



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Advancing Knowledge, Driving Change

Levels of Motivic Definition in Verdi's "Ernani"

Author(s): Roger Parker

Source: *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 141-150

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/746272>

Accessed: 26-02-2019 20:04 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *19th-Century Music*

Levels of Motivic Definition in Verdi's *Ernani*

ROGER PARKER

In the recent Verdi "explosion" many of the early operas have been admired and commented on; their economy, energy, and overall dramatic power have been praised; but seldom do individual passages receive much detailed analytic attention. Quite properly, of course, writers are sensitive to the traps awaiting those who consider tiny sections of large-scale works without concern for their dramatic context or for the historical background against which the music was created. Furthermore, the evident simplicity of Verdi's early style may seem to discourage at-

tempts to look at the music in greater detail, its ready accessibility making inappropriate the use of analytic methods more usually associated with music of greater surface complexity. It is, in this sense, rather unfortunate that a good deal of the close analytic work of recent years has concerned itself with the contentious topic of overall key relationships, of "tonality and drama" in the broadest sense.¹ Too frequently, it seems, terminology we associate with the architectonic principles of, say, Beethoven is transferred to Verdian opera with no thought for the different weight even such basic words as "tonic" might have in the changed context.

This article is a revised version of the seventh chapter of my doctoral thesis, *Studies in Early Verdi* (London University, 1981). I would like to thank William Drabkin, Julian Budden, and Pierluigi Petrobelli for their assistance at various stages.

0148-2076/82/030141 + 10\$00.50 © 1981 by The Regents of the University of California.

¹See, for example, David Lawton, *Tonality and Drama in Early Verdi Operas* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973), and also the frequently-cited discussion of key relationships in *Un ballo in maschera*, this journal 2-3 (1978-79).

Moreover, to attach such a high degree of priority to "pure" harmonic organization in music which is plainly conceived primarily in terms of the human voice seems bound to lead to a certain imbalance.

Perhaps because of this unwarranted specialization, there may have been something of an over-reaction against analysis in general. This is unfortunate because, given a sensitivity to the inevitable adjustments needed, there are many theoretical disciplines which the Verdi specialist might find rewarding. For example, recent attempts by musicologists and others to apply the terms of semiology to their disciplines have had interesting consequences for the study of early Verdi. Though the severe, disciplined "objectivity" of Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Nicolas Ruwet, or David Lidov may well prove too unwieldy in this particular field, Frits Noske has already demonstrated that the careful application of semiological methods of analysis can be most useful in such a hybrid medium as opera, where many different levels of signification operate simultaneously. More important still, he has shown that the stimulus of a new discipline can lead to a freshness and impartiality difficult to achieve under more conventional circumstances. Those who know Noske's book *The Signifier and the Signified*² will see that, although I have not felt a need to relate my material specifically to his theory of "musico-dramatic signs,"³ my analytic approach, particularly in the later part of this article, owes much to his example.

For many reasons *Ernani*, first performed in March 1844, is a key work in Verdi's career. Its success, which was far more immediate and widespread than that of *Nabucco*, assured Verdi a popularity in Italy second only to Donizetti, while at the same time its many foreign performances built for the composer a considerable international reputation. The opera was also one

of the few early Verdi works to enjoy frequent revivals later in the century: it became, for example, the *cavallo di battaglia* of Verdi's favorite Aida, Teresa Stolz.⁴ Furthermore *Ernani* was, significantly, the first Verdi work to be commissioned from outside Milan: thus to the prestige of a "foreign" assignment—a definite sign of Verdi's rapidly spreading reputation—was added the challenge of composing for a new public and a new theater. Indeed, perhaps the intimate, character-based format of the new opera, in contrast to the choral tableaux of the previous two works, *Nabucco* and *I Lombardi*, may be partially explained by the change of venue. The opera house for which *Ernani* was written, La Fenice in Venice, is smaller and more intimate than La Scala, Milan, where grandiose effects are almost demanded by the sheer size of the theater.

Ernani also marks Verdi's first collaboration with the man who was to become his most important librettist, Francesco Maria Piave. Piave is frequently anathematized by Verdi commentators for his clumsy poetry and naive dramatic pretensions, and was indeed, as we can see from Verdi's often exasperated letters during the composition of *Ernani*, a theatrical novice at the time of this first collaboration. Certainly he was less accomplished and strong-willed than Verdi's previous librettist, Temistocle Solera. As Verdi wrote to Brenna (Secretary of La Fenice) during arguments about the final shape of the opera:

I've set to music three libretti by Solera and comparing the originals, which I've kept, with the printed text you will only find changed a very few lines, and these always because Solera himself wanted it. But Solera has written five or six libretti and knows all about the theater and dramatic effect and musical form. Signor Piave hasn't yet written for the theater and therefore it's natural that he should be wanting in these matters.⁵

But in the long term, and in spite of the complaints, Piave's evident inexperience may even have been beneficial to the final result. It forced Verdi to take a far more active part in the dra-

²The Hague, 1977.

³Defined by Noske, p. 316, as "a musical unit which stresses, clarifies, invalidates, contradicts, or supplies an element of the libretto. The sign is semantically interpretable and discloses dramatic truth." As will become clear later, I am not in complete agreement with the final sentence (see fn. 15).

⁴See Frank Walker, *The Man Verdi* (London, 1962), pp. 427–28.

⁵Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, vol. I (London, 1973), p. 145.

matic planning, and perhaps for that reason to confront more directly his essential problems as a music dramatist. In the words of Gabriele Baldini:

Working with Piave was Verdi's first opportunity to work with himself. [Piave's] libretti are in fact those best suited to Verdi's music . . . simply because, in detail as well as in general shape, Verdi himself composed them.⁶

On the other hand, although *Ernani* is quite different from *Nabucco* and *I Lombardi*, it is in many senses a far more conventional opera, a return to the operatic *mores* of Verdi's first work, *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*. The use of choral forces in *Nabucco*, their magnificently effective entrances into set pieces, and in the end the elevation of the chorus to the status of an equal partner with the principal soloists—all this is highly individual, even though in part it derives from the continuing tradition of "opera-oratorio" in general, and Rossini's *Mosè* in particular.⁷ At least in external format, *Ernani* reverts to the more commonplace Donizettian *opera seria* form, a fact made immediately obvious by the stylized succession of arias which introduces the major characters in Act I.

However, before we condemn the opera as dramatically reactionary (an epithet also misapplied, incidentally, to the work which most closely resembles *Ernani* in the Verdian repertoire, *Il trovatore*), we might consider the possibility that, stimulated by the different demands of a Venetian audience, Verdi was attempting to formulate an alternative method of dramatic structure. What Verdi needed after *I Lombardi*, as Julian Budden says, "was the discipline of a plot whose action is focused on the central issue, and whose events fall within the same range of experience."⁸ The choice of a drama such as *Er-*

nani, where all three principal male characters are in love with the heroine, was surely deliberate. Its stylization and "monothematicism" allowed the composer to concentrate all his energies on matters of internal coherence rather than isolated external effect, and above all on the precise definition of characters and their relationships, the exact placing and weighting of their ordered confrontations.

It is significant that, only days after Victor Hugo's *Hernani* had first been suggested, Verdi already seemed to have the entire action before his mind's eye:

But oh, if only we could do *Hernani* instead that would be tremendous. . . . Signor Piave has great facility in versifying and in *Hernani* all he would need to do would be to condense and tighten up; the action is there ready made, and it's all immensely good theater. Tomorrow I'll write at length to Piave setting out all the scenes from *Hernani* which seem to me suitable. . . . I've already seen how the whole of the first act could be compressed into a magnificent introduction, and Act I could finish at the point where Don Carlos requires Silva to give up Hernani who is hidden behind the picture. Act II could be made from Act IV of the French play. And the third act would end with a magnificent trio in which Hernani dies.⁹

He was free, as never before, to concentrate on internal coherence, leaving the ruthless logic of the plot mechanism to take care of itself.

The most obvious attempt to establish this "internal coherence" on a strictly *musical* level lies in Verdi's experimental use of a recurring melodic contour, the rising sixth from dominant to mediant. Needless to say, such an exceedingly common gesture needs a degree of qualification if it is to signify at all strongly as a unifying device. This "special context" is achieved by placing the interval, whether in its pure form or as a more complex definition of space, in the initial phrases of important, set-piece arias. For example, Julian Budden has already remarked on how different treatments of the interval serve to define musically the major characters as they

⁶Gabriele Baldini, *Abitare la battaglia* (Milan, 1970). English edition *The Story of Giuseppe Verdi*, trans. and ed. Roger Parker (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 70–71.

⁷It is interesting that Verdi's second opera, *Un giorno di regno*, has some links with this "oratorio" tradition (see, for example, the choral participation in Belfiore's Act I cabaletta "Verrà pur troppo il giorno"), but in its alterations of Romani's original libretto, and in particular in its elevation of the Marchesa to an opera-seria character-type, it betrays an attempt to shade the comic plot into the *Ernani/seria* format.

⁸Budden, p. 142.

⁹*Ibid.*, 141–42.

appear in the first act.¹⁰ The lyrical rise of the violin melody in the prelude (ex. 1a) and of Ernani's cantabile (ex. 1b) becomes more agitated rhythmically in Elvira's cantabile (ex. 1c). When the baritone Don Carlo asserts himself musically, the interval becomes a contour (ex. 1d), more relaxed, less impetuous, and by the time we reach the aged Silva—the male character with least chance of fulfilling his amorous intentions—the initial lyrical rise has been transformed into a tortuous ascent, filled with chromatic inflection (ex. 1e).

By the manner in which it both unifies and distinguishes between the principal characters, we might describe this interval as one associated with the “love element” of the drama—at its most uncomplicated with Ernani, its most crabbed with Silva. Similarly, we could identify a second recurring idea which becomes attached to the other essential dramatic element of the plot, the dictates of honor. (It is, of course, the tension between love and honor that impels the plot mechanism to its gruesome end.) While the “aspiring” rising sixth is, as we have seen, typically presented at the beginning of a phrase or longer period, this second idea (which, like the first, is a commonplace of Verdi's musical language) tends to appear at cadential passages, and can be described as a chromatic inflection, often around the dominant note, involving a diminished third (ex. 2). It first appears at the beginning of the prelude, rounding off the passage later to be associated with the pact of honor which eventually destroys Ernani (ex. 2a). But as one might expect, most of the prominent references occur toward the end of the opera, as the pact gradually takes hold of the action. Example 2c is the music of the pact itself (“*Se uno squillo intenderà, tosto Ernani morirà*”) with the interval presented exclusively in the orchestra; after the final appearance of Silva, whose entrance is marked by a bass delineation of the motive (ex. 2d), the score is saturated with references. I have chosen only the three most prominent (exx. 2e-g).

But this type of recurring feature, which is used far more prominently and consistently in

(Ricordi vocal score, p. 1)

Example 1

Ernani than in any other previous Verdi opera, was perhaps not an entirely satisfactory innovation. Both the ideas fall uncomfortably between two stools. On the one hand they are too basic a part of the common language to function reliably as dramatic reminiscence motives (which must, by definition, be exceptional in some sense), while on the other they are not used with sufficient frequency or developmental variation to give deeper coherence to the opera. Verdi may well have realized this problem, because his next opera, *I due Foscari*, experiments with another, far more rigorous system of recurring motives, allotting to each of the major characters his or her own melody, to be presented as a *carte de visite* when they enter the stage. But just as the motives in *Ernani* remain too amorphous to carry full dramatic weight, those of *I due Foscari* are on the contrary too monolithic. Their unvaried repetition actually hinders the progression of events. It was a structural problem which, at least at this stage of Verdi's career, remained unsolved.

However, if the conventional, restricted, aria-based format of *Ernani* did not stimulate solutions to the problem of establishing overall unity

¹⁰In all musical examples, page numbers refer to the current Ricordi vocal score of *Ernani*, plate no. 42308.

a.

b. **ELVIRA AND ERNANI**

 La ven - det - ta

c.
 [Se uno squillo intenderà, tosto Ernani morirà] (p. 206)

d.

e. **ERNANI**

 Can-giar - mi col ci - pres - so!! (p. 281)

f. **ERNANI**

 Com - piasi il mio destin fa - ta - le. (p. 295)

g. **ELVIRA AND ERNANI**

 mor - te fu l'al - tar! (p. 297)

Example 2

or motivic connections, it did encourage Verdi toward the clarification of his musico-dramatic language on a smaller scale. In the best individual pieces of the opera we find a more acute awareness of the precise dynamics of melodic contour than in previous works. It is almost as though the reduction in scope, the “chamber music” proportions of the plot, allowed the composer to concentrate more completely on the basic materials of his art, on the vocal line as an expression of character and dramatic impetus.

Nowhere is this attempt to expand the expressive potential of set structures better illustrated than in Elvira’s famous Act I *scena* “*Surta è la notte*.”¹¹ We might begin discussion by examining the (rather conventional) text:

¹¹Vocal score, pp. 32–36, which the reader may like to consult during the following discussion.

Surta è la notte e Silva non ritorna!
 Non tornasse ei più!... Questo odiato veglio
 Che quale immondo spettro ognor m’insegue
 Col favellar d’amore,
 Più sempre Ernani mi configge in core.



Ernani! Ernani involami
 All’abborrito amplesso,
 Fuggiamo se teco vivere
 Mi sia d’amor concesso.
 Per antri e landi inospite
 Ti seguirà il mio piè,
 Un Eden di delizia
 Saran quegli antri a me.¹²

The recitative (lines 1–5), as usual set in a free mixture of eleven- and seven-syllable lines, neatly and economically fulfills a dual function. It sets the scene (or rather confirms the impression already given by the string introduction—low, restrained strings are typically “nocturnal” in nineteenth-century Italian opera: “*Surta è la notte . . .*”), and then introduces us to the two dominant emotions which animate Elvira: her hatred of Silva (“*Questo odiato veglio . . .*”) and her love of Ernani (“*Più sempre Ernani mi configge in core*”). Simultaneously, of course, the text furnishes musical opportunities for the exposition of a variety of vocal effects. The neutral, space-defining opening line gives way first to dramatic declamation—underpinned by the almost obligatory string tremolando—and then to lyrical, rather ornamental lines.

The cantabile is cast in the usual double quatrain, with a vivid image to propel the third quarter, “*Per antri e lande inospite*.” The fact that Piave’s final line, “*Saran quegli antri a me*,” is rather lame, and carries an uncomfortable repetition of “*antri*” from line 5, evidently did not concern Verdi: perhaps the generous open vowels of “*saran*” were compensation enough. The musical setting of the cantabile expands somewhat the verse structure. As we can see, the aria is divided into two units which, although exactly

¹²“Night has fallen, and Silva not returned! / Would that he never came again!... This hateful old man / Who like some foul spectre always follows me / With words of love, / Evermore fixes Ernani in my heart. // Ernani! Ernani, speed me away / From this horrible embrace, / Let us fly, if love allows me / To live with you. / Through desolate caves and barren lands / I will follow you; / Those caves will be, to me, / An Eden of delights.”

balanced in length, distribute the lines unevenly:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	7 8 7 7 8
a ¹ a ² b ¹ b ²	a ³ c a ³ (cadenza)
	
17 measures	16 measures + fermata

The first unit consists of an exposition of the complete text, with two melodic phrases (a and b) both repeated in varied form; the second concentrates on the final two lines of text, building a climax (a³) which is repeated after a short, "athematic" contrasting section—in this case a held note in the voice with a Bellinian, "atmospheric" woodwind countersubject. Within the exposition section, the most important structural point occurs at the transition between a² and b¹, where the second quatrain begins with the words, already mentioned, "*Per antri e lande inospite*": *as well as the change of melodic contour, we have a harmonic jolt as the D-minor tonic of a² moves without preparation onto the dominant seventh of B \flat major.*¹³ The a sections are remarkable in their restriction of melodic contour, with a particular insistence on the note D, which never relaxes to the tonic B \flat , and indeed is eventually tonicized by the mediant modulation in a². (We might tentatively describe this hovering on the mediant as a musical equivalent of the image of flight presented in the first line of the aria text, "*Ernani! Ernani involami*," although this kind of madrigalism was not typical of Verdi's expressive treatment of words.)

At this stage a problem arises. The foregoing description has, with its concentration on the relationship between text and music, inevitably stressed the sectional aspects of the scene: recitative/aria, quatrain 1/quatrain 2, etc. In this sense, although it can and does *identify* the vocal climax at a³, it has not explained precisely how

¹³For a fuller consideration of the "internal dynamics" of nineteenth-century Italian opera arias, see Luigi Dallapiccola's well-known article "Parole e musica nel melodramma," in *Appunti, incontri, meditazioni* (Milan, 1970), pp. 5–28. English translation in *A Verdi Companion*, ed. William Weaver and Martin Chusid (New York, 1979), pp. 193–215.

Verdi so successfully impels his music forward to this particular moment, how the climax is felt to encapsulate all previous melodic activity. For an explanation of these things, we need to consider the scene so far as an integrated unit, with the orchestral introduction, recitative, and aria all playing their part in a gradual process of thematic development. We need, in short, to recognize the presence of layers of activity which cut across the otherwise sharply differentiated formal structures.

In several ways, for example, the opening orchestral prelude functions as more than merely a scenic introduction. Its underlying harmonic motion—a prolonged tonic pedal followed by a comparatively perfunctory II–V–I cadence—anticipates in every detail the initial progression of Elvira's cantabile, while the frequently reiterated melodic line spanning a major sixth (ex. 3a) adumbrates the cantabile's initial vocal phrase (ex. 1c). These are to some extent surface similarities, of isolated effect. On the other hand, the small motive which is traced in example 3 has a far more pervasive influence. The figure is best defined as a four-note turn, usually but not invariably moving around the dominant. As the layout of example 3 suggests, it can be split into three families. First, on the left-hand side, it is presented frankly as an ornament, on all but one occasion carried by the vocal line, and clearly introducing the florid aspect of Elvira's musical personality. The middle column sees it expand into a more purposeful melodic line, especially in example 3f, where there is a chromatic shift in the upper auxiliary note. In the third, right-hand column, it appears in inversion.

The essential division into ornament and melodic progression may at first seem to weaken the effect of the motive as a binding element, but in fact its dual presentation is of crucial importance. Its final emphatic statement (ex. 3m), which comes at the climax of the cantabile, in the section earlier identified as a³, gains full effect precisely by being an accumulation of the left-hand and central columns. The dictates of vocal characterization and motivic integration are thus perfectly matched. Elvira's voice type, the definition of which is one conditioning function of this aria, as all her future appearances will set her against other characters in duets and ensembles, and the nature of the aria, which is to

a. ⁴

b. ⁶

c. ¹⁵

d. ²²
[d'a-] mo - - - re

e. ²⁶
[con-] fig - - ge in co - re

f. ²⁸

g. ³¹
Er-na - ni

h. ³³
[all'ab-] bor-ri - to

i. ³⁵
se te - cò

j. ⁴⁰
[i-] no - spi-te

k. ⁴¹
se - gui- ra

l. ⁴⁴
[de-] li - zia

m. ⁴⁷
un E - den di de- li - zia sa - - ran — que - gli an-tri a me,

n. ^{CABALETTA, m. 10}
Tut-to — sprez [-zo]

Example 3

some extent controlled or influenced by the imagery of the poetry, both demand that this final section should be ornamental, or at least extremely florid, while Verdi's developing sense of musical cohesion, on the other hand, required a climax which was motivically coherent, which derived logically from preceding material. Hence the twofold preparation as ornament and melodic line, both elements of which seem to accumulate naturally in the angular sequential ascent and descent of example 3m.

We might add a note about the right-hand column of example 3, where the figure is inverted. It is, of course, significant that this important alteration is confined to one section of the aria (section b); as we have mentioned earlier, that section is the traditional point of greatest differentiation in the structure. The inversion has no further role in the cantabile but—a typical example of the barriers between set pieces being broken down—is transposed down an octave to form part of the main theme of the ensuing cabaletta.¹⁴

The second recurring motive I have isolated is charted in example 4 (see page 149). It is in fact an especially common cliché of Verdi's musical language: the flattened sixth of the scale falling to the dominant. As a "control," example 4a-d indicates the idea's occasional use in the preceding scene of Act I simply as an undefined cliché or, as the semiologist would say, an unattached signifier. This is important, since it is the frequency and variety with which it is employed during Elvira's recitative and cantabile (ex. 4e-l) which forces the idea onto our attention and acquires for it the status of a "sign."¹⁵ As with

the fragment isolated in example 3, it is the constant repetition over a short time-span, rather than any marked individuality, which ensures the motive's significance. Of special interest is the linking of our two motives (ex. 4h) in the orchestral interlude which immediately precedes the opening of the cantabile proper, and its use in the bass (ex. 4i) to effect the modulation to D minor in a² (already discussed in connection with pitch levels, as a tonicization of the sustained D of the opening phrase). It is also worth mentioning that vocal statement of the flattened sixth, though it occurs once in the recitative (ex. 4g), is reserved entirely (discounting the cadenza) for the b section of the cantabile (exx. 4j and k), again emphasizing this passage as an area of contrast.

The remaining fragments in example 4 (m-v) are taken from subsequent parts of Act I, scene ii, and chart the later use of the flattened sixth at its most characteristic pitch level, G \flat -F. While in Elvira's cavatina the G \flat always remains a chromatic inflection, subsumed under the overall B \flat major tonality, in the Scena e Duetto between Elvira and Carlo which follows, its implications of B \flat minor are fully realized. The juxtaposition of mode becomes a fundamental point of contrast between the two characters: Elvira obstinately clings to "her" G \flat -F, and hence to the minor mode, while Carlo remains in B \flat major. The final reference (ex. 4v) is particularly striking. The implications of the G \flat are taken one stage further at Elvira's words "*Aspirar non deggio al trono*," etc., where it is briefly tonicized (as a 6/4 chord in G \flat major), only relaxing onto the F after three measures. The moment is made doubly significant by its pivotal position. If we understand the two-phrase cadenza as an idealized two-measure period, the emphatic G \flat of example 4v lies at the exact mid-point of the closing, Andantino section of the duet. Twenty-four measures precede it, twenty-four measures follow it.

If we accept the presence of this careful motivic working—whether it was conscious or not on Verdi's part—we should not necessarily then search for a dramatic corollary, far less a precise "meaning" in terms of the plot. Verdi may well, as in the Scena e Duetto just discussed, utilize

¹⁴For examples of this motivic transference later in Verdi's career, see the final section of my article "The Dramatic Structure of *Il trovatore*," part of a symposium on that opera to be published in *Music Analysis* this year (other contributions from Pierluigi Petrobelli and William Drabkin).

¹⁵Although, when defining this word in an operatic context, I would differ slightly from Noske (see fn. 4). A "sign" does not necessarily carry a semantic label, a precise (or even imprecise) "meaning" in terms of the libretto. This is not to say that it does not function dramatically, but how far do the events of the plot affect the essential drama of an opera like *Ernani*? In certain cases, the analyst must retain the right to disregard the plot mechanism. As Roland Barthes says, "We must accept one last freedom: that of reading the text as if it had already been read." Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York, 1974), p. 15.

a. CORO

 quan-d'e - - - sce la not - te nell'orri - de grot [-te]
 (p. 7)

b. CORO

 nel vi-no cer - chia-mo al-men un pia - cer (p. 10)

c. ERNANI

 d'af-fan - - no mo - ri - rò (p. 22)

d. ERNANI

 Pur-chè sul tuo bel vi [-so] (p. 26)

Scena e Cavatina (pp. 32–45)

e. 

f. 

g. 
 [con-] fig - ge in co - re.

h. 

i. 

j. 
 il mio piè, il mio piè

k. 
 [sa-] ran que - gli an-tri a

l. 
 [E-] - den que-gli an-tri a me

m. CABALETTA, m. 30

 -giar ah! vo - la, o tem [-po]

Scena e Duetto (pp. 46–56)

n. 
 [ELVIRA: Sire, fia ver?]

o. 
 45 CARLO: Vie-ni me-co . . . ELVIRA: Tol-ga Id - di - o!

p. 
 60 ELVIRA: O - gni cor ser - ba

q. 
 64 CARLO: Quel-lo a - scol-ta del mio cor

r. 

s. 
 83 CARLO: del tuo a-man - te

t. 

u. 

v. 
 ELVIRA: A-spi - rar — non deg - gio al tro - no

Example 4

previous points of motivic saturation to establish a basic sense of dialectic tension, but the resulting semantic associations are only transitory. While the recurring motives mentioned earlier—the rising sixth and the diminished third—certainly carry such significance, their treatment was entirely different. They, as we found, stand or fall by means of their definition, their ability to exist within a number of different contexts and still be recognizable. The motivic processes involved in this short scene for Elvira,

on the other hand, act in the opposite direction: short-term saturation makes them wholly at one with the musical context, and so destroys any precise semantic signification. Their effect is far more local and their dramatic function is to give unity and force to a static presentation of character. And of course it is precisely in this area, in the increasing precision with which Verdi forges the individual units of his dramatic language, that *Ernani* marks such a significant advance in the composer's career.



IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ARTICLES RICHARD TARUSKIN: How the Acorn Took Root: A Tale of Russia

JAY REISE: Late Skriabin: Some Principles Behind the Style

JAY RODGERS: Four Preludes Ascribed to Yulian Skriabin

SIMON KARLINSKY: Igor Stravinsky and Russian Pre-literate Theater

BENITO V. RIVERA: Rhythmic Organization in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony

PAUL HARKSHAW: The Date of Bruckner's "Nullified" Symphony in D Minor

PHILIP FRIEDHEIM: Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream

REVIEWS, PERFORMERS & INSTRUMENTS *by* John W. Clark, Alain Frogley, Michael C. Tusa
