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THE VOCAL TECHNIQUE OF THE VERDI BARITONE

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## ABSTRACT

I wrote this thesis in an attempt to provide useful information about the vocal technique of great operatic singers, especially “Verdi baritones”—singers specializing in dramatic lead roles of this voice-type in Giuseppe Verdi’s operas. Through careful scrutiny of historical performances by great singers of the past century, I attempt to show that attentive listening can be a vitally important component of a singer’s technical development. This approach is especially valuable within the context of a mentor/apprentice relationship, a centuries-old pedagogical tradition in opera that relies heavily on figurative language to capture the relationship between physical sensation and quality of sound. Using insights gleaned from conversations with my own teacher, the heldentenor Graham Sanders, I analyze selected YouTube clips to demonstrate the relevance of sensitive listening for developing smoothness of tone, maximum resonance, legato, and other related issues.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

I wrote this thesis to assist readers interested in the vocal technique of great opera singers. For centuries, the leading opera singers have attributed their success to great mentors. Luciano Pavarotti and Dame Joan Sutherland both found their “guiding force” in conductor Richard Bonyngé. Heldentenor James King learned his craft from heldentenor Max Lorenz. Tenors Franco Corelli and Mario Del Monaco both credited Arturo Melocchi with developing their voices to their full potential. There are many ways to learn to sing well, but historically the apprentice/mentor relationship has proven to be the most effective.

In our own age, with vocal pedagogy turning increasingly to scientific methods, the centuries-old apprentice/mentor approach nonetheless remains relevant. New technological tools such as YouTube can enhance this mode of learning by providing evidence of great singing from the past. In what follows, I intend to provide an example of such an approach. I will use historical recordings, my own performances, and perhaps most importantly, interviews with my teacher, the heldentenor Graham Sanders, to suggest that in teaching the art of operatic singing there is no substitute for a close relationship with a vocal mentor.

Jerome Hines of the Metropolitan Opera of New York opens his book *Great Singers on Great Singing* with the warning, “This book could be injurious to your vocal

health.”<sup>1</sup> Hines suggests that while the material presented could prove helpful to some, it is not a panacea. Behind his quip lies a conviction that opera needs a renewed emphasis on apprenticeship. In my attempt to answer this call, I have limited the selections to Verdi baritones, my own voice-type.

The Verdi baritone is a category within the German “fach” (“trade”) system for opera. The fach system was developed to ensure the vocal health of singers by listing the appropriate roles a certain voice type could sing.<sup>2</sup> The baritone category is broad to say the least, since most males fall within this group. A baritone’s range can be extensive, as each individual voice is different, but most operatic baritone roles extend from a low A-natural to a high A-natural. Sound quality primarily determines the subset of a baritone. Lyric baritones sing higher than most baritones and possess a sweeter more melodic sound. Heldenbaritones sing lower and sound violent yet noble in tone quality. Comic baritones have an ugly sound, which makes them ideal for playing dwarves, goblins, jesters, etc.

For the Verdi baritone, certain distinctive characteristics were used by Verdi to create especially vivid roles (Iago from *Otello*, the title role in *Rigoletto*, and Germont from *La Traviata*, to name three prominent examples.) These properties include a dark and broad tone color, blossoming high notes, the snarl, and most importantly, *squillo* (ring), which allows the voice to penetrate the orchestra’s sound and project into the theater. Verdi baritones in fact have a wide range of repertoire—including roles by

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<sup>1</sup> Hines, Jerome. *Great Singers on Great Singing*. Pompton Plains: Limelight Editions, 1982, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Malone, Tiana. La Scena Musicale. Accessed March 26, 2014.

[http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm16-6/sm16-6\\_fach\\_en.html](http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm16-6/sm16-6_fach_en.html) .

Giacomo Puccini, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Georges Bizet, Charles Gounod, Umberto Giordano, and Vincenzo Bellini—but of course they are most at home singing the roles of Verdi.

This thesis is supplemented by a recording of my own performances of several arias from Verdi baritone roles. Here I demonstrate my application of techniques that I have gleaned from studying these great masters. My work has been guided throughout by studies with Sanders, who sang as a member of Oper Bonn for three years, Theater Bremen for four years, and performed as a freelance artist at venues such as the Hungarian State Opera in Budapest, the Edinburgh International Festival, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Semper Oper Dresden, Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, and the Istanbul Opera. For three years, this accomplished artist has graciously shared his knowledge about the art of opera singing with me. He has helped me develop my voice to new levels, teaching me how to reassess my technique constantly in order to improve it each day. It is my wish that after reading my account of the physical and mental efforts required to sing beautifully, the reader will gain a new appreciation for the tradition of one-on-one vocal pedagogy.

## Chapter 2

### Glossary of Scientific Terminology

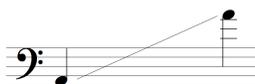
The following analyses will contain an abundance of vocal terminology. In an attempt to facilitate an easy reading of these chapters, I have included a glossary of technical terms. These definitions have been gathered from the books of two vocal pedagogy masters: William Vennard's *Singing: the Mechanism and the Technic*<sup>3</sup> and Cornelius L. Reid's *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*.<sup>4</sup> Although I believe these scientific explanations are not of paramount importance for singing technique, they can prove useful to some and interesting to most. I understand that for certain individuals, a scientific definition is important in their comprehension. However, most great singers avoid using scientific definitions because definite answers are considered too limiting. In my opinion, the art of singing is anchored in the imagination.

1. **Back vowels-** Vowels [o] and [u] seem farther back, especially when they are produced by bunching the tongue far back near the soft palate.
2. **Baritone-** The male voice type whose range lies between that of the tenor and bass. Although the modern baritone's range is practically identical with that of the pre-Romantic tenor, the baritone timbre is noticeably richer and heavier.

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<sup>3</sup> William Vennard. *Singing: the Mechanism and the Technic*, vol. 5 (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1967).

<sup>4</sup> Cornelius L. Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis* (New York, United States: Music House Ltd., 1983), 326, 346.



3. **Bel canto**- Italian “beautiful singing,” a style of singing characterized by brilliant vocal display and purity of tone.
4. **Chest voice**- Commonly used to refer to those tone qualities which respond to high levels of intensity in the lower pitch ranges. Functionally, these qualities result from the parallel positioning of the vocal folds by the cricothyroid and arytenoid muscles in a “thick” adjustment.
5. **Coloring the voice**- Making adjustments in the tonal texture of vocalized sound to reflect emotional responses to the music or text. Tonal coloration is achieved by subtle variations in the balance of registration, and by adjustments made for resonance. Terms such as “rich, dark, ringing, etc.,” are all verbal representations of tonal coloring.
6. **(To) Force**- The use of excessive energy to compensate for an absence of muscular equilibrium within the vocal tract. To “push.”
7. **Half voice**- Phonation at low levels of intensity, used artistically and to reduce the fatigue factor of the voice (“save the voice”.) In Italian, “mezza voce.”
8. **Head voice**- Tone qualities produced through the coordinated activity of both register mechanisms, the chest register and the falsetto, but with the falsetto strongly dominant. Called “head voice” due to the sensations of vibration in the head cavities.

9. **Heldentenor**- A male voice type of exceptional power and “ring” whose natural tessitura is slightly lower than that of the “dramatic tenor.” The true heldentenor is ideally suited for the heavier Wagnerian roles and is an uncommon voice type.
10. **Legato**- Italian, “connected,” connection between two or more tones in a musical phrase. A true legato reflects a constant, precise resonance adjustment for all tones and is inseparable from good singing.
11. **Line**- Legato tonal flow that gives a musical phrase the impression of possessing a linear dimension.
12. **Nasal tone**- A vocalized sound whose thin, “twangy” tonal characteristics are the result of throat constriction.
13. **Natural quality**- Property of a tone, apart from pitch and intensity, determined by its harmonic structure, by temperament and anatomical structure, and revealed only when the mechanism is free of constricting tensions with all its constituent parts finely “tuned” and well coordinated both physically and conceptually.
14. **Open throat**- An adjustment of the laryngo-and oropharynges that is free of constricting tensions.
15. **Passaggio**- Italian, “passageway;” an early frame of reference used to indicate that portion of the tonal range where it is necessary to cross from the chest voice to the head voice smoothly and evenly. The smooth and easy negotiation of the passaggio without loss of range, resonance, or flexibility is the hallmark of technical mastery.
16. **Pressure**- In singing, pressure is applied to the vibrating vocal folds by escaping breath.

17. **(To) Push-** During phonation, to expend energy that is improperly channeled or improperly absorbed by the vocal mechanism.
18. **Register change-** An abrupt transition from one register balance to another that causes a break in the tonal flow. The danger in using a divided registration is that it can split the mechanism apart, causing a vocal breakdown. Those who possess a well-developed vocal technique have at their disposal the option, rather than the necessity, of using the two mechanisms either separately or together.
19. **Resonance-** A spontaneous reinforcement and amplification of tonal vibrations which occurs whenever a cavity is tuned to the natural frequency of the pitch being sounded.
20. **Rich tone-** A sound whose harmonic spectrum is enriched by the proper reinforcement of both higher and lower partials or overtones.
21. **Tessitura-** Italian, “texture,” is a reference to a particular kind of tonal coloration and voice quality that determines voice classification.
22. **Timbre-** The wave form or complex harmonic structure of a sound as expressed in quality; the “color” of sound.
23. **Too far back-** A term used to describe vocal qualities produced when the throat is constricted.

### Chapter 3

#### Analysis of “Eri tu” Sung by Ettore Bastianini

Ettore Bastianini (1922-1967) was a famed Italian operatic baritone. His peers, including soprano Dame Joan Sutherland, praised his impressive sound and dramatic presence. “How splendid the voice was and what a big personality on stage,” remarked Sutherland. Bastianini began singing at age seventeen in a choral setting before taking lessons with local singing teachers Fathima and Anselmo Ammanati, who trained him as a bass. As a bass, Bastianini possessed a pleasant timbre, but his voice was limited in volume and in the bass register particularly soft and weak. He struggled reaching the lowest notes of the bass repertoire, and, in *Rigoletto*, relied on choristers to supply the last “Fa” in Sparafucile's aria.<sup>5</sup> Gino Bechi, another renowned baritone, told him, “You're really a baritone, you know. I'm a fool to say so as I don't need more competition, but it's true.” Although Bastianini enjoyed some success as a bass, he decided that the baritone repertoire fit his voice better and he made the switch in 1951 at age twenty-nine.<sup>6</sup> As a baritone he soon gained great fame, performing many times at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City (debuting in 1953), La Scala (debuting it 1948), the Royal Opera and Covent Garden (debuting in 1962), the Vienna State Opera (debuting in 1958), and in

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<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Hooley, *Ettore Bastianini- A Biography*  
[http://www.musicweb-international.com/hooley/bastianini\\_bio.htm](http://www.musicweb-international.com/hooley/bastianini_bio.htm) (Accessed 1/22/2014)  
 Contains interviews with Del Monaco and Bergonzi.

<sup>6</sup> Harold Rosenthal. “Bastianini, Ettore.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press,( accessed February 15, 2014)  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02286> .

many other opera houses around the world. Although his brilliant career was cut short by his death from throat cancer at age forty-four, he established himself as one of the greatest baritones in history, performing forty-four roles before his forty-fourth birthday. Speaking of Bastianini, biographer Charles A. Hooey observed, "If it was feasible to link every word of praise ever uttered, thought or spoken about this singer, how far would the strand of intelligence go in encircling the globe? Of course, I'd have to say, All the way!"<sup>5</sup> Hooey records many personal statements regarding Bastianini in his biography. Mario Del Monaco, a dramatic tenor known for his vocal power and stage presence, knew Bastianini as a cherished colleague, "one of the most beautiful voices from this part of the century, a rare example of diction and belcanto expressed with a voice of extraordinary beauty." Carlo Bergonzi, another great tenor of Bastianini's time respected Ettore greatly: "a natural beauty of voice, evenness of timbre, elegance of phrasing and gesture, soundness of diction and expression, a sure technique and, a deep seriousness and professional discipline, which made him a great baritone - perhaps the last real Verdian baritone." According to Kurt Malisch in the 2007 edition of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Bastianini's signature roles included Gerard from *Andrea Chenier*, Renato from *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and the Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*. The encyclopedic passage tells of Bastianini's powerful dark timbre and legato, but also of his lack of acting skills, which resulted in his lack of comic roles. His only successful quasi-comic character was the title role of *Rigoletto*.<sup>7</sup> Most of the singers mentioned in this

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<sup>7</sup> Kurt Malisch, "Ettore Basianini," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2007).

paper have been criticized for their lack of stage-acting skills, but it is important to understand that the voice serves as the primary actor in an opera. Although the voice reigns supreme, strong stage presence paired with glorious costumes and larger than life sets adds to the operatic experience.

Bastianini's efficient and reliable technique can be analyzed in the aria "Eri tu" from Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Here the character Renato appears distraught because he believes his friend, Riccardo, has slept with his wife, Amelia. The aria changes from violent and loud during the recitative to soft and sobbing through the middle section as Renato works through his emotional turmoil. Several distinctive qualities present themselves throughout Bastianini's performance. First, he sings with the "core" of the voice, which means that there is little coloring of the voice (it is not too dark or too bright.) This quality can be described as "honest" singing: we hear Bastianini's natural sound, with no manipulation of his voice. Another feature worth noting is his snarl. He was renowned for emitting a snarling sound at dramatic moments in an opera, such as in *La Forza del Destino* during the duet "Le minace, i fieri accenti," when Don Carlo (Bastianini) forces Don Alvaro (Franco Corelli) to fight.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfN7LMQfua8>; 5:00 provides a striking example.)

Opera singers rely on resonance and *squillo* (ring) in the voice to project over an orchestra. Ring, as described by Cornelius L. Reid in *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, is "a vibrant tone quality reflecting the presence of strong upper partials in the harmonic spectrum...open throated resonance is a tonal property which makes great singers so exceptional."<sup>4</sup> Reid also remarks, in his dictionary, that resonance ("spontaneous

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reinforcement and amplification of tonal vibrations”) is imperative for healthy singing. It must be noted that although “ring” is produced in the voice when the laryngopharynx “tunes to resonate from 2800-3400 cycles per second,”<sup>4</sup> singers do not tell their bodies to tune to a specific number. Rather, through muscle memory, a singer will associate a kinesthetic experience when creating the appropriate amount of “ring.” Instead of tuning to a number, singers tune to a physical feeling. Personally, this kinesthetic awareness came with relative ease. The key for me, since baritones are renowned for losing resonance on higher notes, was to focus on keeping the feeling of “ring” or buzz constant in my head. If that feeling ever diminished, I knew that I had lost “ring” and that the note was no longer desirable. This awareness proves invaluable because each venue I sing in has a different acoustic, so rather than listening for feedback, I sing off of the feeling and trust that the voice is in line based on that awareness.

Many singers believe that making a snarling face, which exposes the teeth can increase resonance.<sup>8</sup> Rather than focusing on miniscule internal functions, singers often prefer to think on a grander scale. Many singers emit a slight snarl to produce a “resonance crescendo.” They start with their lips naturally covering their teeth while singing, but gradually raise the biological curtain of the lip to uncover the teeth and add extra resonance. Snarling not only provides technical assistance with dynamics, but can also be used for stylistic interpretation of a villainous character by contributing to an evil, threatening appearance and sound.

“Eri tu” is a standard-repertoire work for a Verdi baritone, displaying the vocal range, power, and mastery of technique required of this voice type in a characteristically

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<sup>8</sup> Sanders, Graham (11/5/2013). Personal interview.

bold and aggressive role. The opening, “Alzati, là tuo figlio a te concede riveder” (“get up, there you may see your son,”) forcefully initiates the aria. Bastianini sings this phrase with an almost violent articulation. His presentation lacks smoothness, but proves domineering and detached, which is appropriate because he is issuing a command. The next phrase, “Nell’ombra e nel silenzio, là” (“there in the darkness and in silence,”) proves especially difficult to sing. The “là” is considered a back vowel, produced deeper in the oral cavity, and thus is inherently darker than a bright front vowel like “ee” or “eh” produced closer to the opening of the mouth. In this passage, it occurs right in the *passaggio*, the bridge between the chest and head voice and thus the most difficult part of the vocal range to navigate. Back vowels are toughest to sing in a high register because the resonance can easily shift back into the throat and sound muffled or “woofy.” To steer through this phrase, a singer can benefit from listening to how Bastianini sings with *appoggio* (leaning on the voice.) Cornelius L. Reid states that by maintaining the suspensory muscles of the larynx in equilibrium, the singer is able to “lean on the voice” and sing without fatigue.<sup>4</sup> Bastianini stresses the words in an iambic manner (which has the stressed rhythm of “da Dum”). This leaning, combined with constant resonance, allows him to travel to the top of his range with ease. Constant resonance is of the utmost importance, not only because it allows the voice to cut through the orchestra, but because it keeps the sound evenly balanced. Italians call this resonance “singing in the mask” because it is accompanied by a constant buzzy feeling in the cheeks and face (but not the nose!), in a mask-like distribution. When this resonance remains constant in all registers of the voice and on all vowels, it allows for easy production of sound and easy projection. Bastianini is a master of this type of singing. His vowels are all aligned resonantly

(meaning that each sound he makes has an evenness of sound quality) so that his voice sounds smooth from the bottom register (chest voice) through the middle register (*passaggio*) all the way up to the top register (head voice). Berton Coffin, a famous vocal pedagogue, created a vowel chart that mapped the vowel changes of the tenor Enrico Caruso through all registers. This chart shows how a singer must modify the voice in order to smoothly pass through all the registers, as Bastianini does throughout this aria. The chart writes out academically how a singer must change the coloring of vowels in different registers to maintain maximum resonance and evenness of tonal color.<sup>9</sup>

When Bastianini reaches the phrase “rossore e l’onta mia nascondi” (“hide your shame and my disgrace,”) he “throws” his voice around—yelling, screaming, or speaking on pitch—on “na-SCON-di”. This ability is found only in more dramatic voices, such as the great tenor, Mario del Monaco ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f54WPJLOe1o; 3:50](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f54WPJLOe1o;3:50) provides a good example of this technique.) Lighter, more lyric voices wear out when used in this way, but dramatic voices seem built for it. Moreover, the throwing of the voice is a stylistic choice that Bastianini makes for the sake of characterization, adding disgust to his admonishment of a sinful wife. This dramatic effect can impress the audience by creating an emotional connection and a feeling of pathos that carries over throughout the opera.

Bastianini’s first “snarl” in this aria occurs at 1:32 with “mie.” Even though his face is not visible in this clip while he is singing, the much brighter sound occurring at this point is evidence of the accompanying snarl. That brightness is caused by the extra

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<sup>9</sup> Berton Coffin, *Coffin’s Overtones of Bel Canto: Phonetic Basics of Artistic Singing*: (Scarecrow Press 1980), see the Accompanying Vowel Chart.

upper resonances produced by unveiling the teeth. Snarling and throwing of the voice create dramatic vocal sounds that add to a live opera performance.

Bastianini's techniques maximize the efficiency of vocal production. For example, at 2:38, just before he sings "L'universo" ("universe,") one can hear a brief but audible "uh" sound. This "uh," is a common technique used by almost all great opera singers. When renowned American *heldentenor* James King attended a concert of Beniamino Gigli, King asked the Italian master why he always put an "uh" sound before the "B natural" in *Celeste Aida*. Gigli replied that "uh" is the most relaxing sound a person can make.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, most singers will produce an "uh" sound prior to a particularly difficult note or after a challenging phrase to create the most relaxation in the voice. The "uh" occurs again at 2:58 before "dell'amico" ("friend"). Here the relaxing utterance occurs prior to a new phrase, almost like hitting a reset button. At first, one might think that this extra sound compromises the music. In fact, it assists the music in two ways. First, it provides a coloring to the end of the note that can be used as an emotional tool, enhancing the music. Secondly, by allowing the singer to relax and sing with proper technique, the aria will sound better, because the singer will remain in top form.

The soft section, "O dolcezza perdute" ("oh sweetness lost" starting around 3:38,) presents different technical difficulties. Singing with soft dynamics can be especially challenging, with soft high notes being the most difficult. Bastianini manages to maintain the ring in the voice throughout; that is his core sound and he takes great pains not to lose it. To make the sound softer one might say that he "thinks softer": he backs off a bit in terms of pressure, and he takes out some of the upper resonances (by not snarling.) The

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result is a piano sound that still projects through the whole house and is technically feasible. Cornelius L. Reid writes that open-throated soft singing is an “extremely difficult technical accomplishment” due to the balance of muscular systems in the throat.<sup>4</sup> Bastianini could only have achieved this equilibrium through well-practiced technique.

At 4:18 he releases the “seno” with an “uh” sound. That is the proper technique to come off of a vowel at the end of a note as it prevents his voice from becoming tight just before the high note. The most dramatic and biggest snarl comes at 5:05 when he sings “non siede che l’odio.” This stylistic choice helps his character emphasize that “only hatred and death remain” in his heart. Bastianini then thrills the crowd with a powerful finish to the aria. The final climax is a technical tour de force, as he inserts several “uh’s” right before the last high note to allow the fullest production of sound for a powerful, prolonged note.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis of “Nulla silenzio” Sung by Cornell MacNeil

Cornell MacNeil (1922-2011), of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was a world-renowned American operatic baritone specializing in the roles of Verdi and Puccini. F. Paul Driscoll of *Opera News* considered him a singer of unparalleled abilities: “MacNeil may have had rivals, but he had no equals.”<sup>10</sup> MacNeil studied with Wagnerian bass-baritone Friedrich Schorr at the Hartt College of Music in Hartford, Connecticut, and Dick Marzollo, a vocal coach at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.<sup>10</sup> Before his opera career began, his bold speaking voice earned him a job doing backstage announcements at Radio City Music Hall in New York City, where he announced the surrenders of both Germany and Japan at the end of World War II. MacNeil debuted at the New York City Opera in 1953, and had his first performances at both La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera of New York in 1959. His prolific career at the Metropolitan Opera included 642 performances covering twenty-six different roles. In 1969 MacNeil became president of the American Guild of Musical Artists.

“Big Mac,” as MacNeil was commonly called, was known for the ringing upper register (heard in this clip from a performance in the title role of Verdi’s *Rigoletto*

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<sup>10</sup> F. Paul Driscoll, "Obituaries: Cornell MacNeil," *Opera News* 75, no. 2 (August 2011), 76.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqGdLtRJIDs>; 00:10 shows the climactic conclusion on a high A) and his ability to attain “chiaroscuro.” The latter term, an Italian word meaning “light” (chiaro) and “dark” (scuro), refers to a singing style with significant “heaviness,” “weight,” or “color” in the voice while balancing the “squillo” (“ring”). MacNeil was also praised for his pure legato sound<sup>11</sup> and excelled in the longest and most vocally challenging roles of the baritone repertoire (Scarpia in *Tosca*, Iago in *Otello*, Di Luna in *Il Trovatore*, and Amanasro in *Aida*). Notwithstanding his vocal accomplishments, he was criticized for his lack of acting talent and often replaced by more accomplished actors like Sherrill Milnes and Robert Merrill for video recordings.<sup>12</sup>

MacNeil demonstrates verismo singing in the aria “Nulla Silenzio” from Giacomo Puccini’s *Il Tabarro* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiTEkiiM\\_1E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiTEkiiM_1E)). At this moment near the end of the brief (fifty-five-minute) one-act opera, Michele (MacNeil), an old stevedore, whips himself into a jealous frenzy over the supposed infidelity of his wife, Giorgetta. Though he suspects his employees of the misdeed, in fact Giorgetta’s lover is Luigi, another stevedore. Michele discovers the perpetrator, strangles him, shields him under his cloak, and grotesquely reveals the dead corpse to Giorgetta as the curtain falls.

Not all Verdi baritones can sing Puccini roles successfully because Puccini’s operatic style, verismo (“truth” or “realism”), contrasts sharply with the bel canto typical of the Verdi repertoire. Verismo opera must credibly portray the tragedy of life. Consequently, the singer often abandons the beautiful legato line of bel canto for a

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Bernas. “MacNeil, Cornell.” *Grove Music Online. The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, accessed February 20, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Bärenreiter, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2007).

violent screaming phrase of pain. There are two defining characteristics of verismo singing. First is the vocal “tear” or “cry” (which sounds almost like a crack, but is intentional) as sung for example by tenor Beniamino Gigli in the aria “No, pazzo son” from Puccini’s verismo opera, *Manon Lescaut* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_9Z9MHkX23k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9Z9MHkX23k); vocal tears can be heard at 00:40, 00:44, and 1:50). Gigli demonstrates here how one must use the voice as a dramatic tool in verismo opera to express real human emotion. The other central characteristic of verismo is the “sob,” heard in Mario Del Monaco’s live 1961 recording of Leoncavallo’s *I Pagliacci* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oN4zv0zhNt8>; Del Monaco sobs multiple times between 1:53 and 2:18). Regarding tears and sobs, tenor Graham Sanders advises that it is imperative that they not be artificial or manufactured in quality. In other words, one should not sing with the intention of putting a tear on a particular note. Rather, the effect must come in the heat of the dramatic moment, naturally.<sup>8</sup> Gigli tears because he feels his character beg to go into exile with his love, Manon. Del Monaco sobs because his character is distraught over his wife’s infidelity. Some voices are naturally built for this type of singing, while others lack the physical characteristics. While any singer can “tear” or “sob” once, only certain singers are capable of doing this while singing a three-hour opera. Cornell MacNeil had the natural vocal ability necessary to portray the jealousy and anguish of Michele.

“Nulla Silenzio” begins as Michele panics over his wife’s affair. In the first phrase (around 00:50), we first experience the dramatic difference in the color (resonances around the voice that give it sonority) and weight (heaviness of sound and

tone quality) of MacNeil's voice in comparison to that of Bastianini. These terms, weight, heaviness, etc. are difficult to define and in fact, are not found in dictionaries on vocal terminology, but certain words create images that prove useful for both performer and audience member. Although each individual will have a different comprehension of these words, I would describe "weight" as the amount of darkness in the voice and "heaviness" as the amount of weight being carried up throughout the voice's range. The best method for understanding the terminology is to listen to recordings or live performances.

MacNeil's weight and color of sound adds to his credibility as a bitter old stevedore. Older voices naturally have more breadth of tone and MacNeil's freakish amount of color assists the audience in understanding Michele. Even though MacNeil has a naturally round, rich sound, there is significant "ring"—i.e., "bite" or "squillo"—within the voice. On "dorme" ("sleep"), MacNeil executes an incredibly low note for a baritone, a low G. If the adage is true that in opera there are three registers—low, middle, and cash register—MacNeil proves that audiences admire successful singing in all of them. His free and resonant performance of this note demonstrates how relaxation on a low note can carry over to the technique required for high notes. At 1:32 on the word "noi," ("us,") MacNeil enters the *passaggio* of the voice. Since he is older in this performance (age fifty-nine), his voice has matured in weight (darkness of tonal color) and he can "open" up in the *passaggio* more than a young singer. A young performer would sing "noi" completely in head voice by changing vowel color, but an older singer like MacNeil can open the voice with more "chest" or "weight" up through the *passaggio* by maintaining the same vowel color.

Singing more openly in the *passaggio* is arduous and generally can only be accomplished several times each performance due to vocal fatigue. However, it sounds impressive and is necessary at dramatic moments. Modifying the vowels to transition into head voice through the *passaggio* proves much safer and easier, but can sound less remarkable at important dramatic events. As Big Mac sings “a Rouen” (“at Rouen”) at 2:10, his use of the chest voice is evident and dramatically effective. This climactic moment occurs as Michele realizes his wife’s infidelity.

A similar battleground in the debate over when to use head or chest voice arises in Verdi’s *Otello*. Otello makes his entrance with the “Esultate” mini-aria in which he proclaims his violent victory over the Moors

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srCGSB1okAE>.) As Mario del Monaco (in his most famous role)<sup>13</sup> sings the first word, “Esultate” (at 00:10), he opens and thus emphasizes the “ta” in “esultate” (“ehsulTAHtay”). The moment is made more dramatic thanks to the chest voice and unmodified vowel. Both MacNeil and Del Monaco understand the need for dramatic extremes in opera and make conscious technical decisions regarding head and chest voice to intensify emotion through their voices.

One can see and hear Big Mac’s first snarl at 2:34 when he sings “Sorrìdeva alla mia penna” (“smiled at my pain”). He snarls to convey the excruciating emotion. At 2:42 the orchestra swells in volume, but MacNeil’s squillo on “ee” vowels slices through the blaring pit. The “cash register” presents itself at 3:21. MacNeil opens up his body,

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<sup>13</sup> Harold Rosenthal. "Del Monaco, Mario." *Grove Music Online. The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, accessed February 20, 2014,

expands his chest and throat, and shows his teeth to achieve extra resonance on his free and ringing high note.

Cornell MacNeil's application of these techniques creates a unique performance of the aria "Nulla silenzio." Despite MacNeil's rich and dark tonal quality in comparison to Bastianini's or Protti's more direct sound, he still maintains a balance of fullness and ring throughout all registers. Because of his squillo, he cuts through the swelling orchestra and is easily heard throughout the opera theater. The free and resonant high notes confirm the efficiency of his technique, allowing him to achieve great beauty and precision consistently throughout long and challenging performances.

## Chapter 5

### Analysis of “Si può” Sung by Aldo Protti

Aldo Protti (1920-1995) was an Italian baritone renowned for his mastery of the Italian opera repertory, especially works of Giuseppe Verdi. Born in Cremona, Italy, Protti studied in Parma and made his operatic debut in Pesaro in 1948. He debuted at La Scala (as Amonasro in *Aida*) in 1950. His Metropolitan Opera debut came late in his career, at age sixty-five, performing the title role of *Rigoletto* in Verdi’s late masterpiece. Music critic and author Giorgio Gualerzi described Protti in 1972 as “one of the most reliable baritones in the business.”<sup>14</sup> Protti gained great fame over the course of his career for this reliability. The duration and success of his career are testaments to his admirable technique.

Sir Denis Forman, of Covent Garden, introduces Ruggero Leoncavallo’s *I Pagliacci* as “the one where the broken-hearted clown has to put on the motley and then stabs his wife.”<sup>15</sup> This modestly proportioned seventy-minute opera packs a mighty theatrical punch with sad clowns, sordid affairs, and murder. The work is actually a show within a show. A theater troupe performs for an audience, then succumbs to real

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<sup>14</sup> J.B. Steane. "Protti, Aldo." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed February 17, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/O009671?q=aldo+protti&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit> .

<sup>15</sup> Sir Denis Forman, *A Night at the Opera: An Irreverent Guide to the Plots, the Singers, the Composers, the Recordings*, (New York: Random House Inc., 1994).

emotions and murderous acts during their production. The aria “Si può” serves as the opera’s prologue. Tonio, a hunchback clown trouper, describes the ancient practice of theatrical performances which includes his assurance to the audience that what happens on stage is not real—ironic foreshadowing at its best.

In *Pagliacci*, the conventions of *verismo* (“truth”) opera require great technical singing. The prologue presents an especially difficult singing challenge for the baritone ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10Lt\\_pFt8\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10Lt_pFt8_8)). The obvious flaws of this 1961 recording helps demonstrate the persistent *squillo* that allowed Aldo Protti to sing reliably throughout his career. This technique, roughly translated as “ring,” allows a singer to project without over-exerting the voice. This *squillo* causes interference (a buzzing sound) in the recording and remains constant throughout the aria regardless of vowel or register changes.

A careful analysis of his performance of the prologue aria “Si può” by the character Tonio reveals other evidence of his mastery of technique. Protti demonstrates technically correct soft singing at 2:30, with “Un nido di memorie” (“a nest of memories sang in the depth”). At 2:34 one can hear that his upper lip covers the resonating teeth to hold back some volume for this softer section. As mentioned above (p.6), many singers believe that showing teeth adds resonance and volume of sound. Conversely, performers often will cover their teeth with their lips to dampen the resonance, much like using the left pedal of a piano. Falk Struckmann, a modern day heldenbaritone, provides a good example of using the lips in an attempt to decrease resonance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rcMI2Cfvbw> (especially 2:13). This biological tool allows a singer to feel physically as though s/he were singing at a normal volume level,

but with different dynamic results. Max Lorenz, one of Adolf Hitler's favorite Wagnerian tenors, (Lorenz was Jewish, but protected from the Nazis due to his vocal prowess) once said that piano (soft) singing is only a held back forte (loud).<sup>15</sup>

Protti, like Bastianini and other Verdi baritones, uses the snarl effect to assist him throughout the aria. (At 2:57 a slight snarl can be heard.) The effect is especially typical of Verdi baritones, who have a tessitura (literally, "texture") that is relatively high for a baritone. According to Cornelius L. Reid, tessitura is "a reference to a kind of tonal coloration and voice quality that determines voice classification and portion of the vocal range within the majority of pitches in a given opus are concentrated."<sup>4</sup> In other words, tessitura is the range at which a singer can comfortably sing for an extended period. Lower notes are more tiring and difficult to sing for Protti, so he projects them by adding resonance. In fact, the score suggests that Leoncavallo understood the struggles that Verdi baritones face with low notes. Evidence of this can be found at 3:17 starting with "vedrete" ("to show"). Here Leoncavallo writes "animando a poco a poco" ("more lively, little by little") so that the tempo can increase in order to get the baritone out of the exhausting low register: Piero Cappuccilli, another famous Verdi baritone, encounters the same tessitura issues that Protti does (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEucpIrgmq8>) and takes advantage of Leoncavallo's tempo markings at 5:41.

Dramatic singers must make use of a variety of effects in order to keep the audience's attention and convey a character's different emotions. The tenor William

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<sup>15</sup> Sanders, Graham (1/3/2014). Personal interview.

Johns, heard here singing “O sink hernieder” from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* with Dame Gwyneth Jones (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8H5LC0eXjM>), models this variety of technique. According to Graham Sanders, Johns once remarked that singing loudly must be paired with other vocal effects (soft, dark and light colorations, or throwing of the voice (p.8)); otherwise the audience would acclimate itself to the great volume of sound and the aural impact would be lost.<sup>15</sup> Protti uses the art of “throwing” his voice for a desired affect at 3:17 on the word “Dunque” (“therefore”). By doing this, Protti recaptures the audience’s attention before presenting additional narrative. He also uses this dramatic technique to accent the upcoming phrases; the variety in his vocal arsenal (colorations, voice throwing, and snarls) allows him to command the scene and the audience’s response to it.

At 3:31 there is a theatrical swell in the aria. Revealing that the audience will hear cries, pain, and laughter, Protti opens up his timbre to announce this drama. Regarding this technical device, Cornelius L. Reid writes that “true, well-resonated ‘open timbres’ are spontaneous tonal qualities that reflect the attainment of a high level of technical proficiency.”<sup>4</sup> Instead of changing vowel color on the higher notes, Protti maintains the same vowel color without losing resonance. Verdi baritone Carlos Alvarez demonstrates a similarly opened timbre in the passaggio (for dramatic effect) at 2:20 in the aria “Nemico della patria” from Giordano’s *Andrea Chenier* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5jYstWFHac>.)

Legato (“connected”) singing proves imperative in certain situations as breaks in sound can punctuate a phrase and change its meaning or undermine a buildup of emotion. With good technique, singers can connect all words smoothly without omitting

consonants or losing clarity. At 3:45, with “E voi, piuttosto” (“and you rather”), Protti shows off his seamless legato. The style employed here is a specifically Italian form of legato. In German operas, legato means getting from one note to the other as quickly as possible. In Italian repertoire, such as this, there is a small portamento between each note—i.e., a slide up or down which connects the notes (3:57 shows a sliding down.)

The final part of the aria leads up to the high “A flat.” Knowing that the high note is fast approaching, most “non-Verdi” baritones will under-sing this part of the aria—that is, they will sing softer to conserve energy. True Verdi baritones can rely on their technique and the natural ability of their unique voice-type to sing this phrase with power. Protti’s technique allows him to slowly “roll out” his voice like a cello with legato and lyricism through this part. The climax arrives at 4:30. The high “A flat” with a vowel change from back “oh” to front “ee” requires that the note be in the “hole.” Singers call it “sinking it in the hole,” because there is a complete relaxation and almost dropping down of the sound into a fully head-voice resonant high note. Protti initiates the high note with only the core of his voice and crescendos off of it. This confidence in his technique to start with that little “string” of sound and build upon it can often be found in great singers. An average singer of this role might panic on the high note and try to force it, which can result in a tightly squeezed high note, rather than trusting the resonance to carry him up to the top. If the “A flat” were not executed with maximum vocal efficiency, the following notes would suffer and possibly sound hoarse. At 4:40 Protti proves his technique again by maintaining a fullness of sound after the high note, all the way through to the final high “G natural.” Protti’s nearly flawless technique, exemplified in

this performance, led to magnificent individual performances and a long, successful career.

## Chapter 6

### Analysis of “Credo” Sung by Titta Ruffo

The Italian baritone Ruffo Titta Cafiero (1877-1953) is widely regarded as one of the greatest baritones of all time. His recordings during the peak of his career, 1907-1916, are considered to be the pinnacle of the baritone singing art.<sup>7</sup> Nicknamed “La voce del Leone” (“the voice of the lion”), he earned the admiration of contemporaries such as Victor Maurel, the original Iago in Verdi’s *Otello* and title character of Verdi’s *Falstaff*. Maurel described the notes of Ruffo’s upper register as some of the most glorious sounds he had ever heard.<sup>16</sup> For reasons that he did not explain, Cafiero reversed his name for the stage to Titta Ruffo. In his autobiography, *La Mia Parabola* (“My Parabola”), he wrote with disdain about his conservatory teachers and how they almost ruined his voice (although he omits how.) He claimed that his saving grace was his brother, Ettore, who was both a fine pianist and vocal coach.<sup>17</sup>

In 1898, at the young age of twenty-one, Ruffo made his operatic debut in Rome as the Herald in Richard Wagner’s *Lohengrin*. It took him several years to progress to lead roles on the large stages of Europe. He made his debuts in London, Lisbon, Milan, and Paris between the years of 1902 and 1911. Ruffo took an intermission from opera to

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<sup>16</sup> Henry Pleasants, *The Great Singers* (Simon & Schuster, New York 1966).

<sup>17</sup> Ruffo, Titta. *La Mia Parabola*. Dallas: Baskerville Publishers, 1995.

enlist in the Italian army during World War I. His New York Metropolitan Opera debut did not occur until 1922, when he performed Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*.<sup>18</sup>

Ruffo is considered a pioneer in the realm of operatic baritones because he pushed the limits of the voice by using it as a theatrical tool rather than just a beautiful melodic instrument. The earlier singers focused on glistening, graceful tones, in contrast to Ruffo's powerful full-bodied singing. However, Ruffo did possess the ability to sing classic bel canto style, with long lines and beautiful tone. For these reasons, many Verdi baritones look to Titta Ruffo as their true patriarch, and subsequent Verdi baritones can only aspire to follow his example.

Verdi's *Otello* (1887), written late in his career, proves more dramatic than earlier creations such as *Ernani* (1844) or *La Traviata* (1853). The role of Iago is considered to be the crowning dramatic role for a baritone in the Italian repertoire. It represents a significant theatrical and vocal challenge to portray the scheming, vengeful antagonist of Otello. Iago's "Credo," short for "Credo in un Dio crudel" ("I believe in a cruel God"), is a frightening soliloquy using agitated music to express Iago's utter hatred for the Moor Otello.

The first phrase of the "Credo" separates true Verdi baritones from the charlatans. It possesses a steadily ascending line going through the passaggio and ending on an E-flat, the note where most baritones would instinctively flip, i.e., transition, into head voice. This note must sound powerful and ferocious, but vocally in control; it must adequately set the emotional tone while projecting over the orchestral brass. The following audio clip, from a 1914 recording, illustrates these qualities:

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<sup>18</sup> J.B. Steane, "Titta Ruffo," *Singers of the Century* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), 161–5.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BrUq03w7SU>. At 00:38 as Ruffo sings “simile a sè” (“created me like himself”), he roars through that E-flat with squillo and chiaroscuro (balance of dark and light tonal color). At 1:12, another technically difficult passage arises during “Son scellerato perchè son uomo” (“I am evil because I am man”). The singer must traverse from a middle G in full chest voice up to an E-flat right in the passaggio of the voice within a short phrase. Not only must the transition be smooth, but, as Ruffo illustrates, the E flat must “roar” and fully convey the emotional impact of what Iago says.

A new challenging section of the aria begins at 1:48 with “Credo con fermo cuor, siccome crede la vedovella al tempio” (“I believe with a firm heart in all of these bad things”). Ruffo sings Iago’s “creed” with *appoggio* (leaning), especially on “siccome crede la vedovella al tempio.” He seems to almost bounce upward on each note, leaning in the manner of a beach ball floating on top of a waterspout. In English, many teachers use the word “support” instead of “appoggio.” This tendency can be problematic because the word “support” suggests rigidity, which in turn suggests tightness. Translating “appoggio” as “leaning” implies a healthy flexibility of breath control rather than a negative stiffness. Contrasting the smoothness of his appoggio, Ruffo throws his voice on “che il” (“that it”) at 2:22. This assertive, masculine singing style was revolutionary when Ruffo first appeared on the opera scene, for it rejected the prevailing aesthetic of vocal beauty.

At 2:56, the climax of the aria occurs with a high “F sharp” on “germe” (“germ”). Ruffo procures this high note with ring, freedom, and openness. Following the last high

note, an F-natural on “ciel” (“heaven”), singers will commonly produce an evil laugh—again, using their voices as theatrical tools for dramatic effect.

Even the relatively poor quality of a 1914 RCA Victor cannot hide Ruffo’s grand sound. The aforementioned vocal strengths of Ruffo are apparent in all of his roles, especially at 1:55 during his duet as the title character in *Rigoletto* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfVnmalHdMg>. *Rigoletto* is another vocally bruising role to perform (due to its length, quantity of high notes, and need for vocal power) and is considered to be a staple for Verdi baritones. Ruffo’s ability to crescendo on the final high note assures the audience that his technique is solid.

Modern day Verdi baritones are fortunate that due to media sources such as YouTube, they can listen to singers like Titta Ruffo. As the unofficial father of Verdi baritones, Ruffo’s recordings can prove to be invaluable. As the first true Verdi baritone, he will always serve as a prime example of how to sing this repertoire. Some of his critics do claim that he lost his voice in his fifties due to a lack of technique. But regardless of how his career ended, he had over twenty years of success on the world’s largest stages, and a hundred years after his vocal peak he remains an essential point of reference.

## Chapter 7

### Analysis of Common Technical Singing Errors

Perfect technique eludes even the best of singers—even Cornell MacNeil, Ettore Bastianini, Aldo Protti, and Titta Ruffo. Yet defining “perfection” in any art form proves difficult. The voice is a custom instrument in that it is unique for every performer. The beauty of the voice relies to some extent on the ear of the listener. Nonetheless, one could begin to define vocal perfection by evaluating sound quality. An evenness of tone and resonance throughout all registers of the voice would be the result of perfect vocal technique. The singers I have analyzed approach that ideal, largely because they avoid the small errors such as the loss of resonance on one back vowel, lack of legato, or insufficient ring in a note, that keep a singer from joining the elite ranks of Big Mac or Bastianini. The following examples show some of the blemishes that might result in exclusion from the Mount Olympus of Opera.

Examining faulty technique alongside masterful technique can help young singers develop a musical sensitivity that will aid them throughout their careers. In Verdi’s *Otello*, Iago’s “Credo” presents a difficult singing challenge through the passaggio. Some singers allow the sound to slide back into the throat, but good technicians will smoothly transition into head voice without this backward slide. At 3:09 of the audio file from 1996 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tge2gWQeZ54>), the baritone allows the note to go back into the throat, making it sound displaced and non-resonant rather than remaining balanced and resonant. A parallel example of the same section performed by Sherrill

Milnes, one of America's most famous Verdi baritones, typifies excellent technique

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTNr2KQzQw4> ).

In Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, "Eri tu" invites thunderous applause at the climactic high "G." Some singers "muscle through" the high note, resulting in a "woofy" sound rather than riding the resonance to the top. Figurative descriptions of this sort, though common in the European classical tradition of vocal pedagogy, can be difficult for young singers to process, but in conjunction with recordings their meaning becomes clearer. This attached link of "Eri tu", from 2003

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwPSfyJeQB8> ) shows a forced high note at 8:00.

The singer uses unnecessary muscular effort rather than resonance to push up to the top, resulting in a sound that lacks the beautiful blossoming effect displayed at 3:59 in the performance by Piero Cappuccilli, an Italian Verdi baritone renowned for his noble sound and phrasing, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNCbOve6kj8>).

In Verdi's *La Traviata*, the aria "Di Provenza" sung by the father figure, Germont, requires smoothness of sound on all vowels, especially through the passaggio, because Germont is describing the sea and its fluidity and the aria must paint that picture for the audience. Some singers struggle with this evenness of sound, while other good technicians will navigate these passages with fluidity. The following clip from a concert in 2012 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmbCdla6zsQ> ) shows a lack of smoothness and legato at 1:13 through the end of the phrase. The performer "jams" certain notes, audibly and visibly, and consequently ruins the legato line and gives a turbulent rather than fluid character to the piece. In the same phrase of "Di Provenza," which occurs at 4:03 in the following clip, Leonard Warren, an American baritone,

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MFC3LLFABE> ) avoids these errors and demonstrates the importance of technique in portraying the message of the aria within the opera.

Verdi's *Don Carlos* presents an opportunity for smooth legato with the aria "Per me giunto." Verdi's beautiful melody should be sung smoothly without effect, because the character, Rodrigo, is an authentic hero whose portrayal must be honest and true. This clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaE2gGuhZmc>) shows an over-colored vanilla sound. Great Verdi baritones have unique sounds because they sing without added effects or colors to manipulate their voices. Many singers who are not actually baritones nonetheless try to sing as baritones rather than in their natural voice type, and consequently produce tolerable imitations riddled with small errors. Voices are innately different, but they can be forced or manipulated to sound similar. A good vocal analogy might be the easily identifiable voices of singers such as Robert Plant, Freddie Mercury, or Roger Waters. Such strongly personal styles are rare nowadays, with singers more likely to force their voices to emulate an ideal to which they are not suited. An attempt to over-sing can also detract from the natural quality of the voice and is particularly notable in smooth legato passages. The following performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNoOq-i27ZY>) shows the power of the unaffected, natural, 'raw' voice. Renato Bruson's "Per me giunto" has some of the most beautiful legato and proves that when sung honestly the aria comes to life.

Great technique benefits both singer and audience. For the singer, it provides the means to a healthy singing career, not to mention powerful musical expression. The

audience reaps the benefits of good singing as appreciative witnesses to an exceptional performance.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, by meticulously listening to great opera performers one can gather numerous invaluable lessons regarding vocal technique. I continue to believe that singing is best taught through an apprentice/master relationship. Thanks to modern technology, such as YouTube we are capable of listening to and watching great singers, such as the ones referenced in previous chapters, perform their art. These great singers can serve as masters in our learning process.

Throughout this paper, I have attempted to guide the reader through what I believe to be a valid method for learning vocal technique. By listening to how great singers sing and attempting to mimic their function (not their sound) I believe one can achieve great success in opera.

It is my sincere hope that after reading this paper, the reader has not only a better understanding of the little “tips and tricks” used by opera singers, but that s/he has developed an appreciation for this historic and beautiful art form.

**Appendix A****Text and Translation of “Eri tu”**

Giuseppe Verdi

*Un ballo in maschera*

“Eri tu” (It Was You)

Ettore Bastianini, baritone

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7B8qgElu8Rw><sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ettore Bastianini- Eri tu (1957)

Alzati; là tuo figlio a te concedo riveder	Get up, there you may see your son.
Nell'ombra e nel silenzio, là,	There in the darkness and in silence
Il tuo rossore e l'onta mia nascondi.	Hide your shame and my disgrace
Non è su lei, nel suo fragile petto	No, it's not in her fragile breast
Che colpir degg'io	That I should direct my blow
Altro, ben altro sangue	Another, with the blood of another
A terger dèssi l'offesa!	I must wash away my insult
Il sangue tuo!	With your blood!
E lo trarrà il pugnale	And I shall run my dagger
Dallo sleal tuo core:	Through your vile heart
Delle lacrime mie vendicator, vendicator, vendicator!	And my tears shall be avenged! Avenged, Avenged!
Eri tu che macchiavi quell'anima,	It was you who had defiled my soul,
La delizia dell'anima mia	The joy of my heart.
Che m'affidi e d'un tratto esecrabile	I trusted you, and your abominable deed had poisoned the
L'universo avveleni per me, avveleni per me!	whole world for me.
Traditor! Che compensi in tal guisa	Traitor! So this is how you repay
Dell'amico tuo primo, dell'amico tuo primo la fè!	The fidelity of your friend. Of your most faithful friend.
O dolcezze perdute!	Oh, my lost happiness, oh sweet memories. Of the love that
O memorie d'un amplesso che l'essere india!	gave me divine bliss.
Quando Amelia sì bella, sì candida sul mio seno brillava	When for Amelia, so fair, so pure
d'amor	Love had kindled in my heart!
Quand'Amelia sul mio seno brillava d'amor, brillava d'amor!	When for Amelia, love had kindled in my heart! Kindled in
È finita: non siede che l'odio,	my heart!
Non siede che l'odio, che l'odio e la morte nel vedovo cor!	It is gone! Only hatred. Only hatred, only hatred and
O dolcezze perdute!	Death in my empty heart.
O speranze d'amor, d'amor, d'amor!	Oh, my lost happiness Oh, hope and love! Love! Love

**Appendix B**  
**Text and Translation of “Nulla silenzio”**

Giacomo Puccini

*Il Tabarro*

“Nulla silenzio” (Nothing, silence”

Cornell MacNeil, baritone

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiTEkiiM\\_1E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiTEkiiM_1E)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cornell MacNeil- Nulla silenzio (1981)

**Italian:**

Nulla! Silenzio! È là! Non s'è  
 spogliata non dorme Aspetta... Chi? Che  
 cosa saspetta? Chi? chi? Forse il *mio*  
 sonno!... Chi l'ha trasformata? Quel ombra  
 maledetta è discesa fra noi? Chi l'ha  
 insidiata? Il Talpa? Troppo vecchio!... Il  
 Tinca forse? No... no... non pensa... beve. E  
 dunque chi? Luigi... no se proprio questa  
 sera voleva abbandonarmi... e m'ha fatto  
 preghiera di sbarcarlo a Rouen!... Ma chi  
 dunque? Chi dunque? Chi sarà? Squarciare  
 le tenebre! Vedere! E serrarlo così, fra le  
 mie mani! E gridargli: Sei tu! Sei tu! E  
 gridargli: Sei tu! Sei tu! Il tuo volto livido,  
 sorrideva alla mia pena! Sei tu! Sei tu! Su!  
 su! su! Dividi con me questa catena! Dividi  
 con me questa catena!... Accumuna la tua  
 con la mia sorte giù insiem nel gorgo più  
 profondo!... La pace è nella morte!

**English:**

Nothing. Only silence. She hasn't  
 undressed. She's not sleeping. Wait! Who is  
 she waiting for? Am I just dreaming?  
 Who changed her? What shadow has fallen  
 between us? Who has seduced her? Talpa?  
 He's too old. Could it be Tinca? No, all he  
 thinks about is drinking. Is it Luigi?  
 No, he said he wanted to leave tonight.  
 He asked me to drop him off in Rouen. Then  
 who could it? Who could it be? If only I  
 could solve this mystery.  
 If I could see and crush him in my hands.  
 And shout at him "It's you! It's you!" If I  
 could see that face that mocks me so. It's  
 you! It's you! It's you!  
 Share this burden with me. Drag me down  
 with you into your destiny and we will fall  
 into the black abyss together. Only your  
 death will bring me peace!

**Appendix C****Text and Translation of “Si può”**

Ruggero Leoncavallo

*I Pagliacci*

“Si può?” (May I?)

Aldo Protti, baritone

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10Lt\\_pFt8\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10Lt_pFt8_8)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Aldo Protti- Si può (1961) Tokyo

**Italian:**

Si può?  
 Signore! Signori!  
 Scusatemi se da sol mi present.  
 Io son oil Prologo.  
 Poichè in iscena ancor  
 Le antiche maschere  
 Mette l'autore,  
 In parte ei vuol riprendere  
 Le vecchie usanze,  
 E a voi di nuovo inviami.  
 Ma non per dirvi come pria:  
 Le lacrime che noi versiam son false!  
 Degli spasimi e de'nostri martir  
 Non allarmatevi!  
 No! L'autore ha cercato invece  
 Pingervi uno quarcio di vita.  
 Egli ha per massima sol  
 Che l'artista è un um  
 E che per gli uomini scrivere ei deve.  
 Ed al vero ispiravasi.  
 Un nido di memorie in fondo a l'anima  
 Cantava un giorno,  
 Ed ei con vere lacrime scrisse,  
 E I singhiozzi il tempo gli battevano!  
 Dunque, vedrete amar  
 Sì come s'amano gli esseri umani;  
 Vedrete dell'odio I tristi frutti.  
 Del dolor gli spasimi,  
 Urli di rabbia udrete,  
 E risa ciniche!  
 E voi, piuttosto che le nostre  
 Povere gabbane d'istrioni,  
 Le nostr'anime considerate,

**English:**

May I?  
 Ladies! Gentlemen!  
 Excuse me if I present myself all alone.  
 I am the Prologue.  
 Since the author puts the ancient  
 Characters  
 On the stage again  
 He wishes, in part, to recapture  
 The old traditions,  
 And again he sends me to you.  
 But not to tell you, as before:  
 "The tears that we shed are feigned!  
 Do not be alarmed at our sufferings  
 And our torments!"  
 No! The author has tried, rather.  
 To paint for you a slice of life.  
 He has for his sole maxim  
 That the artist is a man  
 And that he must write for men.  
 And he was inspired by the truth.  
 A nest of memories sang in the depth  
 Of his soul one day,  
 And he wrote with real tears,  
 And the sobs beat time for him!  
 And so, you will see loving  
 The way human beings love each other; you will  
 see the sad fruits of hatred. You will hear cries of  
 grief,  
 Screams of rage,  
 And cynical laughter!  
 And you: consider our souls,  
 Rather than our shabby  
 Actors' garb,

Poichè siam uomini di carne e d'ossa,

E che di quest'orfano mondo

Al pari di voi spiriamo l'aere!

Il concetto vi dissi...

Or ascoltate com'egli è svolto.

Andiam.

Incominciate!

Because we are men of flesh and blood

And because we, just like you, breathe

The air of this forsaken world!

I've told you the concept...

Now listen to how it is developed.

Let's go.

Begin!

## Appendix D

### Text and Translation of “Credo”

Giuseppe Verdi

*Otello*

“Credo” (I believe)

Baritone, Titta Ruffo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BrUq03w7SU><sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Titta Ruffo- Credo (1914)

**Italian:**

Credo in un Dio crudel che m'ha creato  
simile a sè e che nell'ira io nomo. Dalla viltà  
d'un germe o d'un atomo vile son nato. Son  
scellerato perchè son uomo; e sento il fango  
originario in me. Sì! Questa è la mia  
fè! Credo con fermo cuor, siccome crede la  
vedovella al tempio, che il mal ch'io penso e  
che da me procede, per il mio destino  
adempio. Credo che il guisto è un istrion  
beffardo, e nel viso e nel cuor, che tutto è in  
lui bugiardo: lagrima, bacio,  
sguardo, sacrificio ed onor. E credo l'uom  
gioco d'iniqua sorte dal germe della culla al  
verme dell'avel. Vien dopo tanta irrision la  
Morte. E poi? E poi? La Morte è il Nulla. È  
vecchia fola il Ciel!

**English:**

I believe in a cruel God who created me like  
himself in anger of whom that I name. From  
the cowardice of a seed or of a vile atom I  
was born. I am a son evil because I am a  
man; and I feel the primitive mud in  
me. Yes! This is my faith! I believe with a  
firm heart, so does the widow in the  
temple, the evil I think and proceeds from  
me, fulfills my destiny. I think the honest  
man is a mockery, in face and heart, that  
everything is in him is a lie: tears, kisses,  
looks, sacrifices and honor. And I think the  
man plays a game of unjust fate the seed of  
the cradle the worm of the grave. After all  
this foolishness comes death. And then  
what? And then? Death is  
Nothingness. Heaven is an old wives' tale!

**Solo Recital**March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

St. John's Lutheran Church, Lewistown, Pa.

*Audio found on separate file*Per me giunto from *Don Carlos*.....G. VerdiDi provenza from *La Traviata*.....G. VerdiO du mein holder Abendstern from *Tannhäuser*.....R. WagnerEri tu from *Un ballo in maschera*.....G. VerdiLook, through the port from *Billy Budd*.....B. BrittenHarlekin's Aria from *Ariadne auf Naxos*.....R. Strauss

Avant de quitter from *Faust*.....C. Gounod

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## ACADEMIC VITA

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### Education

BA Music from Pennsylvania State University May, 2014

Schreyer Honors College May, 2014

Phi Beta Kappa

### Experience

#### Voice

- Bayerische Staatsoper Young Artist-2014-15
- Cincinnati Opera Chorus-Summer 2014, Summer 2013
- Comprimario role in Der Rosenkavalier, Cincinnati Opera-Summer 2013
- Various concerts in Central Pennsylvania, including performing bass solos for Handel's Messiah 2012 and 2013, and a solo recital March, 2014 at St. John's Lutheran Church, Lewistown

#### Piano

- Performed at Carnegie Hall and Philadelphia's Kimmel Center

### Competitions

#### Voice

- Winner of The Opera Foundation Björn Eklund Scholarship

#### Piano

- Finalist in Philadelphia Orchestra Albert M. Greenfield Student Competition
- Winner of Young Pianist Competition of New Jersey
- At Penn State-Winner of MTNA, Jury honors and jury recognition

### Teachers and Coaches

#### Voice

- Mitchell Cirker, Eric Malson, Kathy Olsen, Graham Sanders, Henri Venanzi

#### Piano

- Timothy Shafer, Enrico Elisi, Marcantonio Barone