

## *Technique of Musical Composition*

Original article

UDC 784.21; 781.6

<https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-030-049>



### **The Scene of the Council Hall: the Storyline and the Structure of the Grand Final Scene in the Second Edition of Verdi's Opera *Simon Boccanegra***

**Anastasia A. Logunova**

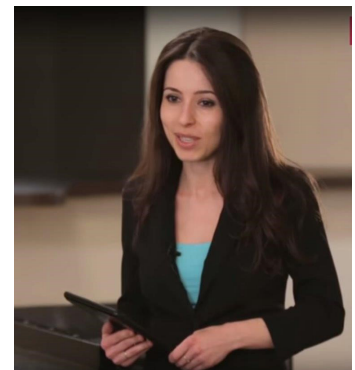
St. Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov

State Conservatory,

St. Petersburg, Russian Federation,

✉ [ventolibero@mail.ru](mailto:ventolibero@mail.ru),

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6476-4630>



**Abstract.** The comparison of different authorial redactions of operas presents one of the through themes of world Verdi studies. The opera *Simon Boccanegra* holds a unique position, since the second version of the opera was created by Verdi almost a quarter of a century following the first. The depth of the changes, first of all, in the final scene of the first act, for which a new interpretation of the content was found is stipulated by such a temporal distance. Also important is the fact that the edition of *Simon Boccanegra* became the first large-scale collaborative work of Verdi and Arrigo Boito. In the two versions of the opera, the interconnection between the storyline and the structural laws is examined in the context of the general evolution of Verdi's pivotal final scenes. In the original version, the composer still followed the conventional traditions, having created the most conservatively structured scene of that kind

Translated by Dr. Anton A. Rovner

of all of his works from the 1850s. In the version of 1881, the final scene was transformed into one of the boldest and most original mass scenes in Verdi's music.

While initially the introduction of the episode missing in the play by Antonio García Gutiérrez (the festivities in honor of the anniversary of Simon Boccanegra having been elected as the doge of Genoa) was stipulated by the tradition of the mass grand final scene, the typical structure of which was in many ways "prompted" the scenario, in the second redaction, already the storyline and the verbal text of the scene of the Council session predetermined its musical-dramaturgical structure. However, even in this innovative final scene, Verdi does not abandon certain attributes of the typical structure. The result was a paradoxically organic combination of tradition and innovation of the scene in the Council Hall, which has become one of the pinnacles of the combined artistic work of the outstanding musician and the playwright.

**Keywords:** Giuseppe Verdi, Arrigo Boito, Francesco Maria Piave, *Simon Boccanegra*, Francesco Petrarca, final scene, la solita forma, storyline, libretto

**For citation:** Logunova, A. A. (2024). Eng. The Stage in the Council Hall: the Storyline and the Structure of the Grand Final Scene in the Second Redaction of Verdi's Opera *Simon Boccanegra*. *Contemporary Musicology*, 8(3), 30–49. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-030-049>

## Техника музыкальной композиции

Научная статья

### Сцена в зале Совета: сюжет и структура центрального финала во второй редакции оперы Дж. Верди «Симон Бокканегра»

Анастасия Александровна Логунова

Санкт-Петербургская государственная консерватория имени  
Н. А. Римского-Корсакова, г. Санкт-Петербург, Российская Федерация,

✉ [ventolibero@mail.ru](mailto:ventolibero@mail.ru),

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6476-4630>

**Аннотация.** Сравнение авторских редакций опер — одна из сквозных тем мировой вердианы. Особенное положение в этом отношении занимает «Симон Бокканегра», поскольку вторую версию оперы Верди создал почти через четверть века после первой. Подобной временной дистанцией обусловлена глубина изменений прежде всего в финале I акта, для которого было найдено новое сюжетное наполнение. Важно и то, что редактирование «Симона Бокканегры» стало первой крупной совместной работой Дж. Верди и А. Бойто.

В двух версиях оперы взаимосвязь сюжета и структурных закономерностей рассмотрена в контексте общей эволюции вердиевских центральных финалов. В оригинальной редакции композитор еще следовал устоявшимся традициям, создав наиболее консервативно построенную сцену такого рода среди всех сочинений 1850-х. В версии 1881 года финал превратился в одну из самых смелых и самобытных массовых сцен у Верди.

Если изначально введение отсутствующего в пьесе Г. Гутьерреса эпизода (торжества по случаю годовщины избрания Симона Бокканегры дожем Генуи) было обусловлено традицией массового центрального финала, типовая структура которого во многом «продиктовала» сценарий, то во второй редакции уже сам сюжет и вербальный текст сцены заседания Совета предопределили ее музыкально-драматургическое строение. Однако даже

в этом новаторском финале Верди не прощается с некоторыми атрибутами типовой структуры. Парадоксально органичное сочетание традиции и новаторства сцены в зале Совета, ставшей одной из вершин совместного творчества выдающихся музыкантов и драматургов.

**Ключевые слова:** Джузеппе Верди, Арриго Бойто, Франческо Мария Пьяве, «Симон Бокканегра», Франческо Петрарка, финал, *la solita forma*, сюжет, либретто

**Для цитирования:** Логунова А. А. Сцена в зале Совета: сюжет и структура центрального финала во второй редакции оперы Дж. Верди «Симон Бокканегра» // Современные проблемы музыкознания. 2024. Т. 8, № 3. С. 30–49. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-030-049>

Among Giuseppe Verdi's operas existing in several redactions, *Simon Boccanegra* holds a special position. The two versions of the opera are divided by a distance of almost a quarter of a century, that is record-breaking for the composer — 1857 and 1881. The significance of this fact is strengthened by the fact that the 1860s and the 1870s became a time of experiments and innovations, the time of *Don Carlos* and *Aida*. Alla Konstantinovna Koenigsberg distinguishes three basic types of redaction in Verdi's practice: the composition of additional numbers or scenes for new productions, the adaptation of the written music to a new libretto, and stylistic changes made simultaneously with composing a new, dramaturgically important scene [1, p. 213–214]. The revision of *Simon Boccanegra* pertains to the latter type, the most interesting in terms of the evolution of the views of Verdi the dramatist. The comparison of the scenes carrying out a similar function, – the final scenes of Act I in the two versions with a concentration on the issue of interaction of the storyline and the structural regularities — becomes illustrative.

### *The Original Version: from the History of the Creation*

Verdi engaged in composing *Simon Boccanegra* following the initiative of librettist of the Venetian theater *La Fenice*, Francesco Maria Piave, who convinced the directory to consent to any of Verdi's terms. Having twice before rejected the proposals of *La Fenice*<sup>1</sup>, this time, the composer accepted the commission from Venice.

The plotline was chosen by Verdi himself,<sup>2</sup> who turned once again to the dramaturgy of Antonio Guttierrez, to which he was directed both by the success

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning of 1855, Verdi was occupied with his work on *Re Lear* [*King Lear*] and new redactions of the operas *Stiffelio* and *La battaglia di Legnano*.

<sup>2</sup> The contract was signed in May 1856, in two months Verdi decided about the plot of his opera, about which he informed Piave on July 31, while the title appeared for the first time in the letter to Piave from August 23 [2, vol. 2, p. 245].

of *Il Trovatore*, the first opera set to this author's play, and the place of the action — the composer's Genoa, where, starting with 1861, the composer would spend his winter months.<sup>3</sup> Apparently, the translation into Italian was done by Giuseppina Strepponi, just as in the case of *Il Trovatore* [2, vol. 2, p. 245].

The libretto of *Simon Boccanegra* is close to the dramatic source, which is in accord with Verdi's principles<sup>4</sup>, but for the grand final scene, indispensable for Italian opera of the first half of the 19th century, as it frequently happened, it was necessary to create the situation artificially. In Gutierrez play, the episode was chosen of the return of Simon Boccanegra's kidnapped daughter (Act I, Scenes 15–18<sup>5</sup>): for the sake of creating a mass scene, the plotline is supplemented with festivities in honor of the anniversary of the election of the doge of Genoa.

The work on the libretto was complexified by the geographic distance — at that time, Verdi was in France. The composer hoped to come to Sant'Agata to meet with Piave, however, the trip did not take place,<sup>6</sup> so he found it possible to turn for help to the writer and prominent figure of the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Montanelli, who lived in Paris from 1856 to 1859.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Piave, not suspecting about the involvement of yet another author, continued his work. On February 27, 1857, he shared his ideas about the grand final scene, but in his return letter, Verdi declared to the poet that the text was completed without his participation: “Here is the *libretto*, more or less abridged and changed, as it was required. Whether you sign it with your name or not, remains your decision.”<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that Piave in the aforementioned letter suggested to avoid the “formal festivities” and, instead of this, to create “a grandiose march in honor of the doge,” however, by that time Verdi had already made his choice, incorporating Montanelli's text for the festive-ceremonial section.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> By 1868, Verdi was bestowed the title of honored resident of Genoa. It is symbolic that the palace of *Villa Sauli* on the hills of Carignano, where Verdi lived from 1866, — the building, constructed by Galeazzo Alessi, has not been preserved. It was built in 1554 for Ottaviano Grimaldi Ceba — one of the representatives of the dynasty that is also mentioned in the plotline of *Simon Boccanegra*. From 1774 to 1900, Verdi rented the *Palazzo Doria* in the center of Genoa. See: Rostagno, A. (2014). Genoa. In R. M. Marvin (ed.) *The Cambridge Verdi Encyclopedia*. Cambridge University Press, p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> The most essential change was the abridgment of the second act with its main protagonist Lorenzino Bucchetto, a usurer and the unfortunate pretender to the position of doge, who is merely given casual mention in the libretto.

<sup>5</sup> Gutiérrez, A. G. (1843). *Simón Boccanegra: drama en cuatro actos, precedido de un prólogo*. Impr. de Yenes, pp. 56–59.

<sup>6</sup> Verdi informed the librettist about this on October 27, 1856 [2, vol. 2, p. 245].

<sup>7</sup> The beginning of 1857, when Verdi was already living in Italy.

<sup>8</sup> Undated letter. Cit. from: [2, vol 2, p. 249].

<sup>9</sup> “...You haven't said anything about the last chorus... that I have written in four verses, according to your own idea; even if it does not satisfy you, tell me, what would you like me to do... In my turn, I would create, for example, instead of a formal festivity, a grandiose march in honor of the doge, who would stride to the throne during the chorus, and as soon as the festivities begun, they would have been interrupted by the appearance of Adorno, etc. O God! If we had acted together, this could have been done so simply!” (Piave's letter to Verdi from February 27, 1857.) Cit. from: [ibid.]



*The Structure of the Final Scene*

In the first version of the opera, the final scene is structured according to the principles of *la solita forma*, which is perceived as an anachronism; after all, starting from 1842, Verdi transformed the four-section structure<sup>10</sup> of the massive final scenes, reducing them by means of the conclusory section (*stretta*).<sup>11</sup> In correspondence with the storyline<sup>12</sup> and the situation typical for final scenes, the scene is opened by the ceremonial introductory section consisting of three numbers: The Chorus of the People and the Barcarole, the Oath of Fidelity to the Doge and the Dance of the Corsairs with the Chorus (*Scheme 1*).

Coro de popolo e barcarola	Inno al doge	Ballabile di corsari africani con coro	Scena e sestetto		Racconto e stretta	
			Tempo d'attacco	Pezzo concertato	Tempo di mezzo	Stretta

*Scheme 1.* Giuseppe Verdi. *Simon Boccanegra*, 1st Version.  
The Structure of the Final Scene of Act I

The first number reminds in its texture of the beginning of the festive chorus in the grand final scene of *Stiffelio*, while the juxtaposition of the sound of the male chorus with the *a cappella* voices (the barcarolle) carried from the sea was previously applied by Verdi in the second final scene of *I Vespri Siciliani*. The doge's greeting during the solemn procession forestalls the hailing of Philip II during the auto-de-fé scene from *Don Carlo*. An intermezzo episode is what the dance of the African pirates becomes, the music of which is devoid of any Oriental motives whatsoever. The section is concluded by a general chorus, in which, once again, the sources of the solemn chorus from the grand final scene of *Don Carlo* are divined, moreover, not only the figurative ones, but also the intonational.

The section marked *Tempo d'attacco* begins with the cries of *Treason!* sounding from behind the stage, and culmination can be marked at Gabriel Adorno's arioso. The unexpected appearance of Amelia obtains lyrical comprehension in the sextet with the chorus (*pezzo concertato*). In such ensembles, two elements may be highlighted in Verdi's music: the *tutti* (the collective reaction), such as, for instance, in the scene

<sup>10</sup> Following the terminology established in present-day musicology, the typified structure includes the following sections: *tempo d'attacco*, *pezzo concertato*, *tempo di mezzo*, *stretta* [3, pp. 424–425]. An overview of *la solita forma* with examples from arias, duos, introductions and final scenes from Verdi's operas is presented by Steven Huebner [4, pp. 206–290].

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the final scene of Act II of *Nabucco*.

<sup>12</sup> At the height of the festivities marking the anniversary of the coronation of the doge, the news spreads about the abduction of Amelia. Boccanegra suspects Paolo, while Gabriel Adorno, the beloved of the main heroine, accuses the doge himself of the abduction (*tempo d'attacco*). Suddenly, Amelia appears, who refutes Gabriel's accusation (*pezzo concertato*, *tempo di mezzo*). The people demand that the villains be punished (*stretta*). For greater detail, see: [5, p. 140].

of the killing of the king in *Macbeth*, and the solo, such as in *Traviata* [for greater detail, see: 3, 426]. The first final scene of *Simon Boccanegra* presents a late example of the choral element; it is marked *pezzo concertato*: the people repeat in amazement: “She is saved!”

The particular feature of the section marked *tempo di mezzo*, which functions most frequently as a transition to the conclusive *stretta*, may be considered to be the lasting solo episode — Amelia’s narration, so that the appeal to justice in the *stretta* becomes a lawful reaction to the description of the perfidious abduction.<sup>13</sup>

The conservative quality of the structure of the final scene signified a peculiar boundary in the composer’s musical style, having marked a departure from similar attributes in such scenes as the state of festivity in the introductory section, the typified *stretta* in the role of a conclusion, and a *tutti* in the beginning of the *pezzo concertato* (for greater detail, see: [5, 140–142]).

### *The New Final Scene*

The idea of revising the opera may have come to Verdi in 1875, when being in transit in Cologne, the composer watched Schiller’s early play *Fiesco’s Conspiracy in Genoa*, and, as legend has it, exclaimed, “Ah, Piave! What a remarkable libretto could be made of this work!”<sup>14</sup> In fact, *Simon Boccanegra* is indebted for its second birth to Giulio Ricordi, who came up with the idea of staging the opera at the *La Scala* Theater during the 1880–1881 concert season. As Harold Powers observes, the choice particularly of this opera may be explained by Ricordi’s special fondness of it: the head of *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, a brilliant music critic, manifested himself in his youthful years as a gifted composer,<sup>15</sup> and the piano fantasy on themes from *Simon Boccanegra* became one of his first compositions [see: 7, 103]. At first, Verdi had a skeptical attitude towards the idea of reviving the opera:

Yesterday I received a large package, which, it seems, presents the score of *Simon* — the composer wrote in response to Ricordi’s proposal on May 2, 1879. — If you come to Sant-Agata in six months, a year, two or three, etc., you shall find it untouched, the same as you have sent it to me. I hate unnecessary things [2, vol. 2, 255].

<sup>13</sup> The unison theme with its emphasis on the diminished seventh chord inherits the *stretta* theme from *Giovanna d’Arco* [*Joan of Arc*]. Overall, the scene invites parallels with the final scene of Act I of Saverio Mercadante’s opera *Il bravo*. For more detail, see: [5, p. 141].

<sup>14</sup> Translation by Vassily Korganov. The story about this is contained in Arthur Pougin’s work, in one of the first biographies of Verdi translated into Italian in 1881 by Jacobo Caponi (under the pseudonym of Folchetto). On the initiative of Giulio Ricordi, the composer familiarized himself with the Italian translation before its publication, having put in the necessary corrections. Pougin’s book, published in 1886 with Caponi’s additions, lay at the source of the first Russian language biography of the composer written by Vassily Korganov (1897). According to Folchetto, Verdi was especially impressed in Schiller’s play, performed in German, which the composer did not know, how the drama unfolds against the background of the rebellion [see: 6, p. 64].

<sup>15</sup> Giulio Ricordi manifested himself in this quality under the pseudonym of Jules Burgmein.

A few months later, the composer's position changed: in October 1880, Verdi and Boito put *Otello*<sup>16</sup> aside for the sake of *Boccanegra*, the work on which continued until March 24, 1881.

Apparently, the conservative quality of the grand final scene became one of the reasons why, according to Verdi's conception, particularly the first act had to undergo the most significant revisions. Once again, the situation for the final scene of the new redaction, was thought of by the creators of the opera, just like before. Verdi peruses through various possible scenarios, among which there are not only festivities, but also hunts and even battles with African corsairs.<sup>17</sup> Along with these common or farfetched variants, he suggests an idea in the spirit of Risorgimento — to show the “preparations for war with Pisa or with Venice.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Verdi also immediately suggests the documents that must be attached to the libretto, — namely, Francesco Petrararch's letters that were included in the *Letters about Familiar Matters* [*Rerum Familiarum Libri*].

In that regard, two amazing letters by Petrarch come to my mind: one of them is written to the doge Boccanegra,<sup>19</sup> the other — to the doge of Venice, in which the poet tells the rulers that they are instigating a fratricidal war, since they are both sons of one mother — Italy, — Verdi writes to Ricordi on November 20, 1880. — The sensation of the native land as a single Italy is matchless for that time! Of course, this is politics and not drama, but a talented person may have undoubtedly dramatized that fact. For example, Boccanegra, struck by this thought, may have wished to follow the poet's advice, he could have convened the Senate or a private conference, brought the letter to the notice of all the attendees, and informed them of his wish. There is an overall consternation, exclamations, fury — up to the point that the doge is accused of treason, etc., etc.<sup>20</sup>

At this stage of the work, Verdi was not conscious of how resolutely the grand final scene would be transformed. On November 26, 1880, he wrote to Ricordi: “As for the libretto, since the Idea<sup>21</sup> for the creation of the main portion of the final scene has been found <...>, it remains to complete a small matter ... It would be necessary to retain

<sup>16</sup> Boito set to work on *Otello* at the end of 1879 — in the letter from December 2, the librettist expresses his joy in regards to the upcoming collaboration with Verdi. Conati, M., Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, p. 3. Since Piave was no longer alive, Boito also turned out to be Verdi's coauthor in the work of editing *Simon Boccanegra*.

<sup>17</sup> Bouchène, A. (Ed.). (1973). Pis'mo Verdi k Dzh. Rikordi ot 20 noyabrya 1880 g. [Verdi's Letter to Giulio Ricordi from November 20, 1880. In *Verdi Dzh. Izbrannyye pis'ma* [*Verdi G. Selected Letters*] (2d ed.), Muzyka, pp. 231–232.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>19</sup> Simon Boccanegra was chosen as a doge twice, having been at the head of the republic from 1339 until 1344, and then from 1356 to 1362. Petrarch's letter, addressed “to the doge and consul of Genoa,” is dated 1352, when Genoa was ruled not by Boccanegra, but by Giovanni da Valente. This is pointed out by Marcelo Conati. See: Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Bouchène, A. (Ed.). (1973). Pis'mo Verdi k Dzh. Rikordi ot 20 noyabrya 1880 g. [Verdi's Letter to Giulio Ricordi from November 20, 1880. In *Verdi Dzh. Izbrannyye pis'ma* [*Verdi G. Selected Letters*] (2d ed.), Muzyka, pp. 231–232.

<sup>21</sup> Particularly so — starting with the capital letter — this word is written by Verdi.



Amelia's narration, in which I would like to change a considerable part of the music, and I shall leave much of it in the *stretta*...."<sup>22</sup> In his letter to Boito from December 2, Verdi is likewise optimistic: "if we could find a good beginning for the final scene, one that would bring diversity... into the exceeding monotony of the drama, then all that is left to do after that would be reduced to a few verses here and there, a change of several musical phrases, etc."<sup>23</sup>

But, as the result, the final scene was essentially created anew, with the exception of Amelia's story, which was subjected to significant changes, while the *stretta* as a section of the form, mentioned by Verdi, was altogether eliminated.

As it is well-known, Verdi was not averse to reflecting ideas of a social-political character on stage, as well as the aspiration towards historical precision towards regional color.<sup>24</sup> In *Simon Boccanegra* the search was held, first of all, within the space of the storyline and the libretto. In the first version, the occasion for the festivity was the "silver jubilee" of Boccanegra assuming his position, which diverges from the true chronology of the events that Guttierrez holds onto: the year 1339 on the Prologue and 1362 in the main action. Having rejected the festivity scene in the grand final scene, Verdi avoided the deviation from accuracy.

Boito immediately set to work on *Simon Boccanegra* and already on December 8 sent Verdi two possible scenarios at once for the new redaction, moreover, in both cases involves another documentary source in his work — the *Annals of the Republic of Genoa* by Agosto Giustiniani.<sup>25</sup> According to the second variant offered by Boito, Acts I and II are combined together into one, and a new act is brought in with the scene of the siege of the Church of St. Cyrus, based on the events of 1356 described in Giustiniani's chronicles.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Pis'mo Verdi k Dzh. Rikordi ot 26 noyabrya 1880 g [Verdi's Letter to Giulio Ricordi from November 26, 1880] [2, vol. 2, p. 256].

<sup>23</sup> Pis'mo Verdi k Boyto ot 2 dekabrya 1880 g [Verdi's Letter to Boito from December 2, 1880]. Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, pp. 8–9.

<sup>24</sup> Thus, as he was creating *Aida*, Verdi immersed himself in the study of ancient instruments and rites [see: 8, pp. 58–60], and while searching for materials for the insertion of the ballet in *Otello* before the Paris production turned his attention to 16th and 17th century lute pieces. [see: 9, pp. 57–59].

<sup>25</sup> Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, pp. 11–12. Agostino Giustiniani (1470–1536) was a monk of the Dominican order, a bishop, who taught Eastern languages in various educational institutions, including the Paris University; he prepared the 'Bible for the Polyglots,' from which he was able to publish only the *Psaltery* [10, pp. 46].

<sup>26</sup> Boito turned to that episode in the history of Genoa, when during the siege, Boccanegra was chosen as the doge of Genoa. See: Giustiniani, A. (1856). *Annali della Repubblica di Genova*, vol. 2. Presso il libraio Canepa, p. 56.

In the first scenario, Boito elaborated Verdi's, presenting the plan of the session of the Council at the Palazzo degli Abati.<sup>27</sup> Having been inspired by Verdi's suggestion that he use Petrarch's text, Boito suggests inserting two more fragments — this time, from the letter to the doge of Genoa:<sup>28</sup>

The doge announces to the Council that Toris, the Tatar khan has sent emissaries to ask for peace with Genoa (see: *Annali della Repubblica di Genova* Volume 2, Book 4). The entire Council unanimously hails peace. Then the doge advocates for an end to the war with the Venetian Republic. The objection of the consuls, expressions of dissatisfaction. The doge shouts: "You consent to peace with barbarians and infidels, while at the same time you want war with our brethren. Are you not satisfied with your triumph? Has not the blood spilled into the waters of the Bosphorus not satisfied your brutality? You fly your triumphal flags over the waves of the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic, Euxinus Pontus, Ionian, and Aegean Seas," and here we may quote the most beautiful passages of the fifth letter from the 14th book of letters of Petrarch. In particular, he writes there: "It is good to resist your opponent with weapons, but still it is better to conquer with the magnitude of one's heart,"<sup>29</sup> and where he speaks with such deep feeling about the splendor of the Ligurian Sea — the introduction of this last digression would not lengthen the scene excessively, but it is so beautiful, when he pronounces: "And the helmsman, struck by the new landscape, dropped his oar and in his fascination stopped his watercraft in the middle of the route"<sup>30</sup>.<sup>31</sup>

Verdi decided on the scene in the Council hall,<sup>32</sup> allowing himself only a few things to note.<sup>33</sup> Among other things, the composer was worried whether the khan's letter would provide sufficient reason for the meeting: "Would it be possible to add some other state affair, for example, a carried out attack by some corsairs; and, possibly, the Venetian

<sup>27</sup> *Palazzo degli Abati* is a building created in 1291 upon the decision of the captains who headed the city, Oberto Spinola and Corrado Doria, subsequently reconstructed into the Palazzo dei Dogi.

<sup>28</sup> Apparently, the librettist's letter is lost; however, Verdi's answer followed already on December 28, 1880: "Dear Boito, this scene in the Senate is very good, full of motion and regional color, with very elegant and strong verses, which we usually write." Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, p. 15. Verdi and Boito in their correspondence call the final scene "the scene in the Senate," but in the final version, the Council Hall (*Sala del Consiglio*) was designed as the place of action.

<sup>29</sup> 'Bello è superare l'avversario alla prova del brando: bellissimo è vincerlo per magnanimità di cuore'. Fracassetti, G. (Ed.). (1856) *Lettere di Francesco Petrarca delle cose familiari libri ventiquattro ora la prima volta raccolte volgarizzate e dichiarate con note di Giuseppe Fracassetti*, vol. 3. Le Monnier, p. 318.

<sup>30</sup> '... Ed ammirato il nocchiero alla novità dello spettacolo lasciavasi cadere il remo dalle mani, e fermava per meraviglia la barca a mezzo il corso'. Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>31</sup> Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, pp. 9–10.

<sup>32</sup> "... We must settle for the scene in the Senate, which, having been created by you, could not — I am certain of this — fail to impress," — Verdi wrote on December 11, 1880 — "... In the long run, let us try to try and create this final scene with the presumed Tatar ambassador, with Petrarch's letters etc., etc." Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Verdi was fully satisfied with Boito's text: "The rest is beautiful. Entrancing, from "plebeians, patricians, and people" until the end with the words "Be cursed!" Ibid.

war, maledicted by the poet?” the following comment by Verdi is characteristic of him: “Obviously, everything must be done quickly, in two words.”<sup>34</sup>

Not limiting themselves to the time of the action of the play (1362), and not adhering strictly to the chronology of the two terms of Boccanegra’s rule, Verdi and Boito combined in their new libretto of the final scene several storylines at ones from the history of that period connected with the republic’s external politics, its economics and relations with Venice, as well as the inner social infighting. This included both the conflict between the plebeians and the patricians, which has found reflection in the episodes of insurrection (*Death to the Patricians!*), and the struggle between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The war between Genoa and Venice, who competed with each other in the trade on the Northern Mediterranean coast (1350–1355) was connected with the republic’s economic interests at that time. For both cities, which were separated from the rest of Italy by lagoons or mountains, maritime commerce was of great significance, and the struggle for predominance on the sea had not ceased since the 12th century. The Genovese merchants had a great influence in Crimea, where they established a colony in Kaffa (Feodosia), while the Venetians owned the settlement of Tan in Azak (Azov). From Kaffa there was intensive exchange of merchandise going on with the Golden Horde: the Genovese brought textiles, purchasing grain and hides [10, p. 114], even in circumvention of the union established with Venice, one of the provisions of which prohibited trade with the Horde. Particularly in connection with this conflict, Petrarch dispatched epistles to the heads of the republics. As has been indicated above,<sup>35</sup> the “letter to doge Boccanegra” that inspired Verdi, was addressed by the poet “to the doge and the council of the Genovese republic”<sup>36</sup> after their victory over the Venetians in the Bosphorus battle (on February 13, 1352) and is dated November 1, 1352, when it was not Boccanegra, but Giovanni da Valente stood at the head of the republic. The letter of the Tatar khan mentioned at the very beginning of the session may very well have been discussed by the Chambers of the Consuls — and, once again, that did not happen during the years of Simon Boccanegra’s rule.<sup>37</sup> In particular, in 1347 established a peace treaty with the khan of the Golden Horde Janibek, whose army unsuccessfully lay a siege of Kaffa. However, Boito initial scenario mentions “the Tatar khan Toris.” In Giustiniani’s *Annals* for 1344, it is really written

<sup>34</sup> “1. Are you certain of the necessity of demonstrating at the very beginning that Amelia is saved and asks for justice? 2. Do you think that the Tatar plan suffices for gathering the Senate? Would it be possible to add some other state affair...” [Ibid., p. 15–16]. In the third comment, Verdi suggests shortening Amelia’s request to pardon Gabriel, whom she already calls her fiancé, otherwise, all the sense of the scene between the doge and Amelia in the third act is lost. All the three wishes were considered in the final version of the libretto.

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 16.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Franciscus Petrarca duci et consilio reipublicae Ianuensis’. Fracassetti, J. (Ed.). (1862). *Petrarcae F. Epistolæ de rebus familiaribus et variæ*, vol. 2. Le Monnier, p. 292.

<sup>37</sup> On December 23, 1344, a coup was organized in Genoa — the patricians came to power, and Giovanni da Murta became the doge. But, just like Boccanegra, Murta stood for an agreement with Venice. See: [11, p. 115].

about the embassy of a certain khan Toris.<sup>38</sup> It may be presumed that “Toris” is connected with the toponym *Tebriz* — this city was later annexed by Janibek to his realm. This is particularly how *Marco Polo* calls Tebriz in the *Book of the Diversity of the World*.<sup>39</sup> As J. Heyd asserts, Giustiniani in his “Annals” based himself on the chronicles of Giorgio Stella (1365–1420), the official chronicler of Genoa from 1395, who knew that the prince who ruled in Tebriz in 1344 sent emissaries to the doge and the commune of Genoa.<sup>40</sup> Apparently, this referred to Ashraf,<sup>41</sup> who held the highest position in Iranian Azerbaijan during the years 1344–1356. On the other hand, Giustiniani assumed that Toris was the name of a person.<sup>42</sup> In the final version of the libretto, the name of the khan is prudently not concretized. Thus, the authors pieced together the text of the final scene, creating an extensional portrait of the epoch with all of its contradictions, boldly and at the same time delicately gathering together historical facts of different times. We can hardly fail to remember Verdi’s words: “It may be very good to paint from reality, but inventing reality is better, much better.”<sup>43</sup>

### *The Voice of Petrarch*

The letters of Petrarch present prosaic texts in Latin, incorporated in the compilation of the *Book of Letters on Everyday Matters*,<sup>44</sup> at the same time Verdi, most likely, turned to Giuseppe Fracassetti’s Italian translation<sup>45</sup> which he had in his library in Sant-Agata [7, p. 111]. In the final libretto, only one parallel is indicated. The phrase from the letter to Venetian doge Andrea Dandolo from March 18, 1851 (Book XI, Letter 8) that Venice and Genoa ought to comprise a unified entity

<sup>38</sup> ‘E l'imperatore de' Tartari nominato Toris mandò al duce Boccanegra ed alla città un ambasciatore, richiedendo pace con Genovesi; ed offeriva restituire le robe che aveva pigliato e risarcire i danni dati’ Giustiniani, A. (Ed.). (1856). *Annali della Repubblica di Genova*, vol. 2. Presso il libraio Canepa, p. 75.

<sup>39</sup> In Chapter 26, *Marco Polo* describes “the majestic Toris” — “a large city in the country of Iraq,” “the best in the whole region.” Polo, M. (2018). *Kniga o raznoobrazii mira [Book about the Diversity of the World]* (I. Minaev, transl. from the Old French, M. Vilkov. introd.). OOO Izdatel'stvo “Palmira”; OOO “Kniga po Trebovaniyu,” p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Heyd, G. (1868). *Le colonie commerciali degli Italiani in oriente nel medio evo: dis*, vol. II. Stabilimento tipografico Antonelli, p. 85.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Maliq al-Ashraf was a naib in 1343–1353, and the sultan of Azerbaijan in 1353–1357.

<sup>42</sup> According to another hypothesis, *Toris* should be corrected to “Tana” (the city founded by Venetian merchants at the site of the present-day Azov). See: Heyd, G. (1868). *Le colonie commerciali degli Italiani in oriente nel medio evo: dis*, vol. II. Stabilimento tipografico Antonelli, p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> Bouchène, A. (Ed.). (1973). Pis'mo Verdi k Klare Maffei ot 20 oktyabrya 1876 g. [Verdi’s Letter to Clara Maffei from October 20, 1876. In *Verdi Dzh. Izbrannye pis'ma [Verdi G. Selected Letters]* (2d ed.), Muzyka, p. 216.

<sup>44</sup> Petrarch decided to compile his letters into a book, after familiarizing himself with Cicero’s combination of books in the summer of 1345.

<sup>45</sup> Fracassetti, G. (Ed.) (1856). *Lettere di Francesco Petrarca delle cose familiari libri ventiquattro ora la prima volta raccolte volgarizzate e dichiarate con note di Giuseppe Fracassetti*, vol. 3. Le Monnier.



and not torment the body of Italy,<sup>46</sup> are referred to by Simon Boccanegra's words "Adria and Liguria possess a common fatherland."<sup>47</sup> The excerpts from Petrarch's second letter, those most literal digressions that Boito was fond of, did not find their way into the final text. The firm understanding that "the public requires brevity,"<sup>48</sup> gained the other hand: the verbal text of the pivotal final scene cannot do otherwise than astound by its laconic quality. The fact itself is noteworthy — a letter addressed by Petrarch to the government of Genoa, a genuine historical document, became a part of a plotline of an opera and an occasion for bringing in the massive scene of the Council session.

Despite the fact that Francesco Petrarch's name is not mentioned in the opera, Verdi clearly wished to emphasize that invisible presence of another historical personality, and for this reason he attempted to outline this image in a more relief manner. "Of the 2000 audience members attending the premiere, hardly twenty people would be familiar with the two letters by Petrarch," Verdi wrote to Boito on January 15, 1881. — "Nonetheless, we shall introduce a peculiar footnote for the public, so that Simon's lines would not remain a mystery."<sup>49</sup> Thus was the libretto text embellished by refined descriptions characterizing the poet in diversified ways: "the hermit of Sorgo" (as it is well-known, Petrarch owned a house in the valley of the Sorgo River where he lived during the years 1337–1353), "the singer of the white-haired beauty from Avignon" (meaning Petrarch's beloved Laura), and "he who called out to Rienzi."<sup>50</sup>

Petrarch's voice sounds out not only in the initial section of the scene, but also in the *pezzo concertato*. The conclusive call for peace in Boccanegra's solo (*E vo gridando: pace! E vo gridando: amor!*) is inspired by the last line of the canzona

<sup>46</sup> 'Venetos cum Januensibus unum fieri, quam formosum corpus Italiae lacerari'. Fracassetti, J. (Ed.). (1862). *Petrarcae F. Epistolæ de rebus familiaribus et variæ*, vol. 2. Le Monnier, p. 132. '... Si stringessero in un corpo solo Veneziani e Genovesi, dei quali narra invece la fama che gli uni i tiranni dell'Occidente, e i tiranni dell'Oriente chiamarono gli altri a parte del loro furore per lacerare spietatamente le belle membra dell'Italia lor madre comune!' Fracassetti, G. (Ed.). (1856). *Lettere di Francesco Petrarca delle cose familiari libri ventiquattro ora la prima volta raccolte volgarizzate e dichiarate con note di Giuseppe Fracassetti*, vol. 3. Le Monnier., p. 61.

<sup>47</sup> 'Adria e Liguria hanno patria comune'.

<sup>48</sup> Pis'mo k Ch. De Sanktisu ot 29 marta 1851 g. po povodu libretto opery *Trubadur* S. Kammarano [Letter to Cesare di Sanctis from March 29, 1851 regarding the libretto of Salvatore Cammarano's *Il Trovatore*]. Bouchène, A. (Ed.). (1973). Pis'mo Verdi k Dzh. Rikordi ot 20 noyabrya 1880 g. [Verdi's Letter to Giulio Ricordi from November 20, 1880. In *Verdi Dzh. Izbrannye pis'ma [Verdi G. Selected Letters]* (2d ed.), Muzyka, p. 55.

<sup>49</sup> Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (English language edition prep. by W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> In June 1347, Petrarch wrote a letter to the Roman tribune who took a stand against the nobility for the sake of establishing a republic and unifying Italy, expressing his hopes at the revival of the great spirit of the Roman people [12, p. 133]; in addition, during the insurrection headed by him, Petrarch wrote the canzona "the High Spirit" where he also addresses Rienzi: "I believe that you shall help the noblest dominion to stand on her feet again." Cit. from: [Ibid.].



ce!  
DORE - zia - - - to il ciell!  
E vo gridan - do: pa - ce! e vo gridan - do: a.  
pu - gno d'un cor.sar!  
- len, di ve - len.  
- vez - za al - men.  
Pa - - - - - ce! ti spi - - -  
Ah!..... di - sde - - - gna, di -  
- mor!..... e vo gri.dan.doa.mor!  
Sta la cit - tà su - -  
No, l'an.gue che mi.....  
Tut - to fal - li la.....  
Vol di so - a - - ve.....  
Vol di so - a - - ve.....  
Vol di so - a - - ve.....  
XX  
dim. pp

Example 1. Giuseppe Verdi. *Simon Boccanegra*.  
Second Version.  
The Final Scene of Act I. Mm. 350–356

*My Italy* (*I' vo gridando: Pace, pace, pace*)<sup>51</sup> [7, p. 114]<sup>52</sup>; in addition, the entire phrase would be heard one more time in the culminating moment of the section (Example 1)<sup>53</sup>. Moreover, the words *pace* become the key word in the contrapuntal fabric of the ensemble. It appears eleven times in Amelia's part, and the especially significant intonation *pezzo concertato*, which permeates the entire texture at the conclusive link of the chain form, coincides particularly with this word (Example 1, m. 6).

The canzona *My Italy* is sometimes compared with the song of the Jews in the Babylonian captivity [14, p. 54] — as it is known, particularly this psalm became the preimage of the chorus from Act III of *Nabucco*, so, when turning to Petrarch's verses, Verdi makes a peculiar reference to the opera from 1842, having once again elegized the woes of long-suffering Italy. The idea itself to demonstrate the session of the council during an internecine war — the council one which an agreement with a foreign ruler was being discussed and the appeal towards the unification of the country was sounded, — reminds of *La battaglia de Legnano* (1849). Thereby, in the second version of *Simon Boccanegra* the political theme is not merely enhanced considerably. The plotline and the text of the scene

<sup>51</sup> The absence of precise quotations upon referencing particular phrases reminds of the 15th century, when the texts of madrigals and ballatas included in themselves separate lines from Petrarch's sonnets with new continuations [13, pp. 4–5].

<sup>52</sup> Apparently, the only known musical interpretation of this text belongs to Philippe Verdelot: as Susan McClary presumes, his madrigal may have been written in response to the incursion by the imperial forces of Charles V into Rome in 1527 [14, p. 54].

<sup>53</sup> In Franz Werfel's free translation, this line is replaced by the following words: 'Liebe ist Sinn der Welten, Der Mensch allein ist kalt, Nur ihr seid starr und kalt!' ("Love is the final goal of the universe, only man is cold, only man is cruel and cold"). As L. Čapka indicates, these words bring reference to Novalis' aphorism from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*: "Love is the final goal of world history — a universal Amen" [15, p. 4].

of the conclusion of the opera generates parallels with the operas of the period of Verdi's music that passed under the sign of the Risorgimento.<sup>54</sup>

*The New Final Scene: the Structure*

Such a concentration of historical facts and actions could not have confined itself within the previous scheme. The grandiose construction of the final scene was derived after the text following the content, bound together by intricate motive connections. Five sections are perceptively highlighted in it:

- the scene of the session,
- the insurrection,
- Amelia's narrative<sup>55</sup>,
- Simon's monologue, passing into an ensemble (*pezzo concertato*),
- the curse<sup>56</sup>.

Particularly such a rubrication is set in the first edition of the libretto of the new redaction [7, p. 111] (*Scheme 2*):

<i>Scena del consiglio</i>	<i>Sommossa</i>	<i>Racconto</i>	<i>Pezzo d'assieme (concertato)</i>	<i>Maledizione</i>
Allegro moderato	Allegro agitato	Moderato	Andante mosso	Largo assai

*Scheme 2. Simon Boccanegra. Second Edition. Final Scene of Act I*

From the very first measures, the scene immerses the listener into the tense atmosphere of the session, beginning with Boccanegra's address to the consuls. Until now, no other opera by Verdi the beginning of the massive scene of the pivotal final scene was more remote from the function of the "introductory section" [5, p. 188] – the emotional filament of what is occurring is too high, and each episode

<sup>54</sup> A no less acute political subject of this scene in the Council hall was sounded in another country than Italy in the 20th century. At a performance by the Berlin State Opera in 1944, Boccanegra's monologue at the beginning of the *pezzo concertato* aroused lasting ovations, while the baritone who performed the part of the doge was summoned up for interrogation for "an attempt to descript the military action" [15, p. 5].

<sup>55</sup> In the narrative, only the first period was preserved without any considerable changes; in particular, the freedom of the changes of timbre and the fluidity of the transitions from the cantilena to the recitative grew.

<sup>56</sup> At the Council Boccanegra speaks with a call for the unification of Venice and Genoa. The doge's speech is interrupted by shouts: the people roused to rebellion demand his death. Simon Boccanegra's impassivity captivates the crowd, but the unrest does not abate, the reason for which turns out to be the killing of the Genovese Lorenzino carried out by Gabriel Adorno, since, after all, it was Lorenzoni who abducted Amelia. The responsibility for the kidnapping is laid upon by Adorno on Boccanegra. Gabriel makes an attempt on the doge's life, which is hindered because of the appearance of Amelia, who vindicates Simon (as heard in Amelia's narrative). The adversarial relation between the plebeians and the patricians is intensified (*tempo d'attacco*), and once again the crowd is stopped by Simon, who preaches peace in the name of the common motherland (*pezzo concertato*). Understanding Paolo's involvement in the abduction, Boccanegra resorts to a psychological maneuver, inducing everybody, including Paolo, to pronounce a curse on the culprit. For more detail, see: [5, pp. 187–188].

is too significant in its content: the warily menacing introduction, the strict recitative manner of the part of the doge, the elemental vigor of the crowd in the insurrection episode<sup>57</sup>, the effect of which is comparable with the *Dies irae* from Verdi's *Requiem*.

The theme of the insurrection becomes a source of motives binding together the three sections of the scene (see *Example 2*).

Particularly in the insurrection scene, Wolfgang Osthoff and, after him, Daniela Goldin Folena perceive the influence of Schiller's play *The Conspiracy of Fiesco in Genoa* [16, pp. 141–142]<sup>58</sup>.

At first, Verdi was ready to reject the *pezzo concertato* ensemble traditional for the pivotal final scene: On November 26, 1880, he wrote to Ricordi: "I do not think that any reason whatsoever exists to create one of the usual *pezzi concertati*" (cit. from: [2, vol. 2, p. 256]). But already on January 26, Verdi informs Boito: "Without having realized it, I have written a *pezzo concertato* in the new final scene. Of course, Simon will first sing all his sixteen lines solo ("Plebeians! Patricians! People!") then a *concertato* follows, an unconventional one, but, nonetheless, a *concertato*."<sup>59</sup> Indeed, this section begins as a monologue, while the episode perceived at first as an ensemble addition,<sup>60</sup> as a result, grows into a full-fledged *pezzo concertato*,

Example 2. Giuseppe Verdi.  
*Simon Boccanegra*.

Second Edition. Final Scene of Act I.  
Mm. 57–63

<sup>57</sup> It is noteworthy that even in the chorus of the insurrectionists, Verdi advocated for a lucid conveyance of the text: "I tried, in spite of the restless movement in the orchestra, to preserve the clarity of all the words," — he writes to Boito on February 5, 1881. — "The orchestra roars, but it roars quietly." Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, p. 37.

<sup>58</sup> At the basis of Schiller's play is the conspiracy organized by aristocrat Gian Luigi Fieschi in 1547 against the doge of Genoa, Andrea Doria. In Act II, a rebellion gradually erupts around the Fieschi palace: the people demand Doria's death; in the same way, in the new final scene of *Simon Boccanegra* the approach of the crowd of rebels chanting *Death to the doge* is shown.

<sup>59</sup> Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, p. 34. About the role of the chorus in the final scene through the prism of Aristotle's ideas, see L. Belloni [6].

<sup>60</sup> Thus, in his letter from February 2, 1881, Verdi urged Boito to shorten the number of lines for Amelia, emphasizing that the *pezzo concertato* here is, "first of all, a large-scale solo for the doge with the addition of the other parts at the end." Conati, M., & Medici, M. (Eds.). (1994). *The Verdi-Boito correspondence* (Eng. lang. ed. prep. W. Weaver). The University of Chicago Press, p. 36.



the through structure of which anticipates the analogous moment in the final section of Act III of *Otello*.<sup>61</sup> An ensemble with an unfolded solo sung by the baritone is one of Verdi's favorite types,<sup>62</sup> and in *Simon Boccanegra* it receives its last and most

The image shows a musical score for a scene from *Simon Boccanegra*. It consists of three systems of music. The first system is for the baritone (BB) and piano. The baritone part has the lyrics "V'è in queste mura un vil che m'ò de, e impalli di . sec in". The piano part is marked "LARGO" and "p". The second system continues the baritone part with the lyrics "volto; già la mi amman l'affer. raper le chiome." and the piano part. The third system shows the end of the piano part. The tempo is marked "LARGO" throughout.

Example 3. *Simon Boccanegra*, Second Version.  
Final Scene of Act I. Mm. 386–390

by a vociferous *tutti*, and three more times — almost in a whisper, as a conjuration. At the same time, the second of the two orchestral themes in the *Largo* tempo<sup>65</sup> (see Example 3), on which the entire scene concludes, forms an arch with the *pezzo concertato*, reminding of its key motive, *pace*.

### Conclusion

Particularly in the second version the grand final scene of *Simon Boccanegra* obtained its magnitude and depth, which made it into one of the most powerful scenes in all of Verdi's music. The most important role therein was played by its structure, with its opening sections, striking by their formidability (the doge's speeches and the insurrection) and their effective conclusions (the curse of Paolo).

<sup>61</sup> Verdi stands against the commentaries "aside" traditional for such ensembles, which "cause the artists to remain immobile." Letter to Boito from January 24, 1881. Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>62</sup> See the grand final scenes of the operas: *Un Giorno il Regno* (Act I), *Nabucco* (Act I), *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (Acts I and II), *Ernani* (Acts I and III), *Alzira* (Act II), *Attila* (Act I), *Macbeth* (Act II), *Traviata* (Act II), *Un ballo in maschera* (Act II), and *Aida* (Act II).

<sup>63</sup> "The most beautiful monument that Verdi created for the baritone," "a hymn for universal brotherhood, as inspiring as Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy,' and just as simple in its structure..." is how J. Budden calls this solo [2, vol. 2, pp. 3–12].

<sup>64</sup> *Boccanegra*'s solo presents two large parallel periods with the tonal correlation between the keys of *es-moll* and *Fis-dur*. It is noteworthy that for the second parallel period Verdi chooses, contrary to custom, not the parallel major, but a key enharmonically equal to the relative major, highlighting with a special color the supplication for peace.

<sup>65</sup> At the basis of the first theme lies a descending motive, the initial sounds of which remind of the *stretta* theme of the first version, at the same time forestalling the theme of Iago from *Otello*. (In particular, J. Budden indicates at this [2, vol. 3., pp. 314–315]). The second theme, with its reliance on the motive of "singing around the note," is derived from the theme of Amelia from the *pezzo concertato*.

It is paradoxical, but the history of the creation of the scene in the Council Hall indicates that this innovative and to the utmost degree original composition has appeared in many ways *as the result of* the conventionalities related to opera in the first half of the 19th century. After all, when the first version of *Simon Boccanegra* was being composed, Guttierrez' play was supplemented by a scene of a mass ceremony for the sake of bringing in the grand final scene, indispensable for Italian opera, constructed in correspondence with the typified rules *la solita forma*. In the second version, the traditional mass finale turned into a scene striking by the depth of its content and the abundance of its text, created on the basis on chronicle sources and encrusted with allusions to Petrarch's works. Now the new conception itself and the storyline manifesting it predetermined the structure of the scene. The multivalent final scene, the introduction to which was initially dictated by the implicit laws of Italian opera, in the second version breaks with them almost entirely. Almost — because even in such an original scene, the composer retains connections with the tradition of *la solita forma* in the lyrical core of the final scene — the ensemble with the chorus, *pezzo concertato*, which follows Simon Boccanegra's chief monologue, that this “hymn to universal brotherhood” [2, vol. 3, 312] becomes universal in the literal sense of the word: here the *pezzo concertato* is not an obsolescent formality, but a manifestation of the crucial idea of the final scene.

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Information about the author:

**Anastasia A. Logunova** — Cand. Sci (Art Studies), Associate Professor, Foreign Music History Department.

Сведения об авторе:

**Логунова А. А.** — кандидат искусствоведения, доцент кафедры истории зарубежной музыки.

Статья поступила в редакцию 29.04.2024;  
одобрена после рецензирования 26.06.2024;  
принята к публикации 03.09.2024.

The article was submitted 29.04.2024;  
approved after reviewing 26.06.2024;  
accepted for publication 03.09.2024.