Imitation and Litany in Verdi's *Falstaff*

by Daniel Fox

1. “We shall not stand still”

Of the final “comic” fugue that closes Verdi's *Falstaff*, Budden says “The message of the fugue and indeed of the whole opera is: 'Man is born to be made a fool of.'” In an attempt to encompass both the drama and the music, it is tempting to abstract this and argue that *imitation*, especially in the form of *mockery*, is the underlying theme of the opera. The very plot is based upon the mocking of Sir John. Although this has been accomplished by the end of Act II, Act III compounds the mockery and makes it public- Act III is, in effect, an imitation of the first two Acts: Acts I and II culminate in the mockery of Sir John, as does Act III. But only after Act III has Sir John learned his lesson and shared it with us: *our apotheosis is in our ability to laugh at ourselves*. It is finally in Act III when Falstaff, Pistol, and the chorus all sing “Apotheosis.” Act III also expands the mockery: both Ford and Dr. Caius are mocked through the masked weddings.

The comic fugue of *Falstaff* does not just close the opera, but it is the capstone of Verdi's operatic career. It is a satisfyingly symmetric ending to the career of a composer who complained of

the counterpoint hoisted on him in his early private lessons that substituted for conservatory training: "I did nothing but canons and fugues, fugues and canons of all sorts."[1] It is a symmetric ending for a composer whose first opera was a comedy and a failure. The lesson we learn from Sir John through Verdi and Boito, is to be able to laugh at ourselves.

It is in the final fugue that imitation is given its culminating formal musical expression. But imitation is scattered throughout the opera. Characters are constantly repeating one another and musical phrases echo. One might argue that the *tinta* of *Falstaff* is *imitation.* But there is another element which is almost as strong.

There is a tendency to take stock at the end of one's life and this constitutes the other great theme of *Falstaff- litany.* The opera is jammed full of lists. There are lists of animals and plants and dirty laundry and ugly names and rooms and nationalities and magical creatures and even the numbers, listed in order, from One through Twelve. It is a paradox that in an opera whose first two Acts pass at break-neck speed, characters are constantly taking the time to elaborate great lists. These lists are almost always redundant. With the exception of the very first list—that of the offenses that Sir John has committed against Dr. Caius—the elaboration never improves an argument. These lists are one of the key modes for bringing action, and thus time, to a halt. Traditionally, time stopped so that characters could express their inner world through poetry and, primarily, melody. In *Falstaff* time is frozen so that characters may give us lists.

Verdi and Boito have created many more lists than are found in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of* Windsor. The lists would seem unnecessary if they weren't so effective at creating a *tinta.* And the litany has a double function: On the one hand, it is the proclivity of a man at the end of his life to ramble off his lists, as we all will do. On the other hand, these lists are a commentary on the dramatic effectiveness, or lack there of, of all the duets and arias in the operatic tradition.

According to Karl Holz, in reference to his late quartets, Beethoven declared "Art demands of us that we shall not stand still..."[2] Verdi's career, like Beethoven's, is full of unceasing progressing. Forward motion was fundamental to Verdi's artistic life and to his artistic creations. It became a rallying cry for Verdi. The "Concision!" that he demanded of Piave would seem to have reached its height in *Falstaff,* an opera whose plot speeds ahead from the very opening scene. But this plot-driven aesthetic is undermined, mocked, by the gratuitous litanies which pervade the opera from start to finish.

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1 Roger Parker. "Verdi, Giuseppe." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.temple.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/29191pg2

2 Joseph Kerman. *The Beethoven Quartets.* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1966), 349.

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We will investigate the themes of imitation/mockery and litany. In Section 2 we describe how the themes are presented in the first scene of the opera. Section 3 argues that mockery is at the center of the plot of the opera. Section 4 enumerates examples of imitation and takes a detour in order to briefly compare Beethoven and Verdi through their biography, position within their musical traditions, and their uses of imitation, particularly through Verdi's *Falstaff* and Beethoven's *Opus 131 String Quartet.*

Section 5 reintroduces litany to the discussion and Section 6 compares the uses of litany by Verdi-Boito and Shakespeare. Sections 7 through 10 each touch upon a different variety of litany within the opera. Section 11 continues the discussion of mockery in the light of the final fugue. Section 12 is the list of citations.

2. "It would be a good thing if, in the beginning of this opera, the chorus could be left out"

Falstaff has no opening chorus but launches right into the action, which hardly pauses before the end of Act II. The opera begins with Dr. Caius angrily delivering his list of grievances to *Falstaff.* Dr. Caius rails: "You have beaten my servants!...And you rode my best horse till it was winded, And broke into my dwelling." It is a short list compared to those still to come. Sir John answers "I did those things you speak of...And I enjoyed them." Sir John's "solution" is to admit and enjoy. This is our first lesson in his philosophy. The most convincing version of it is given at the end of the opera, to which we will return.

More lists follow as Pistol and Dr. Caius hurl insults at one another: "You ruffian!" "Blockhead!" "You beggar!" "Coward!" "Dog!" "Scum!" "You scarecrow!" "You offspring of mandragora!" This last refers to demons in the form of little men without beards. In a hint at the self consciousness of the drama, Pistol pauses to wonder, "Who?", because, like most of the audience, he does not know who a mandragora is.

Verdi wrote to the librettist of *Il Trovatore*, "If in operas there were no more cavatinas, no more duets, no more trios... if the whole opera were one single piece, I would find that more reasonable and right... It would be a good thing if, in the beginning of this opera, the chorus could be left out (every opera begins with a chorus); if Leonora's cavatina could be left out; and we begin right off with the

Troubadour's song."[3] In *Falstaff* the dream of beginning "*in media res*"[4] is fulfilled like never before. Verdi had written unconventional openings before. *I Masnadieri* opens with Carlos reading Plutarch. *Aida* opens in the middle of a conversation. But Carlos is quickly joined by the chorus of bandits and Radamès quickly finishes his discussion about going to battle and begins a cavatina.

Sir John's "cavatina" consists of reviewing his tab at the *Garter Inn.* "6 pullets: 6 shillings. 30 flagons of sherry: 2 pounds. 3 turkeys...Two pheasants. One anchovy." In this whirlwind opening, Sir John's solo is a list of all he has consumed. Bardolph tells us of the paltry change left: "A mark, a mark, a penny." In this first episode of frozen time, we linger not on love, but on gluttony. This sets the mood for the rest of the opera: the moments of frozen time—excepting the fleeting Fenton-Nannetta duets—consist of seemingly trivial lists.

But that these lists are not totally trivial is suggested by how Sir John continues. To Bardolph: "You will be my destruction. Ten pounds a week it costs me to sustain you! You drunkard! Night after night we wander, trying tavern after tavern, And your blazing nose lights up my path and serves me as a lantern! But what I save in tallow you squander in the tavern. Thirty years I've replenished that nose of yours and kept it shining. You're not worth it." He is taking account, not just of his tavern bill, but of his life. He even rightly foresees his own downfall in Bardolph and Pistol, but for the wrong reason. We see this foretelling in other Verdi operas. For example, there is the ironic declaration of immortality that Germont makes to Violetta in the first scene of *La Traviata.*

3. "We'll mock him at our leisure"

When Alice, referring to Sir John, declares "We'll mock him at our leisure," she is defining the central plot for us: The mockery of Sir John. If we extend this mockery to include Ford and Dr. Caius then we really do have the plot in a nutshell. Even the word "leisure," which would appear to be out of place in the rushing world of Acts I and II, finds substantiation in the leisure of the litanies which the characters allow themselves and with which they mock Sir John.

Sir John's attempts to seduce Alice and Meg and the subsequent scheme to extract money from their husbands's accounts is, of course, foiled by the entire rest of the caste working in concert to teach Sir John a lesson. In the process Ford is mocked when he is tricked into marrying Nannetta to Fenton

3 Will Crutchfield. "Pure Italian." Rev. of Verdi: A Biography, by Mary Phillips. New Yorker 31 Jan. 1994: 79.

4 James A. Hepokoski. *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90.

when he thinks he is marrying her to Dr. Caius. That Bardolph and Dr. Caius also are married is pure icing. Sir John himself mocks his own size throughout the opera.

It would not be inappropriate to have "All mocked!" in the final fugue. In fact, it almost made its way there. In a letter to Verdi, Boito wrote: "By the way, the variant necessary for the final fugue is still lacking. See if what I transcribe for you on the back of this letter will do.

Everything in the world is jest
Man is born a jester
In his brain his reason
Is always reeling.
All mocked! All mortals
Taunt one another,
But he laughs well who has
The last laugh."[5]

Budden informs us of another mockery unfulfilled: "It would seem to have been Verdi's notion that Falstaff should be made to share Ford's mock-sentimental madrigal 'Amor, l'amor che non ci da mai tregua', alternating words and phrases with exquisitely humorous effect."[6] A love duet between Sir John and Ford might have weakened the surprise wedding at the end, but it shows how Verdi and Boito were examining different ways to paint the *tinta* of mockery.

4. Meg: "I have a letter here."
Alice: "I also."

That counterpoint is important in *Falstaff* is driven home by the closing fugue. Fugue is considered the pinnacle of imitative counterpoint. However, imitation is a pervasive element in the libretto and the score throughout the opera. It is only in the final number that this imitation reaches its highest form. The most common form of imitation in *Falstaff* is in the echoing of words and music.

5 Giuseppe Verdi and Arrigo Boito. *Falstaff: A Lyric Comedy in Three Acts*. (New York: International Music Company, 1949) , 167.

6 Julian Budden. *The Operas of Verdi: Volume 3 from Don Carlos to Falstaff.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 429

These echoes may be exact or contain slight variations, but they are clearly audible to the listener and just as apparent on the page of the libretto or score, except when the libretto indicates that an ensemble utters a single word. In this last case a look at the score is required to determine whether a single statement is made or the phrase or word is echoed from one character to another.

A prime example of an echo with variation is when Pistol and Bardolph enthusiastically characterize Sir John:

Pistol: “Falstaff enormous!”
Bardolph: “Falstaff tremendous!”

Another significant instance of an echo with variation is when Meg and Alice realize they have love letters addressed to them that are identical in all but the name:

Meg: “I have a letter here.”
Alice: “I also.”[7]

We find that imitation is at the very heart of the plot. Not long after this, “Monster” echos through the quartet of women's voices.[8] Four is certainly not the limit to the length of such echos. A short while later in the same scene we find[9]

Fenton: “It's she.”
Nannetta: “It's he.”
Ford: “It's she.”
Alice: “It's he.”
Dr. Caius: “It's she.”
Meg: “It's he.”

These last are sung in echoes like the pizzicato echoes of the *Presto* of Beethoven's String Quartet

7 Andrew Porter. *Falstaff: English National Opera Guide 10*. (New York : Riverrun Press, 1982), 69.
8 Porter, *Falstaff*, 70.
9 Porter, *Falstaff,* 74.

Opus 131. We have exact echos of "Si"[10] and of "Goodbye,"[11] the later ricochet around, forming a cadence in F. We have the mocking imitation of Ford and Sir John after Sir John has been ensnared in the trap

Sir John: "You go first."
Ford: "Precede me."[12]

We find a more extended example in the form of an imitative duet between Ford and Dr. Caius that is reminiscent of the counterpoint in late Beethoven quartets:

Ford: "When I catch you..."
Dr. Caius: "When I seize you..."
Ford: "I'll despatch you..."
Dr. Caius: "I will beat you..."
Ford: "And I will smash you!" and on...
Dr. Caius: "When I seize you..."[13]

It would seem a rewarding endeavor to compare Beethoven's late quartets and Verdi's Falstaff. In fact, this paper began with that aim. Budden suggests that "Finally we have noted an increasing use in late Verdi of classical figuration, beginning with the revised version of *Simon Boccanegra.* This style of writing will come to predominate *Falstaff*, giving to the score something of the character of a Beethoven quartet. It is not precisely contrapuntal, yet every fiber of the texture has life and interest even where the material amounts to little more than academic commonplace."[14] I would broaden this to say that comedy and imitation are central to both the late quartets of Beethoven and *Falstaff.* As a basic example, one can look at the *Presto* from Beethoven's Opus 131. The four players echo the violinists F#-B, a commonplace cadential figure. Such imitations abound in this movement and can be found elsewhere in the quartet, often to great comic effect. The comedy arises from material that is an "academic commonplace" in both that late quartets and *Falstaff.* Both composers seem to be engaged

10 Porter, *Falstaff,* 76.
11 Porter, *Falstaff,* 81.
12 Porter, *Falstaff,* 88.
13 Porter, *Falstaff,* 100-1.
14 Budden, *Operas,* 442.

in mocking the very tradition of which they are the greatest champions.

Another wonderful imitation in the opera is how the orchestra imitates human laughter. We first here the women's laughter, scored on “Ah”'s and then later the orchestra gives us voiceless laughter. The extent to which Verdi exhausts the possibilities of a theme such as imitation, mockery, or litany, is similar to the purely musical exploration of motivic development that Beethoven brought to flower in his later quartets. For both composers these late compositions were a type of “Indian summer.” Thayer writes of Beethoven's life, “the close of 1809 terminated a decade (1800-1809) during which—if quality be considered, as well as number, variety, extent and originality—Beethoven's works offer a more splendid exhibition of intellectual power than those of any composer produced within a like term of years; and New Year, 1809, began another (1810-19), which compared with the preceding, exhibits an astonishing decrease in the composer's productiveness.”[15] After this lull of 1810-1819 came the Late Style which brought, *The Ninth Symphony*, *The Missa Solemnis*, the last three piano sonatas and the last five string quartets.

Verdi is also perceived to have gone through a “fallow period between *Aida* and *Otello*...”[16] Quoting Parker at length: “After Aida in 1871 there was to be no Verdian operatic première for 16 years. The creative stagnation was not, of course, quite so complete. In 1873, while supervising performances of *Aida* at the Teatro S Carlo in Naples, Verdi wrote and had privately performed the String Quartet in E minor. And in 1874 came the *Messa da Requiem*, composed in honor of Alessandro Manzoni. But the fact remains that the 1870s and early 80s, years in which we might imagine Verdi at the height of his creative powers, saw no new operas...At the same time, his personal life underwent an upheaval brought about through a continuing public scandal that caused much private anguish between him and his partner. The reason was his relationship with the soprano Teresa Stolz, who had been the first Leonora in the 1869 version of *La forza del destino*, the first Aida in the Milanese première of that opera (1872), and for whom Verdi wrote the soprano solo in the *Requiem*. Matters between her, Strepponi and Verdi came to a crisis in 1876 but eventually resolved with the status quo intact, Stolz remaining a close friend of Verdi, perhaps also of Strepponi, for the rest of their lives.”

Beethoven's personal life also went through great upheaval during 1810-1819. In his case it was the custody fight for his nephew Karl which climaxed with Karl's half-hearted suicide attempt. For Beethoven it was a fight for his only chance at fatherhood. For both composers the crisis was self-manufactured. They almost seem to use the crisis for further emotional development which they then

15 Kerman, *Beethoven,* 155-6.
16 Parker, *Verdi.*

pour into their music.

I also find comparison between the artistic lives of Beethoven and Verdi hard to resist. For example, the following descriptions of the two composers are almost interchangeable:

“What separated him from the composers of the 18[*20/80*]s was his refusal to alter the fundamental aspects of the stylistic language he had learned as a child, although he expanded the limits of this style in ways that earned him the astonishment and incomprehension of his contemporaries.”

“[*Beethoven/Verdi]*'s importance lies less in the transformation of the genre in which he worked than in his continual transformation of himself within it: he maintained into [the end of his life] the pace of growth of a young genius finding his first voice. Indeed, he rendered the genre almost useless for others...”

“His retention of these out-of-date forms and even his attempt to endow them with a new vitality in his last years indicates his growing isolation from the musical life in [*Vienna/Italy]* that accompanied his increasing and unshakeable prestige. Many of his works were an inspiration to the younger generation, although the attempt to use them as models ended generally in disaster.”

(The unedited quotes and references for each are given at the end of this paper.)

That “he rendered the genre useless” might be said of Beethoven and piano sonatas. Although there are many fine piano sonatas after Beethoven, the ones that break with the tradition rather than further it are the most significant. Thinking of how the late romantics forced their musical language into the dramatic structure of sonata form, one is reminded of the lecture in Mann's *Dr. Faustus* in which Kretzschmar explains why Beethoven's last piano sonata Opus 111 has no third movement. His argument extends to say that not only was there no third movement to come, there were no more piano sonatas to come.

5. “The effervescence of the whole opera”

From the following letter it would seem that around the time of the production of Falstaff Boito was bursting with litany: “They will temper everything—accents, inflections, gestures, movements, words, kisses, blows, laughter, gaiety, vivacity, strength, power, youthfulness, folly, the effervescence of the whole opera—and the audience will witness a performance very different from what Shakespeare conceived, from what you created, from what all of us want.”[17]

The litany of *Falstaff* is part of its *tinta*, of the very fiber of its drama and comedy. That Verdi was concerned with these lists comes down to us on a surviving scrap of paper. It simply contains the list “Lout! Poltroon! Greedy! Drunkard! Rogue! On your knees”[18] In Budden the only reference to litany I found was that “...Verdi specified certain instrumental requirements...a bass clarinet in A for the 'Litanies' in Windsor Forest...”[19]

The theme of encompassing the whole pervades *Falstaff:* his belly is the whole world and all of the characters are occupied with elaborating lists. This idea of filling out and exhausting possibilities can be traced back to *I Masnadieri* where Verdi exhausts the descending minor seconds of the chromatic scale throughout the length of the opera.

6. “Give me a laundry-list and I'll set it to music” -Rossini

In Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* we find the antecendents of the litanies of Boito and Verdi. Shakespeare has Ford rattle off “My collars...a nightdress...Greasy napkins!...Dirty stockings!... And dishcloths...and smelly old nightcaps...” Miss Quickly defines her job through a list: “I wash, wring, brew, bake, scour, dress meat and drink, make the beds, and do all myself.” Sir John too tells us of the dirty laundry:“[they]...rammed me in with fould shirts and smocks, socks, fould stockings, greasy napkins;”[20] Anne incites all the creatures to “Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides and shins.”[21] Evans characterizes Sir John as one “...given to fornications, and to taverns, and sack and wine and metheglins, and to drinkings and swearings and starings, pribbles and prabbles”[22]

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17 Weaver, *Verdi-Boito,* 217.
18 Weaver, *Verdi-Boito,* 278.
19 Budden, *Operas*, 434.
20 Porter, *Falstaff, 72.*
21 Porter, *Falstaff, 80.*
22 William Shakespeare. *The Complete Dramatic and Poetic Works of William Shakespeare.*

But there is no list of accounts by Sir John. The litany is not nearly so prevalent or dramatically central in the Shakespeare. As an essential dramatic element it was a creation of Boito and Verdi. One of the great ring side seats of artistic creation would have been to watch Verdi and Boito at work around the kitchen table! With neither man young it is easy to imagine that they would have found themselves delivering their own litanies and then folding them into the play.

7. The Six Strokes of Midnight

One of the central lists of *Falstaff* is at the beginning of Act III, Scene ii when Sir John is waiting in Windsor Forest by the oak tree. He is alone. He might express his inner most thoughts just before he is due for an amorous meeting with not one, but two ladies. In the place of such an outburst of expression, we receive an ostinato F note with which he simply counts off the strokes of the clock: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven striking, Eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve o'clock. It is midnight." It is ironic that in *Un Ballo in Maschera* Verdi gives Amelia only six strokes of the clock at midnight, whereas in *Falstaff,* the opera that has been preceding at breakneck speed, Sir John has time to count all of them. But by this point we are accustomed to time freezing for a list. There is no more elemental list than that of the numbers themselves.

The emotional expression is all in the orchestra. But is there once again some mockery afoot? Some of the lushest harmonies of the opera are used to accompany Sir John counting to twelve. It is hard to not suspect that Verdi is chuckling while he enjoys writing out these rich chords that, dramatically at least, express nothing. Is he saying, 'these heavy harmonies are good only for passing the time?'

8. "E spiritelli"

Verdi had been courting the dark and fantastic elements of magic in his librettos since at least *Macbeth.* Curses are a thread throughout the operas, as are witches. In *Falstaff* he has himself a glutton's portion of "spiritelli." The spirits which I have been able to catalogue are goblins, fairies, the queen of all fairies, water nymphs, nymphs of the woodland and wood-nymphs, hobgoblins, tiny elves, impish brats, Boston devils, sylphides, sprites of the woodland, vampires, and the very devil himself,

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(Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1926), 81.

Satan. Occasional reference is made to them through all three Acts but the majority of the spirits are conjured in the final Windsor Forest scene.

9. "Pinch him"

The pinching creatures are incited to "Tweak him and tickle him! Pinch him and prickle him!..." and then the chorus sings "Prickety, prickety, prickety, prockety, stickety..." Sir John is threatened with many other tortures: "batter," "tatter," "clatter," "shatter" and of course to be popped like a balloon. One of the climatic scenes of the opera is nothing but schoolyard name calling made effective on Sir John, so we are to believe, because all the threats come from people in disguise as "spiritelli." Masks and deceptive identities is another theme that stitches together Verdi's oeuvre. For example, we find it in *La Forza del Destino* and *Un Ballo in Maschera,* as well as in *Falstaff* itself with Ford approaching Sir John in disguise.

10. "Let the sky rain potatoes"

We round out this discussion with a litany of litanies. Throughout the opera a great menagerie is enumerated: *ox, tom-cat, buffalo, jackass, buzzard, sparrow, boar, pig, bloated viper, rat, porpoise, cat, kittens, cricket, roe ("You are my roe"), gnats, mosquitos, pole-cat, mosquitos, midges, baboon, salamander, herring, and elephant*. It appears to be a more comprehensive zoo than is found in the Shakespeare. The garden in which these creatures dwell has, at the very least, *rhubarb, calomel, pumpkin, potatoes, cabbages, turnips, woodbine, violets, and lilies.*

When flattering Sir John, Ford resorts to repetition: "You are a man of breeding, prowess, persuasion, compassion, You are a man of valor, a man of fame and fashion..." Of course when Quickly is describing to Sir John the state of the to-be-cuckolded Ford, she finds any single word insufficient and depicts him as "raging, roaring, bellowing."

The instances of litanies of name calling abound. Among many other accusations, Sir John is accused of having the following characteristics: "Paunch like a pumpkin! Brain of a bumpkin! Greatest of gluttons! Burster of buttons! Breaker of benches! Chaser of wenches!..."

When Ford is in search of Sir John in the house, he demands: "Go search every bedroom, The kitchen, the pantry, the oven, the chimney, And the cellar..." We even find that when one nationality

appears it cannot do so alone: so in just a few lines we are told of a German, a Dutchman, and an Irish top[p]er. (The latter being a type of boat rather than a specimen of a cultural group.)

11. "You are inferior artists"

There is a self-consciousness to *Falstaff* which is illustrated in the musical declarations. Counterpoint and rhythm are praised and these are the most significant musical aspects of the score. Verdi and Boito are preparing us for the great fugue at the end when, with the whole world, we will find ourselves mocked.

In the first scene Sir John himself criticizes Bardolph and Pistol in musical terms: "Cease the antiphony. Your wailing has no rhythm. Stealing should be like counterpoint: achieved with charm and in tempo. You are inferior artists."[23] After suffering his unexpected swim in the river, Sir John revives himself "..whirling to the sound of the trill! That trill that pervades the world!"[24] One can't help but think of late Beethoven where the trill finds its apotheosis in the last piano sonata. Thus we are primed to believe in the power of music and in particular counterpoint.

Verdi, who put so much importance on the text, began work on the final fugue, his final operatic number, before he had even a draft of the libretto! He wrote to Boito, "I am amusing myself by writing fugues!... Yes, sir: a fugue... and a *comic fugue*... which might fit nicely into *Falstaff!*...But what do I mean by a comic fugue? Why comic? You will ask... I do not know *how*, or *why,* but it is a *comic fugue!* I will tell you in another letter how the idea was born!"[25]

But the build-up is a set-up. Budden explains, "...The fugue itself holds a delightful academic joke in store. Between figures 59 and 60 a dominant pedal is set up in C major. In all the fugues of Mendelssohn and his followers this betokens the approach to the final cadence which in turn will be spun out with varieties of plagal harmony. But after four bars we are without warning whirled off into E-flat major and a succession of fresh developments. Eventually the fugue breaks off in mid-air; in slower tempo Falstaff's voice is heard with 'Tutti gabbati' ("all gulled') echoed by the rest in unison; and so without more ado to the brilliant conclusion."[26] He concludes: "The message of the fugue and indeed of the whole opera is: 'Man is born to be made a fool of.'"

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23 Porter, *Falstaff, 64.*
24 Porter, *Falstaff, 107.*
25 Verdi-Boito P148. V:
26 Budden, *Operas, 530.*

And so this great contrapuntal music which we have been primed to revere from the very first scene of the opera is mocked, if ever so academically, in the finale. Verdi seems to be mocking himself good-naturedly at times. It is tempting to wonder if, in Sir John's scheme to pursue two ladies at once, Verdi saw an image of himself and enjoyed laughing at his own folly?

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Below are the undisguised versions of the quotes used in Section 4:

"His retention of these out-of-date forms and even his attempt to endow them with a new vitality in his last years indicates his growing isolation from the musical life in Vienna that accompanied his increasing and unshakeable prestige. Many of his works were an inspiration to the younger generation, although the attempt to use them as models ended generally in disaster. What separated him from the composers of the 1820s was his refusal to alter the fundamental aspects of the stylistic language he had learned as a child, although he expanded the limits of this style in ways that earned him the astonishment and incomprehension of his contemporaries."[27]

"Verdi's importance lies less in the transformation of the genre in which he worked than in his continual transformation of himself within it: he maintained into his seventies the pace of growth of a young genius finding his first voice. Indeed, he rendered the genre almost useless for others, and had, strictly speaking, no successor."[28]

27 Charles Rosen. *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 483.
28 Crutchfield, *Pure,* 81.

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