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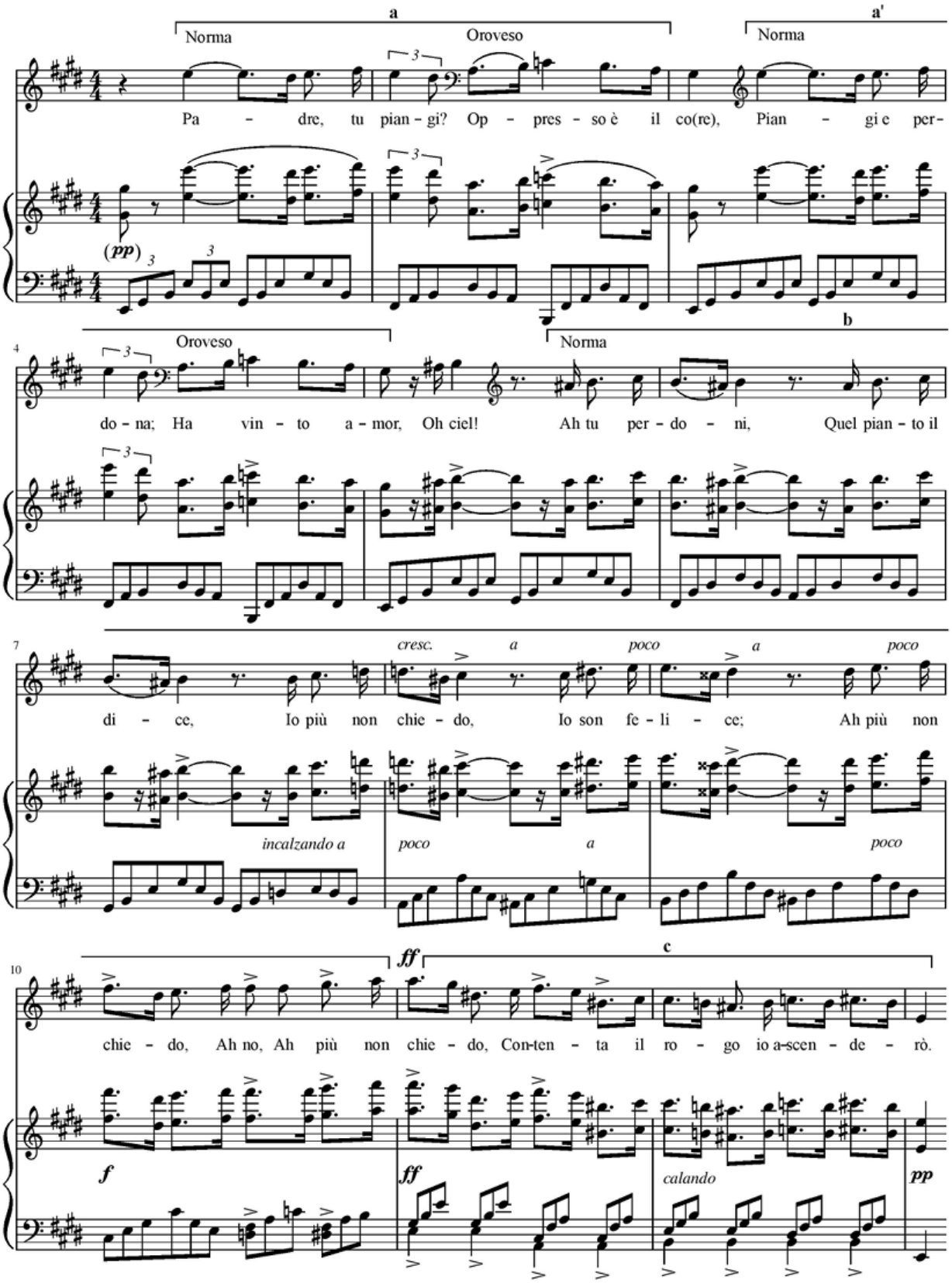
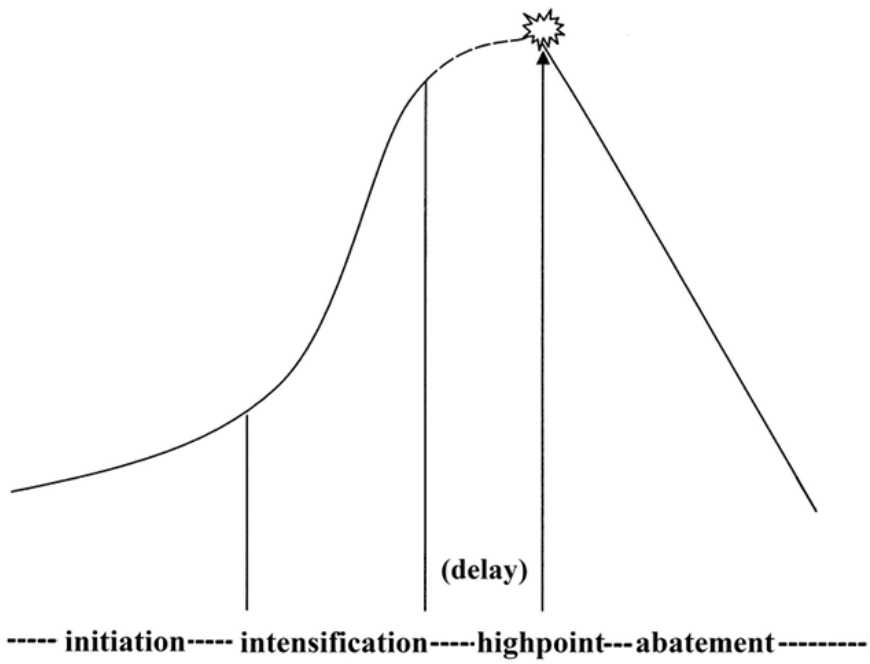
MTO 26.2 Examples: Lee, Climax Building in Verismo Opera: Archetype and Variants

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)
https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.20.26.2/mto.20.26.2.lee.html

Example 1. Reconstruction of Kerman and Grey's Analysis of Groundswell in Vincenzo Bellini, *Norma*, Act 2, finale (1989, 156)



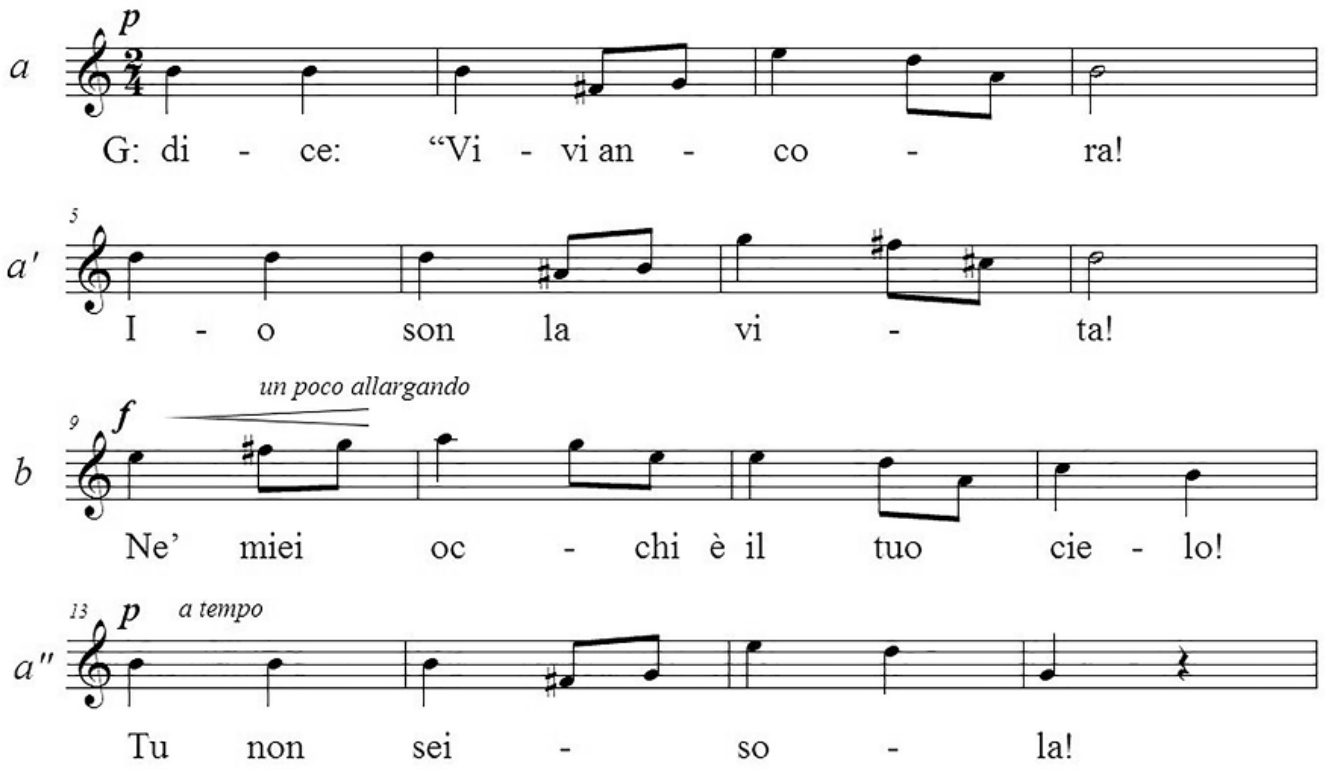
Example 2. Tension trajectory in the climax archetype: initiation, intensification, delay (optional), highpoint, and abatement (horizontal axis: climax progress over time; vertical axis: degree of dynamic intensity)



Example 3. Climax archetype stages: features and operational parameters

Climax stage	Features and operational parameters
Initiation	-Onset of dynamic arc; establishes periodic units -Characterized by balance and stability -Regular phrase unit, steady pace, and stationary harmony
Intensification	-Substantial increase of dynamic momentum -Pace acceleration (via unit reduction or dynamic markings), volume increase, and ascending pitches
Delay (optional)	-Temporary sustaining or slowing down of the pace of the intensification -Enlargement of unit size (thematic augmentation or harmonic stasis), performance indications such as *ritardando* and *rallentando*, rests, and fermatas
Highpoint	-Zenith of the climax process: the moment of highest energy -Can be an acute point (e.g. a chord) or extend over a longer duration when in the form of a thematic statement, such as in apotheosis-type highpoints -Strongest dynamics, highest pitch, and maximum dissonance or its decisive resolution
Abatement	-Closing of the dynamic arc -Cadential resolution -*Decrescendo*, descending melodic line, deceleration, rhythmic deactivation, thinning texture, and bare instrumentation

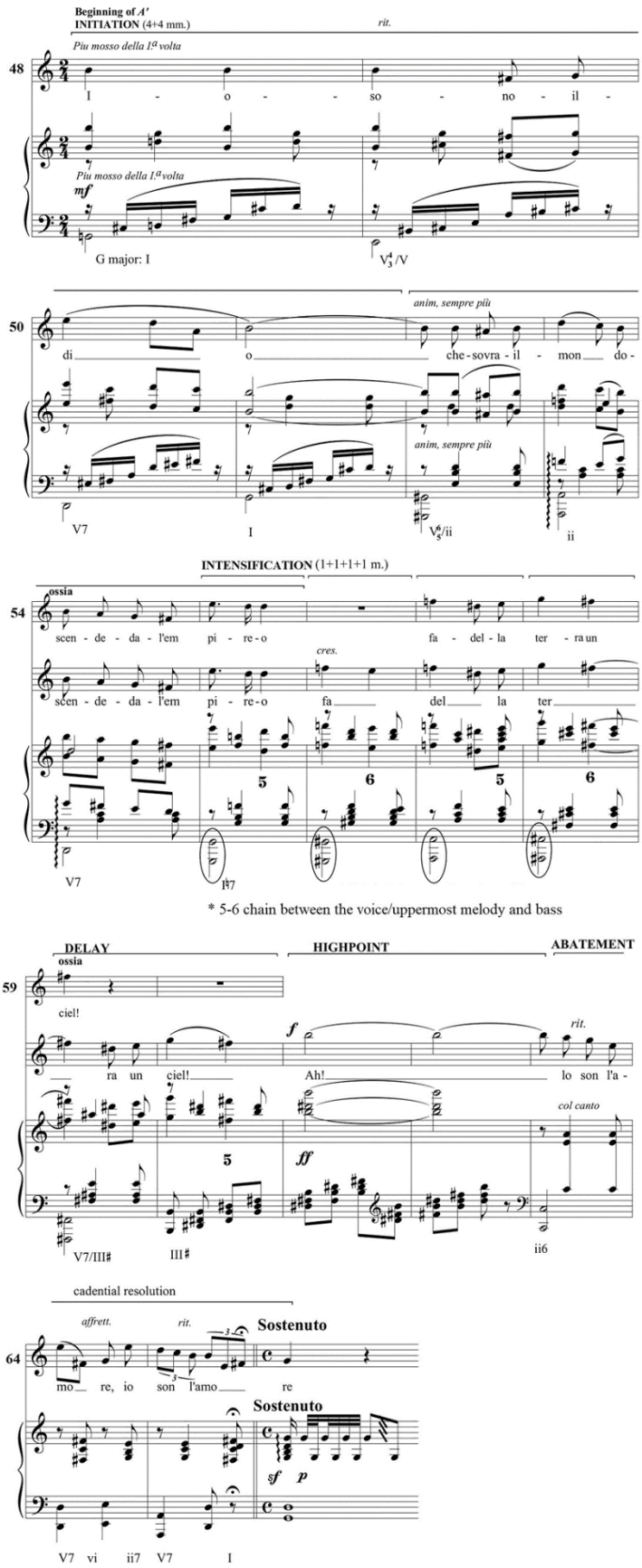
Example 4. Umberto Giordano, *Andrea Chénier*, Act 3, "La mamma morta," *A* section: lyric form (*a a′ b a′′*)



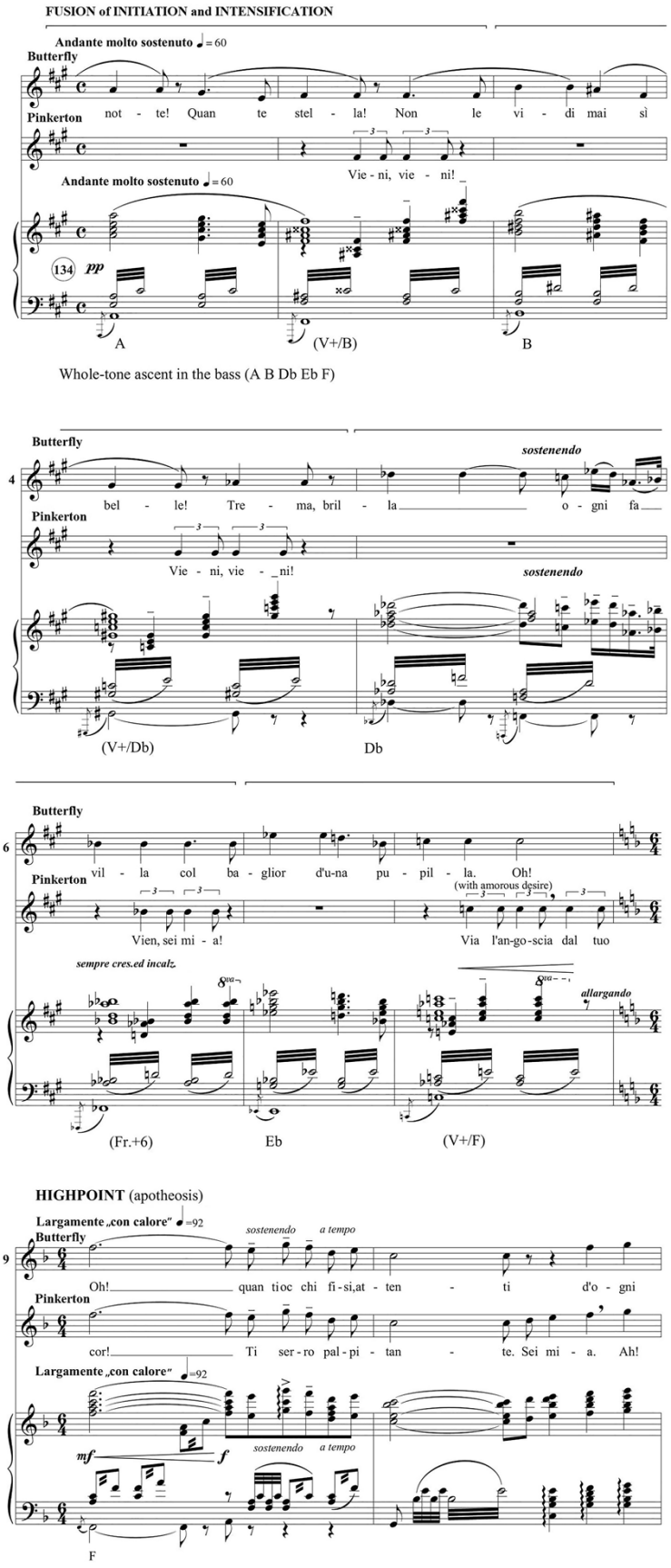
Example 6. Climax variants: deformations and operational parameters

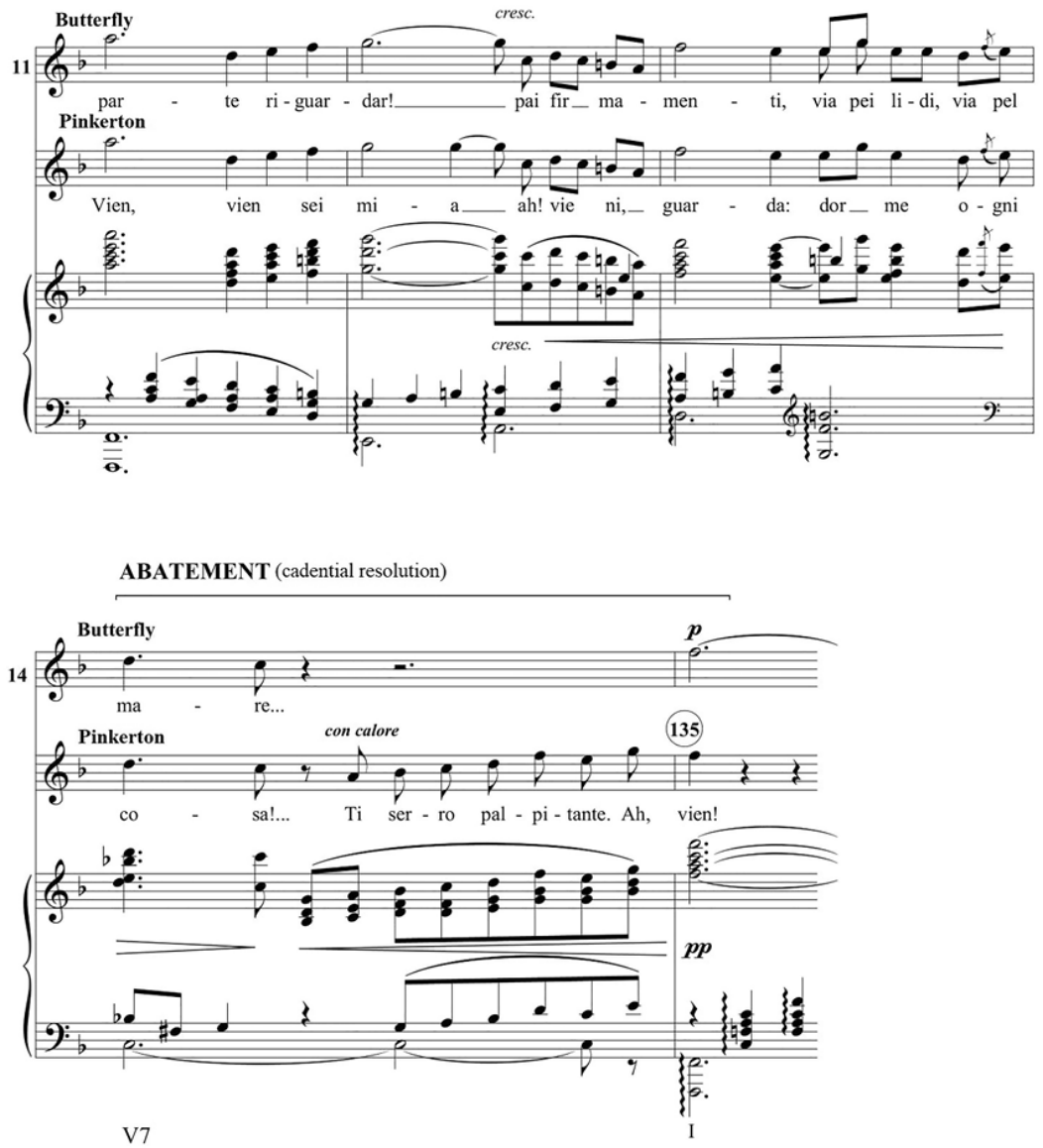
Climax variants		Deformations and operational parameters
Initiation-intensification Fusion		-Integration of initiation and intensification through simultaneous use of parameters for each stage
High region		-"A stretch of music of high activity, prepared in the same way as other highpoints, but prolonged over a significant period" (Agawu 1984, 170) -Can continue to accumulate energy and reach its own highpoint.
Highpoint frustration		-Highpoint realized with parametric deviation
Highpoint absence		-Complete silence in place of sounding highpoint or highpoint frustration
Compound structure	Climax succession	-A series of climaxes
	Climax nesting	-A climax containing a smaller climax(es)

Example 5. Umberto Giordano, Andrea Chénier, Act 3, "La mamma morta," *A′* section

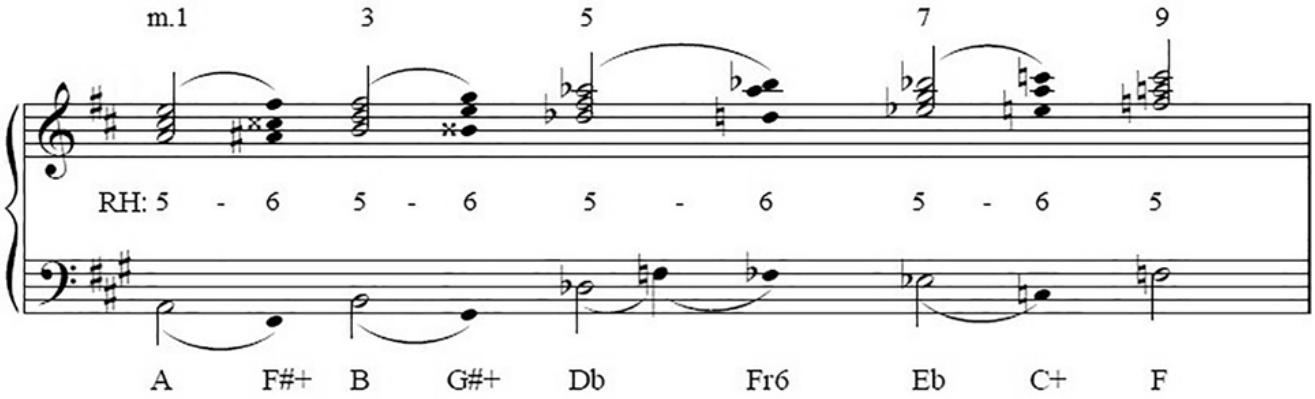


Example 7. Giacomo Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*, Act 1 duet, R134
Note: The regular grouping, shown with brackets in mm. 1–8, applies to the initiation only

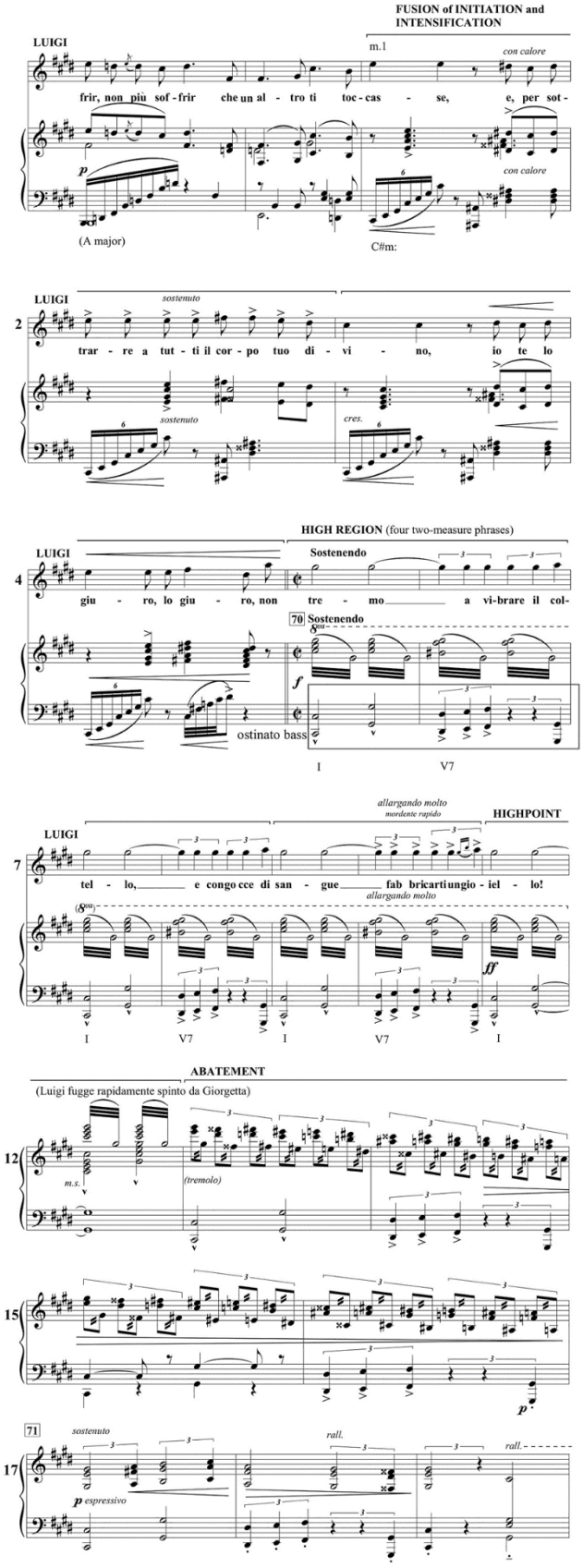


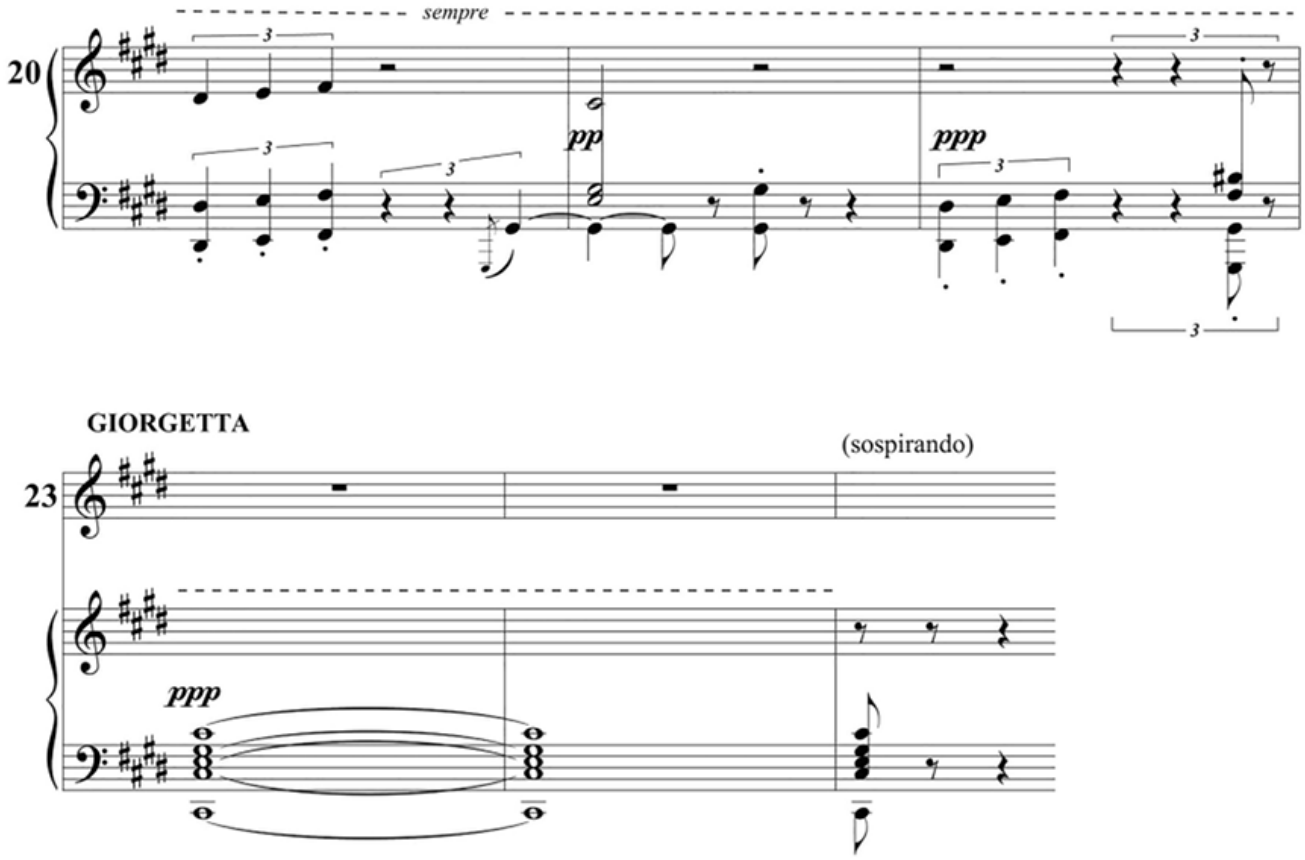


Example 8. Giacomo Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*, Act 1 duet, R134, harmonic progression and 5–6 chain, mm. 1–9.1

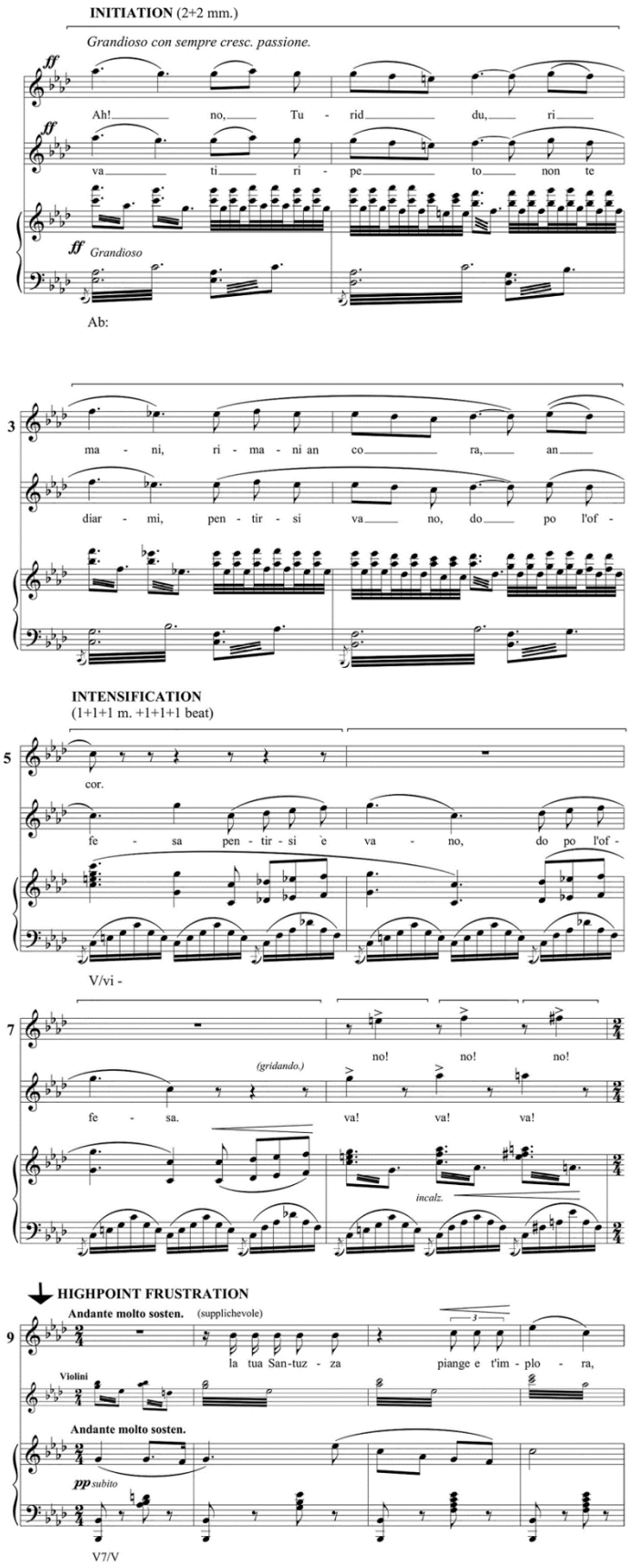


Example 9. Giacomo Puccini, *Il tabarro*, Luigi and Giorgetta's duet, R69/10–71
Note: The regular grouping, shown with brackets in mm. 1–4, applies to the initiation only




sempre
20
pp
ppp
GIORGETTA
(sospirando)
23
ppp

Example 10. Pietro Mascagni, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Santuzza and Turiddu's duet



Example 11. Riccardo Zandonai, *Francesca da Rimini*, Act 3 duet, R66–68

CLIMAX A
INITIATION (4+4 mm.)

FRANCESCA
Largo molto ♩= 50
66
lie - re che non ar -
B:I

FRANCESCA
smorz.
di - sce di fa - re di più
dim.
IV I I

FRANCESCA
Lo ser ra tra le brac - cia e lun - ga -
cres.
IV♮7

INTENSIFICATION (1+1+1 m.)

FRANCESCA
rit. a tempo
men - te lo bacia in boc - ca
rit. a tempo
mf espress.
I I

DELAY
cres.
accel. molto e cres.
ii$^{6}_{5}$ I VI# IV

CLIMAX A, HIGHPOINT
CLIMAX B, INITIATION (2+2 mm.)
Piu mosso ♩= 120
67
allargando
ff
I$^{6}_{4}$

CLIMAX B, INTENSIFICATION
accelerando
ii6 I6 ii°6

INTENSIFICATION (cont.) HIGHPOINT ABSENCE ABATEMENT

Soprani
Largo ♩= 50
(lontanissimo) Ah! - - - - - -
cres. molto

Tenori
(lontanissimo) Ah! - - - - - -

Bar. e Bassi
Ah! - - - - - -
68 Largo ♩= 50
acc.
pp
cres. molto
(bII) v7 IV

- - Pri - - - ma - ve - - -
- - Pri - - - ma - ve - - -
Ah! - - - - - Ah!
dim.
V

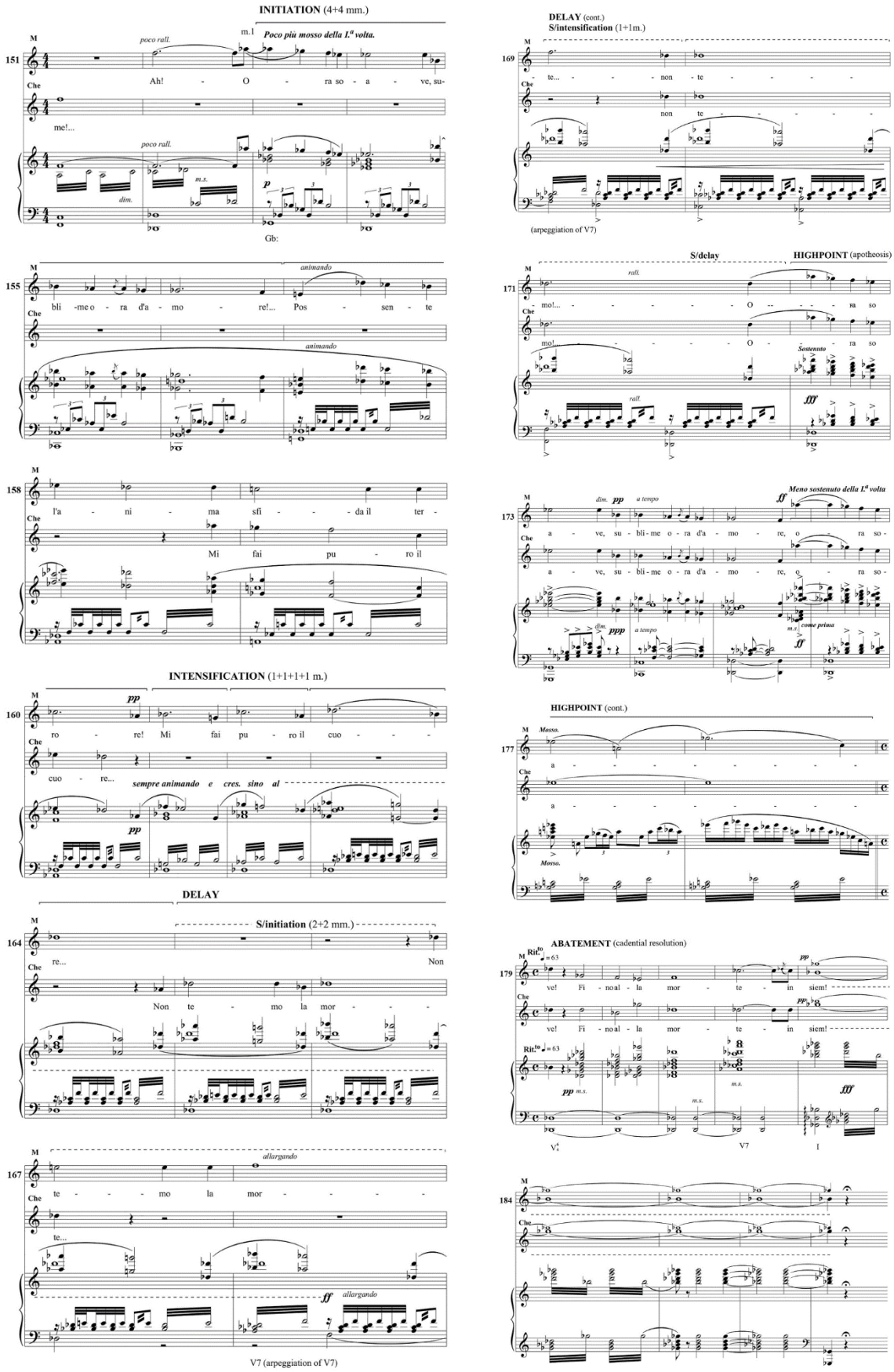
ABATEMENT (cont.)
PRANCESCA
(con la voce spenta)
No,

PAOLO
France - - - sca!
perdendosi
- - ra!
- - ra!
espress.
Violin solo
pp p
bII

FRANCESCA allarg.
Più lento
Pa - o - lo!

Sop.
Ah!
perdendosi

Ten.
Ah!

allargando
ppp Più lento ppp
I

Example 12. Umberto Giordano, *Andrea Chènier*, end of the Act 2 duet for Chènier and Maddalena