which should also be reflected on the piano, bringing out each phrase with a slightly different color of sound. Once again, the articulatory dualism is crucial - the right hand must play strictly *legato*, while in the left hand the *pizzicato* accompaniment continues, its slow, measured pace increasingly evoking a funeral march.

Before the beginning of Angelica's aria *Senza mamma* (number 60), the composer once again provides his characteristically precise performance directions regarding tempo and expression. First comes *andante desolato* for the twice-repeated procession of chords opening the aria, played by the wind section; then *lento grave* accompanies the start of Angelica's phrase, when the chordal structure is executed by the string

section. This orchestration ensures that, despite multiple repetitions of the same motif in the orchestral accompaniment, its sound possesses fundamentally different timbres. The pianist should likewise reflect this tonal variation, even though the piano reduction contains no explicit instructions on the matter. Only a subtle dynamic difference ($p \rightarrow pp$) signals this change, yet it does not fully convey its character. Shortly afterward, the solo violin presents a brief but exceptionally lyrical motif, whose timbre is difficult to reproduce on the piano. Nevertheless, the marking *dolce espressivo* in the score should be regarded as crucial for interpreting this passage. Despite the instrument's limitations, the performer must strive to capture the subtlety and emotional depth of the motif, conveying its plaintive tone characteristic of the solo violin. The entire sequence designated by number 61 is constructed across three sound layers, with the middle voice once again taking a leading role in the melodic line, which in the orchestra is realized by the horns. Against this background, the first and second violins provide sixteenth-note accompaniment, while the third, lowest layer is assigned to the harp, giving the whole passage an exceptionally ethereal quality. In the piano reduction, the main horn melody is written in the left-hand line but must nevertheless be executed primarily by the right-hand thumb (which simultaneously plays the string sixteenths). As in the previously discussed analogous passage (number 36), it is essential to perform this line *legato*, avoiding any scansion or accentuation of individual notes.

The image displays a musical score for the character Suor Angelica, specifically bars 1-5. The score is presented in three systems, each featuring a vocal line for Suor Angelica and a piano accompaniment. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'a Tempo, ma ben sostenuto'. The first system shows the vocal line with the lyrics 'O - ra che sei un' and the piano accompaniment with a 'pp legato' marking. The second system continues the vocal line with 'ange - lo del cie - lo, o - ra tu puoi ve - der - la la tua' and includes a '(umilmente)' marking. The third system shows the vocal line with 'mam - ma, tu puoi scende - re giù pel fir - ma -' and a 'senza affrett.' marking, followed by a 'calando' marking. The piano accompaniment in the third system is marked 'pp'. The score is written in a key with one flat and a 4/4 time signature.

Fig. 16. *Suor Angelica* no. 61, bars 1-5 - three-layered structure of the musical texture

The conclusion of the aria presents a passage with a mournful, march-like rhythm (no. 62). The heavy dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm, played by violins, violas, and muted horns (*suono muto*) at *ppp*, is complemented by steady strikes of the timpani together with the harp, accompanied by cellos and double basses. This carefully constructed accompaniment creates a unique timbre, further enriched after a moment by the celesta, joining the flute and piccolo. When realizing this passage on the piano, it is crucial to

maintain the tempo without rushing, avoiding the acceleration of the sixteenth notes in the dotted group, which allows them to retain their weight and fully resonate. The sound of the celesta will be much more interesting if played an octave higher, in the two- and three-lined octaves, compared to its notation in the piano reduction. This renders it brighter and more vivid, effectively conveying the transcendental character of the aria's final phrases.

A firmly struck single note of the horn interrupts the dreamlike atmosphere - for the piano, it is notated at *piano*, yet it must be played strongly and decisively. Next (nos. 63 and 64), the chordal accompaniment supports the cheerful singing of the sisters praising the Virgin Mary. From a performance perspective on the piano, the most important aspect is achieving a full, noble sound, because the gradually increasing dynamics leading to the climax, together with the choral singing of the nuns with Angelica at the forefront, can tempt the performer to play too harshly and loudly. Similarly, in the following no. 65, conveying the full harmony is of key importance. This time the chords are supplemented by sixteenth-note passages, yet they consistently retain the most crucial role, both melodically and harmonically.

a Tempo
(Si ode dal fondo a destra il segnale delle tavolette. Le suore vengono da ogni parte, si
sia!...

65 a Tempo

sp *dim. molto* *rall.* *pp*

raccolgono e tutte in fila si avviano verso le celle; la teoria bianca entra sotto le arcate di destra;
a Tempo sost.to

pp

Figure 17. *Suor Angelica* no. 65, bars 1-7. Example of a melody carried by chords.

The orchestral intermezzo, beginning after the general pause at no. 66, largely constitutes a repetition of previously used musical motives, with particular emphasis on the material from the *Senza mamma* aria. The three-layered texture is preserved, with the most important melodic line in the middle voice (horns in the orchestra, the right-hand thumb for the pianist). In the second measure of no. 67, the melody is taken over by the oboes and first violins in unison, and in the piano reduction it is written in octaves in the right hand. To avoid excessive haste in playing the accompaniment, which at this point consists of a group of four thirty-second notes and four sixteenth notes, the pianist, when playing the octave phrase, should hold the upper note as long as possible with the fifth finger, lifting only the thumb to play the harmonic filling. This ensures the fluidity of the phrase. Maximum closeness of the fingers to the keyboard allows achieving an *espressivo* effect in *pp* dynamics, and enables leading the melody in a legato manner.

In the second half of the intermezzo, six measures before no. 68, an interesting situation arises from the pianist's perspective when realizing the piano reduction. Not all essential melodic elements, which stand out sonically at this moment against the full orchestra, are included in the transcription. Most notably, the celesta part is missing, whose subtle, ethereal sound, heard clearly twice, imparts an aura of melancholy and mystery. This concerns measures 6 and 5 before no. 68 in the score, as well as measures 3 and 4 in no. 68. The first instance features a descending third A–F, and the second a tritone B–F, both intervals repeated three times. They are part of a longer celesta passage, and their absence in the piano part at these two points is significantly felt. However, these notes can easily be added on the piano, since at this point the right hand only carries the melody in octaves, while the sixteenth-note accompaniment passes to the left hand. The fourth and third fingers can therefore play this element without difficulty, significantly enhancing the atmosphere of the entire intermezzo. Another important deficit occurs two measures before no. 68, where the chromatic descent of the second violins begins, also accompanied by the celesta. Omitting it entirely in the piano part can be problematic because it is a characteristic motive that may serve as a reference point for the stage action performed by the singers. Including it in the piano part is not difficult either, so it is worth doing to enrich the sound, while simultaneously aiding the orientation of the other performers.

Next, after the conclusion of the intermezzo, a slow march of a mournful character reappears (no. 69), analogous to no. 62, which concluded the aria *Senza mamma*. Once again, it is essential to remember not to rush the successive chords played by the right hand in dotted rhythm, particularly ensuring that the dotted quarter note, which follows each eighth note on beats one and three of the measure, does not sound prematurely (the eighth note must be held to its full value - otherwise, an impression of unnecessary haste will arise).

After two sonorous unison octaves, played by nearly the entire orchestra, no. 75 appears in the score. This gap in numbering results from changes Puccini made at this point after the premiere of the work in New York. The *Amici fiori* passage was significantly shortened due to the continuity of the dramatic action and technical difficulties in Angelica's part. It is now performed only in its second, revised version.

Number 75 constitutes Angelica's farewell to her fellow nuns. Her nervous, heightened excitement is reflected in the orchestra through numerous tied syncopations (*flutes*), complemented by rapid sixteenth-note passages grouped in sixes in the *string section*, all in a 12/8 meter. This dynamic moment, full of rhythmic tension, imparts a pulsating character to the music and mirrors the growing excitement of the main character. Due to the fast tempo, this passage becomes demanding from a performance perspective. It is essential to maintain precise execution of the syncopated passages, without delaying them on account of the sixteenth notes. From the standpoint of rhythmic clarity, it is crucial that the group of sixteenth notes is performed at the appropriate speed, with the last note landing precisely on the beginning of the next tied syncopation. For the singer, this is also a rhythmically challenging moment, as connecting consecutive syncopations with a slur may give the impression of losing the strong beat of the measure. Additionally, the change in tempo (*andantino ma un poco mosso*) at the beginning of the entire section does not allow the performers to mutually "feel their way," making the conductor's role particularly crucial.

SUOR ANGELICA
Andantino un poco mosso ♩ = 96
_dio,..... buone so-relle, addio, ad - dio! Vi lascio per
Andantino un poco mosso ♩ = 96
75
sem - pre. M'ha chia - ma - ta mio fi - glio!
SUOR ANGELICA
Den - tro un raggio di stel - le m'è ap - parso il suo sor - ri - so, m'ha

Fig. 18 *Suor Angelica* no. 75, bars 1-8. Syncopated structure in 12/8 meter

After the dramatic climax in which Angelica attempts to take her own life (no. 76 - the anticipation of which was presented in the previously discussed no. 17, arioso *I desideri sono i fiori*), numbers 77–80 are imbued with tragedy, the music illustrating the heroine's despair and inner turmoil. The agitated orchestra, whose poignant melodic line is again based on chords in dotted rhythm, resonates over a dark *tremolo*. After a moment, the choir joins Angelica, lamenting her commission of a mortal sin (measure 5 in no. 79). It is doubled in the orchestral part, which on the piano can be transferred an octave higher to achieve greater clarity of texture.

The final passage requiring the pianist's careful consideration of performance decisions is the opera's finale, the scene of revelation and miracle, which Puccini often referred to as the triumphal march of Mary. In the piano reduction, the orchestral part is

divided into as many as six staves - three systems - to which the offstage angelic choir is added. The first system corresponds to the organ part, featuring an acordal texture of long, sustained half notes. The second system represents the piano part, with prominently audible thirty-second-note passages in the two- and three-lined octaves. The march rhythm is provided by the percussion section, whose part occupies the lowest, third system in the reduction. Since the pianist cannot perform all three systems simultaneously, prioritization is necessary. The organ part doubles the choral line, and its dynamic marking is *pianissimo*, so it is not in the foreground. By contrast, an appropriate combination of the second and third systems allows for a satisfactory performance by the pianist. In the lower, “percussion” system, only the left hand should be retained, providing a solid harmonic foundation with octave-based chords. During rests, the left hand must leap across almost the entire keyboard, from the great octave to the two-lined octave, to support the right hand in the thirty-second-note passages of the offstage piano. When the left hand must play a chord in the lower register, the pianist can omit the first three thirty-second notes of the group; fortunately, their absence is not perceptible, as the melodic line remains uninterrupted by the right hand, and the march rhythm is maintained.

The image shows a musical score for 'Suor Angelica' no. 81, bars 1-3. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system includes staves for Sopranos (Soprani), Organ, and Piano (PIANOFORTE INTERNO). The second system includes staves for the Chorus (CORO), Organ, and Piano. The third system includes staves for the Piano. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Andante appena mosso' with a quarter note equal to 80. The dynamics are marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'pp subito' (pianissimo subito). The lyrics are in Italian: 'O gio - rio - sa', 'che levano l'Inno alla Madre delle Madri', 'vir - gi - num, Su - bli - mis in - ter'.

Fig. 19. *Suor Angelica* no. 81, bars. 1-3. Opera finale in three systems for the pianist

The opera finale for the pianist consists of “only” three staves within a single system, and once again, with the use of the right pedal or the *sostenuto* pedal, they can be executed freely. The right hand focuses on the soft violin *tremolo* in the upper register, while the left hand once more jumps between the great octave, which should sound continuously (for clarity of texture without blurring individual elements, the *sostenuto* pedal can be used here), and the melody played by the harp, written both in the score and in the reduction as arpeggiated chords.

As described and explained above, in *Suor Angelica* Puccini employed every means to convey the ascetic life within the cold convent walls. The orchestral part, accordingly, accompanies the stage action rather calmly, rather than overwhelming it with the magnitude of its sound (with the exception of a few moments discussed in the chapter). For the pianist wishing to perform it, this does not present many technical difficulties; however, executing it consciously, with attention to preserving the orchestral sonority, requires greater engagement and careful consideration of certain performance issues. Consequently, although the score is not excessively complex technically, its full comprehension and interpretation demand subtlety and sensitivity to detail. The true value lies in the refined rendering of atmosphere and emotion, which constitutes a challenge for any performer seeking to capture its depth.

Chapter 4 - *Gianni Schicchi* - the musical layer - examples of the adaptation of orchestral texture for piano

4.1 *Gianni Schicchi* - the musical layer

The music of *Schicchi*, from its very first bars, transports the listener into an entirely new world. Paraphrasing the famous saying about Hitchcock's films - *Schicchi* begins with an earthquake, and thereafter the tension only increases. The final opera of the *Triptych* refers to the tradition of the great Italian opera buffa, *while presenting a style far more modern, bolder and more audacious than its two sister works, which remain close to the traditional melodramma*.³⁶ As Piotr Kamiński writes, this is indeed the case. The music of *Schicchi* is restless, frenetic, full of sharp, nervous rhythms. In the context of his earlier works, one observes a surprising development and expansion of artistic horizons, *and the joy of this new freedom is inscribed on every page of his masterpiece*.³⁷ Puccini ultimately realises his long-held desire to create a comic opera - *di ridere e di far ridere*³⁸ - allowing him both personal expression of humour and the ability to provoke laughter in the audience.

In the course of the entire opera, Puccini continually employs leitmotifs, consistently juggling and developing them. Below is a brief discussion of the most important of these:

- motif of sobs and sighs

The opera opens with a sudden surge of a melody rising across three octaves, only to begin immediately to descend abruptly in rapid, dissonant and strongly accented chords. From the very first bars, the sound of the orchestra is piercing, characterised by a metallic brilliance. After a moment, at the point where Puccini marks *tumultuoso* for the first time (though certainly not the last), the sigh motif appears, reflecting the crocodile tears of the members of the Donati family over the body of their deceased, extremely wealthy relative. These are descending, repeated seconds chords, based on a syncopated rhythm. Shortly afterwards, the turbulent gallop of the orchestral *tutti*

³⁶ Kamiński, P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, op. cit., p. 1238

³⁷ Carner, M., *Puccini. A Critical Biography*, Duckworth, Surrey 1974, p. 446, trans. by the author

³⁸ Biagi Ravenni, G., Gianturco, C., *Giacomo Puccini. L'uomo, il musicista, il panorama europeo*, LMI, Lucca 1997, p. 352

subsides, yielding space solely to weeping and sobbing (both in the orchestra and in the vocal parts), as well as to the funeral drum - in the course of the opera Puccini repeatedly resorts to percussion instruments, employing them to create a sound of a grotesque, illustrative character.

This motif functions, as it were, as a guiding idea and returns repeatedly in various forms, accompanying the stage action and reappearing in different variants depending on the context (for example, in the scene of the search for the will, where, after a momentary calming, the orchestra falls into a wild, violent whirl, and the sigh motif is presented at a much faster tempo - from *largo*, at a crotchet = 60 in the first scene, to *allegro vivo* at a crotchet = 138).

1 CURTAIN RISES-SI ALZA LA TELA
Largo ♩ = 60

(The relatives of Buoso murmur a prayer, while Marco, old Zita and Ciesca sob loudly.)
(I parenti di Buoso susurrano una preghiera, mentre Marco, Zita e Ciesca si lamentano addolorati.)

ZITA *pplamento*

CIESCA *pplamento*

MARCO *pplamento*

rit. a tempo

Fig. 20. First presentation of the motif of sobs, no. 1, bars 1-8

- motif of the will

The search is brought to a successful conclusion - the will is found. At this moment, the composer presents another leitmotif - a single-bar theme, sounding solemnly - indeed, almost pompously - as the elderly Zita opens the deceased's final testament. It is

constructed from a chord formed by the woodwind instruments and cellos, together with a four-note descending phrase repeated twice, crowned by two slightly held (*trattenuto* in the score) chords. Thereafter, the string section begins a *pianissimo* tremolo, as well as *al ponticello* (on the bridge), producing increased muting and intensifying the effect of growing tension.

This motif provides shared musical material for the Notary. In the words of Mosco Carner, *sounding like a scholastic formula, it recalls similar ideas from Die Meistersinger. One of the most charming applications occurs in the scene of dictating the will, where it accompanies the routine, rapid mumbling of the Notary, reciting the Latin preamble in four-part counterpoint.*³⁹

ZITA

OP - EN!
- per - to!

Andante moderato ♩=58

mf

tratt.

pp

tratt.

14

tightly as they can, Marco and Betto have climbed on a chair. All their faces can plainly be seen, absorbed in
no saliti sopra una sedia per veder meglio. Tutti i visi sono assorti nella lettura.

tratt.

Fig. 21. First presentation of the motif of the will, nos. 13/14, bars 16-26

³⁹ Carner, M., *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, op. cit., 454, trans. by the author

- three motifs of Gianni

1. This is a very short phrase, constructed from two spread chords - first C minor with a characteristic leap of a fifth, quickly descending by thirds to F minor. *Gianni Schicchi*. It appears exactly on these words and sounds precisely in this manner. The Donati family, moreover, repeatedly chants the name of their “saviour,” usually on the interval of a fifth.



Fig. 21. *Gianni Schicchi* motif, No. 25, bars 7-8

2. The second theme directly associated with Schicchi is a fanfare-like chordal phrase, recurring frequently throughout the work. It is certainly no coincidence that it first appears on the words describing Gianni: *Motteggiatore! Beffeggiatore!*⁴⁰ These words will resonate in the listeners’ ears with every recurrence of this characteristic theme, and indeed, it appears whenever the title character, a planned deception, or less-than-honest intentions are in question. It is as if Puccini is winking at the audience, saying, “watch what is about to happen.”
3. The third motif always associated with the character of Gianni is a short phrase, usually performed by the wind instruments, which recurs repeatedly throughout the opera, serving both to illustrate the clever and mischievous character of the protagonist and to heighten the situational comedy.

⁴⁰ “Joker! Prankster!” trans. by the autor



Fig. 22. *Motteggiatore, Beffeggiatore* motif, no. 28, bars 6-13



Fig. 23. Third *Gianni* motif based on the interval of a third

- motif *Calendimaggio* (the love of Lauretta and Rinuccio)

The only motif in the entire opera that evokes a typically Puccinian phrase, familiar from the composer's earlier works, spanning a wide arc with a long, *legato* line and a melody that moves the listener's heart, is the theme of the enamoured couple. Lauretta and Rinuccio plan their wedding for the festival falling on the first day of May - *Calendimaggio*. As Carner emphasises, they represent “*donna seria*” and “*uomo serio*” in a world of entirely comic and grotesque characters.⁴¹ They are the only characters in

⁴¹ Carner, M., *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, op. cit., 446, trans. by the author

the opera who are given by the composer a long, lyrical phrase to sing, distinguished further by the orchestration, as only their theme is entrusted to the lyrical string section.

LAURETTA

WELL THEN, MY SWEET BE - LOV - ED, ALL HOPE IS SHAT - TERED, FOR NOW WE
 - di - o, speran - za bel - la, dol - ce mi - rag - gio; non ci po.

RINUCCIO

WELL THEN, MY SWEET BE - LOV - ED, ALL HOPE IS SHAT - TERED, FOR NOW WE
 - di - o, speran - za bel - la, dol - ce mi - rag - gio; non ci po.

rit. a tempo

dolce

LAURETTA

KNOW THAT FATE WILL NE - VER LET US MAR - RY!
 - trem spo - sa - re per il Ca - len - di - mag - gio!

RINUCCIO

KNOW THAT FATE WILL NE - VER LET US MAR - RY!
 - trem spo - sa - re per il Ca - len - di - mag - gio!

stacc.

(Gianni Schicchi starts walking up
 (Gianni Schicchi riprende a passeg -

Fig. 24. *Calendimaggio* motif, No. 42, bars 4–9

- motif of Laretta

Laretta also has her own theme. The melody from her famous aria *O mio babbino caro* needs no introduction; however, it is noteworthy that it appears earlier, in the aria of Rinuccio, who is in love with her, serving as a kind of foreshadowing of Laretta's arrival and reflecting the affection that unites the two characters. The sweet, slightly sentimental melody and simple harmony stand in complete contrast to the harsh, at times even grating, orchestral texture, yet effectively convey the delicate and somewhat naïve nature of Laretta's character.

- motif of Florence

The final, quiet “character” of the opera is... Florence. It accompanies the protagonists throughout, with various locations mentioned by them, such as the Ponte Vecchio or Piazza Santa Croce, as well as smaller towns surrounding the Pearl of Tuscany - Fucecchio, Prato, Figline, Empoli. Its motif is a nostalgic melody with a modal colouration, as Schicchi bids farewell to his beloved city, warning the Donatis with his *addio cielo divino* - farewell Florence, farewell divine sky. This phrase clearly draws on the tradition of Tuscan folk songs, from which it extensively borrows, and its very opening shows a striking resemblance to the melody of the song *Peschi fiorenti*.⁴² Moreover, melismatic figures, such as the sixteenth-note run on the word “Firenze,” constitute a characteristic element of the folk music of this region.



Fig. 25. Florentine motif visible in Gianni’s vocal line, no. 64, bars 1-5



Fig. 26. Opening of the Tuscan melody *Peschi fiorenti*

⁴² *Fiorita di canti tradizionali del popolo italiano*, R. Bemporad & Figlio, Milano 1895, ed. E. Levi, p. 18.

The clear influence of Tuscan folk music is also evident in Rinuccio's aria (which, although rarely performed, is the longest tenor aria in Puccini's late works) *Avete torto! Firenze è come un albero fiorito*. The composer himself indicated its stylised character by including the annotation *ad uso di stornello toscano* in the score - "in the manner of a Tuscan stornello." The *stornello* is a type of Italian folk song, with a simple, singable melody and an improvisatory character. Serving as a form of social commentary, it was often performed spontaneously during work or social gatherings, either *a cappella* or with guitar accompaniment. Thanks to its rhythmic regularity and ease of memorisation, it enjoyed great popularity among the lower social classes.

One of the key formal elements of the *stornello* is its hendecasyllabic structure - each verse consists of eleven syllables, with the tonic accent falling on the penultimate syllable. This is one of the most characteristic and widespread metrical forms in Italian literature, valued both for its rhythmic regularity and for the natural fluency it affords in recitation. The above description corresponds fully to the structure of Rinuccio's aria; it fits perfectly within the style of a Tuscan *stornello*, both melodically and formally. As a result, the composer not only references folk music but consciously adapts its elements to the operatic narrative, emphasising the cultural identity of the characters.

In *Schicchi*, Puccini juggles characteristic motifs, playing with them and constantly passing them between the orchestra and the singers. On first encounter, the richness of the texture may seem overwhelming; however, once their meaning and hidden significance are discovered, the entire work bursts anew with an even greater kaleidoscope of colour. As Mosco Carner aptly summarises, *there is little point in analysing the musical-dramatic structure of Gianni Schicchi in detail. The scenes follow one another with such speed, and the changes of mood are so numerous and variable, that any verbal analysis would be insufficient.*⁴³

⁴³ Carner, M., *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, op. cit., 455, trans. by the author.

4.2. *Gianni Schicchi* - adaptation of orchestral texture for piano

Schicchi is riddled with difficulties and pitfalls, both in the vocal parts and in the orchestral writing, which, of course, are reflected in its piano reduction. One of the greater challenges is the frequent occurrence of fast tempi - while they pose no difficulty for individual instruments, their non-pianistic structure in the piano extract represents a real test for the performer. Another significant issue - requiring in-depth analysis by the pianist - is the rich colouristic layer of the work, arising from orchestration of an extremely illustrative character, as well as the problems associated with its faithful adaptation for the piano.

The very first page of the piano reduction already foreshadows the performance and interpretative challenges the pianist will encounter over the following one hundred and eighty bars. Of course, the fast tempo and dense texture, built from numerous dissonant chords, create technical difficulties; however, what is particularly important is the preservation of proper articulation in order to convey as faithfully as possible the grating-weepy character created by the orchestra. The *Allegro* tempo at a quarter note = 132, combined with the *tumultuoso* marking, may tempt the performer to rush the sighing motif excessively, yet this leads to a loss of its intended character. To shape the sigh fully, the right hand should not flee too quickly from the syncopation on the weak beat but rather give it appropriate weight through proper, sufficiently strong accentuation. Equally crucial is the articulation of the left hand - when chosen appropriately, it helps to diversify the texture and better convey the orchestral richness of the sound. For this purpose, after eleven heavily accented (>) notes intended for the double basses and brass section, a change of touch is required, moving to much shorter and sharper *staccato*.

After a short while, the turbulent introduction transforms into an ostinato structure, continuously based on the weeping, syncopated motif. It moves forward slowly but inexorably, successively carried by different instruments, like a funeral procession accompanied by a snare drum (in the score, no. 1-6). Against this backdrop, the Donati family begins their insincere lamentations. From the pianist's perspective, it is essential to capture the difference in tonal atmosphere, transitioning from the extremely expressive introduction of the wind instruments to the far more intimate character of the second part of the opening scene. The *piano* in the piano reduction should therefore

convey its subtle, string-like quality with a soft, slightly diffuse timbre. To achieve this effect, one should avoid striking the notes abruptly, initiating each successive note as gently as possible, in the manner of a calm bow stroke. The use of the left pedal to dampen string vibration is also justified here, in order to achieve a timbre close to that of the string section's *piano*.

From the perspective of pedalling, an interesting moment occurs in no. 6 (bars 8-18), when the weeping motif momentarily yields first to unison octaves and then to chords articulated by the bassoons and horns, still accompanied continuously by the snare drum. A natural solution for the pianist might be to employ the right pedal to achieve *legato* in the octave repetitions on a single note, but this would completely obscure the percussive character of the snare. A more effective alternative is to avoid the pedal and sustain the lower octave note with the thumb for as long as possible, while repeatedly articulating it in continuous contact with the keyboard, almost without lifting the finger. As the chords intensify, a light support from the right pedal is permissible, yet the priority must remain the preservation of rhythmic and articulative clarity, allowing the percussive character of the snare to be fully projected.

The search for the deceased's last will then begins, undoubtedly one of the more technically demanding passages (nos. 7-9). Puccini depicts the situation in an extremely illustrative manner, with the furious Buoso relatives on stage, throwing objects with force, faithfully mirrored in the music, which is ardent and violent. The motif of sobbing and sighing is constantly present, now taking on an unrestrained, aggressive character. In the piano reduction, it is initially assigned to the left hand, whose task is to maintain it at a fast tempo, while the right hand takes over the violently descending five-note figures played by the flutes and first violins.

Particular attention must be paid to proper accentuation - Puccini marked the accent on the first of the five notes. While this poses no difficulty for the instruments mentioned, it is counterintuitive on the piano, because the last, lowest note falls on the second strong finger, and the descending direction of the phrase encourages it to be accented. The fast tempo makes it relatively difficult to maintain correct accentuation at once (with the shifted, syncopated accent of the left-hand sobbing motif), and therefore conscious control of articulation is necessary to faithfully reproduce the accentual structure intended by the composer.

RINUCCI
will!)
zio!)

7 Allegro vivo ♩ 138

by a false alarm from Simone.)
guardare il contenuto del piatto; ma un
falso allarme di Simone lo disturba.)

SIMONE

(All turn round. Betto has an innocent look on his face;
Simone, scanning a parchment more closely)
(Tutti si voltano; Betto fa il distratto; Simone guarda me-
glio una pergamena)

Ah! No! NOT HERE!
Ah! No. Non è!

Fig. 27. no. 7, bars 1-8. Five-note flute figures in the right hand with the accent marked on the first note of each group

The described motif reappears in no. 12, with the added difficulty of shifting the double-bass accompaniment of dyads to the weak beat. Due to the fast tempo, there is a risk of uncontrolled displacement of accents, so the foundation of the performance should be a stable and precise execution of the sobbing motif in the middle voice of the piano texture. Equally important for revealing the full spectrum of the composer's expressive means is the dual articulation: short slurs connecting two notes *legato* in the right hand, and *staccato* (pizzicato in the orchestra) in the left. In the further course of the scene (nos. 8, 9, 10), there is a longer orchestral passage where the pianist's priority must remain the maintenance of precise articulation, as the composer marked numerous detailed indications. In both hands, the articulation constantly changes (rarely identical in both hands), weaving between *staccato*, short *legato* slurs of just two notes, strong accents (>), and *tenuto* marked with horizontal lines (-). Besides articulation, precise rhythm is also crucial in this passage - the dotted rhythm at a fast tempo can easily be distorted into a triplet-like rhythm, which must be avoided to preserve its clarity and almost jazz-like character. Furthermore, dynamics are equally important, with *subito*

piano, *crescendo*, and gradual *incalzando*, indicating an increase in phrase intensity through heightened expression and dramatic tension.

In no. 10, the *Calendimaggio* theme appears, also at a very fast tempo, though slightly *sostenuto*, and the rhythmic structure of this passage is based not only on continuous syncopations but also on the complex interplay between both hands - the right executes a triplet phrase, while the left carries a rhythmic pattern of an eighth note followed by two sixteenths. To ensure clarity of the texture, it is crucial to distinctly differentiate these rhythmic layers against the chordal, intense texture of the orchestral accompaniment. Precise articulation and dynamic control will allow a fuller and more spacious sound in the piano transcription.

In no. 14 of the score, the first presentation of the testament motif appears, which, continuing the analogy to Hitchcock's oeuvre, functions as the MacGuffin of the entire opera. This passage is characterised by a specific *agogics* and its associated performance tradition, which is not indicated in the notation. After each repetition of the pompous 4/4 phrase, the music transitions to *tremolo subito piano*, yet not counted in four but *alla breve*. A pianist preparing to work with a conductor should take this discrepancy between the written score and performance practice into account. In the following passage (no. 15), the unison of cellos and double-basses, performed *pizzicato*, creates an aura of mystery, which the left hand reflects in the piano part. Against this backdrop, single notes of the horn and English horn are assigned to the pianist's right hand. To achieve the intended sound, any accents in both hands should be avoided, and the playing should remain as close to the keyboard as possible, thereby reflecting the atmosphere of mounting tension.

A dynamic passage then begins in *allegro vivo* (nos. 16-23; quarter note = 160). Its foundation is a motoric sequence in the cellos, whose *ostinato* eighth notes, performed *staccato*, impart a distinct rhythmic character to the whole. The pianist executing this passage should maintain exceptional precision in sustaining an even pulse, while simultaneously shaping the phrase of the wind instruments assigned to the right hand. All instances in which the right hand carries the chordal melody of the wind instruments - both in the presentation of the main theme of the passage (e.g., no. 19) and in the dotted-rhythm chords (no. 20) - require maximally sustained notes despite the rapid tempo. Overuse of the pedal should be avoided, so as not to blur the motoric

accompaniment of the left hand. The fast tempo presents technical challenges, particularly in passages of small sixteenth notes (no. 21, bars 15–22). These are, however, not unplayable - their precise execution is achievable through a small but repetitive circular motion of the wrist, playing close to the keyboard, and minimising any unnecessary hand movements.

The image displays a musical score for a scene. The top system contains vocal staves for two characters: NELLO and BETTO. NELLO's part has the lyrics "EV' - RY MEAL THAT IS SERVED WILL BE A" in English and "Si fa - ran - no star - gar spes - so la" in Italian. BETTO's part has the lyrics "VINT - AGE!!" in English and "vi - gna!" in Italian. Below the vocal staves is a piano accompaniment section, marked with a box containing the number "19". The piano part consists of a treble and bass clef staff with chords and sixteenth notes. The bottom system continues the piano accompaniment with similar notation and lyrics: "BAN - QUET WHILE WE ARE LEFT HERE STARY - ING" in English and "cap - pa, noi schiante - rem di bi - le," in Italian.

Fig. 28. no. 19, bars 1-10 - chordal melody of the wind instruments in the right hand

At its first appearance, the octave Schicchi theme (no. 25, m. 7) should be rendered by the pianist prioritising its roguish, slightly sinister character, rather than focusing solely on the technical execution of parallel octave leaps. This motif is performed by the string section in combination with bassoons and horns, and its sound is characterised by an exceptionally dark timbre. Accordingly, on the piano it is most effective in the small- and great-octave registers, foregoing the unison octave notation in the left hand.

Rinuccio's suggestion to seek Schicchi's help provokes a violent reaction from the Donati family, reflected in the orchestra by a triplet motion built on parallel fourths, fifths, and sixths in the string section (no. 26, bars 12-20). From the pianist's perspective, it is essential that the upper melodic line (usually the fourth) in the right hand stands out,

giving the texture greater spatial clarity and sonic definition. Next, Rinuccio sings his aria (nos. 28-33), in which the stylisation of a Tuscan *stornello* is evident in both the vocal line and orchestral accompaniment. The chordal texture, enriched with numerous arpeggios, allows the piano to imitate the sound of the guitar, conveying its characteristic lightness and fluidity. Careful discretion in accompaniment and a warm tone, reminiscent of plucked string instruments, is required. The pianist should consciously shape the sound, paying particular attention to the left-hand execution and to balancing the middle and lower chordal components to achieve a darker, more saturated tone.

RINUCCIO (as a Tuscan stornello)
(ad uso di stornello toscano)

OUR FLORENCE IS A PROUD AND ANCIENT CIT - Y - HER
Fi - ren - ze è come un al - be - ro fio - ri - to - che in

And: mosso un po' sost? $\text{♩} = 92$

RINUCCIO

IN - FLU - ENCE AND BEAUTY ARE UN - E - QUALED. MARSHALLING ALL HER YIGOR AND AU -
piaz - sa dei Si - gnori ha tronco e fronde, ma le ra - di - ci for - ze nuove ap -

Fig. 29. No. 30, bars. 1-6 - arpeggiated accompaniment stylized on guitar texture

The guitar-like texture yields only briefly to a typically Puccinian phrase of lyrical-illustrative character (no. 31, bars 1-12). In the opening measures of this passage, the composer employs his characteristic layout, in which the melody, carried in a broad arch through chords (right hand of the pianist), rests on a passage-like accompaniment completing the harmonic layer (left hand). After this short orchestral solo fragment, serving simultaneously as a preview of Lauretta's motif and an expression of Rinuccio's love for her, the musical background transforms into an illustrative depiction of the swift flow of the Arno River (*L'Arno, prima di correre alla foce, canta baciando Piazza*

Santa Croce).⁴⁴ The entire structure (marked *mormorando*) acquires a murmuring, flowing character, realized through smooth legato chords in the right hand and a wave-like, whispering accompaniment in the left. The aria's finale (after a demanding D2 for the tenor - no. 33) simultaneously serves as a prelude to the arrival of the title character with his daughter - their presence is marked by the appearance of both Lauretta's and Schicchi's motifs, the latter in the piano reduction written only additionally above the main system (no. 33, bar 8). Unfortunately, this solution is not optimal, as it makes it easy to omit the characteristic motif, which is crucial in this situation. Its realization by the pianist is not difficult - indeed, for a moment the right hand must stop playing the string tremolo, but at this point it does not constitute the main sonic element, serving only as a background for Lauretta's motif, which sounds in the low register of the left hand (cellos, double basses, and bassoons in the orchestra). The short Schicchi motif should resonate together with the knocking at the door; shortly afterward, Rinuccio sings: "He's here!", and the title character finally enters the stage. For this reason, omitting the motif due to suboptimal notation would be a serious loss, even a mistake, on the part of the pianist performing the reduction. Apart from the illustrative character of the phrase and its purely theatrical effect, such omission could cause problems for the other singers, especially Rinuccio, since it constitutes a characteristic musical reference point for him.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece by Rinuccio, numbered 33, covering bars 7 to 10. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in G major and 4/4 time. It begins with a rest, followed by a half note G, a quarter note A, and a half note B. The lyrics "HE'S HERE!" are written above the first three notes, and "E lui!" above the next two. A stage direction "(Rinuccio opens the door; Rinuccio apre la porta;" is written above the final note. The piano accompaniment is in the same key and time. It features a tremolo in the right hand and a steady accompaniment in the left. A stage direction "(A knock is heard at the door) (si bussava alla porta)" is written above the first two bars. A crescendo marking "cresc." is written above the third bar. The score is written on a single system with a vocal staff and a piano staff.

Fig. 30. No. 33, bars 7-10 - motif heralding Schicchi's arrival written on an optional staff

⁴⁴ "Arno, before reaching the mouth, sings, kissing Piazza Santa Croce" - translated by the author.

An analogous situation occurs immediately afterward, in Laretta's first conversation with her beloved (no. 34, bars 7–8). This time, the characteristic flute melody is written on an additional staff, which again makes it easy to omit, since the right hand is playing Laretta's main melodic theme at the same moment. Although the flute melody does not play as crucial a narrative role as the previously mentioned scene and the motif announcing Schicchi's arrival, it still stands out within the work - enriching the composition, increasing both its motivic complexity and its coloristic palette. For this reason, it is worth including when performing the piano transcription, especially since it does not present any technical difficulty. The opposite occurs shortly afterward, with the return of the weeping motif and Gianni's monologue on transience (no. 35, bars 7–8). Here, however, the priority is maintaining the stable monotony of the sobbing theme, and including the same optional flute melody would disrupt its continuity. This example clearly illustrates how much a successful interpretation of the piano reduction depends on the pianist's decisions - their understanding of the work as a whole, including, naturally, the orchestral sound, and their ability to make informed choices about which elements to include (even if not explicitly written in the reduction) and which can be omitted.

Fig. 31. no. 35, bars 7-8 - Schicchi's motif written optionally, which should be omitted in order to preserve a stable performance of the sobbing motif

Another interesting, yet simultaneously demanding and problematic moment for the performers is the scene of the so-called double duet (no. 38). In the score, a quartet is

notated: Zita, Lauretta, Rinuccio, Schicchi, but in practice they sing “in pairs”, engaging in the dialogues Lauretta - Rinuccio and Zita - Schicchi. This device had already been employed by Puccini in his earlier works - for instance, the quartet *Dunque è proprio finita?* from the finale of Act III of *La Bohème* (Rodolfo and Mimì - Marcello and Musetta) is constructed in a similar manner. Once again, the rapid tempo presents an additional difficulty, marked *Allegro energico* with a quarter-note nearly at 160. The principal melody is initially carried by the first and second violins, followed by the flutes and clarinets. It first descends and then ascends, forming a sharply delineated line with dotted rhythm, emphasising the last note of the bar. This motif is assigned to the right hand in the piano reduction. In contrast, the left-hand accompaniment, realised in the orchestra by the violas, cellos, and double basses, as well as the oboe, English horn, and trombones, consists of short, clearly accented quavers falling on the weak beats of the bar (always on the weak part of the beat), which constitutes a significant technical challenge. Crucial to the overall progression is the maintenance of stability at the rapid tempo, without slowing down or accelerating, which might otherwise cause the last quarter-note of the bar to “slip”. Similarly, in the further course of the turbulent dialogue (no. 38, bars 16-17), when the last accented quarter-note is replaced by two quavers, the pianist, urged on by the rapid tempo, must absolutely avoid entering the unison octaves too early, as this would lead to a continual acceleration and, consequently, to a lack of synchronisation among all performers. Tempo stability also provides indispensable support for the singers, whose parts are equally demanding, particularly in terms of rhythm. In the pedagogical process, when the pianist works individually with the singer during a lesson, it can quickly become apparent that the singer cannot properly orient themselves with their entries and rhythm without the presence of the stage partners. An additional challenge for the pianist is thus performing a different, selected vocal line (a task made difficult *a vista* by the complex rhythms and tempo) while simultaneously signalling with a gesture the singer’s point of entry. The key elements in this process are precision and control, as well as the gradual increase of tempo during the pedagogical work, so that each participant in this intricate interaction can feel comfortable in their role.

In describing the course of the opera, it is impossible to omit Lauretta’s aria *O mio babbino caro* (no. 40). Its musical structure is not complicated; nevertheless, or perhaps precisely because of this, its lyrical, characteristically Puccinian melodic line has made

it known worldwide, including among those not particularly interested in classical music. Its construction represents a classic example of the lyrical form characteristic of Puccini, easily identifiable in his earlier works. One is referring to the passagework, harp-like accompaniment, against which the chords - most often played by wind instruments - double the singer's melodic line. Such a configuration is employed, for instance, just before the finale of the famous tenor aria *Che gelida manina* from act I of *La Bohème*. Paradoxically, this simple arrangement can constitute a certain kind of trap for the pianist. Schematic thinking of the melody in the foreground and the accompaniment in the background is erroneous in this case. The melody, already naturally exposed in the vocal line, does not require additional reinforcement by the piano. Such reinforcement would in fact produce the opposite effect, weakening the fullness of the sound. In reality, it is the harp-like accompaniment that is most important at this moment - it harmoniously synchronises with the soprano's melodic line. For this reason, it is the pianist's left hand that should guide the entire structure, while the right hand should be limited to an accompanying function. Altering this approach - shifting the point of emphasis from the principal melody to the gently accompanying left-hand structure - constitutes a key element, crucial both for providing the soloist with a greater sense of freedom and for the smoothness of the overall performance.

(on one knee, to Gianni Schicchi)
(in ginocchio, dinanzi a Gianni Schicchi)

LAURETTA

OH MY BE - LOV - ED DAD - - DY, WON'T YOU BE KIND AND
Oh'mio bab.bi - no ca - - ro, mi pia.ce è bel - lo,

40 Andantino ingenuo ♩ = 120

pp dolce

LAURETTA

HELP US? YOU KNOW I LOVE RI - NUC - CIO,
bel - lo; vo'an - da - rein Por - ta Ros - - sa

pp

The image displays three systems of musical notation, each featuring a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment (piano and bass staves). The first system is from *Gianni Schicchi*, no. 40, bars 1-6. The vocal line is marked 'dolciss.' and 'molto rall. a Tempo'. The lyrics are 'fan - cies, Regrets I do not cher - ish. - guar!..... Ma il fur - to non m'ac - co - ra'. The piano accompaniment includes markings like 'dim.', 'molto rall.', and 'a Tempo'. The second system is from *La Bohème*, no. 33, bars 1-6. The vocal line is marked 'allarg.' and 'dolciss.'. The lyrics are 'For now..... life's rosy morn is break - ing, now gold - en love is poi - ché,..... poichè v'ha pre - so stan - za la dol - ce spe -'. The piano accompaniment includes markings like 'f con anima', 'cres.', and 'allarg.'. The third system is from *La Bohème*, no. 34, bars 1-6. The vocal line is marked 'dolciss.'. The lyrics are 'wak - ing!..... Now that I've told my sto - ry, - ran - za!..... Or che mi co - no - sce - te'. The piano accompaniment includes markings like 'ppp allarg. sempre'.

Fig. 32. *Gianni Schicchi* no. 40, bars 1-6, and *La Bohème* no. 33, bars 1-6 - comparison of the orchestral accompaniment texture

Lauretta's sentimental aria not only moves the hearts of music lovers but also exerts a decisive effect on her father's emotions, who immediately agrees to assist with the matter of the will (no. 41). To convey the subtle character of both the orchestral sound and the entire scene, the pianist should be mindful of a discreet tonal colour and even articulation, which play a key role in this passage. The dynamics, particularly during the sixteenth-note passages (nos. 42 bars 1-3, and 43 bars 1-2), should also be highly contrasted in order to more accurately reflect the orchestral *crescendo*. This stems from

the instrumentation, which naturally supports the *crescendo* - the approach begins with the bassoons, followed by oboes, clarinets, and the English horn, culminating triumphantly with trumpets and trombones. On the piano, a conventional *crescendo* from *piano* to *forte* may prove insufficient, as the dynamic would increase too quickly and the phrase's finale would lose its fanfare character, becoming merely sharp, strident chords. Therefore, the entire approach must be contrasted much more markedly, beginning from *ppp* to *ff*, which over the span of only three bars achieves an effect much closer to the orchestral sound. This constitutes an example of differences in approach to dynamics and their notation, which should be considered when creating piano reductions (though they often are not - leaving it once again to the pianist to implement them). In this passage, particular attention must also be paid to the moments of return of the amorous *Calendimaggio* theme, which should be performed extremely subtly, *dolce più possibile*, considering that both Lauretta and Rinuccio are singing in the upper range of their *tessitura*. Excessively strong execution of the chordal melody may provoke a harsher sound, both on the piano and in the voices, which would be undesirable. In the orchestra, the chords naturally soften the timbre through their warm, string-based colour; consequently, in the realisation of the piano reduction, special effort must be made to render the chords as soft and gentle as possible.

In the no. 45, a brief interrogation by Gianni of the Donati family members begins, accompanied by a percussive texture of timpani and snare drum, slightly softened by the harp. This coarse, almost metallic timbre should be reproduced on the piano through a rough, monotonous tone and sparing use of the pedal. The following episode, the visit of the doctor Spinelloccio (nos. 46-47), also possesses an extremely characteristic colouristic quality. The chords articulated by the woodwind instruments in *pianissimo* exhibit an unreal, slightly glassy sound. On the piano, the proper use of *tenuto* articulation is helpful in this case - successive chords should be played with minimal separation from the keys, repeating them without losing contact of the fingers with the keyboard, while taking into account the specific manner in which wind instruments produce their sound.

With the arrival of Gianni's aria (no. 48), the character once again changes. The very first chord (*forte* for the entire string section) should sound on the piano in a full, orchestral manner. The right hand then takes over the string *tremolo*, which should

retain its discreet character, while the left hand leads the bassoon melodic line, converging with Gianni's melody (no. 49). In the piano reduction, an optional staff reappears, containing a sixteenth-note scale first executed by the clarinet and then by the flute. As in the previously described case (nos. 33-34), it is advisable to temporarily suspend the right-hand tremolo in favour of performing these scales, which enrich the texture and reflect Schicchi's ingenuity. Subsequently, the quaver accompaniment of strings and bassoons at the transition between nos. 49 and 50 imparts a dark, mysterious colour to the passage. In its transcription for piano, attention should be focused on the left hand, so that the unison octaves, despite the brisk tempo, are played as *legato* as possible, extremely smoothly, while avoiding blurring through excessive use of the right pedal. Their *staccato* repetition in the small and large octave must again be executed as close to the keys as possible, with emphasis on the lower component of the octave, in order to achieve the darkest, most orchestral sonority. In the second half of the aria (no. 51), the orchestra plays *tutti staccato*, while the string section is *pizzicato*, gradually building to the climax not only dynamically but also through a change in articulation to *tenuto*. These elements should also be reflected in the piano part, while avoiding harsh chords in favour of a soft tone. Up until the final climax (the last three bars of no. 51), the pianist should not reach full *fortissimo*, allowing proper support for the singer and preventing excessive forcing of subsequent notes.

With no. 52, a motif based on leaps of fourths and fifths, imitating the sound of the name Schicchi, resounds with full force, chanted by all members of the Donati family. The texture once again becomes dynamic and dissonant, and the tempo is dizzying (quarter-note = 152). From a pianist's perspective, the transition to a key change (no. 52, bar 4), consisting of four chromatically descending notes in the solo French horn, is particularly important. These must sound resonant, while remaining exceptionally precise in time, as any acceleration would destabilise the entire structure and transform the intended tension into chaotic disorder. Although chaotic disorder is precisely the expressive device that the composer intended to achieve in this scene, it should be perceived solely by the listener, while in reality it constitutes a strictly ordered form, both rhythmically and articulationally. Extremely precise articulation plays an equally crucial role in the realisation of the piano transcription - particularly the short staccati in the left hand, which should be clearly marked to avoid excessive sonic weight.

Musical score for Figure 33, no. 54, bars 1-6. The score features four vocal parts (MARCO, SIMONE, BETTO) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in bass clef, 2/4 time, and feature a chanted 'Schicchi!' motif. The piano part is in treble and bass clef, 2/4 time, and features a four-note solo for French horn. The tempo is marked 'Allegro vivo' with a quarter note equal to 152 beats per minute. The piano part starts with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and ends with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic.

Fig. 33. no. 54, bars 1-6 - chanted Schicchi motif and four-note solo for French horn

When discussing articulation in this scene, it should also be noted that once again the piano reduction does not always follow the score precisely. An example is the unison octaves (no. 53, bars 5-6) played by the string section in *diminuendo*, yet ending with a sharp *pizzicato*. In both the score and the piano reduction, an accent (>) is indicated on the final octave; however, the reduction lacks information that this note is to be executed *pizzicato*. A lack of familiarity with the orchestral sound may lead to performing this accent in a strictly pianistic manner, emphasising the final quaver, which could unintentionally lengthen it, whereas in reality the opposite effect is required. Although a minor detail, it should be emphasised that the orchestra (or piano) plays solo at this moment, and this nuance significantly affects the colouristic character of the sound. A pianist committed to an accurate realisation of the piano transcription should be sensitive to all such subtleties and execute them as faithfully as possible.

The next passage consists of parallel thirds played by the bassoons, French horn, and trombones (no. 54). From a pianist's perspective, it is not particularly demanding technically; however, it is crucial that the successive thirds connect extremely smoothly, without any accents or protruding notes. Shortly thereafter, the orchestra erupts once more into a turbulent tumult, with the Donati family members shouting over one another in an escalating uproar (no. 56). Once again, proper accentuation and rhythmic stability

of the triplets at a fast tempo are essential. As the intensity increases (*stringendo*, *violento*), the pianist is unable to realise the harp and piccolo flute thirty-second-note scales; however, the desired sonority can successfully be achieved by substituting a rapid *glissando*, taking care not to delay the beginnings of the subsequent third-based phrases. The climax of this passage is marked by the sudden interruption of the mounting din by a single bell note (three bars before no. 57). In the context of the piano reduction, the only effective way to achieve the desired sonority is to strike the key with the fist. Fortunately, the placement of the note on the keyboard (F♯ in the great octave) allows for precise striking of the correct key without touching adjacent notes.

Another passage of particular interest in terms of colouristic sonority is no. 60, beginning with the timpani. Shortly afterwards, the orchestral chordal theme from Gianni's aria returns, accompanying the *parlando* of successive family members. To achieve a satisfactory colour on the piano, one must differentiate the intensity of the individual components of the chords, placing greater emphasis on the lower and middle notes, so that the fifth finger does not stand out too prominently melodically. Although in the orchestral part the melody of the highest voice, played by the oboe, is clearly audible in the foreground, the instrumental colour and the additional filling provided by the murmuring thirty-second notes in the violas create a sonority considerably richer than the simple chordal texture of the piano reduction, where this effect is greatly diminished. Therefore, in order to achieve a fuller piano sound, the middle components of the chords should be consciously exposed, allowing a better approximation of the orchestral quality of the sound. This is yet another example of the significant difference between the orchestral texture and its effective adaptation for piano.

In the female trio, the only one in the entire opera (no. 61), the leading role is played by subtle dynamics and the composer's instruction in the score: *cantando*. The piano therefore accompanies the soloists in a singing manner, with attention required only to the conductor's guidance, which may initially be on 2 but can shift to 6 with Schicchi's entry.

Gianni's second arioso (nos. 63–64), *Prima un avvertimento*, represents a significant vocal challenge for the singer; for the pianist, however, the difficulty once again lies in conveying the colouristic character of the orchestral sound, which does not translate directly into a simple piano accompaniment. In no. 63, bars 5–6, the bassoons play

a *misterioso* phrase in parallel thirds, repeated twice, the second time accompanying Gianni's words: *and then... exile!*⁴⁵, addressed to the Donati family, part admonitory, part coercive. On the piano, a useful approach is to subtly darken the timbre, rendering it even more mysterious to better reflect Schicchi's ominous tone. The real challenge, however, lies in the French horn motif repeating Gianni's phrase *la vedete Firenze?*⁴⁶ Individual notes on the piano cannot sound like a brass instrument, but with appropriate use of the pedal and constant finger contact with the key, a hint of resonance can be created, imitating the soft, smoothly diffusing horn sound. Shortly afterwards, a similar problem arises with the double-thirds motif of the trumpets, notated in the piano reduction as *staccato* and *piano pianissimo*. While *staccato* is important, *pianissimo* on the piano will never fully match the trumpets' *pianissimo*; therefore, it is necessary to perform them decisively, even sharply, so that they stand out distinctly against the lyrical melody with its soft sonority (which, in the orchestra, is assigned to the cellos with bassoon accompaniment).

GIANNI SCHICCHI

(pointing to Arnolfo's tower which is plainly visible through the open window)
(accenna la torre di Arnolfo che appare al di là del terrazzo)

FLO-RENCE!
-ren-se?

FAREWELL, DEAR
Ad-dio, Fi-

molto rit. rit.

pp as in the distance
come da lontano

GIANNI SCHICCHI

FLO-RENCE, FAREWELL, EN-CHANTING GIT-YI I MUST SA-
-ren-se, ad-dio, cie-lo di-vi-no, io ti sa-

Andantino giusto ♩ = 58

pp

Fig. 34. nos. 63-64, bars 9-15 - French horn phrase and trumpet double thirds in *pianissimo* in the right-hand part

⁴⁵ *E poi... esilio* - ed. note

⁴⁶ "Do you see Florence there?" - trans. auth.

The orchestral passage immediately following (no. 66), despite its modest length, is characterised by a wealth of articulatory and colouristic devices, the adaptation of which for piano requires careful consideration by the performer. It is constructed from four sections: a thirds-based motif in the wind instruments, a delicate harp *arpeggio*, rapid, sharp *marcato* chords in the string section, and a leaping motif in dotted rhythm. From the pianist's perspective, it is extremely important to convey this dynamically shifting, diverse colouristic palette within a very short span of time. The first sequence in the score consists of descending four-note figures; at a fast tempo, it is not feasible for the pianist to play these with one hand while simultaneously achieving a bright, as *leggero* as possible, sound. Playing only the thirds is sufficient, as the priority is a clear, radiant tone, easily achieved in the three-lined octave. Next, despite the *forte* marking, attention must be paid to the subtle sonority of the harp, cascading down in delicate thirty-second notes. A completely different type of *forte* is required in the following bar, where the mechanical *marcato* of harsh chords builds in an energetic *crescendo*. The entire sequence concludes with a leaping melody in a pronounced rhythm, with a strong accent on the final note, announcing the arrival of the Notary. This is another example that clearly illustrates the importance of the pianist's familiarity with the full score; without this knowledge, a strictly pianistic approach could easily obscure the distinctive character of the passage.

134

66 Allegro (Gianni jumps into the bed, the relatives close the shutters so as to darken the room and place
(Gianni schizza a letto; i parenti in gran fretta lo accomodano, poi rendono la stanza oscura.)

leggero

a candle on the table at which the lawyer is to sit to write out the will. They throw all sorts of things in
buia tirando i tendaggi, mettono una candela accesa sul tavolo dove il notaio deve scrivere e finalmente.....

a heap on the bed and finally open the door) .. aprono)

affrett.

Fig. 35. No. 66, bars 1-10 - four-section orchestral solo

In the Notary scene, one can also identify a passage requiring an approach other than a strictly pianistic one. This concerns his pompous speech - he delivers Latin preambles accompanied by the string section *tutti con sordino*. The string part is a clear pastiche of organ music, with a solemn and majestic character. For this reason, when realising this passage on the piano, the dynamic should be minimised (since the organ cannot alter the sound intensity through direct key mechanism or attack), and the natural, romantic phrasing should be restrained, focusing instead on a uniform, dignified progression of all voices in slightly sustained (*un po' sostenendo*) quavers. Although this approach is not instinctive for the pianist, it is essential for enhancing the illustrative character of the scene.

From no. 76, the opening phrase of the opera returns, featuring a rapidly ascending melody outlined with broad gestures and cascading descending chords. In adapting this structure for the piano, it is important to convey its grandeur and, once again, to focus more on the middle components of the chords rather than the highest line, so that they sound full, with a texture as rough and gritty as in the orchestral part.

The final passage discussed in this section is the scene opening the opera's finale (no. 80), in which Schicchi, disguised as Buoso, has already bequeathed the entire estate to himself, the family furiously denounces him as a thief and a cheat, and he drives them away with unfeigned satisfaction. Once again, this is a moment at a very fast tempo, with numerous accents falling on the weak beats of the bar. Shortly thereafter, the orchestra introduces passages of parallel octaves, played *tutti*. On the piano, the tempo makes it impossible to execute these freely in octaves with both hands; if necessary, the texture can be reduced to a single melodic line for each hand. However, this entails a serious risk of losing the volume and richness of the full orchestral sound, which moreover builds in a *crescendo* to the marking *tutta forza*. The register in which the octaves are written is also problematic, as they begin descending through the three-lined, two-lined, and once-lined octave, only later moving down to the bass clef. This notation results in a weakening of the sound, which loses power and cannot achieve the force of the orchestra. Consequently, it is advisable to shift this passage slightly lower, beginning from the two-lined octave, which allows a quicker transition to a piano register with greater audibility. The next sequence (*tutta forza*, no. 80, bar 11) presents similar difficulties, especially as the soloists join in - the melody played by the group of

BETTO

WE'LL SHOW HIM! WE'LL SHOW HIM! WE'LL
 Sac - cheg - gia! Sac - cheg - gia! Sac -

tutta forza

BETTO

SHOW HIM! TAKE ALL OF THE SIL - VER!
 - cheg - gia! Sac - cheg - gia! sac - cheggia!

p

98

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano ensemble. The vocal line is at the top, with lyrics in Italian. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The left hand plays a tremolo pattern, while the right hand plays a chordal melody. The score is marked with 'p' for piano and 'f' for forte. The lyrics are: '...cheg - gial sac, cheg - gial sac - cheg - gial sac, choggial sacchoggial/sacchoggial/botti, noi bot-'. The tempo is marked 'ALLEGRO'.

Fig. 37. no. 80, bars 12-16 (in the score) - substitution of the *ostinato* rhythm of two sixteenth notes and an eighth note with a *tremolo* in the piano part

The opera concludes with the final lyrical duet between Lauretta and Rinuccio (again based on a harp-like accompaniment notated in the left hand and a chordal melody in the right) as well as Gianni's almost *a cappella* monologue, ending with his fanfare motif resounding triumphantly (no. 86). To render this on the piano with full impact, despite the rapid tempo and additional *stringendo*, it must be played with firmly grounded keystrokes, ensuring both the intensity of the sound and clarity of execution.

Conclusion

This dissertation has been devoted to the issues surrounding the piano reduction as both an artistic and practical phenomenon in the context of Giacomo Puccini's operas *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. The aspects under examination focused on matters of tempo, dynamics, agogics, timbre, performance tradition, and the sound of the piano in relation to the orchestral texture. The study aimed not only to present the piano reduction as a pedagogical and technical tool but also as an autonomous form of musical expression, demanding from the pianist-repetiteur a heightened awareness of tonal colour, interpretive competence, and collaborative skills in working with singers. The analysis demonstrated that the pianist's role in preparing an operatic production extends far beyond that of an accompanist, encompassing a range of interpretive, adaptive, and communicative activities, all aimed at creating conditions for the soloists as close as possible to performing with the orchestra.

In the course of these considerations, fundamental differences between the orchestral sound and its piano reduction were highlighted - both in terms of timbre, texture, dynamics, and the response time of the orchestra versus that of the pianist to the unfolding musical situation. Although these issues cannot be fully resolved through pianistic technique alone, they open a space for the performer's interpretative creativity, who seeks means to compensate for the instrument's inherent limitations. In this context, the importance of a conscious compromise between fidelity to the original and the functional requirements of the piano reduction was emphasised. An analysis of performance practice demonstrated that excessive literalness in realising the reduction can be counterproductive, particularly when it obscures the clarity of the work's structure from the singer's perspective. What therefore becomes crucial is not technical meticulousness, but the skillful shaping of the texture so as to facilitate the singer's orientation and support their interpretative choices.

A conclusion of particular significance is the proposition that a piano reduction should not be regarded as a simplified "substitute version" of the score, but rather as an interpretative commentary on the work - one that, on the one hand, conveys its essential sonic and dramatic elements, and on the other, provides space for the pianist's own artistic expression. In this sense, the practice of piano reduction emerges as

an autonomous domain of performative creativity, where elements of transcription, adaptation, and interpretation converge.

The research also revealed the crucial importance of stylistic context and performance traditions. The analysis of the operas *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi* demonstrated how diverse pianistic strategies are required depending on the character of the work - from the ascetic, liturgical stylization and religious expression in the former, to the comic dynamism, rhythmic precision, and vivacity in the latter. This confirms that a piano reduction is not merely a neutral medium, but a carrier of stylistic idiom that the pianist must interpret and convey.

One limitation of this study is its focus on only two operas by Puccini. Although this choice was justified both substantively and practically, further research should encompass a broader repertoire, including works by other composers and various stylistic trends. This would allow not only a deeper reflection on the universal performance challenges of piano reductions, but also the identification of differences arising from diverse compositional traditions.

From the perspective of artistic practice, the results underscore the importance of interdisciplinary preparation for the pianist-repetiteur, who must combine technical, interpretive, linguistic, and communicative skills. The study confirms that the pianist in the opera theater functions as a fully-fledged artistic partner, rather than merely a supporting accompanist. Recognizing this role - both in theoretical reflection and institutional practice - appears to be one of the key challenges for contemporary musicology and music pedagogy.

In conclusion, the research presented in this study fills a significant gap in Polish scholarship on the subject, proposing a new perspective on the piano reduction as a distinctive form of musical adaptation. The findings of the analyses confirm the need for further studies on this topic, which could contribute not only to expanding theoretical knowledge but also to the practical refinement of the training and preparation of pianists.

Concluding this reflection, it should be emphasized that the piano reduction, although by nature a simplification of the orchestral score, in performance practice becomes

a space for creative dialogue between tradition and individual interpretation. The analysis contained in this work demonstrates that its value is not limited to a supportive function - it can serve as an artistically equal counterpart, reflecting the sensitivity, competence, and imagination of the pianist. In this sense, the piano reduction emerges as a bridge between the orchestral and chamber worlds, which - when utilized thoughtfully - has the potential to enrich both operatic practice and the broader musicological discourse.

Appendix - Recording List of the Work (division of scenes according to score numbers and recording times)

Suor Angelica:

1. **Ave Maria** (Nos. 1-2)
2. **Sorelle in umiltà** (Nos. 3-16) 00:03:20
3. **I desideri sono i fiori** (Nos. 16-29) 00:11:02
4. **Laudate Maria** (Nos. 30-34) 00:17:53
5. **Chi è venuto** (Nos. 35-40) 00:19:48
6. **Suor Angelica!** (Nos. 40-43) 00:22:16
7. **Il Principe Gualtiero** (Nos. 44-51) 00:26:21
8. **Tutto ho offerto alla Vergine** (Nos. 52-59) 00:34:14
9. **Senza mamma** (Nos. 60-62) 00:39:49
10. **Sorella, o buona sorella!** (Nos. 63-65) 00:44:39
11. **Intermezzo** (Nos. 66-68) 00:47:12
12. **Suor Angelica ha sempre una ricetta buona** (Nos. 69-76) 00:49:35
13. **Ah, son dannata!** (Nos. 77-84) 00:52:15

Gianni Schicchi:

1. **Povero Buoso** (Nos. 1-5)
2. **O Simone?** (Nos. 6-12) 00:04:00
3. **Ai miei cugini Zita e Simone** (Nos. 13-15) 00:07:54
4. **Dunque era vero** (Nos. 16-27) 00:10:40
5. **Avete torto!** (Nos. 28-33) 00:14:47
6. **Quale aspetto sgomento è desolato!** (Nos. 34-37) 00:18:37
7. **Brava la vecchia!** (Nos. 38-39) 00:20:36
8. **O mio babbino caro** (No. 40) 00:22:36
9. **Datemi il testamento** (Nos. 41-44) 00:24:51
10. **Chi può essere?** (Nos. 45-47) 00:27:48

11. **Era uguale la voce?** (Nos. 48-52) 00:30:16
12. **Gianni, ora pensiamo** (Nos. 53-59) 00:33:21
13. **Ecco la cappellina** (Nos. 60-62) 00:36:28
14. **Prima un avvertimento** (Nos. 62-66) 00:39:42
15. **Ecco il notaro!** (Nos. 67-72) 00:42:28
16. **Lascio ai frati minori** (Nos. 72-79) 00:46:32
17. **Ladro, ladro** (Nos. 80-83) 00:52:47
18. **Lauretta mia, staremo sempre qui** (Nos. 84-86) 00:54:08

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