

12 ‘Ad arbitrio dei cantanti’

Vocal cadenzas and ornamentation in early nineteenth-century opera

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When the singer has reached the cadenza, the conductor will stop the entire orchestra and give complete free rein to the virtuoso or virtuosa.

(B. Marcello, *Il teatro alla moda*, 1720)

Text vs performance

The performance is an ever-changing ingredient, and the performer’s creative role is essential to the vitality of the re-creative process on which the art-form depends. It is essential, too, in its capacity to nourish and stimulate the compositional art it serves. In this sense, a composer is not strictly the sole author of his music.

(Crutchfield, 1983, p. 19)

This statement by Will Crutchfield may seem obvious, but it is actually a claim in favour of the *performer*, rather than a statement about a mutual co-operation between the *performer* and the *composer*. The latter’s outlook on the issue was well expressed by Giuseppe Verdi: ‘I want only one creator, and will rest content when a performance is simply and exactly as the music is written’.¹ The singer’s contrasting point of view is instead aptly summarised by Manuel García Jr., a singer and outstanding teacher, who in 1840–1847 published the *Traité complet de l’art du chant*, one of the most influential treatises on singing: ‘*General Rule*. A musical idea, to be rendered interesting, should be varied, wholly or in part, every time it is repeated’ (García, [1847] 1857, p. 58; or. vol. 2, p. 37). As Crutchfield states, in the first half of the nineteenth century ‘the solo singer ... was still a kind of co-composer, responsible through ornamentation for much of the surface detail of his music’ (Crutchfield, 2012, p. 611).

Musicological studies on nineteenth-century opera have always given ample space to the composer’s perspective, often leading to excellent results. They have focused largely on dramaturgy, forms and the processes of composition used by each individual composer. This author-oriented type

of research has culminated in critical editions of the works of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and Verdi (as far as Italy is concerned). These publications have generally sought to 'restore' the text as originally written by the composer, freeing it from the 'encrustations' or 'errors' introduced by the performing tradition.

The principle of fidelity to a text as written by the composer, exemplified by the earliest critical editions, has often inspired performances and recordings defined by Marco Beghelli as 'diplomatic' and not 'critical', in that they imply a gross misunderstanding of the meaning of the written sign (Beghelli, 2001a, p. 11). One conspicuous example of this misunderstanding, and in general of the mystification that surrounds the expression 'as written', can be found in the recording of *Lucia di Lammermoor* conducted by Jesús López-Cobos (Donizetti, 1977): in the soprano's celebrated cadenza (which will be further discussed below), Montserrat Caballé gives an (almost) exact rendering of the notes as written by the composer. In all likelihood, the brief cadenza written in smaller note-heads by Donizetti, whose end is marked by a fermata, was only intended as an initial suggestion for the singer (Fanny Tacchinardi Persiani, during the première in 1835) and was not in the least 'prescriptive'. On the contrary, at moments such as these the composer actually 'passed the baton' to the singer (as is clearly demonstrated by the phrase quoted as an epigraph at the beginning of this article). The rest for the orchestra, frequently accompanied by the indication 'a piacere', allowed singers to improvise, allowing them to freely to insert their own cadenza.²

Moreover, studies have appeared, more or less recently, with a performer-oriented approach, tending to investigate and monitor that very *living tradition* which is formed by the continuous variants made (or requested) by the singers (García calls them 'cangiamenti', that is 'changes').³

The sources for the recovery of performance practice are:

- 1 nineteenth- and twentieth-century singing treatises (such as the already mentioned one by García, or those written by Laure Cinti Damoreau, Gilbert Duprez, Luigi Lablache, Mathilde Marchesi, and so on);
- 2 the singers' vocal parts and other manuscript musical sources (note-books), which recorded, as a reminder, the variants introduced or to be introduced in a particular musical performance;
- 3 vocal scores or printed anthologies that certify or collect the variants introduced or used by specific singers (see for example the precious anthology by Luigi Ricci, printed in 1937);
- 4 verbal accounts provided by contemporaries (found in articles in journals, letters, *memoirs* or autobiographies);
- 5 phonographic evidence, i.e. sound recordings, roughly dating to the early twentieth century (Crutchfield, 1983).⁴

Moreover, some recent critical editions have responded to the requests engendered by these studies, and their appendixes report some traditional

variants introduced by the singers. One might recall, for example, Rossini's opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia* edited by Patricia Brauner for the publisher Bärenreiter, which contains an appendix with a long essay by Will Crutchfield on ornamental variants (Crutchfield, 2008). Fabrizio Della Seta's recent edition of *I puritani* also contains an appendix with a few variants for the parts of Elvira and Arturo, personally collected by Giovanni Mario, a tenor who lived in the nineteenth century (Della Seta, 2013, vol. 3, appendix 4).

Of course, one of the dangers inherent to the 'performative' perspective, and which threatens to undermine it, is what Marco Beghelli calls 'codified tradition'. This refers to a slavish transmission of certain variants or cadenzas, which themselves become 'text', in clear contradiction with the spirit of operatic performance practice, which must be open to the singer's individual and personal contributions (Beghelli, 2001b). García himself emphasises this concept in his treatise:

Since the study of embellishments requires great exercise, and since it must allow the artist to improvise variants (*cantar alla mente*), which is a distinctive merit of the eminent singer, the teacher must never tire of making the student practise in varying the pieces by himself.⁵

According to one commonly held opinion, after Rossini's unfortunate experience with the castrato Velluti in *Aureliano in Palmira* (1814), the composer's ornamental writing was intended to limit the number of arbitrary decisions introduced by singers, who most likely grafted their own ornamental variations onto even the most daring passages written by Rossini in his own hands. Actually, it can be understood as a challenge thrown out to the singers themselves. In a recent study, Will Crutchfield has even hypothesised that Velluti himself, with his own practice of ornamentation, inspired or anticipated certain traits found in Rossini's ornamental writing and that of the following generation (Crutchfield, 2013).⁶

Thus, we could partly rectify the principle stated at the beginning, and agree with Damien Colas when he affirms that 'only the text left by the composer can be invested with authority' (Colas, 2004, p. 123).⁷ The traditional variants are indeed important, but cannot be given the status of a 'text' and place themselves on the same level as the music written by the composer. Therefore, though keeping tradition 'alive' through individual contributions, the singer cannot achieve a level of 'authorship' equal to that of the composer. It must however be stressed that this does not involve a refusal of performance tradition or an excessive adherence to the composer's text. An authorship statute for operatic texts did not come into being until at least halfway through the nineteenth century, which meant that these texts inevitably contain a certain amount of 'uncertainty' or even some actual more or less recognisable 'uncertain points' that are open to the performer's contribution: singers with a certain historical and stylistic awareness had to be able to implement them in a suitable and aesthetically effective

manner, without excessive arbitrariness. In sum, an original and personal contribution of the interpreter is in certain cases inescapable, and consubstantial with the text and the dramaturgy of early nineteenth-century opera.

Types of ornamentation

A few remarks are called for on the types of ornamentation or creative intervention made by the singer. While the typology is quite varied (ranging from appoggiaturas to various *fioriture* or embellishments, cadenzas or *points d'orgue*), I think it is useful to group the ornamentations into two broad categories, as proposed by Damien Colas: 'substitution' figures and 'interpolation' figures.

The substitution technique is related to the 'formulaic aspect of melody' (Colas, 2011, p. 271), and is used mainly in the pieces in fast tempo, where we often find 'simple figures, repeated regularly with homogeneity of rhythmic values' (or 'reiterated ornamental cells') (Colas, 2004, p. 117; 2011, p. 271). Two examples will suffice to clarify this type of ornamentation. The first is taken from Rosina's famous cavatina in the *Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Una voce poco fa*, and is in particular an excerpt from the Allegro (*Io sono docile*). The three variants of Rossini's original text were retrieved from two printed vocal scores and a manuscript notebook by Cinti Damoreau (the example appears in Crutchfield, 2008, p. 402) (Example 12.1).

The image displays five musical staves, each representing a different variant of the melody for the lyrics "vi - pe - ra, sa - rò, e cen - to". The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4. The variants are labeled as follows:

- GARCÍA47 (Gar.):** Shows a simple, direct melody with the lyrics "e cen - to" on a single note.
- epvGD (Son.):** Features a more complex, rhythmic melody with repeated eighth-note patterns. The lyrics "vi - pe - ra, sa - rò, e cen - to" are spread across the notes.
- epvC5 (Fod.):** Similar to the previous variant, but with a different rhythmic pattern for the first part of the phrase.
- CD III (Cin.):** Another variation of the rhythmic pattern, showing a different phrasing of the repeated notes.
- WGR:** Shows a highly rhythmic and ornamented version of the melody, with many repeated eighth notes and accents. The lyrics "vi - pe - ra, sa - rò, e cen - to" are integrated into this complex texture.

Example 12.1 Rosina's cavatina *Una voce poco fa* (Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*) (taken from Crutchfield, 1983, p. 402).

The other refers to the equally famous cabaletta by Manrico in Verdi's *Trovatore*, *Di quella pira*, with some substitution variants by the tenor Francesco Tamagno (taken from Crutchfield, 1983, p. 45) (Example 12.2).

Trovatore: "Di quella pira"



Ex. 176: Tamagno



Example 12.2 Manrico's cabaletta *Di quella pira* (Verdi's *Trovatore*) (taken from Crutchfield, 1983, p. 45).

Substitution figures are frequent in the repetitions, therefore in cabaletta reprises, rondos, and other pieces in strophic structure (songs, ballads, toasts, etc.); all of which were specifically designed to enable the singer to change and embellish the melody. Repeating a cabaletta exactly 'as is written' is a glaring contradiction and an unforgivable infringement of García's 'general rule', quoted at the beginning of this article.

Instead, the technique of interpolation consists in inserting ornamental notes between the original notes of the melody, and is used mostly in slow pieces. They range from simple *fioriture*, which often serve to adorn a phrase or the repetition of a phrase, to larger interpolations, the so-called *fermate*, *points d'orgue* or *cadenze*. According to García's above-mentioned precept ('A musical idea, to be rendered interesting, should be varied, wholly or in part, every time it is repeated'), *fioriture* are often written by the composer himself, which does not however imply that the singer cannot add his own embellishments.

There follow a few examples, beginning with none other than Verdi, who expressed himself so clearly regarding respect for the written text.

Rigoletto's aria, *Cortigiani, vil razza dannata* (Act II). In the repetition of Rigoletto's impassioned phrase, set in the upper register, Verdi composes his own variant in triplets; the baritone Francisco D'Andrade adds a slight *fioritura* that reaches an A₅ (Crutchfield, 1983, p. 40) (Example 12.3).

Rigoletto: "Cortigiani, vil razza"



(Verdi's repeat)



Ex. 145: D'Andrade (at repeat)



Example 12.3 Rigoletto's aria *Cortigiani, vil razza dannata* (Verdi's *Rigoletto*) (taken from Crutchfield, 1983, p. 40).

In Leonora's *Tacea la notte* from Act I of *Trovatore*, the soprano Lillian Nordica adds some embellishments at the end of the first and second phrases of the melody, expressive *fioriture* that serve to underline key words such as 'peaceful' and 'happy'. Nowadays, no singer would dare to add those variants, especially in Verdi: evidence from recordings, while limited to the early twentieth century, documents instead a performance practice still characterised by extemporary ornamentation (Crutchfield, 1983, p. 45) (Example 12.4).

Trovatore: "Tacea la notte"



Example 12.4 Leonora's aria *Tacea la notte* (Verdi's *Trovatore*) (taken from Crutchfield, 1983, p. 45).

Ex. 179: Nordica

mo-stra-va lie - - - - to e pie-na

Example 12.4 (Continued).

The last example is taken from Bellini's *Sonnambula*, in particular from the repetition of the cabaletta in tempo moderato, *Sovra il sen la man mi posa*. Here we find both types of ornamentation (substitution and interpolation). Note that, in this case too, the variations underline the verbal images they accompany: respectively, 'non ha forza a sostener [hasn't the force to contain]' and 'balzar, balzar lo sento [I feel it throbbing, throbbing]' (these examples appear in Caswell, 1989, pp. 26–27) (Examples 12.5a and b).

Regarding the strict adherence between the vocal ornaments and the words to which they apply, it is worth recalling Cinti Damoreau's advice:

Always beware of all those notes that lack intelligence, character and color, with which the mediocre singer tries to enchant his/her the public, and do not forget, I repeat, that the embellishments must always be subordinate to the words, that, after all, variation does not mean distorting and making a musical phrase unrecognizable.

(Cinti Damoreau, 1849, introduction; it. ed. p. 6)

The 'cadenza', as mentioned above, belongs to the category of interpolation – even though it can also be considered a figure of 'suspension' or 'prolongation'.⁸ Cadenzas can be subdivided, as suggested by Marco Beghelli, into two major types (Beghelli, 1995, p. 479): cadenzas of large proportions, used at the end of a piece (also called *full-stop* or *full-scale cadenzas*) and smaller ones, to be used inside the piece itself and sometimes even at the beginning, every time the musical context provides an opportunity (also called *half-cadence*, *suspension point*, *point d'arrêt*, etc.).

Amina's famous final aria in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* (*Ah! non credea mirarti*) can be seen in Appendix 1, along with the variants of the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (1820–1887) reported on the upper staff (Caswell, 1989, pp. 11–14). There are many embellishments, mostly interpolation figures, in line with the style of this singer:

Cinti-Damoreau I

cor che i suoi con-ten-ti non ha for-za a so-ste-ner.
 cor che i suoi con-ten-ti non ha— for-za a so-ste-ner.
 cor che i suoi con-ten-ti non ha— for-za a so-ste-ner.

di forza
f più vivo

Example 12.5a Amina's cabaletta *Sovra il sen la man mi posa* (Bellini's *Sonnambula*) (taken from Caswell, 1989, p. 26).

praised for her range, suppleness, and purity of tone, for her perfect and natural expression and her deeply inspired interpretational skills, as well as for her broad dynamic range – especially her effective pianissimos, her improvisational talent for ornamentation, and her unparalleled facility in executing *fioritura* and trills.

(Montemorra Marvin, 2001, p. XXX)

There are also two cadenzas: the first is shorter (a *fermata*) and is annotated by Lind on a subdominant chord, significantly on the word 'pianto [cried]' (p. 13, third system); the other is longer and comes at the end, set on a perfect cadence (IV–V^{4/6}–V–I) (p. 14, second and third systems).⁹

It should also be pointed out that these *fioriture*, *fermate* and *cadenze* can be found not only in the lyrical pieces, especially in the slow ones, but also in recitative pieces, in which they can have both an expressive value (to highlight an important word), and also be used for demarcation (to emphasise the end and to indicate that the next sung piece is about to begin). In this regard, see for example the recitative in the final aria of Donizetti's *Pia de' Tolomei* (1837) written for Fanny Tacchinardi Persiani, where the final *fermata* is both expressive, on the word 'pianto', but simultaneously used for demarcation (Pagannone, 2007, p. 530, m. 92, vocal score, p. 299).

The aria *De tous les pays* from François-Adrien Boieldieu's *Le califfe de Bagdad* (1800) (Caswell, 1989, pp. 30–43) is an excellent example of how a coloratura soprano (in this case, Cinti Damoreau), was able to add fermatas and sing in a very free manner, even in the recitative parts, in chords other than the dominant, and even in the presence of a continuous beat in the accompaniment (see p. 32, m. 36; which in this case is a hyperbolic emphasis of the expression 'loin de vous').¹⁰

According to Manuel García, the cadenza (*point d'orgue*) should generally observe three basic rules: (1) it 'must be wholly enclosed within the chord on which it rests' (thus, performers are not allowed to modulate to another key, with the exception of 'artistes qui joignent à une science profonde un goût infallible');¹¹ (2) it 'must fall exclusively on a long syllable' (practically speaking, on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable of the verse); (3) it 'should be made in a single breath' (García, [1847] 1857, p. 63; or. vol. 2, pp. 47–48).

He does however allow for some exceptions, especially following the rules of breathing, as long as repetitions of words are added, with breaths coming in between. He also claims that, 'to avoid monotony', cadenzas of some length can be composed 'of two, three, and sometimes even four different ideas, unequal in value, and varied in light and shade, which gives them animation, and avoids the impression of a vocal exercise' (*ibidem*).

If we take the simple cadenza written in the 'mad scene' from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, we can observe that the basic rules proposed by García are strictly observed (Example 12.6).

But Lucia's cadenza, which was then standardised and thus permanently entered the repertoire, is the double one with an *obbligato* flute. It appears to have been introduced in 1868 in a performance at Her Majesty's Theatre in London by the Swedish soprano Christina Nilsson, in collaboration with the composer and conductor Luigi Arditi. The first manuscript evidence, however, dates to 1889 (when *Lucia* was staged at the Paris *Opéra*, with soprano Nelly Melba). This cadenza, in three slightly different forms, was later inserted in 1900 in a printed collection of *cadenze* and *variants* by Mathilde Marchesi, Melba's teacher. Since then, it has become the model for all singers to date (Marchesi, 1900; Pugliese, 2004). Of considerable length, it has become *de facto* the focal point of Lucia's entire 'mad scene', and perhaps of the entire work. It is a fine example of a variant 'codified' by tradition. In the Appendix 3 you will find, in order: (a) the first of the Marchesi-Melba cadenzas, with analytical notes, (b) the most widely performed variant today, located in Luigi Ricci's anthology printed in 1937, *Variazioni, cadenze, tradizioni per canto*, vol. I, and (c) a table, from the study by Naomi Matsumoto (2011, pp. 310–11), which summarises the main variants of the three Marchesi-Melba models (C1, C2, C3). The cadence's modular structure enables the removal or addition of elements such as the beautiful reminiscence of *Verranno a te sull'aure* theme (from Act I Duet), section 4, which is now obligatory in modern performances. The tradition of cadenzas in *Lucia* allows us to glean that each new formula is generated as a direct descendant of the previous one, or better still, draws on preceding versions that are more or less 'codified'. Thus, rather than being a free and original contribution, it can be defined a re-composition, which in some cases contains expansions of pre-established modules.

Therefore, the cadenza in *Lucia*, notwithstanding its gradual expansion over time, seems inconsistent with the evolution of vocal style in the nineteenth century, actually tended to limit the space for freely sung cadences, and if anything, to supplant them with 'syllabic' ones. It reflects that phenomenon of 'standardisation', that is to say the 'codified tradition' which is completely at odds with the real, genuine, 'extemporaneous' nature of the cadence.

The nature of improvisation in opera. Conclusions

In light of what I have said so far, we should enquire about the nature of improvisation, or about 'extemporary' variation in opera, from at least the early nineteenth century onwards. Was there – is there – real 'improvisation', given that the proper meaning of the term is 'to produce something on the spur of the moment'?¹⁴ Or is it indeed more accurate to speak of 'reinvention' of changes or additions planned and tried out

beforehand? Especially in a 'double cadenza' such as the one sung by Lucia, it is difficult to imagine that there was no prior agreement between the singer and the flautist. The scholars I have considered are all sceptical about the real improvising skills of singers, in both the past and in the present. Philip Gossett states that, according to contemporary sources, presumably 'true improvisation was rare ... singers developed an interpretation and reproduced it for the most part fairly consistently' (Gossett, 2006, p. 330; it. transl. p. 359. See also Gossett, 2010, p. 50). The same applies to modern-day singers: it is difficult to break away from an established model, or from a custom template cut out *ad hoc*, as demonstrated by *Lucia's* cadenza. Damien Colas suggests a more complex hypothesis, once again on the basis of contemporary sources, in particular singers' notebooks. Given that the variants are subdivided into substitution figures and interpolation figures, he posits that true improvisation – or better, 'extemporisation' – was possible only for the latter, and in particular in the cadenza, where the rest in the orchestra allowed the singer to act with a greater degree of freedom and confidence. On the contrary, in fast pieces with substitution figures, it was not possible to make a false step, and the singer therefore had to write down the variants in advance, or rely on a series of *substitute figures* memorised beforehand (similarly to the 'commonplace books' in the *Commedia dell'Arte*) (Colas, 2011, p. 271). One could argue that this was also the case for cadenzas. In fact, treatises on singing often provide several examples of cadenzas to study, memorise and use as needed.¹⁵ Furthermore, the modules (or passages) that make up the cadenza can be compared to collections of 'commonplaces', which can be exhibited and 'assembled' according to the circumstances.¹⁶

The fact remains that in the nineteenth century there were singers who were more or less endowed with improvising skills (and the same applies to today's singers). As Gossett observes, 'some were superb musicians, capable of spinning out inventive variations and cadenzas; others possessed splendid instruments but had to learn everything in advance' (Gossett, 2006, p. 331; it. transl. p. 360).

We can see an example of Cinti Damoreau's very informative, multiple ornamentation with a simpler formula designed specifically 'for the faint-hearted [*pour les peureuses*]', another intermediate one, to be used 'as needed [*au besoin*]', and the most difficult one with the highest note but fewer details, intended perhaps for the most skilled singers, because it leaves room for individual improvisation (the example is taken from Caswell, 1989, p. 29; the piece is the cabaletta *Sovra il sen la man mi posa* in Bellini's *Sonnambula*) (Example 12.9):

The image shows a musical score for a cabaletta. It consists of three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal staves are in a soprano clef and contain the following lyrics: 'pour les peureuses bal- au besoin zar', '-zar, bal- zar'. The piano accompaniment is in a bass clef and features a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The score is in 3/4 time and is in the key of B-flat major.

Example 12.9 Amina's cabaletta *Sovra il sen la man mi posa* (Bellini's *Sonnambula*).

I should like to conclude with an account of a true improvisation. Once again, it is by Madame Cinti Damoreau, who in the preface to her *Treatise* recounts a curious and amusing episode. A Concert (*Accademia*) was scheduled and she had to sing a duet with another (unspecified) soprano; this is her story in brief:

we agreed upon the embellishments to be done, [opportunities for] which were found in profusion [in the chosen duet], since it was composed almost entirely of questions and answers; I was the one who always had to answer. That evening at the concert, an evil thought crossed the mind of the lovely singer, and she suddenly changed all the embellishments agreed upon that morning. Quite disconcerted at first, I did not, however, lose my courage; and by one of those inspirations one cannot define, I replied without losing a minute, a second, a quarter of a rest, by improvising other embellishments which I have to admit did show my slight annoyance at being caught unawares.

(Cinti Damoreau, 1849; it. ed. p. 6; see Caswell, 1975¹, p. 481)

This anecdote served as a lesson for her students: ‘if it were not for my habit of changing all themes and being able, thanks to constant practice, to play around with any musical phrase, I would certainly be less delighted in my inspiration ...’ (*ibidem*).¹⁷

This anecdote could provide us with some suggestions for *Lucia*’s ‘double cadenza’: what if, at least in the ‘call and response’ section (Section 1), the singer and flautist ‘defied’ each other to improvise variants and answers?

Regarding the cadenza in *Lucia*, I should lastly like to mention a cadenza recently sung by Natalie Dessay (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW5Ol3jNrJI> [min. 3.45]). She recovers the formula for solo voice, previous to Marchesi-Melba, albeit simulating with her voice a dialogue like that with the flute, without abandoning the quotation of the duet theme. Even if it is not pure improvisation, it seems to me a viable option, a change from routine: a sort of re-creation of the performing tradition (the same singer can be heard performing at least one other different cadenza). Dessay’s way of singing and acting seems to confirm the idea of improvisation put forward by Matsumoto in his essay: ‘more an indication of the style of display or the freedom of theatrical spirit, than of compositional spontaneity’ (Matsumoto, 2011, p. 316). The challenge faced by a performer, or any performer with high artistic qualities, is still to give the impression of improvising or ‘extemporising’ on the spot, even when he or she is closely following a written outline.

The fact remains that in the YouTube era, in which virtually everything is only a click away and therefore subject to rapid consumption and comparison, the need to renovate or to vary paradoxically becomes, once again, almost mandatory (suffice it to think of the many ‘innovations’ introduced by directors, which are often true falsifications). If in the nineteenth century it was a challenge for a singer to elaborate new variations from one evening to the next, to the delight of the most inveterate melomaniacs (see the evidence provided by Cinti Damoreau, 1849, introduction; it. ed. p. 6), nowadays the objective most likely involves preventing a performance from becoming trapped in pure routine and homogenisation.¹⁸ Once again, and finally, Manuel García’s motto quoted at the beginning deserves to be mentioned, duly paraphrased: ‘A musical idea [an aria, a cadenza] should be varied every time it is repeated’.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Lorenzo Bianconi, Marco Beghelli and Vincenzo Caporaletti for their precious advice and observations.

Appendix 1

Aria *Ah! non credea mirarti* from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*: variants of the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind.

[2] Ah! non credea mirarti

(*La sonnambula*)

Vincenzo Bellini

Andante cantabile

Lind* *espressivo*
Ah! non cre-dea mi-rar-ti Si pres-to e-stin-to, o

⁵ AMINA
Ah! non cre-dea mi-rar-ti si pres-to e-stin-to, O

fio-re, Pas-sa-sti al par d'a-mo-re Che un gior-no

fio-re; pas-sa-sti al par d'a-mo-re, che un gior-no

legato

espressivo

Andante cantabile

* "The embellishments of Cadenze in this piece were sung in moderate time, not quickly." See Critical Notes.

so- lo, che un gior- no sol du- rò, che un gior- no

so- lo, ah! sol du- rò.

Pas- sa- stial par d'a- mo- re,

Che un gior- no, che un gior- no sol du-
che un gior- no, che un gior- no sol du-

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system begins with a vocal line containing the syllable '-rò.' and a piano introduction. The second system starts with a vocal line containing '-rò.' and continues with the lyrics 'Po- tria no- vel vi-'. The third system contains the lyrics 'go- re, Il pian- to, il pian- to mio re- car- ti,' and 'Ma rav- vi- var l'a- mo- re il pian- to'. Performance markings include 'molto espressivo', 'pp', 'rall.', and 'Cadenza'. Measure numbers 25 and 30 are indicated. The piano accompaniment features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

-rò.

molto espressivo

Po- tria no- vel vi-

25

-rò.

Po- tria no- vel vi-

go- re, Il pian- to, il pian- to mio re- car- ti,

go- re il pian- to, il pian- to mio re- car- ti,

Ma rav- vi- var l'a- mo- re il pian- to

ma rav- vi- var l'a- mo- re il pian- to

30

mi- o ah no, no non più ah non cre- de- a ah non cre- de-

mio, ah, no, no, non può! Ah! non cre- de- a, ah! non cre- de-

Appendix 2

Cadenze e varianti composte ed eseguite dalle sorelle Marchisio, ms: Barbara Marchisio's dedication to Rocco Edoardo Pagliara (front matter; Marchisio B. and C., 1900).

A R[occo] E[doardo] Pagliara

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Buon amico,

Offro a voi questi cari ricordi della fortunata mia carriera, a voi che avete ancora raccolti gli ultimi sospiri, gli sprazzi, i resti del nostro bel canto italiano. E non ve li offro né pel merito loro, né colla più lontana speranza che possano un giorno essere utili alle giovani alunne di questo vostro Conservatorio. Oh! no, amico mio, ogni giorno di più mi convinco che oggi chi aspira all'arte mia adorata segue tutt'altra via, con troppa fretta e minore entusiasmo! Ve li offro questa volta per la sola certezza che gelosamente voi conserverete le brevi composizioni che vi ricordano il conubbio [*sic.*] canoro delle sorelle fortunate, perché ben vecchia e mai stanca, avete conosciuta una delle esecutrici togliendola ai dolci riposi e spronandola all'insegnamento.

Sempre vostra affezionatissima. Barbara Marchisio

27 giugno 1900

Napoli

To R[occo] E[doardo] Pagliara

Librarian of the Conservatory of Naples

Good friend,

I offer to you these cherished memories of my lucky career, to you who have yet collected the last sighs, the flashes, the remains of our Italian bel canto. And do not I offer them or for their merit, nor with the distant hope that they can one day be useful to young pupils of your conservatory. Oh! no, my friend, every day I am convinced that today those who aspire to my beloved art follows a completely different way, with too much impatience, and less enthusiasm! This time, I offer them for the only certainty that you will save jealously these short compositions that remind you the singing union of lucky sisters, because, very old and never tired, you have known one of the performers, taking her away to the sweet repose and spurring her to teaching.

Ever yours affectionately. Barbara Marchisio

June 27, 1900

Naples

A. N. G. Pagliara
bibliotecario del R. Conservatorio di Napoli

Buon amico,

Offro a voi questi cari ricordi della fortunata mia carriera,
a voi che avete ancora raccolti gli ultimi sospiri, gli sprazzi
i resti del nostro bel canto italiano. E non ve li offro ne per
merito loro, ne sotto più lontana speranza che giofano un giorno
opere utili alle giovani alunne di questo vostro Conservatorio.

Oh! no, amico mio, ogni giorno di più mi convinco che oggi
chi aspira all'arte mia adorata segue tutt'altra via con
troppo fretta e minore entusiasmo! E di offro questa volta
per la sola ragione che gelosamente vi conservate le brevi sum-
posizioni che vi ricordano il conubio nuovo delle sorelle fortunate
perché ben vecchia e mai stanca, avete conosciuta una delle escentrici
bagliandola ai dolci riposi e spronandola all'insegna manto.

Sempre vostra affezionatissima Barbara Marchisio

Cadenze e varianti

27 giugno 1900
Napoli

Appendix 3

Section (1)

Sop. *p*

Fl. *p*

(2)

(3a) (3b)

(3c) rit. rit.

(3c cont.) PRESTO rit.

Section (4) not present

(5) rall. (6)

Appendix 3a Flute-cadenza of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Marchesi and Taffanel, as published in *Variantes et points d'orgue, composés pour les principaux airs du répertoire par Mathilde Marchesi* (Paris, ca. 1900).

section (1)

LUCIA

FLAUTO

(2) (3c)

f *f* *pp* *f* *f* *pp*

pp *rall.....* *pp*

(4)

pp *rall.....*

Appendix 3b Cadenza from Lucia's mad scene (Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*), located in Luigi Ricci's anthology printed in 1937, *Variazioni, cadenze, tradizioni per canto*, vol. I, pp. 50–51.

ALLEGRO

TYPE	SINGER	(1)	(2)	(3a)-(3b)	(3c)	(4) "VERRANNO A TE?" THEME	(5)	(6)
C1	Marchesi No. 1 for Melba Composed early 1887; performed 1889, published c. 1900	Interval steps with trills. Antiphonal: soprano then flute	Descent by chromatic roulades; soprano + flute	Arpeggio-based ascent; then triplet-based descent	Scale ascent, repeated <i>g'</i> , then <i>b-flat''</i> . Scale descent	Not present	Triadic figure with trills	Fermata and trill on the penultimate <i>b-flat''</i>
C2	Marchesi No. 2 Published c. 1900	Same as C1	Same as C1	Same as C1	Scale ascent, arpeggio descent	Flute = melody; soprano = arpeggio accompaniment	Variant of C1	Soprano: fermata on the penultimate <i>d'''</i> Same as C1
C3	Marchesi No. 3 Published c. 1900	Chromatic ascent; antiphonal: flute then soprano	Rhythmic variant of C1	Omitted	Variant of C1; <i>b-flat''</i> and <i>a-flat''</i> repeated	Not present	Variant of C1	Same as C1
C1 + C3	Michailowa (sung in Russian; recorded in 1905)	Slight variant of C1; reaches <i>c'''</i>	Same as C3	Omitted	Slight variant of C3	Not present	Same as C1	Same as C1
C4	Pinkert / Tetrzzini [Variant of C3]	Arpeggiated V; antiphonal: soprano then flute	Same as C3	Omitted	Same as C3	Not present	Slight variant of C3	Same as C1
C4'	Dal Monte / Pagliughi / Callas	Slight variant of C4; antiphonal: soprano then flute	Rhythmic variant of C3	Omitted	Rhythmic variant of C3	Soprano = melody; flute = arpeggio accompaniment. Curtailed with tonic plus decorated tonic ending	Omitted	Scale decoration of dominant B,
C1 + C2'	Sutherland	Same as C1 but without initial third leap	Slight variant of C1	Slight variant of C1	Variant of C1	Same as C2 but soprano = melody and flute=accompaniment. No final three repeated notes	Variant of C1; decorated arpeggio	Chromatic decoration of dominant; reaches <i>b'</i> , then fl's section B,

Appendix 3c Table from the study by Naomi Matsumoto which summarises the main variants of the three Marchesi-Melbamodels (C1, C2, C3) (Matsumoto, 2011, pp. 310–11).

Notes

Unless otherwise indicated, English translations are mine.

- 1 Letter to Giulio Ricordi, dated 11 April 1871 (Cesari and Luzio, 1913, p. 256). Hector Berlioz's aversion towards variations introduced during performance by singers is also well known, and is amply clear in the following memorable passage:

[I would say to her before beginning] Madame ... this time we are dealing with a beautiful and noble composition whose every note has a purpose, whose style is chaste, whose form is new, and if you please, you are going to sing it with all your heart, without changing a thing, for, in spite of all the embarrassment which I would cause you, especially in front of the public, I swear to God that at the first embellishment I will stop the orchestra immediately because of your insult to the composer.

(Berlioz, cited in Caswell, 19751, p. 469)

- 2 An example a contrario, or a classic case of an exception that confirms the rule, is found in Verdi's *Macbeth*, act III, No. 11, mm. 186–89, where the composer expressly writes that 'Artists are kindly requested not to perform the usual cadenzas'. Cf. Lawton (2001, p. 701).
- 3 This line of research includes, most notably, studies by Marco Beghelli, Clive Brown, Austin Caswell, Damien Colas, Will Crutchfield and Philip Gossett. Cf. bibliography.
- 4 This is a new frontier for research, especially now that the Web has significantly increased the availability of phonographic sources.
- 5 This sentence (García, 1847, vol. 2, p. 36) was excluded from the later updated editions of both the English and French versions of the treatise. Twenty or thirty years after the first edition, when vocal style was transformed, and in typically Verdian and Wagnerian fashion, this particular emphasis on improvisation probably was considered obsolete and inappropriate. However, this in no way affects the validity of the statement for the period we are considering, that is the first half of the nineteenth century (but, as we shall see, the use of ornamentation and embellishment variations by singers was to continue for quite some time).
- 6 On this point, see also Lamacchia (2005) and Celletti (1968). See also Gossett (2010) and Lamacchia (2010). On the basis of fairly clear indications, such as the lack of adaptations for Malibran in Bellini ('He was well aware that Malibran would have made her own adaptations'), and, on the contrary, the amendments Donizetti himself made for the singer, Gossett (2010, p. 46) surmises that, in fact, 'Malibran personalised every opera she sang with embellishments, dramatic actions and more'. In the numerous press cuttings in Lamacchia's article on the contralto Maria Marcolini (Lamacchia, 2010), reviewers frequently complain about her florid embellishments (defined from time to time as 'ornamenti estrinseci [extrinsic ornamentation]', 'ghiribizzi [whims]', 'frastagli [excessive ornamentation]', 'volate [runs]' and 'vocalizzazioni [vocalisations]') and the personalisation the singer used in the music she performed.
- 7 Colas thus seems to have pinpointed a new balance within the notion of 'authorship', in favour of the composer, unlike Will Crutchfield:

Therefore it is important to keep in view on the one hand (1) that the practice of ornamentation is by definition incompatible with the idea of an absolute point of reference, and, on the other, (2) that only the text left by the composer can be invested with authority.

(Colas, 2004, p. 123)

The principle he invokes, an 'absolute point of reference', as valid as it may be for instrumental music in the nineteenth century, becomes much more problematic when applied to opera. In the latter case, the text is often the result of a negotiation between composers and interpreters. In Italy, Verdi was the first to take on a more markedly creative role, even though he still had to make compromises with singers, especially with respect to his earliest works.

- 8 Scott Burnham in his essay 'The fate of the antepenultimate: fantasy and closure in the Classical style' (see this volume) rightly remarks that one can consider the cadenza both as 'delay' and 'intensification'; in other words, the cadenza itself can function 'both as arrival and departure'. Of course, Burnham's focus is on the 'Classic cadenza' in the concerto, but the concept, in my opinion, can apply to our vocal cadenza.
- 9 Another splendid example, found in Caswell's anthology, consists in Amina's cantabile *Come per me sereno*, once again in *Sonnambula*, which offers highly elaborate versions of the final cadences, by Cinti Damoreau and the Marchisio sisters (Caswell, 1989, p. 20). In particular, the two cadences by Cinti Damoreau, and especially the one performed by the Marchisio sisters contain a number of ornamental figures, which in relation to the corresponding verbal expression ('amor la colorò'), make use of chromatism and appoggiaturas, decorating the notes of the dominant chord in a sensual manner. On the use of the expressive appoggiatura, see Crutchfield, 2012, pp. 627–28.
- 10 The ornaments added by Cinti Damoreau in this aria, however, demonstrate how García's rule regarding the varied repetition of the same phrase is applied. In fact, the score contains a short cadential phrase which is repeated eight times, in an almost identical manner; Cinti Damoreau adds a different variant to each repetition, obviously to 'make it interesting' (cf. Caswell, 1989, pp. 40–42, mm. 195–234).
- 11 This harmonic rule is far more limiting than the one established by Gaspare Spontini several years before, in his *Ristretto di Esercizi per bene apprendere la maniera di canto, e lezioni [sic.] di portamento, di ornamento, ed espressione* (1798–1800; published under the title *Metodo di canto*):

Between the rest [i.e. suspension point] and the cadence [i.e. full-stop cadenza], there is no other difference, as the former has to be attached to the notes of the suspension chord. On the contrary, in the cadence one absolutely must abandon the 4th and 6th chords in order to embellish this more and use others before returning to the perfect chord.

(Spontini, [1798–1800] 2012, p. 52)

In Crutchfield's opinion, a new final cadence came into being in the early nineteenth century as compared to the one that was in vogue in the eighteenth century; it usually leant on a dominant seventh chord (no longer on a dominant fourth-sixth) ('was sung mostly ... during a pause after the dominant chord'), and tended to eliminate the concluding trill ('the supertonic trill was set aside'), and as the century progressed melismas were replaced by textual repetitions ('replacing melisma with bits of text repeated from the aria's final verse'): in other words the 'melismatic cadence' was followed by a 'syllabic cadence', see especially Verdi (Crutchfield, 2012, p. 629).

- 12 'Called "la piccola Pasta", she had a small and delicate voice that was sweet, polished, distinct by virtue of good placement, and had a compass of *b* to *f*'. Her technique was almost impeccable, with an extraordinary agility in embellishing. A lack of fullness of tone and passion was compensated for by exceptional bel canto purity and near-instrumental virtuosity' (Bussi, 2001).
- 13 The other features of a typical cadenza described by Damien Colas are:

(1) *passaggi* expanded to an undetermined number of notes – the free melodic elaboration of a given harmony ... (3) *passaggi* in segments made up of the

regular repetition of a basic melodic cell in a scalic or arpeggiated pattern ... (4) large-scale asymmetry, in contrast with ordinary cadential passages that are ornamented but lack a fermata: (5) the separation of the cadenza from its context, so that it ... could easily be transplanted into another piece or itself substituted by a similar figure.

(Colas, 2004, p. 115)

For an account of the typical cadenza used by Cinti Damoreau, see Caswell (19752, pp. 12 ff.; it. transl. pp. 89 ff.).

- 14 For an accurate examination of the two alternative concepts of 'improvisation' and 'extemporisation' – most of the phenomena we are examining are better ascribed to the latter – see Caporaletti (2005).
- 15 See in particular García ([1847] 1857) (Appendix) and Cinti Damoreau (1849) (which contains a section entirely dedicated to such examples; see it. ed., pp. 50–53 and pp. 99–112). See also Lablache ([1840] 2005) who, after giving a number of examples, explicitly declares: 'I offer them the precedents as recollections of formulas they can change' (p. 135; ed. reprint p. 243; italics mine).
- 16 In the table on p. 273, Damien Colas (2011) notes that 'interpolation' figures (including, therefore, those found in cadences), which are entirely opposed to 'substitution' figures, are mainly characterised by 'weak or non-existent rhythmic contingency' (and thus an absence or suspension of any and all regularly articulated tempo), by the fact that 'memorisation of the formulas ... and notation' are both 'unnecessary', and lastly by the presence of 'numerous degrees of freedom'.
- 17 Another quite similar episode is recounted by Philip Gossett, and concerns a performance of *Tancredi* in Pesaro (1982). In the cabaletta of Isaura's aria (No. 9), which calls for obligatory passages in the clarinet, the singer Bernadette Manca di Nissa introduced her well-studied variations, and the clarinettist of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, who had to add an echo, answered in kind, modifying his part. See Gossett (2006, p. 331; it. transl. p. 359).
- 18 I also suggest listening to and watching a cadenza sung by the American soprano Ruth Welting in 1985 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZKoUwurOtA> [min. 1.05]), which is remarkable not only for the fact that it is performed in the original key (F), but for certain changes to the prevailing model (C4'), including some splendid substitution figures (in Section 2, and especially in the final modules, after the quotation of the theme).

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