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A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

The Italian baritone Leone Giraldoni (1824-1897) was one of the most prominent operatic performers of the nineteenth century. His singing style and complete artistry made him a leading choice of the major opera composers of his day, not the least being Giuseppe Verdi, for whom he created Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859) and the title role in *Simon Boccanegra* (1857). At the height of his talents, Giraldoni was regarded with great esteem throughout Europe and England. Toward the end of his singing career, Giraldoni also gained a reputation as a celebrated teacher throughout France, Italy, Spain and Russia, where he taught at the Moscow Conservatory. The purpose of this document is to make available in English translation for the first time one of two treatises that he wrote regarding the training of the singing artist, *Guida teorico-pratica ad uso dell'artista-cantante*, written in 1864 with an expanded and revised version in 1884. The document will also examine the teaching approach of the old Italian school of singing through a commentary and discussion of the content of the treatise, with reference to both old and modern works on singing and information gathered from biographical accounts of Giraldoni's contemporaries.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Many writings exist concerning the art of singing and the art of teaching singing. Treatises from the eighteenth century, by the eminent Tosi and others, tend to deal almost exclusively with aspects of singing style and the practical vocal application of specific stylistic features of the music itself, such as appoggiaturas, turns, trills, etc., and have little to say about actual vocal technique and voice production. Many of the principles of the old Italian school of singing were largely handed down orally from teacher to student in the course of instruction, and vocal pedagogy of the era relied heavily on the teacher's "ear"; by listening to a student's vocal production, or *emissione,* of the classic vowel series, and by compelling the student to breathe correctly, the teacher guided the student to the correct, balanced tone, or *chiaroscuro.* Little was known about the exact functioning of the vocal cords and the larynx itself. The development of tools to view the functioning larynx in the early to mid nineteenth century heralded an explosion of interest in vocal science, mechanics, and vocal production.[1] The writings of Manuel Garcia (1805-1906), a Spanish voice teacher-scientist, who in 1841 "invented the *laryngoscope* to observe the vocal cords in vibration," was instrumental in marrying vocal style and practice with technique and science, forging a new path in vocal pedagogy which continued into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as demonstrated in the teachings of, among others, Bernard Coffin, William Vennard, and Richard Miller.[2]

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[1] James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Inc., 2003), 5.
[2] William Vennard, *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technique*. 4th ed. (New York: Carl Fischer, 1967), 58.

Other vocal treatises worthy of examination are those by great performers of the era, such as Marchesi, Lilli Lehmann, Lillian Nordica, Tettrazini, and Caruso. The works in this category include collections of progressive vocalises (Marchesi), compilations of vocal hints and performance tips (Nordica, Caruso and Tetrazzini), as well as comprehensive explorations of vocal technique (Lilli Lehmann). The writings of Italian baritone Leone Giraldoni (1824-1897) fall into this latter category.

Biography of Leone Giraldoni

Giraldoni, considered one of the finest baritones of his generation, created two of Verdi's greatest baritone roles, Renato in *Un ballo in Maschera* (1859) and the title role in *Simon Boccanegra* (1857), and took the title role in first performance of Donizetti's *Il Duca d'alba* in 1884. After a distinguished performing career, Giraldoni gained great admiration as a teacher and became professor of voice at the Moscow Conservatory, where he taught until his death. The teaching approach of this great artist, as laid out in his treatise *Guida teorico-pratica ad uso dell'artista-cantante,* is the primary concern of this document. By examining Giraldoni's *Guida teorico-pratica ad uso dell'artista-cantante* and relevant works which delve into the teaching philosophies of the Italian school of singing, a more rounded and complete understanding the some of the vocal pedagogy of the era may become apparent.

Italian baritone and pedagogue **Leone Giraldoni** was born in Paris in 1824 and died in Moscow, Russia 19 Sep/1st Oct 1897.[3] Giraldoni "studied singing in Florence with the maestro Luigi Ronzi, one of Italy's most famous teachers", and later made his debut at Lodi as the High Priest in *Saffo.*[4] He performed in cities throughout Italy and Europe including Oporto, Firenze, Paris, and Bucharest, and made his debut at La Scala, Milan in 1855. At La Scala, he was heard as Di Luna in *Trovatore* and Rossini's Figaro in a notable performance in 1877.

Giraldoni was one of Giuseppe Verdi's favorite baritones and was chosen by the composer to create "the title role in *Simon Boccanegra*, Venice, 1857, and the role of Renato in *Un ballo in Maschera*, Teatro Apollo, Rome, 1859."[5] Other operas that formed a major part of his repertoire were *La Traviata, L'Africain, Faust, Don Sebastiano* and Gomes' opera *Guarany*. Giraldoni performed in many operas by composers that were overshadowed by the towering figure of Giuseppe Verdi. He took part in Achille Peri's opera *Vittor Pasani* at the opening of the Comunale di Reggio Emilia, 1857, Pedrotti's *Mazeppa*, Marchetti's *Romeo e Giulietta* and Gomes' *Salvator Rosa.* Many other composers also found him to be an artist who contributed most effectively to their works. In the latter part of his career, Giraldoni "created the title role of Donizetti's posthumously produced *Il duca d'Alba* at the Teatro Apollo, Rome (1882)." [6] He married soprano and virtuoso violinist Carolina Ferni, with whom he had a son, Eugenio

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[3] Elizabeth Forbes. *The Grove Book of Opera Singers,* edited by Laura Macy. (Oxford, UK: Oxford Press]), 192.
[4] Gaspare Nello Vetro, "Istituzione Casa della Musica Parma: Dizionario biografico, dei personaggi citati a cura di Gaspare Nello Vetro," Istituzione Casa della Musica, http://www.lacasadellamusica.it/ferrarini/biografie1.htm#g (accessed September 30, 2010).
[5] Forbes. *The Grove Book of Opera Singers,* 192.
[6] Ibid.

Giraldoni, a baritone who, like his father, took part in many world premieres and was "given the role of *Scarpia* in the world premier of *Tosca* at the Costanzi in Rome in 1900." [7]Alongside his wife, Leone Giraldoni premiered Agostino Mecuri's *Il Violino del Diavolo* at Cagli in 1878. He brought his "career to an end with a performance of Filippo Marchetti's *Don Giovani d'Austria* in Rome, 1885."[8]

As a performer, he was praised for the meticulous care that he gave to the interpretation of his roles and his dignified stage presence, an attribute much admired by Verdi. As a singer, he was greatly admired for his high-lying, richly colored voice, his legato and his elegant sense of phrasing. During his career, he excelled alongside many of the greatest baritones of the day, including: Felice Varesi, the first Rigoletto, Macbeth and Germont; Ronconni, the first Nabucco; and Achille de Bassini, the first Seid, *Il Corsaro*, Miller, *Luisa Miller* and Fra Melitone, *La Forza del Destino*; and perhaps Italy's greatest baritone, Antonio Cotogni, who sang "Posa in the Italian premiere of Verdi's *Don Carlos* (1867)."[9] After his retirement, Giraldoni taught in his native Italy, Madrid and later at the Moscow Conservatory. He became a highly influential teacher and published two treatises on the art of singing. The first was *Guida teorico-pratica ad uso dell'artista-cantante* (A Practical and Theoretical Guide to the Singing Artist). This treatise was published in Bologna in 1864 and later revised and expanded in 1884. He also translated this treatise into Spanish and gave it to the conservatory in Madrid. The second treatise, *Compendium, Metodo, Analytical, Filosofico e Fisiologico per la*

[7] J.B. Steane. "Giraldoni, Eugenio." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41572 (accessed September 30, 2010).
[8] Nello Vetro, "Istituzione Casa della Musica Parma: Dizionario biografico, dei personaggi citati a cura di Gaspare Nello Vetro."
[9] Forbes, *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, 97.

educazione della voce (Compendium on the Analytical, Philosophical, and Physiological Method for the Education of the Voice), was published in Milan by the Ricordi company in 1889.

The Need and Purpose of this Study

The need for such a study is important because it will make available for the first time a treatise on the art of singing and performing by one of the most important singers of the nineteenth century. The study will present for the first time an English translation of Giraldoni's treatise, *Guida teorico-pratica ad uso dell'artista-cantante*. Through an examination of the content of this work written by one of the great masters of singing, the study aims to provide useful insights into the teaching methodology used during the nineteenth century, a period when opera was at its zenith. The study will also introduce one of opera's great stars of the nineteenth century to a younger generation of singers and teachers, who may benefit from knowing more about the teaching and performing aesthetic of performers and teachers of the old Italian school.

In recent years, many books have emerged that lament the current state of singing, some even referring to singing as a lost art. Even the last great singers considered part of the "Golden Age of Singing," or *bel canto* era, an era that "began in the early part of the nineteenth century and flourished until the middle of the twentieth century," reportedly lamented the lost art of teaching.[10] In 1917, Mattia Battistini, among the greatest Italian baritones of all time, told a young inquisitive student that "the voice is fine but not one

[10] Cornelius L. Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis* (Huntsville, Texas: Recital Publications, 1983), 18.

tone is in place. Alas, what are you to do? There are no more good teachers even in Italy."[11] Giraldoni's text is important for two major reasons: the work has never appeared in the English language and it is also one of a few works of the later part of the nineteenth century to be written by an esteemed artist who was involved in the premieres of some of the major operas of the romantic period. Within this context, the more that can be gleaned from treatises written by such artists and teachers, the better we may be able to teach the next generation of great singing artists.

[11] Jacques Chuilon, *Mattia Battistini: King of Baritones and Baritone of Kings,* trans. E. Thomas Glasow (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009), 289.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

Most of the "secrets" of the Italian school of singing were not gathered together into books that attempted to pass on the secrets of great singing. The teaching of the Italian school was instead passed down orally from teacher to student. Earlier books or treatises on singing dealt less with the "nitty-gritty" issues of vocal technique and more with the current styles and performance trends of their day. By the later part of the nineteenth century, several books dealing with vocal technique emerged written by eminent teachers or pupils of famous teachers. Many of these books dealt principally with a single teacher's philosophy or method. Leone Giraldoni's treatise, along with works of a similar nature by Lilli Lehman, Luisa Tetrazzini, Enrico Caruso and Lillian Nordica, fall into a small and select group of works that were written by the most eminent performers of their day. For the purpose of the following document, the related literature has been drawn from nineteenth century works that appeared around the same time as Giraldoni's treatise, as well as works written by eminent vocal pedagogues and vocal historians from the mid and later part of the twentieth century. It is hoped that the wide-ranging time span of the related literary sources may provide useful insight into the vocal training and voice management techniques advocated by Leone Giraldoni.

Tradition and Gigli by E. Herbert Caesari

E. Herbert Caesari (1884-1969) was an eminent teacher in London who dedicated his life to the restoration and research of the Italian school of singing. Among his books on voice are, *The Alchemy of the Voice, The Voice of the Mind, Vocal Truth: Some of the Things I Teach* and *The Science and Sensation of Vocal Tone.* In *Tradition and Gigli,*

Caesari traces the formation of the Italian school of singing from its beginnings with the Florentine Camerata to its height in the early part of the twentieth century. Caesari studied at the Santa Cecilia Academy, Rome, with Riccardo Daviesi and later the famous Italian baritone Antonio Cotogni. It was there that he studied alongside Beniamino Gigli, who also became a life-long friend and supporter of Caesari's work. In this book, Caesari recounts the teaching style of the old Italian school, or *Schola Cantorum,* as handed down to him by Riccardo Daviesi and Cotogni. In the forward to the book, Caesari describes his writings as "a metempsychosis [sic] of the Schola Cantorum, of the Old Italian School of Singing." [12] While the book makes no direct reference to the Giraldoni treatise, Leone Giraldoni is acknowledged as one of the great baritones of the Italian tradition in the chapter, "Some famous composers-teachers and singers."

Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy by James Stark

James Stark is both a voice teacher and vocal historian. This work takes an in-depth look at treatises and writings on singing by a wide range of authors from the time of the Florentine Camerata to the modern day. The author examines both old and new treatises on singing as he addresses issues of *appoggio,* vocal attack and production, registers, and important issues that concern the modern day singer and the voice teacher. The author combines aspects of vocal history with vocal science using as his departure point the writings of Manuel Garcia II. Stark states that Garcia's writings "served as a watershed between tradition and science in the history of vocal pedagogy."[13] The book provides information on the kind of voice instruction that Giraldoni may have received as

[12] E. Herbert-Caesari, *Tradition and Gigli, 1600-1955: A Pangeric.* 2nd ed (London: Robert Hale, 1958), 10.
[13] Stark, *Bel Canto*, xi.

a young singer and also the changing shape of vocal thought at the time when Giraldoni was writing and teaching in Italy, Madrid and Moscow. Many of the topics in Giraldoni's treatise are also discussed in Stark's book.

Caruso and Tetrazzini on the Art of Singing by Enrico Caruso and Luisa Tetrazzini

Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) and Luisa Tetrazzini (1871-1940) are two of the greatest opera singers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is one of the few books written by eminent artists of the time dealing with the art of singing and the technique needed to develop a world-class voice.

Like Giraldoni, Caruso and Tetrazzini address areas of Diction, *Appoggio*, Emission or Tone Production, and Vocal Hygiene. Tetrazzini even addresses the use of facial expressions in the formation of tone color. Both writers are adamant that the art of respiration is the building block of the voice and that the "breath stop," or *Appoggio,* makes possible the start of any tone through an open throat. Caruso places great emphasis on the "power of respiration," saying, "if one is well-versed in the art, one can open the throat perfectly without a perceptible opening of the mouth, merely by the power of respiration,"[14] while Tetrazzini adds that one should never sing without the *appoggio,* as "its development and its constant use mean the restoration of sick or fatigued voices and the prolonging of all one's vocal powers." [15]

Tetrazzini dedicates a whole chapter to the use of facial expressions and the benefits of practicing in front of a mirror so that the use of expressive facial gestures does not interfere with vocal emission. In his treatise, Giraldoni indicates that the singer needs

[14] Enrico Caruso and Luisa Tetrazzini. *The Art of Singing* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975), 53.
[15] Ibid, 16.

to concentrate his efforts on the area just around the eyes so that the mouth is not affected in any way. To that end, he places sketches showing the appropriate expressions to be employed for different emotional effects. Tetrazzini echoes his sentiments, writing that a "singer's expression must concern itself chiefly with the play of emotion around the eyes, eyebrows and forehead."[16]

Technics of Bel Canto by G. B. Lamperti

During the later part of the nineteenth century, two of the major schools of singing were those belonging to Garcia and to Giovanni Battista Lamperti. Lamperti's *Technics of Bel Canto* was published in 1905, only eight years after the death of Leone Giraldoni. Lamperti's work, like many works of the period, provides much information on the same issues of vocal emission, tone production, breathing and *appoggio* and resonance. The work provides simple illustrations of the breathing mechanism and the vocal organs. The author also explains at what pitches the registers of the various voice categories occur and offers a wide range of vocal exercises for accomplishing smooth register changes. Exercises are also provided to develop other areas of vocal technique, and Lamperti also offers little hints on achieving best results and correcting vocal faults.

The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique by Richard Miller

Published in 1996 by one of the giants in vocal pedagogy of the twentieth century, Richard Miller's *The Structure of Singing* is one of the most in-depth studies of the science and art of vocal technique. Miller deals with all of the major issues concerning students and teachers of singing, identifying problems in vocal production and offering reasons for various problems along with corrective exercises. The book offers critical

[16] Ibid, 31.

opinions on many aspects of the *old Italianate* school of singing and attempts to demystify much of the confusion surrounding them. His discussion of *appoggio* is one that unites modern ideas with those of the past. Miller's book gives up-to-date photographs and images taken with the laryngoscope; these images help to explain why certain methods of respiration may be erroneous. The author deals with problems concerning the formation of vowels and consonants and offers suggestions for the health of the voice and the effect of exercise, diet and other day-to-day health issues that concern the modern professional singer and voice teacher.

<u>*Sounds of Singing* by Berton Coffin</u>

Coffin is part voice teacher and part scientist. One of the principle reasons for choosing this work on the art of singing is Coffin's relationship to the old Italian school through the teacher Paola Novikova. Paola Novikova (1896-1967) studied directly with Mattia Battistini (famed baritone of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), one of the direct descendents of the old Italian school of singing.[17] Among her most admired pupils were George London, Nicolai Gedda and Ferruccio Tagivini.[18] Coffin also studied with her and sat in on many of Gedda's lessons.

The forward by Gedda gives a great account of his lessons with Novikova as well as providing useful insight into the teaching of Berton Coffin. The work deals with all the principal areas of vocal technique and provides numerous vocal exercises designed to correct vocal problems. Coffin includes a complex "chromatic" vowel chart that for any student could become as difficult to comprehend as it is to put it into practice. The chart

[17] Deborah Andrews, *How a Voice Teacher Shapes the Performance of His Students: A Study of the Pedagogy and Life of Giuseppe De Luca* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 29.
[18] Ibid., 26.

attempts to teach the student how to color various vowels at different scale degrees. Coffin includes a series of question-answer type scenarios that one would expect to encounter in a lesson situation. The work is both readable and difficult; the science is important but may not help the singer gain better control of the voice. Coffin's vocal lineage and understanding of the old Italian school may provide the most useful and interesting part of this work.

The related literature included here is by no means meant to represent a comprehensive list of all the works on the art and science of singing – there are far too many to include. This list serves as a starting point for the exploration of works related to singing and singing technique. The authors mentioned above either had distinguished performing careers or teaching careers. In this list of works, the pedagogical voices of both sides of the coin, performers and teachers, are represented. These works and numerous others then give rise to a question related to the art of teaching the singing voice: who came first, the singer or the teacher? The answer is the singer, or what Caesari refers to in his works as "the completely natural voice".[19] Caesari states that "it was precisely on the model of the completely natural voice that the masters of the old school built of their knowledge" of the singing voice and established rules on how to train voices that did not possess this natural facility.[20] These works enable us to gain a more complete knowledge and historical perspective of the similarities and differences between teachers and performers with regard to the art of singing. From this perspective, the importance of Giraldoni's treatise cannot be underestimated, as it is one of the few treatises compiled by

[19] E. Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone: A School of Natural Vocal Mechanics* (Boston: Crescendo Publishing Company, 1936), 5.
[20] Ibid, 5.

someone who was both a distinguished performer and teacher. Collectively, these works of related literature help to provide an overarching look at the historical development of the art of teaching singing and the continuing evolution of thoughts and philosophies that surround it.

CHAPTER THREE

Commentary on the Translation

Chapter I:
The theory of Breathing: the advantages of this study and the consequences of its neglect.

Giraldoni's treatise opens with a chapter totally dedicated to the act of respiration for singing. In the opening chapter, the author strongly encourages the student to pay strict attention to the method of breathing and the management of the breath, exclusively studying and mastering all aspects of breath before embarking on any exercises that involve vocalizing. Breath is also the carrier of the voice in terms of the emission of the sound, and according to Giraldoni, the conveyor of emotional depth. The singer's ability to breathe correctly does two things: it supports the sound, and allows the artist to interpret correctly and to project the ideas within the musical score. Today, there are as many complex methods of teaching breathing as there are teachers of singing, and clearly breathing, and perhaps more importantly, the act of turning breath into tone, is one of the key concepts of learning and maintaining good singing. Voice teachers from the past tended to rely upon figurative language as a means of reducing complex functions like breathing and breath management into simple images that fall easily within the mental grasp.[21] From the outset, Giraldoni's work stands somewhat apart from these earlier treatises on singing, heralding the more modern, scientific approach to vocal pedagogy, in that it provides an anatomical overview of the act of respiration, as well as recommended methodology for respiration and breath management.

Earlier treatises on singing made little attempt to focus on the act of respiration or on specific methods of breathing, nor did they impart to the student any information

[21] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 92.

regarding the anatomical function of the respiratory organs, or, for that matter, the science of anything surrounding breath pressures in relation to pitch and vowel. Early writers and teachers of singing elaborated a great deal on a few vague, tried and tested dictums regarding respiration for singing. One of these specifically directed to the breath was *chi sa respirare sa cantare* (he who knows how to breathe knows how to sing). This phrase has also had other interpretations, such as *chi sa respirare ben e sillibare sapra ben cantare* (he who knows how to breathe well and pronounce well knows how to sing well).[22] In his book, *The Science and Sensations of Singing*, Herbert-Caesari, a twentieth-century teacher well-versed in the historic Italian singing tradition, or *bel canto,* says that both good breathing and good pronunciation are actually already present in good singing; therefore, the famous dictum should very well be, "he who sings well, breathes well," and perhaps also pronounces well.[23]

What most concerns Giraldoni in the opening chapter is making the student aware that the breath is the foundation of good vocalism. He also points out that as a result of correct breathing or breath management the singer is better able to find the correct and faithful interpretation for the music. Some of Giraldoni's thoughts on these matters are suggestive of writers, singers and teachers who came before him. A great deal of the same advice appears in the works of Caccini, Pacchierotti, and Tosi, who, while not offering "elaborate theories on breath control," as Giraldoni does, offered "pragmatic remarks advocating quiet inhalation and the economical use of breath for the effective rendering of the musical phrase."[24] Like Giraldoni, these writers also encouraged singers

[22] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 91.
[23] Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone*, 18.
[24] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 93.

to take breaths at appropriate places within the music so that the musical phrase and, in turn, the thoughts and wishes of the composer, would not be interrupted or disturbed. If the breath were to be taken at inopportune moments, like during a word, or if the singer were to take too many breaths, both the rhythmical drive and timing of the music could render the aria or song meaningless and leave the singer feeling unnecessarily fatigued. The audience, feeling the discomfort of the singer, becomes, as Giraldoni states, "less involved in the music and the art and more involved in the singer's extraneous efforts." The training of the breath for the purpose of creating drama within the voice is the more pressing issue for the author.

Giraldoni provides a very brief explanation of the parts of the body that govern the act of both inhalation and exhalation. In his explanation, Giraldoni incorrectly indicates that the diaphragm takes no part in passive breathing. The diaphragm, a muscle that takes part in every aspect of respiration, separates the lungs and the abdomen. It makes a partition and creates two cavities in the body. Because the diaphragm possesses no nerve endings, we have very little sensory awareness of it, and it cannot come under direct control of the singer as Giraldoni implies. What singers actually feel when they take a deep, diaphragmatic, breath, in the way advocated by the author, is the displacement of many of the internal organs of the body as the lungs fill completely, rather than any sort of controlled or willful movement of the diaphragm.

Giraldoni singles out the chest breath or what is also called clavicular breathing as the most basic and "fatal" error the singer can make. This type of breathing is one that pertains "to the collarbone; the process of inhaling by elevating the chest and pulling up

the ribs by means of muscles that normally move the shoulders."[25] This type of breathing does indeed fatigue the singer, as Giraldoni asserts, because greater effort is required to sustain phonation. It encourages the singer to expand the upper ribcage, which is always limited in terms of movement because all the ribs, with the exception of the very low floating ribs, are joined to the immovable sternum. Voice teacher Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839-1910), a contemporary of Giraldoni, says that, "to breathe without expanding the chest is an absolute necessity."[26] This manner of breathing encourages the diaphragm to become contracted, or rather relaxed, in its upward movement because the abdominal wall is contracted or pulled in, in an attempt to expand the ribcage beyond its free range of movement. Vocal pedagogue James McKinney provides further evidence for Giraldoni's assertions that this is a disastrous method of breathing for singing in his 2005 book, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults:*

> Upper chest breathing is undesirable for the following reasons:
> 1. It limits (inhibits) the downward travel of the diaphragm
> 2. It is visually distracting to the audience
> 3. It wastes energy and is physically tiring because of the effort expended in raising the chest.
> 4. It is often associated with poor posture.
> 5. Tension in the muscles of the chest and shoulders may be transmitted to the neck area and the vocal mechanism itself.
> 6. It is inefficient, tending to be shallow. [27]

If Giraldoni's writing in any way constitutes a guide to the method of singing, then at the method's heart would be strict attention to manner of respiration and of breathing. Giraldoni's three "indispensable" parts of breathing place importance on

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[25] Cornelius L. Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 49.
[26] William Earl Brown, *Vocal Wisdom: Maxims of Giovanni Battista Lamperti* (New York, Taplinger Publishing Company, 1957), 53.
[27] James C. McKinney, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults: a manual for teachers of singing and for choir directors* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2005), 57.

breathing for the phrase, conditions of posture, and maintaining good diaphragm/abdominal support. Breathing for the phrase, or with the phrase length in mind, is key to ensuring that adequate breath is present so that both the text and the musical phrase make sense, providing a true and faithful interpretation of the composer's musical sentiments. Lamperti also advocated the idea of breathing for the phrase. Taking the idea a step further, Lamperti advocated that every phrase drew its own breath, thus allowing the singer to respond to needs of the phrase both in terms of breath and vocal timbre.[28]

Giraldoni's idea that efficient respiration should be a cure-all for a number faults encountered in singing is not far from the mark. The author points out to the singer that the singer can feel the positive effects of good respiration in the following ways: improved vocal security, perfect intonation, the ability to find the full range of emotional intent, improved agility and *sostenuto* singing, a more noble sonorous sound, and both *forte* and *piano* singing are possible. Many singers of the past and present have often advocated the admonition to "sing on the interest and not the capital." Singers who have experienced vocal longevity often attribute their lasting vocal health to the correct use of the breath and to careful and judicious use of the voice. There is little doubt that the correct use of the breath in singing leads to greater vocal security and control. In many ways, "all bad habits of the throat are merely efforts of protection against clumsy breath management."[29]

To understand the effect of the respiration on the intonation of the voice, it may be useful to identify some of the ways intonation can be defined. Intonation can be

[28] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom*, 90.
[29] Ibid, 13.

described as: "fidelity to pitch; the ability to reproduce accurately a single pitch or series of pitches. In earlier centuries, intonation was used to indicate tone quality, as for example 'purity of intonation.'"[30] Today's reader might also interpret intonation as either flat or sharp singing. Few singers and teachers of singing would disagree that the correct use of the breath has a substantial effect on good intonation. Intonation that is connected to flat and sharp singing not only involves aspects of breath management, but also involves aspects of vocal registration. Sharp singing, in many cases, is brought about when the singer employs an "excessive amount of breath pressure" for the given pitch.[31] This "excessive" breath pressure can result in the tightening of the throat and therefore increased constriction, leading to imbalances in the vocal registration. Increased breath pressure in the direction of the larynx, subglottal pressure, also inhibits the release of healthy high notes. Increased subglottal pressure is not limited to any one voice category, but is often more apparent in the tenor voice. To alleviate the issues surrounding subglottal pressure and the "throaty" and effortful sound that often accompanies it, the singer "should try to keep the supply of breath down as far toward the abdomen as possible, thus maintaining the upper passages to the head quite free for the emission of the voice."[32] Proper phonation is dependent upon maintaining an even and unimpeded supply of air to the voice that in turn secures the correct adjustment of the vocal tract. These adjustments include the degree to which the soft palate is either elevated or collapsed, the position of the larynx and the openness and freedom, the *gola aperta* (open throat), one of the most desirable aspects of the classical trained singer. Aspects of

[30] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 165.
[31] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 338.
[32] Luisa Tetrazzini and Enrico Caruso. *The Art of Singing*, 55.

intonation are also involved in the capacity of the artist to reflect to the listener the depth of the character's emotions. One must always remember to:

> sing within yourself, as it were – to feel the tones all through your being; otherwise your singing will possess no sentiment, emotion or authority. It is the failure to accomplish this which has produced so many soulless artists—singers endowed with magnificent voices, capable of surmounting every technical difficulty, but devoid of that charm of intonation which is so vital to the success to success on the operatic stage.[33]

Is it true that the breath can help give the singer the freedom to find the fullest interpretation of the music he is delivering? The author, who was a greatly experienced singer, certainly asserts this. Giuglio Caccini, one of the earliest composers and teachers of singing, certainly felt that the "chief requirements for expressive singing were a good voice and good breath control."[34]

Giraldoni's argument on breathing suffers at the point at which he returns to his discussion of the chest breath; correct breathing, in Giraldoni's view, should be solely assigned to the diaphragm. By insisting that the rib cage be completely ignored in the act of respiration, Giraldoni would be advocating that the capacity of the lungs be instantly cut in two. Giraldoni cites, as the main support for his views on the art of respiration for singing, a thesis by Dr. Mandl, *The Hygiene of The Voice*. He credits Mandl's work as the premiere work on the correct respiration, but never provides any real supporting evidence or information from Mandl, leaving the reader uniformed as to the very basis of Giraldoni's reasons for advocating his recommended method of breathing. We are aware of the faults, but not any more enlightened on how corrections to these faults may be made. Interestingly, the ideas on breathing put forward by Dr. Mandl, who was a

[33] Ibid.
[34] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 157.

physiologist working in Paris were also embraced and propagated by the famous father/son teachers, Francesco Lamperti (1811-1892), and Giovanni Battista Lamperti.[35] Francesco Lamperti, like Giraldoni and Mandl, indicates in his 1884 treatise, *The Art of Singing*, that the correct method of breathing is one in which the diaphragm alone is used and any use of the ribs is counterproductive. Like Giraldoni, Lamperti provides information on vocal anatomy and physiology, which he credits as a direct citation from the same Dr. Mandl's 1879 publication, *Hygiène de la voix*.[36] According to the twentieth-century vocal pedagogue, Herbert-Caesari, Lamperti "denounced the method in a public lecture as incomplete, and therefore erroneous, misleading and harmful" two years after publishing his 1884 treatise supporting these ideas on breathing.[37] Lamperti was such an influential teacher that any retraction of the statement appeared to have little effect, and Herbert-Caesari's assertion of a retraction of Mandl's ideas may be spurious; Giovanni Lamperti further cites Mandl in his 1905 book, *The Technics of Bel Canto*,[38] and the Lampertis' combined views on breathing, supported by citations from Mandl, form much of the basis of *appoggio*, a fundamental tenet of the Italian *bel canto* school to be discussed in greater detail in further chapters.

Giraldoni consistently refers to the breathing mechanism as a windbag, an analogy that is not very clear and could be interpreted as meaning many things. Are we to believe that the art of breathing is merely one of blowing and sucking? He advocates the use of the abdominal muscles and diaphragm to regulate and control the breath. Given this, the idea of the windbag most likely represents the concept that the act of breathing

[35] Ibid., 99.
[36] Ibid., 44.
[37] E. Herbert-Caesari, *Alchemy of the Voice* (London, Robert Hale, 1965), 76.
[38] G.B. Lamperti, *Technics of Bel Canto* (New York, G. Schirmer, 1905), 35.

for singing is similar to the action of a bellows, by definition "a device for producing a stream of air under pressure."[39] Teachers who promote the concept of abdominal or belly breathing often use the analogy of the bellows to serve a descriptive function in their teaching. Giraldoni is never clear about how the singer can physically manage the steady release of the breath, the most important issue. The notion of using the breathing apparatus as a windbag or bellows would imply that, as described by the vocal pedagogue Cornelius Reid, the "abdominal muscles (especially the diaphragm) must be forcibly pushed upward and inward during exhalation in order to activate the vocal folds."[40] Reid discredits the "bellows" idea of breath management:

> The bellows concept, however, like all aspects of abdominal control, contains inherent contradictions: 1) the diaphragm contracts (and flattens) during inhalation and relaxes (and rises) during exhalation; 2) the diaphragm is a reflexive muscle and cannot be consciously controlled, and 3) concern for any isolated muscular activity introduces compensatory tensions and tonal stiffness by undermining the respiratory equilibrium characteristic of correct vocalization.[41]

The closing remarks include a short passage that advises the student to take a breath via the nose and the mouth, so that any drying sensation within the mouth cavity can be avoided. This advice may be of some use to the student, as nose breathing may have been used by singers to prevent the drying out of the mouth cavity due to cold temperatures and to dusty rehearsal or performance spaces.[42] While there may be other reasons for advocating combined nose and mouth breathing, such as greater inhalation capacity, increased speed of breath intake, or the formulation of a more open throat and released larynx, the author makes no advances in these directions. While Giraldoni "never tires of

[39] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 31.
[40] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 33.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid, 51.

calling the artists attention to the very essential principles," he never offers any exercises either for achieving a better-functioning respiration or for the management of the air during vocalization. While the role of the larynx is two-fold, one as vibrator and the other as the regulator of the release of the breath, Giraldoni does not discuss its action and involvement in respiration and vocalization in the Chapter I. The opening chapter highlights the importance of the training of the breathing apparatus to deliver a strong performance and to provide a structural platform for the voice. Giraldoni gives more specific information about breath management and vocalizing the breath in the chapters that follow.

Chapter II:

Constant examination of voice emission and the true point of voice support. The Dangers of singing with incorrect emission.

The health and longevity of the singing voice, unless the singer is unfortunate enough to experience a debilitating illness, can be greatly attributed to the way in which the singer emits and supports the voice. "Simple emission" of the tone that is, in the earliest part of vocal study, neither overly dark nor overly bright, is essential to the eradication of habitual problems and to the education of the vocal organ. Simple emission can be defined as an unimpeded release of a tone that is accompanied by no action in the throat, and mastering simple emission is the secret both to the preservation and health of the vocal organ and to a healthy and long performing career. Giraldoni credits the loss of a great many voices and the scarcity of good voices as the result of the lack of study and dedication given to the practice of simple emission, practice that frees the voice and allows the student to find the correct way in which to support the tone.

The advice at the opening of the chapter is that simple emission is best practiced and learned by starting in the area of the chest voice. Although uncomfortable with the term, the author uses it because it is a term that was in vogue at the time of his writing. The chest voice spoken of here most likely references the part of the voice in which the singer naturally speaks, and the most easily accessible part of a young singer's vocal range. Chest voice can also imply one of the areas in the voice commonly referred to as a register. As Giraldoni uses the term here, the chest voice or chest register implies that the student will best achieve simple emission of a tone by working, at first, within a single register. The combination of correct *appoggio* and simple emission must become the singer's primary goal in order to eradicate any or all of the natural defects of the voice. The study of the perfect and simple emission, Giraldoni says, is essential for the correction of all habitual and basic vocal faults. If a young voice student does not sufficiently address these faults, irreparable damage may be the result.

Giraldoni frequently uses the term *appoggio* (lean) or *appoggiare la voce* (to lean on the voice) here and throughout the treatise. This terminology is synonymous with breathing and breath management in classical voice training, but its meaning and application can be vague and unclear, and Giraldoni provides no further clarification of what *appoggio* means, or how the singer acquires or applies it. The term *appoggio* initially became popular in the nineteenth century in the hands of Francesco Lamperti; Lamperti developed the idea based on the work of the famous Dr. Mandl, who spent a great amount of time investigating the action of the respiratory organs.[43] While many authors have provided differing descriptions and definitions of *appoggio*, the term as it is

[43] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 101.

used here is probably most closely linked to the ideas put forward by Francesco and Giovanni Battista Lamperti, as Giraldoni also advocates the ideas of Dr. Mandl. *Appoggio*, for the purpose of attempting to understand Giraldoni's thoughts, then, can be loosely defined in the following way: "by singing *appoggiata*, is meant that all notes, from the lowest to the highest, are produced by a column of air over which the singer has perfect command, by holding back the breath and not permitting more air than is absolutely necessary for the formation of the note to escape from the lungs."[44]

The premise that Giraldoni establishes here is very clear. The voice, its longevity and beauty, can be guaranteed through two acts: simple, uncomplicated emission of tone, and exemplary breath support, *appoggio.* Giraldoni alludes to one of the foremost tenets of the old Italian school within the chapter, *cerca la qualità e la quantita verrà* (first find the quality [of the tone] and the quantity will come).[45] A voice achieved through push and pull of muscles will never last and will never be considered by its listeners to be either "pleasing" or "charming." Of more interest to the reader here are the principles on which this emission of tone is found. Vocal emission is a term found in many older treatises on singing. This term seems to have been replaced in most modern studios by the term "voice production." These two words certainly convey very different messages to the singer. Emission is defined as "an act of emitting, something sent forth or a putting into circulation"; production, on the other hand, is "something produced, the act or process of producing." [46] The act of emission Giraldoni discusses concerns the uncomplicated and unimpeded release of the natural voice, and not the investment many of today's singers

[44] Ibid.
[45] Esther Salaman, *Unlocking Your Voice: Freedom to Sing* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1989), 7.
[46] *Webster New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "production."

place in the creation of a "sound" or of "voice" according to a misguided idea of tonal color, size of voice, or particular aesthetic.

Giraldoni's two points on how to create a "beautiful and homogenous" sound can be broken down further into what amounts to four golden rules of singing, pertaining to the larynx and its position within the throat, the position of the soft palate, the tongue, and the mouth. The correct functioning of these parts is the consequence of singing with the correct support of the voice, the *appoggio.* The breath, not only relevant to the *appoggio* of the voice, helps in creating correct laryngeal position, soft palate position, gives greater freedom of the tongue, and effects the position of the mouth and jaw. If one interprets Giraldoni's words in this way, then breath, either efficient or inefficient, is a commanding force in all aspects of singing technique –*"chi sa respirare sa cantare"* (he who breathes well sings well). If breathing in singing helps to provide the full and efficient use of the whole body, then he who breathes well certainly gives himself a greater chance at singing his best. If the *appoggio* is taken to mean, as stated above, that the voice rides on a column of air then the cords and larynx and the subsequent movement of these parts during the act of singing also need to work efficiently if the harmony between *appoggio* and voice is to be kept intact. The "laryngeal adjustments" as directed by the needs of pitch and volume form part of an unbroken relationship that must exist between the voice and the breath. The perfect emission then becomes a product of "(*a*) the correct adjustment firstly of the vocal cord, and secondly of the *pharyngeal* parts (epiglottis, tongue, soft palate and pharynx), and of (*b*) the *minimum* quantity of breath necessary for the initiating and alimenting of the tone."[47]

[47]Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone,* 18.

Giraldoni's advocacy of a lower laryngeal position should not be confused with that of laryngeal depression, or of forcibly pushing the larynx low. The author frequently uses the words *senza sforza* (without force) and *naturalmente* (naturally), so much so that the reader should never think that anything recommend can be achieved by way of the brutal handling of the voice or breath. To create a beautiful and homogenous sound, Giraldoni recommends that the larynx be slowly lowered on inhalation. The relationship between deep inhalation and a slightly lowered laryngeal position has been well documented. If the act of inhalation frees the larynx to sit slightly lower than in normal respiration, then this "adjustment of the vocal tract will be accompanied by a reflexive elevation of the soft palate and an overall enlargement of the throat cavity."[48]

Early training of singers and their tone was for the most part regulated by the teacher's ear and ability to guide the student to the desired sound. With the invention of the laryngoscope, it became possible to observe direct changes in sound with direct changes in laryngeal and pharyngeal positioning. These changes within the vocal tract have a direct impact on tonal quality, something discussed in greater depth in chapter three. Beautiful tone is what lies at the heart of the *bel canto* tradition. It appears that the positioning of the palate and larynx have a great deal to do with this beautiful sound, for if the tone were to fill only the mouth cavity, then the tones emitted would be tight, harsh and crude. The correct vocal tone should issue forth as "round, vibrant and mellow," thus "the roundness and the mellowness are created by the low larynx and the expanded pharynx, while the '"vibrant" quality again issues from strong glottal closure."[49] Garcia also acknowledged the positioning of the tongue in the manner described by Giraldoni.

[48] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 196.
[49] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 38.

Garcia noted that "as the larynx descends below the position of rest, the entire pharynx changes in conformation: the soft palate rises, the tongue flattens and becomes hollow along the mid-line toward the posterior part, the pillars of the fauces separate at their base, and the soft tissues of the pharynx gain greater tonus."[50] Depending on the positioning of the various parts of the throat, the voice may produce a variety of timbres. Vocal timbre is also something that can be willed in by the singer as an emotional response to text and musical content.

Because the tongue is attached to the jaw, hyoid bone, pharynx and soft palate, it is also an important part of the vocal tract and in singing, and if not used correctly in singing, can contribute to faulty tone. The movement and positioning of the tongue contributes to the internal shaping of the vocal tract and plays a major role in the formation of vowels and consonants. A great deal of advice on the positioning of the tongue exists in vocal pedagogy. Recommendations include grooving the tongue, flattening the tongue, and keeping in the tongue in the "ng" position or close to the top teeth. Any or all of these concepts would seem ridiculous if one knows that the emission of "good" or "correct" vowels depends on the freedom of the tongue to assume different positions within the throat and mouth, meaning that, should the singer deliver "good," correct vowels, then the tongue has ultimately assumed the correct position for the vowel being pronounced. Giraldoni correctly recommends to keep the tongue in a normal state, with no tension, as placing an immersion or any prescribed shape in the center of the tongue may induce tension rather than free any constriction. As Giraldoni points out, the appropriate position of the tongue is perhaps the result of good singing rather than the

[50] Ibid, 39.

cause. There is no denying some vocal students use incorrect and at times harmful tongue positioning. However, tongue tension most frequently results from faulty emission of tone and constriction within the throat, which cannot be corrected by adjusting merely the tongue alone, and the most natural and appropriate tongue position may vary according to the physiology of the individual. Other voice teachers agree that if the singer does exhibit faults connected to the incorrect use of the tongue,

> then the fault does not lie with the tongue itself but with the erroneous formation and emission of the vowels. If the tongue is apparently the culprit the remedy does not lie in the flattening or otherwise manoeuvring it, but in clearing the field around it, thereby permitting it to assume its natural position (that is, natural to the particular individual), into which it will then readily fall, all other parts being equally well adjusted.[51]

In the end the singer's resultant tone most accurately indicates if the emission of the tone is correct or not. A singer's daily practice should always include time for monitoring the simple technical aspects of the art so that bad habits, such as tongue tension, do not set in. The author refers to this type of work as "preventative study and examination."

The attack of the tone or more simply the way in which a singer begins singing is another area that demands the focus and attention of the singer. Giraldoni mentions that the attack of the sound should be executed lightly, maintaining evenness of the breath throughout a given phrase or exercise. The "light blow" to the throat should be interpreted as a gentle closing of the cords and not in any way as a blow similar to a punch. As with *appoggio* and "perfect emission," Giraldoni does not go into any depth with regard to the attack of the sound or how to practice to achieve a healthy one. The attack, or onset, of emission affects "vibrancy" within a tone, and the onset of the sound and the idea of vibrancy within a sound, something that has "been described as the

[51] Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone*, 160.

'caress of the glottis' was fundamental to the *bel canto* system."[52] During the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, singers and teachers recognized that the "use of *vibrazione*" and its correct execution gave enormous benefits to the singer and helped the singer make the "most daunting phrases become not only possible to perform but a delight."[53] The Italian school of singing considered that all the breath must be turned into tone at the vocal cords. There was no mixing of air with voice, all air had to be made tone. Thus,

> the *bel canto* system was built upon the continual 'caress of the glottis,' the all-important act which took precedence over breathing, tone amplification and articulation. Through an understanding of *vibrazione* and *messa di voce*, both of which depend on isolation for their successful operation, the exclamatory vowels could be used in every shade and grade to produce coloring appropriate to the mood and emotion expressed.[54]

As with many earlier works on singing, Giraldoni advocates commencing vocal study with the [a] vowel, which is the most open of all the vowels and is often viewed as the best vowel with which to begin vocal study. It requires a completely open throat and needs optimum balance of register and resonance. Giraldoni advises the student against using any hint of closed or open vowel in the early stages; both the closed and open vowels are strongly linked to darkening or lightening of the tone and are not essential in early training because they hinder the progress of simple emission. The sound that Giraldoni advocates is the *chiaroscuro* (light and shade) sound, the sound that is totally balanced in color and therefore in resonance. This sound has long been acknowledged in *bel canto* singing as the ideal tone, and will be discussed in greater depth in the later chapters.

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[52] Salaman, *Unlocking Your Voice.* 33.
[53] Ibid., 34.
[54] Ibid., 118.

Giraldoni continually reaffirms that correct emission is an essential part of correct vocal technique, and that the *appoggio* of the voice helps make the correct emission possible. As Giraldoni points out, a variety of problems can develop if care is not taken to secure the correct vocal emission by means of correct breath support in early stages of training. The ailments referred to in the chapter, such as hoarseness, inflammation of the throat and vocal cords, coughs, etc., can all be indicators of incorrect vocal use, and although these symptoms can present in a singer due to pathological medical conditions, in most cases they are "most likely attributable to poor vocal technique."[55] These symptoms, if not diagnosed and corrected, can lead to greater vocal problems such as nodes, polyps, and even hemorrhages, and "unless a new approach to vocal training is taken….there is every reason to believe that the condition will recur."[56] Giraldoni rightly suggests that the presence of any of these symptoms in a voice indicates incorrect vocal technique, and neglect of technique can lead to loss of confidence, diminished vocal ability, and even to a premature ending of the singer's career,

Many singers wish to advance quickly in their studies. It may be wise to heed Giraldoni's advice of "gradual growth" and take care in the initial stages so that one's voice, career and health may be left intact for a long time. Many vocal teachers of the past advocated this "gradual growth" and it was not uncommon for singers to study anywhere from five to seven years before embarking on careers that lasted for decades. Giraldoni, like teachers before and after him, advocates that the student be fully aware of the actual art of singing before rushing into overly complicated exercises and vocal literature. Even when fully versed in his art, the singer should always keep a check upon

[55] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 148.
[56] Ibid., 251.

the basics. G.B. Lamperti agreed with Giraldoni on several of these issues. Unlike many of his day, Lamperti did not believe that the music of Verdi and Wagner was harmful to the voice. He placed the blame at the feet of teachers and students, saying that

> everyone says that the music of Verdi and Wagner spoils the voice. That is not true of perfected voices. And here we have the one cause for the deterioration of singing, which no one will grasp and which is nevertheless so simple. The insufficiently cultivated voice, which possesses neither the flexibility or the art of breath- supported legato, naturally wears itself out.[57]

He went on to say that the "fatal mistake is rather, that unripe artists take on the most difficult tasks before possessing the necessary ability."[58] Closer to our time, the English voice teacher Esther Salaman had this to say about teaching young singers:

> Teaching young singers today, I have found it very to hard to work at these notions. Students feel extremely competitive amongst themselves, and quantity of sound is valued over quality- or so they think. And so it is speed in getting something to show; a big voice, and as soon as possible, invites notices and jobs![59]

Unlike other aspects of our society, becoming an artist is not something that can be rushed, and the growth of an artist is something unique to the individual. Perhaps no matter the time period, the early Italian adage, "*cerca la qualità e la quantita verrà*," is something that singers today should continue to remember and focus upon.

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[57] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 222.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Salaman, *Unlocking Your Voice*, 8.

Chapter III:

Definition of the diverse registers/records of the human voice; Advice regarding the union of these registers/records; fault acquisitions to avoid and the advantages of a well-united voice.

Chapter III begins a discussion of the various registers of the voice. For the art of correct singing and the creation of a homogeneous sound, the three registers described at the outset of the chapter must first be studied independently and then joined so that the listener can detect no point of departure from one register to another. The success or failure of the singer to do this again hinges on the correct *appoggio,* or breath support, without which, the correct functioning of the registers is impossible. The uniting of the registers was a skill that the "teachers from the old Italian school advocated"…thereby, "uniting or equalizing the registers to avoid a noticeable shift in voice quality from one register to another."[60] A vocal register can therefore be described as "a series of consecutive homogeneous sounds produced by one mechanism, differing essentially from another series of sounds equally homogeneous produced by another mechanism, whatever modifications of timbre and of strength they may offer."[61]

Register theory is quite often a gray area in singing and theories about how many registers the voice contains vary from school to school and from studio to studio. An analysis of singing treatises would show that "the number of registers which are said to comprise the singing voice have been variously listed as none, one, two, three, four, five, six or seven, with some other teachers of singing insisting that each note in the vocal

[60] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 57-58.
[61] Garcia, Manuel. *Hints on Singing.* trans. Beata Garcia (New York: E. Schubert and Co., 1894), 8.

compass should be called a register."[62] Until the pedagogy efforts of Manuel Garcia II, the Garcia of laryngoscope fame, the Italian school followed a two-register theory for all voices. Garcia codified a three-register theory that has since become the basis of most modern pedagogy. Garcia theorized, however, that women's voices contain three registers and men's voice contain two, a theory also advocated by Lamperti. The two registers were named chest voice, or *voce di petto,* and head voice, or *voce di testa*. Register debate aside, by the time of Giraldoni's treatise, the famous vocal pedagogue Manuel Garcia had, in his 1847 treatise, established the three register theory.[63] Prior to this, Italian teaching predominately subscribed to a two-register theory consisting of chest, *voce di petto,* and head, *voce di testa.* Garcia, in his *Hints on Singing,* states that "every voice consisted of three registers, namely, chest, medium and head. The chest holds the lowest place, the medium the middle and the head the highest."[64] Giraldoni, like Garcia, advocates the three-register theory and divides the voice into chest, middle chest and head voice, and he cautions the singer not to confuse register with *appoggio*; the change in the registers is achieved through laryngeal adjustment and not through altering or adjusting the point of support. The *appoggio*, therefore, underpins successful register and laryngeal adjustment. The definition of a register can then be more fully described as:

> a type of coordination between two groups of laryngeal muscles in which either one or the other of the tensor groups predominates. It is because of the interactions between these systems that the vocal folds adjust so that they become "thick" or "thin," that the impression of "higher" or "lower" tonal placement is created, that symptoms of vibration appear to be concentrate in the chest or head…[65]

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[62] Richard Miller, *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited* (London, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1977), 99.
[63] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 68.
[64] Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, 7.
[65] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology,* 297.

giving the singer also the impression of different areas of resonance and register. The point of not getting these two aspects confused is that Giraldoni suggests the chest voice should be strengthened first and that this register, and its involvement throughout the singer's range, gives the voice its timbre, power, intensity and homogeneous quality.

The first register the author discusses is the chest register. The chest was long regarded as the powerhouse of the voice both in terms of color and stability. Lodovico Zanconi, the Italian-Austrian composer and music theorist, wrote in his *Prattica di Musica* (1592) that the chest voice was far more pleasing in terms of tone than the "shrill" and "penetrating" tones of the pure head voice.[66] Zanconi had very little time for the dull head voice and felt that "chest voices gave more delight than head voices, which 'are not only boring and annoying, but in a short time one comes to hate and abhor them.'"[67] He went on to say that "dull voices can never be heard and may as well not be there."[68] It should be noted that the writings of Zanconi pertained more to the male voice, as women of the time were not allowed to sing publicly in any formal established group; head voice, as Giraldoni notes, is the most natural register in the female voice, and he discourages men from utilizing the head voice in performance.

The birth of the solo voice coincides with the birth of opera and this new style of solo singing was strongly influenced and encouraged by the members of the Florentine Camerata. Giulio Caccini, one the Florentine Camerata's most influential members, wrote about the new style of solo singing in his *Le Nuove Musiche* (1602). Caccini, like many writers on singing, referred to the voice has having two registers, which he called

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[66] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 59.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

voce piena e naturale (full and natural voice) and the other as *voce finta* (feigned or false voice, i.e. falsetto). He, like Zanconi, detested the latter, preferring the full and natural voice. He described *voce finta* as breathy and lacking nobility, and not capable of achieving the greatest technical feat in singing, the *messa di voce*.[69] Moving closer to Giraldoni's time, even Garcia noted the power that belonged to the chest voice and stated that "in men's voices, as in women's, the three registers co-exist, but the chest predominates."[70] He also stated that the chest voice was the most basic essential voice of both female and male.[71]

The fact that little attention is given to the chest register in the female voice is a twofold issue. Women, particularly sopranos, tend to sing mostly in head voice and quite often have little in the way of chest extension, this, according to Giraldoni, making the voice weaker overall. The other issue is one that concerns national schools of singing. While "the introduction of chest timbre is common to singers trained in the historic Italian school…it is largely shunned among singers who have emerged from the Nordic/Germanic tradition."[72] The use of the chest voice in moderation and with care strengthens vocal tone and provides the singer, especially the female vocalist, with a greater interpretive and emotive palette. It is important to note that Giraldoni wrote his treatise at the time of Verdi's later compositions and around the time of the birth of the *verismo* school. While the *bel canto* tradition in singing and voice pedagogy was still held in high regard, text, as opposed to sheer beautiful line, was growing in emphasis and

[69] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 59.
[70] Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, 10.
[71] Berton Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics* (London: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1989), 20.
[72] Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140.

importance. The growth in size of the orchestra also added to the need to find powerful voices that could carry above the music and fill increasingly large auditoriums.

The suggestion of adopting the [a] vowel, both here and in the earlier chapter, for the purpose of early study is not uncommon. Securing the [a] vowel is important for the freedom of the vocal tract in all areas, but at the same time it does not mean that all other vowels will automatically be correct. The correct formation of the [a] vowel means that the lips will slightly part as the jaw naturally lowers and the larynx drops. The tongue lies flat, but not depressed the singer finds that tongue constriction and other tightness within the vocal tract is greatly avoided.[73] The ability to move freely from one tone and vowel to another lies in the singer's ability to keep that parts of the vocal tract agile and moveable, without inducing any tension within the vocal tract. Many singing texts refer to what Giraldoni describes as "relinquishing entirely of the throat," and the use of the [a] vowel, as Giraldoni suggests, or any open vowel was and is considered a healthy way of strengthening the voice.[74] "Relinquishing the throat" means that the breath or *appoggio* becomes responsible for support of the voice. Time without doubt plays an important part of any vocalist's development. Giraldoni mentions that if some of the notes are resistant to come out than one should sing as far as possible without resistance and than gradually extend outward by dragging the voice from the last good note to the notes beyond, moving one by one. The real key to producing the homogeneous sound, the *chiaroscuro,* is to have the voice, either male or female, blending and moving imperceptibly between the registers or resonances that make up the individual voice.

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[73] Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (Belmont, CA: Schirmer, Thomson Learning, 1996), 71.
[74] Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics*, 39

Because the chest voice ordinarily corresponds most closely to the speaking range of the voice,[75] it can be the easiest register to start vocal strengthening and study. By establishing the chest voice, without any force, with good clean and effortless emission of tone, the voice's true individual nature can be established, and the singer may more easily find freedom to find his breath and the *appoggio*, or point of support, as Giraldoni suggests. Giraldoni does not offer any suggestions or exercises to help the singer strengthen the chest voice, however, and although he notes that the chest voice can be particularly weak in the soprano voice, he offers no tangible solutions to correct the issue. G. B. Lamperti also observed the importance of identifying the chest register, and notes in his 1905 *Technics of Bel Canto* that "some coloratura sopranos have no developed chest register."[76] Lamperti remarks that "to determine the natural registers of any voice requires the experience and acute ear of the teacher,"[77] and goes even further than Giraldoni to recommend specific vocalises like these to identify the chest register and incorporate it smoothly into the register above it: [78]

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

[75] Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 117.
[76] G.B. Lamperti, *Technics of Bel Canto,* 10.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p. 14.

Other more modern vocal pedagogues have also recognized the importance of the chest register, and have provided more concrete and helpful advice than Giraldoni on how to identify and improve this area of the voice. Richard Miller, for example, suggests "brief legato descending patterns, such as 5-4-3-2-1, …sung in the low range entirely in head" then repeating the pattern, adding a "head/chest mixture" to the bottom notes, then a "chest/head mixture" on subsequent repetitions until full chest is achieved in the entire pattern.[79]

Giraldoni's discussion of the chest register ends with pointing out the pitches where change is usually felt within the different vocal categories. The ranges given for the chest register of each category of voice are as follows: for the soprano and the mezzo-soprano, low 'C' to 'A Flat' or 'A', for the Contralto no higher than the 'A', for the tenor no higher than 'C' or 'D' fourth line, the baritone is the same as the soprano and the bass should not carry the chest past the 'A' Flat. The notes of the chest register are important for establishing the foundation of the voice, the *appoggio,* and for adding color to the sound. Giraldoni provides more detail in regard to the use of and application of the registers in the section devoted to register unification. Giraldoni's strict classification of points of register change is perhaps a little misleading. To make every voice change on the pitches indicated above would suggest a method that in some cases may lead different voices into difficulties. G. B. Lamperti makes a more flexible observation about change of register: "A given voice should not be classified simply according to its actual compass, but also according to its *timbre*. As for the correct employment of the registers,

[79] Miller, *The Structure of Singing,* 141.

general rules can hardly be formulated."[80] Registration also implies properties of resonance and within the male voice types alone, different singers, even if they are the same voice type, may feel different changes of register and resonance at different points within the scale. Giraldoni's areas of register change are brief and very approximate and as already mentioned would possibly create difficulties for some voices, should they choose to follow strictly his guidelines. Richard Miller gives a more detailed and useful view of the registers of both male and female voices in *The Structure of Singing:*

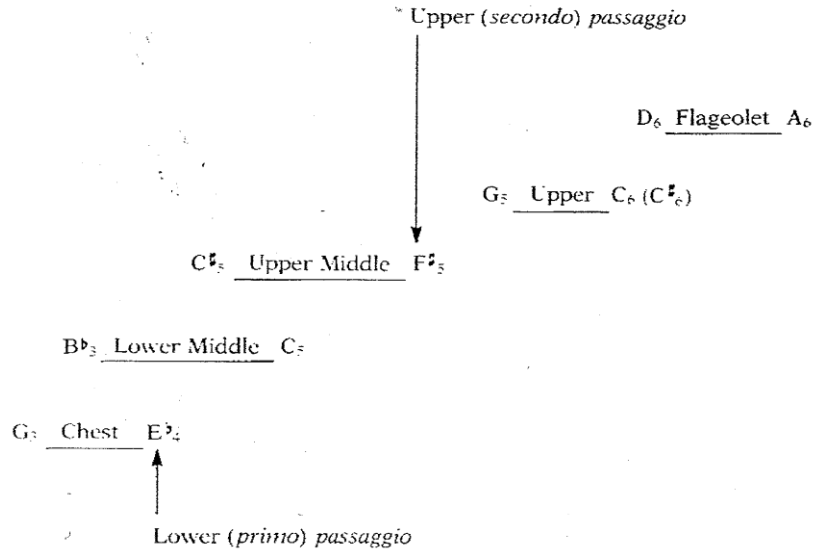
Approximate Register Events

Category of Voice	*primo passaggio*	*secondo passaggio*
tenorino	F_4	$B\flat_4$
tenore leggiero	E_4,($E\flat_4$)	A_4,($A\flat_4$)
tenore lirico	D_4	G_4
tenore spinto	D_4,($C\sharp_4$)	G_4,($F\sharp_4$)
tenore robusto (tenore drammatico)	C_4,($C\sharp_4$)	F_4,($F\sharp_4$)
baritono lirico	B_4	E_4
baritono drammatico	$B\flat_4$	$E\flat_4$
basso cantante	A_3	D_4
basso profondo	$A\flat_3$,(G_3)	$D\flat_4$,(C_4)

[81]

[80] G.B. Lamperti, *Technics of Bel Canto,* 23.
[81] Miller, *Structure of Singing,* 117.

REGISTRATION EVENTS OF FEMALE VOICES



82 Figure 10.1. Soprano *passaggi* and Register Zones

[82] Ibid., 134.

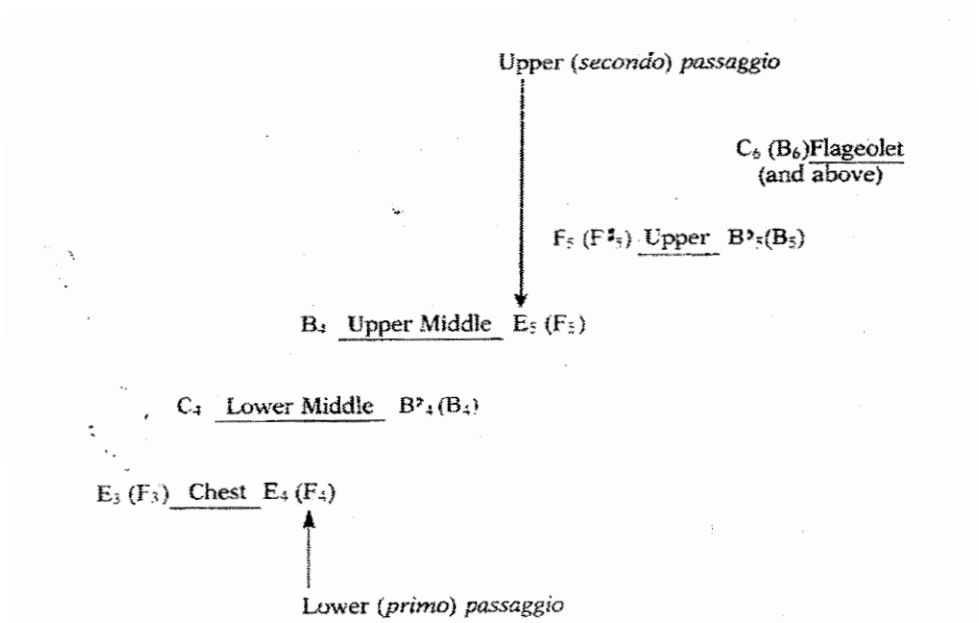


Figure 10.2. Mezzo-soprano *passaggi* and Register Zones

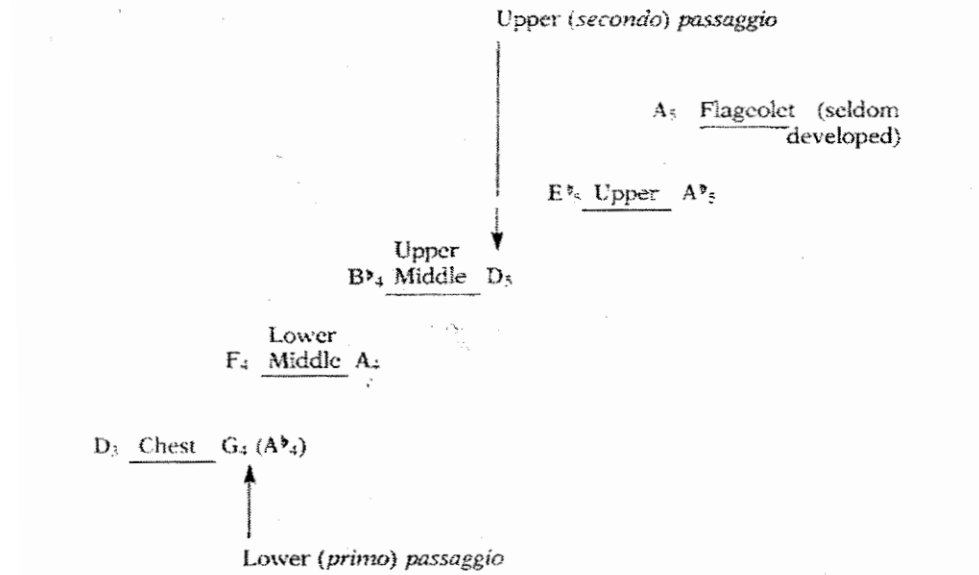


Figure 10.3. Contralto *passaggi* and Register Zones

[83]

No doubt there are points within every singer's voice where shifts of register and feelings resonance either change or shift. Overall it is the physiology of the individual's vocal mechanism that determines the position of registers within a voice:

[83] Ibid., 135.

> functionally a vocal register is a product of two parts; 1) a *phonation component* – consisting of vocal fold vibration, glottal shape and airflow – that produces the fundamental frequency of vibrations which is perceived as pitch; and (2) a *resonation component* – consisting of acoustic couplings of both subglottal and supraglottal systems to the larynx – that produces the harmonic spectrum, which not only determines which vowel is heard, but also the timbre of the voice.[84]

These factors are responsible for the various vocal groupings within vocal categories.

The Mid-Breast Register, the *mezzo petto*, is more commonly referred to as the middle voice, that part of the voice lying between the bottom and the top sections of the vocal range, the encompasses the group of notes that join the two opposing ends of the voice. The middle voice is of utmost importance in joining and unifying the voice and is "the crucial area in determining whether or not smooth register negotiation will take place from the lowest to the highest range of the singing voice."[85] Modern terminology also makes use of the term "mixed voice," which serves to imply the exact same blending of the registers. The mixed or middle register "is the result of blending the qualities of head and chest registers (heavy and light mechanisms) in the middle of the voice, approximately one third of the entire singable range."[86] The pitches at which a singer may feel where these subtle changes occur are arbitrary and dependent upon the individual's voice. These points of change, or registers, can vary greatly even within one voice type, such as a dramatic soprano and a coloratura soprano, and any effort to have both fit into the same mold, where registers are concerned, could be disastrous. Any

[84] Clifton Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities, 1997), 112.
[85] Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 118.
[86] Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy*, 116.

effort to determine vocal classification made by singer or teacher "must take into account the location of pivotal points, without, however, relying solely on them."[87]

As already noted, Giraldoni advocates a three-register theory for female voices but only two registers for male voices. The tenor, baritone and bass, according to Giraldoni, simply carry this *voce di mezzo petto* to the extremes of the range. The whole section is somewhat ambiguous, as in his citing of cases such as Duprez's famous high "C" from the chest, he implies that these upper notes and also those of Tamberlick were chest notes that contained head resonance. If this is the case it would then seem to indicate that a third register is indeed involved in the male high voice.

Giraldoni's distinction between the bass-baritone and the baritone-tenor is also very interesting. From the examples of the two voice types Giraldoni gives, those of Coletti and Ronconi, we can assume that for the most part the repertoire of the two voices was very similar. What distinguishes the two voices is the quality of the voice in the high range, from high F to high A. Both Coletti and Ronconi were certainly two of the most distinguished singers of their day. Giraldoni implies that Coletti was a baritone whose voice seemed to resemble more of a bass, while Ronconi was closer to that of a tenor. Coletti's voice had a wide range but lacked the unbelievable power that Ronconi possessed in the upper register. The former even excelled in the works of both Verdi and Wagner, and while only a few early recordings exist one can easily hear the bass quality in the voice. No recordings exist of Ronconi, but historical accounts indicate that while his voice was not always beautiful, in tune or elegant, he possessed a power that was unrivaled both in terms of sheer volume and dramatic color. With a voice able to create

[87] Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 134.

larger than life characters, particularly those found in the works of Verdi, Ronconi, in many ways, "was the prototype of the 'modern' Verdian baritone."[88] a baritone voice capable of producing a great emotional effects and power in the notes that lie above the bass clef.

The Head Register: While the training and guidance of the head voice is certainly important to the development of the female voice, Giraldoni believes the head voice in the male singer is only that of a useless falsetto. In many ways the author seems to be somewhat unsure of his exact point with reference to the male singer. His view of the registers indicates that he, like many early writers on singing, believed that the male voice had two registers, chest and falsetto, and the female voice had three registers. According to modern pedagogy, the male voice has three registers in modern pedagogy. The first register extends from the lowest to the area of the *primo passaggio*. The middle voice extends to the *secondo passaggio*, going from there to final register, the *voce di testa*, or head voice. After passing the second *passaggio* point, the male voice then enters the "legitimate head voice (*voce di testa*), a range extending a fourth or a fifth in most male voices."[89] Giraldoni's two-register theory for the male voice is more understandable when considered with an historical perspective. He points out the historical use of falsetto by earlier tenors was principally for embellishing cadences and other ornaments. He goes on to say that the public no longer appreciated the use of the falsetto voice for high notes in the male voice. In the same breath, he notes that it is appropriate to use the male

[88] Elizabeth Forbes and Roger Parker. "Ronconi, Giorgio." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23780 (accessed March 31, 2011).
[89] Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 118.

falsetto voice, if it is strongly connected to the "mid chest" voice. While Giraldoni gives indications for finding this register, chiefly the idea of voice production in the pharynx and mouth, free throat and lowered soft palate, the precise nature of Giraldoni's head voice remains very unclear.

Historically the tenor voice, prior to the famous high 'C' of Duprez, used a very light vocal emission to accomplish the singing of the upper limits of the voice, "either *voce di testa* (which we now call falsetto), or a technique that was called *voix mixte* (mixed voice), or *voce di mezzo petto* (half chest voice)."[90] Many writers on the art of singing have commented on this part of the vocal mechanism, using other terms such as *voce finta* (feigned voice) and *fistula-voice* (fistelstimme). These terms can be added to list of terms whose meaning is neither precise nor informative but nevertheless "leave the impression that there was indeed a vocal technique different from chest voice, falsetto or covered voice."[91]

The pharynx, or throat, consists of three major cavities, the laryngopharynx, oropharynx and nasopharynx.[92] Pharyngeal adjustments of these three parts, freeing them of constricting tensions, provide the *gola aperta,* the open throat that is so desired by classically trained singers. Even though he rejected the terms *voix mixte* and *voce di mezzo petto,* Garcia certainly shared similar thoughts on the production of the male voice's high notes. Garcia claimed that:

[90] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 73.
[91] Ibid., 74.
[92] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology,* 268.

> if, while the glottis alone vibrates and all other parts of the instrument are relaxed, one moderately increases the pressure of the air, one can obtain and increase of brilliance in intensity, but never an increase of volume. One can conceive the immense advantage which the male voice can draw from these observations, completely new in theory, and too rarely applied instinctively by some artists. They serve to clarify the relatively high notes ordinarily so thick in basses, baritones and tenors.[93]

The incredible effects upon the voice that Giraldoni refers to may be the same effects here that Garcia describes, that the voice can find a new brilliance that may translate into volume but not have the same breath pressure problems that occur with sheer increase in the breath pressure. Caruso alludes to the same; when discussing the registers of the male voice and the way in which high notes should be formed, Caruso echoes most of Giraldoni's thoughts on the matter. Caruso does not find the falsetto to be legitimate part of the voice. According to Caruso,

> the voice is naturally divided into three registers – the chest, medium and head. In a man's voice of lower the last is known as "falsetto," but in the case of a tenor… and indeed the other male voices who still possess the falsetto … he may use a tone which in sound is almost falsetto, but is really a mezza voce, or half voice. This latter legitimately belongs to a man's compass; a falsetto does not. The most important register is the medium, particularly of tenors, for this includes the greater part of the tenor's voice and can be utilized even to the top of his range if rightly produced. In the matter of taking high notes one should remember that their purity and ease of production depend very much on the way the preceding notes leading up to them are sung. Beginning in the lower register and attacking the ascending notes well back [in the pharynx, and in the same way that Giraldoni describes] a balance must be maintained all the way up, so that the highest note receives the benefit and support of the original position of the throat, and these is no danger, consequently, of the throat closing and pinching the quality of the top notes.[94]

[93] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 74.
[94] Luisa Tetrazzini and Enrico Caruso. *The Art of Singing*, 54-55.

The classically trained singer aims to achieve an evenness of sound and vocal quality throughout the entire compass of the voice, or **Union of the Registers**. The correct unification or blending of the registers of the voice results in a more homogeneous sound quality. Most issues concerning register unification occur in the part of the voice also referred to as the *zona di passaggio,* which lies between the *voce di mezzo petto,* or middle voice, and the head tones. This area, if not treated correctly, can cause a great amount of difficulty to many singers. According to Giraldoni, the treatment and practice of the upper middle part of the voice, the area that links the lower register with the upper register, should be the focal point of the student's practice; both student and teacher can detect and identify areas of register change, but the goal is that the listener perceives a vocal seamlessness. The blending of the registers into one sound indicates mastery of classical *bel canto* voice training, regardless of one's opinion on how many registers any one voice may possess.

Giraldoni makes the suggestion that when training the voice, the teacher must instruct the student on the correct way of making the registers overlap in order to avoid and eliminate any breaks between registers. In order to achieve this, Giraldoni advocates weakening the last two notes of a register in order that they may participate in the next register. Mathilde Marchesi, a former student of Garcia, also advocated this concept regarding register unification. The premise of this practice is to allow the notes that lie at the end and beginning of the different registers, the notes that seem weaker within a register, to begin participating with each other so that the color from one register transfers to the next and throughout the entirety of the vocal range. Like Giraldoni, Garcia cautioned, especially with regard to the female voice, that the chest register should be

well established before commencing this study: "When the chest voice has been well established (which should be done in a few ways), the student should immediately work to blend that register with the next."[95] While this 'caution' applied to the female singer, the male student was also urged to take caution when beginning this study.

Luigi LaBlanche, the famous nineteenth century basso, offered the following on the unification of the male registers:

> the two registers of the male voice frequently afford unequal sounds, which would produce a very disagreeable effect if the ability to unite them could not be attained by study. The highest notes of the chest are very strong, by the effort which they require, whereas the first head tones are often feeble. Hence it is necessary to apply oneself to strengthening the latter and softening the former. As our organs permit us to use the extreme sounds of one register in the next register, the best manner of uniting the two kinds of sounds is to begin by making a single sound pass from the chest register to the head register, and vice versa.[96]

Many other nineteenth century treatises echo the idea of extending the chest voice, with great care, beyond the singer's natural limits. Carlo Bassini advises the student that,

> care must also be taken not to lessen the force or intensity of the chest note, in order to give the medium note all the strength of which it is capable. One of these registers is always the weaker of the two, and the greater strength generally lies in the chest voice: in order to equalize the two, it would seem at first natural and proper to reduce the power of the stronger to a level with the weaker; but this is wrong; for experience has proved that such a proceeding would weaken the voice.[97]

Bassini's comment supports Giraldoni's advice that the chest register needs some power but does not need over-strengthening. The singer who makes every effort to sing in pure chest voice and continues strengthening this range beyond its natural limits with no adjustment potentially sacrifices the beauty and the longevity of his singing life. Mattia

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[95] Stephen F. Austin, ed. *Bassini's Art of Singing: An Analytical, Physiological and Practical System for the Cultivation of the Voice*, Carlo Bassini (Plural Publishing, 2008), vi.
[96] Ibid., vii.
[97] Austin, *Bassini's Art of Singing,* 11.

Battistini, arguably the greatest baritone of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, felt that to do so was to break one of the great technical rules in singing, for "if he allowed himself to indulge in this bad habit merely to prove to his public that he had a low register, he would have compromised his high register and flexibility, acquired a pronounced vibrato, and considerably shortened his career."[98]

Skillful technical singing according to the *bel canto* model requires studying the registers and then joining them to create homogeneous tone. Other great singing teachers, including Mathilde Marchesi, advocated the importance of obtaining and gathering the "intimate knowledge" of the voice. Marchesi, who taught a number of famous female singers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, echoes many of Giraldoni's sentiments, particularly those to do with registration. She advocates three registers for the female voice, saying that the registers are "the *alpha* and the *omega* of the formation and the development of the female voice, the touchstone of all singing methods both old and new."[99] Like Giraldoni, she attributes the study of the registers as the most important part of developing a homogeneous voice, and scientific understanding of the voice is indispensable in helping to train "difficult voices and in correcting the numerous faults of emission that each pupil brings, the results of either bad habits or inferior training."[100]

Today's singers and teachers, like those of the late nineteenth century, believe the study and the application of the various elements of the singing technique are important so that the singer can, even if slightly indisposed, still perform and give of his best to his public. Knowledge is the most important aspect of the singer's technique and that

[98] Chuilon, *Mattia Battistini: King of Baritones and Baritone of Kings,* 284.
[99] Marchesi, xiii.
[100] Ibid., xiv.

knowledge allows the performer to go on stage even if all the circumstances are not completely ideal. The aspiring young singers of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century sought to earn the title of "artist" through great dedication and study, and through, as Giraldoni puts it, "a tireless study of the mysteries of the voice." It seems fitting to let Mattia Battistini, one of the most outstanding singing artists of all time, contribute the last words on how to achieve the level of a "melodramatic artist": " My advantages lie in *cantilena*, in the softness and the agility of the voice, in timbre, in a word, in musicality…. One must develop these qualities all one's life to be renowned for them…then you will be a real artist, an intelligent professional, and you'll know how to preserve the voice into old age – however much you sing."[101]

Chapter IV:

Primary exercises for the singer/a profitable way to practice.

Giraldoni dedicates Chapter IV to recommendations on what and how best to study and practice. Three categories for the exercising the voice include exercises for the simple emission of the sound, exercises based upon the different intervals of both the major and the minor scale, and exercises for the acquisition of agility. This third category is more of a style guide to various ornaments that can be used, how to execute them and where and when they may be tastefully interpolated into the music. Unlike many other treatises of this time period, such as those of Marchesi, Delle Sedie and Lamperti, Giraldoni does not provide a detailed list of scales and exercises that should be used. Instead he provides verbal descriptions of how each category is to be executed and leaves

[101] Chuilon, *Mattia Battistini,* 285.

it to the teacher or singer to compile a list of exercises that best suit the needs of the singer's practice. The chapter is never intended to represent a full 'method' of the art of singing as was advocated by the other treatises mentioned as the author expected that the more particular details of the singing should be left to the singer's teacher.

The first exercise for the acquisition of simple emission is the practice of the *messa di voce.* The *messa di voce* is broken down into three parts: the sound that moves from soft to loud, the sound that moves from loud to soft, and finally the sound that crescendos from soft to loud and back to soft again. Opinions of the exact way to achieve *messa di voce* have always been subject to controversy. Most teachers, past and present, agree that exercising and achieving the *messa di voce* is one of the true tests of fine singing. *Messa di voce* is also an area in vocal study that unites both voice teaching and voice science. The *messa di voice* and its traditional use in vocal training indicate that it has been always considered the "ultimate test of vocal co-ordination, since it requires critical control and balance of glottal closure, subglottal pressure, registration and timbre. This view is echoed by some voice scientists." [102] Historically the use of the *messa di voice* has been recognized as an integral part of *bel canto* singing. Early writers and composers have all emphasized the importance on this technique. Caccini noted that many gradations of the sound existed between *piano* and *forte* and that the breath was responsible for executing such sounds. One of the earliest and most flowery descriptions, though, comes from the seventeenth century madrigalist, Domenico Mazzocchi. In the preface to a published book of five-part madrigals, Mazzocchi stated: "to perform his compositions, one must gradually increase both breath and tone, or sweetly increase his

[102] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 116.

voice in liveliness but not in tone; then he should gradually quieten it and make it smooth until it can scarcely be heard and seems to be coming from the depths of a cavern."[103] Until Tosi first used the term *messa di voce* during the eighteenth century, the technique was referred to as the *crescendo-decrescendo.* Just as it was for the eminent teachers of the seventeenth century, the mark of the truly accomplished artist was the newly named *messa di voce*. Tosi described the *messa di voce* by saying:

> [*messa di voce*] consists of letting the voice come out softly from the least *piano*, so that it goes little by little to the greatest *forte*, and then returns by the same artifice from the *forte* to the *piano*. A beautiful *messa di voce* in the mouth of a professor who is not stingy with it, and does not use it except on the open vowels, will never fail to make the greatest effect.[104]

Giraldoni implies that the *messa di voce* requires not only the appropriate laryngeal action, but also the correct application of the breath, the *appoggio*. Likewise, Giambattista Mancini, writing in 1774, believed that,

> the most necessary thing for success, is the art of knowing how to conserve the breath, and manage it. I repeat that the scholar should not presume to be able to execute the *messa di voce* if he has not first acquired, in the manner described above, the art of conserving, reinforcing and taking back the breath: since on this alone depends the gift of the just and necessary gradation of the voice. [105]

Modern opinions, such as those of Richard Miller and William Vennard, diametrically oppose one another in terms of how to achieve the *messa di voce,* but both still advocate the use of *messa di voce* to develop a complete and equalized sound. Vennard indicates that the correct execution of the *messa di voce* heavily integrates into elements of registration, and that the crescendo and decrescendo on a single pitch are the

[103] Ibid., 94.
[104] Ibid., 95.
[105] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 95.

result of moving between registers also on the given pitch. [106] Richard Miller, on the other hand, supports Giraldoni's view that the breath governs the ability to produce the *messa di voce.* Miller suggests that the "core" of the voice must be present throughout the exercise and that any use of *falsetto* weakens vocal cord closure, the exact thing that the exercise is designed to correct. In contrast to Vennard, Miller says emphatically:

> the suggestion to go from 'chest voice' to 'head voice' in the *messa di voce* exercise is to be avoided at all costs (although recommended in some pedagogies). No fundamental altering of muscle participation occurs during sustained pitch; *messa di voce* involves no abrupt change in crycothyroidal-thyroarytenoidal balances. (How could such action possibly be considered appropriate to a sustained note in the upper region of the voice, for example?) Sudden drastic shifts in muscle balance among the internal adjustors of the vocal bands are to be shunned. [107]

In the views of some teachers closer to Giraldoni's time, such as Garcia and Francesco Lamperti, they considered the *messa di voce* an exercise for the most advanced student. They also held the breath and the management or support of the breath to be the most important aspect of good singing. The breath, the support or the *appoggio,* that lay at the heart of Giraldoni's teaching, was also central to their teaching and to the achievement of the perfect *messa di voce,* and the "spun sound" that Giraldoni refers to in Chapter IV. Garcia made reference to both of these sounds in his treatise of 1841, saying the *messa di voce* [which he also called the *sons files* and *spianato di voce*] was the best test of breath support; he said that the exercise is not meant for beginners, since it "requires the singer to be expert in the control of the breath and of the *timbres.*"[108] The *falsetto,* along with changes in register, laryngeal position, pharyngeal position and

[106] Vennard, *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technique*, 77.
[107] Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 174.
[108] Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, 97.

timbre, constituted the art of the exercise for Garcia. Garcia, like Vennard, opined that registration played a major role in the *messa di voce.* Garcia described the exercise:

> The student will begin the tone softly in the falsetto and in somber timbre. As we have seen this procedure makes the larynx firm and contracts the pharynx. Then, without varying the position, and, as a result, the timbre one will pass into the chest register, fixing the larynx more and more firmly in order to prevent making the abrupt movement which produces the hiccough at the moment of the separation of the two registers. Once established in the chest register, one will raise the larynx again and will dilate the pharynx again to clarify the timbre in such a way that toward the middle of the duration of the tone, the student will do the reverse; that is to say that before passing into the falsetto register, at the moment the voice is diminished he will darken the chest tone again fastening the larynx low and contracting the pharynx in order to support it and avoid the jerk of the change of registers. Then he will pass slowly form the chest register to the falsetto; after which he will relax the pharynx and extinguish the tone. I deduce this rule from the physiological fact that the larynx, being held low by the somber timbre, can produce the two registers without being displaced. Now, the displacement produces the hiccough which so disagreeably separates the one register from the other. [109]

In the same way that Miller and Vennard differ with regard to the exercise, so too do Garcia and Francesco Lamperti. Lamperti held the opinion that the breath governed the execution of the *messa di voce*. Like Giraldoni, Lamperti believed the *appoggio* of the voice was essential to all aspects of singing and most essential to the *messa di voce*. To Lamperti, the term *appoggio* broadly encompassed many aspects of singing technique. Just as Giraldoni includes the action of commencing the tone, the onset, in his exercise, so does Francesco Lamperti. This *appoggio*, or support, was to him a "term that referred not only to the balance of inspiratory and expiratory muscles, but also to vocal onset and glottal closure, position of the vocal tract, airflow and breath pressure, legato, the *messa di voce* and even good intonation." [110]

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[109] Ibid., 98
[110] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 102.

Opinions over how to execute *messa di voce* are divided among teachers of singing; teachers agree, however, about the exercise's importance to a singer's daily vocal practice. Giraldoni's advice is in keeping with the advice of other contemporaneous as well as modern works on the art of singing. His views combine elements of both Garcia and Lamperti, and in more recent times, those of Miller and Vennard. His advice about lowering the soft palate and taking the voice to the antrum of the pharynx would seem to advocate Garcia's concept of the exercise. On the other hand, Giraldoni supports the importance of breath support and that there be no change in color, which is more in keeping with the views of Lamperti. Interestingly, Giraldoni does cite the involvement of the cricoid-thyroid cartilages in the execution of the exercise, noting that breaks appear when their involvement is too great. These muscle groups, though, do not play a relevant role in the increase and decrease of volume on a given pitch. These muscle groups are actually responsible for the stretching of the vocal folds via a tilting action, and therefore the changes associated with pitch. The cricothyroid muscle "… joins the cricoid and the thyroid cartilages, and, by pulling the cricoid cartilage forward and downward, stretches the vocal folds." [111] The contraction of these muscles causes the thyroid and cricoid cartilages to tilt, with:

> the thyroid moving forwards and the cricoid moving backwards. This action causes the vocal folds to stretch and create a change in pitch. The muscles of the vocal folds have the potential to draw the thyroid and the arytenoids cartilages closer together. It is thought that when this happens the vocal folds become thicker and create a heavier, chest sound. Excess tension on these muscles is considered responsible for register breaks.[112]

[111] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology,* 83.
[112] Meribeth Bunch, *A Handbook of the Singing Voice* (London: Meribeth Bunch, 1998), 30.

Whatever the opinion on how to produce the *messa di voce*, the breath and its management are essential to the successful execution of the exercise.

The final section the chapter is comprised of suggestions on singing and on style. Giraldoni recommends that the singer gather together a series of exercises that benefit his individual practice periods. Giraldoni suggests that exercises on the minor second increase "elasticity" in the throat, and help to unite the registers. Teachers have long advocated interval practice, particularly via scales based on movement by half steps, for the equalization of the vocal registers. Giraldoni's advice on interval practice is somewhat unclear, but he is opposed to dragging the sound and recommends a light lowering of the soft palate.

Giraldoni dedicates the final section of the chapter to aspects of agility, or more of a "crash course" in vocal articulation and effects. Early treatises on the art of singing, such as those by Tosi, Agricola, and Caccini, provide testament of the great importance placed on the mastery of certain vocal effects, particularly those involving extreme vocal agility. Giraldoni was writing at the time of the rise of the *verismo* opera movement in Italy in the late nineteenth century, which marked a great shift away from the more florid music of the *bel canto* era toward a more declamatory style of singing. While many of the vocal effects Giraldoni describes might have been declining in popularity at the time, the mastery of these effects and knowledge of how to execute them is still of use to singers of Giraldoni's time, as well as today's singers.

The acquisition and practice of vocal agility should be part of any good vocal regimen and Giraldoni notes that its practice and acquisition provide great advantages to the singer. Teachers have long recognized that agility is an essential element in singing

practice, should the singer wish to achieve balance and ease of vocal emission. Just as in gymnastics both strength and flexibility are inseparable, so too in singing are the aspects of agility and *sostenuto*, or sustained singing. In singing terms, these two aspects of technique give the singer strength and flexibility. While a reader may consider the practices outlined here as outdated, there are several modern pedagogues and singers who place major value on the practice of agility exercises, whether it be for specific vocal effects, exciting passages of *fioratura*, or for the emancipation of the breath. Sustained singing improves by studying agility, for:

> there is a danger in sustained singing, especially when the tessitura is high and the writing dramatic, to fix an energy level. At such moments, the imagination is kindled, the flow of the adrenaline increases, the body is keyed up, and the full athleticism of the singer is brought into play. Such passages risk introducing tension and subsequent vocal fatigue. How can a singer reveal the powerful sweep of the voice and still remain free? The answer lies in the agility factor. Even if the climactic phrase consists of a series of whole notes at slow tempo, *agileness* must be present.[113]

Giraldoni advises that above all things the singer pay attention to the acquisition of *legato* singing, which has long been acknowledged as the most essential form of vocal articulation of the classically trained voice.[114] Teachers closer to Giraldoni's time also supported his thoughts. Both Lampertis indicated that *legato* was the most important aspect of vocal articulation. Francesco Lamperti stated "he who sings without legato cannot sing (*chi non lega non canta*) and that the two things that render the human voice superior to every other instrument are the power of *legato* and the variation in color." [115] His son believed the singer should "observe a strict legato, a smooth and unbroken

[113] Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 41.
[114] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 164.
[115] Ibid,.164.

passage from one tone to the other." [116] Even amongst today's pedagogues, it would hard to find one who did not consider the *legato* of great importance. *Legato* in classical singing is so important that "it can be said that the only musical instrument (excluding electronic instruments) capable of true legato is the human voice. Pitches, intensity levels, voice colors, and vowels can all be changed without discrete breaks in the tone, due to the elastic properties of the singing muscles." [117]

A number of treatises and writings on singing address the *ribatutta* and the *grupetto*, including those of Garcia, Stockhausen, Delle Sedie, Marchesi and Lamperti. These two types of vocal articulation, or more accurately, ornamentation, were considered dramatic extensions of the trill. The *ribatutta,* also named the *ribatutta di gola,* is "a strongly dotted rhythm redolent of a sob," while the *grupetto* is the grouping of notes that form the turn or mordent.[118] Early treatises and collections of vocalises dedicated to the practice of specific vocal effects offer advice about stylistic execution, such as where accents should be placed or which notes within the group should be approached *forte* or *piano.* Actual detail surrounding the technical act of singing the ornaments runs little deeper than the advice to keep things smooth and without any trace of jerkiness. The term *granita* Giraldoni mentions refers to producing each note of the scale or group cleanly so that every note is clearly audible and distinct from its neighbors, something that he advises the student to strive to gain.

Giraldoni notes that the "*colpa di petto*," (blows of the chest) must be achieved with a smooth contraction of the diaphragm. He provides no definition of *colpa di petto*;

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[116] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 12.
[117] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 165.
[118] Ibid., 160.

this action may be something that is achieved in the same way the *staccato* is achieved. Modern pedagogy recognizes the important relationship between *staccato* and the muscles involved in breath management. According to voice teacher Lois Alba, "the study of staccato is very important to the acquisition of true agility."[119] Richard Miller notes, "the feeling of suppleness in fast moving melismatic passages is akin to the umbilical-epigastric movement experienced in rapid silent panting. This movement in the anterior abdominal wall resembles quick staccato onset activity, incorporated, however, into the articulated legato."[120]

Many of the early treatises regarded the mastery of the breath as the foundation of healthy singing. Teachers and singers only embarked upon teaching and practicing exercises in later study once breath was firmly in place. This recommendation appears time and again throughout Giraldoni's treatise. The first exercises that should concern the singer are those relating to tone emission, keeping all early exercises relatively simple. With regard to agility exercises, Richard Miller agrees, "only after mastery of the less complicated agility vocalises should the singer move onto the more difficult exercises."[121] Exercises for agility have broader vocal benefits because agility has a beneficial effect on the breath; therefore, vocal exercises and passages in the literature that require the use of supple vocalization can only be "mastered after the singer has acquired the coordination of the breath with the sound itself" and a total release of any conscious control of the throat.[122]

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[119] Lois Alba, *Vocal Rescue, Rediscover the Beauty, Power and Freedom in Your Singing* (Norwich, NY: William Andrew Publishing), 44.
[120] Miller *The Structure of Singing,* 41.
[121] Ibid., 42.
[122] Alba, *Vocal Rescue,* 43.

According to Giraldoni, both the trill and the *grupetto* should be executed with a smooth legato line, a recommendation Garcia echoed. Garcia believed the defect of the trill was the lack of good control at the level of the glottis, and like Giraldoni, he indicated that the poor trill gave the sound effect of a little goat or horse. In his *Hints on Singing*, Garcia provides an answer to problems associated with the trill. He observes, "false intonation, caused by the intervals being too narrow or too wide; rattle of glottis or short aspirations, producing he trill known as the *trillo caprino* or *cavallino*; jerks of the diaphragm instead of glottic action; the drawing in of the voice as soon as the oscillations begin, which causes a disagreeable noise. In singing a trill the voice ought not to be drawn in, but decidedly pressed out with the same evenness of *timbre* as if it were a single sound."[123]

The use of *tremolo*, which Giraldoni urges the singer to avoid, has had very different connotations over time. In vocal history, the terms *tremolo* and *vibrato* were sometimes used interchangeably. The *tremolo* Giraldoni admonishes singers to avoid is what we today refer to as "wobble," the abnormal oscillation of pitch on a single pitch. While *tremolo* can refer to a *vibrato* that is too slow, it has also been used in the twentieth century to indicate a *vibrato* that is too fast.[124] If the definition of a trill is a musical ornament that is characterized by "a rapid fluctuation between two distinct pitches of a diatonic scale a major or minor second apart," then what Giraldoni is urging the singer to avoid is the earlier type of ornament referred to as the trill in the writing of Tosi.[125] Tosi referred to the trillo as a *caprino* (goat-bleat). The recommendation to support the

[123] Garcia *Hints on singing*, 44.
[124] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 141.
[125] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 383.

grupetto in the back of the throat could easily be applied to the trill if one chose to follow Tosi's advice. He advocated that the best trill was that produced from the throat while the *caprino* "causes laughter because it is born in the mouth like a laugh."[126] Giraldoni's *sincope,* fainting effect, is the study of vocal syncopation. The displacement of the beat that occurs in any syncopation creates a fainting effect. Exercises based on the syncopation of the beat are in many collections of vocalises, such as those of Vaccai and Marchesi.

Undoubtedly the practice of exercises that encourage agility and suppleness of the vocal apparatus provide great benefits for the voice and should be considered an essential part of any vocal study. The acquisition of agility is important and "essential for the artistic singer from the point of view of elasticity and softness (pliability) as well as the style of bravura (brilliant singing).[127] The development of ornamentation in vocal music, a trend that started in the late Renaissance was in no way a new practice during the late nineteenth century. Discussion of vocal ornamentation had been going on since the early seventeenth century and descriptions regarding the usage and execution of several ornaments, most notably the trill, have changed markedly within generations and most definitely from the time of Caccini to the time of Giraldoni. History, then, may very well dictate both definition and application of many of the vocal ornaments. Singers should definitely heed Giraldoni's advice, however, and dedicate daily practice to exercises designed to help strengthen vocal flexibility.

[126] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 131.
[127] Alba, *Vocal Rescue,* 41.

Chapter V:

The necessity of vocalization and recommendations on the emission of the different vowels. The application and study of articulation. The necessity for good pronunciation and the many effects that it possesses

The importance of correct vocalization has already been mentioned. Once the student is secure in the knowledge of how to breath correctly and has found the correct support (*appoggio*) of the voice, he needs to move onto more intricate and complex forms of vocalization. The vocal exercises called "*vocalizzi*" usually made up the larger portion of earlier treatises on the art of singing. A quick glance at works that pre-date 1900 and those that came in the twentieth century would serve to prove this. Giraldoni's treatise, though, differs in this way, because he apparently did not intend for his writings to be a complete method on the art of singing. His works serve to highlight the importance of various technical aspects of singing that should concern the student as he progresses through his study. Books of 63vocalises contain, in compact form, all the technical aspects that a singer might encounter in the standard vocal repertory. These books dedicate whole exercises to the trill, mordent, syncopation, runs or roulades, as well as exercises based on each interval of the major, minor and chromatic scale. In many ways, the 63vocalise was the first step in the finishing process of vocal training and the first step in preparation to perform repertoire. In addition to the selected 63vocalises of Crescentini, Rughini and Bordogni that Giraldoni mentions, many others exist, such as those of Marchesi, Vaccai, Delle Sedie, Concone, and Tosti, to name but a few. Even the works of Garcia and Francesco Lamperti end with a series of scales and exercises

intended to develop specific aspects of singing. Cornelius Reid, the respected twentieth century pedagogue, provides an interesting description of what the v64ocalise should be:

> Vocalises form the essence of materials used in the development of vocal skills. An effective 64vocalise is one designed to meet an immediate pedagogic objective. Thus effectiveness is determined by two criteria: timeliness and functional needs. The standard 64vocalises of Bordogni, Concone, Nava, Vaccai, etc., have little pedagogic value since they center on the art of singing and rarely address themselves to a specific problem. Although claims have been made for their musical worth, this is negligible compared to the wealth of important vocal literature available for musical study.[128]

The first part of this definition is quite true; however, given the number of teachers who used and composed v64ocalises who produced great singers, it is too simple to dismiss their 64vocalises as having no value at all. Giraldoni places the 64vocalise at the middle to end of the singer's study, and the 64vocalise's objective, as he points out, is to allow the singer to practice every difficulty to be encountered in the literature; the 64vocalise is designed to be difficult so that the repertoire the singer encounters does not seem as hard to tackle. Reid's opinion pays little attention to the historic basis of the v64ocalise. The v64ocalise played a major role in the training of the singers who premièred the major works of the nineteenth century, the operas of Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti and Verdi. One vocal training method that contains extensive 64vocalises is the *Art of Singing* by Carlo Bassini, recently translated from the Italian into English by the distinguished vocal pedagogue, Dr. Stephen Austin. Austin, unlike Reid, places great importance on the ideas put forward by the master teachers and singers of the nineteenth century, and further notes that Bassini's work is:

> not just an historically interesting document, it defines a method of *bel canto*. It contains the vocal wisdom of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The principles illuminated here were those used to train the great singers who were the

[128] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 411.

> first to sing the operas of Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini and others. The value of Bassini's book lies in its pedagogical value – its effectiveness as a method – and its heritage.[129]

Other works on singing mention Giraldoni's idea that vocalization exercises should be of a specific nature and not only intended to give the student pleasure. The only known student of the great baritone Mattia Battistini, Paula Novikova, the teacher of Fedora Barbieri, George London and Nicolai Gedda, amongst others, gave the following advice; "Don't give in to the student's desires – they should sing that which is good for them at a specific time."[130] She, like Giraldoni, also advocated the use of a variety of vocal exercises and felt that one should "never do consecutive exercises of the same kind. Continually alternate types of vocalization; this helps the throat to be elastic."[131]

There is little doubt that 65vocalises's play an important part in the training of a singer, whether they are in the style of those devoted to the several ornaments, such as trill, mordent etc., or are a grouping of vowels sung to patterns that help the singer achieve greater technical proficiency. Perhaps the 65vocalises's greatest benefit to the singer is that it helps enforce good habits over bad without entering into the singer's specific repertoire. Should the singer's repertoire be the basis on which he works his technical practice, then eliminating faults from his repertoire can become an even greater task. According to the old adage, practice makes perfect, even the faults, and repertoire is the last place where anyone needs to practice and perfect faults. Viewed in this light, the 65vocalise, whatever its form, can be a great tool that when used wisely and effectively

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[129] Austin, *Bassini's Art of Singing,* iii.

[130] Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics,* 38.
[131] Ibid.

can help the singner to enhance his practice time and perfect the voice for the repertoire that he will perform in public.

The first aspect of good pronunciation Giraldoni discusses is directed to the vowels. His attention mainly focuses on the [a]. As previously noted, the [a] vowel is usually the first vowel utilized in training the voice, as the vowel, when produced correctly, seems less prone to problems with throat constriction than do the other vowels. In addition to the [a], the other main vowels for vocalization within the Italian school were and still are the [a], [ɛ], and the [i]. Compared with other major national schools of singing, the Italian school has a long tradition of moving from the brighter vowels to the darker vowels and back again through any series of exercises. The singer schooled in the Italian tradition, such as Giraldoni was, recognizes that articulation and pronunciation is a separate act from support, but at the same time is wholly reliant on sustaining the same position of support throughout the whole vowel series. The Italian school of singing believed that "distortion of tone in unskillful singing is often caused by the very inability of the resonators to flexibly match the laryngeal position demanded by a specific vowel sound," a problem that would not occur with adequate and correct support.[132] To this end, Giovanni Battista Lamperti noted, "all bad habits of the throat are efforts of protection against clumsy management of breath." [133] Evenness of sound throughout the vocal range depends on proper breath support and pronunciation, two areas that are essential to good singing. All the vowels, while being audibly obvious and well defined, for the most part should contain a homogeneous sound quality. This is what Giraldoni alludes to in the description he gives of the [I] and the [ɛ] vowels when he says, "they have a tendency to

[132] Miller, *National Schools of Singing,* 56.
[133] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 13.

run toward the nose." The tendency for these vowels to flatten out must be addressed in singing; if not, it will result in the loss of harmonic balance between the vowels, or put another way, the loss of any sense of vocalic equivalence.

Because the [a] vowel avoids the more complex internal movements of tongue, lip and other parts of the throat, Giraldoni's idea of balancing the [i] and the [ɛ] with the [a] is justifiable. The other consideration, though, is the effect, that when correctly sung, both the [i] and the [ɛ] have on the [a] vowel. These two vowels, high in vocal formants, have a balancing effect throughout the voice, and many 67vocalises and exercises in the Italian school begin and end with these vowels. The reason is to do with vocal resonance balance. The Italian school uses vocalizing on the [a] vowel a great deal, "both in sustaining and in agility, but generally only after the singer has learned to keep the vowel well balanced with regard to fundamental and upper partials."[134]

Vowel modification, as Giraldoni mentions here, is a little unclear. Certainly modification occurs in changing from one vowel sound to another, such as the rounding of the lips to form the [open o] and the [u] vowels. In terms of vowel modification in relation to pitch, Giraldoni provides little in the way of information in this chapter. The author does not embark on a discussion about vowel modification; he simply says that for a singer to alter a word, vowel or syllable for the purposes of making the voice better signifies poor vocal technique. Other teachers, however, have recognized that correct emission of the vowels in relation to pitch relies on some shaping of the vowel as pitch ascends, some *aggiustamento* (adjustment). The old Italian school taught that vowels need to be shaped if they are to be emitted correctly. The great singer and teacher,

[134] Miller, *National Schools of Singing, 57.*

Antonio Cotogni, would tell his students, "remember that you must mentally shape every vowel and impart to it the right color, *timbre* and expression before actually producing it; the habit is soon acquired, and such thinking before doing becomes really quite an easy matter."[135] Francesco Lamperti gives similar advice: "Never disassociate these three – word, tone and breath." [136] When the "acoustic laws of vowel differentiation are allowed to function without mechanical falsification of the vowel," the voice remains even, intonation is secured and diction remains flawless.[137] Vowel modification should be altering or shaping the given vowel without changing the integrity of the vowel. Giraldoni himself points out that singing the vowels is very much different from speaking of them; in other words, the "solution is to articulate each vowel so that the air flows freely and phonation is disentangled. When we are able to do that, we can sing every vowel in its pure form, even though it may feel different from regular speech."[138]

The [open o] and the [u] vowels complete the back vowels of the vowel spectrum and require a certain amount of lip rounding to make them complete. For any vowel, the teacher must guide the student toward an audibly correct vowel sound that is balanced in its harmonics and overtones, in other words, the sound of the *chiaroscuro.* The advice to round the lips for the production of both vowels can be found in any manual or book focused on singer's diction. These two vowels take the internal position of the [a] vowel, but use lip rounding to reshape the vowel to its new form. The tongue also adjusts its position in the pharynx, but any thought of trying to place the tongue in the correct

[135] E. Herbert-Caesari, *The Voice of the Mind* (London: Antony Rowe, Ltd., 1996), 21.
[136] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 100.
[137] Miller, *The Structure of Singing,* 155.
[138] W. Stephen Smith, *The Naked Voice: A Wholistic Approach to Singing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 109.

position would inevitably overdo the muscle adjustment and create more problems than solutions. The idea that "good pronunciation is dependent on knowing where the tongue should be on each vowel" would undoubtedly lead the singer to a state of over-thinking and then to efforts to try to directly control muscle movements; it is "impossible to sing naturally while controlling the muscles in order to enunciate clearly."[139]

Knowing how to emit vowels and consonants correctly is important because without intelligible diction, listeners cannot hear or understand the text. The singer's ability to pronounce clearly at the same time as keeping a calm, relaxed throat is really the advice the reader should take from the Giraldoni's comments. The younger Lamperti gives this advice in relation to the throat: "the throat, however, does alter its shape somewhat for vowel and volume. But diction takes care of that. A quiet throat is the result of interrelation of vocal energy and breath power. There is an affinity between voice vibration and breath like the relation between string vibration and bow."[140] Giraldoni warns the singer to avoid the insertion of added vowels, either in the middle of words or at the end. The use of these shadow vowels prevents good pronunciation, confuses the listener's ear about what word is being sung, distorts the true meaning of the word and destroys the *legato* line; because "shadow vowels are undefined vowels (usually schwa) that do not keep the airflow on a consistent path. The vowels become unaligned, destroying the legato line. Normally we shouldn't sing any sound that is not part of the language."[141]

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[139] Alba, *Vocal Rescue,* 28.
[140] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 12.
[141] Smith, *The Naked Voice,* 113.

The key to achieving good diction in singing is to understand that consonants and vowels are not produced in the same place. Any effort on the singer's part to "spit" the consonants, or to throw them forward in order to project, often negatively affects the jaw position and leads to unnecessary tension. To achieve good diction, singers must "separate the function of the articulators when saying consonants, just as we do when defining vowels – in order that – we will be able to maintain a sense of legato and free flowing air, no matter what the word we are singing."[142] Giraldoni's advice to form the consonants (with the exception of a few formed at the back) forward on the lips is correct, but the singer needs to avoid the temptation to drag the vowel forward into the oral cavity. This explains the advice Lamperti gives to "drink the tone" and the idea that one should implode the consonant.[143] Vowel formation takes place in the back part of the throat, or as old masters of singing professed "directly at the vocal cords."[144] Garcia's advice regarding tone or vowel, which is in essence the embodiment of the tone, was that the singer's mouth was the pharynx. All of these ideas hinge upon the fact that the consonant and vowel are produced in the different places. The coordinated production of vowels and consonants in the right way leaves the throat free to produce tone and the lips and tongue free to articulate the consonants. Exercises to release tongue tension may be of some value; however, if tone and diction are correct then the tongue must assuming the correct position which would imply that it has found the correct level of freedom and movement within the vocal tract.

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 129.
[144] Salaman, *Unlocking Your Voice,* 21.

Giraldoni recommends that the singer learn the notes and the words separately, then use *solfège* syllables (do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do) as the "uniting glue" of words with notes. It was a common practice at Giraldoni's time to use *solfeggio* syllables to learn music and practice vocal technique. Francesco Lamperti also encouraged singers' use of *solfège*:

> Musicianship, as well as vocal technic, grows apace when the movable 'do' is used. Finally, musicianship should be far enough advanced to permit the student to invent, even extemporize, his own *solfeggi* and *vocalizzi*. This stimulates his musical imagination and emotional reaction, which are more important than mere vocal technic. Creative musical intelligence also develops thereby.[145]

Twentieth century vocal pedagogue Cornelius Reid observed the positive effect of *solfège* use during the *bel canto* era: ". . . it is apparent that these studies helped build a great vocal tradition. What is imperative, if the level of technical skill associated with that era is to be attained again, is that these exercises, together with the principles upon which the training methods of the time were founded, should be restored to use."[146]

The final words of the chapter remind the singer that in performance the voice, through its clarity and emotion, becomes the link between the composer, poet and audience. The technical aspects of how to form, pronounce and enunciate the vowels and consonants, the two building blocks of language, need to be studied so that the singer can fully impart to every utterance the right tone and meaning of the text:

> …think hard about where and how the legato line is interrupted by the consonants and then seek to minimize that interruption as much as possible. This is the first and most important consideration in applying technique to repertoire. So when vowel definition guides our breath to flow freely through the resonators and the consonants interrupt that flow minimally, the voice will have much more color, flexibility and communicative power.[147]

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[145] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 114.
[146] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology,* 347-348.
[147] Smith, *The Naked Voice,* 114-115.

To Giraldoni, the acquisition of a fine technique is not the sole desired end result. Rather, sufficient technique must be gained in order to set the voice free to communicate the intentions of the composer and poet as well as the performer. The great master teacher at the end of the nineteenth century, Giovanni Battista Lamperti, said, "I have never written a method, because all that a singer need know could be written on the palm of my hand. Fundamentals are three: control of powerful breath energy, trueness and ease of all tones and distinct, correct diction – after which the pupil unfolds according to his talent, his temperament and his intelligence." [148] Giraldoni did not intend to present the singer with a method on singing either, but more of a handbook on what is required in order to achieve good singing. The development and study of vowels and consonants in relationship to good pronunciation is without doubt important in helping the singer find both vocal and artistic freedom. If this freedom be the real goal of vowel and diction study, then the much quoted adage of the old school still holds true: "*chi sa ben respirare e sillibare saprá ben cantare,"* he who knows how to breathe and pronounce well knows how to sing well.[149]

Chapter VI:

The vocal timbres, accents and dramatic effects capable within the singing voice.

Study of the different styles of the old masters.

Building a secure vocal foundation, a technique, should be the aim of every singer. This foundation serves the singer in times of vocal opulence and in times of vocal

[148] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 138.
[149] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 91.

struggle. A singer's technique, though, should do more than just aid in the preservation of the voice; it should, after a great deal of study, equip the singer with the ammunition to be able to interpret and fully express the intentions of the composer and author, as well as the performer's own reactions to the music and the text that he has to perform. This chapter and the ones that follow deal with aspects of vocal tone and stage presence necessary for building a professional career. Chapter VI sheds light upon the use of the voice, the open tone (*voce aperta*) and the closed tone (*voce chiusa*) and how they, along with other dramatic devices, may be employed to create touching effects and deep emotional responses both to music and text. Giraldoni also notes that the singer should possess a thorough knowledge of music history, style, harmony and theory, as well as to play an instrument, preferably the piano. The acquisition of theses skills informs the singer of what effects are correct and permissible for use within diverse styles and periods of musical expression.

The first point of departure for the student is to understand the nature and application of the open and closed tones and how best to find tone color within the voice. The word "*timbre"* is present in almost any work devoted to singing. *Timbre*, to most people, simply refers to the color of a voice, a subjective response to the impression the sound of a voice makes on a listener. More precisely, *timbre* is:

> the wave form or complex harmonic structure of a sound as expressed in quality; the color of a sound. Differences in *timbre* can be perceived both objectively and subjectively; in the former instance, aesthetic impressions of vocal tone (for example, "clear," "Sweet," "round," "dark," "shrill" etc) and in the later, by harmonic data recorded by scientific instruments."[150]

[150] Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 377-378.

To understand better the qualities of the open and the closed tone it is necessary to focus on what the ideal tone is, the tone that should be learned so thoroughly that it informs these other two *timbres* of the voice. Giraldoni refers to the ideal tone as the "mixed tone," a tone that is the combination of both open and closed. This is none other than the *chiaroscuro.* In order to produce other colors and to be effective in vocal performance, the voice must never be unnecessarily weighed down by the production of overly darkened vowels or overly bright vowels, as this destroys the possible formation of the balanced light-dark tone. To this end, the

> lightness of formation and of emission of all the vowels…produces the open-closed tone (*chiaroscuro*), which is the ideal *timbre* in vocal emission. *Chiaroscuro* means light-dark: this term, as applied by the masters of the old Italian School of singing, signified essentially a tone that was not too light nor too dark, or in other words, not too open or too closed, but a well balanced proportion of both. In a last intimate analysis it meant a greater proportion of light: it meant invariably a light basis with an appropriate admixture of dark. To express this quality of tone we use the term open-closed. All voices should cultivate this ideal *timbre* in vocal emission.[151]

Not only is this the ideal tone the author indicates for the very commencement of vocal study, but quite rightly, it becomes the essential tone for all normal effects within the context of performing a role, or as he says, the ideal tone for the expression of the normal state of mind. All other effects of expression depend on the application of either the open or the closed tones and their variations.

The *chiaroscuro* was the ideal voice quality for the classically trained singer of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; sources from this time period make it evident that this was the ideal tone color.[152] Giovanni Battista Lamperti noted that even though the student may "acquire a wide range of voice, you cannot modulate the sounds until the

[151] Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone,* 69.
[152] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 33.

resonance of your tone becomes round and rich, *chiaroscuro*… The light-dark tone should be always present."[153] Even today, this tone color is desirable among classical trained singers, because the tone quality requires the utmost coordination of the whole vocal tract and allows the larynx to operate within the most efficient position that of "floating level"; the term *chiaroscuro*, the light-dark tone, according to Richard Miller, designates the basic *timbre* of the singing voice in which, "the laryngeal source and the resonating system appear to interact in such a way as to present a spectrum of harmonics perceived by the conditioned listener as that balanced vocal quality to be desired – the quality the singer calls 'resonant'."[154]

The *chiaroscuro* tone, while recommended as the ideal tone for the study of the voice, seems not to be considered the real point of departure for the Italian school of singing; rather, the *voce chiusa* seems to have been the preferred tone of the Italian school from around the middle part of the eighteenth century on, or at least from the time of Duprez's famous 'High C.' that two of the most influential singing teachers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Garcia and G.B. Lamperti, both taught and advocated the use of the *voce chiusa*, even if in slightly different capacities. Garcia, while at the Paris conservatory, had done a great deal to define the effects of laryngeal posture as well as registers and vocal *timbres*. He suggested that the voice consisted of two timbres, *voix sombrée* and *voix claire* which correspond to the *voce chiusa* and the *voce aperta*. Garcia, like Giraldoni, stated that these two qualities could be combined in any number of ways to provide vocal and dramatic effect. The difference is that Garcia "recommended the closed quality as the primary timbre to be used and most importantly,

[153] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom,* 38-39.
[154] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 34.

that it was the result of maintaining the lowered laryngeal posture" so important for producing the color and range commonly associated with the complete operatic sound.[155] On the other side, as the two schools of singing were treated somewhat as cults by their followers, the Lampertis believed that the *voce chiusa* was the starting point for achieving the *chiaroscuro*. To this end they advocated, "all tones were closed until opened" and "that in their inception all tones are dark to be opened and closed at will. This muted beginning evolves into the dark-light tone which is the ideal quality of the human voice."[156]

Whatever the case, both schools and many other of the period stressed the importance of the dark tone over the too white or open tone, and that all tones employed for vocal expression were derived from the *voce aperta* and the *voce chiusa*. This does not indicate that Giraldoni was wrong in his suggestion that the *chiaroscuro* tone was the tone to be used for the expression of "natural" feelings, as it would make sense that the tone produced by the combination of the open and closed tones be used in this manner within the confines of operatic performance. Perhaps Giraldoni's conception of *chiaroscuro* tone had more dark than light in it; there is no real way of knowing. The use of different *timbres* was not the only device the singer could employ to achieve dramatic effects. These effects, of which Giraldoni only mentions a few, were achieved principally by the way in which note to note movement was achieved, such as the *slancio*, the *strasciamento* or *strisciato* (today referred to as scooping or sliding), and the *staccato.*

Early singing treatises predominately consisted of advice on style and dramatic effects. Garcia was probably the last to codify the use of many of the dramatic effects that

[155] Steven Austin, *Bassini's Art of Singing*, vii.
[156] Stark, *Bel Canto,* 45.

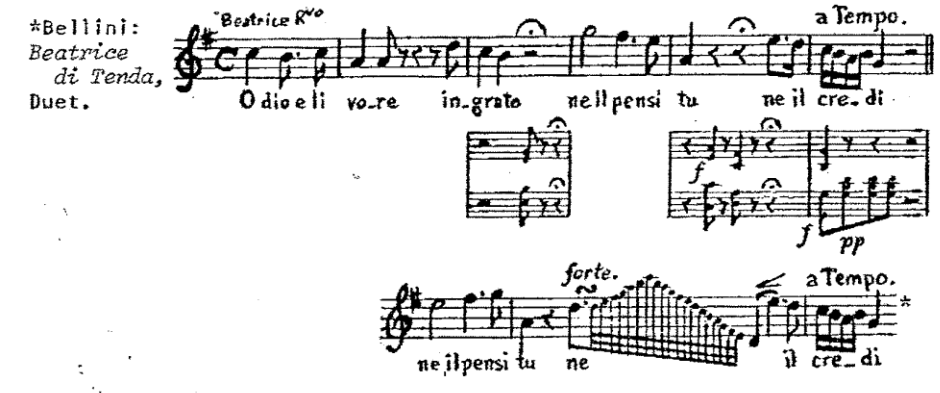
are suggested to the singer in Giraldoni's treatise and many others. The *slancio*, translated here as "enthusiasm," is difficult to define. In a radio interview in October 1985, the great Italian tenor, Carlo Bergonzi, attempts to explain what *slancio* means:

> *Stewart Manville*: Carlo Bergonzi, I adore the caressing quality of your singing. Is that quality what is meant by "*slancio*"?
>
> *CB*: No, *slancio* is something felt in the person.
>
> *SZ*: "*Slancio*" applies to interpretation, not vocal quality. Would you care to define it?
>
> *CB*: When you interpret a phrase, putting in that vocal expression, that signifies *slancio*—giving expression to the words. . . .
>
> *Dr. Umberto Boeri*: "*Slancio*" may best be defined as "oomph," "propulsiveness" or "a springing forward." [157]

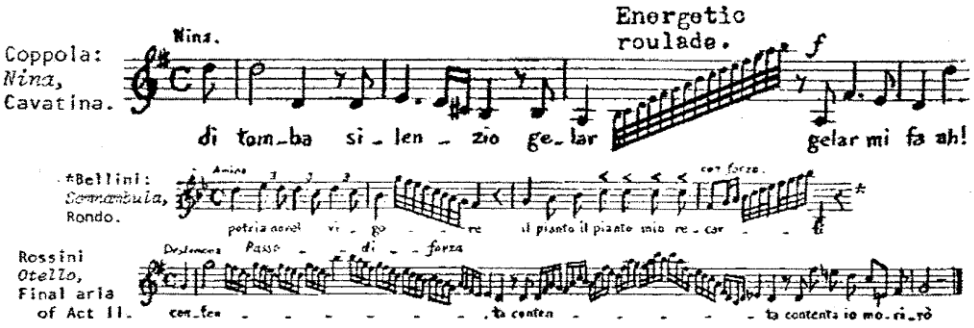
The *slancio*, as Garcia codified it, was most closely identified with vocal effects in passages of *bravura*. In his treatise, Garcia took many of the known vocal effects and separated them into categories. Out of many categories it was the *canto di bravura* that included the "*canto do forza*, the *canto do slancio* and the *canto di sbalzo.*"[158] The *slancio* was the name given to a florid passage in the *bravura* style characterized by strong leaps instead of movement by step and half step. Movement within a musical phrase or at a cadential point in such a way gave the music a heightened sense of dramatic force and enthusiasm, as demonstrated in the following musical examples Garcia provides:

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[157] http://www.stefanzucker.com/bergonzi-talks-zucker-and-public (accessed March 31, 2011)
[158] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 180.



Examples of bravura passages:



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The second part of the chapter focuses on the musical education of the singer, with strong attention given to both the study of music history and music theory. A comprehensive study of music history provides the singer with information on musical style. What may be acceptable style in early operas, such as those of Monteverdi, may not be acceptable in operas of Mozart or later composers like Verdi and Puccini, not to mention those that are not part of the Italian school, such as Wagner and French composers. The study of theory enhances the singer's ability not only to hear changes in musical structure, including rhythm, tempo, and harmony; it also improves the singer's ear and allows him to respond vocally to these changes in musical language. Other sources of the time point the lack of musical and general cultural education in singers that

[159] Garcia, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing: Part Two* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 199.

must be present should the singer wish to become a true artist rather than a mere maker of wonderful sounds.

This chapter opens with critical, theoretical and technical information that any singer must possess, and then follows with advice on the singer's general education. Giraldoni provides information and advice in order to encourage the singer to fire his artistic senses in the hope of becoming an artist and not just a singer. It is an interesting and insightful chapter that takes us back into an age where the musical education of a singer was highly prized and valued. In today's age, when singers are more focused than ever on sound and aspects totally technical, it reminds us that in order to give a fully rounded musical performance, one must understand music history and music theory, and perhaps also have a strong general education in all forms of art, including music, painting and literature.

Chapter VII:

The need for the indispensable study of stage action with some general pointers concerning mimicry.

The techniques of stage craft, including those aspects of movement and gesture, should be studied during the course of a singer's training as the quality of an individual's movement on stage helps the performer create the characters and also helps the performer to look and feel comfortable on stage. Miming is relevant only to the student singer who has little natural talent for aspects of gesture, or the ability to convey through movement the emotions and feelings of the character he is portraying; in order to create a more dramatic and well-rounded performance, it may be necessary for the teacher to have the student copy or mimic particular gestures and stage movements. Giraldoni provides singers with advice about stage techniques that are essential to giving a professional and artistic performance, the study of which he feels should be commenced at the same time as vocal studies. In Giraldoni's estimation, this study is equal in importance to vocal studies.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Giraldoni's treatise, along with those of Lamperti (1864), Panofka (1866), and Delle Sedie (1874), [160] formed part of the best-known collection of nineteenth century works on the art of singing. While Lamperti's treatise should be well known to teachers and students of singing alike this may not be the case with the other three works. Certainly until now this treatise has never appeared in an English translation. The treatise can be broken down into two distinct parts. The first six chapters of the work deal specifically with aspects of vocal technique while the concluding chapters deal with aspects of stage-craft and movement, costume designs, makeup and general advice on a pursuing a stage career.

The chapters that have been dealt with in the commentary, those that deal with vocal technique and the training of the voice, echo much of what is found in the works of Garcia and to a larger degree those of both Lampertis. Giraldoni, like both Lampertis, holds that the breath and the *appoggio*, the support of the breath, is the basis on which the voice is built and developed. The importance of the *appoggio* and aspects of breath management in developing the singing voice are still to be found in the majority of voice studios, thus indicating that little has changed in the past one hundred and fifty to two hundred years. The *appoggio,* which the author refers back to throughout the work is described in a more coherent way by G.B. Lamperti as "a concentrated action of the entire muscular covering of the body restraining the energy of the escaping air, the

[160] John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of the Profession* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), 107.

diaphragm acting as a "stop-cock."[161] To counteract singing "too white," Giraldoni advises the student to make use of the darker vowels so that a greater resonance and timbral balance can be found. Consonants and their formation are also given thoughtful consideration. The consonants should be enunciated clearly and quickly and toward the front of the mouth, not in the same area where the voice is formed, which is much further back. Knowing how and where to form the consonant has a direct effect on vocal quality and the "forced development of vowels before consonants prevents good diction and endangers complete control of the singing tone. Thus consonants and their refinements are of primary importance."[162]

Chapters five and six deal more with aspects of singing style with regard to ornamentation and articulation. This part of the treatise repeats much of what Tosi had to say on these matters and backs up much of what can also be found in Garcia's traite of 1841.[163] The final chapters that deal with stage deportment and characterization are interesting historically and the reader may find it interesting to experiment with the chart of facial gestures and other physical gestures that the author suggests. These chapters allow both readers and students today to see the dedication their forefathers applied to character exploration and development. Even in more recent times there are stories of performers who went to great lengths in search of creating exactitude in their creation of a character. One such story surrounds the great American baritone Leonard Warren, who in his preparation for the role of Scarpia, "haunted every museum and every antique shop in Rome to find exactly the kind of lorgnette that Scarpia would have worn. These details

[161] Brown, *Vocal Wisdom*, 24.
[162] Ibid, 86.
[163] Giorgio Pastelli, *Opera Production and Its Resources* (Chicago: The University of Chocago Press, 1998), 403.

show in a rather amusing way the Warren's almost fanatical pursuit of perfection regarding his preparations for a role as a singer and as an actor."[164] The chapter devoted to health and diet is at times a little out of keeping with developments in modern medicine and for the most part can be read with a wry smile. If one takes anything away from this chapter it should be that keeping the body in as a good a condition as possible is not only good for one's heath but also has a beneficial effect on the singing voice.

After reading the treatise one is left with strong impression of Giraldoni, a man who was totally dedicated to every facet of the art of performing. He imparts his advice in a clear way and along the way provides a few short stories and anecdotes about great performers who had to overcome adversity on their way to greatness. These stories should help a young performer realize that the path to greatness, no matter the field of endeavor, is not always easy. The treatise also points to the differences between what makes a truly great artist and what amounts in the end to the difference between an amateur and a professional. Singers and writers on the art of singing throughout history bemoan the lost art of great singing, the *bel canto.* Then as today people are "surely crying poverty in the midst of plenty";[165] human physiology has not drastically changed over the past half a millennium and talented voices abound in every generation. Enrico Caruso's diagnosis applies equally to singers of today as it did to those of his time:

> There is a far too prevalent tendency to shirk the real hard (technical) work which must be accomplished before lasting success can be attained. No matter how naturally talented any individual vocalist may be, he or she cannot possibly produce the best results as a singer unless the particular organs have been subjected to a proper and sufficiently long course of training.[166]

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[164] Leonard Warren, *Lebendige Vergangenheit*, RCA Victor Orchestra dir Jean Paul Morel, Historic Recordings, MONO 89145, 1997.
[165] Stark, *Bel Canto*, 217.
[166] Herbert-Caesari, *The Voice of the Mind*, 9.

Historically, Giraldoni's *Theoretical and Practical Guide for the Use of the Singing Artist* accurately represents most of the collective knowledge and practice of singers and teachers of his time. What sets Giraldoni's work apart from most other contemporaneous singing treatises is the author's desire to help develop the "whole artist," from singing technique to musical study to stage deportment to creating a character – the whole arduous journey from the very first utterances of a novice singing student through to the specific work required by an established artist and performer. Giraldoni's work is one of a few from the later part of the nineteenth century to be written by such an artist, and by correcting its deficit from the canon of English translations of historical singing treatises better enables us to inform and teach the next generation of great singing artists.

Translation of Treatise

Prologue

Much has been written about poetry, painting and about the Beautiful Arts in general, but very little or almost nothing about melodramatic art has been considered in its entirety. Not withstanding if there is an art that opens wide areas of new investigation, it is undoubtedly the sublime art that embraces all that painting and poetry enclose, being that it is the very language with which all passions and feelings of the human heart are expressed.

In providing knowledge to melodramatic artists with these notes, I do not pretend to present a complete treatise of the art that would be appropriate for all exigencies. I believe I have pointed out the most essential and indispensable parts to form a complete knowledge of this art. To become an artist it is not enough to have received a gifted voice by Divine Providence or to be a good actor. What reveals a true artist is his deep intimate understanding and knowledge of all the elements that concur in his art and not those mere gifts that may have been gifts of nature.

How can the artist acquire a complete understanding of the sources that he can make use of to add value to his natural means if he ignores the point of departure that is none other than his intimate understanding of the instrument which he possesses. There is no singer that does not have aptitude for singing when his voice is well; but this is barely sufficient for a simple amateur.

The artist (aside of a case of some serious infection to the vocal cords) should always be disposed to show for the public his artistic gifts. Only by means of his art will he be able to perform in the most difficult of circumstances and to be able to oblige the public of his resources. This is why it is essential for someone who wants a career in melodramatic art to start his studies under the direction of a master teacher that knows his art well and which secrets to use for initiating his student.

And now it is a good time to point out the absurdity of an idea that prevails in our society, relative to the study of voice. The person who wants to study violin, will not place himself under the direction of a master teacher of piano; however, it is very common to assign voice education to a teacher that has never had vocal experience. What is even more absurd is that it even ignores the basic rudiments of vocal art and the principles that need to be observed for the formation and education of the voice. It is not sufficient that the teacher be versatile in his counterpoint or enjoy a reputation as a pianist in order that he may train the voice.[1]

The voice itself is an instrument that obeys unchanging rules, rules that will always be unknown to those who have not done conscientious study of the voice. Any teacher can assess if a note is hoarse, weak, open, closed, out of tune, of the throat,

[1] This is a generalization about teachers, but I have known many teachers who even lacking voice, have made great contributions to melodramatic art. Teaching artists for the theater who have achieved great artistic stature.

rests in the nose, etc.; but if he has not done specialty studies of voice, how can he teach the way to correct those natural defects? After a few days, the student having placed himself under the direction of a teacher will come to know the particular tastes of the teacher and how to flatter him. He could also adapt by natural means any paper with direction; nor would it be difficult to develop a singer with good style. But this is not enough. If the singer is not developed under strict principles from the start from his primary studies, he will always find obstacles almost insurmountable in the practice of his art.

Teachers suffer in general the defect of not extirpating, above all, the first and natural defects that denaturalize the simple emission of sound which is so very essential to the singer, and believing, and having been persuaded that they cannot do away with impunity those that they classify as laws of nature, when most of the time there are nothing more than habits of nature, suggesting a cause and ignoring the all powerful mediums that art offers to all who have received from God an energetic will and elevated intelligence.

Such absurdity is the reason that in all theaters everyday are heard such a great number of defective voices. Persist then I do, in recommending particularly the most scrupulous care in the selection of a teacher to train the voice from the beginning. From this first step depends many times the fortunate success or unhappy failure of an artist's career, in the case that nature has not bestowed the extraordinary qualities of intelligence and heart, that make forgiveness of vocal defects possible.

It seems incredible that a teacher, that should not be involved in voice education other than in the material side forget this, and attend only to implant in the student a way to feel that is in my opinion something that cannot be transmitted or learned. The early singers had more sound ideas about training the voice, and teachers such as Nozzari, Crescentini, Righini, Garcia, etc. are proof of this. These masters that were also first class singers, would have their students study for years the theory of the voice, without concern of nothing else except the throat mechanism, convinced that once that difficulty had been overcome and taught the singer could independently pursue the first steps in his career. It is true that there are some voices that nature has provided with such gifts of quality that no teacher will experience difficulty teaching, adding to the reputation of the teacher without much effort on his part. This however is not common. What may happen first is that the student will be surprised at first by the sound and effects of his voice without knowing its cause. This is no more than early revelations. One can take advantage of this and must form a sound theory only by means of seasoned practice.

With these brief recommendations I limit myself. I only wish to point out some things for those who want to dedicate themselves to the study of melodramatic art. These being the indispensable requirements to rise above the level of a multitude of so called artists, condemned to grow during their life in the practice of this profession, that for them it is nothing more than any other occupation. These so called artists do nothing more than groan about their fate, when they should do something about their uselessness, ignorance and foolhardy presumptions.

Chapter I

The theory of Respiration in Singing:

The advantage of its study and the consequences of its neglect.

I do not wish to bother the reader with a description of the form of the organ of the voice or of the respiration. Just as there is little value for an instrumentalist to inquire about the way sound is produced by his instrument, the singer can avoid the useless and fastidious study of scientific knowledge that is concerned with the anatomy of the vocal apparatus. As with all other musical instruments, it is the way in which the instrument is put together that requires the student's greatest affinity. In fact, it is the vocal cords that vibrate; they stretch or slacken in a similar manner to other cord-based instruments. The sounds of the voice reverberate or echo within the pharynx and the mouth. This is similar to the way sound vibrates within the case or soundboard of a wind instrument or string instrument such as the violin, cello, double bass, and the piano. This vibration also takes place within the vocal organ (as we will see in a further chapter), which acts rather like the end of a bellows, dispensing the air throughout the aria. One sings, therefore, from the lungs, which act upon impulses from the diaphragm. As the air passes through the trachea that acts like a pipe, the vibration within the vocal organ is reflected and extended in accordance with the sound to be produced, either stronger or weaker. The mouth finally becomes the recipient of all the harmonious sounds of this wind instrument. Leaving all other considerations aside, it is not possible to insist enough upon the necessary and indispensable study of the particulars of the act of respiration for the art of singing. [2]

A great many singers believe that the respiration for singing is the same as the respiration required for speech. From this flagrant error are born those inopportune breaths that cut words and affect the musical structure, depriving the singing of any spontaneity. This only results in involving the public in the singer's efforts and exhaustion. Music, just like speech, is a language that has phrases that cannot be truncated without altering the true sentiments and meaning of what is being said; therefore, it is necessary for the singer, who wishes to interpret faithfully the thoughts of the composer, to know how to identify the musical sentences. This will allow him to be able to breathe in time with the music and at the appropriate places. It is known that the act of respiration is divided into two parts; inhalation and exhalation. In the first, the lungs expand, while in the second, the opposite occurs: they contract. The parts belonging the *thorax* move first and are then followed by the movement of the lungs. Then there is a muscle called the *diaphragm* that supports the lungs. This

[2] (In the Spanish translation of the treatise this shorter paragraph took the place of the paragraph above). The same does not occur with the study that should be continuously done over breathing while singing, that is of absolute and indispensable necessity for the singer. Few artists have thought about this and that is why very few can appreciate the advantage that can be acquired by this study.

muscle is not essential for customary breathing, but is indispensable for the act of singing. The trained singer relies on this, as if were a kind of windbag needed to regulate, at his will, the act of breathing. This muscle is located between the lungs and the *abdomen*.

Knowing how to manage the breath constitutes a great part of the theory of respiration for the singer. During ordinary respiration, the *thoracic* parts and the movement of the lungs rise and fall continuously. If the movements of the *thorax* become involved in breathing when singing, it would be exceedingly harmful, inasmuch as this method of respiration would be characterized by shortness of breath and fatigue, tiring the singer and producing a faulty performance. In order to sustain and manage the breath three things, then, are necessary:

1. To acquire always a big enough breath, and one that is proportionate to the phrase to be sung. There is nothing worse for a singer to terminate a phrase with shortness of breath or to have to take a breath at an inappropriate place.

2. Maintain immobile, throughout the act of singing, the external *thoracic* parts, being careful to bring forward and retire shoulders at the same time without incurring any effort or tension to do so.

3. Use the *diaphragm* with the help of the muscles of the abdomen to manage the breath in the same way as that is expelled from a bellows.

To ensure the correct breath while singing, these are the three indispensable conditions that one must know. Therefore, it will be necessary that, before beginning any practice concerned with the emission of sound, the singer study this particular mode of respiration for vocalization. Only when he is well in possession of this method of breathing may he commence on the study of the voice. He should always examine the way in which his respiration functions. Studying in this way, little by little, change occurs and this act becomes habitual in the singer and will later become a familiar and natural act.

A majority of singers do not take care with the act of this study because they disregard the advantages that this can produce. This practice affords the singer future vocal security, maintains perfect intonation, and allows for the greatest interpretation of the musical thoughts without the danger of any inconsistencies in the respiration occurring in the wrong place. It is harmful to the dramatic expression to feel out of breath when arriving at the end of a musical period. This can be both damaging to the expression and can also impair the vocal intonation.

Incorrect methods of respiration have the disadvantage of forcing the singer to sing too fast, especially when the chest is employed in the manner of a bellows. Appropriating this action to the chest instead of to the diaphragm when singing is a fatal error, by which many have fallen. Not only many singers have fallen prey to this, but also many distinguished, yet ill-advised, teachers. It is easy to comprehend that by making the outer wall of the chest act like a bellows, a part of the body that should only serve as a sounding board for the sonorous reverberations of a well-supported sound, diminishes the dimensions of the extension of the cavity and results in altering

the quality of the sound. This only produces useless fatigue that is the result of that ill-timed movement. Some teachers are only familiar with breathing systems that are suitable for chatting and have not seen the above manner of breathing during singing.

If teachers would hasten to pay attention and analyze this idea that may yet be unknown to them, instead of discounting the work of others, they would not fall into that vulgar error, and they would appreciate all the advantages that result from this mode of respiration.

A very conscious physician that has dedicated his whole life to the essential study of illnesses of the respiratory system, the Hungarian Dr. Mandl, wrote a short thesis on *voice fatigue and its relationship to the manner of breathing*, that demonstrates, with unquestionable authority, the dangers of adopting a mode of singing that uses only the rib gage instead of the diaphragm. This method of using the ribs is unfortunately the one used by the Paris conservatory. In opposition, I approve wholeheartedly with what the cited doctor says at the end of his work: *There will never be enough twisting of correct principle when another is the method that has been officially adopted*

Initial vocal exercises rely most essentially on the act of respiration: for example, to know how to spin a sound and how to alter the vocal mechanism and in doing so to allow for the passage of the voice from loud to soft and back again. All this is dependent upon the action of the diaphragm and abdomen that regulate the breath at the will of the singer, in a similar manner to that of a bellows. Another recommendation: in the act of inhaling, avoid all the air passing through the mouth, as it produces an unpleasant sensation, drying the internal walls of the pharynx and the throat. One should breathe in a way whereby the air passes halfway between mouth and nose. In this manner the passing air does not produce any discomfort and at the same time permits an even greater inhalation.

I will never tire of recommending to artists and calling their attention to these very essential principles, given that they provide the foundation for the education of the voice. One should not have to backtrack in their studies to correct difficulties one could have corrected in the beginning. Correctly done, the student will, little by little, and without being aware of it, acquire the habit of breathing comfortably while singing and it will not take long to recognize the advantages of such study. The larynx becomes free of fatigue and the singer will experience greater phrase amplitude.

Chapter II

Constant necessary examination over voice emission & the true point of voice support. Dangers of singing with an incorrect emission.

The only emission that the theater singer should employ is that of chest singing*, as it is the most correct and natural even though its application is often quite rare. This originates generally from the little care that teachers give to the primary study of simple voice emission and because the teacher has also neglected to find the true point of *appoggio* of the voice that was entrusted to him.

**To be understood I feel obligated to adopt a designation that is in current use, even though it is found to be erroneous and very difficult to analyze.*

Why do we hear so many imperfect voices? Because the point of separation is not sufficiently studied, that is none other than the quality of simple emission. Until the imperfections of breathing for simple emission of the voice are mastered, one must not think of any other study, because instead of helping the voice, irreparable damage may be the result.

The first thing to examine, then, is the correction and ridding of any natural defects. Once this is achieved, the remaining study is much easier. Having these results, the rest is easy. Anyone who owns a voice can improve it much by means of intelligent and conscientious study, and thus can succeed in changing it so advantageously, that it will be much changed. Then the notes of the voice will regain their natural state.

The practice of simple emission is sufficient to condition the voice to a mode of being. Either good or poor sound quality is dependent on this exercise, because it is the basis of all vocal practice. In fact, the first thing that draws attention when one hears a singer, is the quality of his voice; quality that influences very much its success. There is, therefore, what is repeated, to go forward in voice studies until we have assured a good emission. It is difficult to explain in writing the way sound should be expressed. I will in the best way possible try to indicate which are the external effects of a correct and natural emission. It is not certain if all muscular tension proceeds from one effort, which produces the consequent fatigue: the singer, who needs always to conserve all his energy and elasticity, needs naturally, to avoid all that might contribute to the weakening or dulling his abilities.

The first caution that the singer must take is to begin delivering the sound with as great naturalness as possible, paying greater attention to the quality of the sound rather than the volume of the sound. The voice acquires intensity and volume very fast when it has found the true point of support. Singing should look effortless, if it is desired that the voice appear full and spontaneous; and saying without any effort, I understand, not only those who can do it with an excessive pressure of the chest, but also all the tension of the throat muscles. Voice acquired by these means tires the

throat very fast and leaves it exposed to irreparable catastrophe, and besides this the voice will never seem gratifyingly full or pleasing.

To deliver a beautiful and homogenous sound it is necessary to:

1. Slowly lower the larynx, without any effort, a little more than in its natural position.
2. Have the soft palate inclined in such a way that the sound will not solely strike the walls of the mouth but participate with the pharynx, helping the sound acquire roundness and uniformity, raising the voice above the shrillness that it would acquire if the chest were the foundation of the support. The tongue should remain in its normal state with a light immersion in the middle. The mouth is naturally opened halfway as for a light smile allowing part of the teeth to show which allows it to be graceful and uninhibited.

All these recommendations would be useless if the student already has found the true support for the voice, since the previous indications are not the cause of a good emission, but more likely its consequences. A student's good sound should show/indicate the practice that he said it took, because I cannot explain it by means of the theory.

I should recommend likewise to the student, that he frequently repeat this early exercise to assure himself that his voice has not acquired new imperfections with other exercises that, even though, more pleasant and less fastidious, are not so important. I recommend, therefore, that he start all his exercises with this preventive study.

The sound, in principle, should not be spun; it needs to be attacked with aspiration lightly in the throat by way of maintaining the same force or loudness and without wishing to find anything other than the true point of vocal support. When this is secured, the spinning of the sound will be much easier and secure. I will speak more about this in the following chapters.

The [a] vowel needs to be adopted for the study, avoiding both its very closed or open emission: either one would be imperfect if it were used as a foundation for vocal emission; because the open or closed voice is only for dramatic effect, and for this reason there is a time and place for its use. I will have occasion to discuss this in the chapter dealing with vocal timbre.

So that other natural defects of the sound can be eradicated, it may be considered necessary within a pupil training to change the basic vowel on which the exercise of simple emission is based. For the student who has the vice of singing with the voice too open I recommend that the teacher find (through the modification of the closed vowels like [o] and also the [u]) to modify the sound of the emission so that the pupil then makes himself the master of a more secure sound. The use of the [u] may help facilitate the repercussions of the sounds in the head.

With a defective emission one encounters insurmountable difficulties landing the singer in no short time in the disastrous position of not being able to continue

forward making the most of his natural talent. Almost all singers who support with the throat at the tip of the larynx or the epiglottis cause damage to the pillars of the soft palate, which are by their own nature very sensitive. The continued irritation of these parts causes frequent inflammations of the throat, vocal apprehension, and the loss of the indispensable and necessary confidence that all artists need in order to reveal their artistic talent. Besides the deplorable consigned results, supporting the voice with the throat easily produces a great tiredness, given the continued tension imparted to the internal parts, and it also takes away the energy and elasticity of the voice.

Even though the majority of singers suffer from this imperfection that becomes like a component part there never seems to be sufficient amount of time or practice available to uproot it. This would not be necessary if care had been taken from the start. This fatal error regarding the chest as the support point causes frequent hoarseness, convulsive coughs that at times overwhelm the bronchial tube, and can cause serious health consequences. I do not exaggerate by saying that the principle causes concerning the loss of many voices generally arise from this fatal error and culpable neglect.

Because I cannot do more than insist and recommend to young singers who want to pursue a career in the melodramatic arts that they take great care in their initial study and refrain from the natural desire that all have, of wanting to anticipate and rush their progress. In procuring the delight of exercising the voice with pieces of music, songs, it would be to my amusement that they succeed, for the progress along the road to their art will always remain closed. The same occurs in all the other arts; it is not uncommon to find students of drawing who abandoned too soon the study of initial practice principles for the practice of complicated compositions. Progress needs to be gradual. Melodramatic artists cannot improvise. It takes many years of constant conscientious study to claim the title of a complete artist. The student should not aspire to do more than he should at one time: This will be a more secure means to inspire one to occupy one day a place among the elite of the art.

Chapter III

Definition of the diverse registers/records of the human voice; Advice regarding the union of these registers/records; fault acquisitions to avoid & advantages of a well united voice.

Once the voice support, the *appoggio*, is acquired, and knowing that the emission of the voice is free of defects, it is necessary to focus on unification of all the sounds that have been studied separately; and it is this subject matter that will concern us and requires more caution, because any error at this point can produce infinite disasters in the vocal body. The vocal registers may be classified in the following three distinct categories:

1. Chest register.

2. Middle chest register.

3. Head register (*). I recommend that the word *register* not be confused with *voice point of support*.

To have a mellow and homogeneous voice, it is necessary that all the registers that form the voice have the chest as a point of support so that the chest contributes throughout to the reverberation of the sound in the chest cavity. Much of the voice's intensity and timbre would be lost if it relied only on the cavities of the pharynx or mouth for the repercussion of the sound. We will begin by defining each of the vocal registers before taking up the issue of their mutual union.

I: The Chest Register.

This register is the one that generally provides the voice with its ring and its strength. In the soprano, little care is given to this register because of a prejudiced idea that the application of the chest register is harmful to the watery notes and may cause damage to the whole voice. Certainly it is not easy to acquire the notes of this register, unlike those of the other vocal registers, as some do not naturally possess these notes; but if the advantage of this study were known, less neglect would take place. Particularly because today's music requires teachers to develop great energy and dramatic force in expression, this register has become almost indispensable, not only to help the singer produce greater voice effects, but also to learn how to protect his own instrument from the excessive fatigue which he could not resist without having the chest register secure in some way. This requires particular application and great care.

For the singer to emit the chest voice well, I need to call attention to what I said in regard to simple emission, that is: attack the voice with a light blow to the throat by way of aspiration; abandon the throat entirely, lowering lightly the larynx with no effort at all, emit the vocal "A" a little more open in this register particularly

at the limits of the register. All this must be done with all naturalness. When the pupil has control over his emission in this register, he should modify the timbre, that I recommend to be slightly open at the start, and always to remember that he should be able to maintain the timbre to be either open or closed and suitable for expression of dramatic effects; so that the point of support, the *appoggio,* is secured and is never different in any of the registers. The emission, I repeat, should not be closed or open except to express dramatic passions that are translated by means of these different timbres. The student should not flinch if he observes at first the notes are uncertain, weak or strident: persevere in this fastidious study, and his voice little by little the voice will naturally find the true point of support, acquiring brightness and ring. I recommend again no force be applied to the walls of the throat which would produce a goat sound, for certain not very pleasant. In the beginning do not look for sound purity because it is impossible ever to acquire it. When a note is resistant to come out, it is best to take the closest and least resistant note to it and slowly drag the note thereby making it participate in the sound.

The advantages of the chest register voice are immense, since this register builds on the voice's intensity and purity. It is the only register that makes it possible to find the true point of vocal support, the *appoggio*. Through the energy that it generates, it infuses assurance and trust in the owner's instrument, procuring also a pure *mezza voce* and ringing voice, that is not possible to be found by studying only the other registers.

In the soprano, as in the mezzo-soprano, the chest register varies from the low *do* to the middle *la* or *si;* it is rare in the contralto ever to pass the middle. In the tenor, the chest voice ascends to the middle *do* or *re*. The chest register in the baritone has the same limits as the soprano or contralto. For the basso profondo it is rare for the chest ever to go above the middle *sol* or *la.* For the singer who nature has favored with the possession of the above-mentioned limits of the chest register I advise to note rarely the acute notes of this register. In general the feminine voice would not have to pass the middle *fa* in her study. To obtain the advantage of securing better the notes of the second register and not run the risk of weakening the notes of the second register if they check a lot and often and exercise with frequency the extreme notes of the first register so that the consequences of any irreparable voice damage is avoided. This register is available for even those who do not have this gift by nature; but it requires more care in its study and perseverance to secure it.

II: Mid-Breast Register

This register, named mid-breast, does not have a particular character, serving only in transition between the chest and head registers, participating on one or the other. This register is the more difficult system, even though, I repeat, it does not have its own special character. The voice's equality and homogeneity is dependent on the joining of this register with the other registers, which is enough for being highly recommended for study.

The extension of this register varies greatly dependant on the voices. In the soprano it is very limited and it does not extend beyond the middle *si* or *mi*. The mezzo-soprano has the same extension, but to the middle *la* or *re*. The same occurs with the contralto as with the mezzo-soprano*;* in this type of voice it is this register that is most dangerous of all and the most difficult to systematize; and this explains why it is so rare to find a true contralto voice that is homogeneous in all the registers.

In the tenor, this register extends to the middle *mi* or *fa* and then to the extreme ends of the voice. The celebrated *do* in chest of Duprez and the less renowned sustained *do* of Tamberlick, as extraordinary as they may be are nothing more than notes of the middle chest, involved in the head, by the abandonment of the soft palate in sound expansion.

In the baritone, the middle chest voice generally starts at the middle *la* or *si* with the upper limits of the voice varying according to the character of the baritone voice from the *fa* (F) to the *la* natural above the lines of the bass clef depending on the voice being bass-baritone *or baritono tenore*. Two examples of these types of voices are Coletti and Ronconi; just as there was a difference between Donzelli and Mario as tenors. When one knows how to make the chest register participate with the *appoggio* one acquires an extraordinary vibration, especially above intervening natural notes of *do* to *mi* over the musical staff. The same can be said for the bass; the register is limited to the *sol* or *la* finishing at the *mi* or *fa* above the stave. When speaking about the union of the registers, I will point out the advantages of this mode of study that which occupies me presently, as it is not easy to separate this study from others because of the correlation that exists between them.

III: Head Register

As to the head register (also known as falsetto in male voices) it serves no more than that which concerns the female voice. The tenor, baritone and bass do not have occasion to make use of this register, at least in the Italian scene. Long ago tenors often made use of this voice, specially to embellish a cadence; but today taste has changed a great deal and I would not advise any singer to risk this in public, unless his voice register is perfectly sound and united to the mid chest register, *voce di mezzo petto.*

The head voice is very easy to systematize with study as it has a character that is very particular. To extract from this voice all the desired effect, it is necessary to carry the voice to the cavity of the pharynx and mouth, while abandoning the throat as much as possible; the soft palate mast be lowered slightly to prevent, as I have said before, the voice being only reflected in the inside of the mouth; if that were the case it would render the voice thin, and without the power and the vibrations that it acquires by striking the caverns of the pharynx. This register extends to the extreme voice heights and consequently has a very variable extension. In the soprano it has the most ring and is the most natural register. In the contralto, although loud enough, it lacks smoothness and it is somewhat strident. In the mezzo-soprano it is not as extensive, or as nice, but significantly better than in the contralto.

These are the general considerations that distinguish each register within the different voices. Once the divisions and respective tendencies are known, the study of their union begins, the essential base for the art of singing.

IV. Union of the registers

The union of these registers depends on the (sameness/evenness/equality) of the voice, an indispensable condition for any melodramatic artist.

The union of the registers consists of unifying the outer limits of the sections of the voice; in a manner where any gaps in the sound naturally vanish as the voice passes from one register to another, the voice seems homogeneous and of one color throughout the entire range. The most difficult gap to make vanish is the passage from the chest voice to the mid chest voice. To attain this fusion it is necessary to reduce strength of emission of the last two chest notes thereby making it participate in the character of the register that lies above without losing sight, however, the support of the voice should not separate from the chest. In the same manner it is also helpful for the voice, to spin the notes belonging to the chest register beyond the natural limits (but with great care and always striving to avoid the slightest voice straining); so also to make the most of this register union study. The frequent passing of each chest voice note to the mid chest the fusion of these two registers will be acquired in a manner that should not be perceived as an unpleasant setback, a pitfall of so many voices.

Even though the passing of the mid chest voice to the head voice is much easier in women's voices, especially in the soprano, I recommend not neglecting the same practice both in this register and the aforementioned, because this will help the voice find more homogeneity. In the next chapter I will discuss the exercises more with the intention of achieving this objective.

To acquire some notes beyond their chest register, many singers strain their voice and are amazed that they have lost rather than acquired these notes. If there is one register that in study does not need to be forced it is the precisely the register of the chest. If it is strengthened, the intensity of the notes will little by little lose their energy and the center notes will weaken to point of being unable to withstand the slightest amount of fatigue. If instead, practice in trying to reach the upper notes of the chest register is done with care without any throat effort, limited to maintaining the same voice register as well as not changing the support of the voice it will not take long to reap the fruits of this work because the voice that was initially indifferent and rebellious, will come out more easily; the character of the voice will then be extended to all the registers will produce a uniform, energetic and melodious voice.

Many singers decide to make a general study of the voice without having first exercised the separate and diverse registers of the voice before beginning the practice of their union. This neglect results in the acquisition of many vocal habits, of the type that cannot be corrected later. They may be able to study for the rest of their life but the study will never be beneficial because the initial steps have been incorrectly learnt. This demonstrates clearly how essential it is to make sure to infuse the singer early with intimate knowledge of his own instrument; in this way he will not become an absolute slave to his own voice, besides freeing (the artist) from the troubles encountered when unfavorable health conditions present themselves.

One who dedicates himself to the practice of the melodramatic art should always be willing to show the public his available means, not limited to singing only when his voice is well: what makes the artist is essentially his intimate knowledge and free exercise of his own faculties. A singer who aspires to deserve to have his name known must make a tireless study of the mysteries of the voice, therefore, the one who is always a slave to the gifts that nature has favored him with will never be able to be called an artist.

Chapter IV

Primary Exercises essential to the Voice: A profitable way in which to study

Once the singer has acquired the essential starting points, such as voice support and the union of the registers, it may be said that he is already two thirds of the way on his path, since all that is left requires no greater effort, being only the mechanical study that relies on what has already been set forth.

All the voice exercises can be classified into three distinct categories:

1. Exercises for simple emission.
2. Exercises for intervals.
3. Exercises for agility.

The first category includes:

The sound sustained equally without increase or decrease of force.

The loud sound concluded softly.

The soft sound concluded loudly.

The sound that initially begins piano that moves to forte and returns to piano.

The second category teaches the intervals of the second, third, fourth, etc including both major and minor intervals.

The third category will bring together all the exercises for perfecting voice, from the *grupetto* to the chromatic scale.

I have no intention of presenting in these brief pages a complete method on the art of singing. I will be satisfied to point out some key advice over each of these particular exercises; leaving then the most minute details to the teachers of the art that can only come from the scrupulous examination of each of these exercises.

I. Exercises for simple emission

In Chapter II, I pointed out the essential conditions for simple voice emission; I wish to add then to the expressed recommendations, the one of maintaining the sound at same strength without any muscle tension. In order to decrease the sound, gradually take the sound toward the antrum of the pharynx, being careful to not change the color sound, always maintaining the character of the same vowel. With the decreasing of the sound and going in the direction toward the pharynx cavity, the soft palate slowly lowers and the pharynx progressively resumes its original position.

In this way the sound is sustained in the mouth and nose, this being where the sound participates at end of the natural emission of the spoken word. I recommend, that when making the *diminuendo*, that the mouth not be closed as the sound will lose its strength; it is the larynx that must operate this gradual decrease in sound, and the mouth must remain immobile in same position as attacking at *forte*. If the mouth were to control the gradation of the sound, the larynx would lose the benefits of the flexibility it would acquire by retaining these movements.

The breaks heard in some voices when making the *diminuendo* of the sound always arise when there is too much movement in the cricoid-thyroid muscles, so much so that these muscles do not have the strength to maintain the sound from *forte* to *piano* while returning to its first position. For the sound to decrease progressively, it is necessary, therefore, to have parts involved in the emission return little by little to their natural position. This exercise, in addition to increasing voice elasticity, equalizes the registers and makes possible the attaining of a clear and vibrant voice even if the singer does not naturally possess it.

For passing from *piano* to *forte* one must attack the sound with very slight aspiration of the throat and with the minimum amount of muscle contraction. In one word, in same way as if talking. To re-enforce the sound it is necessary then that the throat gradually take the same position it occupies when going from loud to soft, progressively lowering the larynx and allowing the voice to resume its initial point of support. The force in moving to very loud singing must be done by the pressure of the diaphragm over the lungs. Recall here what I said in the first chapter regarding way of breathing since one should avoid at all costs that the ribs and external muscles exert pressure over the lungs as this would remove the strength and the elasticity of the sound.

This exercise from the start will be more difficult since it is not at first natural; and one should not by means of force try to augment the coming out of the rebellious voice. Only with consistent and long study will the throat acquire the desired elasticity, permitting the singer to place in evidence the whole of his own resources.

The spun sound is no more than unification of these two exercises into one and deserves no more attention than does taking a deep breath. I recommend besides the knowledge of dividing the spun sound into two equal parts that one should practice in two ways by moving from *piano* to *forte* and then from *forte* to *piano*. To join these more securely, it is necessary to measure the breath so that it is well distributed.

Practice like this: if one wants to produce a spun sound effect in the theater, I recommend that one third of the breath be used for producing the *piano* to *forte* and the remaining two thirds be used for the *forte* to *piano*; this makes it appear as if the

note is held longer than in the reality of the time. One should not neglect this beneficial exercise and therefore I advise that this be a part of daily study.

II. Interval/transition exercises

Exercises of secondary category should start with practice of first interval, that is: the minor second. This exercise helps procure elasticity for the throat, is very helpful for the union of the registers. To transition from one sound to another securing the first, it is necessary to decrease the sound by moving it toward the pharynx and lightly lowering the soft palate. When the sound is in this position, that is, entirely abandoned by the throat and sustained only by the pharynx and the soft palate, the sound with the help of a slight *portamento,* will be able to unite with the following one. The first sound frankly should be taken with a light aspiration to the throat, decreasing it in a way for the second sound to become joined with the first over a soft voice. The opposite can be done later, that is, to take up the soft sound to the *forte* sound. However, this should not be confused with tying or voice carrying. Nothing nice comes from that type of leading as in passing from one interval to another one should be able to hear all the intervals of the chromatic series. This leading is part of dramatic voice accents, of which of will discuss next, and this cannot be used unless passion is required for dramatic effect as will be shown in Chapter VI. Adopted as a system it becomes an unbearable defect.

I believe it is useless to treat the third, fourth, fifth, etc. intervals one by one, since the same principles apply to the interval of a second. When the interval is higher, the voice has a tendency to drag, which is precisely why it is best to be sure of the first sound, and before abandoning it, mentally concentrate on the next that is to be emitted. This simple reflection will also help much with the intonation of the intervals that are more difficult.

III. General points on agility; the trill and the ***grupetto*.**

Vocal agility is a gift of nature that practice can prodigiously develop. Even though modern music does not show like the old, the singer must not neglect his practice, because this study has immense benefits for his voice. Exercises on voice agility are excellent for equalizing the voice and acquiring indispensable elasticity of the voice. There are various ways to carry out or accentuate styles of vocal agility, which can be smooth, chopped or beating (*legata, picchiettata o ribattuta*). Each of these requires a different accent and execution. I will point out the essential conditions for their relative development.

Smooth agility (*legata*) is the one for the singer to pay attention to more so than the others, since others are no more than a modification of the principle that governs the first. One who does not possess this naturally in his voice should begin the study slowly, being careful to tie together all the sounds of the scale without

dragging the voice and listening carefully to transition from one note to another. Only the first scale note should be lightly attacked and increase little by little increase the rate of progression throughout the intervals of the scale. To perfect the exercise for smooth agility it is necessary that it also be what is called *granita* (granite); that is, that each of the sounds that form the scale, are sensitive to the ear.

To give the chopped agility its true character, it is necessary that each note be heard by means of a smooth throat aspiration without chest involvement and with the most lightness possible.

Beating agility *(ribatutta*) needs to be executed with a smooth contraction of the diaphragm. This type of agility is quite rare and generally used only for low voices and also known as blows to the chest (*a colpi di petto*). I do not advise singers to study this particularly from these agility types; it is sufficient that they understand in case they have need to use them for character effect.

Agility exercises should generally be performed using the larynx and not the mouth; a not too uncommon defect among many singers.

The trill (*trillo*) like agility is a natural gift that with practice can be acquired, as in the case of the celebrated *Giuditta Pasta*. Particular care needs to be taken to assure clarity in the execution of the two notes on which the trill rests; being more or less the dividing interval. One must not confuse the trill with the ***tremolo*** like that of a little horse, called to neigh, because it reminds us of the horse or that kind of oscillation of same note that is no more than a ridiculous caricature of the trill. This should always start with a lower note and be gradually increased in speed so that one knows that it is the performer who is in charge.

The *grupetto*, or the mordent, must be well executed and should be supported lightly in the back of the throat, in a way that each note is heard clearly. It should always be smooth (*legato*). The number of notes in the *grupetto* varies according to the singer's taste and can be classified into three types: simple *grupetto*, double and compound. The use of *grupetto*, when it is well suited, gives grace to the melody and sometimes adds strength and vigor. But I must recommend it be used with caution, because if it is too lavish and is in bad taste, it would do much damage to the melody, undermining its distinctive character: the *grupetto* used within inappropriate types of music is eminently ridiculous.

IV. The *sincope*, *fainting effect* and how to accentuate it.

The *sincope*, is the anticipation of one note over another, and is to be accented in a way so that its true character is not adulterated. It is rare! Few are the singers who know how to accentuate a *sincope.* The attack of the *sincope* should always be decisive, and not repeated over the consecutive fourth. I point out this

defect for the particular attention of all singers, for with a little care it can easily be avoided. Once these initial practices have become a habit for the singer, he needs to make up a series of exercises that simultaneously address all his major vocal difficulties, and if he wants to overcome all of them, he should not let a day go by without practicing them separately. I recommend, nevertheless, that reflection be the singer's guide for all exercises. Only in this way is the singer able to reap the fruit of his labor. The mechanical voice study, if not directed by intelligent attention, could be more harmful than helpful. To be able to have the singer identify himself with his instrument, is obtained through the constant practice of his resources. In this way he will be able to acquire mastery that marks the complete artist, rendering art superiority to that of nature.

Chapter V

The necessity of vocalization and recommendations on the emission of the different vowels. The application and study of articulation. The necessity for good pronunciation and the many effects that it possesses.

Once the singer has separately overcome all the difficulties that voice study presents, he must dedicate himself to the study of vocalises, which is nothing more than the simultaneous application of all the principles that form the basis of singing. It would be inopportune to study the vocalises first without securing the principles that are the foundations of singing; because the singer must have reached a secure level of handling his own instrument, with practice of the primary exercises, as he would always hesitate every time he wished to go out (perform). Although fastidious, this practice conducted with intelligence and consistency, it will not be long before this work bears fruit; and even though the art of singing, studied in this manner, appears more difficult to learn and seems to take longer, what sometimes happens is the opposite; for besides progressing with certainty one acquires little by little a secure knowledge of the proper voice. One who vocalizes well cannot help but sing well since melodramatic singing is nothing more than vocalization with addition of words. It will always be more difficult to sing well a vocalization better than any opera piece because vocalises are focused solely on uniting all the difficulties that are found in singing, whereas in song, fantasy is introduced by the participation of voice and word. The vocalization exercises should never be neglected. I recommend that the student not focus only on vocalises of one author as he needs to train the voice to encounter all possible difficulties that arise in singing. I counsel students to make a preference for others' recommendations such as those of Crescentini, Righini, Bordogni and in general those who have written with more knowledge of voice difficulties. The vocalises should be specific and help the singer overcome the difficulties of execution that each of them presents, and merely give the pleasure of singing a melody of his liking as the study requires courage and accuracy if vocal difficulties are to be overcome. Pleasure like that of sentiment in singing can be developed with exercise; but it is more difficult to instill this in him if he is the possessor of a rebellious nature. Nevertheless, art can make up for the lack of many natural gifts, and the artist who knows his own capacity can in many cases make the audience forget that he lacks certain gifts. Do not neglect, then, profitable study, animated by the zeal and love for the art, which motivates the singer to perfect his skills consciously with each exercise that he acquires with practice. This is the only way open to the artist, a path to an honorable career that will someday be worthy of the public's admiration.

Up to now, I have only mentioned the [a] vowel for the study of the voice. Just as a song must attend to the words, which are merely constantly representing the five vowels, first one must pass a comprehensive study of the pronunciation to have the ability to emit well every vowel within a song.

The [a] vowel is the most appropriate for voice study, since correct emission does not require any of the agents that coincide with articulation. The limits I have set in these lines does not permit me to expand much on this argument, and I will not enter into particulars about the pronunciation of every vowel. I will limit myself to only share some opinions concerning phonetic formations in general.

The [ɛ] like the [i] rely in common discourse on a lean toward the nose. In singing they ought to be emitted very differently. The point of voice support for good emission, as I have said several times, must always be the chest: from here (**chest**) whatever vowel the voice has to emit is done with the point of support being the chest. This needs to become an applied principle that must never change. The internal part of the mouth and the pharynx should certainly take part in sound modification, but they should never be used as point of support; so it is necessary to exercise the emission of those two vowels, without moving away from the chest as the point of vocal support. In this way the sound will never be nasal and may have same strength and vibration as the [a] vowel. This exercise which by itself, does not appear to be very important, on the contrary, merits attention by all singers; because the natural propensity of the singer leads him to emit these vowels with help of the nose, which could cause him to lose much of what he previously acquired through his hard work; the voice breaks down when varying the point of *appoggio* (support) and can lead to a voice confusion that is serious and damaging.

In this way the singer will not be forced, as many are, to change the vowel and as a consequence the word, as in a cadenza or at some point of effect because he has difficulties in emitting what was written. There are many singers that do not hesitate to go against their good taste or the prose, and change the written word for the sole difficulty that they cannot be bothered to invest in the correct emission of the vowel. The simultaneous study of the vowels will make him master of the emission and as a result he will avoid indecent ridicule.

I recommend for both the [a] and the [ɛ] vowels that the singer adopt the principle of listening distinctly to the various vowel sounds formed within the word and the relationship they have to the accent in the prose; for example in the word, *amare* (to love) it is easy to recognize that the first [a] vowel is lighter than the second; In the word, *Ercole,* the first [ɛ] vowel is more open than the second. Just as good and correct pronunciation is based essentially on the emission of vowels, it is necessary that the singer be very careful to not distort the many particulars of pronunciation.

For vowel [open o] as for vowel [u] the lips only should be used for the modification of the sound. These two vowels by their closed nature require greater voice intensity for expression and can induce unexpectedly a strain in the internal walls of the throat: thus it will be necessary to wrestle with this natural tendency, leaving the throat free from any manifestation of muscle tension, exterior of

otherwise. In principle it will be difficult to achieve, but with a little perseverance, it will not take long to overcome this difficulty.

It will be very helpful to become accustomed with the particular formation of the sounds of all the vowels and dedicate yourself to vocalize each and all the phonetic formations for all vowels. I recommend again without any fear of repeating myself, that only the mouth, the pharynx, the tongue and lips should be used to modify at will the sound, without ever changing the voice's point of support (*appoggio*).

I would need more time and space to unravel all the rules that govern with respect to articulation of all the consonants in singing, as practice aided by reflection will be perceived by the singer as more than enough, since there are so many exceptions to the general rules. Articulation of the consonants should be generally more accentuated in song than in usual language as it corresponds to the importance of vocal expression. One must be careful with words that end in consonants and with abbreviations like *castel* for *castello*; *amor* for *amore,* etc. If the singer is not careful to accentuate the final consonant with force, he runs the risk of confusing the beginning of the next words; resulting in much incorrect pronunciation. This same warning applies to all cases in which two different consonants are close to each other, such as in the words *perfido, morte, rimbombo, etc.* In these cases, pronunciation of the first consonant must be clear and neat, not to fall in the habit of so many singers who prefer to add an [ε] vowel after each consonant, pronouncing the former words as: *perefido, morete,* etc. To clearly pronounce the first of these two consonants, it is necessary that the throat be totally abandoned to the strength of sound, supporting only with the help of nose and throat, which allows the articulation of the consonant that follows, to be achieved without any throat tension: by not taking this care, many singers acquire the vice indicated before.

There are also some dramatic situations where the word by a particular set of ideas that it embraces, requires, a specific articulation in the consonants; for example, the first word of condemnation by the tenor in *Lucia,* where the dramatic accent and the voice itself correlate much more with the expression the more the first consonant is articulated.

I shall not examine all situations where articulation helps the dramatic accent and even impacts the voice. It is essential that the singer approach his study of the art with love, that he be engaged with particular attention to philosophical study of various gradations of feelings and surely will find in articulation an effective and powerful aid for expression of many effects. More than in simple vocalization, the singer should permit as much as possible lightness and elasticity in the throat for the accented pronunciation of the word, this way avoiding useless tiredness to the throat that should not be used for any function other than the mere formation of sound, changed later by other agents that contribute to the general articulation of letters.

In the theater, to ensure that the artist gives his words sensibly to the public, he will need to exaggerate his pronunciation of some, particularly, with naturally silent or muted consonants like the b, the d, the g, the v, etc. In this way he will succeed in having all the words in his song heard clearly by his audience, a very rare quality today, since the pronunciation of many singers is indifferent.

A study I recommend first to the singer is that he devote himself to the learning the words and the notes, then to using the solfeggio as the glue that unites both with the singing. With practice the singer can train his voice to simultaneously articulate four of the five vowels, that is, the [a], the [ɛ], the [i], and the [open o], and some consonants like the d, r, m, f, s, l; this will serve as the preparatory study of the pronunciation. This is proof of how damaging it is to begin early music training by naming the notes instead of solfège. Missing out study that requires greater knowledge, can lead to defects that are not necessary if care had been taken early on. The study of solfège from the beginning would be infinitely more profitable, if the mind is forced to do the job entrusted to the mouth; since vocalizing on the [a] vowel in solfège in the mind, would result in setting intonation more securely without danger of incurring distortion of the anticipated study of the pronunciation.

The singer must not only be the interpreter of the composer in expressing a melody, but through use of word he must also interpret the sentiments of the poet who weaves the dramatic action, thus increasing the interest of the spectator and produces the great effect. I believe, then, it is not futile to insist one more time to recommend to singers not to deprive themselves of any unforgivable neglect, of the immense advantages, that can be obtained from this indispensable practice.

In the next chapter I will discuss what is missing in order to complement the vocal study of the melodramatic artist; and I will briefly consider studies that should be found useful to complete the artist’s education.

Chapter VI

The vocal timbres, accents and dramatic effects capable within the singing voice. Study of the different styles of the old masters.

The sound quality of the voice is called *timbre* or also sometimes referred to as the color of voice.

The voice consists of two opposing *timbres*, the open *timbre* and the closed *timbre*.

The *timbres* are used to express all the emotions, expressions and passions of the human heart.

The open *timbre* generally expresses all the expansive feelings of the soul such as joy, anger, etc. The closed *timbre* is used to express all the passions that denote concentrations of the soul, such as revenge, hatred, suppressed anger, etc.

It is helpful to observe that one should not confuse the color tone (*timbre*) with the point of voice support (*appoggio)* that should always be in the chest, like I have said knowingly and repeatedly.

Here the singer must observe that the point of *appoggio* should not be confused with the *timbres* of the voice, which for the purpose vocal emission should always be at the chest, as I have already told you. On the contrary, to sing with voice support at the chest or at the nose, or at the throat create what are called guttural tones, nasal tones, etc. These tones referenced by some authors in their works on the art of singing are brought about by incorrectly changing the point of voice support to the nose or throat cavity, etc. Hence they create improper and erroneous *timbres* that are not true.

The open or closed *timbres* are to be used for expressing expansive or concentrated passions and neither one can be accepted as the basic tone for voice emission that really requires a mixed tone that allows for use of one or the other, depending on the need in performance. The mixed tone color is preferred for the expression of feelings that show the normal state of being; so the singer who takes one of the opposite *timbres* as the basis for his vocal emission, would deprive himself of an essential resource to be able to express certain soul affections. Therefore, the singer should practice using one tone color as much as the other two *timbres,* and should consider them only as effects or dramatic vocal accents.

The point of *appoggio* can be moved only for expressing specific sentiments, like, for example, a sigh of desperation that can perfectly characterize the point of *appoggio* being the throat, just like the effect of tears or any other pathetic sentiment

of the soul can easily take the voice to the nostrils. There are other sentiments that cannot be expressed by the *timbres*, therefore, the voice has to resort to other means or accents such as, for example: voice dragging, the *staccato*, the *slancio*, (enthusiasm), etc.

Voice dragging should be used with great parsimony (sparingly), and only when the singer wishes to express a profound sadness of the soul like: tearing of the soul, the irony, the love betrayal, etc. Further, it would also add much more to expression of these feelings, to move the point of *appoggio* of the voice from the chest to the throat as I mentioned above with regard to the expression, which is that of tears or crying.

The *staccato* (short detached note) is very apt for expressing the sob or stupor.

The *slancio* (enthusiasm) especially characterizes any dramatic and energetic sentiment, a distinctive characteristic of modern music that the celebrated maestro, Verdi, has been able to embellish in new forms.

Few are the singers that can accentuate the *slancio* as it should be; a somewhat neglected earlier practice that today, mercifully, thanks to a new form of modern music this effect can be produced with the least amount of fatigue and it should become an essential part of the singer's education. I recommend that this accent not be achieved with blows to the chest, which in addition to distorting the distinctive character of the enthusiasm (*slancio*), could also distance the artist from a perfect intonation. On the contrary, it is necessary to abandon the throat just as the sound has been strongly attacked; and when I say throat abandonment, I do not mean to say that the sound should be abandoned; in relation to this I request the reader to refer back to the chapter dealt with the *messa di voce*; since strictly speaking, enthusiasm (*slancio*) is nothing more than a successive vocal passage moving from *forte* to *piano* over the same note and almost instantaneously.

The diaphragmatic breath, which the singer will have appropriated will be of great help in securing the expression of the *slancio* and will permit the singer to leave a mark of great energy in his singing that shows no sign of having been achieved with throat tension. It will allow for greater flexibility and as a result will allow him to resist the fatigue that comes with strong singing. The effect of his singing upon the audience will also be much greater.

For greater clarity the voice effects and dramatic accents could be summarized, as follows:

Effects: mix tone color (*timbre*) expression of normal state

Closed tone color (*timbre*) expression of concentrated state

Open tone color (*timbre*) expression of expansive state

Accents: *Strasciamento*……..voice dragging, tearing of the soul

Staccato (short detached note)…….the sobbing

Slancio (enthusiasm)…… the energy

If to theses are added the gradations of the voice that can be obtained with the support of the *crescendo*, *diminuendo* and *legato* of the sound we would have a complex summary of the many vocal effects possible. With this brief summary in mind the singer should never find himself, with the correct application, contradicting the sentiments that he wishes to express with his voice. Besides, there are an infinite number of subdivisions that with more meticulous examination would take us very far: I leave it to the artist's good sense to know how to appreciate them and judiciously apply them.

The singer who wishes in his heart to interpret the music with truth should become accustomed from the beginning to study the character and style of what he has to sing. All well written music possesses its own particular color and its own distinctive character. To acquire and develop this useful knowledge, I recommend to younger singers that they study the styles of the older masters. With careful examination of the history of different musical genres that gave rise to what is current, one can develop a good sense of style and character to impart to each of them.

Starting with German composer, Gluck, for example, who lived in Italy around the year 1745, one can easily discover the grandeur of his conception and his sublime style that is both broad and majestic; one would find in it a kind of recitative, neglected in operas that came before him, with an expression and a truly dramatic truth. The Orpheus, Ifigenia, Armida and the Alceste are the most valuable fruits of this great genius and very justly he is called the father of Lyrical Tragedy.

In Piccini, his antagonist, we do not encounter such breadth of style. One can admire, nevertheless, the charm and grace of this particular era; so much so that in 1778, the Paris public opinion was divided between these two composers. The *didone* was his greatest triumph. Piccini was the first master teacher in Italy, he introduced scene changes and he changed both rhythm and timing to suit the dramatic situation. In 1760, in the opera, *la Buona Figliuola* (Good Natured Girl) presented in Rome, he introduced this novelty that broke the monotony of endings by Leo, Vinci, Pergolese, Hasse, Lagroscino, etc.

Sacchini, although monotonous by the uniformity of all his compositions, nevertheless, distinguished himself by his pleasing and pathetic style: *Edipo a Colona*, (The Passion of Oedipus) composed in Paris in 1875 was his greatest work.

Mozart, that immense and portentous genius, who knew how to couple the most beautiful melodies with most erudite instrumental accompaniments, whose music even today is captivating and enchanting, was the golden link that brought together the first dawn of Lyric Tragedy that provided the sublime inspiration out of which was born the compositions of Paisiello and Cimarosa, whose music was light and graceful in its style; whose compositions reveal passionate and melodramatic sentiments, very common amongst the majority of teachers of that time.

I will not try to provide a list of all the qualities illustrative of the musical geniuses throughout the history of our century, those interpreters being: Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Mercadante, Auber, Pacini, etc., all precursors of Verdi, who for so many years has given luster to his homeland with flashes of his fierce and prodigious talent: my strengths and the limits to which I am reduced to a trace history in these short pages, do not permit me. In doing so I have wanted to touch on this question with the sole purpose of persuading the singer to pursue for his own good his research in these areas that is so helpful to his study. Although not essential to the completion of his musical education as a lyric artist, this study will extend his knowledge and develop in him a sense of style and beauty.

The singing artist is the ‘host’ for interpreting the poet’s and composer’s inspirations; it is not enough to possess the gift of a beautiful voice and to have the education in voice training to overcome all the difficulties of singing, if one does not add to these conditions, a profound musical education that allows the artist to identify with the poetic thoughts that initially inspired the composer. Voice education would suffice if the purpose was only to better the written musical materials and to flatter the ear rather than to touch the heart; but the singer who has expression, besides his voice education that should facilitate his execution of all the difficulties of a melody should also possess a sensitiveness of the soul and the art of being able to also express feelings. In principle this is the basis of true melodic interpretation. No such study would be more apt for the development of the sense of style that is that of the first masters who are distinguished primarily by a remarkable sense of clarity and spontaneity.

To complete the musical education of the singer and because he is able to find his preferences with regard to taste and to the way he feels so much so that he will develop in him an effective way of being expressive, I must still insist that the singer must always try to search for a broader musical knowledge. He should study the pianoforte so that he would be able to accompany himself. He should study the principles of harmony, thus permitting him to understand the expressions that are to be found within the tonalities of accompaniments. He should be able to sightread,

without which neither the teacher nor the pianist will be able to easily instill in him the style of the operatic composers that he will study nor develop his sense of good taste and his criteria for making sound musical interpretations that are truthful in their sentiment. It is arduous work certainly, thinking about how much the singer must dedicate himself to the study of a single song, but there are many advantages to be found in the perfecting of art, that I must recommend and insist that singers complement their musical education and become dedicated in this way with great strength of heart.

Chapter VII

The need for the indispensable study of stage action with some general pointers concerning mimicry.

If I could have simultaneously dealt with all the necessary knowledge that completes the education of a melodramatic artist, I would have written these notes related to mimicry at the same time that I dealt with those principles that govern the study of voice.

Singers generally believe that it is useless to pay particular attention to the study of all areas of the performing arts, assuming it is sufficient to feel only for elements of vocal expression, trusting that this type of practice will be enough to make the theatrical scene speak. Without any clear thought they believe that the public should support and pay a type of tax to see and hear an artist who is really in his apprenticeship.

Miming is certainly an art that cannot be easily taught; but just as in any other art, if it is not possible for the teacher to instill a sense of beauty within those who do not have it, it may be possible to teach well the external manifestations and the absurdities that should be avoided. Just like an elite language, it has its invariable rules that cannot be violated without falling into the ridiculous and the absurd. Why then should we neglect and treat lightly a study that is so essential? If the importance and application of this language were known, the strength that a word is given when combined with an appropriate gesture, one would understand just how necessary this study is. And, nevertheless, it is generally considered today that in order to be called an artist and have the right to boldly confront public opinion; it is enough to have received from nature a more or less strong voice, a voice more or less beautiful; forgetting that the artist, when interpreting the sense of poetry and feeling of the music, it is not adequate to make use of one and neglect the other.

The study of the stage action within a scene should not be limited to knowing how to march on the stage or how to gesture more or less unencumbered. If the gesture does not correspond to the sentiment being expressed, it will appear to be false and insignificant, or even a contradiction. The basis for appropriate action on stage and for gesture should always be the word. The single gesture is to the mime what the single note is to music. Therefore, it is necessary for the melodramatic artist to study this second part conscientiously and with reflection; this part, so essential, will become a great resource for the singer helping him tremendously throughout his career.

It is useless, then to mention how absurd it is to use and present on stage a young singer who has just completed his initial vocal studies. Even though he may have possession of a sense of beauty, he will always seem clumsy or he will

exaggerate in his performance, because the action should come with help from the expression of the word. In this way the gesture and expression will always be enough. His continual occupation with his arms and his legs will only make him feel embarrassed. His thoughts must appear ordered so that he never runs the risk of assuming the same gestures or remaining like a stake, wooden, on the stage. This often happens when the singer is thinking of his actions instead of following the beat within the music therefore sacrificing the action the music or both. On the other hand, what can we expect from a poor beginner who ignores these essential doctrines? Is he able to convey to the listener, through his song and actions, the vocal expression and feelings that he possesses, if he has not had enough time to make a habit of unifying the resources for this most essential study? Hence, there are many singers that are pleasing in a lounge accompanied by a piano, and are absolutely incompetent when performing with an orchestra in front of the public.

It is not enough that a singer, who has completed his voice studies, should be content in taking lessons from a professor of declamation or from a mime artist, that in the course of their artistic career have done nothing other than perform automatic gesture exercises shown to them by a dance teacher or choreographer.

The study of declamation should be reasoned philosophically to make it a secure resource and should be done simultaneously with vocal study. Scarcely as the student has commenced his study in opera, he should at the same time begin the study of declamation and reciting the text from memory while gesturing at the same time. In this way he will be able to make progress from the beginning of his career without the threat of forcing the public to participate in his efforts.

I know well that there are some artists who have been given by a nature a special intuition, as is the case with many famous actors, but these cases are generally exceptions to the rule. How is it possible for the singer then to confront the first steps in their art unless they study carefully the rudiments of the profession they wish to enter? This is the only way that you can gain the enviable name of ‘artist’. Some seem to arrive at the point of celebrity without ever even knowing the music. But what does that prove? All we know is that nature is immensely prodigious and varied in its manifestations and there are those who are elected and placed here for the mission of transforming in us a sense of taste and beauty (that cannot be taught), stretching the boundaries of sentiment and expression. To master the nature of these powers is the prerogative of our study. This is not achieved on a mere whim, and is certainly not granted to those who wish to have it by means of a simple request.

Let me return now to provide some general advice regarding miming. To afford the artist a secure guide with only a few words, if not to become an actor but to be at least able to correct himself, he must amend his natural faults and avoid any false interpretation of any feeling. Not being able to establish more than general rules, I leave the judicious application of my advice to the artist’s own intelligence.

As we have been able to see through the discussion of the *timbres,* voice accents and dramatic effects, the soul is manifested from three aspects: that is; normal state, concentrated and expansive. This trinity of states should therefore result in the mime or gesture also having a trinity of expressions. Likewise the voice also is expressed with a trinity of *timbres*. Therefore, the gesture will be normal, concentrated or expansive according to the state of the soul to be disclosed. When I speak of the gesture it is not only about movement of the arms, but also of the head, the eyes and the various positions of the chest. It is necessary that all the parts of the body to come together and avail themselves to contribute to the dramatic expression.

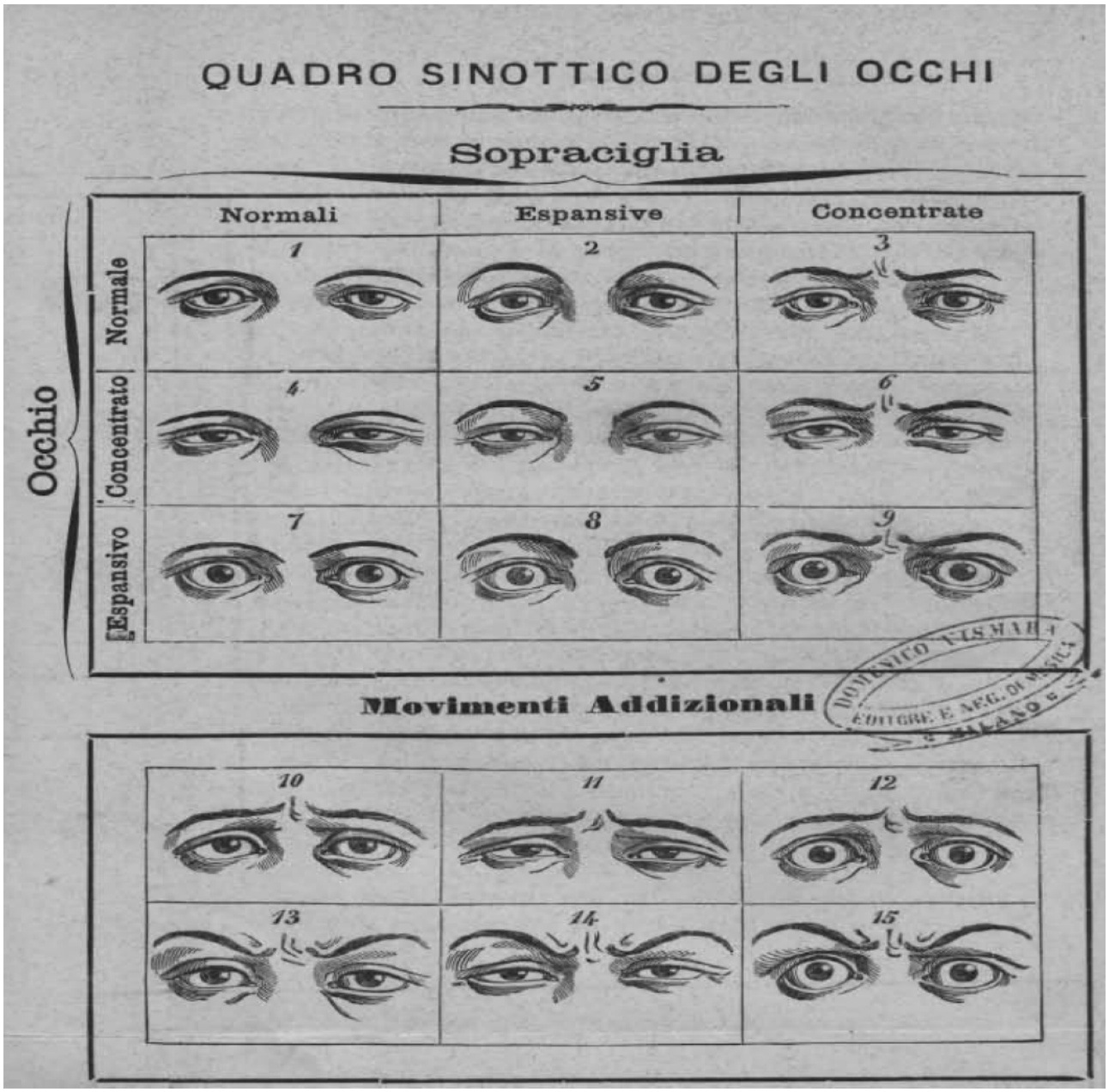
I beg the reader to follow me with the most scrupulous attention since this material is difficult to explain in writing. For the reader to understand me better, I will consider the principle aspects of each gesture separately, examining them from this threefold point of view: normal, concentrated, and expansive.

The normal state is used to describe feelings of perfect quietness. These feelings like those of private passions or affections are to be expressed within the aspects of the gestures of the normal state of mind. That is why I believe it is useless to give the normal state of being any particular consideration.

The concentrated state of the soul is achieved by leaning the head somewhat toward the chest. On the contrary, expressing the state of expansiveness is achieved by bringing the head back to its normal position.

Leaning the head a little toward the opposite shoulder and toward the interlocutor and then leaning slightly backwards expresses the feeling of arrogance. Observe that what gives this sentiment its true expansive character will be the slight tilt backwards. Just as it has been observed above, these physical attitudes will characterize perfectly the state of mind. Doing the opposite will express the sentiment of compassion or of love. If one inclines the head toward the other person’s shoulder turned somewhat from the same side that is lowered lightly and tilted toward the chest, this becomes the ultimate movement that corresponds perfectly to the concentrated state of the soul from which deep compassion and feelings of love originate.

In regard to the eyes, they compress to express a concentrated sentiment and they open to manifest the expansion of any other eccentric state of the mind. The eyebrows rise for an expansive feeling and contract to express the opposite feeling, a sentiment more compressive.


QUADRO SINOTTICO DEGLI OCCHI
Sopraciglia
Normali
Espansive
Concentrate
Occhio
Normale
Concentrato
Espansivo
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
Movimenti Addizionali
10
11
12
13
14
15

The modifications to different degrees of these sentiments, as in the case of producing either a normal state, a state of expansiveness or a state of compressed feelings, along with a combination of these states relies on three movements. Movements of the eyes and eyebrows express the above three states and also give rise to nine particular expressions (*)[3] that correspond to sentiments of (1) indifference, (2) boredom, (3) physical and moral tiredness, (4) contempt, (5) mental concentration, (6) stupor, (7) shock and (8) energy **(9).**

These sentiments should be used in a general sense, as it is possible to find an infinite variety of gradations of these expressions, correspondent to the infinite sensations of the soul. To provide greater clarity, this is why I wished to qualify these nine sentiments.

The three states of the eyes, mentioned above (normal, concentrated, and expansive) can be modified if additional changes are made with the eyebrows such as raising the outside of them, the part that is closest to the temples. A deep sense of grief is characterized by the first, which can vary in its intensity depending on the movement of the eyes. See eye chart frames 10, 11, and 12. In the second case the eyes depict by the gradations and feelings of lubricity. See nos. 13, 14,15.

A better understanding of the movement of the eyes and the diverse characteristics that can be achieved when united with movement of the eyebrows is essential. You will find adjacent a small picture chart to help the artist study separately the various movements of the eye that can be used at correct moments. I highly recommend this practice as it will give the artist greater facial expression and will help extend true character to any expression. Moreover, who does not know that the eyes are the soul of the body, making them, even on their own, enough to provide truth in expression? Therefore, the artist should not neglect this practice that will provide him with the ability to create greater dramatic effects.

The hand should also take an active part matching all three of these movements: if closed it will express a compressed feelings, and if open, with fingers spread wide, it will characterize all the feelings of expansion.

The movements of the mouth and the chest also correspond with the three states of mind even though both are indispensable to the act of singing. The artist must start this study immediately and never neglect the application of these prescribed rules in matching the various states of mind or soul. In general, these are the essential agents of dramatic expression; that can express any given sentiment, even when called upon separately.

[3] See table of expressions.

We must know speak about the secondary agents involved in gesture, the arms and the legs, which do no more than increase any expression merely by their movement. Taken on their own they have no specific expression.

The movements of the arms have infinite variations, especially if we take into consideration the movements of the hands and the fingers: thus, it is not possible to put forward all the possible variations. I limit myself, for now, to recommend the best way to obtain a well-rounded style of movement. One should always take care that there is a certain correlation between their movements so that they do not look like they are sending signals such as the waves of movement found on a telegraph wire. To ensure a gesture never losees its nobility, arm movements should never go higher than the shoulder, unless it is to express an invocation to heaven or some such instruction. Singers should also avoid those conventional gestures that show no more than the inability of the performer, such as, the proverbial laying the hand on the chest or upon the hilt of a sword, etc. Action should be natural and as a consequence should impart the feelings of the soul. In one word, a gesture being essentially elliptical should possess concrete meaning and be expressive. We are not speaking about those natural movements that give the gesture grace and poise. When we say ‘gesture’, it is that silent language, which together with the word conveys strength of expression.

With regard to the importance of the involvement of the legs in stage action, they are essential in giving the character its true nature, both in terms age and condition. Because their movements are so varied I do not wish to analyze them separately, as it is not my intention to present the reader with a comprehensive treatise on declamation. My advice to the artist is therefore limited. To love the art enough, so that one dedicates oneself to it completely, that one turn oneself over to the care of a teacher that is not content to teach gesture alone but also knows how to teach the application of it is essential. In this way one will be sure to progress without the fear of becoming a poor imitation of another. The gesture, as I have said many times already, must express all those sentiments of the soul. It is the artist’s aim to express the feelings within each work that he performs. I only recommend that there be no contradiction in his expressions. Unity within his thoughts should give way to unity of expression.

I recommend now, to young and intelligent students, some general tips that are the result of constant observation and of a long and laborious career on the stage.

Just as harmony is the result of various oppositions, so also in a plastic art like the mime, harmony in action is brought about from the opposition of each and every gesture although they may occur within a common expression. One should always avoid uniformed movements (I do not mean unity of design) as a constant rule. The arms should operate in opposition to the direction of the head. Also, the chest and legs should move in opposition to each other. These principles can be

observed in all the Greek statues that even to this day are the synthesis of all plastic beauty.

Two movements should never be executed simultaneously, for it is evident that if one moves the arms and the legs at the same tempo one will look like a marionette.

The more important types of gesture should move slower. This way the arms and legs can move more slowly than the hands and eyes. Always when the singer has to execute a transitional movement he should above all take care to support with the opposite leg, that is, the leg that must initiate the movement. There is nothing more awkward than to see the incorrect leg initiate the movement of the body. (You should always use the leg that corresponds to the direction in which you wish to travel. If you want to go right, use the right leg and not the left.

The gesture used must also be consistent with the genre of the piece that is sung; so it is important that the singer moving at an easy walking pace should avoid making large gestures with his arms, which harms both expression and effect. In a word one should make few gesticulations, but they should be fair and reasoned. As I have said before, it would take a long time to go into the thousands of considerations that concern this very complex art from. I highly recommend the recent writings of Morocchesi. These works concerning opera are highly beneficial to this type of study.

What I have said is enough regarding some of my general observations that can serve as a guide for the singer, so that he will have some knowledge of the mimic art, which can by itself, in all situations, aid in correcting many natural defects. It is enough if I have only achieved calling to the artist’s attention these essential points that are almost always neglected. I do not pretend to be infallible and I hope to be forgiven for my sincere findings and my imperfect work, which is merely the fruit of my own personal experience.

Chapter VIII

Ways to characterize the face in the theater and some pointers on how to dress in character. Need for singer to have some knowledge by study (erudition).

Besides interpreting the poet and the composer, the melodramatic artist is obliged to make a personage out of the character he represents. Especially in Italy, many directors and managers as well a great many artists attach little importance to the staging of operas and care little about the historical truth with regard to costumes; so it is not uncommon for a character of the year1500 to appear with dressed in ornaments that belong to a character of the year 1200. An artist's vestments should not be a mosaic of different periods. This mistake could be corrected with a little care and attention.

I enjoy being able to write here and modify what it was that I said over twenty years ago. Progress leaves its mark on all human endeavors and much has been made through the introduction of operas from abroad and generally through the adaptation of modern culture. Works are now staged with greater historical truth and the luxury of the scenes, mounted spectacularly, make them worthy of the most famous theatres abroad. If not divided on the opinions of those proponents of modern music that for the most part is modeled on the revolutionary school begun by Wagner, I can now recognize how Italy was able to benefit from this contact with works from abroad. This has resulted in better staging of works by giving them a more righteous character and greater historical truth. So it is then, that in this way the classical Italian masterpieces are represented. The music of Italy was able to connect with all people through its innately divine melodies, the prestige of which can never be destroyed by modern science. I return then to my subject.

The deportment and attitude of the artist contributes in great part to the personality of the character he is playing. He must also be aware of the external manifestations of the character. The truth of the character can be found in the characteristics of the facial expression. It is essential to creating a character that is as close as possible to being a real person.

When one has to interpret a particular characters personality, the artist should carefully research what the distinctive physique traits of the era in which the character lived were and be able to copy them exactly. This will prevent the artist from making known his nonsensical, unpardonable and inadequate knowledge. What would be said, for example, of an artist representing the character of Lorenzo de Medici with crudely cut hair and long beard? This happens when the artist, without taking the trouble to study history, limits himself to form with his imagination a fantastical idea of an historical character he is to represent. This is not to say that the artist should slavishly copy the person he wishes to characterize; because art should be the idealized representation of nature and its main objective is to exalt the mind and heart toward the beautiful.

Regarding the face, there are three things that primarily contribute to expression of a character from a particular time period:

1. The hair
2. The beard
3. Age

The authenticity of the performer's costume characterizes the time period more so than the person; but these two conditions come together in such a way that they cannot be separated without becoming a contradiction or inevitable absurdity.

The shape or cut of the hair is a distinguishing feature of characters of certain historical periods and as such hairstyle should be strictly observed. For this reason my advice to conscientious artists is to take with them a collection of various wigs to suit every period. As we said, the style of the hair is one of the essential parts for giving the character a good face. In order for the illusion to be more complete, when dealing with bald wigs and those that are false-fronted, the artist would do well to provide himself with a white powder mixed with crimson and yellow if the front is woven and a paste of the same colors in oil if the front is parchment: these dyes will help to make the dividing line between the wig and face disappear, giving it a single color with which the illusion is complete.

If the artist has to characterize the role of an elderly man, instead of bleaching the eyebrows as is customary, he would be better served by making false eyebrows with hair taken from the beard.

Wrinkles should not be made, as is generally the case, with a smoke blackened iron. It is not natural to give the face character in this way because wrinkles are not usually straight lines as is the result of using an iron, nor does it produce the desired effect in the theater. Besides, black is not a color that is sympathetic to gradations of the skin. To give facial wrinkles their full character a red powder should be applied by means of a stump (paper roll) following the natural wrinkle lines of the face, thus giving them greater prominence and naturalness. Then take a little white paste and using a bristle brush, blend it with the contours of the wrinkles. This white will serve to highlight, and at the same time soften, the hardness of the wrinkle lines. Wrinkles painted this way produce a marvelous illusion.

The singer who has to play an elderly role, besides doing the wrinkles, should paint his face beforehand in a color appropriate to the character's age making use of a dark shadow to mainly accentuate the face cavities. The dark shadow will also be useful for producing those light dark colors that give the facial features of this characteristic type.

The color red, I advise, should be used very sparingly being careful to spread it progressively over the cheeks and under the lower eyelids. Much care should be taken in choosing both the white and red colors, since they are composed of substances which are not only harmful to the skin they come in contact with, but also to one's general health. I strongly insist on this point because it is recognized that many of the maladies that afflict artists, and those that have escaped medical and scientific investigations, have their origin in the abuse of these substances as has been described peremptorily by the famous chemist, Chevalier.

The use of wire-mounted beards should also be carefully avoided. The beard made of curly hair and pasted to the skin by means of diachylon or rubber putty, produces a complete illusion. This rubber putty is usually dissolved by adding equal parts of wine spirits; after removal of the beard the residues that remain attached to the skin can easily be cleaned using this agent. Adapting the beard to the face in this manner has the advantage of not bothering the singer during the act of singing as is the case with those beards that are mounted on wire.

Artists who do not wish to shave their beard for roles that do not require one, can make it disappear, in appearance, by attaching over it a small, very fine and transparent piece of skin with simple rubber or rubber putty. This is then colored with paste or highly diluted oil paints to give it a more realistic appearance. I recommend this method only for roles that call for the face to come across as strongly characterized, something especially suited to the portrayal of elderly roles.

The artist should strive to adapt both his wig and his beard to suit his own facial features. An artist with a round face, for example, should strive to get a wig that has a light hair filling on the sides and a somewhat long beard. He should be careful to have as little hair as possible on the cheeks thus acquiring an oval appearance that nature did not provide.

For the portrayal of Black roles and their diverse gradations, the desired color can easily be attained by using smoke black (*negro de humo*) or earth shadow (*tierra de sombra*) that should be spread or scattered across the face with the finger. This method will produce a lucid naturalness found in those of the Moorish race. If one wishes to simply create the face of a dark colored girl it is better to use the dark earth shadow, applying it with the finger in the same way as mentioned above. These are some general considerations regarding the face. Let us now examine how the stage dress or costume, contributes to creating effectively a particular time period.

The singer who has little love for art should study with scrupulous attention the distinctive character traits that besides the character also indicate the time period in which the character lived so as not to not err in the choice of costume. One should also extend this care to accessory items such as sword, necklace, laces, rings, etc.

There is nothing easier than warning the conscientious artist against creating any contradiction in his stage appearance. If any doubts become apparent, he only has to consult the various libraries and art museums that exist in any civilized city. Here he will find all the evidence and necessary documents so as to not run the risk of error. Particular attention should be given to the costume, as it is the first thing belonging to the artist that the audience will see. This results in keeping viewer's interest and provides the artist with great personal satisfaction. In fact, if the artist appears on stage well costumed, he predisposes the public in his favor and does not have to fight the unfavorable prejudice that is produced by the appearance of an artist who is careless about his costume. It is not easy for the public to forget a first and unfavorable impression; the effort, the artist has to go to, to regain public favor lost by his careless stage attire would have been better used to further his success if he had, at the outset, dressed appropriately and with taste. I will never recommend strongly enough to the artist the serious care and study he must attend to regarding his stage attire and how he must carefully attend also to the character, the time period and the distinctive traits of his character that will distinguish his character presentation.

General ignorance, unfortunately for this art, is one thing that causes artists to neglect all the diverse branches of this profession. It is not the fault of someone who is dedicated to an artistic career, that if by birth or social position they were unable to receive from the start a good education. But it is unpardonable for those wanting to devote themselves to the 'practice of melodramatic art', to believe that it is not necessary to educate the mind as befits the person who has to interpret, not just any character, but also the infinite passions and affections of the human heart. An artist may be born adorned with extraordinary gifts granted him by nature, but this just scarcely serves for singing a musical note. If a singer's talent is not supported by sound criterion and an intelligent mind, capable of giving this or that expression of affection the appearance of truth, the singer can never hope to move the public's hearts. Perhaps, he would please the public's ear, but they will soon tire of it since it only speaks to a single sense.

Although the sense of feeling is a gift from nature, the feeling for this sense can be developed in no small measure by a thorough education. Injuring the fibers of the heart awakens feelings, and the soul is taught that divine and mystical language that gives poetry both expression and truth of character. This is the only way that one can make the audience become a participant in the artist's feelings. Besides, the expression of the heart's affections, which the artist needs to exquisitely feel (which cannot be acquired without a careful education), he needs to be very careful in interpreting the character he represents as this cannot be understood by the ignorant or uneducated artist. Indeed, what would a poor workman do, if having spent his life among his peers and discovering in himself the gift of a beautiful voice, he finds his rudimentary training lacking and is therefore unable to clearly exhibit the distinctive character interpretation of a sovereign, the type of passion of the Orientals, the

particular grace of the courtiers of Louis XIII, the Troubadour's pathetic and romantic heroism of the middle ages so much a part of his Castillian pride. In one word, all those gradations of passion, character and feelings that distinguished so many historical characters, all these things would remain unknown to him. Preliminary education is, therefore, what should occupy the mind of those who want to embark on a theatrical career. Without this education the singer can never make himself worthy of the name, 'artist', which only one with a sensitive heart and cultivated talent can aspire to. Afterwards, so much more meritorious will it be for the artist, born in an obscure position and deprived of the elements of a primary education, the artist who manages to acquire through studious application and work those necessary skills to develop the feelings of the heart and in the end cultivate his talent. Miracles always come to those who will them. This author recommends that the artist have faith in himself and to not get discouraged if he feels in his heart the force of resistance to these efforts. The palm has always enriched the brow of one who knows suffering.

Chapter IX

Advice relating to the singer's health

It is recognized that the majority of the natural ailments of the human body tend to affect those parts that are exercised more frequently, and as a result are placed in a state of constant irritation. It is not surprising then that the singer may often feel troubled by his voice. Although the singer may have a robust constitution and attentively monitor the vocal organ, the parts of the voice that participate in the singing action can become irritated simply by use. These parts include the tonsils, the pillars of the soft palate, the pharynx and the bronchial tubes. These parts are rarely found in perfect balance so the proverbial saying, “my voice is not well” has its origins for these reasons. Do not believe then, that this is a simple excuse. Considering the continuous fatigue produced by the action of singing on those delicate parts of the voice, one can understand the reason why a singer may be subject to frequent hoarseness and other ailments that would pass unnoticed in anyone that has no need of their voice for singing. The slightest irritation of the mucosal tissue that covers the internal parts of the vocal apparatus can sometimes influence the timbre of the voice and may often prevent the artist’s from giving their best. An artist though who possesses an intimate knowledge of his own instrument and his ability, can nevertheless, sometimes manage to hide his afflicting indisposition. For the singer who aspires to be able to sing in the theatre it is necessary for him to know how to fight these difficulties.

Hoarseness is one of the most frequent indispositions for the singer. When it is caused by an exercise period that is too long it does not hurt the voice long term, but only momentarily. Rest for one or two days is enough to make this disappear. The voice that becomes hoarse after a period of prolonged study, once rested, will regain its energy, lightness and elasticity. This does not happen solely from exercising the voice for too long and could have been avoided if the singer had been moderate in applying both use of force and vocal extension. Hoarseness that is acquired from external causes such as those that are nothing more than a cold or an effect of overheating, require more care. It is necessary to seek immediate care if he doesn’t wish to take the risk of it lasting several days, and turning into an inflammation in the lining that covers either the larynx or pharynx, or the lining that extends to the bronchi. Drinks that are hot and refreshing such as those sweetened with fresh honey, taken frequently are very suitable for alleviating the symptoms and helping the indisposition to soon disappear. When the artist appears to have been cooled by a decline in perspiration he is advised to sweat as soon as possible either by means of hot drinks, if his stomach supports them or by taking some time in a dry heat bath (sauna). One or other of these measures is sometimes enough to completely rid oneself of the consequences of a cold, especially if they are employed in time.

For those who prefer the use of hot drinks to help bring about sweating I advise them to place a few drops of liquid ammonia into the concoction, or better yet add a dose of Dower powder (medicinal powder containing ipecac and opium formerly used to relieve pain and induce perspiration). After its first application this will return the skin to its normal state. If the hoarseness and infection has attacked the throat and the lining of the vocal cords, the singer should suspend all singing exercises, because any effort, however small, in this state, not only injures the voice, but, could result in its total loss.

If the hoarseness is the result of fever or of a cold then *aconite* can be used as a helpful remedy. This is a recipe that I have always found to work well in this case:

Orange Blossom Water……..100 grams

Potash Nitrate…….1 gram

Tincture of Aconite…….8 drops

Cedar Syrup…….30 grams

This can be taken three to four times a day and should be spaced out at the same intervals as meal times.

If the action of singing has placed the parts of the vocal apparatus into a state of irritation, the singer, after singing, should be very careful not to expose himself to the effects of the outside air and instead should only venture outside after a period of rest. Many times hoarseness originates from not having taken this simple precaution. This should be kept in mind especially after rigorous performances.

The surest way to prevent colds, and I am surprised this has not been adopted by a majority of singers, is the use of hydrotherapy (a method of treatment by immersing the body or parts of the body in water). The indisposition caused by the common cold and the frequency at which it occurs can be prevented by getting the body used to the effects of the cold such that it becomes a prophylactic measure. This healing treatment should start in the summer so the body can gradually become accustomed to the effect of cold water, and may continue through the fall and even the winter. Without subjecting oneself to a painful healing regimen it would also be sufficient to bathe the whole body with a sponge soaked in water at outside air temperature at the time of getting out of bed. I recommend to those who wish to follow my advice to never neglect taking a walk outside after bathing and if the weather permits one should make use of gymnastic exercises to draw normal heat to the skin, which can be done in the person’s room, with the windows opened, for at least half an hour. The individual’s health would greatly be prejudiced if this last step was not included.

With customary use, as a prophylactic measure, cold water will be sufficient by itself to prevent the many colds that can effect the artist and that many times can multiply, one following another throughout a season and in doing so may deprive him of being able to exercise is voice and vocal abilities for an extended length of time. He should also be careful to avoid humidity as it is always fatal to the free exercise of the vocal cords. I recommend that the singer never, at any stage use woolen scarf to cover the neck or the mouth and also to avoid the use of shoes made of rubber. When the artist ventures out after exercising the voice for a prolonged period he need only use a handkerchief to lightly cover the mouth at the moment that he comes into contact with any cold air.

I recommend that the artist never bleed because of a vocal indisposition, and even less to apply leeches to the throat. I know many artists that have forever lost the strength of their vocal resources because of one simple subtraction of blood from the throat. Even gargles are almost always fatal, especially the use of those that are strongly astringent.

In general, with regard to the maladies of the voice I recommend the use of the homeopathic system, as it is the most suitable for a speedy recovery for voice ailments. This system never has to resort to means capable of producing serious disturbances in the body.

For all those ailments that come as a result of nervous disorders, I finally recommend use of electricity. The singer affected by nerves should especially avoid receiving roles that are too vivid in terms of impressions since he has already satiated inseparable emotions from his professional exercises.

The singer’s vocal apparatus also has an intimate correlation with the stomach and the digestive organs. Looking after these organs requires as much care as looking after the organs of the voice. The indisposition or state of weakness of any of those organs can be reflected in the actors voice and can therefore produce an imbalance in their respective roles.

Performing singing exercises alone can produce a great loss of strength through the repeated action of respiration on one side and the irradiation of nerve impulses on the other. Because of this the singer should ensure good nutrition in order to repair these loses. Do not pay so much attention to the quantity of food eaten but to the quality of the food eaten. As a basis the daily food preference should be for roasted dark meat, which is preferable to white meat that has little use in a reparative sense.

Many singers believe that the voice acquires much greater vigor if the stomach is loaded with food. This fatal error on the part of many intelligent artists has often caused them to be vocally indisposed. If they knew better how to balance

their constitution these problems would fade away. One must remember that what goes in must also come out or rather what enters must also exit. Many artists believe that good nutrition is advantageous in bringing back the losses of the voice and therefore feed themselves in a manner to increase their own nutrition. The loss of what they acquired through vocal exercise can only be found again by investing in many hours or hard work and muscular exercise. If not the surplus of the consumed nutrients is converted into fat and the repairing of the body is not complete. This easily occurs in a number of singers and later, and in sour condition, they begin the articulations (exercising) of his muscles and mucosal membranes. If not they will be more likely to suffer from gout, joint pain and rheumatic problems affecting the whole body resulting in infirmity, problems that are caused by nothing more then the excesses of their diet and eating habits.

Liquor, like any other over stimulating drink or food should be abolished as harmful to the vocal organ. Avoid the use of all those gargling, so-called secrets for purpose of having a voice of good health. The reaction that tends to happen in response to that type of stimulation is not free of dire consequences.

The singer will do well to abstain from smoking, even if he is used to it. It is a fact that tobacco contains a strong dosage of nicotine, a powerful poison, pungent and irritating, not only to the mucous membranes, but also to all parts of the nervous system. I have tried (tobacco) and its effects many times on insects that died between convulsive spasms within a few seconds. As essentially a narcotic plant, tobacco is an irritant. I know there are many singers that smoke constantly without feeling any discomfort. Better for them, but this does not take away the fact that smoking is essentially an irritant and that being so, it should be acknowledged as harmful.

The throat can also be made sufficiently sore by the mere act of singing, which excites in a particular way the circulation of the blood vessels that supply the mucous membrane surface of the voice, without the added irritation caused by an exterior incentive. Besides the direct action exerted on the throat, smoking also affects the functioning of the stomach as can be witnessed in anyone not used to smoking. In this case one cannot endure the nauseating effects of the tobacco. Therefore, the singer should refrain from acquiring new habits that can have dire consequences on his voice. Besides which, these habits are costly to acquire and are difficult to stop once acquired.

Nothing that has been mentioned so far has as much of an affect on the voice as that of the aging of the vocal apparatus. In effect, we can see that when a man reaches puberty, the vocal organ experiences a complete revolution. It is necessary to advise young people, who have thought about embarking on a stage career, to abstain from any vocal study before nature has completed its full course. Violation of this ‘law of nature’ could produce the result of losing ones beautiful voice forever. The male soprano, that at one time delighted the public with wonderful performances,

proves the correlation between these two antagonists voice and age. The singer who loves his art with all his heart will recall that if Bacchus (Greek God) makes you pay dearly for the excesses of drinking and more dearly and bitterly pays he who sacrifices Venus too much. I agree that, if there is a class of person more inclined to these excesses of pleasure, it is precisely we artists. This is the result of having been endowed by nature with stronger feelings and more impressionable temperaments. That is why it is necessary for the artist to use utmost caution and to resist natural instincts, always avoiding the abuse that besides the moral leeway that quenches the most of noble sentiments and aspirations of the soul may cause irreparable consequences to the voice and his entire physical well being in general.

Practicing when the vocal organs are affected with a disease is disastrous (funestissimo) and may turn an ordinary indisposition into a serious illness, as I indicated in the section I entered when dealing with hoarseness of the vocal cords.

Singers should avoid singing after fasting or immediately after eating. After eating allow a space of around two hours for digestion before commencing any practice.

Too much practice is also harmful to the singer's voice. Instead of making for progress it does nothing more than tire the vocal cords and leads to the detriment of the voice, and produces no benefit in any way. It would be the same as if one wished to consume all at once eight days worth of food.

Also to be avoided as damaging to the voice:

1. Singing in the open air (outdoors).

2. Laughing with effort/force.

3. Lively discussions.

4. Reading out loud.

5. Strong emotional outbursts.

Mental concentration that is produced by a serious application either in writing, reading or in any occupational act, has an immediate influence over the voice whose timbre becomes instantaneously veiled.

Practicing at the piano, besides producing the just mentioned effects, tires the chest. For this reason it should be used in moderation.

These are only general precautions that must be observed particularly by the singer who wishes to make progress in the career he has started. A detailed

examination of all the circumstances that are harmful to the singer's voice would take too long. Much depends on the varying susceptibility of the individual's body to health problems and this is why the singer should engage in a constant observation of his health. In doing so the singer will know better than anyone else what is advantageous and what is harmful to his voice and what things he should avoid. He should not, however, imitate the hypochondriac who believes he is always ailing and in the process turns his stomach into a medical laboratory. Such a kind of life, instead of being soothing, would ruin his stomach and produce grave health disturbances. The singer should not take medicine unless he feels he has a serious infection that places him in a state where he absolutely cannot perform to his potential. Rest, above all else, is the best way of restoring health to its normal state. Soft drinks such as cream of tartar in lemon water, powdered magnesia, pulp of sugar cane conduit and tamarind (A juice created by mixing sugar cane and tamarind. The word *fistula* refers to the meat or pulp of the sugar cane and the tamarind) used sparingly at distant intervals are measures that have been recognized to be sufficient in helping minor throat ailments to disappear. In the case of a serious infection of the larynx or pharynx or stubborn granulations, a medical doctor should immediately be consulted, to prevent those infections from becoming a chronic disease. Things such as this happen frequently to singers and to those who continually exercise their throat.

There are some singers, according to them, that believe they can create a particular timbre and clarity in their voices by inflicting blisters and artificial ulcers to their bodies with great suffering. Persuaded in this way they believe humours that affect the throat will go away. In their ignorance they do not recognize that the humours connected to the wound are no more than natural secretions from any sore. These secretions are the way in which nature tries to repair the sore, by creating a new skin, and does not influence more than momentarily the humours which soon after will take their natural course.

The singer should confine himself to a life style based on the immutable laws of hygiene. With simple prophylactic measures he will avoid many vocal ailments and indispositions.

I do not, however, intend for the singer to become a voluntary slave, imposed to continued hardships. Use everything, but do not overdo anything: this is the way to lead a life of sound and reasoned hygiene without which there is no possibility of good health.

Chapter X

General Considerations Regarding Melodramatic Art.

The artist will find himself to be the living painter of human nature. This is the principal object of his studies and the seed of his science. It is true that he should, at will, faithfully reproduce the images of passion that have moved him, but he should not ever be under the control of them. An awareness to not allow these passions to overtake him is something that he must be in touch with through careful observation of himself.

Art is not a simple and cold imitation of nature. It is rather an idealized representation and one who does not have that igniting spark capable of creating and imprinting a special character within any given production, will never be more than a menial imitator, incapable of instilling in the minds of others the slightest emotion.

All who exercise any art call themselves artists, but the word ‘artist’ in its correct sense means that one is an interpreter or a priest of art. He who in one word is dedicated to the learning and growth of his art, gives life with rays of his genius to all conception that he is responsible for interpreting, and like Pygmalion is able to animate inert marble with the fire stolen from the sky.

To aspire to be able to merit this name in this melodramatic art with justice, it is necessary to muster strong will and untiring perseverance, because only with tireless and diligent study can the singer hope to distinguish himself among the flock of so called artists. The beginner who has natural talent and an enviably endowed voice plus dramatic intuition, will always encounter in his early stages, countless obstacles that only he can overcome through will power and constant application of his own willpower.

Before setting foot on stage, I would advise the artist to study at least the principles of all branches of art that when taken together constitute the foundation of the melodramatic artists education. There are many artists who make their debut in the theatre who are only superficially aware of the necessary requirements of their art. Those who only trust their voice and their way singing are blinded by a foolish presumption, and in doing so close the way for their own progress. Many talented artists die in this manner, presuming to rely upon their strength, and in this way spend their life vegetating and blaming everyone except themselves for their misfortune.

One is not born an artist. What is born is the sense of beauty that eminently characterizes the artist and from here is born the immense gifts that nature has bestowed upon the artist himself.

It takes many and many years of study to develop and perfect these enviable qualities, before the artist can become the master of his art. Constant observation of his surroundings and diligent study are the singer's only means by which one day he may deserve this title and enviable reputation, a reputation that cannot be bought.

All artists, some more and some less, have gone through troubled periods that have required of them a strong will, to not let oneself give up and become discouraged.

Who cannot remember, for example, the first steps in the famous theatrical career of the great *Rubini* when he assumed the part of the second tenor, for the impresario Barbaia in Naples, and was deemed incapable of interpreting and sustaining a minor part and was therefore relieved of his services. Who would have thought at that point, that this so called 'incompetent' artist who with his rays of genius and the power of his enviable natural gifts would develop art and create a musical and artistic revolution? *Nozzari,* who heard him, knew however, how to uncover the powerful resource hidden behind that appearance of incompetence and in doing so did not allow art to be deprived of this prodigious talent. He instructed him, infusing in him the science that he already so heavily possessed. Before obtaining the smallest reward for his constant toil and valiant efforts he had to overcome many vicissitudes! He was not deterred and he fought with perseverance, knowing that in the end he would overcome all the obstacles that were placed in his path. This determination would later lead him to the cusp of universal fame.

Duprez, the complete artist par excellence, was believed to be inept and was judged as such by the Paris public after his debut at the Odeon Theatre? Who would have thought then that he would leave Paris to study in Italy, not leaving behind more than sad memories of the tenor he was, only to return some years later to dethrone *Nourrit*? *Nourrit* the idol of the Parisian Grand Opera public, who for fifteen years had not tired of celebrating and worshiping him! Naturally Duprez, also had to suffer much fighting against the general prejudice that favored Nourrit, as an actor par excellence, expressive singer, endowed with a magnificent presence giving prominence to all the roles he played. But Paris was stunned when they heard that wide range of vocalism, the expressive declamation and elevated style, the vibrant pronunciation and that perfect Italian emission of the voice. That is why the triumph of Duprez, during the premiere of *Guillaume Tell,* was so sensational that another like it is not remembered in the annals of the history of Grand Opera. How much practice must he have done in order to achieve such a triumph! How many disappointments and tribulations might he have experienced in making those first steps toward his eventual triumph!

I could cite many similar examples, but this is sufficient to show what can be achieved with strong will in the study of melodramatic art. These examples can instill in the hearts of artists of goodwill, the courage and perseverance necessary to

overcome the inevitable obstacles always present at the beginning of an artistic career! The greatest reward an artist can receive in his profession is without a doubt, the testimony of the public's general satisfaction and adulation. This adulation can become fatal for many beginners. It is precisely the self-satisfaction at being applauded that many times, instead of receiving this favor as a sign of encouragement to continue their studies, it blinds them to pride. Vanity is awakened making them believe that they can abandon their studies because they already know enough.

Other times, artists yield slavishly to the depraved taste of an ignorant public only for the satisfaction of being celebrated. This leads simply to the prostitution of the art. As I have said before, the artist should be like a priest of the art, and as such, cooperate in the education of the public, guiding them toward the beauty of their emotions and good taste. The artist looking for flashy effects abdicates his sovereign prerogatives. He that does so is damned and allows himself to be voluntarily dragged down by his own vain gloriousness and self-satisfaction toward an undeserved triumph!

Therefore, I recommend to young artists, to envisage their first stage steps as nothing more than a progression within the art and their conscious thoughts should only be focused on this sole purpose. That they try to enrich their repertoire by accepting serious, semi-serious or clown roles, even though they may not feel capable interpreting these, they should not think about the present, but only on capitalizing, day by day, on the future benefits that will result from their tireless study.

Do not lose an opportunity to hear either good or bad artists. From the first learn to become more perfect and from the second learn to avoid poor habits and defects. Guard against being swayed by the sentimental impulse. Remember, the artist has need of both expression and sentiment. These two powers are entirely different. One can feel a lot and not know how to express anything and vice-versa. What the artist needs to achieve is purpose, especially through expression. What he needs to observe is that the more he has control of himself the greater the effect he will be able to produce on the public. Heaven help the artist who is dominated and controlled only by the feelings he wishes to express! He will never produce the effect he aims for because he will be more here or there but nowhere near the truth. The effect is not achieved unless it stays within the limits of the truth for this is where the impetus for the feeling originates. It is generally believed that feelings are sufficient for expression. In this way the two powers are confused as one. I believe I have said enough to challenge this error so generally admitted.

Now that I have discussed, though briefly, all the elements that contribute to the formation of the melodramatic artist, I leave it to others to provide a more detailed depth of the each of arts different branches. I simply wanted to bring to the

attention of young artists the many principles that in my opinion are indispensable to education of those who feel a vocation for this noble art.

I will consider myself happy if I have been able to contribute to and revive some courage, or give others better ideas of developing new research in the area of melodramatic art, an area to which I have been devoted for many years of my life. The fruits of my experience may help others, providing Italy, my adopted country, new and famous artists, perpetuating the long series of select geniuses of this classic land of song and harmony.

GUIDA TEORICO-PRATICA

AD USO

DELL'ARTISTA CANTANTE

DI

LEONE Cav. GIRALDONI

ARTISTA

e

SOCIO ONORARIO DI DIVERSE ACCADEMIE FILARMONICHE

VICE-PRESIDENTE DELLA SOCIETÁ NAZIONALE DI MUTUO SOCCORSO

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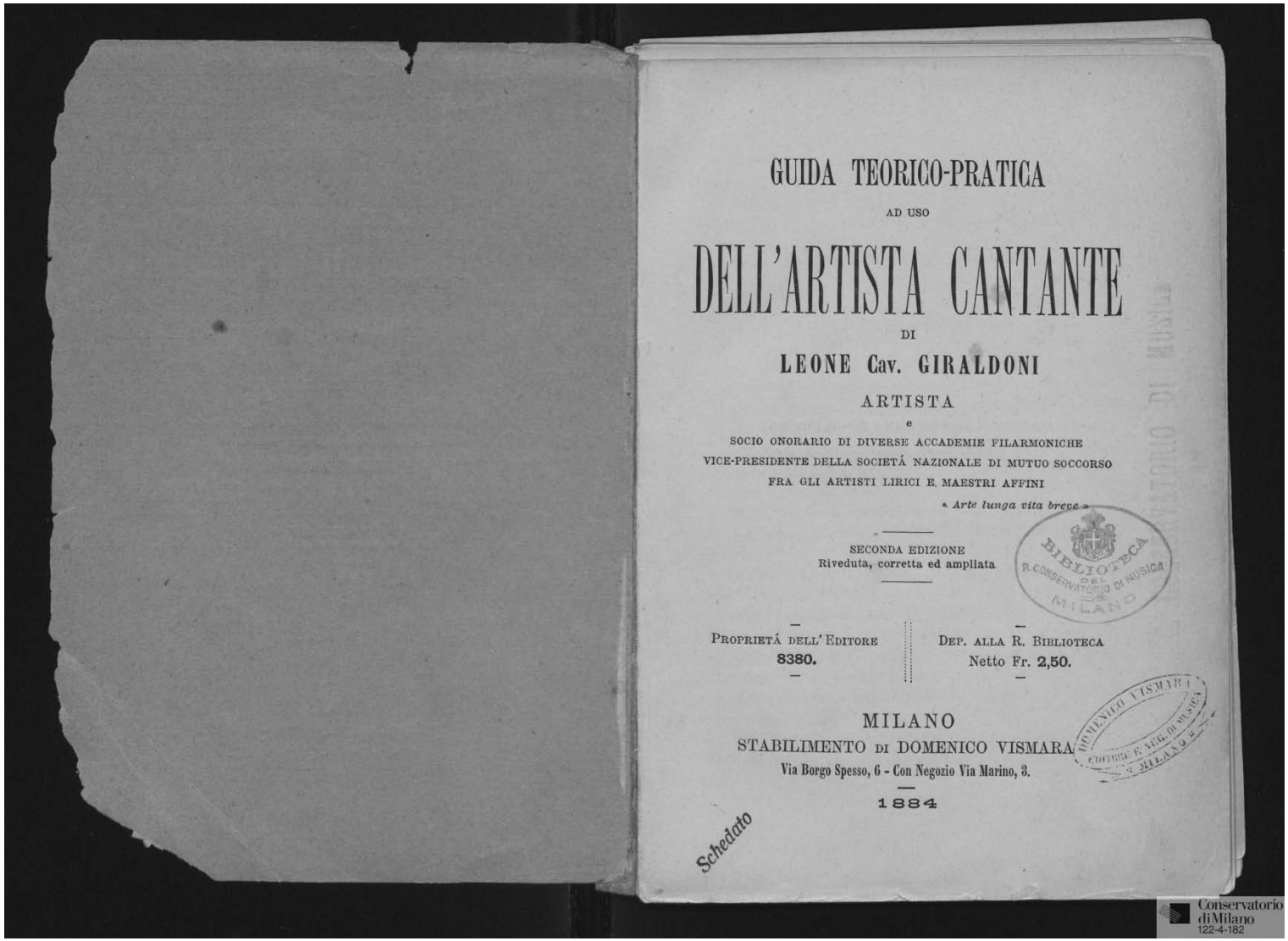
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PER LA SECONDA EDIZIONE

L'accoglienza ottenuta dalla prima edizione di questo mio piccolo lavoro ed il suo esaurimento completo, mi hanno indotto a farne una seconda, nella quale io aggiunsi il frutto di altri vent'anni di esperienza pratica della bella arte nostra.

Possano questi miei consigli venire presi in considerazione dalla gioventù che si dedica alla carriera teatrale!

Ma ne dubito assai e lo dico con sommo rammarico. Oggi si studia poco o nulla. — I giovani che si presentano al cospetto del pubblico per iniziare la loro carriera, si trovano quasi sempre privi delle cognizioni le più indispensabili per l'esercizio dell'arte alla quale si dedicano.

A chi la colpa? Ai pubblici, ai maestri, o ad essi stessi?

Io, fermo nelle mie convinzioni, che è l'artista che deve educare il pubblico al culto del bello, sviluppando

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il suo gusto ed il suo criterio, credo che la colpa debba ascriversene agli artisti stessi. I maestri sarebbero anch' essi responsabili di questo decadimento dell'arte, ma pur troppo militano in loro favore molte circostanze attenuanti. La quistione dell'arte teatrale è quistione assai complessa, perchè abbraccia un campo assai vasto di considerazioni che qui sarebbe ovvio di sviluppare.

Comunque sia rimane per me cosa indiscutibile che l'artista, che si espone al giudizio di un pubblico, avrà sempre maggiore probabilità di riuscita quanto più collo studio si sarà fatto padrone dei requisiti che gli necessitano per potersi distinguere.

Dunque concludo col dire che l'artista allievo studî, quanto può, i diversi rami dello scibile artistico, e non gli sarà difficile, oggi meno che pel passato, di occupare un posto invidiabile in arte.

Se oggi la musica teatrale ha variato la sua indole, si è aperto però un campo più vasto all'artista di farsi apprezzare. Una volta bastava quasi all'artista di poter superare le difficoltà vocali di una parte affidatagli, di conoscere lo stile del canto le cui regole tendono oggi a cadere in disuso per mancanza di sacerdoti adatti, ma il pubblico esige una maggiore espressione drammatica. Vuole vedere nel cantante anche l'artista drammatico, e per distinguersi in quel nuovo agone, l'artista abbisogna, oggi più che una volta, di arricchire la sua mente di cognizioni storiche e di una erudizione generale che nei tempi passati non gli necessitavano come oggi.

Se poi a questi requisiti egli potrà aggiungere i precetti della scuola antica, egli è certo che non avrà sprecato inutilmente il suo tempo e che oggi, più che mai, gli sarà facile giungere ad invidiabile meta.

Volontà, coscienza e perseveranza, possono all'artista appianare la via del trionfo.

Mi auguro di poter contribuire con questi miei consigli al bene dei miei commilitoni d'arte.

Questo è il più fervido mio voto.

L. Giraldoni.

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DUE PAROLE DI ESORDIO

Si è molto scritto sulla Poesia, sulla Pittura e generalmente su tutte le belle arti, ma poco anzi quasi nulla, sull'arte melodrammatica presa nel suo complesso. Eppure se vi è un'arte che dia campo a nuove investigazioni, certo ch'ella è quell'arte sublime che riassume in sè stessa i limiti della Pittura e della Poesia, essendo più di esse linguaggio veritiero delle passioni ed affetti del cuore umano.

Non pretendo ora, dando questi brevi cenni agli artisti melodrammatici, presentar loro un trattato completo dell'arte, sì che possa pienamente rispondere a tutte le esigenze; però credo aver toccato quasi tutti i punti essenziali e più indispensabili alla formazione di un artista completo. Non basta per essere artista l'avere una bella voce, o essere un buon attore; ciò che dinota il vero artista, si è la conoscenza profonda ed intima di tutti gli elementi che concorrono all'arte sua, e non qualche dote di cui la natura possa averlo favorito.

E come potrà un artista aver piena conoscenza di tutte le risorse con cui possa far valere i propri mezzi se ignora il primo punto di partenza; cioè la conoscenza intima del proprio istrumento? Qualunque cantante è atto a cantare quando stia bene di voce;

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ma questo appena basta per un dilettante. L'artista (previo il caso di seria affezione degli organi vocali) deve essere sempre in grado di spiegare innanzi ad un pubblico qualunque, le proprie facoltà artistiche. Soltanto per mezzo dell'arte potrà giungere a lottare contro la natura stessa, obbligata a curvarsi innanzi alle sue risorse. È dunque indispensabile a colui che intende dedicarsi all'arte melodrammatica, di cominciare i suoi studi sotto l'egida di un maestro il quale sia profondo conoscitore dell'arte di cui deve palesare i secreti.

E qui è mestieri accennare l'assurdo costume che prevale nella nostra società riguardo agli studi del canto; non vi sarà alcuno che volendo imparare a suonare il violino si dirigga ad un maestro di pianoforte; ebbene, sembra affatto naturale l'affidare la coltura di una voce ad un maestro che non solo ne sarà assolutamente privo, ma che ignorerà perfino i primi rudimenti dell'arte del canto, e le prime regole per la formazione e l'educazione di una voce; e tutto ciò perchè questo maestro sarà molto erudito nel contrappunto, oppure andrà famoso come pianista. (*).

La voce anch' essa è un istrumento che possiede le sue regole invariabili; regole che non sarà mai dato di conoscere a chi non ne abbia fatto un coscienzioso e particolare studio. Un maestro qualunque potrà bensì dirvi se tale suono sia rauco, debole, aperto, chiuso, stonato, di gola, di naso, ecc.; ma se egli non avrà fatto studi particolari sulla voce, come

(*) Qui intendo parlare della generalità, conoscendo molti maestri privi di voce che hanno reso grandi servizii all'arte melodrammatica dando al Teatro artisti di vero merito.

potrà insegnarvi il modo di correggere i vostri naturali difetti? Qualunque maestro potrà bensì esercitare il vostro gusto; o con puntature adattare meglio una parte ai vostri mezzi naturali; e farvi anche riuscire cantante di buono stile; però ciò non basta. Se voi non avete avuto principii retti ne' vostri primi studi, sarete continuamente impedito nell'esercizio dell'arte vostra. I maestri in generale hanno il comune difetto di non estirpare anzitutto, quei primi e naturali difetti che snaturano l'emissione semplice del suono, base essenzialissima per il cantante; e credono, anzi sono persuasissimi, che non si possono infrangere senza pericolo, quelle che essi chiamano *leggi* di natura, e che il più delle volte non sono che *vizi* di natura, ponendo così in non cale i mezzi onnipotenti che l'arte offre a colui che abbia ricevuto da Dio una volontà decisa ed un'intelligenza elevata. Da tale assurdità provengono tante voci difettose che ogni giorno si odono sulle scene. Non potrei dunque insistere abbastanza nel raccomandare vivissimamente il più scrupoloso discernimento nella scelta del maestro, che indirizzare deve, ne' primi principii, la voce. Da questo primo passo alle volte dipende il fortunato od infelice esito di un artista nella sua carriera, se la natura non lo abbia dotato di tali qualità di cuore e d'intelligenza, da far dimenticare i difetti della voce. Sembra incredibile come il maestro, che non dovrebbe curarsi nell'educazione della voce che della parte materiale, vi ponga sì poca cura, e si dia tanta premura invece d'inculcare al suo allievo il proprio modo di sentire, unica cosa, credo, che non si possa trasmet-

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tere. I nostri antichi cantantanti avevano più buon senso di noi altri su questo particolare; ed i Nozzari, Crescentini, Righini, Garcia, ecc. ne fanno particolare fede. E di fatti questi maestri che tutti furono rimarchevoli cantanti facevano passare ai loro allievi anni interi negli studi materiali della voce, non curandosi che della parte meccanica della gola, persuasi che vinta quella difficoltà ed ammaestrata la voce a tutte le risorse dell'arte, il cantante potesse proseguire da sè stesso nell'incominciato cammino. Vi sono certamente alcune voci che hanno ricevuto dalla natura stessa tali prerogative da poter essere ammaestrate da chicchessia, facendo così la fama del maestro senza sua colpa, però sono assai rare. Il caso pure, alcuna volta, viene in aiuto allo scolaro, il quale senza sapersene rendere conto, incontra un bel giorno insoliti effetti di sonorità nella sua voce; ma per lo più non sono che lampi, di cui non saprà approfittare formandosi per mezzo di una pratica ragionata una sicura teoria.

Io mi limito con questi brevi consigli ad accennare alle persone che si vogliono dedicare allo studio dell'arte melodrammatica, quali sieno i requisiti indispensabili per poter sperare d'innalzarsi almeno al disopra di quelle migliaia dei così detti artisti, che vegetando tutta la vita nell'esercizio di questa professione, che per loro non è altro che un mestiere al pari di qualunque, bestemmiano contro la fortuna od il destino che li dimentica quando dovrebbero invece accusare la loro nullità, ignoranza, o temeraria presunzione.

Capitolo I.

Teoria della respirazione del cantante; vantaggi di questo studio, e conseguenze che nascono dall'averlo trascurato.

Non infastidirò il benevole lettore con una descrizione analitica delle parti formanti gli organi vocali e respiratori. Nello stesso modo che poco importa all'istrumentista l'indagare quali sieno le cause della formazione fonica del suo strumento, così pure il cantante può evitare l'inutile e fastidioso studio della conoscenza scientifica ed anatomica dell'apparato vocale. Questo apparato riunisce in sè il congegno di tutti gl'istrumenti musicali coi quali tutti egli ha molte affinità. Difatti, vi sono le corde vocali che vibrano, si stendono o si rallentano come quelle degli istrumenti a corda; vi sono in esso: i ripercutori del suono (la faringe e la bocca) come negl'istrumenti a vento, e come il violino, il violoncello, il controbasso ed il pianoforte, egli possiede la sua cassa armonica di ripercussione (il torace). Egli partecipa inoltre dell'organo perchè (come vedremo in questo stesso capitolo) egli è dotato di un mantice che dispensa a volontà l'aria, spinta dai polmoni sotto l'impulsione del diaframma e che passa dalla trachea che funge da canna d'organo ripercuotendosi od allungandosi a norma del suono più o meno acuto che si deve pro-

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durre, fanno l'uffizio tanto di corde armoniche quanto d'imboccatura d'istrumento a vento.

Lasciando da parte ogni altra considerazione in proposito, non si potrebbe invece abbastanza insistere sulla necessità indispensabile per il cantante, di fare uno studio particolare sulla respirazione nel canto. Pochi sono sempre stati gli artisti che vi abbiano posto mente; e perciò pochi son quelli che sappiano apprezzarne tutti i vantaggi che ne potrebbero ricavare. I più dei cantanti credono che nel cantare si debba respirare nello stesso modo che nel discorrere, e da questo errore nascono quelle respirazioni difettose od intempestive che fanno troncare la parola od il periodo musicale, levando al canto la sua spontaneità e facendo partecipare gli uditori dello sforzo ed affanno del cantante. La musica, come il discorso, è un linguaggio che ha le sue frasi, che non è permesso troncare senza alterarne il vero senso; è dunque necessario per il cantante che vuol interpretare il pensiero di un autore, sapere distinguere i periodi musicali, respirando a tempo e luogo. Tutti sanno che la respirazione si divide in due funzioni, cioè in *inspirazione* ed *espirazione*. Nell'atto dell'inspirazione i polmoni si dilatano e si restringono al punto della espirazione. Le parti toraciche secondano i movimenti dei polmoni. Però havvi un muscolo chiamato *diaframma* sul quale posano i polmoni, il di cui uso, benchè non abbia a notarsi in modo essenziale nella consueta respirazione, diventa indispensabile nell'esercizio del canto; giacchè il cantante abile se ne serve a guisa di mantice per regolare a sua voglia l'atto

della espirazione. Questo muscolo si trova fra i polmoni e l'addome. Nel saperlo fare agire riposa in parte l'arte della respirazione nel cantante. Nell'atto della inspirazione ordinaria, le parti toraciche secondando i movimenti de' polmoni, si alzano ed abbassano di continuo. Nella inspirazione nel canto, un tale movimento del torace è oltremodo nocivo, rendendo la respirazione corta ed affannosa, cagionando in tal modo una subita stanchezza, ed una difettosa esecuzione. Per sostenere e spendere il fiato a volontà sono dunque necessarie tre cose:

1.° Fare sempre acquisto di un'inspirazione piuttosto ampia e proporzionata alla frase che si deve cantare, perchè non v' è di peggio per un cantante che terminare una frase con fiato troppo scarso, o respirare fuori di luogo, come noteremo in appresso.

2.° Tenere immobili, durante l'atto del canto, le parti toraciche esterne, avendo cura di portarle avanti, retrocedendo alquanto le spalle, ma però senza verun sforzo nè tensione.

3.° Servirsi del diaframma con l'aiuto de' muscoli dell'addome per spendere il fiato a propria volontà come si potrebbe fare con un mantice.

Queste sono le tre condizioni indispensabili per saper respirare cantando. Sarà dunque necessario che il cantante prima di esercitarsi ad emettere il primo suono, studî in particolar modo la respirazione vocale, ed allorquando se ne sia ben impossessato potrà incominciare lo studio della voce non dimenticando però ad ogni suono di esaminare se la sua respirazione sia stata presa in regola. In tal modo questo

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esercizio a poco a poco cambiandosi per lui in abitudine, finirà col diventargli azione famigliarissima e naturale.

La maggior parte de' cantanti trascura quasi sempre questo studio, ignorando quali vantaggi ne possano trarre. Questo esercizio dà più tardi al cantante una maggior sicurezza nella voce, mantiene la perfetta intonazione e lo mette in caso di poter interpretare il pensiero musicale senza cadere in controsensi col respirare fuori di luogo, nè nuocere alla espressione drammatica arrivando alla fine di un periodo musicale con un fiato affannoso che oltre alla espressione, non di rado nuoce fino all' intonazione. Una cattiva respirazione ha lo svantaggio altresì di stancare ben presto il cantante; specialmente quando abbia preso il vizio di servirsi del petto a guisa di un mantice. Quest' azione appropriata al diaframma diventa per il petto, nell'uso del canto, un funesto errore; errore nel quale cadono molti cantanti non solo, ma bensì molti distinti maestri che lo hanno consigliato. È ben facile comprendere che facendo fare l'uso di mantice alle pareti esterne del petto che solo deve servire di cassa sonora per il rimbombo del suono ben appoggiato, si diminuisce l'estensione della cavità, e si altera la qualità di quel suono; oltre all'inutile stanchezza che risulta da quell'intempestivo movimento. Alcuni maestri non hanno veduto in questo modo di respirare nel canto che uno di quei soliti sistemi, o fors'anche ciarlatanismi, più atti a metterne in evidenza il promotore che ad arrecare benefizio all'allievo nell'arte del canto. Se tali persone

fossero tanto premurose a rendersi conto di un' idea a loro ignota, quanto lo sono a biasimare le opere altrui, non sarebbero caduti in questo errore così grossolano ed avrebbero potuto apprezzare tutti i vantaggi risultanti da questo modo di respirare nel canto, e ne sarebbe venuto benefizio a' loro allievi ed alla loro fama. Un dottore coscienziosissimo, e che in tutta la sua vita si è occupato essenzialmente delle malattie delle vie respiratorie, il dottore ungherese Mandl scrisse un opuscoletto intitolato: « **De la fatigue de la voix dans ses rapports avec le mode de respiration** » ove addimostra con ragioni incontrastabili a quanti pericoli si esponga colui che adopera nel canto la respirazione costale invece della diaframmatica; e combatte vittoriosamente la funesta teoria esposta nel metodo di canto del Conservatorio di Musica di Parigi; ed io approvo pienamente l'ultima sua conclusione che dice: « *non si può combat-* « *tere abbastanza un principio fatale allorquando lo* « *si vede preconizzato in un metodo officiale.* »

I primi esercizi vocali riposano essenzialmente sull'azione della respirazione; per esempio, nel sapere filare un suono, oltre al meccanismo vocale che modifica il passaggio della voce dal piano al forte e viceversa, vi è pure l'azione del diaframma e dell'addome che ad uso di mantice dispensa il fiato secondando la volontà del cantante.

Altra raccomandazione: devesi pure evitare nell'atto dell'inspirazione di far passare tutta l'aria dalla bocca, perchè potrebbe procurare una fastidiosa sensazione nel seccare le pareti interne della faringe e

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della gola. Si deve respirare in modo da far passare l'aria metà per la bocca e metà per il naso. Divisa in tal modo, non cagiona nel suo passaggio verun incomodo, permettendo anche di ottenere nel medesimo tempo un'aspirazione maggiore. Non saprei abbastanza fissare l'attenzione degli artisti su questi essenzialissimi principii, siccome quelli che servir devono di base all' insegnamento vocale. Non si lasci sgomentare dalla difficoltà che potrà l'allievo incontrare in principio, perchè a poco a poco, ed a sua propria insaputa acquisterà l'uso famigliare di questo modo di respirare nel canto e non tarderà molto a riconoscerne i vantaggi, sia per la fatica che risparmierà alla laringe, sia anche per la padronanza che acquisterà nell'ampio fraseggiare.

Capitolo II.

Necessità di uno studio costante dell'emissione vocale, e del vero punto d'appoggio della voce. Pericoli a cui si va incontro con una falsa emissione.

Cantar di petto (*) è la sola emissione che deve adottare il cantante teatrale, siccome la più corretta e la più naturale, benchè forse la più rara; ciò proviene dalla poca cura che hanno generalmente i maestri d'insistere abbastanza nello studio primitivo della semplice emissione vocale, fintantochè non sieno si-

(*) Sono costretto, per rendermi intelligibile, ad adottare le denominazioni di uso per quanto io le trovi erronee ed inanalizzabili.

curi di aver procurato il vero punto di appoggio, alla voce loro affidata. Perchè vi sono tante voci difettose? Perchè non si studia abbastanza il primo punto di partenza, che è la qualità dell'emissione semplice. Fino a che vi sieno difetti da estirpare nell'emissione della voce, non si deve pensare ad altro studio, perchè, anzichè giovare, potrebbe recare irreparabili danni. La prima cosa da studiare è dunque l'estirpazione dei naturali difetti. Una volta ottenuto questo scopo, tutto il resto rimane molto più facile. Chiunque possiede una certa voce è suscettibile di migliorarla assai, mediante uno studio intelligente e coscienzioso; anzi può giungere a cambiarla in suo vantaggio in modo quasi irriconoscibile e ardisco asserire che i vantaggi che la voce può acquistare con l'arte e lo studio, resistono maggiormente ai deterioramenti che arreca il tempo, che le doti vocali compartite soltanto dalla natura stessa.

L'esercizio dell'emissione semplice basta da sè solo ad inculcare alla voce un modo di essere; da lui solo può dipendere la buona o cattiva qualità del suono, perchè è la base di ogni esercizio vocale. Difatti, la prima cosa che colpisce quando si sente un cantante, è la qualità della sua voce; qualità che influisce moltissimo sull' esito suo. È d' uopo quindi non cercare di anticipare sugli studi vocali, fino a che non siasi ben sicuro di una buona emissione. Per quanto sia difficile lo svolgere per iscritto il modo con cui si deve emettere il suono, cercherò però alla meglio di indicare quali sieno gli effetti esterni di una emissione retta e naturale. È riconosciuto che ogni ten-

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sione di muscolo proviene da uno sforzo; ogni sforzo poi porta seco la fatica; la gola del cantante avendo bisogno sempre di tutta la sua energia ed elasticità, è d'uopo naturalmente di evitare tutto ciò che possa indebolire od affievolire le parti che concorrono all'azione sua. La prima precauzione alla quale deve badare un cantante, si è di cominciare ad emettere il suono colla massima naturalezza possibile, occupandosi più di tutto della qualità che della quantità del suono. La voce ben presto acquista volume ed intensità allorquando si è trovato il suo vero punto d'appoggio. Si deve cantare senza verun sforzo, se si vuole che la voce abbia spontaneità e riesca simpatica; e quando dico senza verun sforzo, non intendo soltanto parlare della soverchia pressione del petto, ma altresì di ogni tensione de' muscoli della gola. La voce ottenuta con tali mezzi stanca ben presto la gola, e si va incontro a disastri irreparabili; oltrecchè la voce non potrà mai riescire gradita e simpatica.

Per emettere un suono bello ed omogeneo bisogna:

1.° Abbassare leggiermente e senza sforzo la laringe, un poco al disotto della sua posizione naturale;

2.° Tenere il velo palatino inclinato in modo che il suono non vada soltanto a colpire le pareti della bocca, ma abbia altresì da partecipare del rimbombo della faringe che leva al suono lo stridulo che acquista dall'appoggio al petto, e lo rende rotondo ed omogeneo. La lingua dev'essere nel suo stato normale con una leggiera incavazione nel mezzo. La bocca naturalmente mezz' aperta e trasversalmente

come mossa da un leggiero sorriso, lasciando scoperta in parte la dentatura; ciò che dà alla bocca grazia e disinvoltura. Sarebbero inutili tutte queste raccomandazioni, se l'allievo possedesse già, o potesse facilmente trovare, il vero punto d'appoggio della sua voce, giacchè tutte queste indicazioni non sono la causa di una buona emissione, ma bensì l'effetto. Rimane al buon senso dello scolaro di saper mettere in pratica ciò che per iscritto non posso indicargli che come teoria. Devo poi raccomandare allo scolaro di tornare frequentemente a questo primo studio, affinchè si assicuri bene che la voce sua non acquista nuovi difetti con altri esercizi, che se riescono più graditi e meno fastidiosi, non sono di tanta importanza. Consiglio dunque di cominciare ogni esercizio con questo preventivo studio.

Il suono, in principio, non dev' essere filato; bisogna attaccarlo con un leggiero colpo di gola a guisa di aspirazione, mantenendolo nella stessa forza e senza cercare altro che il suo punto d'appoggio. Sarà dopo molto facile il filarlo quando l'emissione semplice sarà assicurata; e di ciò riparlerò nei seguenti capitoli.

La vocale **A** è quella che devesi adottare per lo studio; però devesi evitare di emetterla troppo chiusa o troppo aperta. L'uno o l'altro sarebbe difettoso; il chiuso e l'aperto essendo soltanto effetti drammatici di cui è buono servirsi a tempo e luogo, ma che diventerebbe difetto se l'uno o l'altro servisse di base all'emissione vocale; avremo occasione di riparlarne nel capitolo che riguarda i timbri.

Si potrà però nello studio, quando si crederà ne-

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cessario far cambiare all'allievo la vocale che deve servire di base all'emissione semplice onde modificare artificialmente il suono nell'intento di estirpare qualche difetto naturalè. Per cui se l'allievo avesse per vizio di cantare con voce troppo aperta, consiglio al maestro di cercare (coll'artifizio delle vocali più chiuse, come la O ed anche la U) di modificare il suono dell'emissione finchè l'allievo possa rendersene padrone in modo sicuro. La U è agevolissima per ottenere la ripercussione del suono verso la testa.

Con una emissione difettosa si va incontro a difficoltà insormontabili, o anche a disastri che in poco tempo mettono il cantante in istato di non poter più adoperare i suoi naturali mezzi. Quasi tutti i cantanti di gola appoggiando la loro voce nell'estremità della laringe, ossia epiglotta mediante l'avvicinamento de' pilastri del velo palatino fanno soffrire a queste parti molto sensibili di loro natura, una continua irritazione, che loro cagiona frequenti infiammazioni di gola, oltre ad una continua apprensione sulla loro voce, perdendo così quell' indispensabile franchezza necessaria ad un artista per palesare le doti del suo naturale ingegno. Oltre a questi deplorabili risultati, la voce, appoggiata in gola, procura facilmente una stanchezza soverchia, giacchè quella continua tensione delle pareti interne, leva alla voce la necessaria energia ed elasticità. Eppure la maggior parte dei cantanti ha questo difetto, che diventa poi talmente costituzionale, che un incessante studio non basta ad estirparlo; quando invece poco avrebbe costato se fosse stato curato fino dal principio. Questo fatale

punto d'appoggio procura al cantante frequenti raucedini, tossi convulsive, che invadono alle volte fino ai bronchi e può portare nella salute deplorabili conseguenze. Non esagero dicendo che una delle cause principali della perdita di tante voci proviene generalmente da questo funesto sbaglio, o da una imperdonabile negligenza. Non potrei dunque abbastanza insistere nel raccomandare a' giovani che vogliosi dedicare allo studio dell'arte melodrammatica, a ben curare i primi passi che faranno, e frenare il naturale deslo che li spinge tutti, a voler anticipare sul progressivo studio, per procurarsi il diletto di esercitare la loro voce con pezzi di canto, che se riescono di maggior sollazzo, potrebbero però chiudere loro per sempre la strada al progredimento nell'arte alla quale si dedicano. Lo stesso succede in tutte le arti; si vedono, per esempio, quelli che studiano il disegno, voler subito abbandonare lo studio primitivo de' principii per esercitarsi in composizioni intere. Il progresso vuol essere graduato. Gli artisti melodrammatici non si possono improvvisare. È d'uopo quindi di molti anni di costante e coscienzioso studio per poter pretendere al titolo di artista completo. Non aspiri dunque lo scolaro a far più del dovere; sarà questo il più sicuro mezzo per isperare di occupare un giorno un posto fra gli eletti dell'arte.

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Capitolo III.

Definizione dei diversi registri della voce umana. Consigli riguardo all'unione di questi registri. Difetti da schivare e vantaggi della voce ben unita.

Una volta acquistato un sicuro punto d'appoggio nella voce e riconosciuto essere l'emissione scevra di difetti, bisogna occuparsi di unire tra loro tutti questi suoni studiati separatamente; e questo è lo studio di cui ci occuperemo e che richiede maggior cautela attesochè uno sbaglio potrebbe condurre con sè disastri infiniti nell'organismo vocale. Si possono classificare i registri della voce in tre distinte categorie, cioè:

1.° Registro di petto.
2.° Registro di mezzo petto.
3.° Registro di testa. (*)

Raccomando di non confondere la parola *registro* col *punto d'appoggio* della voce.

Per possedere una voce pastosa ed omogenea, bisogna che tutti i registri formanti l'insieme della voce abbiano per punto d'appoggio il petto, onde poterli fare partecipare del rimbombo del suono, il quale perderebbe assai della sua intensità o del suo timbro, se avesse per solo ripercutore gli antri della faringe

(*) Vedi la la nota a pag. 16.

e della bocca. Cominceremo a definire ognuno dei registri della voce prima di parlare della loro unione relativa.

§ 1.

Registro di petto.

Questo registro è generalmente quello che dà alla voce lo squillo e la forza. Nel soprano è per lo più poco curato per causa del pregiudizio ammesso che lo studio del registro di petto nuoce alle note acute e può portare danno all'insieme della voce. Certamente che le note di questo registro non si acquistano così facilmente, come quelle degli altri registri, da chi naturalmente non le possieda; ma se si sapesse di quanto vantaggio sia questo studio, non si trascurerebbe tanto di leggieri. Particolarmente poi colla musica del giorno ove è mestieri sviluppare grande energia e forza drammatica nell'espressione, questo registro si è fatto quasi che indispensabile; non solo per aiutare il cantante a rendere maggiori effetti colla sua voce, ma altresì per saper proteggere giudiziosamente il suo proprio istrumento dalla soverchia fatica alla quale non potrebbe resistere senza possedere in modo sicuro il registro di petto. Esso richiede un particolare studio e somma cautela.

Per emettere bene la voce di petto, devo richiamare ciò che dissi già all'occasione dell'emissione semplice, cioè, attaccare la voce con un leggiero colpo di gola a guisa di aspirazione; abbandonare interamente la gola facendo subire alla laringe un leggiero

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abbassamento sulla vocale **A** un poco aperta in questo registro e particolarmente negli estremi de' suoi limiti; ma tutto ciò colla massima naturalezza. Quando lo scolaro si sarà reso padrone della sua emissione in questo registro, dovrà modificare il timbro che consiglio alquanto aperto in principio, e ricordarsi sempre che deve essere in grado di ottenere il timbro aperto o chiuso, atti a palesare effetti drammatici; per cui, allorquando si sarà assicurato del punto d'appoggio della voce nei differenti suoi registri, la emissione, lo ripeto, non dovrà essere chiusa od aperta, se non che per palesare le passioni drammatiche, che a mezzo di questi differenti timbri si traducono. Lo scolaro non si deve sgomentare se in principio le note gli usciranno dubbie, o deboli o stridenti; perseveri in questo fastidioso studio, e a poco a poco la voce trovando naturalmente il suo vero punto d'appoggio, uscirà chiara e squillante. Ricordo nuovamente di non usare nessun sforzo alle pareti della gola, ciò che potrebbe procurare un suono caprino molto disgustevole. Non si cerchi neanche in principio la purezza del suono; volerlo esigere allora sarebbe lo stesso di non poterlo mai acquistare. Allorquando una nota sarà ritrosa ad uscire, si prenda quella antecedente di cui sia più sicuro, strascinandola sopra, fino a che non partecipi dello stesso suono.

I vantaggi della voce del registro di petto sono immensi; questo registro facendo partecipare tutta la voce, della sua forza e limpidezza. È il solo registro che possa aiutare a ritrovare il punto vero d'appoggio dell' insieme della voce. Oltre all'energia che fa

acquistare, infonde la sicurezza e la fiducia nel proprio istrumento, procurando inoltre una mezza voce pura e squillante che indarno si tenterebbe ritrovare mediante lo studio degli altri registri.

Nel soprano, come nel mezzo soprano, il registro di petto varia dal **DO** basso al **LA** o **SI** di mezzo; nel contralto è raro che passi il **LA**; nel tenore la voce di petto può ascendere fino al **DO** o al **RE** di mezzo; il registro di petto nel baritono ha gli stessi limiti di quello del soprano o del contralto; e nel basso profondo passa di rado il **SOL** o il **LA** di mezzo.

Per quanto la natura possa avere favorito il cantante dei suaccennati limiti nel registro di petto, consiglio fortemente di non fare uso delle note più acute di questo registro se non raramente. In generale le voci femminili non dovrebbero passare il **FA** di mezzo nei loro studi. Ne ricaveranno il vantaggio di assicurare meglio le note del secondo registro e non correranno il pericolo di affievolire le note del secondo registro, caso che si verifica tanto sovente allorquando si esercitano con frequenza le note estreme del primo registro, e che può avere conseguenze dannosissime quasi irreparabili per la loro voce.

Questo registro può acquistarsi anche da quelli che naturalmente non lo posseggono, ma richiederà una maggiore cautela nello studiare e più perseveranza nell'assicurarsene.

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§ 2.

Registro di mezzo petto.

Questo registro, così detto di mezzo petto, non ha un carattere suo particolare, servendo solo di transizione tra il registro di petto e quello di testa, partecipando dell'uno o dell'altro, secondo che se ne avvicini o se ne allontani. È il registro più scabroso da sistemare, benchè, ripeto, non abbia un carattere suo speciale. Dall'unione di questo registro cogli altri dipende l'uguaglianza generale della voce e la sua omogeneità; la qual cosa ne raccomanda abbastanza lo studio.

L'estensione di questo registro varia molto a seconda delle voci. Nel soprano è limitatissimo, non estendendosi che dal **SI** al **MI** di mezzo; nel mezzo soprano ha la stessa estensione, però dal **LA** al **RE** di mezzo. Nel contralto è come nel mezzo soprano; in questo genere di voce è il registro il più pericoloso di tutti ed il più difficile da sistemare; ciò spiega perchè sia tanto raro il trovare una voce di vero contralto, omogenea e ben unita in tutti i suoi differenti registri. Nel tenore questo registro si estende dal **MI** o **FA** centrale, fino ai confini estremi della voce. Il celebre **DO** di petto di Duprez e il non meno rinomato **DO DIESIS** di Tamberlick, per quanto sieno straordinari, non sono altro che notte di mezzo petto, che partecipano del rimbombo alla testa, mediante l'abbandono del velo palatino nella espansione del suono. Nel baritono la voce di mezzo petto incomin-

cia per lo più dal **LA** o **SI** di mezzo, fino ai limiti superiori della voce che variano a seconda del carattere della voce baritonale dal **FA** al **LA** naturale fuori delle righe della chiave di basso, secondo che quella voce sia da basso-baritono o da baritono-tenore; prenderò per tipi di queste due specie di voci baritonali *Colletti* e *Ronconi;* vi è tra loro differenza che passa tra *Donzelli* e *Mario* come tenori. Quando si sa fare partecipare questo registro dell'appoggio al petto, acquista una vibrazione straordinaria; particolarmente sulle note dell'intervallo dal **DO** al **MI** naturale fuori delle righe. Lo stesso dicasi per il basso; se non che tale registro è limitato dal **SOL** o **LA** di mezzo fino al **MI** o **FA** sopra le righe. Quando parlerò dell'unione dei registri tra loro, indicherò il modo di studiare vantaggiosamente quest'ultimo che ci occupa presentemente, non essendo agevole farne uno studio separato dagli altri per causa della correlazione che esiste tra essi.

§ 3.

Registro di testa.

In quanto al registro di testa (così detto anche di falsetto nelle voci maschili) non serve più quasi che per le voci di donna: il tenore, baritono e basso non avendo mai occasione di servirsene, almeno sulle scene italiane. Anticamente i tenori si servivano sovente di questa voce, specialmente per abbellire una cadenza, ma oggi il gusto è talmente cambiato che non consiglierei ad un cantante l'arrischiarlo in pub-

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blico, a meno che il registro di quella voce non fosse perfettamente sonoro ed unito alla voce di mezzo petto.

La voce di testa è la più facile da sistemare collo studio, avendo un carattere suo ben particolarizzato. Per cavare da questa voce tutto l'effetto desiderabile, bisogna portarla verso la cavità della faringe e della bocca, lasciando alla gola tutto l'abbandono possibile; il velo palatino dev'essere leggiermente abbassato affine d'impedire, come già dissi, alla voce di ripercuotersi solo sulle pareti interne della bocca; il che renderebbe il suono alquanto esile, levandogli la forza ed il rimbombo che acquista nel percuotere gli antri della faringe. Questo registro si estende fino agli estremi acuti delle voci, per cui ha un'estensione molto variabile. Nel soprano è questo il registro il più squillante ed il più naturale; nel contralto, benchè abbastanza forte, manca però di soavità ed è per lo più stridulo; nel mezzo soprano non è tanto esteso come nel soprano, nè tanto grato; ma migliore assai che nel contralto.

Queste sono le considerazioni generali che distinguono tra loro i registri nelle differenti voci. Una volta che si sia ben conosciuta la loro divisione e le loro rispettive tendenze si comincierà lo studio della loro unione, base essenziale dell'arte del canto.

§ 4.
Unione dei registri.

Dall'unione di questi registri dipende l'uguaglianza della voce, condizione indispensabile a qualunque artista melodrammatico.

L'unione dei registri consiste nell'unificare tra loro i confini delle differenti sezioni della voce; di modo che facendo sparire lo stacco naturale che nasce passando da un registro all'altro, la voce sembri tutta di un colore ed omogenea nella sua estensione fonica. Lo stacco maggiore e più difficile a far sparire, è quello che risulta dal passaggio della voce di petto a quella di mezzo petto. Onde ottenere questa fusione, bisogna cominciare a diminuire la forza dell'emissione delle due ultime note di petto, facendole anche partecipare del carattere del registro superiore; non perdendo però di vista che il punto d'appoggio della voce non deve dipartirsi dal petto. Nello stesso modo che sarà molto profittevole alla voce di spingere le note del registro di petto al di là de' limiti assegnati dalla natura (ciò però con molta cautela ed evitando sempre di sforzare menomamente la voce e solo come studio) così pure gioverà assai allo studio dell'unione di questi registri l'esercitarsi ad emettere i suoni del registro di petto, con voce di mezzo petto. Dal frequente passaggio su di ogni nota dalla voce di petto a quella di mezzo petto, si arriverà insensibilmente ad ottenere la fusione di questi due registri in modo da non sentir più quel disgustevole stacco, scoglio di tante voci.

Benchè il passaggio dalla voce di mezzo petto a quella di testa sia molto facile nelle voci femminili, particolarmente di soprano, raccomando di non trascurare il medesimo esercizio, tanto per questo registro, quanto per l'altro anzidetto; perchè molto potrà giovare per rendere la voce omogenea. Nel seguente

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capitolo poi parlerò degli esercizi più adattati per raggiungere tale scopo.

Molti cantanti, per acquistare qualche nota di più del registro di petto, sforzano la loro voce e si meravigliano dopo di perdere invece di acquistare. Se v' ha un registro che domandi a non essere sforzato nel suo studio, egli è il registro di petto. Se lo sforzate, le note acute perderanno a poco a poco della loro energia e le note di mezzo diverranno tanto fioche da non resistere ad una benchè minima fatica. Se invece progredite nel vostro studio con cautela, cercando di raggiungere le ultime note del registro di petto senza il minimo sforzo di gola, limitandovi a mantenere la vostra voce nello stesso registro, come pure senza variare il punto d'appoggio al petto, non tarderete a raccogliere il frutto delle vostre fatiche, perchè a poco a poco la voce, in principio ritrosa, si paleserà con più facilità; ed il carattere del registro di petto estendendosi su tutti gli altri registri, vi renderà la voce uniforme, energica e melodiosa.

Tanti cantanti si dedicano allo studio in generale della voce senza aver prima esercitato separatamente i registri diversi onde arrivare poi ad unirli insieme; tale noncuranza fa acquistare alla voce del cantante molti vizi di cui non si può più correggere. Potrà studiare per tutta la vita che tale studio non gli sarà giovevole giammai, se il primo passo sarà stato sbagliato. Tutto ciò dimostra assai chiaramente quanto sia indispensabile lo assicurarsi anzitutto di questi primi studi che infondono nel cantante la conoscenza intima del proprio istrumento; in questo modo il cantante non è più schiavo assoluto della propria voce, svincolandola anzi dai legami che l'assoggettano allorquando essa si trovi in condizioni sfavorevoli di salute.

Chi si dedica all'esercizio dell'arte melodrammatica dovendo essere sempre pronto a palesare i suoi mezzi dinanzi ad un pubblico, non può limitarsi a voler cantare solo quando stia bene di voce; quello che costituisce essenzialmente l'artista, è l'intima conoscenza, ed il libero esercizio delle proprie facoltà. Che il cantante dunque che aspira a meritarsi tal nome s'inizii a' misteri della sua voce per mezzo di un indefesso studio, poichè non potrà giammai chiamarsi artista colui che non sarà che schiavo delle doti di cui la natura lo avrà favorito.

Capitolo IV.

Primi esercizi indispensabili al cantante.
Modo di studiare con profitto.

Una volta che il cantante abbia acquistato questi due essenziali punti di partenza, cioè l'appoggio della voce e l'unione de' suoi registri, potrà dirsi di già ai due terzi del suo cammino giacchè il rimanente non richiede che poca fatica essendo soltanto uno studio meccanico che riposa unicamente sulla pratica dei principii già enunciati.

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Tutti gli esercizi della voce si possono classificare in tre distinte categorie:

cioè

1.° Esercizi per l'emissione semplice
2.° Esercizi per gl' intervalli
3.° Esercizi per l'agilità.

La prima categoria comprenderà:

Il suono tenuto uguale senza aumentazione nè diminuzione di forza
Il suono preso forte e lasciato piano
Il suono preso piano e lasciato forte
Il suono interamente filato dal piano al forte e ritornato al piano.

La seconda categoria comprenderà: tutti gli esercizi d'intervalli di 2.ª 3.ª 4.ª ecc. maggiore e minore.

La terza categoria infine racchiuderà in sè tutti gli esercizi di perfezionamento del canto, dal gruppetto fino alle scale semitonate, ecc.

Non avendo intenzione col dare queste poche pagine agli artisti presentare un metodo completo dell'arte del canto, mi contenterò di accennare loro alcuni consigli essenziali sopra qualcuno di questi studi in particolare; lasciando poi ai maestri dell'arte il dettaglio più minuzioso che potrebbe comportare l'esame scrupoloso di ogni esercizio.

§ 1.

Esercizi per l'emissione semplice.

Nel capitolo secondo, ho già accennato quali sieno le condizioni necessarie all'emissione semplice della voce; aggiungerò dunque alle raccomandazioni già espresse, di mantenere il suono nella medesima forza, senza tensione di nessun muscolo.

Per diminuirlo poi, si porterà progressivamente il suono verso gli antri della faringe, badando a non cangiare il colore del suono e mantenendo sempre alla vocale *A* il medesimo carattere. Nel diminuire il suono, e nella direzione che prende verso le cavità della faringe, il velo palatino si abbassa leggermente e la laringe risale progressivamente alla prima sua posizione, di tal modo che essendo retto solo dalla bocca e dal naso, il suono viene a partecipare in ultimo dell'emissione naturale al linguaggio semplice. Raccomando, nel diminuire il suono, di non chiudere la bocca a misura che il suono perde la sua forza; è la laringe che deve operare questa gradazione, e la bocca deve rimanere immobile nella medesima posizione che aveva nell'attacco del suono forte. Operando la gradazione coll'ufficio della bocca si fa perdere alla laringe il beneficio dell'elasticità che acquisterebbe mediante questi movimenti.

Lo stacco che si fa sentire in alcune voci al mo-

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mento di diminuire il suono proviene sempre dal movimento troppo repente dei muscoli *crico-tiroidei* che non hanno la forza di trattenere il suono passando dal forte al piano col riprendere la loro primiera posizione. Perchè il suono vada diminuendo progresivamente, è necessario dunque che le parti che lo emettono, riprendano a poco a poco la loro posizione naturale. Questo studio oltre al fare acquistare alla voce l'elasticità, eguaglia anche i registri e serve precisamente a procurare una mezza voce chiara e squillante a chi naturalmente anche non la possedesse.

Per passare dal piano al forte, dopo avere attaccato il suono con una leggerissima aspirazione della gola e senza la benchè minima contrazione ne' muscoli, in una parola nello stesso modo che se si volesse parlare, bisogna, per rinforzarlo, far progressivamente prendere alla gola la posizione che occupava nell'emissione dal forte al piano; abbassando progressivamente la laringe, e riportando la voce al primo punto d'appoggio. La forza si deve aumentare fino al fortissimo mediante la pressione del diaframma sopra i polmoni. Ricordo qui, quanto dissi già nel primo capitolo sul modo di respirare, per cui si deve bene evitare di non premere il petto mediante le coste ed i muscoli esterni, ciò che leverebbe al suono la forza e l'elasticità.

Quest'esercizio riescirà più difficoltoso in principio non essendo così naturale come il primo; nè si cerchi perciò di aumentare, mediante lo sforzo, la voce ritrosa ad uscire. Non è che con un costante e lungo studio che la gola acquistando la voluta elasticità,

permetterà al cantante di poter palesare l'interezza dei proprii mezzi.

Il suono tutto filato non essendo che la riunione di questi due esercizi in uno solo, si deve pensare soltanto a prendere una respirazione maggiore. Raccomando del resto di saper dividere il suono filato in due parti uguali di modo che vi sia tanto dal piano al forte, quanto dal forte al piano; e per giungervi con maggior sicurezza, bisogna saper calcolare il fiato in modo da consumarlo ripartitamente.

Ciò come studio; perchè se si vuole ottenere effetto in teatro col suono filato raccomando di dividerlo, di modo che un terzo della respirazione venga spesa dal piano al forte e due terzi dal forte al ritorno del piano. La qual cosa lo farà sembrare tenuto per maggior tempo. Non si dovrà mai trascurare questo profittevole esercizio, e consiglio anzi di farne l'oggetto di un quotidiano studio.

§ 2.

Esercizi per gl'intervalli.

Gli esercizi della seconda categoria dovranno cominciare collo studio del primo intervallo, cioè: di seconda minore; questo studio oltre al procurare elasticità alla gola, aiuta anch'esso moltissimo all'unione dei registri. Per passare da un suono all'altro, assicurato che sia il primo suono, bisogna diminuirlo portandolo verso la faringe ed abbassando legger-

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mente il velo palatino. Quando il suono si trova in tale posizione, cioè abbandonato interamente dalla gola e solo retto dalla faringe e dal velo palatino, si potrà con un leggero portamento di voce unirlo col seguente. Il primo suono dev'essere preso con franchezza e con una leggera aspirazione di gola; di modo che diminuendolo, il secondo suono viene unito al primo sul piano della voce. Si potrà quindi fare l'opposto, cioè attaccare il primo suono col piano e portarlo sul secondo col forte. Non si deve però, col portamento della voce, confondere quel disgustoso trascinamento che nel passare da un intervallo all'altro ve ne fa sentire tutta la serie cromatica. Lo trascinamento fa parte degli accenti drammatici della voce, di cui farò discorso in seguito, e non può essere messo in uso che quando la passione lo richiegga come effetto drammatico, secondo verrà indicato nel capitolo VI. Adottato come sistema, diventa difetto insopportabile.

Per gl'intervalli di terza, quarta, quinta, ecc., essendo il medesimo principio che regge l'intervallo di seconda, credo inutile di passarli in rivista ad uno ad uno. Più l'intervallo sarà maggiore, e più la voce tenderà allo strascinamento; è d'uopo quindi assicurarsi bene del primo suono, e prima di abbandonarlo penetrarsi mentalmente di quello che si dovrà emettere. Questa semplice riflessione aiuterà anche molto per l'intonazione degl'intervalli i più scabrosi.

§ 3.

Dell'agilità in generale, del trillo e del gruppetto.

L'agilità è un dono di natura che lo studio però può fare acquistare o sviluppare prodigiosamente. Benchè la musica moderna ne abbia assai limitato l'uso, il suo studio non dev'essere trascurato dal cantante, perchè da esso ricaverà immensi vantaggi per la sua voce. L'agilità è lo studio per eccellenza per acquistare la perfetta uguaglianza nella voce e l'indispensabile elasticità. Vi sono diversi modi di eseguire o di accentare l'agilità; essa può essere *legata*, *picchiettata* o *ribattuta;* ognuna di esse richiedendo l'esecuzione di un accento diverso, accennerò le condizioni essenziali al loro particolare sviluppo.

L'agilità legata è quella che più delle altre deve fissare l'attenzione del cantante, non essendo le altre che una modificazione del principio che regge questa prima; per chi non la possiede naturalmente dovrà cominciare a studiarla lentamente, avendo cura di legare insieme tutti i suoni della scala, senza però trascinare la voce e senza far sentire l'attacco di ogni nota. La prima nota sola della scala dovrà essere leggermente attaccata; a poco a poco si aumenterà la rapidità nella successione progressiva degl'intervalli della scala. Perchè l'agilità legata sia perfettamente eseguita, bisogna che sia così detta *granita;*

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cioè che ognuno de' suoni formanti la scala sia sensibile all'udito.

Per dare all'agilità picchiettata il suo vero carattere bisogna che ogni nota sia colpita da una leggera aspirazione di gola, senza partecipazione alcuna del petto, e con la maggiore leggerezza possibile.

L'agilità ribattuta dev'essere eseguita da una leggera contrazione del diaframma; questo genere di agilità abbastanza rara, non viene usato quasi mai che da voci di basso ed è così detta agilità a colpi di petto. Non consiglio ai cantanti di farne un particolare studio, basterà loro di rendersene conto onde all'uopo saper darle il suo vero carattere.

In generale l'agilità deve per lo più eseguirsi dalla laringe e non dalla bocca; difetto comune a non pochi cantanti.

Il trillo come l'agilità è pure un dono di natura che lo studio però può anche fare acquistare; esempio che ci diede la celebre Giuditta Pasta. Quello a cui si deve particolarmente mirare nella sua esecuzione, è di fare sentire nitidamente le due note sulle quali poggia il trillo; maggiore o minore che sia lo intervallo che le divide. Non si deve confondere col trillo quel tremolo così detto *cavallino* perchè ricorda il nitrire del cavallo; nel qual tremolio di una medesima nota, che del trillo non sono altro che una ridicola caricatura. Il trillo deve sempre cominciarsi dalla nota inferiore e dev' essere gradatamente veloce: il che dà a conoscere averne l'esecutore piena padronanza.

Il *gruppetto*, ossia *mordente*, per essere ben eseguito, devesi leggermente appoggiare in fondo alla gola facendo sentire distintamente ognuna delle note che lo compongono. Dev' essere sempre legato. Il numero delle note del gruppetto varia secondo il gusto del cantante; si potrebbe però classificare in tre specie; cioè: gruppetto semplice, doppio e composto; l'uso del gruppetto quando è bene appropriato, dà grazia alla melodia e alle volte aggiunge forza e vigore; ma devo raccomandare però di esserne parco perchè il prodigarlo oltre di essere di cattivo gusto, nuocerebbe assai alla melodia, svisando anche il suo distintivo carattere; mal appropriato al genere della musica, il gruppetto è di un ottimo ridicolo.

§ 4.

Della sincope e modo di accentarla.

La sincope essendo l'anticipazione di una nota sull'altra, dev'essere accentata di modo che il suo vero carattere non ne sia snaturato. Cosa strana! Pochi sono i cantanti che sappiano accentare una sincope. L'attacco della sincope deve sempre essere deciso e non ripetersi sul prolungamento del quarto successivo; segnalo questo difetto all'attenzione particolare dei cantanti: con un poco di cura facilmente lo schiveranno.

Una volta che il cantante si sia impossessato di tutti questi primi studi, sarà necessario che si formi una serie di esercizi che trattino simultaneamente

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di tutte le principali difficoltà della voce; e se vuole arrivare a superarle tutte, non deve tralasciare un giorno di studiarle separatamente. Raccomando però che la riflessione guidi sempre ogni esercizio. Solo in questo modo potrà il cantante cavare qualche frutto da' suoi sudori. Lo studio meccanico della voce se non vien diretto da un'attenzione intelligente potrebbe, anzichè giovare, non poco nuocere. Immedesimandosi il cantante col suo istromento, e studiando costantemente le risorse che ne può cavare, potrà giungere ad acquistare sopra sè stesso quella padronanza che qualifica l'artista completo e che rende l'arte superiore alla natura stessa.

Capitolo V.

Della necessità dei vocalizzi e qualche consiglio sulla emissione delle differenti vocali. Dell'applicazione dello studio vocale all'articolazione. Necessità di una buona pronunzia, e degli effetti che se ne possono ricavare.

Una volta che il cantante avrà superato separatamente tutte le difficoltà che presenta lo studio della voce si dovrà dedicare allo studio del vocalizzo, che altro non è che l'applicazione simultanea di tutti i principii formanti la base del canto. Sarebbe intempestivo lo studio del vocalizzo prima di essersi assi-

curati de' principii fondamentali del canto; perchè fintanto che il cantante non sia giunto ad essere sicuro nel maneggio del proprio istrumento, collo studio dei primarii esercizi, sarà sempre titubante ogni qualvolta vorrà uscirne. Benchè fastidioso, questo studio, condotto con intelligenza e costanza, non tarda a recare i suoi frutti; e mentre l'arte del canto, studiata in tal guisa, sembra dover essere più difficile e più lunga ad impararsi, accade invece il contrario, giacchè oltre al progredire con certezza, si acquista poco a poco una sicura e ragionata conoscenza della propria voce. Chi sa vocalizzar bene non può che cantar bene, giacchè il canto melodrammatico non è altro che il vocalizzo, coll'aggiunta di parole. Sarà sempre più difficile cantar bene un vocalizzo che qualunque pezzo di opera; poichè nel vocalizzo solo, vengono a bella posta riunite tutte le difficoltà del canto, che la fantasia non introduce che partitamente nel canto con parole. L'esercizio del vocalizzo non dovrà dunque esser mai trascurato. Raccomando inoltre allo scolaro di non attenersi ai vocalizzi di un solo autore, onde avvezzare la voce ad affrontare tutte le difficoltà possibili del canto. Consiglierei però di preferenza ad altri, quelli di Crescentini, Righini, Bordogni e Generali, siccome scritti con maggiore conoscenza delle difficoltà vocali. Il vocalizzo essendo più specialmente fatto per aiutare il cantante a sormontare le difficoltà dell'esecuzione, che per dar pascolo al suo gusto, non si dovrà cercare a dare la espressione voluta alla melodia soltanto, ma alresì studiare coraggiosamente ed accuratamente le difficoltà vocali

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che ognuno di esso è destinato a far sormontare. Il gusto come il sentimento nel canto, si potranno sviluppare coll'esercizio, ma difficilmente s'infonderanno in colui la cui natura vi sia ribelle. L'arte però supplisce a molti doni naturali e l'artista consapevole dei propri mezzi, può di sovente far dimenticare le doti di cui è privo. Non si trascuri dunque mai uno studio cotanto proficuo, ed animato di zelo ed amore per la sua arte, cerchi il cantante di perfezionare vieppiù le conoscenze che va acquistando ogni giorno. Questo è il solo mezzo che possa aprire all'artista una carriera onorevole e renderlo un giorno meritevole della pubblica ammirazione.

Fino adesso non ho accennato che alla vocale *A* per lo studio della voce; e siccome il canto deve adattarsi a parole ove le cinque vocali vengono costantemente rappresentate, prima di passare allo studio complessivo della pronunzia, bisogna potersi rendere conto dell'emissione particolare ad ogni vocale.

La vocale *A* è la più propria allo studio della voce non necessitando per emetterla correttamente di nessuno degli agenti che concorrono all'articolazione. I limiti che mi sono prefisso in queste poche righe non permettendomi di estendermi molto su questo argomento, non entrerò in particolaritá sui diversi modi di pronunziare ognuna delle vocali; mi limiterò solo a dare qualche mio parere intorno alla loro formazione fonica in generale.

La *E* come la *I* che nel discorso comune vengono alquanto appoggiate al naso, devono nel canto essere emesse in tutt'altro modo. Il punto d'appoggio della

voce per la buona emissione, come già dissi altre volte, vuol essere sempre al petto; per cui qualunque sia la vocale sulla quale viene emessa la voce, si dovrà adottare per principio di non variar mai questo punto d'appoggio. Le parti interne della bocca e della faringe devono bensì contribuire alla modificazione del suono, ma giammai servire di punto d'appoggio; cosicchè bisogna esercitarsi ad emettere quelle due vocali senza cambiare il punto d'appoggio al petto. In tal modo il suono non sarà più nasale e potrà avere la medesima forza e vibrazione della vocale *A*. Questo studio, che da sè potrà sembrare non avere grande importanza, merita invece di fissare tutta l'attenzione del cantante; poichè lasciandosi trascinare da quella naturale propensione che lo porta ad emettere quelle vocali coll'aiuto del naso, potrebbe fargli perdere molto di quello che, a grande stento, avrebbe potuto antecedentemente acquistare; perchè variando il punto d'appoggio, la voce si disesta e non tarda a cadere in una grave e pregiudizievole confusione.

Così il cantante non sarà obbligato, come accade a taluni, di cambiare la vocale e per conseguenza la parola, in una cadenza o in qualche punto d'effetto, perchè gli riesce difficile l'emissione di quella scritta. Vi sono molti cantanti che non si peritano, anche a danno del buon senso o della prosodia, di cambiare le parole scritte per la sola difficoltà che provano nell'emissione di una vocale ritrosa. Lo studio simultaneo delle vocali lo renderà padrone della loro emissione ed eviterà loro questo ridicolo sconcio.

Raccomando sia per l'*A* come per l'*E* di avez-

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zarsi fin da principio a far sentire distintamente i vari suoni delle vocali formanti le parole in relazione all'accento prosodiaco che hanno; per esempio, nella parola *amare* è facile a riconoscere che la prima *A* è più stretta della seconda; nella parola *Ercole* la vocale *E* è più aperta della seconda, ecc. Siccome il pregio di una buona e retta pronunzia riposa essenzialmente sulla emissione delle vocali, bisogna stare attento nel cantare, di non svisare la loro particolare pronunzia.

Per la *O* come per la *U* le labbra sole devono servire alla modificazione del suono. Queste due vocali richiedono per la loro natura chiusa una maggiore intensità di voce per farsi palesi e portano impensatamente a sforzare le pareti interne della gola; bisognerà dunque lottare contro questa naturale tendenza, abbandonando la gola senza la partecipazione di verun muscolo la cui tensione si palesi all'esterno, cercando di portare il suono verso la testa ove acquista la rotondità voluta. In principio riuscirà difficile, ma con un poco di costanza non si tarderà a conseguire lo scopo prefisso.

Sarà bene, onde avvezzarsi particolarmente alla formazione fonica di tutte le vocali, dedicarsi a vocalizzare sopra ognuna di esse. Raccomando, senza tema di troppo ripeterlo, che solo la bocca, la faringe, la lingua e le labbra devono modificare il suono a volontà, senza ricorrere a far cambiare alla voce il suo punto d'appoggio.

Ora troppo ci vorrebbe a svolgere per iscritto tutte le regole che reggono l'articolazione di tutte le con-

sonanti nel canto; la pratica aiutata dalla riflessione basterà al cantante senza aver bisogno di estendersi sopra una teoria le cui eccezioni potrebbero superare le regole generali. L'articolazione della consonante dovrà però in generale essere più accentata nel canto che nel linguaggio usuale, onde corrispondere all'importanza che ha già la vocale nel canto. Deve il cantante badare molto alle consonanti che terminano alcune parole per abbreviazione: come *castel* per *castello; amor* per *amore,* ecc. In questo caso se il cantante non ha la cura di accentar fortemente la consonante finale, va a rischio di confonderla con quella che comincia la parola seguente; risultandone una pronunzia molto incorretta. — Lo stesso dicasi pure tutte le volte che due consonanti diverse trovansi vicine, come nelle parole *perfido*, *morte*, *rimbombo*, ecc. In questi casi la prima di quelle due consonanti devesi sbalzare onde pronunziarla distintamente e non cadere nel vizio di tanti cantanti che preferiscono aggiungere dopo ogni consonante una *E*, facendo udire in tal modo *perefido morete*, ecc. Per sbalzarla intendo che nell'articolazione della prima consonante, la gola abbandoni interamente la forza del suono, reggendolo soltanto coll'aiuto del naso e della gola, ciò che permetterà di articolare la consonante seguente senza tensione di gola; per evitare la quale molti cantanti cadono nel vizio suindicato.

Vi sono pure alcune situazioni drammatiche in cui la parola, per la serie concreta d'idee che abbraccia, vuole una particolare articolazione delle consonanti, come a mo' d'esempio la prima parola della

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maledizione del Tenore nella *Lucia*, dove l'accento drammatico e la voce medesima concorreranno tanto maggiormente all'espressione, quanto maggiormente sarà articolata la prima consonante.

Troppo vi vorrebbe ad esaminare minutamente tutte le situazioni in cui l'articolazione aggiunge assai all'accento drammatico ed all'effetto medesimo della voce. È d'uopo che il cantante che studia l'arte sua con amore si dedichi con particolare attenzione allo studio filosofico di quelle diverse gradazioni di sentimenti, e ritroverà nell'articolazione un aiuto efficace e potente all'espressione degli affetti. Più ancora che nel semplice vocalizzo, il cantante deve, nell'articolazione più o meno accentata delle parole, lasciare alla sua gola tutta la leggierezza e l'elasticità possibile, onde evitare di stancare inutilmente la gola, che non deve avere altro ufficio se non quello della semplice formazione del suono; il quale viene poi modificato dagli altri agenti che concorrono alla articolazione delle lettere in generale.

L'artista in teatro dovendo rendere le parole sensibili a tutto un pubblico in un vasto recinto, dovrà alquanto esagerare la sua pronunzia, particolarmente poi nelle consonanti di loro natura mute o deboli come il *b*, il *d*, il *g*, ecc. In questo modo potrà far udire tutte le parole del suo canto a tutti gli astanti; merito rarissimo ad incontrarsi, oggi che molti cantanti non pronunziano nè bene, nè male.

Uno studio che consiglierei al cantante prima di dedicarsi all'applicazione delle parole alle note, sarebbe quello del solfeggio colla denominazione delle

note. Con questo studio potrà simultaneamente avvezzar la sua voce sopra quattro delle vocali esistenti, cioè *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* ed alcune consonanti *d*, *f*, *l*, *m*, *r*, *s*. Servirà esso di studio preparatorio alla pronunzia. Ciò fa riconoscere quanto sia dannoso di far cominciare i primi studi col denominare le note nel solfeggio; studio che necessita ben altre cognizioni, colla trascuranza delle quali si possono acquistare difetti che non si avevano prima. Lo studio del solfeggio in principio sarebbe infinitamente più profittevole, se si facesse eseguire alla mente l'ufficio che si destina alla bocca, giacchè vocalizzando sulla vocale *A* nel solfeggiare colla mente, avrebbe per risultato di fissare più sicuramente l'intonazione delle note senza incorrere nel pericolo di falsare la emissione coll'anticipare immaturatamente lo studio della pronunzia.

Non solo il cantante dev'essere l'interprete del maestro nell'esprimere una melodia, ma deve puranco col mezzo delle parole interpretare i sentimenti del poeta, che tesse l'azione drammatica; la qual cosa molto accresce l'interesse dello spettatore e riesce di maggior effetto. Credo dunque inutile d'insistere di più nel raccomandare ai cantanti di non privarsi mediante una imperdonabile negligenza, degli immensi vantaggi che possono ritrarre da questo indispensabile studio.

Si vedrà nel seguente capitolo ciò che manchi al compimento degli studi vocali dell'artista melodrammatico; ed in seguito esaminerò in compendio quali sieno gli studi a cui si dovrà applicare per completare la sua educazione artistica.

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Capitolo VI.

Dei timbri, accenti ed effetti drammatici della voce. Dello studio dei differenti stili negli antichi maestri.

Chiamasi *timbro* la qualità fonica, ossia il colore di una voce.

Vi sono due timbri opposti; il timbro aperto ed il timbro chiuso.

I timbri servono all'espressione delle diverse passioni del cuore umano.

Il timbro aperto esprime generalmente tutti i sentimenti espansivi dell'anima come la gioia, la collera, ecc. Il timbro chiuso viene usato per esprimere tutte le passioni che denotano concentramento dell'anima, siccome la vendetta, l'odio, la collera soffocata, ecc.

Qui è duopo osservare di non confondere col timbro il punto d'appoggio per l'emissione della voce che vuol essere sempre al petto, siccome ho reiteratamente detto. Si può bensì cantare col timbro chiuso od aperto appoggiando la voce od al petto, od al naso, od alla gola, per cui i così detti timbri gutturali, nasali, ecc. indicati da alcuni autori d'opere sull'arte del canto, dipendendo interamente dallo spostare il punto d'appoggio, o alle fosse nasali o alla

gola, ecc., sono impropriamente ed erroneamente chiamati timbri.

Il timbro aperto o chiuso essendo la manifestazione di passioni espansive o concentrate, non possono nè l'uno, nè l'altro ammettersi come base dell'emissione vocale, che esige un timbro misto che tenga il mezzo fra questi due opposti, onde potere all'uopo servirsi o dell'uno o dell'altro. Il timbro misto esprimerà di preferenza i sentimenti che palesano lo stato normale dell'anima, per cui il cantante che prenderebbe per base della sua emissione vocale uno dei due timbri opposti, si priverebbe di una risorsa essenziale onde palesare certi affetti dell'anima. Il cantante dovrà dunque esercitarsi tanto sull'uno, quanto sull'altro di questi due timbri, considerandoli soltanto come effetti od accenti drammatici della voce.

Il punto d'appoggio della voce si potrà spostare solo per esprimere sentimenti particolari, come, per esempio, il singhiozzo della disperazione che si caratterizzerà perfettamente, appoggiando la voce in gola; come pure si otterrà agevolmente l'accento delle lacrime o di qualunque altro sentimento patetico dell'anima, portando la voce alle fosse nasali. Vi sono altri sentimenti che i timbri non sono sufficienti a palesare, per cui la voce dovrà aver ricorso ad altri mezzi od accenti; come saranno, per esempio, lo *strascinamento* della voce, lo *staccato*, lo *slancio*, ecc.

Lo strascinamento della voce si dovrà usare con molta parsimonia, e solo quando si vorrà esprimere un sentimento profondamente doloroso dell'anima,

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come: lo strazio, l'ironia, l'amor deluso, ecc. Aggiungerà anche molto all'espressione di questi sentimenti, lo spostare alquanto il punto d'appoggio della voce dal petto alla gola, come si disse più sopra all'occasione dell'espressione delle lacrime.

Lo staccato sarà molto atto a rendere il singhiozzo o lo stupore.

Lo slancio caratterizzerà particolarmente qualunque sentimento energico e drammatico, carattere distintivo della musica moderna che il celebre maestro Verdi seppe vestire di nuove forme.

Pochi sono quei cantanti che sanno accentare lo slancio come si deve; e questo studio, che prima era alquanto trascurato, oggi, mercè la nuova forma della musica moderna, deve far parte essenzialissima dell'educazione del cantante, onde potere rendere questo effetto colla minor fatica possibile. Raccomando di non rendere quest'accento mediante colpi di petto; i quali oltre lo snaturare il distintivo carattere dello slancio, potrebbero anche allontanare il cantante da una perfetta intonazione. Bisogna invece abbandonare la gola appena si è attaccato il suono con forza; e quando dico abbandonare la gola, non intendo che si debba abbandonare il suono; e qui prego il lettore a volersi riferire all'articolo che tratta della messa di voce; lo slancio propriamente detto, non essendo altro che un successivo passaggio della voce dal forte al piano sopra una medesima nota e quasi istantaneamente.

La respirazione diaframmatica di cui il cantante si sarà impadronito, gli sarà di sommo aiuto per l'e-

spressione dello slancio e gli permetterà d'improntare il suo canto di una energia efficace che non potrà mai raggiungere con la tensione della gola. — Essa gli permetterà inoltre di dare alla voce sua una grande flessibilità e per conseguenza resisterà maggiormente alla fatica di qualunque canto di forza e l'effetto sul pubblico sarà assai maggiore.

Per maggior chiarezza si potrebbero compendiare gli effetti ed accenti drammatici della voce nel modo seguente:

EFFETTI	Timbro misto	esprimente	stato normale	dell'anima
	detto chiuso	»	» concentrico	
	detto aperto	»	» eccentrico	
ACCENTI	*Strascinamento*	della voce	esprimente	lo strazio
	Staccato	»	»	il singhiozzo
	Slancio	»	»	l'energia

Se a questo quadro vi si aggiungono le gradazioni della voce, che si ottengono col reggere, crescere, diminuire e legare il suono si avrà un quadro sinottico dello stile vocale nel suo complesso. Con questo breve compendio in mente, il cantante è sicuro di non trovarsi mai, colla sua applicazione, in contraddizione col sentimento che dovrà esprimere colla voce. Vi è poi un'infinità di suddivisioni che sarebbe troppo lungo esaminare minuziosamente; lascio al buon senso dell'artista di saperne apprezzare il grado ed applicarlo giudiziosamente.

Il cantante che abbia a cuore di rendersi vero interprete della musica che ha da cantare, deve avvezzarsi fino dal principio a studiare in un pezzo il

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carattere e lo stile. Ogni musica ben fatta possiede in sè un colore suo particolare, un suo distintivo carattere. Onde acquistare e vieppiù sviluppare questa utile conoscenza, consiglio ai giovani cantanti lo studio dello stile negli antichi maestri. Nell'esaminare attentamente la storia dei differenti generi di musica che diedero poi nascita a quello oggi in uso, si formeranno un giusto criterio del carattere e dello stile particolare ad ognuno di essi.

Per esempio, cominciando da Glück compositore tedesco, che viveva in Italia verso il 1745, scorgeranno facilmente la grandiosità del concetto e la sublimità del suo stile largo e maestoso; troveranno ne' recitativi, prima di lui trascurati nelle opere, un'espressione ed una verità drammatica sorprendente. L'*Orfeo*, l'*Ifigenia*, l'*Armida*, l'*Alceste* sono i più bei parti di questo grande ingegno, che a giusto titolo fu chiamato il padre della Tragedia lirica.

In Piccini suo antagonista, se non troveranno tanta larghezza di stile, ammireranno però il sommo incanto e la grazia tutta sua particolare; per cui nel 1778 il suffragio del pubblico parigino trovavasi diviso fra questi due compositori. La *Didone* fu l'opera che gli valse i maggiori onori. Piccini fu il primo maestro in Italia che segnasse nei finali, i cambiamenti di scena e le situazioni drammatiche, con cambiamenti nel ritmo e nel tempo. Fu nel 1760 nell'opera la *Buona Figliuola*, data in Roma, che introdusse quella novità, che ruppe la monotonia dei finali di Leo, Vinci, Pergolesi, Hasse, Lagroscino, ecc.

Sacchini benchè molto monotono per la conformità di tutte le sue composizioni, si distinse però per uno stile gradevole e patetico; *Edipo a Colona*, composto a Parigi nel 1875 fu la sua migliore produzione.

Mozart, quell'immenso e portentoso genio che sapeva accoppiare le più belle melodie all'istrumentale il più erudito, la di cui musica oggi stesso incanta e rapisce, fu l'anello dorato che unì i primordi della tragedia lirica, alle sublimi inspirazioni che fecero nascere i Paesiello, i Cimarosa, compositori di stile grazioso e leggero; nelle composizioni de' quali si scorge un sentimento patetico e melanconico comune anche alla maggior parte de' maestri di quell'epoca.

Non intendo ora enumerare tutti i pregi de' sommi genii che illustrarono la storia musicale del secolo nostro, avente ad interpreti nomi come quelli di Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Mercadante, Auber, Pacini, ecc. precursori del sommo Verdi, cheda tanti anni illustra la patria sua colle faville del suo portentoso e ferace ingegno; le mie forze ed i limiti che mi sono prescritto nel tracciare queste poche pagine, non me lo consentono. Ho voluto toccare questo argomento colla sola idea di determinare il cantante a proseguire egli stesso le sue investigazioni con tale proficuo studio. Benchè non indispensabile al compimento dell'educazione musicale dell'artista lirico, questo studio nell'allargare le conoscenze del cantante svilupperà in lui lo stile ed il sentimento del bello.

All'artista cantante è riserbato di esssere interprete delle ispirazioni del poeta e del compositore; non gli basterà dunque possedere il dono di una bella voce

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ed averla educata a tutte le difficoltà del canto, se a questo non vi si aggiunga una profonda educazione musicale, che gli permetta d'immedesimarsi col pensiero poetico, sul quale s'ispirò da prima, il compositore, egli stesso. L' educazione vocale basterà per l'esecuzione materiale di una musica fatta più per dilettare le orecchie che per commuovere il cuore; ma il cantante di espressione, oltre all'educazione vocale che lo deve porre in caso di eseguire tutte le difficoltà di una melodia, deve inoltre possedere molta sensibilità d'animo e d'arte nell' espressione; principio sul quale si basa la vera interpretazione melodica. Nessuno studio sarà più atto a sviluppare questo sentimento, quanto quello dello stile de' primi maestri che si distinguevano sopratutto per una schiettezza ed una spontaneità rimarchevoli.

A completare l'educazione musicale del cantante e perchè egli possa da sè perfezionare il suo gusto ed il suo modo di sentire, che svilupperanno in lui la efficace espressione, non potrei abbastanza insistere perchè il cantante cerchi di allargare la cerchia delle sue cognizioni musicali. Egli dovrebbe studiare il piano-forte quel tanto che gli potesse permettere di accompagnarsi da sè. Lo studio dei principj dell'armonia gli permetteranno inoltre di scomporre l'accompagnamento estrinsecandone le tonalità. Col leggere molto a prima vista, senza essere nè maestro nè pianista potrà penetrarsi facilmente dello stile dei compositori di cui studierà le opere e sviluppare efficacemente il suo buon gusto ed il suo criterio, per dare alla musica di cui si farà l'interprete, il vero

suo sentimento. È lavoro arduo certamente pensando a quanto egli deve applicarsi già, per lo studio del solo canto, ma sono tanti i vantaggi che ne ricaverà per perfezionarsi in arte, che non posso a meno d'insistere nel raccomandare al cantante di dedicarvi tutte le forze dell'animo suo a completare in tal modo la sua educazione musicale.

Capitolo VII.

Necessità dello studio indispensabile dell'azione scenica, con qualche cenno sulla mimica in generale.

Se avessi potuto trattare simultaneamente di tutte le conoscenze atte a completare l'educazione di un artista melodrammatico, avrei dato questi cenni intorno alla mimica, nello stesso tempo che parlava dei principii che reggono lo studio della voce.

Generalmente i cantanti credono sia inutile fissare un'attenzione allo studio particolare dell'arte scenica, credendo essere sufficiente di sentire per esprimere, fidandosi nella pratica che deve dare la scena teatrale, senza scrupolo di far così sopportare al pubblico che paga, per venirli a sentire e vedere, una specie di tributo per il proprio noviziato.

Certamente che la mimica non è arte che facilmente si possa insegnare; però al pari di un'arte qualunque, se non è dato a colui che la insegna in-

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fondere, in altro che ne sia privo, il sentimento del bello, si può ben insegnare quali ne siano le manifestazioni esterne e quali gli spropositi da evitare. Come linguaggio elittico, possiede le sue invariabili regole che non si potranno infrangere senza intoppare nel falso o nel ridicolo. Perchè dunque tale studio, tanto essenziale, viene così di leggieri trascurato? Se si conosce l'importanza dell'applicazione di questo linguaggio, la forza che aggiunge alla parola, un gesto ben appropriato, si comprenderebbe di quanta necessità sia questo studio. Eppure è generalmente ammesso che basta, oggi, aver ricevuto dalla natura una voce più o meno forte, più o meno bella per chiamarsi artista, ed avere il diritto di venire sfacciatamente ad affrontare l'opinione di un pubblico, dimenticando così che l'artista, dovendo interpretare il senso della poesia ed il sentimento della musica, non può contentarsi di servir l'una, per trascurare l'altra.

Lo studio dell'azione scenica non si deve neanche limitare a saper camminare e dare ai gesti più o meno disinvoltura. Se il gesto non corrisponde al sentimento che si vuol esprimere, sarà evidentemente falso se non insignificante o a controsenso. La base dell'azione è l'appropriazione del gesto alla parola. Il gesto solo è alla mimica, ciò che la nota isolata è alla musica. Sarà dunque necessario di studiare con riflessione e coscienza questa seconda parte dell'educazione dell'artista melodrammatico; parte essenziale e che sarà per il cantante d'immensa risorsa ed aiuto nell'esercizio della sua carriera.

È inutile quindi menzionare quanto sia assurdo l'uso di mandare un giovane cantante in scena appena terminati i primi studi vocali. Per quanto egli possa avere il sentimento del bello, in principio sarà sempre o goffo od esagerato; l'azione in lui invece di venire in aiuto all'espressione della parola, gli sarà sempre d'intoppo; e lo vedrete di continuo occupato delle sue braccia e delle sue gambe siccome di attrezzi imbarazzanti; darsi pensiero per non ricadere sovente nei medesimi gesti i quali non hanno per lui altro scopo che di non rimanere come un palo sul palcoscenico; spesso succederà pure che pensando al gestire, andrà fuori di tempo colla musica, sacrificando così la musica all'azione o l'azione alla musica. D'altronde come si può esigere che un povero giovane, ignaro di queste indispensabili dottrine, possa comunicare al suo canto ed alla sua azione l'espressione ed il sentimento di cui si possa sentir compreso, se per tempo non siasi abituato ad immedesimarsi colle risorse di questo essenzialissimo studio? Da ciò si vedono molti cantanti piacere in sala al pianoforte, diventando di assoluta nullità messi che sieno in un teatro a cantare coll'orchestra, davanti ad un pubblico.

Non basterà nemmeno che un cantante, compiti i suoi studi vocali, si contenti di prendere qualche lezione da un sedicente professore di declamazione, o da qualche mimo, che in tutta la sua artistica carriera non avrà mai fatto altro che eseguire, a guisa di automa, i gesti indicatigli dal maestro da ballo o dal coreografo.

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Lo studio della declamazione vuol essere ragionato filosoficamente per potersene fare una risorsa sicura; e dev'essere simultaneo allo studio del canto. Appena un allievo sia in istato di poter imprendere lo studio delle opere, dovrà cercare, nel medesimo tempo, a principiare quello della declamazione, recitando a memoria in unione all'azione. In questo modo non costringerà più il pubblico ad essere partecipe de' suoi sforzi, e potrà progredire sino dal principio stesso di sua carriera.

So bene che alcuni artisti dotati soltanto dalla natura di una particolare intuizione, seppero anche rendersi celebri in arte come attori, ma sono eccezioni che non attaccano punto la regola generale. Come pure si possono citare taluni cantanti che affrontarono i loro primi passi in arte senza aver studiato preventivamente i primi rudimenti dell'arte loro e seppero, ciò malgrado, acquistarsi invidiabile nome in arte. Taluni giunsero alla celebrità senza nemmeno conoscere la musica. Ma che prova ciò? Tutti sappiamo che la natura è immensamente prodiga e variata nelle sue manifestazioni e questi esseri eletti che ebbero per missione di trasfondere in altri il gusto e le manifestazioni del bello (che non s'insegna) allargando i confini del sentimento e dell'espressione, ebbero per maestri la sola natura che dà a suo capriccio tali prerogative ad alcuni suoi prediletti, ma non le concede certo a chi le richiede da essa. Ad alcuni l'intuizione, ad altri (e questi formano la generalità) il lavoro, che sui primi s'informa e si afforza.

Mi rimane ora a dare alcuni cenni intorno alla mimica in generale; cercherò con brevi parole di dare all'artista una guida sicura, se non per diventare attore, almeno perchè possa correggersi da sè, emendando i propri falli ed evitando di cadere nella falsa interpretazione di un sentimento qualunque. Non potendo dare che regole generali, lascio all'intelligenza dell'artista l'applicazione giudiziosa de' miei consigli.

Come abbiamo veduto, parlando dei timbri, degli accenti ed effetti drammatici della voce, l'anima si appalesa sotto un triplice aspetto: cioè stato normale, concentrato ed espansivo. Questa triplicità di stati dovrà, per conseguenza, tradursi dalla mimica con una triplicità di espressione; come colla voce si traduce da una triplicità di timbri. Per conseguenza il gesto sarà normale, concentrato od espansivo secondo lo stato dell'anima che dovrà palesare. Quando parlo del gesto, intendo parlare tanto dell'espressione degli occhi, quanto dei movimenti delle braccia, della testa, delle diverse posizioni del petto, ecc., dovendo esservi conformità in tutte le diverse parti che concorrono all'espressione drammatica.

Prego il lettore di seguirmi colla più scrupolosa attenzione, giacchè questa materia è alquanto astrusa da svolgere per iscritto. Onde riescire a farmi meglio intendere, prenderò separatamente ognuno dei principali agenti del gesto, studiandoli sotto il loro triplice aspetto normale, concentrato ed espansivo.

Lo stato normale essendo quello che qualifica la perfetta quiete, il perfetto equilibrio dei sentimenti, come la privazione di qualsiasi passione od affetto,

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si esprimerà collo stato normale di tutti gli agenti del gesto; per cui credo inutile dover entrare in nessuna particolare considerazione su di esso.

Lo stato concentrato dell'anima; colla *testa* si appaleserà nel chinarla alquanto verso il petto, ed al contrario esprimerà lo stato espansivo il portarla leggiermente indietro della sua posizione normale.

Appoggiandola un poco verso la spalla opposta all' interlocutore e con una leggiera inclinazione indietro si dipingerà agevolmente il sentimento dell'*alterigia*. Si osservi che ciò che darà a questo sentimento il suo vero carattere di espansione, sarà la leggiera inclinazione all'indietro che, siccome abbiam visto disopra, caratterizza questo stato dell'anima. All'opposto si esprimerà un sentimento di *compassione* o di *amore*, se tenendo la testa inclinata verso la spalla che riguarda l'interlocutore, si volta alquanto dal medesimo lato che si tiene inclinata abbassandola leggiermente verso il petto; il quale ultimo movimento corrisponde perfettamente allo stato concentrato dell'anima dal quale nascono quei sentimenti di profonda compassione o di amore.

In quanto agli *occhi*, saranno compressi per esprimere un sentimento concentrato, e si apriranno per palesare l'espansione o qualunque sentimento eccentrico dell'animo.

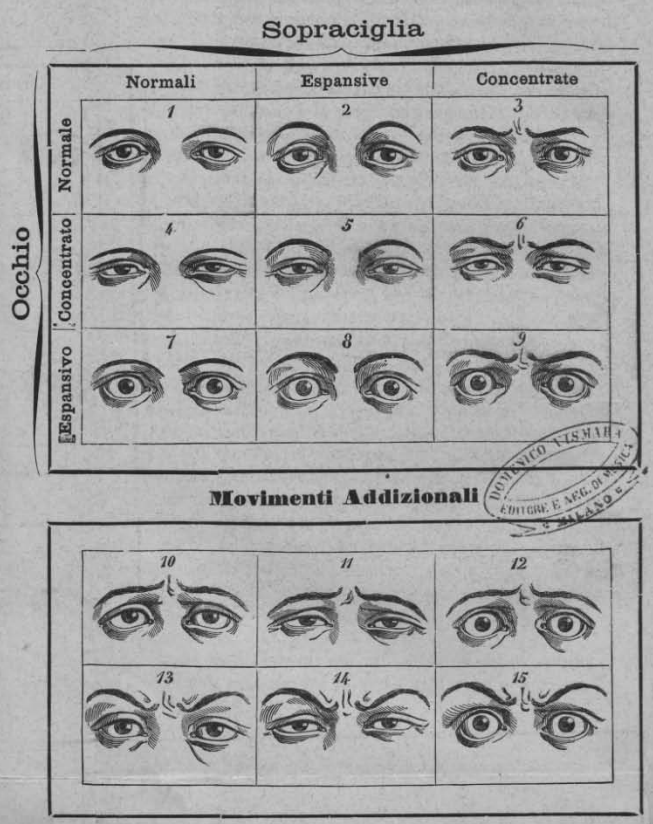
Le *sopraciglia* si alzeranno per un sentimento espansivo, e si contrarranno per un sentimento compressivo.

Dalle modificazioni dei differenti gradi di sentimento che esistono fra lo stato espansivo e lo stato

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QUADRO SINOTTICO DEGLI OCCHI



compressivo, e dalla combinazione dei triplici movimenti degli occhi e delle sopraciglia tra loro, nasceranno nove espressioni particolari (*) corrispondenti ai sentimenti: d'*indifferenza* (2), *noia* (3), *stanchezza fisica o morale* (4), *disprezzo* (5), *concentrazione mentale* (6), *stupore* (7), *meraviglia* (8), *energia* (9).

Questi sentimenti s'intendono presi nella loro attribuzione generale, potendone variare l'espressione in un'infinità innumerevole di gradazioni corrispondenti alle innumerevoli sensazioni dell'anima, che per maggior lucidità ho creduto poter classificare in queste nove principali espressioni.

I tre suddetti stati degli occhi *(normale, concentrato* ed *espansivo)* possono venire modificati da due movimenti addizionali delle sopraciglia, cioè: alzandone la base, oppure la parte corrispondente alle tempia. Nel primo caso caratterizzano un sentimento profondo di *afflizione,* che potrà variare d'intensità secondo il movimento dell'occhio (10), (11), (12). Nel secondo caso dipingeranno i sentimenti che nelle loro gradazioni prendono per base la *lubricità* (13), (14), (15). Onde far meglio comprendere i diversi caratteri dei movimenti degli occhi, unitamente a quelli delle sopraciglia; si troverà qui aggiunto un piccolo quadro sinottico, che potrà servire all'artista per studiare separatamente questi diversi movimenti, e rendersene padrone all'occorrenza. Questo studio, che molto raccomando, aggiungerà assai all'espressione di una fisonomia, dandogli il suo vero carattere. Del resto chi

(*) Vedi la tavola qui unita.

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ignora che l'occhio è l'anima della fisonomia, e che da sè solo basta ad inculcarle una data espressione?

Non ne trascuri dunque l'artista lo studio, da cui potrà ricavare grandi effetti drammatici.

La *mano* pure deve avere la sua parte attiva nella concordanza di questa triplicità di movimenti; chiusa, esprimerà un sentimento compressivo; tutta aperta colle dita allargate, dipingerà agevolmente ogni sentimento espansivo.

La *bocca* ed il *petto* corrispondono anche loro con una triplicità di movimenti, alla triplicità degli stati dell'anima; benchè non sieno gli agenti indispensabili dell'espressione, non dovrà, per quanto sia possibile, trascurarne l'applicazione a norma delle regole prescritte, onde farli concorrere all'espressione dei diversi stati dell'anima.

Questi sono in generale gli agenti essenziali dell'espressione drammatica, cioè quelli che, presi anche isolatamente, possono esprimere da loro soltanto un dato senso.

Resterebbe a parlare dei diversi agenti secondari del gesto, cioè di quelli che colla loro azione non fanno che aggiungere all'espressione degli altri agenti senza avere un'espressione a loro particolare; intendo parlare delle *braccia* e delle *gambe*.

I movimenti delle braccia possono variare tanto all'infinito, specialmente se si considerano unitamente a quelli delle mani e delle dita, che non è possibile segnalarne tutte le varietà. Mi limiterò perciò a raccomandare la maggior rotondità nei movimenti, come di cercare sempre che vi sia tra essi una certa correlazione, onde non assomigliare ai segnali del telegrafo. Perchè il gesto non abbia a perdere mai della sua nobiltà, i movimenti delle braccia non devono oltrepassare l'altezza delle spalle fuorchè per esprimere un' invocazione al cielo o un'indicazione qualunque. Devonsi parimenti evitare quei gesti di convenzione che non hanno altro significato che di provare l' insufficienza dell'esecutore, come per esempio, il proverbiale appoggio della mano al petto o alla spada, ecc. L'azione dev'essere naturale e la conseguenza di un sentimento che dall'anima si parta; in una parola, il gesto essendo eminentemente elittico, deve avere un significato concreto ed espressivo. Non intendo parlare di quelle naturali mosse, che al portamento danno grazia e disinvoltura; quando dico gesto, intendo parlare di quel linguaggio muto che, unito alla parola, le dà forza ed espressione.

In quanto alle gambe hanno una grande importanza nell'azione scenica: sono esse che danno al personaggio il vero carattere di età e di condizione; ma sono tanto variati i loro movimenti, che non mi accingo ad analizzarli separatamente; non avendo del resto intenzione di presentare al lettore un trattato completo di declamazione, mi restringo a consigliare l'artista che ama abbastanza l'arte sua per dedicarvisi interamente, di affidarsi alle cure di un maestro che non si accontenti d'insegnargli solo il gestire, ma che sappia ragiornarne l'applicazione; così egli sarà sicuro di progredire senza temere di essere di altrui cattiva copia. Il gesto essendo, come più volte l'abbiamo veduto, l'espressione di un sentimento dell'a-

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nima, l'artista deve in conseguenza farvi concorrere tutti gli agenti suoi, quando il caso lo richieda; solo raccomando non vi sia contraddizione fra di loro; unità di concetto vuole unità di espressione.

Ora ecco alcuni consigli generici, che raccomando all'intelligenza dei giovani studiosi, siccome il frutto di una costante osservazione e di una lunga e laboriosa pratica sulle scene.

Come l'armonia è il risultato di opposizioni diverse, così in un'arte plastica quale è la mimica, l'armonia nasce dall'opposizione dei gesti tra loro, benchè concorrenti ad un'espressione comune; per cui si dovrà evitare sempre l'uniformità dei movimenti (non dico unità di concetto) e ritenerlo per regola costante; cosicchè le braccia avranno da agire in senso inverso della testa; oppure imporre l'opposizione tra il petto e le gambe, come egli è da osservarsi in tutte le statue greche, che sono al giorno d'oggi ancora la sintesi del bello plastico.

Non si dovranno mai eseguire due movimenti simultaneamente; per cui si eviterá sempre di muovere il braccio e la gamba nel medesimo tempo a guisa di marionette.

Gli agenti più pesanti del gesto dovranno muoversi con maggior pesantezza; così le braccia e le gambe agiranno con più lentezza della mano e degli occhi.

Ogniqualvolta si ha da eseguire un moto di traslazione di fianco si deve prima aver cura di portare il corpo sulla gamba opposta a quella che deve imprendere il movimento; essendo cosa molto goffa

il veder muovere per prima la gamba opposta al lato ove si dirige il corpo.

Che il gesto sia uniforme al genere del pezzo che si canta; così si eviti in un andante di far gesti larghi colle braccia, il che nuoce tanto all'espressione quanto all'effetto. In una parola pochi gesti, ma giusti e ragionati. Come già dissi, troppo lungo sarebbe di entrare nelle mille considerazioni di quest'arte tanto complicata. Raccomando ai giovani la lettura della bell'opera del Morocchesi, la migliore tra le poche opere scritte su questo studio.

Mi basta l'aver esposto alcune mie osservazioni generali che possano servire di guida al cantante, onde egli abbia un'idea dell'insieme dell'arte della mimica, e possa da sè, all'occasione, emendarsi da qualche naturale difetto. Se non altro avrò contribuito a fissare maggiormente l'attenzione dell'artista sopra uno studio essenziale per lui, e quasi sempre trascurato dalla maggior parte di essi. La sincerità della mia intenzione mi farà perdonare, lo spero, l'imperfezione e la deficienza del mio lavoro, dettato soltanto dal desiderio di giovare ai miei compagni d'arte e dalla esperienza acquistata in tanti anni di pratica.

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Capitolo VIII.

Modo di caratterizzarsi la faccia in Teatro, con qualche consiglio sul modo di vestirsi in carattere. Necessità di una certa erudizione nel cantante.

Oltre all'interpretazione del poeta e del compositore, l'artista melodrammatico ha inoltre l'obbligo di interpretare il carattere del personaggio che deve rappresentare. In Italia specialmente, se devo dire il vero, tanto le direzioni quanto gl' impresari ed anche gran parte degli artisti, danno poca importanza alla messa in scena delle opere, e poco si curano della verità storica del vestiario; per cui non di rado si vedrà comparire un personaggio del 1500 con vestiario ed attrezzi del 1200; quando anche non vi sia un mosaico di diverse epoche nel solo vestiario; assurdità che un po' d'attenzione basterebbe a sfuggire.

Godo di poter modificare oggi quanto scrissi più sopra vent'anni sono. Il progresso, che stampa le sue orme su tutte le opere umane, unitamente al gusto moderno che introdusse in Italia le opere estere, modificò molto le messe in scena di cui accennava qui sopra la noncuranza e siamo riusciti ad avere sulle prime nostre scene spettacoli montati con lusso

e verità storica non inferiori a quelli dei più rinomati teatri dell'estero. Se non divido l'opinione dei propugnatori delle musiche moderne che per la maggior parte si modellano sulla nuova scuola del rivoluzionario musicale Wagner, riconosco però che l' Italia oggi seppe profittare degli esempi dell'estero, per perfezionare l'allestimento delle sue opere dando loro un più giusto carattere di verità storica. Così si facesse allorquando trattasi di rappresentare qualche capolavoro del repertorio classico italiano!! e si ricordasse l'Italia che colla sua musica, essa seppe percorrere trionfalmente i due emisferi trasfondendo in tutti i popoli le sue innate melodie il cui prestigio divino, per quanto possa, la scienza moderna non giungerà mai ad annientare. Ma torno al mio soggetto.

Il portamento ed atteggiamento dell'artista costituiscono in gran parte il carattere del personaggio essendone le particolari manifestazioni esterne. La verità del carattere della faccia è cosa tanto essenziale da curare quanto quella della persona.

Quando si ha da tradurre il carattere particolare di un personaggio, si deve prendere cura di ricercare quali erano i tipi distintivi dell'epoca alla quale apparteneva, onde servirli fedelmente. Così non si faranno quegli imperdonabili sbagli che denotano la insufficienza delle cognizioni dell'artista. Che si direbbe, per esempio, di un artista che volesse rappresentare il personaggio di Lorenzo de' Medici coi capelli tagliati alla Bruto e la barba lunga? Ciò però succede quando l'artista, senza prendersi lo scrupolo di studiare la storia, si contenta di formarsi un ideale

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colla sua immaginazione, del personaggio storico che deve rappresentare. Non pretendo però che un artista abbia da farsi imitatore servile, fino ne' suoi difetti, del personaggio che vuol caratterizzare, perchè l'arte dev'essere la rappresentazione idealizzata della natura, e sempre deve avere per scopo precipuo d' innalzare la mente ed il cuore al bello.

Nella faccia, quello che contribuirà principalmente a dare il carattere di un personaggio o di un'epoca, sono tre cose:

1.° I capelli.
2.° La barba.
3.° L'età.

La verità del vestiario caratterizza essenzialmente più l'epoca che l'individuo; queste due cose vanno però talmente unite tra di loro, che non si possono disgiungere senza cadere in controsensi od assurdità inevitabili.

Il taglio dei capelli essendo carattere distintivo di certe epoche storiche, si dovrà rigorosamente osservare. Consiglio perciò agli artisti coscienziosi di portare seco loro una scelta di parrucche ben fatte di diverse epoche, essendo una delle condizioni essenziali per avere la faccia ben caratterizzata. Onde rendere vieppiù l' illusione maggiore nelle parrucche a calva e a frontino, farà bene l'artista di provvedersi di una polvere fatta colla cipria, mescolata a carminio ed a terra gialla, se il frontino è tessuto in maglia, ed una pasta dei medesimi colori a olio se il frontino è fatto di pelle: queste tinte serviranno ad unire perfettamente il frontino al colore della faccia,

dandogli un solo colorito e facendo sparire completamente quella divisione che esiste fra la parrucca e la fronte; la quale veduta che sia, leva completamente l'illusione.

Per le sopraciglia se l'artista deve caratterizzare una parte da vecchio, invece d'incipriarsele o di dipingersele, come si è solito a fare, sarà di maggior effetto se se le mette posticcie, mediante un po' di crespo ingommato.

Le rughe non si devono fare, come si suole, col ferro annerito col fumo; questo modo di caratterizzarsi la faccia non vale nulla; non è naturale, perchè le rughe non sogliono essere dritte come si fanno per mezzo del ferro e non è di effetto in teatro, perchè il nero non è colore che simpatizzi colle gradazioni della carnagione. Per caratterizzare bene le rughe della faccia si deve prendere un pezzo di terra d'ombra, polverizzarne un poco e per mezzo di un pezzetto di carta rotolata o meglio con uno sfumino, cercare di seguire la traccia naturale delle rughe, il che darà loro un aspetto naturale. Si prenda dopo un po' di bianco in pasta e per mezzo di un pennello setolino, si armonizzino i contorni delle rughe. Questo bianco servirà a farle risaltare e nel medesimo tempo a levare la durezza dei lineamenti. Fatte in tal modo, le rughe sono di una meravigliosa illusione.

Oltre alle rughe, il cantante che dovrà rappresentare una parte da vecchio, dovrà dare alla sua faccia il colorito adattato all'età sua, servendosi della terra d'ombra per accentare maggiormente le ombre che formano le cavità della faccia. Questa terra di

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ombra sarà parimenti agevole a procurare quelle tinte chiaro-scure che danno alla fisonomia un tipo caratteristico.

Per il rossetto, ossia belletto, raccomando di usarne con molta parsimonia; avendo cura di estenderlo progressivamente sulle guancie e sotto gli occhi. Tanto per il bianco quanto pel rossetto non potrà abbastanza curarne la provenienza, essendo spesse volte composti di sostanze capaci di pregiudicare non solo la pelle che trovasi in contatto con loro, ma altresì la salute in generale. Insisto particolarmente su questo punto, perchè fu riconosciuto che molte malattie di artisti teatrali, le di cui cagioni fuggivano alle investigazioni della scienza medica, avevano per origine l'abuso di tali sostanze, come fu descritto in modo perentorio dal famoso chimico Chevalier. (*)

Per la barba si deve evitare, per quanto si potrà, d'impiegare quelle montate su filo di ferro. La barba fatta di crespo invece, ed attaccata alla pelle, sia per mezzo del cerotto di Diachylon, sia della gomma mastice, riescirà d'illusione completa. La gomma mastice si suole temperare in eguale quantità di spirito di vino; e per mezzo dello spirito di vino pure, se ne sciolgono facilmente i residui che restano attaccati alla pelle allorchè si leva la barba. Questo modo di adattare la barba alla faccia, ha il vantaggio di non

(*) Oggi è facile possedere tutte le tinte che servono a dare alla fisonomia le sue volute graduazioni. Si hanno da Vienna e da Berlino dei bastoncini di tinta grassa che servono agevolmente a caratterizzare qualunque fisonomia. — Il parrucchiere Venegoni qui a Milano ne ha sempre un deposito.

recare incomodo nel cantare come quelle montate sopra elastici o fili di ferro.

Gli artisti che non volessero levarsi la barba, in certe parti ove occorre presentarsi senza, possono farla apparentemente sparire, incollandovi sopra, colla gomma o vernice, una piccola pelle di vescica finissima, alla quale si dà dopo il colorito della carnagione, con pasta o colore a olio molto disteso; ma non consiglio questo metodo che per quelle parti ove la faccia possa essere fortemente caratterizzata, e specialmente in parti da vecchio.

Per le parrucche come per le barbe, l'artista deve cercare di adattarle alla forma della sua fisonomia; per esempio, un artista che avesse la faccia rotonda dovrà cercare ad avere parrucche poco folte sulle parti laterali e la sua barba piuttosto lunga, avendo cura di tenere le guancie il più sfornite di pelo che sia possibile; così la sua faccia acquisterà apparentemente l'ovale che gli avrà ricusato la natura.

Nelle parti da moro, si ottiene facilmente il grado di tinta che si vuole mediante il nero da fumo che si sparge col dito sulla faccia, che sarà stata preventivamente unta colla pomata, ciò che le farà acquistare quel lucido naturale che possiedono le razze moresche. Se si vuol fare semplicemente la faccia da mulatto, sarà meglio impiegare la terra d'ombra polverizzata, stesa col dito nel modo anzidetto. Queste sono le considerazioni generali che riguardano la faccia; passiamo ora a dare un'occhiata al vestiario che deve qualificare l'epoca.

Il cantante che porta un po' d'amore all'arte sua,

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deve studiare con attenzione scrupolosissima i caratteri distintivi che qualificavano, oltre il personaggio, l'epoca in cui viveva; onde non cadere in errore sulla scelta del travestimento, intendo anche alludere agli attrezzi che vi vanno annessi; come sarebbero la spada, le collane, le trine, gli anelli, ecc.

Non vi è cosa più facile per un artista coscienzioso, che premunirsi contro ogni controsenso nel suo vestiario. Se gli sorge qualche dubbio in mente, egli vada a consultare le biblioteche od i musei di pittura che esistono in qualunque città un po' civilizzata, e vi troverà tutti gl' indizi e documenti desiderabili, onde assicurarsi di non cadere in errore. — L'aspetto del vestiario essendo quello che prima di tutto colpisce lo spettatore alla vista di un artista, egli deve nel proprio interesse e per la propria soddisfazione, porvi una particolare attenzione; difatti, appena un artista si presenta in iscena, se egli è ben vestito, predispone il pubblico in suo favore e non ha più da lottare contro quella sfavorevole prevenzione che desta l'aspetto di un artista trascurato nel suo travestimento. Non è poca cosa per un artista il dover far tornare un pubblico da una prima impressione a lui sfavorevole; lo stesso sforzo ch'egli fa per riacquistare un favore ch' egli scemò col solo suo apparire, gli poteva valere maggiori soddisfazioni se, accurato nel suo travestimento, avesse già ottenuto al suo apparire la generale approvazione del pubblico, disponendolo in suo favore. Non saprei dunque raccomandare abbastanza all'artista di studiare severamente il modo di travestirsi, attenendosi scrupolosamente al

carattere dell epoca ed ai distintivi che particolarizzavano il personaggio ch'egli deve rappresentare.

Una delle cause (ed è disgraziatamente per l'arte la più generale) della trascuranza degli artisti per tutti i rami della sua professione, si è l' ignoranza. Non è colpevole colui che si dedica alla carriera artistica, se per la sua nascita o posizione sociale, non sarà stato in grado di ricevere una primitiva ed elaborata educazione. Sarà bensì imperdonabile colui che volendosi dedicare all'esercizio dell'arte melodrammatica, creda non essere necessario di educare la mente come si conviene, a chi deve essere interprete, non solo di un personoggio qualunque, ma altresì di una infinità di passioni ed affetti del cuore umano. Un artista nascerà con doni straordinari di voce, compartitigli dalla natura stessa; ma ciò appena serve a palesare la nota musicale; se l'ingegno suo non viene aiutato da un sano criterio o da un giudizio intelligente od intuitivo, capace di rendere tale e tal forma di affetto sotto l'apparenza di verità, egli non potrà giammai commuovere il cuore; dilletterà bensì le orecchie, però stancherà presto se non parla che ad un senso.

Il modo di sentire, benchè dono di natura, può svilupparsi assai con un'educazione elaborata. Non è che toccando le fibre del cuore che si muove il sentimento e s'insegna all'anima quel linguaggio divino, mistico che poetizza e le dà l'espressione e il carattere della verità; sola condizione onde rendere un pubblico partecipe della propria sensazione. Oltre all'espressione degli affetti del cuore, che necessita nel-

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l'artista una squisitezza di sentire (che non si può acquistare che mediante un'educazione fina) vi è poi il carattere del personaggio che si deve palesare; e questo pure non potrà mai essere inteso dall'artista, se ignorante. Come potrebbe fare, per esempio, un povero operaio, che in tutta la sua vita avesse vissuto solo in mezzo a' suoi compagni, e che scoperto in lui il dono di bella voce, venisse messo sotto i musicali studii, finiti i quali lo si slanciasse sulla scena? Come potrà egli, per esempio, rappresentare il carattere distintivo della nobiltà di un sovrano? il tipo appassionato degli Orientali? la disinvoltura particolare dei cortigiani della Corte di Luigi XIII? l'orgoglio natio di un Castigliano? l'eroismo patetico e romantico del Trovatore del medio evo? in una parola tutte quelle gradazioni di passioni, caratteri e sentimenti che diedero un tipo a tanti personaggi storici? Tutte cose affatto fuori della sua sfera. La educazione preliminare è dunque quella che deve occupare sopratutto la mente di colui che intenda arrischiarsi sulla palestra teatrale; senza tale educazione non potrà mai rendersi meritevole del nome di artista al quale solo può aspirare l'ingegno colto ed il cuore sensibile. Tanto più sarà poi meritevole, se nato in posizione oscura e privo degli elementi di una primitiva educazione, l'artista acquista con indefesso studio quelle cognizioni necessarie a sviluppare in lui i sentimenti del cuore ed il suo spirito. La volontà ha sempre fatto immensi prodigi; abbia fede in sè stesso e non si sgomenti chi si sente in petto

la forza di resistere alle pene ed agli sforzi; la palma cinse sempre la fronte di chi seppe soffrire.

Volere è potere.

Capitolo IX.

Alcuni consigli sull'igiene del cantante.

È riconosciuto che le naturali indisposizioni del corpo umano tendono maggiormente a rivolgersi verso quelle parti che stanno più di continuo esercitate, trovandosi in tal modo in uno stato di normale irritazione; per cui, benchè un cantante sia forte di costituzione ed abbia una particolare cura di sua voce, irrita in siffatto modo le parti che concorrono alla sua azione, che non è raro ch'egli si senta molte volte alquanto incomodato. Le tonsille, i pilastri del velo palatino, la faringe, o i bronchi, raramente si trovano fra loro in perfetto equilibrio; da ciò proviene il proverbiale detto, *stò male di voce.* Nè si creda che sia cotesta una semplice scusa; giacchè se si considera la sostenuta fatica che comporta l'azione del canto su quelle parti tanto delicate di loro natura, si comprenderà perchè il cantante sia così soggetto a quelle frequenti raucedini ed a tante altre indisposizioni che passerebbero inosservate in chiunque non avesse essenzialmente d'uopo della voce, avvegnachè la minima irritazione del tessuto mucoso che ricopre tutto l'in-

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terno dell'apparato vocale, può talvolta influenzare il timbro della voce in modo da non permettere più all'artista di palesare i propri mezzi. L'abilità sua e la conoscenza intima che avrà del proprio istrumento potranno però permettergli di nascondere talvolta l'indisposizione che egli risente; ciò a cui deve avvezzarsi colui che intende di cantare in teatro; perchè non di rado avrà da lottare contro i propri mezzi recalcitranti. La raucedine è una delle più frequenti indisposizioni del cantante; quando essa proviene da un esercizio troppo prolungato, non è che momentaneamente nociva alla voce, e basta per curarla stare un giorno o due in riposo. La voce anzi, dopo una raucedine proveniente da uno studio troppo prolungato, riposato che si abbia, sembra avere acquistato in energia, leggerezza ed elasticità; però ciò non succederà che allorquando l'esercizio, benchè troppo prolungato, sia sempre stato moderato sì nell'impiego della forza, quanto nell'estensione della voce. Una raucedine presa per causa esterna, non è altro che un raffreddamento, od un effetto di riscaldo e vuole maggiori riguardi; esige anzi una cura immediata se non si vuol correre il rischio, spesse volte, di vederla perdurare molti giorni ed anche convertirsi in infiammazione, sia della membrana che ricopre la laringe, o la faringe, sia di quella che si estende fino ai bronchi. Le bevande calde e rinfrescanti, addolcite col miele fresco e frequentemente ripetute, saranno attissime a far sparire presto queste indisposizioni, se prese da principio. Quando l'artista si avvede di aver preso freddo per causa di traspirazione retrocessa, gli consiglio di fare

subito una buona sudata, sia con bevande calde, se il suo stomaco le sopporta, sia per un mezzo esterno, come il bagno a vapore secco. Basta talvolta una sola di queste operazioni per liberarsi totalmente dalle conseguenze di un raffreddamento, tanto più se fatto per tempo. Per quelli che preferiscono di richiamare il sudore alla pelle mediante bevande calde, consiglio loro di versare alcune goccie di ammoniaca liquida nel decotto, o meglio ancora, di aggiungervi una polvere del Dower che non mancherà certamente di ritornare alla pelle la traspirazione normale. Si dovrà sospendere qualunque esercizio di canto se la raucedine esiste nella gola ed ha attaccato il tessuto delle corde vocali; perchè qualunque sforzo, per piccolo che fosse in tal punto, sarebbe non solo dannoso alla voce, ma potrebbe portarne seco la perdita totale. Gli abbassamenti repenti della voce non hanno altra causa.

Se la raucedine proviene da riscaldamento o da raffreddore sarà utilissimo usare l'*aconito*. Ecco una ricetta che trovai sempre giovevole per quei casi:

Acqua di fiore d'arancio . . .	grammi	100
Nitrato di potassa	»	1
Tintura di aconito	goccie	8
Sciroppo di cedro.	grammi	30

da prendersi tre o quattro volte al giorno per cucchiaiate da tavola, alla voluta distanza dei pasti.

L'azione del canto, mettendo le parti dell'apparato vocale in uno stato quasi costante d'irritazione, il cantante dovrà aver cura, dopo di aver cantato, a non esporsi all'azione dell'aria esterna, se non dopo

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preso alcun momento di riposo: spesse volte la raucedine proviene dall'aver trascurato questa semplice precauzione; vi si dovrà badare con maggiore cura ancora nelle stagioni rigorose.

Il mezzo più sicuro onde evitare raffreddori e che mi meraviglio non vedere già adottato dalla maggior parte dei cantanti, si è l'uso dell'idropatia. Le indisposizioni provenienti dal freddo e che a grado a grado si fanno più frequenti si vincono avezzando il corpo all'azione del freddo come mezzo profilattico. Tal cura non si deve cominciare che nell'estate, onde potere avezzare gradatamente il corpo all'impressione dell'acqua fredda; poscia si può proseguire nell'autunno ed anche nell'inverno. Senza porsi ad un regime di cura fastidioso, basterebbe ogni giorno all'alzarsi da letto bagnarsi tutto quanto il corpo mediante una spugna impregnata d'acqua alla temperatura dell'aria esterna. Raccomando però a quelli che vorranno mettere in uso il mio consiglio di non trascurare mai, dopo il lavacro, di far moto con passeggiate all'aria aperta; o se il tempo non lo permette, richiamare alla pelle il calorico normale mediante alcuni esercizi ginnastici fatti in camera colle finestre aperte; e ciò per lo spazio almeno di una buona mezz'ora; perchè il trascurare tale reazione porterebbe seco un danno pregiudizievolissimo alla salute.

Usata quotidianamente e come mezzo profilattico, l'acqua fredda basterà da sè sola ad evitare all'artista raffreddori che spesse volte si moltiplicano a guisa di famiglia pullulenta, lasciandolo per intere stagioni privo del libero esercizio delle sue facoltà vocali. Si

dovrà anche evitare con cura l'umidità, sempre funesta al libero esercizio delle corde vocali; ma raccomando di evitare l'uso di quelle sciarpe di lana al collo, o qualunque tappa bocca; come parimenti l'uso delle scarpe di gomma; abbia cura soltanto l'artista allorquando esce da un luogo caldo e dopo un esercizio prolungato della sua voce, di porre alla bocca un semplice fazzoletto al momento che si pone in contatto coll'aria fredda.

Consiglio il cantante di non assoggettarsi mai a farsi cavar sangue per indisposizione vocale, tanto più per mezzo di mignatte poste alla gola. Ho veduto degli artisti perdere per sempre il vigore dei loro mezzi vocali per una semplice sottrazione sanguigna fatta alla gola. Anche i gargarismi riescono il più delle volte fatali, specialmente quelli fortemente astringenti.

In generale per le malattie di voce consiglio molto al cantante la cura omeopatica, siccome quella più atta a procurargli una pronta guarigione, senz'aver ricorso a mezzi capaci di portare qualche serio disordine nel di lui organismo.

Per tutte quelle indisposizioni che provengono da affezioni nervose, raccomando infine l'uso dell'elettricità; eviti sopratutto colui affetto dai nervi le impressioni troppo vive, essendo già abbastanza sufficienti le emozioni inseparabili dall'esercizio della sua professione.

L'apparato vocale avendo un'intima correlazione collo stomaco e gli organi della digestione, dovrà in conseguenza il cantante aver la medesima cura di

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quegli organi, come della stessa sua voce. L'indisposizione o lo stato di debolezza in uno di loro potendo riflettersi sugli agenti vocali e portare alcun esquilibrio nella loro azione.

L'esercizio del canto portando seco una gran perdita di forza, per l'azione ripetuta della respirazione da un lato e l'irradiamento dell'influsso nervoso dall'altro, deve il cantante cercare di nutrirsi bene per riparare a quelle perdite. Non si cerchi tanto la quantità quanto la qualità del cibo, preferendo come base del cibo quotidiano le carni grosse arrostite; come il manzo od il castrato a preferenza del vitello e del pollo le di cui carni bianche sono poco riparatrici.

Molti cantanti credono acquistare maggior vigoria di voce caricandosi lo stomaco di cibo. È questo un errore assai funesto ed ho conosciuto molti artisti che a questa sola causa ebbero ad ascrivere le costanti loro indisposizioni di voce, che cessarono appena seppero meglio equilibrare nella loro costituzione il conto corrente del *dare* e dell'*avere*, ossia l'entrata e l'uscita. Difatti molti artisti, sotto il pretesto di riparare vantaggiosamente le perdite che fanno coll'esercizio della voce si nutrono in guisa che per pareggiare gli elementi nutritivi che introducono nel loro organismo, colle perdite che procura loro il solo esercizio della loro voce, bisognerebbe che vi aggiungessero un lavoro muscolare di parecchie ore. Così l'eccedente degli elementi che non vengono attribuiti alla riparazione delle perdite fatte si converte in adipe, come facilmente lo si scorge in gran numero di cantanti, e più tardi in *acido urico* che portasi sulle articolazioni,

sui muscoli e sulle membrane mucose, procurando loro ad età più avanzata la gotta, i dolori articolari, affezioni reumatiche e tutta quella sequela d'infermità che non hanno altra causa che un eccesso di godimenti gastrici.

I liquori, come qualunque altra bevanda o cibi troppo stimolanti, dovranno essere banditi, siccome oltremodo nocivi all'organismo vocale. Si eviti l'uso di tutti quei gargarismi o sedicenti segreti atti a far star bene di voce; la reazione che suole succedere a questo stimolo passeggiero non è priva di funeste conseguenze.

Il cantante farà bene di astenersi dal fumare, benchè vi possa essere avezzo; è riconosciuto che il tabacco contiene una forte dose di nicotina, veleno potente, acre ed irritantissimo non solo per le membrane mucose, ma ben anche per tutto il sistema nervoso. Ne ho provato molte volte l'effetto sopra alcuni insetti che morivano in pochi minuti secondi in mezzo a spasimi convulsivi. Come pianta essenzialmente narcotica l'azione del tabacco non può che essere irritante. So bene che vi sono molti cantanti che fumano e costantemente, senza risentirne incomodo; meglio per essi; però ciò non toglie che il fumare non sia essenzialmente irritante, e come tale non debba essere proscritto siccome nocivo.

La gola è già abbastanza irritata dall'azione naturale del canto che eccita in modo particolare la circolazione de' vasi capillari che irrigano la superficie delle membrane mucose, senz'aumentarne l'irritazione con un esterno incentivo. Oltre l'azione diretta che

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ha sulla gola, il fumare influisce altresì sulle funzioni dello stomaco, e ciò facilmente si scorge in colui che non essendovi ancora abituato non può sopportarne gli effetti nauseanti, se ne tenta la prova. Si astenga dunque il cantante di crearsi nuove abitudini capaci di non indifferenti conseguenze, e che d'altronde tanto costano ad acquistare per provarne diletto, quanto per perderle una volta abituativi.

Nessun organismo ha tanta affinità colla voce quanto l'apparato della generazione. Difatti si vede che appena l'uomo entra nell'età della pubertà, l'organo vocale subisce un'intera rivoluzione; qui è d'uopo di consigliare a' giovani che hanno idea, o speranza di lanciarsi nella carriera teatrale, di astenersi da qualunque studio vocale prima che la natura non abbia pienamente compiuto il suo travaglio; trasgredire questa legge di natura potrebbe avere per risultato di perdere per sempre il dono di una bella voce. I soprani maschi che una volta deliziavano gli orecchi dei pubblici con esecuzioni meravigliose, provano l'influenza e la correlazione che vi sono fra questi due organismi. Ricordisi dunque il cantante che ha cuore ed amore per l'arte sua, che se Bacco fa pagar caro l'eccesso delle sue libazioni, più caro ed amaro paga colui che troppo sacrifica all'altare di Venere. Convengo che se vi è una classe tra gli uomini più portata all'eccesso di questi piaceri è certo quella degli artisti in generale, siccome quelli che natura dotò di più forte sentire e di tempra più impressionabile. Egli è d'uopo quindi che l'artista usi di maggior cautela, onde resistere a quegli istinti naturali, evitando sempre

l'eccesso che oltre all'abbattimento morale che rintuzza fino ai più nobili sentimenti ed aspirazioni dell'anima, può cagionare irreparabili conseguenze per la sua voce, come per tutta quanta l'economia fisica in generale.

Lo studiare allorquando gli organi vocali sono affetti da malattia è cosa funestissima e capace di convertire in seria affezione una semplice indisposizione, come ho detto dianzi a proposito della raucedine.

Ad alcuni è dannoso il cantare a digiuno, o immediatamente dopo il pasto; si dovrebbe lasciare uno spazio di circa due ore prima di mettersi allo studio onde la prima digestione abbia tempo di trovarsi inoltrata.

Lo studiar troppo è parimenti nocivo alla voce, ed invece di agevolare i progressi, non fa che stancare l'organo vocale non solo senz'alcun benefizio per la voce, ma altresì con suo detrimento. Tanto varrebbe volere in una volta assorbire il cibo di otto giorni.

Si eviterà parimenti siccome dannosi alla voce:

Il cantare all'aria aperta;
Il ridere sforzato;
La discussione troppo viva;
La lettura ad alta voce;
E le forti emozioni in generale.

La concentrazione morale, che produce ogni seria applicazione, sia nello scrivere, nel leggere, od in qualunque altra forte occupazione agisce in modo immediato sulla voce, il di cui timbro si trova istantaneamente velato.

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L'applicazione allo studio del pianoforte, oltre all'effetto or ora menzionato, stanca anche il petto, per cui dovrà usarsi cautamente e parcamente.

Queste sono in generale le precauzioni che maggiormente devono fissare l'attenzione del cantante che desidera progredire nella via intrapresa, e quindi fare onore agli assunti impegni. Troppo lungo sarebbe esaminare dettagliatamente tutte quante quelle circostanze capaci di arrecare pregiudizio alla voce. Molto dipende dalla maggiore o minore suscettibilità dell'organismo individuale, per cui il cantante dovrà dedicarsi all'osservazione costante della propria costituzione. Così saprà riconoscere meglio di chiunque ciò che avrà da ricercare come vantaggioso, od evitare come pregiudizievole alla sua voce. Non deve però ad imitazione del *malato immaginario*, credersi di continuo indisposto e fare del suo stomaco un laboratorio di medicine. Tal metodo di vita invece di giovargli non tarderebbe a rovinargli lo stomaco e portare grave disesto in tutta la sua salute. Non si ponga dunque in cura il cantante che allorquando si senta colpito da seria affezione che lo metta in istato di non potersi servire de' suoi mezzi. Il riposo, anzitutto, si dovrà osservare come il miglior mezzo di ripristinamento della salute vocale. Le bevande rinfrescanti, come il cremor-tartaro nella limonata, la magnesia calcinata, la cassia, il tamarindo usate parcamente e ad intervalli di più ore, sono generalmente riconosciute sufficienti per fare scomparire le piccole indisposizioni della gola. In caso poi di seria affezione di angina alla laringe, o alla faringe, oppure di gra-

nulazione tenace si dovrà consultare un medico immediatamente, onde evitare che quelle affezioni prendano un carattere cronico; caso che molte volte succede, specialmente fra quelli che, come il cantante, tengono la gola in continuo esercizio.

Vi sono alcuni cantanti che credono giovare al timbro ed alla chiarezza della loro voce, martirizzandosi il corpo coll'applicazione di vescicanti o fonticoli, persuasi, dicono, di rimuovere gli umori dalla gola; non sanno coloro che gli umori che si portano a quelle piaghe, volonterosamente aperte, non sono altro che le secrezioni naturali a qualunque piaga; travaglio mediante il quale la natura cerca di riparare al disastro sofferto, creando un nuovo epiderma e che non influisce che momentaneamente sugli umori che non tardano a riprendere il loro naturale corso.

Si limiti il cantante a sottomettersi ad un metodo di vita basato sulle immutabili leggi dell'igiene, ed allontanerà, con questo semplice mezzo profilattico, molte indisposizioni della sua voce.

Non pretendo perciò che il cantante abbia da porsi sotto una volonterosa schiavitù, imponendosi continue privazioni.

Usi di tutto, ma non abusi di nulla; questo è il principio di una sana e ben ragionata igiene, senza la quale non vi ha salute possibile.

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Capitolo X.

Considerazioni generali sull'arte melodrammatica.

Pittore vivo dell'umana natura in sè stesso l'artista incontrerà l'oggetto principale de' suoi studii, ed il germoglio della sua scienza. Se è vero che egli debba a sua volontà riprodurre fedelmente l'immagine delle passioni che lo hanno commosso senza che egli sia presentemente sotto l'impero di esse, deve perciò essere egli stesso il punto di convergenza dalle costanti sue osservazioni.

L'arte non è una semplice e fredda imitazione nella natura, ne è bensì una rappresentazione idealizzata; e colui che non possiede quella scintilla vivificante, capace di creare e d'imprimere un carattere speciale ad una produzione, non sarà mai che un vile imitatore, incapace d'infondere nell'animo altrui la benchè minima emozione.

Si dota gratuitamente del nome di artista tutti coloro che esercitano un'arte qualunque. Nella sua vera attribuzione però la parola artista significa interprete e sacerdote dell'arte: colui in una parola che dedicandosi al culto ed all'incremento dell'arte sua, anima colla favilla del suo genio ogni concepimento di cui deve essere l'interprete, come Pigmalione animò l'inerte marmo col fuoco derubato dal cielo.

Per poter aspirare a portare meritevolmente questo nome nell'arte melodrammatica, è d'uopo armarsi di gran volontà e d'instancabile costanza, perchè non è che dopo un assiduo ed indefesso studio, che il cantante potrà sperare di essere distinto in mezzo al gregge dei sedicenti artisti. Il principiante per quanto abbia naturale ingegno, e invidiabili doti di voce ed intuizione drammatica, incontrerà sempre nei primi suoi passi mille ostacoli che la sua volontà sola saprà superare mediante una costante applicazione delle proprie facoltà.

Prima però di porre il piede sulla scena consiglierei all'artista di studiare almeno i principii di ognuno dei rami il di cui assieme costituisce la base inevitabile nell'educazione dell'artista melodrammatico. Sono pochi gli artisti che si presentano in teatro per la prima volta, che abbiano almeno una superficiale conoscenza dei requisiti necessarii all'arte loro. Chi si fida sulla propria voce, chi sul modo di cantare, ed acciecati così da una stolta presunzione sulla propria persona e sui proprii meriti chiudono essi stessi il varco al progresso. Così muoiono tanti talenti appena sbucciati per aver voluto presumere troppo dalle proprie forze e vegetano tutta la loro vita imputando a tutti, fuorchè a loro stessi, la cagione della loro sventura. Non si nasce artista, si nasce col sentimento del bello che caratterizza eminentemente l'artista; si nasce anche, lo ripeto, con immensi doni impartiti dalla natura, ma l'artista non s'improvvisa. È d'uopo di molti e molti anni di studio per sviluppare e perfezionare queste invidiabili doti, prima che l'artista

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possa dirsi padrone dell'arte sua. Lo studio assiduo e la costante osservazione della vita che lo contorna, sono i soli mezzi che potranno lasciargli sperare di raccogliere un giorno una meritata palma e farlo godere di una non compra ed invidiabile fama.

Tutti gli artisti, chi più chi meno, hanno dovuto attraversare periodi di crepacuori e di disgusti tali, che fu d'uopo della loro volontà energica per non abbandonarsi ad un tale scoraggiamento. Chi non conosce, p. e., i primi passi del celebre Rubini nella carriera teatrale, quando venduto all' impresario Barbaia in Napoli assumeva una parte di secondo tenore, e si vide levato di scena come incapace di sostenere una parte secondaria? Chi avrebbe mai creduto allora che questa così detta nullità artistica, doveva un giorno rivoluzionare l'arte musicale colla favilla del suo genio, e la possanza de' doni invidiabili compartitigli dalla natura e sviluppati dall'arte? Nozzari, che lo sentì, seppe però riconoscere le potenti risorse che nascondevansi sotto quell'apparenza di nullità, e per non defraudare l'arte di un così sublime portento, lo prese ad istruire infondendo in lui la scienza che a sì alto grado egli possedeva. Ma per quante peripezie non ebbe egli da passare prima di poter raccogliere dalle sue costanti fatiche e dai suoi coraggiosi sforzi, il benchè minimo guiderdone! Non si scoraggì, lottò con perseveranza e seppe infine vincere tutti gli incessanti ostacoli che lo inciampavano nella via che doveva più tardi condurlo all'apice dell'universale fama.

Duprez, quell'artista completo per eccellenza, non venne egli creduto inetto e giudicato come tale dal

pubblico di Parigi al suo primo debuto al Teatro dell'Odéon? Chi avrebbe mai potuto supporre allora che quello stesso che abbandonava Parigi per recarsi in Italia, non lasciando di sè che trista ricordanza, come tenore di mezzo carattere, doveva tornarvi qualche anno dopo a detronizzare Nourrit! Nourrit, l'idolo del pubblico parigino alla Grand'Opera, che da quindici anni non si stancava di festeggiare! Anch'egli ebbe naturalmente molto da soffrire dovendo lottare contro una prevenzione generale che tutta era in favore di Nourrit, siccome attore per eccellenza, cantante espressivo ed accurato, dotato di una magnifica presenza che maggiormente dava risalto alle parti da lui interpretate. Ma Parigi rimase attonito, quando sentì quel modo ampio di fraseggiare i cantabili, quella declamazione espressiva, quello stile largo ed elevato, quella pronunzia vibrata e quell'emissione prettamente italiana. Per cui il trionfo di Duprez nella sua apparizione nel *Guglielmo Tell* fu tale che non si rammenta l'uguale negli annali del teatro dell'Opera. Ma quanto avrà dovuto egli studiare prima di poter raccogliere il minimo conforto! Da quanti disgusti e tribulazioni non furono attraversati i primi suoi passi!

Potrei citare così mille esempi simili, ma questi basteranno per provare a quanto possa giungere una volontà energica nello studio dell'arte melodrammatica. Possano tali esempi infondere nel cuore degli artisti volonterosi il coraggio e la costanza necessaria a vincere gli inevitabili ostacoli che intoppano sempre i primi passi, nella carriera artistica.

Il maggior guiderdone che raccoglier possa l'ar-

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tista nella sua professione, è senza dubbio la testimonianza del generale aggradimento del pubblico; ebbene, se v' ha una cosa fatale per chi principia la carriera, ella è precisamente quella soddisfazione che risente l'artista nel vedersi applaudito; perchè molte volte invece di ricevere tal favore come segno di incoraggiamento e di stimolo a continuare maggiormente nei suoi studii, s'accieca talmente il suo amor proprio, che per poco che v'abbia la vanità preso radice, crede di già saperne abbastanza per abbandonare ogni ulteriore studio.

Altre volte l'artista piegasi servilmente al gusto depravato di un pubblico ignorante, per ottenere la soddisfazione di vedersi festeggiato. Questa la chiamo prostituzione dell'arte. Come dissi anteriormente, l'artista deve essere il Sacerdote della sua arte, e come tale cooperare all'educazione del pubblico, dirigendo verso il bello artistico il di lui sentimento e buon gusto. L'artista che cerca l'effetto plateale, abdica le sue sovrane prerogative e disgraziato colui che volontariamente si lascia trascinare dalle soddisfazioni dell'amor proprio, o dalle ostentazioni vanitose di un immeritato trionfo.

Consiglio adunque ai giovani artisti, a non avere altro in vista ne' loro primi passi sulla scena, che il progredimento nell'arte loro; tutte le loro facoltà sieno rivolte a questo scopo unico; così cerchino di arricchire il loro repertorio, accettando parti serie, semiserie e buffe quando anche non si sentissero capaci di poterle eseguire; non pensino al presente, ma bensì al benefizio futuro che fanno, capitalizzando giorno

per giorno per l'avvenire, mediante uno studio indefesso e quotidiano.

Non trascurino le occasioni di udire gli altri artisti buoni o cattivi che sieno; i primi per imparare a perfezionarsi, gli altri per evitare di cadere nei loro difetti.

Che sieno ben guardinghi a non lasciarsi trasportare dalla foga del sentire. Che si rammentino che all'artista necessita tanto l'espressione, quanto il sentimento; queste due facoltà sono interamente distinte, attesochè si può sentir molto e non saper esprimere nulla, e viceversa. Quello che necessita all'artista per raggiungere il suo scopo che è di commuovere, è sopratutto l'espressione. Cosa particolare ad osservarsi egli è, che, più l'artista sarà padrone di sè per dominarsi, più grande sarà l'effetto sul pubblico. Guai all'artista che si lascia dominare dal sentimento che vuole esprimere! Non si può essere nel medesimo tempo dominato e dominatore, per cui se l'artista che dominar deve il pubblico che lo ascolta, sentesi dominato sia dalla paura, sia dalla foga del proprio sentire, l'effetto sarà mancato perchè starà o al di là o al di qua del vero. L'effetto non si raggiunge se non si è puramente nei limiti del vero; e per essere nel vero è mestieri saper domare il sentimento e frenarlo a volontà. La testa deve essere la guida del cuore, che deve saper dirigere sia trattenendo, sia lasciandogli libero il corso. Si crede generalmente che basti sentire per esprimere; confondendo così in una sola, due facoltà affatto speciali e distinte. Credo averne detto abbastanza per combattere quest'errore così generalmente accettato.

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Ora che ho toccato, benchè leggermente, tutti gli elementi che concorrono alla formazione dell'artista melodrammatico, lascio ad altri la cura di estendersi in modo più particolarizzato, sopra ognuno di questi differenti rami. Ho voluto semplicemente richiamare all'attenzione dei giovani artisti che si sentono vocazione per sì nobile arte, molti principii che, secondo me, sono indispensabili alla loro educazione.

Mi chiamerò ben felice se avrò potuto contribuire a risvegliare dal torpore qualche animo scoraggiato, oppure a dare ad altri l'idea di svolgere meglio di me il risultato di nuove investigazioni sul terreno dell'arte melodrammatica, al quale dedicai tanti anni di mia vita. Possano i frutti della mia esperienza approfittare ad altri, dotando l'Italia, mia patria adottiva, di nuovi e celebrati artisti che perpetuino la lunga leggenda degli eletti ingegni di questa classica terra del canto e dell'armonia.

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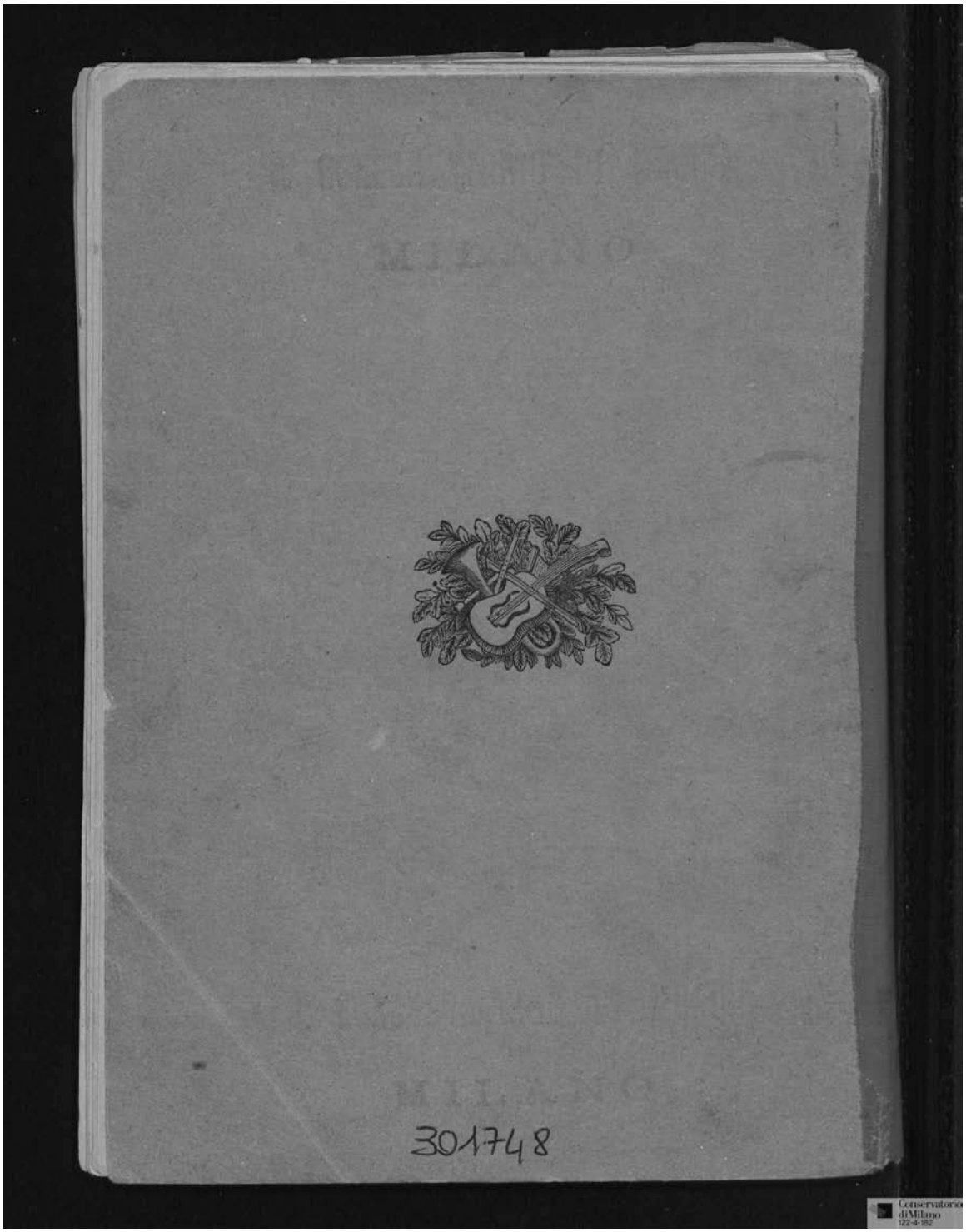
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