MERCADANTE'S EXPERIMENT IN FORM: *THE CABALETTAS OF* ELENA DA FELTRE

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The cabaletta has long been regarded as one of the most notorious elements of Italian opera in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most often defined as "the concluding section, generally in a fairly rapid tempo and with mounting excitement, of an extended aria or duet, sometimes preceded by recitative," (1) the form has been severely criticised by many writers, including Joseph Kerman in the following description:

> Verdi's growing understanding may be traced in his changing attitude towards the cabaletta, one of the worst conventions of early nineteenth century opera. The cabaletta was a fast,vehement aria or duet of extremely crude form and sentiment; it always comes after a slower, quieter piece for the same singer or singers, and served to provide a rousing curtain. The form was strophic, and of the simplest pattern (aaba or abb); the accompaniment consisted of a mechanically repeated polonaise or fast march rhythm.Between the slower aria and its cabaletta, a passage of parlante served to present some sort of excuse for the singer to change his mind. The whole complex, indeed, is a simplification and stereeotyping of the older composite aria of Mozart and Beethoven. Instead of the rather subtle interrelation of one sentiment and the next, and a sense of flux between them, there was now a formalised break into two crude, self-contained pieces. Though Rossini still employed composite arias for the most part, Donizetti arranged for half a dozen cabalettas in every opera. (2)

Philip Gossett has given a more objective view of the cabaletta by defining it as "the lyrical conclusion of a multi-partite composition ... found in arias, duets, ensembles, even finales. In an aria, it consists of a lyrical period, often concluding with exuberant coloratura, a middle section, which may also involve the chorus, and a repetition of the opening period, during which the singer could take the flattering option of ornamenting the melody. Cadential material should conclude the piece." (3)

Julian Budden has elaborated upon this basic outline:

> The cabaletta also has a two-quatrain structure; normally a simple 16- or 32-bar unit, which loosens up towards the final cadence so as to provide the singer with opportunities for display ... Ever since Rossini's time it had been customery to repeat the cabaletta with a ritornello intervening. One cannot talk of two verses here, since the words are always repeated with the tune. The object was usually to give the singer an opportunity of embellishing the melody the second time round without new words to distract the listener's attention (4)

While there are many examples of cabalettas in the archetypical form set forth by Gossett, (5) a closer examination of operas written during the decades following Rossini's departure from the Italian operatic scene reveals that the form, although at times abused, was not always written according to the stylized formula we once envisaged. By the 1830's and 40's it was often modified to fit the dramatic situation, to accomodate the structure of the libretto, or merely to provide a variety of forms within the opera. These modifications of the principle coexisted with cabalettas composed in the traditional manner. Not only did the cabaletta undergo changes at the hands of composers such as Donizetti, Bellini and Verdi, but it was also altered by many of their now lesser-known contemporaries who were struggling to establish a unique, individual style while satisfying a critical and demanding public. Chief among these musicians was Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870), a Neapolitan-trained composer who concentrated primarily (though not exclusively) on writing for the operatic stage. Among his 58 operas are eight that he considered to be among his best attempts and which reflect his desire to break free from the traditions so firmly established in Italian opera of the time. (6) These works have yet to be analysed to determine the success of his endeavors, but it becomes clear upon closer examination that he made a consistent effort to establish a new style of composition.

This article will examine his attempts to change one of the forms, the cabaletta, in the opera about which he has written his manifesto of reform: *Elena da Feltre*.

* * *

On the 1st January 1839 Mercadante wrote to Francesco Florimo, then librarian at the Naples Conservatory, concerning his newest opera:

> *I have continued the revolution I began with Il giuramento, forms varied, trivial cabalettas banished, crescendos out, vocal lines simplified, fewer repeats, more originality in the cadences, emphasis on the drama, orchestra rich but not so as to swamp the voices, no long solos in the ensembles - which force the other parts to stand coldly by to the detriment of the action, not much bass drum, and a lot less brass band.* (7)

The opera, which premiered at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples on 1st January 1839, was based on a libretto by Salvadore Cammarano and was Mercadante's first association with the author of the texts of *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Il trovatore*. Set in Feltre in the mid-thirteenth century, it is a tale of a daughter's love for her father, the loss of the man she wishes to marry, and her betrayal by her father's enemies. Boemondo, a lieutenant of Eccelino III, intends Guido to marry his daughter Imberga. Guido confides in his friend, Ubaldo, that in fact he loves and is going to wed Elena. Ubaldo is distressed because he laso loves Elena, albeit secretly, and strikes a bargain with Boemondo to kidnap her, meanwhile persuading Guido to marry Imberga. Sigifredo, Elena's father and a fugitive from Boemondo's political injustice, foils the attempted abduction and is himself taken prisoner. Elena is informed by Ubaldo that to save her father's life she must deny her love for Guido and convince him to marry Imberga; she is to accomplish this by telling him that she intends to wed Ubaldo. After an impassioned confrontation, Elena confesses to Guido that she still loves him; it is only to save her father that she has put him through this experience. In turn Guido vows to go through with the marriage to Imberga, killing himself immediately after the ceremony. As she hears the nuptial music begin, Elena discovers that Boemondo has murdered her father in spite of their agreement. Assuming that Guido will soon die by his own hand, she declares her misery and dies in the arms of Ubaldo.

Reviews of the premiere were generally negative, despite

Florimo's assertions to the contrary. (8) The critic of *Il Lucifero* was dissatisfied with the cruelty of the plot:

> How can it be tolerated that a victim so devoted in filial love could not at least have comfort in her wretchedness; who could not see a crushed and penitent Guido at her side and who could not hear one word that would have made death less terrible; who could draw her last breath in the arms of Ubaldo, a lover so deservedly loathed? Is this not the triumph of pride and injustice rather than filial love? (9)

The same critic continues: "Mercadante was vanquished by Mercadante ... we are sure that returning to hear *Elena* again, we would find only a lesson in *counterpoint*, but not everthing that serves in the conservatory delights in the theater." (10)

Elena da Feltre received only one performance that season, due in part to its lukewarm reception, but primarily because of the illness of one of the principal singers, as reported in *L'Omnibus* on the 19th January 1839:

> *Elena da Feltre* of Maestro Mercadante, in which we had placed so much hope, after the equivocal success of its opening night, could not be performed again. Barroilhet, the wonderful artist who alone for three years has sustained all the challenges the Teatro S. Carlo could offer a first class bass, is gravely ill, to his and the public's sorrow, and therefore, not only could *Elena* not be performed again, but *Il giuramento*, which was our true delight, could not be given complete. (11)

The opera did, however, enjoy a more notable success in the following years with revivals in Bologna (Autumn 1839), Parma (Carnival 1841) and Milan (Autumn 1843).

Elena da Feltre is in three acts and is written for six soloists and chorus. The three major characters are Elena, Ubaldo and Guido, while the lesser characters are Boemondo, Imberga and Sigifredo. The solo numbers and duets are reserved for the first three, while the last three parts are restricted, except for brief passages of recitative, to the ensembles at the ends of Acts I and II. The opera is laid out in the following manner:

Act I: *Sinfonia*
Chorus of introduction
Duet for tenor and bass (Guido and Ubaldo)
Romanza for soprano (Elena)
Finale (comprising a terzettino and stretta)

Act II: *Duet for soprano and tenor (Elena and Ubaldo)*
Aria for bass (Guido)
Finale (comprising a chorus, quintetto and stretta)

Act III: *Preghiera for soprano (Elena)*
Duet for soprano and bass (Elena and Guido)
Aria for tenor (Ubaldo)
Finale (comprising a chorus, preghiera for Elena, finale death scene)

A curiosity in the apportioning of its vocal/dramatic responsibilities is that while there are fully-fledged arias for the tenor and bass leads, the soprano lead has no full aria with cabaletta and is limited, instead, to a romanza and two *preghiere*. Traditionally, in *primo Ottocento* opera, the romanza and preghiera comprise only the opening section of the aria and exclude the cabaletta. Otherwise, the scheme of the opera has been worked out so that each of the two main characters participate in two duets and in each of the ensembles. Despite the stiffness of the writing found in many parts of this opera, there are a few pieces which are noteworthy for their dramatic impact and for the depth of emotion portrayed. Foremost among these is the finale of the second act: the point at which Elena succumbs to Boemondo's blackmail and states her intention to marry Ubaldo. The dramatic pairing of the affected parties and the manner in which their elation (in the case of Ubaldo, Boemondo and Imberga) and despair (Elena and Guido) are portrayed makes this one of the highpoints in any of Mercadante's operas.

Within *Elena da Feltre* are five pieces which end with a repetitive scheme that could be classified as a cabaletta or its substitute. Those pieces are:

1 Act I: *Finale, stretta*
2 Act II: *Duet for soprano and tenor, "Il mio sangue, i giorni miei"*

3 Act II: *Aria for bass, "Entro al mio sangue immergere"*
4 Act II: *Finale, stretta*
5 Act III:*Aria for tenor, "Miei prodi, sorgete all'armi"*

Of these, the first two follow the form of the cabaletta but omit the ritornello. The second is perhaps the weakest example, being constructed as an antecedent/consequent repeat and yet, though the melody is not repeated in full, the text is an follows the normal cabaletta structure. The final two pieces are examples of full-blown cabaletta forms with various changes, primarily internal ones, that allow Mercadante to assert his individuality rather than simply churning out more pieces that fit the formula.

As previously defined - the cabaletta as a structured melody which is connected to its repetition by a section contrasting in texture and melodic content - fits quite well the two examples of a traditional cabaletta which Mercadante incorporated into this opera; the stretta of the finale in Act II and that of the tenor aria in Act III. Both of these examples have all four components necessary for definition as a cabaletta - the first statement of the cabaletta theme; a transition section or ritornello; a repetition of the cabaletta theme: and a cadential section. Both has reasonably exact repetitions of the melody and, in the solo cabaletta, of the text as well. Exceptions consist of minor variations in the ornaments used. Mercadante also contrasts the character of the cadential section by giving it rhythms and note values normally associated with those sections: long note values and, for him, a conspicuous absence of dotted rhythms. The cabalettas are generally static tonally; with one exception to be discussed later they remain in the same key throughout. The tonalities chosen for the cabalettas are not necessarily those used for the first sections of these pieces, nor are they always in a key that is closely related to the initial one. This, again, is typical of Italian opera of the time. Despite the outward appearance of the two "traditional" cabalettas Mercadante still found ways, subtle thought they might be, to alter them and to make the convention completely his own. The changes include such details as the number of quatrains included in the text, the length of the melodic phrases written to accompany these quatrains, and the way in which the repetitions are presented.

The stretta of the second act finale is the climax of the scene in which Elena has renounced Guido and has stated her intention to marry Ubaldo; the cabaletta is the culmination in which each character expresses his or her reaction to the announcement, a reasonable outlet for the emotions that have been building during the scene. The form of the stretta may be outlined in the following manner:

First statement
mm. 129-175 *Elena/Imberga/Ubaldo/Boemondo/Guido*

Ritornello
mm. 176-215 *the chorus as primary component*

Second statement
mm. 216-262 *Elena/Imberga/Ubaldo/Boemondo/Guido*

Cadential Material
mm. 263-316 *equal voice parts with the chorus*

The repeat at mm. 216ü262 is identical: the melody, voice pairings, rhythms and accompaniments are the same. The ritornello and cadential sections are contrasted to the cabaletta theme most obviously by the addition of the chorus, which in both instances becomes the dominant factor while the main characters fulfil the roles of commentators; this is a typical use of the chorus within the cabaletta. A specific rhythmic pattern is employed,though not the one normally associated with the stretta [| ♩.♫ |]. It is, instead, a variant which is more readily associated with Mercadante and his love for dotted rhythms, a hallmark of his musical style [|♩.♬ | ♩.♬|].

To increase the dramatic tension inherent in the libretto, Mercadante pairs the characters according to the role each has played in the plot. Elena and Ubaldo are paired, as the newest and most contraversial couple,while Imberga and Boemondo are paired as the protagonists of the scene. Guido is the onlt one who stands alone, which is fitting since he is the victim of the actions of the two other couples. Elena and Ubaldo have parallel melodies (with movement at the sixth) with different texts reflecting the opposition of their motives, while Imberga and Boemondo have the same text and complementing melodies to emphasise their unity of purpose: Imberga's marriage to Guido.

According to the definition by Kerman cited above, the typical verse form of a cabaletta text is either aaba or abb. As can be seen in the example below, there is a mixture of one- and two-quatrain structures while the rhyme scheme is

aabc rather than the more traditional ones just mentioned. The aabc scheme is used in the majority of the cabalettas in *Elena da Feltre* with only two examples departing from it.

Example 1: *Elena da Feltre*, ActII, Finale, stretta. Text.(*)

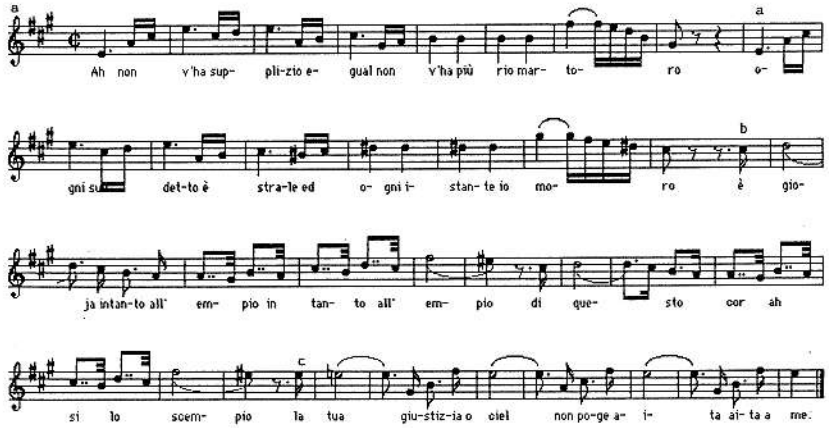
Guido	*Del talamo esecrato*	*a*
	Vegli il rimorso allato ...	*a*
	Se può, vi renda il cielo	*b*
	Miseri più di me.	*c*
Elena	*(Non v'ha supplizio equale!..*	*a*
	Non v'ha più rio martoro!..	
	Ogni suo detto è strale!	*a*
	Ed ogn'istante io moro!	
	È gioia intanto all'empio	*b*
	Di questo cor lo scempio!..	
	La tua giustizia, o cielo,	*c*
	Non porge aita a me?)	
Ubaldo	*D'Elena in sen m'ardea*	*a*
	Il più cocente amore ...	
	Squarciarmelo potea,	*a*
	Ma non cangiarmi il core.	
	Invan tua rabbia cieca	*b*
	Al mio legame impreca ...	
	Sarà la terra un cielo,	*c*
	D'accanto a lei, per me'	
Boemondo/Imberga		
	(Strazio crudel t'aspetta,	*a*
	E tanta e tal vendetta,	*a*
	Che della morte il gelo	*b*
	Men crudo fia per te!)	*c*
Coro	*Non mai si basso amore*	*a*
	Dovea macchiarti il core ...	*a*
	Lo covra eterno velo;	*b*
	Se puoi, lo nega a te.	*c*
	(Al si più miseri di me.)	*(c)*

The two-quatrain structure normally associated with the cabaletta has been used rather freely by Mercadante. He retains this form for the main characters, Elena and Ubaldo, while restricting the other characters and the chorus to the second of the two quatrains, having already used the first part as the text for the lyrical portion of the stretta.



Instead of using the 16- or 32-bar melodic unit for the cabaletta theme (which is stated first by Elena and then by Ubaldo), Mercadante has used a 35-bar melody which may be broken down into an 8+8 + 6+6 + 7 structure. Each of the paired phrases is constructed as an antecedent/consequent while the final seven measures stand alone. Each of the eight-measure units is assigned two lines of text, each six-measure phrase is given to a single line, and the final seven-measure phrase is again assigned two lines of text. The aabc structure of the rhyme scheme is mirrored in the melodic structure, as can be seen in the following example:

Example 2: *Elena da Feltre*, ActII, Finale, stretta. Cabaletta theme.



In the second of the two regular cabalettas, the final section of the tenor aria *"Miei prodi, sorgete all'armi"* in Act III, Mercadante uses the same basic techniques described above to alter the seemingly conventional form. Beginning at m.205, the cabaletta comprises a statement of the theme, a ritornello, the repetition of the melody, and a cadential section.

Example 3: *Elena da Feltre*, ActIII, *"Miei prodi, sorgete all'armi"*

First statement
mm. 205-225 *Ubaldo*

Ritornello
mm. 225-249 *Alternating Ubaldo and the chorus*

Repetition
mm. 250-269 *Ubaldo*

Cadential Material
mm. 269-294 *Alternating Ubaldo and the chorus*

The repetition is of both the cabaletta melody and the text; with minor exceptions which are primarily ornamental in nature, it is a faithful restatement of the original. The first ten measures of the ritornello and cadential sections are the same; after that they each have their own cadential material. The ritornello maintains the rhythmic character of the cabaletta theme, with its leaps and dotted rythms, while the corresponsing portion of the cadential section is characterised by its longer note values and repeated movement between the tonic and the dominant. The text of these two sections differs from that set to the cabaletta theme rather than being a fragmentation of previously stated material.
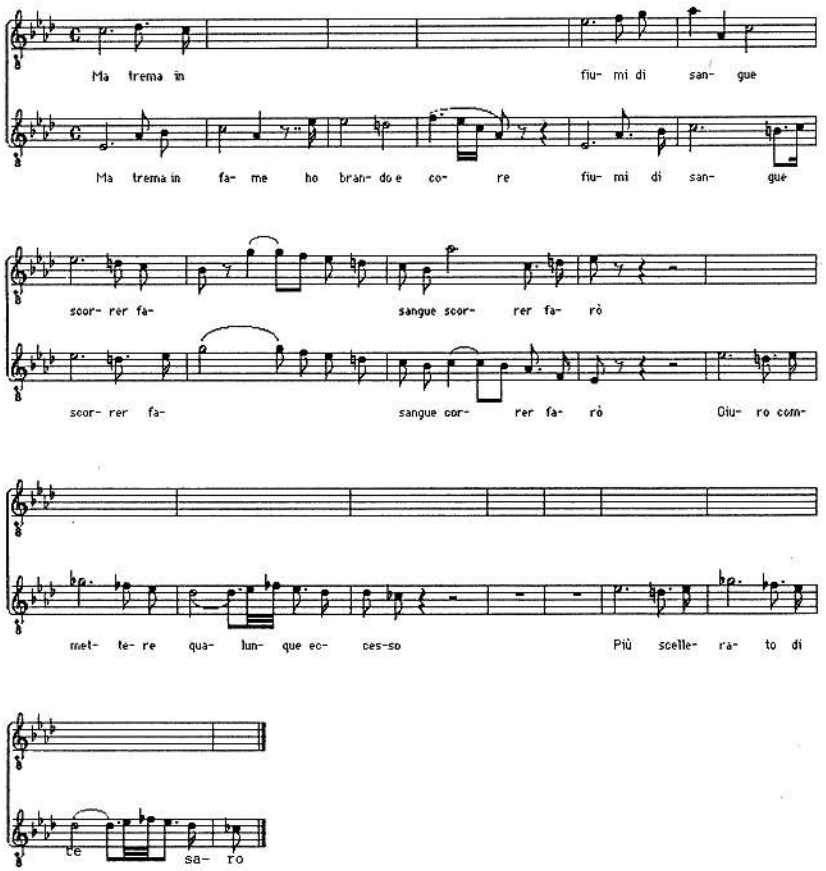
While this cabaletta is typical in its outward appearance, subtle changes have been introduced which reflect both Mercadante's and Cammarano's attempts to individualise this convention. Perhaps the most obvious deviation is the use of the chorus before the end of the cabaletta melody. Instead of confining the chorus to the ritornello and the cadential sections, which, according to Budden, is the traditional practice, Mercadante places the first of the choral phrases after the pentultimate phrase of the theme. This provides an even smoother transition between the two sections (from the first statement to the ritornello and from the repetition to the cadential section) and gives more emphasis to the complete break between the ritornello and the repetition of the cabaletta theme.

The cabaletta theme, excluding the measure of introduction and the 2- measure choral interruption, is 18 measures long, each of the lines of text being set to a musical phrase that is totally unrelated to the other three. There is an alternate

version supplied, though whether by Mercadante or by an over-zealous editor of the piano/vocal score cannot be determined without looking at the manuscript. There is no indication of the circumstances under which this version should be substituted.

Example 4: *Elena da Feltre*, ActIII, aria, *"Miei prodi, sorgete all'armi"*

Cabaletta theme.



Another way in which this cabaletta differs is in Cammarano's use of a one-quatrain structure rather than the traditional two. The text, seen in Example 5, is in a different rhyme scheme than we will see in any of the other examples from this opera: abcb.

Example 5: *Elena da Feltre*, ActIII, aria, *"Miei prodi, sorgete all'armi"*

Text.

Ubaldo *Ma trema, infame, ho brando e core ...*
Fiumi di sangue scorrer farò ...
Giuro commettere e qualunque eccesso,
Più scellerato di te sarò.

In the actual setting of the text, Mercadante repeats the second line, expanding the whole to a five-line text.

This cabaletta is typical of others from this period in that it is tonally static. It is in A-flat major throughout and bears little relationship to the B-flat major of the first section. It does, however, serve as the dominant of the *tempo di mezzo* which is in D-flat major. Judging from the examples in this opera, Mercadante has no desire to remain in the original key and yet feels no compunction to move to a closely related tonality. It appears that contrasting tonalities were used as a delineating tool: contrasting sections should be in contrasting keys, even though there is no evidence that the selection of the new key was based on any pre-determined plan.

In two additional examples from this opera Mercadante chooses to use a modified version of the cabaletta principle. In each of these pieces, the stretta of the Act I finale and the second act duet *"Il mio sangue, i giorni miei,"* he exercises the option of omitting the ritornello section. In all other aspects - the use of a repeated theme, the presence of a cadential section and the use of a two-quatrain structure - these pieces qualify as cabalettas. There is the change of key at the beginning of the section, usually without regard as to what tonality might be structurally related, and the cabalettas remain in the same key throughout. They are quite normal in their use of unrelated and yet regular melodic lines as well as the contrasted cadential section. It is as if, by cutting the ritornello section out of each of these pieces, Mercadante feels he has introduced enough of a change and has no need for the more subtle ideas found in the two regular cabalettas.

The stretta of the first act finale matches in part the description given by Budden concerning the final section of a *primo Ottocento* duet. He states that it is a "moderato or allegro in which once more the voices will sing the same melodic period successively; then there will be a ritornello and the melody will occur yet again sung by both voices in unison, in dialogue, or linked together in whatever way the combination will allow." (12) The stretta has the same melody sung in turn by Elena and Ubaldo, with the lesser characters and the chorus singing a commentary underneath. The two statements of the melody are sung to two different texts, as is standard in expressing the opposing reactions that are theirs throughout the opera. Instead of including a ritornello and a statement in which the two characters sing the melody together, the initial statement of the theme is followed immediately by its repetition which is, in turn, followed by a cadential section. Another statement of the cabaletta theme, despite whatever combination of voices he decided to use, would be redundant, the dialogue having already taken place in the two inital statements.

Poetically this is the most regular example of a cabaletta from this opera. The texts for Elena and Ubaldo are each two-quatrain structures with the now familiar rhyme scheme of aabc. The chorus,as noted earlier,is confined to interjected comments.

Example 6: *Elena da Feltre*, ActI, finale, stretta.

Text.
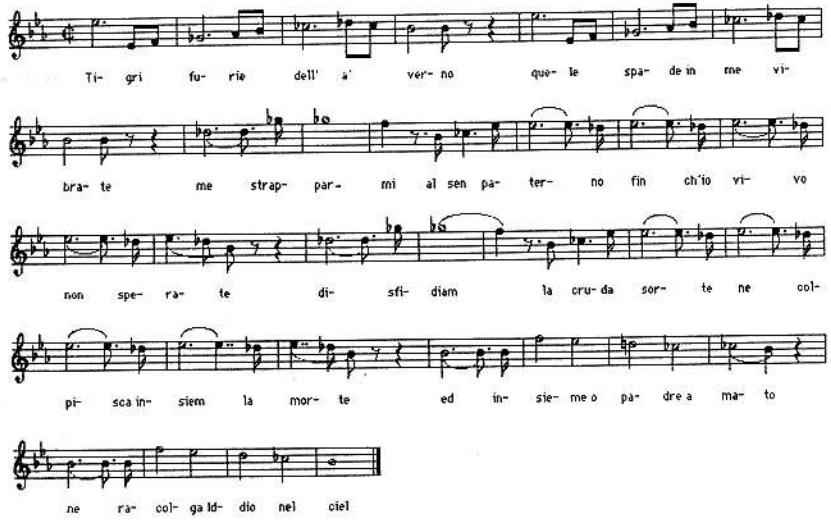
Elena
Tigri...furie dell'averno,
Quelle spade in me vibrate,
Ma strepparmi al sen paterno,
Fin ch'io vivo, non sperate -
Disfidiam la cruda sorte,
Ne colpisca insiem la morte,
Ed insieme, o padre amato,
Ne raccolga iddio nel ciel.

Ubaldo
(Mi sequiro, ai giunger mio,
Lutto e morte in questa mura ...
Quale in empio in ira a Dio
Prota meco la sciagura!
Ho nel cor l'atroce morso
D'un terribile rimorso ...
Ah! l'amico è vendicato,
Maledetto fui dal ciel.)

There is a more regular phrase structure in this example than there was in the two "normal" cabalettas. The theme is 32 measures long and may be divided into four eight-measure phrases. After the completion of the statement, the melody becomes fragmented and serves as the cadential material leading to the repetition. The melodic structure does not, as in other examples seen previously, match the rhyme schmeme, being abbc instead of aabc. The rhythmic character of the first three phrases is marked by Mercadante's favorite dotted rhythms while the fourth phrase, being more cadential in nature, comprises a greater percentage of longer note values which prepare the way for the actual cadential section.

Example 7: *Elena da Feltre*, ActI, finale, stretta.

Cabaletta theme.



As has already been noted, the repetition is of the cabaletta melody alone, each character being assigned its own text. The repetition is almost exact, with only a few instances in which changes are made to accomodate the different text or in which the ornamentation has been altered.

(Overleaf) The cast list and first page of the libretto of Elena da Feltre for its prima at Naples on 1st January 1839.

4 PERSONAGGI

BOEMONDO, Luogotenente di Eccelino III.
Signor Rossi.
IMBERGA, sua figlia,
Signora Gandaglia.
SIGIFREDO, padre di
Signor Gianni.
ELENA, vedova
Signora Ronzi.
GUIDO,
Signor Barroilhet.
UBALDO,
Signor Nourrit.
GUALTIERO,
Signor Benedetti Giuseppe.
Dame e Cavalieri della Corte di Boemondo.
Familiari ed amici di Ubaldo.
Scudieri e guardie di Boemondo.

L'avvenimento ha luogo nella città di Feltre.
L'epoca rimonta al 1250.

5 *ELENA DA FELTRE.*

ATTO PRIMO.

SCENA PRIMA.

Gabinetto negli appartamenti di Ubaldo.

Ubaldo siede presso una tavola, immerso in cupa tristezza: lo accerchiano i suoi nobili amici ed i familiari della potente sua casa.

Coro. Ti scuoti Ubaldo, e svelane
I crudi affanni tuoi:
Dolce ti fia dividere
L'ascoso duol con noi,
Dolce versar le lagrime
In sen dell'amistà.
Muto egli resta, immobile!..
(Piano fra loro.)
Ogni conforto è vano:
Ahi! l'infelice è vittima
Del suo cordoglio arcano!
Ahi! volge a sera il misero
Nell'alba dell'età!

SCENA II.

Guido, e detti.

Gui. Diletto amico!..
Uba. *(Scosso dalla voce di Guido, sorge e lo abbraccia.)*
Qual cagion ti guida
Ne' lari miei?
Gui. Svelarla

As in the stretta of the first act finale, the concluding section of the second act duet *"Il mio sangue, i giorni miei"* between Elena and Ubaldo is a cabaletta in all details except for the missing ritornello. The cabaletta melody is sung first by Ubaldo and is set apart from the preceding *tempo di mezzo* by a change in tempo, key and meter. The repetition is sung by Elena with a counterpoint provided by Ubaldo; within this repeat is parallel movement at the interval of a sixth. The cadantial section is in the form of a dialogue, with less parallel movement than can be seen in other duets from this opera.

There are few changes in the melodic line in the repetition; there is no change, also, in the accompaniment. The major difference is in the addition of Ubaldo's interjections, a technique evidently considered an option in the duets of the *primo Ottocento.* The text is different, as in the previous examples, because of the different feelings and reactions of the characters involved.

Once the cadential section is reached, the character of the music changes. The accompaniment is different, with more continuous support in the lower voices and more doubling of the vocal lines in the strings. Ubaldo's line is the one given most emphasis by the accompaniment, with more importance attached to it as the leading vocal part. As in the repetition there is some paralleling of the voices at the sixth which, again, is not usual in the cadential section of a duet.

The final example of a cabaletta taken from this opera is also the most unusual and the one which ranges furthest from our view of the norm. The aria for bass in the second act, *"Entro al mio sangue immergere,"* is the most uncharacteristic in form and verges on being nothing more than a melodic repeat used to end the aria. The first unusual feature of the cabaletta is its tempo marking: andante sostenuto rather than one of the more usual allegro indications. Instead of an atmosphere of joy, excitement or anger, we have here one of desolation and despair.

Within this cabaletta there are no clearly defined ritornello or cadential sections. Instead, it is a binary structure with a tonal scheme reminiscent of sonata form. The first statement begins in A-flat major and, after the first eight bars, begins its move to the dominant. The second statement, which repeats the text in its entirety but employs only the first eight measures of the melody, also begins in the tonic (as would a recapulation) and moves to the dominant. This time, however, the dominant serves as a preparation for the final tonic.

Although the two-quatrain structure is emplyed by Cammarano, its rhyme scheme is different from any of the other cabalettas in this opera: abac. This unusual scheme is accompanied by four independent phrases which have no musical interrelationships.

* * *

Mercadante did indeed alter the forms of the cabaletta he inherited from his sponsor and friend Rossini. The subtle changes in the melodic structure, the exploitation of the poetic structure, the omission of sections normally associated with it, and the use of binary form instead of the conventional repeat scheme indicate that he was searching for a new way to deal with the final sections of arias and was trying to incorporate the cabaletta more logically into the flow of the drama. The fact that he did indeed cut down on the number of traditional cabalettas and that only one of those was a seemingly "senseless" repeat of both melody and text would substantiate his claim that he wanted to banish those which had no dramatic meaning. In this particular opera Mercadante perhaps did not go as far as he would have liked (and certainly not as far as his manifesto would have us believe), especially since he included a total of five sections which may be defined as cabalettas. He did, however, initiate a move away from the non-functional use of a convention which had begun to be considered trite and which had certainly been over-used, towards the development of a more unified dramatic whole.

Notes

1. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 6th ed., s.v. "cabaletta".

2. Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1956, p146.

3. Philip Gossett, "Verdi,Ghislanzoni and *Aida*: The Uses of Convention", *Critical Inquiry* 1, 1974, p305.

4. Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi, Vol.I: From Oberto to Rigoletto*, Cassell and Company Ltd., London 1973 p16. Yet another description by Frits Noske defines the cabaletta as comprising "two strophes, the second of which is a complete restatement of the first with regard to both text and music. Between the strophes occurs an episode which may consist of a short orchestral transition or a more extended vocal fragment usually involving one or more characters and even the chorus. This scheme is applied to all solo cabalettas as well as to homophonic duets, terzettos and quartets." ("The Notorious Cabaletta" in *The Signifier and the Signified: Studies in the Operas of Mozart and Verdi*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1977.)

5. For a list of exemplary arias see Gossett, "Verdi, Ghislanzoni and *Aida*", p305.

6. The eight operas which I have included in the group of reform operas are *Il giuramento* (1837), *Le due illustri rivali* (1838), *Elena da Feltre* (1838), *Il bravo* (1839), *La vestale* (1840), *La solitaria delle Asturie* (1840), *Il proscritto* (1842), and *Il reggente* (1843).

7. Francesco Florimo, *La Scuola Musicale di Napoli e i suoi conservatorii*, Naples 1880-83, Vol.III, p115.The translation is that of Michael Rose in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Mercadante".

8. Florimo, Vol.III, p115. Florimo wished for a more favorable reception since it was he, and not Mercadante, who supervised the production of this particular opera at the Teatro S. Carlo.

9. Giuseppe de Napoli, *La Triade Melodrammatica Altamurana: Giacomo Tritto (1733-1824), Vincenzo Lavigna (1776-1836), Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870),* Rosio & Fabea, Milan 1931, p156.

10. Philip Gossett, ed., *Saverio Mercadante: Elena da Feltre* Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985, ii-iii.

11. *Ibid.*, iii.

12. Budden, Vol.I, pp17-18.

(*) Note

In this section, as in other sections of this paper, the author has used the revised text of this opera. This revision in no way impinges upon her argument. Elena da Feltre indeed was given but once on its opening run, the Neapolitan censura had objected to one line of the text which Cammarano had neglected to replace as they had demanded. As a result, the librettist was called before them and fined. It is probable that this may have been the real reason for the opera's instant removal and when the opera re-appeared later in the year various changes and cuts had been made to the libretto which also appeared in the published vocal score. The illness of Barroilhet would seem to have been used by the management as an excuse for the opera's removal.

There was one tragic consequence, Adolphe Nourrit, the great French tenor who created the role of Ubaldo was thus fated to sing it once and once only; in a fit of depression he committed suicide on 8th March 1839 and when the opera was revived in the autumn at the San Carlo it was revived without him.

Editor