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**Visible Vocality. Ornamentation, Interpretation, and Expressivity
in 19th-Century German and French Singing Manuals¹**

A discussion with some senior melomaniacs, nostalgic of the great voices from bygone decades, could easily end in the statement that today's singers all sound more or less the same: standardized, cold, unable to reach beyond correct execution. Even from the (theoretically) less passionate point of view of the musicologist, it must be admitted that today's dominant approach consists in a strict adherence to a written score. Conductors often encourage, or even impose fidelity to the composer's supposed will, using it as a shield against the singers' possible arbitrariness. A notorious case was Riccardo Muti's peremptory choice to eliminate the two traditional "do di petto" in "Di quella pira" (Trovatore, Milan, Teatro alla Scala 2000), because they were not expressly written by Verdi. Such blind fidelity to the written score results in terminological and philological inaccuracies.² Furthermore, the belief that expressive nuances and interpretative choices are already intrinsic in the score induces performers to scarcely add or modify anything besides breath marks and minor articulations or dynamics, resulting in a performative rigidity unsuitable to this repertoire. In addition, modern staging often requires interpreters to perform gestures and movements that are at odds with the original libretto and music. In such cases, the understanding of historical performance traditions concerning dynamics, articulation, and ornamentation, as codified and taught in 19th-century French and German vocal treatises, is essential to the acoustic and visual performance of these works. Suitably applied, ornaments and "graces" were intended to help singers depict the required sentiments of dramatic moments, thereby enhancing strong expressivity by making movement more "audible" and vocality more "visible".

New singing methods in 19th-century France and Germany After the French Revolution, the creation of the Parisian Conservatoire in 1795 entailed the preparation of new vocal and instrumental teaching materials. The first singing methods adopted by the Conservatoire

- 1 This paper is based on material analyzed and discussed in my PhD: *Manieren e trattati di canto. Didattica dei mezzi espressivi vocali tra esempi musicali ed espedienti linguistici (1600–1900)*, University of Berne (to be published). This research is part of the project "Kontinuität oder Koinzidenz? Gesangspraxis und Gesangsästhetik 'italienischer' Prägung im Spiegel schriftlicher und akustischer Quellen (1600–1950)" led by Prof. Dr. Florian Bassani and funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).
- 2 Cf. Marco Beghelli: *Per fedeltà ad una nota*, in: *Il Saggiatore Musicale* 8 (2001), No. 2, pp. 295–316; Thomas Seedorf: *Sängerinnen und Sänger*, in: *Verdi Handbuch*, ed. by Anselm Gerhard and Uwe Schweikert, Stuttgart ²2013.

were written by two Italian singers, the tenor Bernardo Mengozzi (whose treatise was in fact published posthumously in 1804 by several teachers of the Parisian institution) and the castrato Girolamo Crescentini, who was invited to the French capital by Napoleon himself.

Bernardo Mengozzi, tenor, composer, and impresario, was invited to teach at the Parisian Conservatoire shortly after its creation in 1795 by Cherubini, with whom he had worked some years before at the *Théâtre de Monsieur*. Though he distinguished himself in the comic repertoire, he had also learnt to sing the technically more demanding *opéra seria* with the castrato Potenza of the Ducal Chapel of Venice.³ Mengozzi's *Méthode de chant du Conservatoire* shows a structure remarkably different from the French vocal manuals of the previous decades, such as *L'Art du chant* by Jean-Antoine Bérard (1755), *Principes de l'art du chant* by François-Joseph Lécuyer (1769) or *Principes de musique* by Albert-Auguste Raparlier (1772). These are mostly focused on 'basic' music theory, aesthetics and pronunciation, with a few musical examples. However, they lack the numerous exercises found in Mengozzi's *Méthode*, the textless "vocalises" that insist on physiological and technical aspects of singing such as sound homogeneity in the different voice registers, articulation, breathing, and dynamics. This new model of *méthode* established itself throughout the early 19th century and influenced the many manuals that appeared in the next decades. The most relevant French treatises of these years, written by Girolamo Crescentini, Alexis de Garaudé, Gilbert Duprez and Auguste Mathieu Panseron, followed this trend to some extent. While Italian methods of this time were almost exclusively dedicated to such *solfeggi* and *vocalizzi*, French manuals tended to present a structure in two parts, in which aesthetic matters follow preliminary practical exercises for building the voice. This new style of singing method was also adopted in neighbouring Germany, although the first German conservatory was only founded in 1843 by Mendelssohn in Leipzig. Did this occur autonomously, or should we infer a French influence on German vocal didactics? In fact, several French methods had been translated and published in Germany since the beginning of the 19th century (among them Mengozzi's, Crescentini's and later Duprez' manuals) catering to the didactical needs of vocal teachers and pupils. Perhaps it was due to the influence of French methods that native German manuals – such as those by Johann Friedrich Schubert (ca 1804), Peter von Winter (ca 1825) or Joseph Mainzer (1831) – also focused on vocalises more than in the past.

Mournful articulations: audible breathing, sobbing, sighing, and weeping Most mid-19th-century German treatises begin with basic aspects of vocal training, voice building and

3 Pier Giuseppe Gillio: Bernardo Mengozzi, in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, online, www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardo-mengozzi_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/ (18. 11. 2016).

technical exercises, relaying aesthetic matters that imply advanced technical skills to later chapters about *Vortrag*. Nonetheless, expressive articulations and dynamic “graces” are sometimes presented within early technical chapters, so that there is not always a clear separation between voice building and aesthetic questions. For example, with respect to articulation, one may find, on the one hand, technical approaches to producing note-connections (*legato*, *staccato*, *marcato*, *martellato*, et cetera) and, on the other hand, expressive solutions such as articulations achieved by interrupting the vocal line through audible breathing to depict varying degrees of fierce sentiment.

The German composer and musicologist Adolph Bernhard Marx (1795–1866) is mostly famous for his composition treatise, yet his first theoretical work was a *Gesangskunst* (1828) in which he notably analyzes the effectiveness of pauses between syllables of the same word:

“Diese Unterbrechungen stellen sich als unvermeidliche Folgen der Gemüths-Aufregung dar und entbinden daher von der auf einem allgemeinen und darum nicht überall absolut nothwendigen Grunde beruhenden Regel [...], nur bei periodischen Abschnitten Athem zu schöpfen, keinen Zusammenhang – am wenigsten den eines Wortes durch Athemholen zu trennen.

Um des Ausdrucks einer solchen Bewegung Willen ist es daher gestattet, nicht bloß zwischen zusammengehörenden Worten, sondern selbst im Worte Athem zu schöpfen.

Ein Beispiel für die Anwendung dieses Ausdrucksmittels ist die Arie aus *Così fan tutte* von Mozart [...].”⁴



EXAMPLE 1 Examples by Mozart: *Così fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni*, after Adolf Bernhard Marx: *Gesangskunst*, pp. 246f.

In both of Marx’ musical examples, the characters sigh or pant because of feelings they cannot control: in the first one, Dorabella is desperate because of the departure of her lover Ferrando, suddenly called to war; in the second example, Donna Anna has just seen her father killed by Don Giovanni. Here Marx describes choices already made by the composer (in this case Mozart) who indicates through notation that the singer should

4 “These interruptions represent the unavoidable consequence of the excited mind and are thus absolved from the general (not absolute) rule [...], according to which one should breathe only between the one and the other phrase, without separating connections, much less words. / In order to express such inner agitation, it is therefore allowed to breathe not only between words but inside a word. / An example of application of this expressive means is the aria from *Così fan tutte* by Mozart [...]” Adolph Bernhard Marx: *Die Kunst des Gesanges, theoretisch-praktisch*, Berlin 1826, p. 246.

interrupt the vocal line. Other vocal treatises indicate the possibility of the singers themselves introducing such breaks in a given melody. Manuel García dedicates a chapter of his *Traité de l'art du chant* to “sopirs” (sighs) and “sanglots” (sobs). The former are described as “produced by the more or less strong, more or less prolonged, friction of air against the sides of the throat, both when introducing and when expelling air from the breast”; for the latter a vibration of vocal folds is added, resulting in “a short and jerky aspiration”.⁵ The author provides several examples:

ROSSINI
Turco in Italia
Duetto. Fiorilla.

voi ve - de te il pian to mi - o

Sanglot. Sanglot. Sanglot. Sanglot.

de te il pian to

Mozart
Don Giovanni
Aria.

la - sce - rò ca - var - mi gli oc - chi e le ca - re tue ma -

Sanglot. Sanglot. Sanglot.

ni - ne lie - ta poi sa - prò ba - ciar

EXAMPLES 2 AND 3 García: *Traité complet de l'art du chant*, Vol. 2, p. 51

While example 3 shows pauses already written by Mozart, in example 2, García distinguishes the performance version from the original vocal line of Rossini's *Il turco in Italia*, adding several short and sudden “sanglots”. The added pauses shorten the last quaver of each coloratura group, with the clear purpose of expressively illustrating the words “voi

- 5 “Les soupirs [...] sont produits par le frottement plus ou moins fort, plus ou moins prolongé, de l'air contre les parois du gosier, soit que l'on introduise l'air dans la poitrine, soit qu'on l'en chasse. Lorsqu'on use du premier moyen, on peut modifier le frottement de manière à obtenir le sanglot, le rôle même, si les cordes vocales sont mises en jeu. Les sanglots s'obtiennent par une aspiration courte et saccadée.” Manuel García: *Traité complet de l'art du chant*, Paris 1847, Vol. 2, p. 51; translation by the author.

vedete il pianto mio” (“you see my weeping”). Listeners are thus invited to imagine the act of weeping, without necessarily seeing the singer before them. It is not by chance that this section immediately follows brief instructions about “physionomie”, in which the author recommends coherence between facial expressions and vocal accents. He underlines the importance of rapidly changing facial expressions by invoking the famous late-18th-century actor David Garrick: “Garrick changeait instantanément d’expression et prenait les physionomies les plus opposées dans le temps très-court qui suffit à se cacher derrière une porte et à reparaître aussitôt.”⁶

In addition, García presents another expressive way of “sobbing” by which the singer inserts aspirations before and after a vowel, or adds the exclamation “heul” before a consonant:

Examples 4 and 5 are musical notation extracts from Rossini's *Traité de l'art du chant*, Vol. 2, p. 51. Example 4 shows a vocal line in 4/4 time with lyrics: "L'er - ror, l'er-ror d'un in - fe - li - ce ha — pa-dre". Below this, a second line shows the technique of "heul" (sobbing) before a consonant: "heul l'er - ror heul l'er-ror d'un in - fe". Example 5 shows a vocal line in 4/4 time with lyrics: "a ah! pa - dre a ah! pa - dreh!". The notation includes a dynamic marking *p* (piano) and a fermata over the final note.

EXAMPLES 4 AND 5 García: *Traité de l'art du chant*, Vol. 2, p. 51 (Rossini's *Otello*, Finale Act 1)

In several extracts from arias by Rossini, Donizetti and Vaccai, García attaches an “h” to vowels following or preceding silences. The frequent application of such audible sobs would certainly astonish a modern audience, yet seems to have been quite common in the mid-19th century, as other treatises of this time confirm. In this regard, the *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst* (1856) by Ferdinand Sieber (1822–1895) is one of the most relevant sources. The third part of his *Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst* is dedicated to “Vortragslehre” and focuses on performance aspects beyond written notes. Great care is devoted to expressive breathing in a chapter significantly named “die seelische Bedeutung des Athems” (the psychological significance of breath).⁷ By means of a varied use of breath, a singer can convey different types of mournful sentiment to the audience. Sieber distinguishes between “Seufzen”, “Schluchzen”, and “Weinen”. The first two can be related

6 “Garrick changed expression instantaneously and took the most different physiognomies in a very short time, just enough to hide behind a door and reappear again at once.” *Ibid.*, p. 51, footnote 1.
 7 Ferdinand Sieber: *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst zum Gebrauche für Lehrer und Schüler des Sologesanges*, Magdeburg/St. Luis 1858, pp. 444f.

respectively to “sourir” and “sanglot” from García’s *Traité*. “Weinen” (weeping) is a variant of “Seufzen” with a more delicate expulsion of breath yet a more audible inspiration. Such weeping can achieve an even stronger effect when combined with other articulations such as “stentato”, the strongest accentuation described:

“Eine viel seltenere Anwendung lässt der gewichtigere Accent des *Stentato* zu, die stärkste der Betonungsarten, die wir überhaupt besitzen. Das ‘mühevoll’ Herausstossen einzelner, auch wohl mehrerer aufeinanderfolgender, Töne gehört dahin, wo der Jammer, die Verzweiflung, weder das Vorbringen ruhiger Worte, noch auch den Ausdruck gleichmässiger Kraft ermöglicht, sondern sich nur durch einzelne gewaltsam betonte, alsbald aber im Uebermaasse ihrer Kraft nachlassende und zum tonlosen Piano schwindende Töne Luft machen kann. Halten wir an dem Begriffe ‘heftigster Aufregung’ fest, die recht eigentlich das *Stentato* zu malen im Stande ist, so erweist sich dasselbe übrigens für die Affektsäusserungen mächtigen Zornes, den Schwur ewiger Rache, ja sogar gegensätzlich für die unerwartete und bewältigende Freude, der die Worte versagen, nicht minder angemessen, als für die oben angedeuteten Klagerufe des höchsten Schmerzes, die Entsetzenslaute der Verzweiflung und des Wahnsinnes.”⁸

Sieber exemplifies “stentato” with two extracts, one by Donizetti (*Maria di Rohan*, Act III, Scene 7) and the other (once again) by Mozart (*Don Giovanni*, Act I, Scene 3):

EXAMPLES 6 AND 7
Sieber: *Lehrbuch der Gesangskunst*, p. 466

Donizetti.

sten - ta - to

È trop - pa la gio - ja mi to - glie il re - spir.

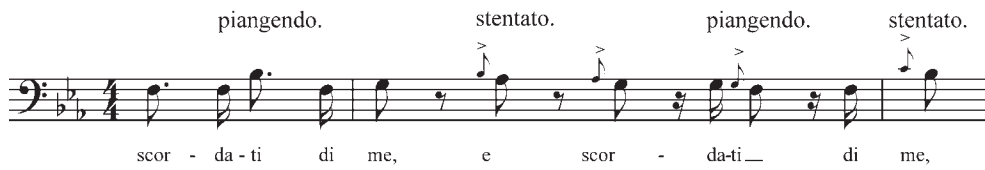
Mozart.

sten - ta - to

häuft sei - ne Mis - se - tha - ten raubt ihm das Le - ben.

As both the written definition and the musical examples show, “stentato” can be used to depict either an excess of joy (Donizetti), or a state of deep desperation (Mozart). In example 8, effects of “stentato” and “piangendo” appear in alternation. Thus the well trained 19th-century actor-singer could rely on a wide palette of vocal articulations to depict the different shades of violent sentiments abounding in operatic drama.

- 8 “Stentato is the strongest type of all the accents that we have and should be applied much more sparingly. The effortful pushing out of single or successive tones is appropriate where lament and desperation make calm words or expressions of even force impossible, and one must give vent to feelings through the production of violently stressed individual notes, fading to a soundless piano in the excess of their force. If we hold on to *stentato* as the ‘fiercest agitation’, then it is also suited to the expression of powerful ire, the vow of eternal vengeance, or even to the contrary unexpected, overwhelming joy, which no words can convey, in addition to the above-mentioned lamenting cries depicting the deepest pain, desperate horror and madness.” *Ibid.*, p. 465f.



EXAMPLE 8 Sieber: *Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst*, p. 467

Portamento: a controversial expressive device So far, we have considered expressive articulations that interrupt sound emission, thereby momentarily breaking the legato singing line. By contrast, other types of “graces” serve to enhance smooth melodic leaps thereby emphasizing legato. “Anticipazione della nota”, the anticipation of the second note of a leap (sometimes to be performed with a glissando), was often mentioned in 19th-century Italian, French, German, and English singing manuals, although warnings about its misuse were equally widespread. Vocal pedagogues did not always agree in their descriptions of “anticipazione” and sometimes criticized the instructions of previous authors. For example, Franz Hauser (1794–1870), one of the most famous German basses of the 19th century, reproached his colleague Heinrich Ferdinand Mannstein (1806–1872) for not distinguishing in his treatise between “anticipazione della nota” and pure “portamento” which, in his view, should connect notes only with a fine legato. In his treatise, Mannstein often recommends the application of “anticipazione” in places that do not seem suited in terms of sentiment.⁹ Hauser clarifies what he means with an example of “good” portamento, according to Mannstein, in an extract from Étienne-Nicolas Méhul’s *Joseph in Aegypten* (example 9).¹⁰

In this trio from the second act, the patriarch Jacob prays to God on behalf of his sons Joseph and Benjamin. Hauser openly contradicts his colleague’s use of “anticipazioni” in this context:

“Es ist Jacob, den Mehul in seiner Oper gleiches [sic] Namens so sprechen und für seine Kinder beten lässt. Wir können uns aber unmöglich vorstellen, dass der Erzvater Jacob so modern, weichlich und verschwommen, wie das angedeutete Portament es will, seine Kinder segnen wird, vielmehr alttestamentarisch, gross, einfach. Diesem Sinne gemäss wird der Vortrag wieder einfach, breit, in der

9 Heinrich Ferdinand Mannstein first published *Das System der grossen Gesangschule des Bernacchi von Bologna* in Dresden in 1834. The second edition of 1848 bears a more concise and significant title: *Die grosse italienische Gesangschule*. Actually Mannstein’s teacher was not Italian; he was a Bohemian tenor, Johann Aloys Miksch, who had studied in Dresden with the castrato Vincenzo Caselli, a student of Bernacchi. Miksch acquired a great reputation as a singing pedagogue and was still mentioned as “the greatest German singing teacher” at the end of the 19th century. See Adolph Kohut: *Johannes Miksch, der grösste deutsche Singemeister, und sein Gesangssystem*, Leipzig-Reudnitz 1890.

10 The original French title is *La Légende de Joseph en Égypte* (1807).

Méhul

Nur mei-ne Kin - der lass glück - lich stets sein, nur mei-ne

Nur mei-ne Kin - der lass glück - lich stets sein, nur mei-ne

Mannstein's version

Kin - der lass glück-lich stets sein.

Kin - der lass glück-lich stets sein.

EXAMPLE 9 Hauser: *Gesangslehre für Lehrende und Lernende*, p. 54

Bindung der Noten, mit strenger Beobachtung ihres Werthes bestehend, getragen, also mit Portament, aber nicht mit Anticipation sein müssen.”¹¹

Hauser considers the “anticipazioni” proposed by Mannstein too “modern” and thus unsuited for the solemn dignity expressed in this prayer.

Although Hauser suggests that composers generally fix “portamenti” on paper, he also proposes its additional use in specific cases, such as in the following example from Rossini’s *Otello*, here with a German text:

Mein Schmerz ist un - ge - heu - er mein Schmerz ist un - ge - heu - er

EXAMPLE 10 Hauser: *Gesangslehre für Lehrende und Lernende*, p. 56¹²

- 11 “It is Jacob, in Méhul’s eponymous opera who speaks and prays for his children thus. However, we can hardly imagine the patriarch Jacob blessing his children in the modern, soft and blurry way that this portamento suggests, rather than, according to the Old Testament, grandly and plainly. Thus, the performance should again be simple, broad in the connection of the notes, with strict observation of values, legato, so with portamento but without anticipazione.” Franz Hauser: *Gesangslehre für Lehrende und Lernende*, Leipzig 1866, p. 54.
- 12 I am grateful to Anselm Gerhard for calling my attention to the resemblance of these musical phrases with a phrase in Johann Strauss’ *Fledermaus*, namely Rosalinde’s “Mein Schmerz wird ungeheuer” in the Trio “So muß allein ich bleiben”. Not only the text, but also Strauss’ melody is de facto the same, just sung a minor third higher. It would be interesting to inquire further whether Strauss intended to allude to the widespread German translation of Rossini’s *Otello* and thereby establish an intertextual connection, or if the resemblance is a pure coincidence.

The word “ungeheuer” (monstrous) is set in downward octave leaps, which Hauser underlines with “portamenti”, suitable to the dramatic apex of the scene. Furthermore, in this example, Hauser suggests an additional performance effect of “tremoliren” (tremolo), a vocal quality otherwise usually despised. A similar situation, which Hauser considers suited to tremolo, is in Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride*, when the main character asks her brother Orestes about Agamemnon’s fate. Orestes should “render perceptible” (versinnlichen) his grief through a tremolo, so that his sister can credibly answer: “Dein Auge schwimmt in Thränen” (your eye is washed in tears).

Thus a good vocal performance requires emphatic vocal effects, yet these are not suited for every character or every dramatic situation. What sounds strange, if not ridiculous, for an old patriarch blessing his sons, could, in another context, appropriately characterize the desperate pain of Desdemona.

Appoggiaturas between embellishment and prosodic emphasis Articulations and portamenti affect the final result of a performance without actually changing the melodic profile. Appoggiaturas on the other hand constitute melodic changes that underline the prosodic profile of the vocal line and consequently enhance expressivity; these were one of the central concerns of late-18th- and early-19th-century vocal didactics. Though they do not require great technical ability, they can serve multiple purposes according to their complex categorization. A comparison between some of the most important German treatises by Johann Friedrich Agricola (1757), Johann Adam Hiller (1774 and 1780), Georg Joseph Vogler (1776), Johann Friedrich Schubert (ca 1804), and Johann Baptist Lasser (1805) reveals a recurrent distinction between several types of appoggiaturas, according to length and position. *Vorschlag* and *Doppelvorschlag* (single and double appoggiatura on the beat), *Nachschlag* (appoggiatura after the note), *Doppelschlag* (turn), and *Zwischenklang* (passage note) are the main categories mentioned in the manuals. The *Vorschlag* is of particular relevance here, since it constitutes one of the very common devices singers employ to improve a written melody, as Agricola explains in *Anleitung zur Singkunst* (1757):

“Die Absicht, weswegen von dem Ausführer einigen Tönen der Melodie Vorschläge vorgesetzt werden, ist entweder: 1) den Gesang desto besser mit einander zu verbinden; oder 2) etwas scheinbar Leeres in der Bewegung des Gesanges auszufüllen; oder 3) die Harmonie noch reicher und mannigfaltiger zu machen; oder endlich 4) dem Gesange mehrere Lebhaftigkeit und Schimmer mitzutheilen.”¹³

- 13 “The performer’s purpose in providing some notes of the melody with appoggiaturas is either (1) better to connect the melody, (2) to fill in the movement of the melody when it seems somewhat empty, (3) to enrich the harmony and make it even more diverse, or, finally, (4) to impart to the melody more liveliness and brilliance.” Johann Friedrich Agricola: *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, Berlin 1757, p. 59 (transl. by Julianne Baird: *Introduction to the Art of Singing by Johann Friedrich Agricola*, Cambridge 1995, p. 92).

This definition had a long-living success: several authors of the early 19th century quoted it more or less literally.¹⁴ In Matthias Waldhoer's *Höhere Kunst-Gesang-Schule* (ca 1835), a treatise completely neglected in current research, the author offers many musical examples in works of the previous century (Porpora, Händel, Graun, Anfossi, Haydn, Mozart, Cimarosa) and of his contemporaries (Rossini, Meyerbeer, von Winter) to explain the application of simple and double "Vorschläge" and "Nachschläge". Waldhoer reuses almost the same words as Agricola:

"Sie [Vor- und Nachschläge] sind für den Sänger sehr wichtig und haben den Zweck, verschiedene Stellen im Gesange leichter mit einander zu verbinden, und etwas scheinbar Leeres in der Bewegung desselben auszufüllen, um ihm dadurch mehr Mannigfaltigkeit und Schimmer zu geben."¹⁵

So is this merely a vestige of outmoded performance habits, or is what Waldhoer describes still current practice for nineteenth-century works? One example included in the manual is the aria "Meine Seele ist erschüttert" from Beethoven's *Christus am Ölberge*:

1. Allegro von Beethoven

Va - ter! tief ge - beugt und klä - lich, fleht dein Sohn hin -
auf zu - dir, zu dir dei - ner Macht ist al - len mö - glich: nimm,
nimm den Lei - dens - kelch - von mir.

EXAMPLE 11 Beethoven: *Christus am Ölberge*, Aria "Meine Seele ist erschüttert" embellished in Waldhoer: *Höhere Kunst-Gesang-Schule*, pp. 93 f.

Waldhoer explains which places are suited for adding graces, for instance to fill intervals of a third, or to widen the melodic range. Furthermore, since Beethoven began work on *Leonore/Fidelio* directly after finishing *Christus am Ölberge* in 1803, the light melodic alterations proposed for the oratorio should be extended to the opera which was staged in

- 14 Among them Johann Friedrich Schubert: *Neue Singe-Schule*, Leipzig [s. a.] and Matthias Waldhoer: *Höhere Kunst-Gesang-Schule, oder: Gruendliche Anleitung, den Gesang nach moeglichster Vollkommenheit zu lehren und zu erlernen*, Kempten [ca 1835].
- 15 "They [Vor- and Nachschläge] are very important for the singer and serve to create a lighter connection between the notes, to fill an apparently empty succession in the movement of the melody, in order to thereby make it more varied and brilliant." Waldhoer: *Höhere Kunst-Gesang-Schule*, p. 92.

its different versions in the same years (1805–1814).¹⁶ Indeed, the singers who created the main roles of *Fidelio* were accustomed to the florid singing style of Italian opera, which necessarily implied a certain amount of alterations. Carl Remmer – the first Florestan – had previously sung roles like the eponymous role of Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*; Anna Milder – the first Leonore – had studied with Antonio Salieri. The same applies for singers involved in Carl Maria von Weber's work in Dresden: most of them were either Italian (Luigi Bassi, Giuseppe Siboni, Luigia Sandrini-Caravoglia, Anna-Maria Sessi-Neumann) or trained by Italian teachers.¹⁷ The first Max in Weber's *Freischütz* was Heinrich Stümer, a pupil of the famous composer and singing pedagogue Vincenzo Righini; the first Agathe was Karoline Seidler, who also sang Rosina in *Barbiere di Siviglia*. Other famous singers of this role were Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient and Henriette Sontag. In particular, the latter impressed Weber with her rendition of the part of Elena in Rossini's *La donna del lago*. Thus the main “German” and “French” interpreters of the time were to a certain extent “Italianate” singers. Having studied with Italian teachers and practiced the Italian repertoire, they were undoubtedly accustomed to modifying the originally notated vocal lines with the usual practice which was in no way shocking to the audience.

Appoggiaturas and other small graces do not only function as embellishments with an aesthetic purpose, but also constitute an important element of dramatic prosody. Through prosodic appoggiaturas, the singer emphasizes accented syllables to render the prosodic pattern of the text and musical intonation. And there are further ways of highlighting accented syllables: as Hiller pointed out in 1780, dots are the easiest grace singers can add, especially when the rhythm is too monotonous. Hauser adds both dotted rhythms and prosodic appoggiaturas in the incipit of “Dies Bildnis” from Mozart's *Zauberflöte* (example 12). Hauser's rhythmical alterations result in a sort of “*inégalité*” which brings fluidity to the prosodic pattern of the syllables in Mozart's version. Will Crutchfield has convincingly demonstrated how these long-living conventions of rhythmic flexibility survive even in early 20th-century recordings.¹⁸

- 16 See Joanna Cobb Biermann: *Das Oratorium Christus am Ölberge*, in: *Beethovens Vokalmusik und Bühnenwerke. Das Handbuch*, ed. by Birgit Lodes and Armin Raab, Laaber 2014, pp. 135–153.
- 17 Christine Pollerus: *Carl Maria von Weber und der “deutsche” Gesang*, in: *Die “Schaubühne” in der Epoche des “Freischütz”*. Theater und Musiktheater der Romantik. Vorträge des Salzburger Symposions 2007, hg. von Jürgen Kühnel, Ulrich Müller und Oswald Panagl unter Mitwirkung von Peter Csobádi, Gernot Gruber und Franz Viktor Spechtler, Anif/Salzburg 2009 (Wort und Musik. Salzburger akademische Beiträge, Vol. 70), pp. 174–187, especially pp. 180 f.
- 18 Will Crutchfield's paper “Language and Rhythm in the Interpretation of Vocal Music” was presented at the international conference “Interpretationsforschung – Musical Performance with Reference to Historical Texts and Sound Documents” (Berne, Switzerland, 6–8 May 2015).

Hauser 1866

Dies Bild-nis ist be-zau-bernd schön — wie noch kein Au-ge je ge - sehn —

Mozart

EXAMPLE 12 “Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön” from *Die Zauberflöte* with Mozart’s original (below) and Hauser’s altered version (above); Hauser: *Gesangslehre für Lehrende und Lernende*, p. 88

Incidentally, such changes and additions were often related to a certain negligence of composers in writing them down. Pedagogues such as Johann Friedrich Schubert pointed out that “though a wrong use of *Vorschläge* can provoke many disasters in music, composers are very negligent in their vocal pieces and do not mark all the *Vorschläge*.”¹⁹ Hence he lists several melodic contexts in which the singer may add short and long appoggiaturas, thereby transforming not only the melody, but even the harmonic context by adding dissonances. If one also takes into consideration the other types of *wesentliche Manieren* (‘essential’ graces) such as appoggiaturas following a note (*Nachschlag*), double appoggiaturas, turns, and so on, one gets an idea of the scope of alterations required to the original vocal line. If we see these instructions in relation to the Italianate training of many German singers of Beethoven’s or even Mozart’s time, the resulting portrayal of the predominant vocal performance practice is surely far removed from any strict adherence to the score.

In fact composers do not always respect all prosodic conventions in their text settings. Sometimes unaccentuated syllables end up on melodic peaks or downbeats, and accented syllables on upbeats or other musically weak notes. If performed exactly as written, this can result in an awkward inaccuracy of accentuation. Thus some modifications of the vocal line aim to “correct” prosodic mistakes or bring clarity to the vagueness left by composers in their scores. Johann Carl Friedrich Rellstab notably recommends correcting such examples through subtle modifications of note lengths and positioning.²⁰ He also takes into consideration further prosodic and metric issues such as

- 19 Obgleich ein unrichtiger Gebrauch der Vorschläge in der Musik viel Unheil anstiften kann, so verfahren doch die Komponisten in ihren Gesangstücken sehr nachlässig und zeigen nicht alle Vorschläge an [...].” Schubert: *Neue Singe-Schule*, p. 51.
- 20 Johann Carl Friedrich Rellstab: *Versuch über die Vereinigung der musikalischen und oratorischen Declamation hauptsächlich für Musiker und Componisten*, Berlin [1786], p. 37. Rellstab (1759–1813) was a printer and musician, pupil of J. F. Agricola and C. P. E. Bach, involved in Fasch’s and Zelter’s Singakademie in

interpunction, enjambments, and metric feet, in his *Versuch über die Vereinigung der musikalischen und oratorischen Declamation hauptsächlich für Musiker und Componisten*, published in 1786. Although the treatise mainly addresses composers with recommendations on how to avoid prosodic errors while setting a text, it includes recommendations for singers as well. For example, Rellstab explains some little prosodic mistakes that can occur in Carl Heinrich Graun's music (whom Rellstab otherwise holds in high regard) when singers "of the good school" add *anticipazione della nota*, which he confusingly calls *cercar della nota*:

Written version

With anticipazione




EXAMPLE 13 *Anticipazione della nota according to Johann Carl Friedrich Rellstab: Versuch über die Vereinigung der musikalischen und oratorischen Declamation, p. 37*

Written version

With longer anticipazione

With shorter anticipazione



As shown in Rellstab's example 13, the problematic syllable "-sre" is too strongly stressed through the melodic peak; Rellstab suggests to the composer several solutions to counter-balance this stress by rewriting the melody in a different way.²¹

In many cases, the limitations of music notation offer further incentive for extensive rhythmic and prosodic alterations of vocal lines. Domenico Crivelli in *L'arte del canto* (1820) gives some examples from arias by Mozart, where he distinguishes between the notated and performed versions. However, although Crivelli's suggestions are intended

Berlin. His son Ludwig (1799–1860) is better known through his work as a music critic, poet and collaborator to Franz Schubert.

21 Rellstab's use of the term *cercar della nota* is inaccurate here, since *cercar della nota* was generally considered to be an approach of the note from below with a sort of *appoggiatura*, different from *anticipazione*. However, at the end of the 18th century such terminological confusions concerning *cercar della nota* were quite common.

to “improve” the prosodic rendition of these phrases, his suggestions are not always convincing:²²

Example 14 displays four musical extracts comparing Crivelli's performance suggestions (top staff) with the original incipit (bottom staff). The extracts are from Mozart's operas: *Don Giovanni*, *Nozze di Figaro*, and *Così fan tutte*.

Extract 1 (Don Giovanni): The top staff shows Crivelli's suggestion for the phrase "Vor - rei, e non vor - re - i mi tre - ma un po - co il cor", where each syllable is assigned a note. The bottom staff shows the original incipit for the same phrase.

Extract 2 (Nozze di Figaro): The top staff shows Crivelli's suggestion for the phrase "Ri - co - no - sci in que - sto am - ples - so u - na ma - dre a - ma - to fi - glio", where each syllable is assigned a note. The bottom staff shows the original incipit for the same phrase.

Extract 3 (Così fan tutte): The top staff shows Crivelli's suggestion for the phrase "Un' au - ra a - mo - ro - sa del no - stro te - so - ro un", where each syllable is assigned a note. The bottom staff shows the original incipit for the same phrase.

Extract 4 (Così fan tutte): The top staff shows Crivelli's suggestion for the phrase "dol - ce ri - sto ³ - ro al cor _____ por - ge - rà _____", where each syllable is assigned a note. The bottom staff shows the original incipit for the same phrase.

EXAMPLE 14 Several extracts from Mozart's operas (*Don Giovanni*, *Nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*) with original incipit (below) and Crivelli's performance suggestions above; Crivelli: *L'arte del canto*, p. 90

In the first example (“Là ci darem la mano”) he makes a rather awkward attempt at dividing syllables which are on the same note in Mozart's version because of the synaloepha correctly applied between words finishing and starting with a vowel (-ma_un; -co_il). Crivelli breaks the synaloepha and gives each syllable a note, thus resulting in a bizarrely

²² Domenico Crivelli: *L'arte del canto, ossia Corso completo d'insegnamento sulla coltivazione della voce*, London [1820], p. 90.

syncopated accentuation of the words “trema” and “poco”. The same principle is then applied to the second extract (“Riconosci in questo amplesso”), this time in a more comprehensible way. The third extract (“Un aura amorosa”) is based on a different principle. Mozart had in fact managed to counterbalance melodic peaks on weak syllables through written *anticipazioni della nota*, thus reaching the top notes before changing syllables. Crivelli asks the singer to eliminate such *anticipazioni* in favour of a straighter melodic line. Yet this results in a coarse stress of the last syllable of each word (au-ra, no-stro), thereby in fact contradicting the natural accents. Though starting from a correct premise (performance requires an interpretative act of the singer), Crivelli’s solutions actually downgrade the excellent prosodic suggestions provided by Mozart. Indeed no performer would think of adopting Crivelli’s versions today. Nonetheless, these examples are useful to give an idea of the degree of liberty encouraged by some singing pedagogues.

There are many other cases where theorists suggest modifications of the vocal score because of alleged mistakes by the composer. Thomas E. Williams in his *Treatise on Singing* (London, 1834) criticizes Carl Maria von Weber’s *Oberon* for blatant declamation errors in the English language. The pedagogue adds notes or even new words to shift weak syllables in metrically strong positions to their right place.²³ Ferdinand Sieber also dedicates a chapter of his above-mentioned *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst* (1856) to “modifications and liberties in the performance”, in which, similarly to the examples above, slight modifications of the vocal line are encouraged to correct prosodic errors.²⁴ This extract from Haydn’s *Die Schöpfung* presents a case in point:

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Haydn 1800' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Sieber 1856'. Both staves show a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: 'Die ih - ren Saa - men in sich selbst ha - ben auf der Er - de.' In Haydn's version, the melody for 'in sich selbst' has a weak accent on 'selbst'. In Sieber's version, the melody is modified to place a stronger accent on 'sich' by changing the note values and pitch, thus correcting the prosodic error.

EXAMPLE 15 Joseph Haydn: *Die Schöpfung*, Rezitativ No. 6 “Und Gott sprach: Es bringe die Erde Gras”, with Sieber’s proposed corrections of prosodic errors; Sieber: *Vollständiges Lehrbuch*, pp. 494 f.

Instead of a pure anticipation of the note, the singer is encouraged to shift and modify some syllables by dividing a note in two and changing the text. In a previous chapter, speaking about prosodic accent, Sieber remarks that even gifted composers such as Weber commit such mistakes, for instance in the famous aria “Durch die Wälder” from

²³ See Robert Toft: *Bel Canto. A Performer’s Guide*, New York 2013, pp. 74 f.

²⁴ “Aenderungen in Rhythmus, Takt und Tempo.” Sieber: *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst*, pp. 494 ff.

Freischütz. Overall Sieber allows for a wide degree of liberty in modifying the text even if the composer is not guilty of any prosodic “errors”. In the section “modifications of the text”, Sieber mentions cases in which an accumulation of consonants (something that occurs more often in German than in Italian) could present an insuperable obstacle for some singers. He then suggests the substitution of some words through others that are more comfortable to sing, as in this aria from Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*:

Allegro vivace. Mozart.

O! wie will ich tri-um - phi - ren, wenn sie euch zum (Richt-platz) füh - ren
To - de

EXAMPLE 16 Mozart: “O! Wie will ich triumphieren” from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, with text changes proposed by Sieber: *Vollständiges Lehrbuch*, p. 478

In this case, however, the suggestions do not represent an effective improvement in declamation, but merely a compromise to help singers who are not particularly talented in pronunciation. In any case, whether changes are prosodic corrections or practical options, it is clear that pedagogues felt the right, or even the duty, to amend and adapt composers’ scores in ways unimaginable nowadays.

Expressive staging instructions for *Rigoletto* in Enrico Delle Sedie’s *L’Art lyrique* (1874)

Ferdinand Sieber’s instructions about articulation and prosody are a good example of *Vortragslehre* dealing with the various aspects of interpretation of a vocal piece. According to 19th-century theorists, it was often this part of a singer’s training which was most sorely neglected, due to pupils hastening onto the stage too early, encouraged by a “modern” manner of composing vocal melodies, apparently less demanding in terms of vocal agility and ornamentation, but also less dependent on further additions or modifications in term of articulation, dynamics, and nuances. Enrico Delle Sedie (1822–1907), an Italian baritone who sang in several Verdi operas,²⁵ warned the reader in his *L’Art lyrique* (1874) about the inadequate education of many pupils:

“La facilité apparente avec laquelle des élèves peu exercés peuvent exécuter certains morceaux de la musique moderne dont les effets sont dûs exclusivement au soin que le compositeur a mis à ne rien laisser à l’initiative de l’artiste, a accrédité parmi eux cette fâcheuse illusion que l’art du chant est

25 See Daniel Brandenburg: Enrico Delle Sedie, la presenza scenica e la cultura vocale, in: *Una piacente estate di San Martino. Studi e ricerche per Marcello Conati*, Lucca 2000, pp. 337–348.

exclusivement instinctif et que les qualités naturelles de leur instrument peuvent leur suffire pour se jeter audacieusement dans l'interprétation des œuvres des grands maîtres.”²⁶

For this reason, Delle Sedie provides a peculiar series of vocalises in his treatise that aim to develop interpretation and expressiveness, rather than purely technical abilities. Like most vocalises, these exercises do not have a text; the name itself *vocalizzo*, derived from *vocale*, indicates an exercise sung on the same vowel throughout. Yet regardless of the absence of text, each of these exercises corresponds to a specific, precisely defined feeling. The first ones are quite generic, such as “la douleur profonde” (“profound grief”), “désespoir” (“despair”) or “imprécation” (“imprecation”); gradually the sentiments become more complex, for instance “l’ironie amère” (“bitter irony”), “reproche à l’adversité” (“reproach against adversity”), and “le retour de la pensée vers un passé regretté” (“thought returning to a regretted past”). Each of these exercises, which constitute a significant part of the singing method, is first introduced with an extract from a drama by Corneille, Racine, or Molière, in order to evoke an adequate atmosphere for the performance of the given sentiment. Next, Delle Sedie provides detailed instructions about articulation, dynamics, voice timbre, et cetera in a descriptive paragraph preceding the musical examples. In addition, the examples include abbreviations between the notes, explained in a summary at the beginning of the chapter:

TABLE DES SIGNES AU-DESSUS DES NOTES					
A accent d'abandon.	F voix faible.	M accent marqué.	RI rire.	VG voyelle claire.	
AF expression affectueuse.	FL sons flûtes.	ME accent de mépris.	S timbre sombre.	VI accent violent.	
B ton bienveillant.	FLA ton flatteur.	MO ton moqueur.	SAC accent saccadé.	VS voyelle sombre.	
C timbre clair.	FU accent de fureur.	MEN ton menaçant.	SAN sanglot.	VT voix tremblante.	
CA accent caressant.	G voix gutturale.	N son nasillard.	SC accent scandé.	8 ^e résonance à l'octave grave.	
CO accent de colère.	GR accent grave.	PL accent plaintif.	SE voix serrée.	8 ^h — à l'octave haute.	
DE accent déchirant.	I ton ironique.	R voix rauque.	SOU soupir.		
EM ton d'emphase.	J expression de joie.	RA accent de rage.	SU ton suppliant.		
EN accent d'enthousiasme.	LA voix large.	RE ton de reproche.	TR sons traînés.		
EX exclamation.	LO voix lourde.	REG expression de regret.	V voix voilée.		

SIGNES AU-DESSOUS DES NOTES.			
<i>cresc.</i> crescendo.	<i>ff</i> fortissimo.	<i>rall.</i> rallentando.	RE mouvement retenu.
<i>dim.</i> diminuendo.	<i>mf</i> mezzo forte.	<i>aff.</i> affrettando.	T son tranquille.
<i>d</i> note détachée.	<i>p</i> piano.	<i>P</i> son porté.	≡ décroscendo.
<i>f</i> forte.	<i>pp</i> pianissimo.	<i>PR</i> mouvement pressé.	≡ crescendo.

FIGURE 1 Delle Sedie: L'Art lyrique, p. 91

26 “The apparent ease with which certain inexperienced pupils can perform certain pieces of modern music is largely due to composers’ carefully including all effects and leaving nothing to the artists’ initiative. This has conveyed among them the disastrous illusion that the art of singing is exclusively instinctive and that the natural qualities of their instrument can be sufficient to throw themselves into the audacious interpretation of great masterworks.” Enrico Delle Sedie: *L’Art lyrique. Traité complet de chant et de déclamation lyrique*, Paris 1874, p. 1; see also the Italian translation included in a later treatise by Delle Sedie: *Arte e fisiologia del canto*, Milano 1876.

92

PREMIÈRE VOCALISE.

La douleur triste et sombre presque sans espoir.

LA DOULEUR PROFONDE.

A quoi te résous-tu, princesse infortunée?
Ta mère vient de mourir dans tes bras;
Ne saurais-tu suivre ses pas.
Et finir en mourant ta triste destinée?

LES FRÈRES ENNEMIS,
(Racine)

LA DOULEUR PROFONDE est exprimée par le chant lié aux 1^{re} et 2^{me} mesures, le timbre sombre, la voyelle sombre, et la voix légèrement gutturale, à la 3^{me} mesure le **LA** traîné sur le **FA** avec un accent d'abandon et à la 7^{me} un accent déchirant et le mouvement retenu exprimeront un sentiment de douleur sombre et de désespoir.

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8)

LA DOULEUR PROFONDE

Andantino.

FIGURE 2 Delle Sedie: *L'Art lyrique*, p. 92

In addition to the expressive means of “sighing” and “sobbing”, Delle Sedie proposes a wide palette of accents and tones: contempt, enthusiasm, rage, gravity, violence, benevolence, irony, flattery, invocation and so forth. These abbreviations can be superposed on top of each other resulting in multifaceted expressions. Focusing on artificially induced sentiments, these abstract vocalises find their concrete application in scenes from works by Rossini, Donizetti or Verdi. For example the scene from *Rigoletto* culminating in the famous “Cortigiani, vil razza dannata” is particularly interesting in terms of the relation between sound and visual representation. After replicating Victor Hugo’s own analysis of his play *Le Roi s’amuse*, Delle Sedie takes every performance and staging detail into consideration. “Thus his voice affects a calm and indifferent tone, yet with a dark timbre and a querulous accent. His gestures and gait are nonchalant, but they offer a glimpse of his inner agitation”.²⁷ The same abbreviations are applied as in the preceding vocalises, yet their meaning and importance are clearer here in relation to the libretto text. The description follows both the text and the music very precisely, giving the reader subtle details about pronunciation, nuances, looks, gestures and movements on stage. Delle Sedie stresses the contradictory feelings the singer must convey, feigning indifference and calm while being first nervous, and eventually furious. *Rigoletto*’s voice starts as a querulous and guttural muttering; but after the courtesans’ nonchalant reaction, he changes to moved, practically weeping accents, before suddenly shifting again to furious and contemptuous tones when he realizes the courtesans mistook Gilda for *Rigoletto*’s lover. Such a multifaceted vocal performance reflects *Rigoletto*’s exterior behaviour from

27 “Nous donnons l’analyse que fait Victor Hugo, lui-même de son Drame [...]. Ainsi sa voix affecte le calme et l’indifférence, mais le timbre est sombre et l’accent plaintif. Son geste et sa démarche sont nonchalants, mais ils laissent entrevoir son agitation intérieure.” Delle Sedie: *L’Art lyrique*, p. 204 f.

the dramatic perspective: he seeks his daughter everywhere, and tries to read the courtesans' eyes. He approaches the only person he recognizes from the previous night, Marullo, "with uncertain and unsteady steps". Finding a handkerchief on the table, he catches it with a rapid and convulsed movement, examines it anxiously, before throwing it on the table with contempt, since it does not belong to his daughter. Even while singing the aria "Cortigiani vil razza dannata", the singer does not assume a static pose: on the contrary, before singing "Quella porta, assassini, m'aprite", he throws himself towards the door of the Duke's chamber, physically fighting against the courtesans. The description of what Rigoletto does after saying "Ah voi tutti a me contro venite! Ah! Ebben piango" is detailed and quite astonishing:

"La nature humaine se refuse toujours à croire au grands désastres, au grands malheurs; En effet, lorsque on est sous le coup d'un grand chagrin, on éprouve à un certain moment ce sentiment intérieur qui pousse à espérer qu'on a été le jouet d'une hallucination, d'un mauvais rêve; on voudrait trouver quelqu'un qui dise: ton malheur n'existe pas. C'est sous l'influence de ce sentiment que Rigoletto dans le *Meno mosso* qui suit, après avoir prononcé les mots Ah! je pleure, se relève de sa chaise comme poussé par un ressort, et tremblant de ses membres mais d'un pas ferme et résolu, d'un ton suppliant et doux, qui s'anime toujours et se presse, approche de Marcello [recte: Marullo] [...]"²⁸

The same depth characterizes analogous readings of scenes from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Macbeth* and *La Favorita*, thus representing a remarkable source for 19th-century opera interpretation. Delle Sedie demonstrates how to shift from one precise sentiment to another with chameleonic vocal accents and tones, and equally varied gestures and movements to match. As mentioned above, even theoretically 'static' forms such as cantabiles or cabalettas require the singer to be very active onstage, though not necessarily in the way we expect from today's singers and directors.

In conclusion, the selected treatises discussed here are just the tip of an iceberg hiding a great deal of information about interpretation. García, Sieber, Hauser are just a few of the most remarkable vocal pedagogues who tried to convince their pupils of the importance of "dynamic" vocal interpretation. In order to convey such a difficult matter through written manuals, they had to codify a palette of expressive means in different ways, through symbols, abbreviations, articulations, 'graces' and so forth. Delle Sedie's *L'Art lyrique* goes a step further in detailing an incredibly wide palette of accents, tones,

28 "The human nature almost always refuses to believe in a great disaster, a grievous misfortune. It is nonetheless true, when one is affected by a deep sorrow, he or she for a moment hopes what happened is nothing more than a hallucination, a nightmare, and wants to meet someone saying: your misfortune doesn't exist. Under the influence of this sentiment, Rigoletto in the following *Meno mosso* – after saying *Ebben piango* – gets up from his chair as if he were pushed by a spring; trembling, still walking with steady and resolute steps, singing in a pleading and soft voice, yet gradually getting animated and anxious, he gets closer to Marullo [...]" Ibid., p. 209.

and expressive nuances to help the singer embody a specific character with the greatest credibility. This vocal and histrionic refinement, and the ensuing dramatic credibility, is probably what the above-mentioned melomaniacs miss today, and what an in-depth HIP vocal training based on 19th-century treatises could help to retrieve.

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