

Verdi, Giuseppina Pasqua, and the Composition of *Falstaff*

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Of all the stories told about Giuseppe Verdi's last opera, *Falstaff*, one of the most frequently repeated is that of the nearly eighty-year-old composer of tragedies finally deciding to write this *commedia lirica* at his leisure and for his own gratification only. Thus it would seem

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that at the very end of his career his attitude towards his compositions and their public reception had changed in some significant manner.

Verdi would have been pleased by the persistence of this story, for he himself started it in a number of letters written as he was composing the opera. One of its earliest formulations is his well-known remark to his editor, Giulio Ricordi, on 1 January 1891: "I began to write *Falstaff* simply to pass the time, without preconceived ideas, without plans; I repeat, to pass the time! Nothing else."¹ Similarly, from the letter to Ricordi of 9 June 1891: "While writing *Falstaff* I thought neither of theaters nor of singers. I wrote for my own pleasure and according to my own opinions."²

These claims, however, were made at a

¹Original Italian in Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio, *I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan, 1913), p. 712.

²*Ibid.*, p. 713.

time when Verdi, depressed by the recent deaths of his close friends Franco Faccio, Giuseppe Piroli, and Emanuele Muzio, felt that he might not be able to finish *Falstaff* at all.³ To make matters worse, the Italian journalists had just discovered that he was composing a new opera, and impresarios and acquaintances were badgering him with requests about it.⁴ Verdi's comments at this time were, more than anything else, official statements that he understood would be quoted or paraphrased in Ricordi's journal, the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*. His insistence on the triviality of the *Falstaff* project was primarily defensive, designed to lower the public's expectations in case he could not fulfill them.

But the question remains, to what extent were his assertions true? Was he now unconcerned about the abilities of singers and the timetables of theaters? Given his past career, one marked by a deep concern for public success and therefore influenced by concrete, practical considerations, we may be permitted some initial skepticism. Moreover, in the case of *Falstaff*, strong, if not conclusive, evidence exists to suggest that Verdi had always had one specific singer in mind for the title role: Victor Maurel, the first Iago. At any rate, when in June 1892 it was time to consider which singers were to appear in the new opera, Verdi and Ricordi discussed all of the parts except that of Falstaff: we can infer that neither man doubted that Maurel would sing the role of the protagonist.⁵

Much more striking, however, is a network of evidence showing that Verdi was very much concerned about singers during at least one period of his work on the opera. In the summer of 1892, when he had nearly finished the orchestration, he began to rethink the part of

Mistress Quickly after he had determined that it would be sung by the mezzo-soprano/contralto Giuseppina Pasqua. The musical personality of this singer had a profound influence on the composition of Quickly's part and, indeed, on the final dramatic shape of the second act. After hearing her sing, Verdi decided to compose a solo piece for her and insert it into the already completed opening of the second part of Act II.

The genesis of this monologue, "Giunta all'Albergo della Giarrettiera," is the subject of this study. I shall first reconstruct as completely as possible the original opening of Act II, scene ii—without Quickly's solo piece—and then examine when, why, and how Verdi wrote this interpolation for Pasqua. The principal sources of this information are Boito's autograph libretto, which Verdi received on 8 March 1890 and from which he composed the opera; the autograph score itself; and Verdi's correspondence with Ricordi, still largely unpublished, from 1891 and 1892.

II

Arrigo Boito wrote the text of *Falstaff* from 2 August 1889 to 8 March 1890. His autograph libretto is now owned by the Carrara Verdi family, Verdi's heirs, in Sant'Agata. Because most of the musical sketches for the opera are inaccessible, it is one of the few available documents that shed light on the early stages of *Falstaff*.⁶ Preserved in a large envelope that bears Verdi's indication "*Libretto originale del Falstaff*," this manuscript—almost entirely in Boito's hand—consists of three separate booklets, one for each act. Most of the text is written in a relatively fair copy on the rectos only. Certain portions of the libretto, however, contain emendations and alternative readings, some written in place on the appropriate rectos, some on the opposite verso, and some on individual slips inserted between the folios.⁷

The libretto includes three versions of the opening text of Act II, scene ii. The first two

³See, for example, Verdi to Maria Waldmann, 6 December 1890, *ibid.*, pp. 528–29.

⁴The Milanese newspapers had learned of *Falstaff* on 27 November 1890, one day after Verdi and Boito had divulged their secret to Ricordi. For an accurate account of the latter event see especially the newspaper *La Lombardia*, 28 November 1890, p. 3. The essential details may also be found in Anton Giulio Barrili, *Giuseppe Verdi: vita e opere*, 3rd edn. (Genoa, 1892), pp. 141–42, and Gino Monaldi, *Verdi: 1839–98* (Turin, 1899), pp. 262–63.

⁵The relevant letters may be found in Franco Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan, 1959), IV, 441–47.

⁶For information on the sketches see Martin Chusid, *A Catalog of Verdi's Operas* (Hackensack, 1974), pp. 4, 68. Boito's libretto has received brief treatment in Alessandro Luzio, "Il libretto del *Falstaff*," *Carteggi verdiani* (Rome, 1935), II, 143–61.

were written before Verdi began to prepare the full autograph score in September 1891. The third is a much later version and contains the added solo for Quickly.

Because Boito's cancellations and additions on fols. 10–11 of the second act of the autograph libretto (the beginning of our scene) produced the superimposition of many words and lines, it is difficult to separate the various versions of the text. On the basis of the word placement, the colors of the inks used, and the rhyme scheme, one may arrive at the following as the most probable original text:⁸

Atto II^o Parte 2^a

Una sala nella casa di Ford. Ampia finestra nel fondo. Porta a destra, porta a sinistra e un'altra verso l'angolo di destra nel fondo che viene in un'antisala. Dal gran finestrone spalancato si vede il giardino. Un paravento chiuso sta appoggiato alla parete di sinistra, accanto ad un vasto camino. Ci sarà un armadio addossato alla parete di destra. Non lontano dall'armadio ci sarà un tavolo. Lungo le pareti un gran seggiolone e qualche scranna. Sul seggiolone un liuto. Sul tavolo dei fiori. Pieno giorno.

Scena I^a

Alice, Meg, Quickly entrano dalla porta a destra ridendo. *Nannetta* le segue senza ridere.

<i>Alice</i>	}	Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
<i>Meg</i>		
<i>Quickly</i>		
<i>Al.</i>		Presenteremo un <i>bill</i> per una Tassa Al Parlamento, sulla gente grassa.
<i>Meg (ad Al.)</i>		Spicciati!
<i>Quick.</i>		Presto! Il tocco è già suonato.
<i>Al. (correndo alla porta del fondo allegramente)</i>		Presenteremo un <i>bill</i> !
<i>Quick.</i>		Falstaff non tarderà.
<i>Al. (chiamando dalla porta)</i>		Holà! Ned! Will! Portate quà la cesta del bucato. Già tutto è combinato.

⁷Luzio cites several examples of changed readings in Boito's libretto. Occasionally, however, he ignores multiple readings of the same passage and arrives at faulty conclusions. Luzio's contention that the variants in the libretto result from Verdi's suggestions has no basis of which I am aware.

⁸The irregular rhyme scheme (ABBCDADCCEF) and the threefold repetition of C rhymes ("ato") admittedly speak against the above reconstruction. Modification of this reading, however, appears to involve even more problems.

(rivolgendo
e riavvicinandosi alle
altre)

<i>Quick.</i>	Sarà un affare gajo!
<i>Al.</i>	Nannetta, e tu non ridi? Che cos'hai?

In this "original" version Alice, Meg, and Quickly enter together at the beginning of the scene; Nannetta follows them, perhaps entering just before Alice's question "*Nannetta, e tu non ridi?*" Here the action moves rapidly (spurred by exclamations like "*Spicciati!*" and "*Presto!*"), for the wives already know that Falstaff is about to visit Alice: it appears, therefore, that Quickly has just reported her encounter with Sir John (hence the opening laughter). Alice goes immediately to the door, tells the servants to bring in the laundry basket, and returns to find Nannetta weeping over her marriage prospects

Boito's second version of the text—the version that Verdi used before he decided to insert a solo for Quickly—is even briefer. This second reading, again a reconstruction from superimposed layers on fols. 10–11 of the second act of the autograph libretto, is shown below:⁹

Scena I^a

Alice, Meg, Quickly entrano dalla porta a destra ridendo. *Nannetta* le segue senza ridere.

<i>Al.</i>	Presenteremo un <i>bill</i> per una Tassa Al Parlamento, sulla gente grassa.
<i>Meg (ad Al.)</i>	Spicciati!
<i>Quick.</i>	Presto! Il tocco è già suonato.
<i>Al. (correndo alla porta del fondo allegramente)</i>	Presenteremo un <i>bill</i> ! Holà! Ned! Will!
<i>Alice (chiamando dalla porta)</i>	Portate quà la cesta del bucato.
	(rivolgendo e riavvicinandosi alle altre)
<i>Quick.</i>	Sarà un affare gajo!
<i>Al.</i>	Nannetta, e tu non ridi? Che cos'hai?

⁹Changes in the initial stage directions are not shown: one word, "[e un'altra] porta [verso l'angolo di destra]," was added in ink, and three, "[ci sarà un tavolo] e una casabanca," were added in pencil. In addition, Boito wrote an unnecessary "a sinistra" after the first appearance of the word "porta."

In revising the original text Boito canceled the opening laughter (and with it, one presumes, the rhyming line "*Falstaff non tarderà*"), relocated the line "*Holà! Ned! Will!*" directly below the second "*Presenteremo un bill!*" and may also at this time have canceled the line "*Già tutto è combinato.*"¹⁰ He reduced eleven lines to eight (or at most nine if "*Già tutto*" was allowed to stand); the scene begins with an even greater flurry of activity than before.¹¹

That Verdi was originally concerned with this second version may be learned by examining the full autograph score of the opera in the Ricordi archives.¹² He wrote most of this score from September 1891 to October 1892, although he continued to modify certain passages until late May 1893. But even during the orchestration and final stages of composition in 1892 he often revised what he had written, frequently by removing already composed folios or sets of folios and replacing them with new ones. One should therefore distinguish between original and replacement folios in each of the thirty-five gatherings.

Of particular interest for the history of *Falstaff* are three folio groups that Verdi added to the autograph score in the later stages of composition without removing the corresponding number of original folios: portions of the opera, that is, in which he decided to expand a previously completed setting. Two of these expansions are not relevant to the present discussion and must be set aside for discussion elsewhere. These are the addition of a seventeen-measure introduction to the women's quartet "*Quell'otre! Quel tino!*" in

Act I, scene ii (fols. 65–66^v, a bifolio inserted into the present sixth gathering), and the addition of an extended orchestral introduction to Act III (fols. 261–65^v, a set of three bifolios with the last leaf removed), which constitutes the entire twenty-third gathering—a replacement for the excised first folio of the present twenty-fourth gathering. The third expansion is the inclusion of Quickly's solo "*Giunta all'Albergo*" as well as a few lines leading into and out of that solo: fols. 180–86^v, an added subgathering of four bifolios (with one leaf, following fol. 181, removed) placed two leaves into the sixteenth gathering (the present fols. 178–95^v). This seven-folio insertion, mm. 28–97 of the final version of this scene, replaced the removed single folio that originally preceded the present fol. 187.

With the exception of the measures originally set on the removed folio, the first orchestral setting of the opening of this scene can be isolated and reclaimed. It is to be found on the original first, second, and fourth folios of Act II, scene ii, i. e., the present fols. 178, 179, and 187. The only problem in reconstructing what remains—the fact that Verdi erased much of what he had originally written on fols. 179^v and 187—turns out to be less serious than might be expected, for with few exceptions, the erased text and notes are still visible and restorable.

Example 1 is a reconstruction of the original music of fols. 178–79^v, the first twenty-seven measures of this scene, with the deleted readings restored; example 2 is the original reading of fol. 187. Because both the recto and verso of fol. 179 contain six measures and fol. 187 contains seven, one may infer that from twelve to fourteen measures are lacking between examples 1 and 2—the music of the removed folio.

As might be expected, those measures that border the subsequent insertion differ most from the final version of the passage: Verdi was obliged to provide smooth transitions into and out of the added material. Thus, having received the new text of the final version—with Quickly's solo added—he found it necessary to revise the vocal parts of example 1, mm. 25–27, at "*Spicciati!*" and "*Presto! il!*": these

¹⁰The canceled lines on fols. 10–11 are: "*Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!*"; "*Spicciati! Presto! Il tocco è già suonato*"; "*Presenteremo un bill!*"; "*Falstaff non tarderà*"; "*Holà! Ned! Will!*" (rewritten above the preceding line); and "*Già tutto è combinato.*" At least one of these cancellations came with the final revision: the "*Spicciati!*" line was retained, for Verdi set it in his autograph score.

¹¹Luzio II, 152, mentions this passage of the autograph libretto without either separating the two early versions or comparing the libretto with Verdi's autograph score.

¹²Ricordi published a facsimile of the *Falstaff* autograph score in 1951. Many of the details of the following discussion, however, are observable only in the original manuscript.

fol. 178 **Una Sala nella Casa di Ford**

leggeriss.

8 fol. 178^v **Entrano Alice, Meg, Quickly**

15 fol. 179 **poi Nannetta** **ALICE**

pre - sen - te - remo un *bill* per u - na tas - sa al Par - la - men - to

brillante

22 fol. 179^v **MEG** **QUICKLY**

sul - la gen - te gras - sa. Spicciati [?] presto il

Example 1

fol. 187 **QUICKLY** **ALICE**

- ra un af - fa - re ga - jo Nan - net ta e tu non ri di che cos' hai

Example 2

words did not appear at all in the third version of the text. Nevertheless, example 1 is very close to the final setting of these measures.

The first four measures of example 2, however, differ markedly from their revision. While both the original and the final reading involve a modulation to B major-minor, the melodic ideas and the declamation of the two versions are dissimilar.

III

Verdi's decision to insert Quickly's solo radically changed the pace and stage action of this scene. In the version eventually published, Alice and Meg enter without Quickly, who rushes in only after the two opening lines to report her news to the two women: "Comari!", "Ebben!", "Che c'è!", "Sarà sconfitto."¹³ Pressed for more details, Quickly responds at length with her narrative solo "Giunta all'Albergo." Alice, after learning that Falstaff is about to arrive, hurriedly arranges for the laundry basket to be brought inside. Only at this point does she then turn to the sobbing Nannetta to inquire why she is not laughing along with the rest of them.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this expanded scene is its effect on the speed of the drama already established in the first three parts of *Falstaff*, for Quickly's monologue momentarily stops the prevailing rapid action. For the first time one has the opportunity not merely to reflect on the stage action but also to re-experience part of what has already occurred—in the first portion of Act II, scene i. This sudden pause in the action provided, in fact, an unexpected gain. The essential dramatic problem in *Falstaff* was to move from the concentrated action of its opening scenes to the comparatively leisurely succession of lyric and stylized pieces at its end. Verdi might therefore have thought it entirely appropriate to insert a brake on the action midway through the opera,

¹³Verdi's addition of the word "Poi" before "Quickly" in the initial stage directions of fol. 178^v of the autograph score is contemporaneous with the inserted solo. Boito similarly added the word "Poi" to his autograph libretto and may also at this time have canceled the words "le segue" in Nannetta's stage directions. The disposition of the new text in the autograph libretto will be discussed below.

before the climax was reached at the end of the second act.

Verdi's principal reason for including the monologue, however, appears to have been practical, not aesthetic. While composing the draft of *Falstaff*, he began to consider who might sing the role of Quickly. In his letters of 9 and 14 June 1891 Boito informed Verdi that the contralto Guerrina Fabbri, whom he had just heard in a Milanese performance of *La Cenerentola*, might be able to perform the role.¹⁴ The composer might subsequently have written some of Quickly's part (but not the solo we are considering) with Fabbri in mind. Sometime before 13 June 1892, however, he decided that Guerrina Fabbri was not suited to the part. He wrote to Ricordi on that date: "With Fabbri's beautiful voice she could be successful in cantabiles based on agility, as in *La Cenerentola*, etc. etc. But Quickly's part is something else. It requires both voice and acting, much stage presence, and the right accent on the proper syllable. She doesn't have these qualities; and one risks sacrificing the most characteristic and original part of the four."¹⁵

For some time he had been considering instead the mezzo-soprano/contralto Giuseppina Pasqua, whose vocal talents were on the decline, but who was still known as a splendid actress.¹⁶ In March 1892 he had written or spoken to Ricordi about her recent performance of Tigrana in the Ferrara premiere (28 February 1892) and Madrid productions (beginning 19 March) of the revised, three-act version of Puc-

¹⁴Luzio II, 153, 157. In a footnote to the 9 June letter Luzio (clearly with Virginia Guerrini, the first Meg, in mind) mistakenly corrects Boito's "Guerrina Fabbri" to "Guerrina Virginia."

¹⁵Abbiati IV, 443.

¹⁶Giuseppina Pasqua (1855–1930) began her career in 1869 as a soprano in the role of Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*. After further study she developed into a mezzo-soprano, having particular success with the role of Amneris in *Aida*. Since she also sang many contralto parts, one would expect that her range was quite extensive. Verdi had been acquainted with her voice at least since the premiere of the new, four-act *Don Carlo* (La Scala, 10 January 1884), in which she sang the role of Eboli.

Those familiar with Pasqua applauded not only her voice but also her acting ability. See Gino Monaldi, *Cantanti celebri del secolo XIX* (Rome, n.d.), pp. 248–49; Rodolfo Celletti, "Giuseppina Pasqua," *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo* (Rome, 1960), VII, 1724–25.

cini's *Edgar*. Warned by Puccini about the state of Pasqua's voice,¹⁷ Ricordi relayed the information to Verdi in late March. Verdi wrote back on 31 March 1892 with what must be a reference to the part of Quickly:¹⁸ "Despite the fact that her low notes are still good, one must still worry whether her voice can follow the descending line. The part is low and for me these notes would suffice:



Ask Puccini again whether these notes are still good and robust and, above all, whether she can sing in that range without tiring."¹⁹

By June 1892 it was becoming clear that *Falstaff* would be finished in time to be premiered within a year, perhaps at the upcoming La Scala season. Verdi and Ricordi began to consider potential singers for the opera. On 17 June 1892 Verdi informed Ricordi that Giuseppina Pasqua could be offered the role of Quickly: "That Pasqua is relying on her Puccini connections is frightening: nevertheless you yourself could write her and tell her openly that here one must put nerves and sentimentalism aside. It is a matter of comedy: music, note and word, stage action, and much energy, not cantabiles."²⁰

The decisive moment for Verdi, Pasqua, and the part of Quickly came three weeks later. In early July Verdi vacationed at the baths of Montecatini, where he received the singer as visitor. He reported their meeting to Ricordi on 12 July:

Pasqua has been here for two days. I read her most of the libretto and had her sing some phrases from the third act that I had with me. Perhaps secretly [*in petto*] she wanted some piece or other to stand out by herself; but she understood, intelligent as she is, what the situation is, and she will be content to do that part, which she will do well. Only I noticed (I alone) that at certain points in the third act Quickly has been on stage too long without saying anything, and I think that without ruining the comedy one could take away a few phrases and a few words here and there from Alice and Meg and give them to Quickly, and we won't lose anything in the performance. I'll write to Boito about it myself after I have looked over this third act again.²¹

It is evident that after hearing Pasqua sing, Verdi began to reconsider some of Quickly's music. His first thought was that she might be given a few more lines to make her a more important figure.²² Moreover, he had certainly heard the contralto's high notes, found them satisfactory, and may shortly thereafter have decided to rewrite some of her lines in a higher

²¹Abbiati IV, 446.

²²On fol. 19 of the third act of Boito's autograph libretto one finds Quickly assigned some of Alice's lines. Thus, shortly before the concluding fugue Boito's original idea was:

Alice Questi è Ford mio marito.—Cavaliero,
Voi credeste due donne così grulle,
Così citrulle,
Da darsi anima e corpo all Avversiero,
Per un uom vecchio, sudicio ed obeso,
Meg Con quella testa calva,
Alice E con quel peso!

Probably before Verdi began to write the autograph score, Boito assigned the lines from "cavaliero" through "Così citrulle" to Quickly, returning to Alice at "Da darsi." Verdi, however, modified this further, probably after 12 July 1892. In one of the only entries he made into the autograph libretto, Verdi wrote "Quik" to replace the "Al." in front of "Da darsi" and in front of "E con quel peso!" Perhaps even later, or perhaps changing his mind immediately, Verdi wrote "tutte" before the final line quoted above. Beginning with the words "mio marito" these lines occur on fols. 365–66^v of the autograph score: these are the initial two folios of gathering 33, which seems, from its basically "fair-copy" appearance in a rather dark black-brown ink, to be a late replacement gathering.

¹⁷See Puccini to Ricordi, 8 March 1892, in *Carteggi pucciniani*, ed. Eugenio Gara (Milan, 1958), p. 69. Gara and others have speculated that the part of Tigrana was too high for her. Cf. William Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini* (New York, 1968), p. 23.

¹⁸Some of the following letters are drawn from unpublished correspondence located in the Ricordi archives in Milan. This includes many of Verdi's letters to Giulio Ricordi, preserved in a numbered set of albums, and copies of Ricordi's telegrams to Verdi, preserved with other business correspondence in a multi-volume set of *Copia lettere*. Bibliographical citations from the albums will consist of the siglum *Mr* and the number of the relevant letter; citations from the *Copia lettere* will be given the same siglum, the abbreviation *Cop*, the relevant years, and the volume and page of the telegram copy.

¹⁹Mr 1006: "Malgrado restano buone le note basse, vi è sempre da temere se la voce segua la linea discendente. La parte è bassa e per me basterebbe queste note dal [G] al [B]. Domandate di nuovo a Puccini se queste note sono ancora buone e robuste, e soprattutto se può cantare *in quel centro* senza stancarsi."

²⁰Abbiati IV, 444–45.

oppure etc.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The vocal line has three measures of music with lyrics: "al fine a far - la spic - cia vi cre - de en - tram - be in - na mo ra - te". Above the first measure is the word "oppure" and above the third measure is "etc.". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with chords and moving lines. The second system also consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has two measures of music with lyrics: "cot - te del - le bel - le ze su - e e lo ve - dre - te". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines.

Example 3

register. In his letter to Ricordi of 31 March 1892 Verdi had described the general range of Quickly's part as extending to $B\flat$ above middle C, although even then the part must have required many Ds and Ebs. And Quickly's part today contains a few exposed high Gs, $G\flat$ s, and Fs. Just as one might predict, virtually all of them occur on replacement folios of the autograph score, probably late replacements, not original folios.²³ The presence of these high notes, it would seem, is due to the abilities of Giuseppina Pasqua in 1892.

²³These include: the high $F\sharp$ in "Signora Alice!" "Chi va là?" "Signora Alice!" (Act II, sc. ii, four and two mm. before rehearsal no. 44, fols. 216–16^v in the autograph score); the sustained F in "Alice piange, urla, invoca i santi" (Act III, sc.i, twenty mm. after rehearsal no. 121; fol. 282); and the $G\flat$ in "V'ha chi crede vederlo ricomparir" (five mm. before rehearsal no. 14; fol. 285^v). Certain high notes in Quickly's part seem unquestionably to have been written before July 1892—her final note in the concluding fugue is a high G—but with few exceptions these notes either are doubled by other singers or are brief, forceful exclamations.

Most important, since Verdi sensed that Pasqua was disappointed with her part because she had no solo piece, one can be certain that when he met with her he had not yet written the monologue "Giunta all'Albergo." Even though he had only the third act with him, it is inconceivable that he would not have informed the singer about her principal piece, had it indeed been composed at that time. Sometime after 12 July, then, he decided to expand the part of Quickly even further and insert a solo piece as a favor (or at least as a pleasant surprise) for Giuseppina Pasqua.

This solo required additional lines of text. When could he have asked Boito to write them? None of his extant letters to the librettist mentions a new text; yet, as will be seen, the solo was unquestionably composed by 21 October 1892, when he mentioned it in a letter to Ricordi. Verdi probably discussed the new text with Boito in person on 28 July, or a day or two later, when the composer was in

Milan to audition Emma Zilli for the role of Alice and to “arrange matters with Boito.”²⁴

What took place at this time is not known. Much can be inferred, however, from the third version of the text in Boito’s autograph libretto. Departing from his typical procedure for textual revision, Boito did not enter the new text directly into the libretto. Instead, he wrote it (from “*Comari!*” to “*Portate quà la cesta*”) on a piece of standard stationery, which now exists as an unbound addition to the autograph libretto. Inside the folded stationery one finds a slip of music paper with notes and text in Boito’s hand: this contains the centerpiece of Quickly’s monologue and is transcribed in example 3.

This evidence suggests the following hypothetical sequence of events. Verdi could have requested the new text on or shortly after 28 July. He had probably already written the core of the new music (in the two versions given by Boito, one ascending to a high G) shortly before, either without a text or, more likely, to a text or metrical pattern of his own devising that he wanted Boito to polish. The librettist could then have written the new text on his own stationery and mailed it in early August to Verdi along with a demonstration (ex. 3) of how well his text fitted the music that he had been given. Upon receiving the text, Verdi probably discarded the envelope but inserted the stationery and music paper into the autograph libretto, then in his possession, and finished composing the music that was to be added. If this hypothesis is correct, the music of the interpolated fols. 180–86^v of the autograph score is best dated July–August 1892.

Fols. 180–86^v themselves, however, are slightly later than this, because Verdi wrote at least two versions of the added music. For the first he used a watery, brown-black ink whose only traces in the manuscript score are found in the measures immediately surrounding the present insertion: the final measures of fol. 179^v (the new notes for the women on “*Comari!*”, “*Ebben!*”, and “*che*”) and the first

measures of fol. 187 (Alice’s “[*Nan-*]netta, e tu non ridi!”). Verdi made the entry onto fol. 187 by erasing the original reading of the first three measures (shown above in ex. 2), writing in the new version (virtually identical with the final setting), and canceling the fourth measure completely. The cancellations of the first three measures now visible on fol. 187 are a product of a later revision.

Sometime after copying the first version of the added solo, Verdi rewrote it in a dark black-brown ink; this copy constitutes the present fols. 180–86^v. Despite the generally fair copy of these folios one can find a few erasures that may point toward the unavailable first version of the inserted solo. What is still restorable of the most significant of these erased readings is shown in example 4, transcribed from fols. 181–81^v (see p. 248).

The rhythm of this first version is that of its final setting, but its melodic shape and some of the details of its harmony were thoroughly changed. The most notable revision here was the inversion of the scalar ascent from E to C on “*Chiedo d’esser ammessa*” (ex. 4, mm. 3–4).²⁵

This early reading, curiously enough, helps us to date the final version. On 21 October, at least a week after he had given Ricordi the autograph score of Act II for reduction, Verdi requested to see again the fascicle that contained Quickly’s narrative. In this letter he wrote out as identification the first phrase of the melody ending with the notes D C# D G; he wrote the melody, that is, in its final version.²⁶ He had therefore revised the solo piece before giving the score to Ricordi.

One final piece of evidence allows us to assign at least a tentative date to the completion of fols. 180–86^v. The dark black-brown ink of those folios matches that of Verdi’s letters to Ricordi from 19 August to 5 September and very nearly matches that of his letters from 18 September to 21 October (which display an

²⁴Verdi to Ricordi, 14 July 1892, in Abbiati IV, 447. The clearest indication of the exact date of Verdi’s trip to Milan is found in Ricordi to Verdi, 27 July 1892 (Mr Cop 1892–93, III, 114): “Lietissimo vederla domattina. Auguro ottimo viaggio. Ossequi affettuosi. Giulio.”

²⁵Whether or not the effect was consciously intended, this revision strongly intensified the family resemblance between the beginning of Quickly’s narrative and the opening two lines of Ferrando’s *racconto*, “Di due figli vivea padre beato,” in the *introduzione* of *Il trovatore*.

²⁶Misdated and without the musical notation, this letter appears in Abbiati IV, 430.

QUICKLY

fol. 181

fol. 181^v

Giun - ta all'Al - ber - go della Giar - ret - tie - ra chiedo d'esser am -

mes - sa al - la pre - sen - za del Ca - va - lier se - gre - ta mes - sa - ge - ra [sic]

Example 4

only slightly lighter ink).²⁷ The final version of Quickly's solo was probably copied during one of these two periods.

What, then, did he want to correct when he wrote to Ricordi on 21 October? It appears that he wished to make only minor corrections at some point in the solo, perhaps in a portion that concerned him throughout much of November 1892: the melody of the lines beginning "*Alfin, per farla spiccia*" (fols. 183^v–84).²⁸ I have already surmised that in late July he gave Boito two readings of this melody, a high version reaching a high G and a low version extending only to D (see ex. 3). The autograph score (fol. 184) now contains the high version, but an erased, virtually illegible low version may be discerned beneath it.

Although Verdi preferred the high version (the final reading), he was not certain that

Giuseppina Pasqua—who still knew nothing about this new solo piece—could perform it. On 4 November he wrote to Ricordi and asked where the contralto might be reached.²⁹ Ricordi was able to supply Verdi with her address by 7 November,³⁰ and on the same day the composer wrote to Pasqua with the revelation of his surprise for her: "As I promised you, I am sending you the first printed proofs of *Falstaff* [portions of Act I, scene ii and Act III, scene ii], which I ask you to return to me once you have read through them. In the second part of Act II there is a *solo* that presents some difficulties that must be smoothed out before printing the music. It would be necessary to perform it *prestissimo, a mezza voce, with only one breath, and neat and clear syllables*. I am sending you the few measures; tell me something about them."³¹

Verdi heard from Pasqua on 16 November, decided upon the high version of the passage, and informed Ricordi of his decision on the

²⁷Since Verdi habitually used the same inkwell for both letters and composition, ink analysis can be a useful tool in dating portions of his autograph scores. Verdi wrote the primary autograph layer—typically an arrangement of such as voice, bass, and first violin—of this portion of *Falstaff* in a gray-brown ink; the contrast with the dark black-brown ink of the inserted monologue is distinctive indeed.

²⁸In the first piano-vocal edition (Ricordi pl. no. 96000; January 1893), p. 196, the line was modified to "*Infin, per farla spiccia*," probably with Verdi's and Boito's approval. Cf. the text in ex. 3 above.

²⁹Mr 1056: "Ditemi dove trovati ora la Pasqua."

³⁰Mr Cop 1892–93, VIII, 166: "Confermando mia lettera ecco indirizzo Pasqua. Piazza Aldovrandi 10. Bologna. Cordiali ossequi."

³¹Verdi to Pasqua, 7 November 1892; misdated in Cesari and Luzio, p. 714.



Example 5

same day.³² On 18 November, however, came the rather curious final instructions from Verdi: "In Quickly's solo in the second act go ahead and write into the oboe even the notes it doesn't have. They will say that I don't know the range of the instruments. No great matter!"³³ The oboe part of this passage as found in Verdi's autograph score (fols. 183–84) is shown in example 5. Verdi evidently wished to add C and B \flat to the beginning of the fifth measure (cf. ex. 3). One gathers that the oboes then used at La Scala did not descend to the low B \flat ; in this respect the Milanese oboes were inferior to those used in Paris at the time, with which Verdi was undoubtedly familiar.³⁴ Surely the two low notes, C and B \flat , still lacking in modern orchestral scores, should be played in present-day performances of *Falstaff*.

IV

With this modification Verdi had completed the solo for Quickly. From a purely dramatic point of view one might question the value of this insertion; its recapitulatory character may seem anomalous to its tightly compressed environment. Yet it provided Verdi

the opportunity to compose a solo piece for a singer whose ability would greatly add to the effectiveness of the premiere and hence to the possibility of the immediate success of the opera.

Moreover, the entire affair permitted him to write yet another major aria in the narrative, through-composed style so characteristic of the solo pieces in *Falstaff*. Quickly's monologue, like Ford's at the end of Act II, scene i and Falstaff's at the beginning of Act III, is rich in subtle allusions to music heard earlier—a technique particularly appropriate to the setting of a text that recounts events seen and heard before.

Quickly's quotations of "Buon giorno, buona donna," "Reverenza," and "Dalle due alle tre" need no comment here, but other textual and musical allusions in her solo are less obvious: compare, for example, her "Chiedo d'esser ammessa alla presenza del Cavalier" with Bardolfo's introduction of her in Act II, scene i, "là c'è una donna ch'alla vostra presenza chiede d'esser ammessa" (seven measures before rehearsal no. 2); or her "Sir John si degna" with Falstaff's "S'inoltri" and the music that immediately follows (scene i, rehearsal no. 2); or the B \flat –B \natural cross relations at Quickly's "A lui m'inchino molto ossequiosamente" with those heard earlier at her words "Potrà liberamente" (scene i, six measures after no. 4); or, finally, compare Quickly's "Infin, per farla spiccia" with the notes of her earlier "dirle quattro parole" (scene i, seven measures before no. 3).

Through subtle allusions such as these, Quickly's narrative becomes not an exact duplication of what we have experienced before but something that more accurately corresponds to a memory: scraps of musical detail that were first presented during Quickly's interview with Falstaff are transformed and regrouped in new ways, almost in the manner of a symphonic development. And to surround Quickly's monologue Verdi wrote what is

³²Abbiati IV, 466. One might note here that at this time Verdi quickened the tempo of this portion of the solo—presumably to make it performable in one breath. The tempo originally printed in the piano-vocal proofs (November 1892) for this passage was $\text{♩} = 126$; Verdi canceled this in the proofs, probably around 16 November, and wrote in the new, faster tempo $\text{♩} = 132$. See Guglielmo Barblan, *Un prezioso spartito del 'Falstaff'* (Milan, n.d.), p. 25.

³³To Ricordi, misdated in Abbiati IV, 467.

³⁴The low B \flat on the oboe became increasingly common in France during the last half of the nineteenth century. Information on the Italian oboe of the late nineteenth century is provided by Constant Pierre, *La Facture instrumentale à l'exposition de 1889* (Paris, 1890), p. 272. Pierre reports that at the 1889 Paris exposition were displayed two types of Italian oboes: one from the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome, and the other from the Milan Conservatory (which supplied La Scala with a number of its players). The Milanese oboe had only thirteen keys and no rings—which indeed suggests an abbreviated lower register.

probably an entirely new musical motive to depict the wives' bustling action: the motive is first heard against Quickly's words "*Fra poco gli farem la festa*" (fol. 180; Act II, scene ii, thirteen measures before no. 27) and is repeated as Alice calls for the servants, "*Holà! Ned! Will! / Già tutto ho preparato*" (fols. 185^v–86; seven measures after no. 29) and at the wives' support for Nannetta's determination not to marry Dr. Cajus, "*Ben detto!*" "*Brava!*" "*Non temer*" (fols. 189^v–90; six measures after no. 31). This last appearance of the new orchestral motive on fols. 189^v–90 suggests that those two folios, which together constitute the replacement center bifolio of gathering 16, were replaced as a direct consequence of the insertion of fols. 180–86^v, whose dark black-brown ink they share.

The history of the interpolation of Quickly's solo reminds us once again how strongly Verdi still clung to the fundamentally Italian

conception of opera as, among other things, a vehicle for singers. He did not write *Falstaff*, as he once claimed, only to please himself; still less did he write it in pursuit of an abstract aesthetic ideal. Verdi's creation of *Falstaff*, at least in its final stages, was wedded to real singers, to a real stage, and to a real audience. Even in his last opera he was still willing to tailor a solo piece to fit the requirements of an individual singer—so long as the alterations were his own idea and not the singer's.

Verdi remained a man of the theater to the end of his career. If Giuseppina Pasqua had not been able to sing high G, the centerpiece of her solo would have been quite different. Even more significantly, if she had not visited him at Montecatini in early July 1892—and if he had not understood that "*in petto*" she wanted a solo piece—*Falstaff* would exist today without Quickly's solo "*Giunta all' Albergo.*"

