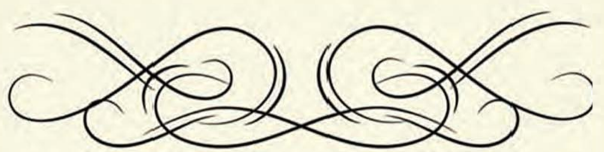
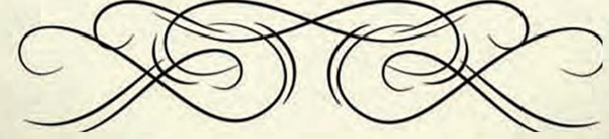
The Old Italian School of Singing

A Theoretical and Practical Guide





Daniela Bloem-Hubatka

Foreword by Ward Marston

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DANIELA BLOEM-HUBATKA

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Table of Contents

Foreword by Ward Marston 1
Preface 3
Introduction 5

1. The Attack 15
2. The Breath 38
3. The Resonance 55
4. Mouth Position and Articulation 75
5. The Registers 89
6. Movement and Agility of the Voice 108
7. The Words in Singing 123
8. Interpretation 131
9. Expression 146

A Summary of Essential Directions for Historical Singing 161
Appendix 1. Jenny Lind Solfeggi 163
Appendix 2. Rossini Gorgheggi (Vocalizes) 166
Appendix 3. Cover: Airs Détachés d'Orphée et Euridice, par Gluck; Air: J'ai perdu 173
Appendix 4. The Singer's Assistant "On the Formation of the Voice"; "General Directions to Singers" 175
Notes 179
Bibliography 195
Index 209

I dedicate this book to all aspiring singers
who wish to sing in the natural manner
of the Old Italian School of Singing

Foreword by Ward Marston

Anyone who has listened attentively to recordings of the great operatic singers of the past century cannot help but notice that singers of today sound radically different from those of, say, one hundred years ago. As someone who has spent most of his life listening critically to singers of the past, I am often dismayed to hear that today's singers lack what in the golden age would have been an essential component of basic vocal training. You can imagine my surprise when I received a CD from someone living in the Netherlands whose vocal production and technique is, to my ears, reminiscent of an earlier style of singing. Her name is Daniela Bloem. She is a lyric soprano and voice teacher who has spent the last thirty years researching the question of why singing has suffered such decline. She believes that vocal pedagogy has largely lost touch with the proper method of teaching the basic and essential principles of singing. I contacted her asking about her repertoire and she gladly sent me additional recordings of a broad range of music. She also sent the introduction to a book she planned to write on the voice. We developed a warm friendship over the phone, discussing singers past and present. A few years ago, Daniela Bloem made a trip to the States, and visited me for several afternoons. Each time, she sang a variety of operatic material as well as lieder and art songs. Daniela, in her mid-sixties, demonstrated that even after singing a strenuous group of arias, her voice did not tire, which she attributes to her own training of her voice in the old method. I am not a voice teacher, but I found her singing captivating and her stamina remarkable. Her visit was very encouraging, because as a teacher, she may be able to shed light on how to recapture the "lost" art of singing. She explained that the teaching of singing has taken a wrong turn and that now, many singers are taught incorrectly. She told me that her own vocal problems led her to investigate how vocal technique had been taught in the 19th century. Then, she completely retrained her voice according to those principles, which forced her to reject much of what she had been taught in her formative years. Daniela has a firm grasp on exactly what is wrong with today's singers and she clearly has something vital to say. This book is a distillation of her research into old methods of teaching, coupled with her personal insight.

Ward Marston is a pioneer in the field of audio restoration. He is a Grammy winner, a recipient of the Award for Distinguished Service to Historical Recordings from the Association for Recorded Sound Collections, and a winner of the Bicentennial Medal for distinguished achievement from Williams College.

Preface

I started to write down my findings about the validity, truth and importance of the teachings of the Old Italian School of Singing through my passion for singing as well as teaching in the historical way. In my search for information I found that the books of the old masters generally agree on the method of singing, thereby inspiring confidence and trust by their instructions, whereas their more modern counterparts offer a variety of often conflicting ideas on singing. I discovered that there were plenty of books on singing currently available but none devoted to the historical Italian method. I was encouraged by my audiences and pupils to become a crusader for this method of singing. They all agreed it was of great importance that I write this book.

The problem with the historical instructions for singing, however, is that they require a means of access to and a basic understanding of the old method in order to grasp the full meaning of their message. That is the primary purpose of this book, to give access to the old method theoretically and practically. Things that were taken for granted in the past must now be rediscovered and explained, which will become clear in the course of this book. I have therefore been obliged to present the historical method in relation to modern teachings. There are many people who will not be surprised to learn that the historical method offers an alternative that guarantees the vocal health of the singer and scope for individual and creative performances.

I am well aware that the necessity to go into great detail describing the historical method might give rise to the impression that this method is complicated. It must be emphasized, however, that precisely the opposite is true; the historical method is simple and logical, following the physical laws of phonation in speech and song.

My approach to the material is based on extensive practical professional experience, performing as a soprano singer and teaching as a singing pedagogue in both the modern and the historical way; my transition from modern to historical singing occurred more than ten years ago. I have therefore been able to observe the difference in the singing methods and their effects on the various aspects of singing from the standpoint of singer and teacher as well as observing listeners- and pupils-reactions.

The reason that I frequently quote the old masters rather than paraphrase them in my own words is to give the reader the opportunity to observe for himself how concise, clear and similar the old masters word their instructions. I have inserted copious

explanatory remarks to enable the reader to enter the historical way of thinking, giving him access to the original material.

The book is written from the standpoint of a soprano but the rules that have to be applied to historical singing are the same for every type of voice. If instructions have been repeated or presented from different angles, this is to emphasize their importance and to crystallize the explanation.

The beginner or the advanced singer who wishes to make the transition to historical singing is strongly advised to purchase the little book *Hints on Singing* by Manuel Garcia, available as a reprint. It contains the concise and yet complete answers to all aspects of historical singing and forms part of the background to my book.

All translations of the poems and prose from the Dutch, French, German and Greek are by the author. When the names Garcia and Lamperti are referred to, this assumes that it is the son and not the father, who will always be referred to as Sr. and in the case of Lamperti by his Christian name.

In order to facilitate the research for this book, I collected a private library of books on singing listed in the bibliography. The witness of the historical singers' biographies provided first-hand descriptions of the physical act of singing. These complemented the instructions of the old masters. It was then very interesting to compare the writings of the modern singers. Also of great value to this research were the recordings of the old singers, not just for their beautiful singing but for their technical excellence and clear use of the historical method.

I wish to thank my husband, Jan Bloem, from the bottom of my heart and say how much I have appreciated his patience and understanding during the time taken on this book. Most grateful thanks also to Brian Lamb, my accompanist and composer, for his unfailing support and encouragement during my voyage of historical vocal discovery. I am indebted to my family for their lively interest in my singing as well as in the process of writing this book.

My pupils deserve my warm thanks and respect for their confidence and perseverance in studying the historical method, presenting me with the confirmation of its unfailingly and amazingly good results in vocal performance at any age and of any kind.

Introduction

"And her voice was the warble of a bird,
So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear,
That finer, simpler music, ne'er was heard;
The sort of sound we echo with a tear
Without knowing why, an overpowering tone
Whence melody descends as from a throne."[1]

It is now more than a hundred years ago that the first recordings of so-called historical singers[2] were made, the same singers who thought that with the aid of those recordings, the art of singing would benefit. They believed that through imitation of their recordings, good singing could be learned more easily than before. In the hundred years that have passed, singing has gradually changed in regard to sound and character from the historical singing documented on the recordings.

The Natural Voice

Listening to the recordings of the historical professional singers, we notice that they sing with a vocal sound that might be called natural and for the purposes of this book this term will be used. The natural voice follows the laws of phonation now known scientifically but developed empirically by the old masters. The natural vocal sound enabled the historical singers to give the required expression in both music and words. Their voices come across clear and brilliant, their intonation pure, their phrasing musical, artful and elegant, their pronunciation clear, their interpretation true to the composers' intentions, their feelings and emotions strike us as genuine, coming straight from the heart. Historical singers all sing after the same method called the Old Italian School.[3] This method of singing was founded in Italy by Italian singers and masters but it is not restricted to singers of Italian nationality. Its principles are universal, for they were developed on the pure vowels of the Italian language and these principles can be applied to other languages. The art of *bel canto* is just a way to sing repertoire; the Old Italian School of Singing is the method to be able to sing all repertoire.

The Artificial Voice

If the qualities of the historical natural voice as mentioned above are applied to the present-day professional singing voice, it can hardly be described as natural but rather as constructed after a preconceived vocal ideal. Generally it elicits responses as pompous and aggressive as well as darker and deeper in timbre with a tendency to melancholy and older sounding than the singer's speaking voice suggests. These characteristics are particularly noticeable in young singers when we have just heard them speak normally and relaxed before they start to sing. Suddenly their singing voices do not seem to be related to their owners anymore and have become incompatible to their young and fresh faces. This is now the recognizable twentieth-century sound that developed after the historical method went out of favor.

Nowadays performances on authentic instruments have become very popular, sometimes even with the musicians all dressed up in clothes of the period, but nobody seems to realize that the cooperating singers "play" their instruments in the modern way and never in the truly authentic manner of the Old Italian School of Singing.

The Individual Sound

If we listen to the recordings of the historical singers we are confronted with personalities expressing their own opinion and, what strikes us particularly, with their own individual sound. "A voice should possess a clear, definite, rich, fundamental tone quality in which the singer's own personality predominates."[4] Present-day singers seem to possess a more corporate sound; we hear more of the method they use than of themselves. Historical singers seem to sing after a method that is not an obstacle to communication but an aid. Their method seems to enable them to use their voices freely for the purpose of recreating the composition. They know how to let us participate in the mystery of music. Their voices speak to us urgently; they sing straight into our heart. The historical singer is certainly well typified in the remark of Mark Hambourg: "But every executant artist can contribute something indefinable of himself to the notes the composer has written, and this indefinableness is what gives life, soul, and humour to music."[5]

Singing as Communication from Heart to Heart

More than two centuries ago singing was considered as an art that had "wondrous effects ... in the human heart: by an occult divine force the heart is seized and turned ... by its talent."[6] Sergei Rachmaninov explained in an interview he gave in 1939 (he forbade it to be published during his lifetime) how he felt about modernism:

> I felt like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien, I cannot cast out the old way of writing, and I cannot acquire the new. The new kind of music seems to come not from the heart but

> from the head. Its composers think rather than feel. They have not the capacity to make their works exalt — they mediate, protest, analyse, reason, calculate and brood, but they do not exalt.

And in his last major interview, in 1941, Rachmaninov said: "I never consciously attempt to write Russian music. What I try to do when writing down my music is to say simply and directly what is in my heart."[7] Accordingly, singers who wish to do justice to the beautiful songs of Rachmaninov ideally should sing with their hearts and not with their heads. The modern method of singing has its basis much more in intellectual reasoning than in direct harnessing of the feelings.

Musicians of the present day seem to perform more and more with their heads instead of their hearts. In singing this preoccupation with the head has had serious effects on vocal sound and expression. Sir Henry Wood complains how desperate matters in the singing world of 1930 have already become and observes: "How few vocalists today can make a real climax by intensity and ring of voice alone, a true voice climax!"[8] Voices seem to suffer from various "taints," as Sir Henry calls them, and he draws up a list: heady, nosy, lippy, teethy, tonguey, throaty and chesty taints. "A fine-toned natural voice should have none of these taints."[9] Here we are confronted again with the ideal sound quality of the historical voice: natural. "We can conjure up and hear mentally the great voices that we have heard in the past, but many present day singers leave no impression upon the mind or the ear."[10] The concern of Sir Henry is that the modern public is not discriminating and demands to be amused by eye rather than by ear. It wants to see more than hear the singer sing; it wants to see the conductor gesticulating; it wants to see the violinist's passionate performance. Few people prefer a performance rendered with easiness and calm.

Sir Henry Wood was closely associated with the method of the Old Italian School for he accompanied in the lessons of Manuel Garcia,[11] building up a vast experience of true singing by having first-hand information on Garcia's teaching.

Crusaders for the Old Italian School of Singing

Blanche Marchesi[12] follows Sir Henry Wood closely in 1932 with her observations vindicating the last great teacher of the Old Italian School of Singing: Manuel Garcia. She grew up with fine singing poured into her. Her mother Mathilde Marchesi,[13] herself a pupil of Garcia, had her own system that deviated partly from Garcia's teachings. She gave the "finishing touch" to numerous star sopranos who had long international careers. Blanche could sing brilliantly herself as we can hear on her recordings: the rendering of the song "L'Été" by Cécile Chaminade in high tempo is miraculous and her "Sicilian Cart Driver's song," recorded when she was 73, shows us a well-preserved middle voice and a thrilling chest voice.[14]

She fought for the preservation of the method of the Old Italian School, giving us a clear picture of the forces that set the abandoning of the true method of singing in motion. At virtually the same time as Sir Henry Wood and Blanche Marchesi, the

historical soprano Blanche Arral[15] makes very astute observations in 1937 on the difference in singing between the Old Italian School and the singing she hears in the thirties. She considers herself lucky that she could listen every day to really great singers at the time of her own singing studies. She hits the nail on the head when she observes a major change in the way that the voice is emitted, telling us that the old masters like Garcia, Marchesi and others "began with the voice as it naturally existed.... If the scale is built on what is already there, the beautiful, personal quality of the individual voice is retained." We notice that her observations are in complete agreement with Sir Henry Wood's. The foundations of the old method were the perfect attack and emission of the voice sustained by breathing to match. The knowledge of the old masters was obtained by empiricism. "Those teachers found the natural quality of each voice and preserved it, so that what nature had begun was developed, polished, and equalized, not changed. That is why voices lasted." Blanche Arral draws our attention to the great variety of tonal quality and color that historical voices presented. The cause of this variety, according to Arral, is also to be found in the method of emission. To her the singers of the 1930s show "very little true tone of any sort."[16] How right Blanche Arral is when she says that the cause of the difference in vocal sound is founded in the method of emission. She confirms that the historical singers sang with a method that brings out their own individual sound whereas present-day singers sing with a method that produces a currently preferred, ideal vocal sound that does not coincide with their own natural voice. The method of the Old Italian School is based on the natural and most efficient way to produce vocal sound. It is founded on the perfect closure of the vocal cords through an action of the larynx that we employ unconsciously in speaking, whereas in singing this action has to be employed consciously. The singing voice that is emitted through this act of the larynx will bring out the individual sound of the singer, conveying the feeling and emotion of the singer's heart.

Historical Singing: A Branch of Music

If we substitute "now" for "1930" we can see for ourselves that the observations of Sir Henry Wood have lost nothing of their urgency. Audiences nowadays expect the abovementioned twentieth-century vocal sound and they are greatly puzzled when they do not get it. They are so used to the "heady" taint that they are under the illusion they miss the overtones if they hear a voice that is produced in the manner of the Old Italian School. They listen with their heads and not with their hearts for the simple reason that the "heady" tone cannot reach the heart.

If we listen to historical singers of different nationalities — like, for instance, Melba (Australian), Santley (English), Calvé and Journet (French), Nezhdanova and Chaliapin (Russian), Patti and Battistini (Italian), Destinn (Czech), Nordica (American), Sembrich (Polish), Schumann-Heink (Austrian), Supervia and de Gogorza (Spanish)— we have to admit that their singing must be an art, a branch of music, for we hear a way of singing that is detached from the national habits of speech. It should be clear

that their way of singing cannot be classified as an "elongation of speech" as singing is sometimes defined. Without exception all these singers sing after the method that was invented in Italy and is called the Old Italian School. The sopranos possessed a special quality, particularly in their high notes, that could be called ethereal or not from this world. To sum up, historical singers all sing according to the same method, the Old Italian School, that enables them to express themselves in their individual way presenting us with true and genuine performances, whereby the spiritual contents of the music come across, not impeded by technical considerations. "The art of singing is not, like science, susceptible to be enriched by new discoveries all the time. Everything has been said on this subject and very well too by competent men who were destined for this study."[17]

If we consider the tremendous advances that science has made over the last decades, this observation has special significance. The investigations into the operations of the human voice using highly sensitive technological means have not contributed to raising the level of present-day vocal sound. "In matters of singing, only good exercises, well executed vocalizes, good music, produce good singers. All possible theories on the larynx, the bronchial tubes, the glottis and epiglottis will never be of the same value as the least cavatine of Rossini."[18] The observation made in 1849 has lost nothing of its urgency. Rossini's vocalizes and his arias have not found their match for vocal development in the historical manner up to this day. They have not yet been superseded by new and different vocalizes for all the later ones are imitations or at best variations of the originals. The historical sounding voice cannot be heard in the flesh on stage or in church and so the general public have no choice, they can only experience the modern sound.

A Classical Repertoire Needs Classical Training

Present-day professional singers sing after the same method that is now taught in conservatories all over the world, but that method does not always seem to be sufficient to meet the demands of classical repertoire in all its requirements. Historical singers seem well prepared to sing the most exacting classical repertoire. The bravura arias like "Io son Titania" from *Mignon* by Thomas or "Ombra leggiera" from *Dinorah* by Meyerbeer are examples of repertoire that can only be performed at the right tempo, with spontaneity and energy when rendered with the technique of the Old Italian School.[19] The present-day method also eradicates special-sounding voice types like the Russian tenor (Lemeshev,[20] Sobinov,[21] Koslovsky,[22] for example). In the professional singing world these voices have become virtually extinct. Tenors sound the same the world over. Fortunately we can watch some superb 20th-century tenors of the Old Italian School like Tagliavini,[23] Björling,[24] Tauber,[25] Tucker,[26] and the abovementioned Russians on DVD or Youtube. Gobbi,[27] baritone, and Chaliapin,[28] bass, give us brilliant examples of the lower male voice produced in the historical manner. Their posture and facial expression confirm and illustrate the teachings of the old masters as described in

this book. It is most interesting to read the comments of the visitors to the websites who agree unanimously that this is great singing of the Old School. The male voice stood a better chance of keeping the historical vocal production well into the 20th century than its female counterpart for the reason that the male voice is mainly produced in the chest. Classical vocal music was invariably composed for and dedicated to singers of the Old Italian School. Ballet dancers have to undergo classical training to be able to perform the classical ballet repertoire. The rigorous training is necessary to meet the demands of performing *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, etc. Interestingly enough these ballet productions have not suffered from modernization like opera productions. Costumes and scenery have remained classical and authentic, contributing to the spectators' understanding of the plot and facilitating the task of the dancers to step into the role. Modern opera productions often put such heavy demands on the singers' physical movements that their actual singing must suffer. The attention of the audience, moreover, is not focused on the singing but rather on the presentation and inventiveness of the production.

Singers who wish to do justice to the expression of classical music will find how much they can benefit from re-educating their present-day vocal sound into the historical one. I have found this to be true for I made the transition into historical singing because I was not satisfied with the voice production that I had been taught, founded on subjective sensations like instructions such as "to sing high in the head, to feel the tone between the eyes, behind the teeth, or in the forehead." I seriously wondered why singing could not be learned in a practical, straightforward method just like learning to play the violin or the piano. These instruments demand a basic technical foundation, an acute and spontaneous touch that suffers no deviation; the violinist has to put his bow on the string to produce a perfect tone, just as the pianist has to put his fingers on the keys. Here we have no subjective sensations but simply a definite physical action that, so my common sense told me, should not be any different in singing. The historical method provided me with the clear technical foundation based on the physical action of the vocal organs that can execute this acute touch just like the violinist's bow, the pianist's fingers or the trumpet player's lips. Our larynx can execute the act of embouchure similar to that of the trumpet player and can be developed into an extremely strong instrument of the highest technical perfection as demonstrated by the historical singers.

An Autobiographical Sketch

Born into a highly musical and cultural family I grew up with the exquisite Kreisler-style violin playing of my Czech-Viennese father and the poetry recitations of my mother, a great-granddaughter of the famous Dutch writer Jacob van Lennep.[29] Music and poetry were part of the daily routine in our home where the beautiful crystal-clear voice of one of my sisters often rang out in joyful Bach and Handel airs. Already at a tender age, music revealed its mysterious powers to me, watching my father who became

a different person as soon as he started to play. All his worries seemed to disappear and I used to listen spellbound to his thrilling and pure violin tones that conjured up a magic realm. Warm June nights we all sat outside under the big jasmine bushes to listen to the warbling of the nightingale. Singing soon became second nature to me and I remember wondering at the difference in sound between the pure voice of my sister and that of the classical singers of the 1960s played on records. I enjoyed imitating the eccentric sound effects they produced. Personal circumstances prevented an early professional vocal education and consequently a "discovery" of my voice did not occur until I was married to Jan Bloem, a professional baritone, who encouraged me to undertake professional training. I fervently wished to get my voice developed for Jan and I had been introduced to the German composer Hans-Georg Burghardt,[30] whose beautiful Lieder Jan sang and whose music we promoted energetically. We visited him regularly and our contact developed into an intimate friendship. Burghardt had composed many Lieder for the soprano voice that I wanted to sing. But before I was ready to sing them, Burghardt first coached me to play his compositions for harmonium, requiring a special technique to reveal the true soul of this instrument. The lovely floating ethereal tones that can be produced by the player have a strong effect on the listener, who experiences relief from stress and nervousness. The biannual Harmonium Convention in Saltaire, Great Britain, brought me my first international acclaim as virtuoso on the harmonium. As soon as I could sing his Lieder in concert, Burghardt nicknamed me "his little Callas."

I was taught the present-day method of singing; although I considered it awkward and unnatural, I had no alternatives to choose from. All my life before my professional vocal training I had sung with my own untrained voice following the example of my sister. I did not like my newly acquired voice that was made to sound rather like the eccentric sound of the singers on the records I used to imitate for sheer fun. I put my talent of imitation into practice to produce the professional voice of the twentieth century, sang concerts with it, and taught it to my pupils. However, I clearly felt that the method constituted an impediment to pouring the feeling in my heart into my performance. The vocal sound that was demanded and that I had to manufacture consciously made me feel alienated from my own spontaneous voice that I had sung with previously. I continued to sing in the way I had been taught until I found the means of re-educating my voice in the manner of the Old Italian method after years of intensive research and experimenting with various methods of voice production. Reading a great many books, both ancient and modern, about voice development, I began to lose courage that I should ever attain my goal: to rediscover the secret of true vocal art, natural, genuine and effortless as well as charged with the full cargo of expression. The historical singers possessed it and managed, despite the poor recording techniques of their times, to convey enough of it to confirm that the Old Italian School is the preferable way to sing if we want to perform the works of the classical composers in a profound and adequate manner. With my education of singing in the modern style, I could not understand the ancient books whereas the modern books confirmed what I had been taught with only a few variations.

Just at the time when I was at the end of my tether after a hectic year's work, Brian Lamb, my accompanist/composer, gave me a little book and said: "This is dynamite, you have to read it!" The book was *The Foundations of Singing* by Franklyn Kelsey,[31] written in 1950.

During my holiday I read it again and again.... Here at last I was handed the key to open and understand the mysterious books of the old masters. This was August 1999; since then I have applied myself with all my energy to re-educate my voice guided by the clear instructions of Kelsey and thanks to him those of the great old masters like Mancini,[32] Tosi,[33] Nathan,[34] Garcia, etc. The wonderful sound production of many historical singers now available on CD accompanied my voyage of vocal discovery and confirmed my findings by its stimulating example. My gift of imitation that had previously enabled me to acquire the professional modern sound now eased my efforts in developing the desired historical sound.

I can honestly say that as soon as I produced my first tones after the method of the Old Italian School, more than 10 years ago, I knew intuitively that I had "come home" to my own natural voice, produced in the professional manner of the historical singers. At the same time it struck me like lightning that singing in the historical manner constitutes a difference in kind to singing in the present-day manner.

"The historic Italian school of singing — a better term than the now debased *bel canto* — made use of a voice that very few people know they possess until a competent teacher shows them how to evoke it."[35]

These words of Kelsey are only too true but it is the best tribute to the clear instructions in his excellent book that they enabled me to find precisely that voice and develop it into a present-day historical voice. Listeners who regularly attended my concerts commented positively on the metamorphosis in my voice, encouraging me to proceed on the path I had taken. Others who only heard me on recordings usually remarked that I sounded like the singers on the historical recordings.

After 10 years of concert singing, teaching, and practicing in the method of the Old Italian School, encouraged by the enthusiasm of my fans and pupils, I flew to Philadelphia where I sang for Ward Marston of Marston Records, highly esteemed producer of historical CDs. It was the crowning glory on my efforts when he enjoyed my singing over several long sessions. He confirmed the success of my rediscovery of the old method and bestowed the "Beethoven kiss" on my historical voice production.

Just like the historical singers who recorded mostly when they were advanced in years keep their voices fresh and amazingly young sounding, my "ageless" voice is a source of amazement to my listeners. The historical voices exhibit no signs of wear and tear that would suggest long careers, just a wealth of maturity. Regularly I receive professional singers in my studio who wish to re-educate their voice into singing in the historical manner. Some of them confess to dislike their conservatory-trained voice to such a degree that they stopped singing altogether, taking up choir conducting, for instance. My practical experience of singing in the present-day manner helped me as a teacher, enabling me to demonstrate the striking difference in sound production from the historical method. Again my gift for imitation proved a great asset: I could now

demonstrate to my pupils their defective efforts, thereby speeding up their improvement. Mancini mentions perfect imitation of and demonstration to the pupil as being among the requirements of a teacher of singing.[36]

I regard as a special challenge those pupils who think that they possess no singing voice yet cherish a burning desire to sing. It is truly exciting to bring their voices out, preparing them to join a choir or even just to sing along in church. Regular experience with the historical method over the last ten years has convinced me that it gives pupils who seem hopeless a better chance to overcome their handicaps than any other method. One of the most touching reactions I received: "I was in the desert and you gave me water!" Another aspect of teaching in the historical method is that singing in this way also seems to have a beneficial effect on the pupil's speaking voice and general health. A number of pupils complained from tired and sore throats as a result from having professions where much speaking is involved. They find that the efficient and hygienic use of the voice for singing can be applied to improve speaking in a similar way.

Agreement on the Historical Method

The books of the old singers and masters like Andreas Herbst, Pier Francesco Tosi, Agricola, Isaac Nathan, Charles Lunn, Giuseppe Concone, Manuel Garcia, Giovanni Battista Lamperti, Jean Baptiste Faure, Julius Stockhausen, Sir Charles Santley, Jenny Lind, Luisa Tetrazzini, Nellie Melba, Sir Henry Wood, and Blanche Marchesi all agree on the Old Italian School as being the only true method for developing the voice and preparing it to meet the demands of modern music in those times that we now call classical.

Books written about the teaching of singing over the last 100 years, with a few notable exceptions, tend to use highly technical language and concentrate on pseudo-scientific subjects such as sinus-tone production. Moreover, they have a tendency to vagueness on important subjects like, for instance, the attack of the sound and the registers, areas of major importance in the historical method. Generally they approach the teaching of singing through subjective sensations.

In the books of the old masters of singing, we find their starting point unanimously focused on the mechanical laws of the human instrument itself and never on subjective sensations. Manuel Garcia does not mention the subjective sensations a singer might have but he unravels the mystery of human sound production by explaining the necessary functions of the singing voice comprehensively and exactly.

An Outline of the Working Method

In the course of this book we shall follow the path of the "natural" art of singing the Italian School teaches: the attack of the voice (the vibrator). The most important step in vocal production of any kind, the right attack leads straightaway into true legato

singing performed on "ah." This is practiced long enough with sustained tones and agility exercises supported by good breathing (the air compressor) to become second nature. Gradually we learn to understand the function of the registers, resonance and focus of the voice (the resonator). Different vowels can then be introduced and lastly consonants, leading to pronunciation of words in singing (the articulator) and that leads to expression and interpretation. If the groundwork has been done well, the last two will bring out all the potential talent with which the singer has been endowed to communicate with an audience. Each chapter will have practical hints at the end, encouraging and helping the aspiring singer to find his way in the historical way of singing. Practical experience with the positive effects on the health of the singer will be mentioned. It has proved to be unavoidable that certain aspects of the historical way of singing should be mentioned repeatedly to ease the readers' access to the historical approach of developing the voice.

Put your trust in the teachings of the old masters and persevere like I did; you will be richly rewarded with the bliss of singing with your own unique voice and exclaim: "What happiness, what delight to sing well!... And then all those people who hang on your lips, who listen to your songs as if it were divine, who are electrified and enchanted... You sway them all."[37]

1

The Attack

There is no other way to approach the subject of the right attack of the voice in the Old Italian School of Singing but in a very elaborate manner for the simple reason that this attack has and is being generally rejected by singers and teachers of the modern methods of singing.

They have no practical knowledge and experience of the very thing they so earnestly reject. As a consequence they can find no access to the teachings of the masters of the Old Italian School if they wished to do so. The dogmas of the Old Italian School have been distorted and adapted to suit the findings of doctors and therapists who accumulated layers of scientific facts which contradicted and gradually obliterated the natural laws of phonation on which the foundations of the Old Method have been built.

To understand the importance of the attack of the voice by means of the *coup de glotte* or "stroke of the glottis," as Manuel Garcia described the mechanical action of the larynx, the statements of the old masters and historical singers as well as their reviewers will be presented. Composers who composed for the historical singers will be quoted also. Room will be given to modern writers and adversaries of the *coup de glotte* or rather what they presumed as being the *coup de glotte* that in the teaching of charlatans had quickly become its own enemy. By approaching the subject from various angles that all lead to the same facts, it will become clear to the reader that the emission of voice in the historical manner can only be obtained through the right attack or *coup de glotte*. Practical hints and comments will accompany the statements mentioned above.

The Historical Attack of the Voice and Present-Day Means of Starting the Voice

"And the critics never stopped admiring the way she attacked the notes."

"The Melba attack was little short of marvellous [writes Henderson].[1] The term 'attack' is not a good one. Melba indeed has no attack. She opened her mouth and a tone was in existence. It began without any betrayal of breathing; it simply was there."[2]

"There can be no real singing without a good attack." These words from Nellie Melba[3] of whom Henderson mentioned that she "had no attack" illustrate the pre-eminence of the Old Italian method perfectly.

It is now an established fact to nearly everyone connected with singing, certainly on conservatories all over the world using modern methods, that the voice should be started with a "soft attack," this has been superseded recently by a "voiced attack."[4]

With the old method, the opposite of a soft attack is the rule; a firm attack that is invariably glottal, with a lead of the larynx is the only way to produce a well-focused voice. The Old Italian School implied that our natural voice should be emitted through means of the mechanism of physical anatomical laws automatically and efficiently. Like all other bones and muscles in our body, every part of our larynx and pharynx has a definite purpose so that it follows that if certain parts are neglected or insufficiently used, the voice can never sound as it is meant to sound and that goes for singing as well as speaking. Charles Lunn[5] gives us a fine illustration of this fact when he says that an arm out of its socket cannot be put back by practicing the piano, but a weak arm in its socket can be strengthened by practicing carefully and diligently.[6] This natural law holds good for our voice. Unless the right mechanical condition is established for the emission of a beautiful singing sound, that sound can never be attained. We cannot induce our voice to emit beautiful singing sounds unless we obey the anatomical laws of nature to which our body is subject. "The voice organs must be set right before we can rightly play upon them, but the development of their rightly used muscles is dependent upon time and work."[7] The Old Italian School knew these laws by empiricism and we can see them confirmed by scientific facts. There is no shortcut to beautiful singing, just as there is no shortcut to playing the violin or the piano.

Any means other than the natural and spontaneous means of emission of the voice is volitional, induced by our will. The fundamental difference between the Old Italian School of singing and all other methods lies in the fact that the historical voice is a byproduct of a spontaneous and mechanical action of the body. It is not just the will to sing that initially produces the historical voice but a mechanical action that every human being sets in motion straight after birth. The perfection of the infant's cry might be gradually lost when we grow up through the acquired way of speech that varies with language, dialect, class and education. The historical art of singing is founded on the mechanical action of the larynx or vibrator that brings forth the vocal sound completely independent of the articulator and resonator. The importance of these facts will be explained in detail in the course of the book. For now we will concentrate on the mechanical action itself called the attack.

A soft or voiced attack of the singing voice as it is practiced nowadays will invariably produce a voice without a proper focus, the reason being that a soft attack goes hand in hand with "expiratory singing" (with the breath flowing out). As a consequence of the soft attack, the remedy is then sought in forcing the voice into places of resonance where it would have traveled and come to rest (focus) of its own accord after a firm laryngeal attack. Expiratory singing is the result of singing in the direction of the sound and is always accompanied by breathiness. The voice sounds as if it has a veil placed in front of it, which can be of varying degrees of thickness: a hooting voice or the voice can be likened to the sound of the chainsaw as a result of strong nasal resonance, to mention some common aberrations.

"It is the fundamental weakness of the modern school of singing ... that the singers sing in the direction of the outward flowing sound, and so cause the maximum degree of unbalance at the instrument itself."[8] The teachers of the Old Italian School always instructed the singer "to sing downwards, into the concentration of sound below the larynx, and never upward and away from it."[9]

The only way to obtain a real "soft attack" resulting in a clear and brilliant sound is through long and ardent practice on a firm glottal attack. This may sound like a paradox but experience proves it to be true. Remember what Henderson said about Melba's attack; it becomes clear that she realized to perfection what the Old Italian School teaches: to perform the attack in such a way that the tone is there instantly, accurately and brilliantly. It requires regular practice but the reward is guaranteed.

The *Coup de glotte*

To disperse the thick clouds of misunderstanding that have gathered around the term *le coup de glotte* or "the stroke of the glottis," a thorough explanation to discover the truth of the term is necessary. Manuel Garcia coined the term *coup de glotte*, giving us a clear and precise description of the action of the attack that has since suffered much undeserved abuse. If you start a singing tone with Melba's good attack, you have then executed what Garcia called *coup de glotte*, which is no more than the precise and accurate start of the tone, by means of the refined laryngeal mechanism we all possess, that produces a perfect closure of the glottis. From my researches a proper *coup de glotte* or a "firm attack" can be easily produced following the instructions of Kelsey, based on Garcia's accurate description *sec et vigoureux* of the phenomenon. *Sec* means "without breathiness" and *vigoureux* is "firm."[10] Kelsey had lessons from Marcel Journet,[11] a splendid singer who sang in what is called, and people understand as, the "historical manner" (meaning the Old Italian School).

Melba's legendary teacher, Mathilde Marchesi, herself a pupil of Garcia, and who gave her the finishing touch (Melba had had seven years of Italian School teaching from the Italian Cecchi in Australia), however, still uses the term *coup de glotte* to describe the right attack, that she calls a "mechanical action" produced by the preparation of the glottis to form a vowel. The vowel "Ah" is the preferred vowel. She stresses the fact that the "stroke of the glottis is a normal function of the vocal organ," and that from that same source came our first cry as a baby. In speaking, our vowels are produced by this ability of the stroke of the glottis.

Above the exercise for the attack of the voice she writes that the glottis has to be contracted before emitting the vowel "Ah."[12]

Sir Morell Mackenzie[13] gives us the following valuable description of the *coup de glotte*: "The coup de glotte, or exact correspondence between the arrival of air at the larynx and the adjustment of the cords to receive it is a point that cannot be too strongly insisted upon.... The sole guide is the muscular sense."[14] He says in a footnote about the muscular sense: "This is the feeling by which our consciousness is made aware of

the movements and position of our limbs. It is different from the sense of *touch*, which resides in the skin."[15] This is a very important remark, because in starting the tone we have to feel what we are doing and our ears can be of no help in the purely physical act of the attack. There should be no preconceived vocal sound, color or "beautiful" effect in our mind when we wish to sing in the historical manner. To put it even stronger: we should not wish to "sing" but simply perform a physical action like other actions our body performs out of necessity. The baby does not employ its "will to cry" consciously. When we speak, "something" starts our voice or else we would not be able to speak.

One of the main causes of misunderstanding is the fact that the listener cannot hear the *coup de glotte* or stroke of the glottis as such (muscular sense as described by Mackenzie). He just hears the perfect singing tone emerge from the singer's throat, if that singer employs it in the proper manner, like, for instance, Melba and Tetrazzini,[16] and with them all the historical singers we can listen to on the recordings now available on CDs.

The singer himself, however, has learned to trust his muscular sense much more than he can trust his ears, for his ears would only deceive him. The *coup de glotte* is a purely physical act, executed at the bottom of the throat on top of the breastbone, and is utterly and completely independent of the articulator and resonator. It is possible to develop a healthy and beautiful singing voice that sounds as fresh today as the voices did hundreds of years ago but only with long and arduous practice on the management of this tone-producing act. Only when the singing voice on the vowel "ah" is settled and has attained flexibility through agility exercises can other vowels be introduced, followed by words, preferably Italian. Charles Lunn describes the vowel "Ah" without the aspirate as follows: "This sound is solely physical. All other sounds are metaphysical; that is, a change of form of the parts takes place in response to the dictates of the will."[17] Lamperti, Sr., agrees: "Because that is the vowel which, more than all the others, opens the throat, and so when the pupil can vocalize with ease on A, he will find no difficulty in doing the same on the other vowels."[18] The old masters all agree with Lamperti Sr. that the open timbre should be used by the pupil: "The open quality ... should be produced by the vowel A, as in the word *anima*. It should be formed in the bottom of the throat, care, however, being taken that it does not change into O ... since such an inflection ... would render it smaller and without brilliancy in a theatre."[19] Lamperti Sr.'s instruction that the vowel "ah" "should be formed in the bottom of the throat" refers to the attack with a *coup de glotte*. We see that the old masters had good reasons to choose the vowel "ah" for developing the voice in a natural way.

On the Nimbus CD's "The Era of Adelina Patti" the clear voice of Sir Charles Santley [20] captivates us and we wonder how a 79-year-old singer has preserved his voice so well. We are fascinated by the different voices he can produce; his voice sounds extremely sonorous and well focused, so the shaky old woman's voice he puts on is all the more humorous when we realize his own age. The diction is very clear and the overall impression is one of complete vocal mastery. In one of the lectures by John Mewburn Levien on Santley we read: "I may say that Santley used the 'Coup de Glotte' i.e., 'the attack' or start of sentence-commencing vowels, with the mechanism, as regards

the throat, of the slightest possible cough. This bit of technique has been widely called in question of late years, and I thought I would just record Santley's practice in the matter."[21] Levien certainly knew what he was talking about. He was a singer himself and a professor of singing at the Guildhall School of Music, and he was a good friend of both Santley and Manuel Garcia, whose family biography he wrote.

It is very conspicuous that music critics of bygone days usually make a point of mentioning the attack of the singer, like that of Marcella Sembrich,[22] pupil of both Lampertis,[23] "with bell-like purity of her attack of the tone."[24] Furthermore we read of Sembrich that "she represents the Old Italian School in perfect purity, nobility and beauty."[25] Nowadays we search in vain for a comment on the attack of the tone like the above mentioned.

Crooning or Breathy Attack

We get a good impression how different the approach to singing is at the end of the 20th century as regards the attack of the voice in the interesting book of Jerome Hines.[26] He interviews 42 professional singers of various nationalities with mainly the following questions: "What does an open throat mean to you?" "What about placement?" "What about breath support?" The attack of the voice is not included as a question. It is only mentioned in passing with one singer, Cornell MacNeil.[27] Both MacNeil and Hines seem to employ a "crooning or breathy attack," also called a half H. It is not an attack "on the cords, almost glottal" but "a relaxed attack, started with that little breath of air, usually at the start of a phrase."[28] To start the phrase with an H can have grotesque effects. For instance, in a performance of Liszt's *Via Crucis* when the baritone sang for everyone to hear clearly Christ's words at the cross as follows: "*H*Eli, [Hayley] *H*Eli, lama Sabacthani?" On the recording made from the radio the H comes through very well, for millions of listeners to enjoy. A firm glottal attack would have brought off the outcry of Christ in a more convincing manner.

The Attack of Jenny Lind

We have ample written evidence that the historical singers who sang before the invention of the gramophone started their tones with a perfect attack or stroke of the glottis. Jenny Lind,[29] for instance, clearly describes singing several notes as "striking," adding that it is "binding" at the same time. She writes to a friend of hers, Gusti, who studies singing using Friedrich Schmitt's *Singing School*.[30] Her friend does not seem to understand a paragraph and Jenny Lind explains it to her and to us saying that a firm attack via "striking" can only be achieved with a well-prepared larynx. Once the note sounds it has to be seamlessly connected, "binding" with the ones above or below it so that the phrase is continuous.[31]

This is a description from a singer herself that makes sense. She stresses that the

larynx has to be prepared for the work to come. Striking and binding are well chosen expressions and will be confirmed by the singer who sings in the historical manner. The mechanical action of the larynx might be described as a stroke and the continuity of the action might be called binding. Her own *solfeggi* are most effective for the soprano voice and practiced daily will keep the singer's voice in perfect condition. (See Appendix 1.)

In the biography of Emma Thursby[32] we read the following advice in one of the letters of her teacher Hermine Rudersdorff: "I have written you a few exercises, which shall be your daily half hour practice, beginning always with one exercise of strokes."[33] Clearly she means a *coup de glotte* and she completely agrees with Jenny Lind in calling the act a stroke. Jenny Lind's poignant remark, "It lies in the flexibility of the larynx, and must therefore be practiced,"[34] is to be taken very seriously indeed. Regular agility exercises are an absolute must if we wish to sing in the historical manner and will unfailingly facilitate a good attack.

Confusion Concerning the *Coup de glotte*

Let us now take a look at Reynaldo Hahn's fascinating speeches on singing[35] and observe the complete bewilderment in 1914 on the issue of the *coup de glotte*. Hahn mentions two methods to produce vocal sound. He gives us some good reasons why the manner of singing on the outflow of breath (expiratory singing) has enough disadvantages to be rejected by many teachers of his day. And then he comes to

> the other method of sound production [which] is the stroke of the glottis. Ah, the stroke of the glottis! What a lot of talk it has provoked! Its most illustrious advocate is Monsieur Faure.[36] But does anyone really know what a stroke of the glottis is? It is something very difficult to explain ... yet it is very easy to perform. M. Faure has never tired of advocating the stroke of the glottis. He extols its merits and asserts that the glottal jolt is our only hope of salvation.[37]

Hahn then proceeds to quote from a contemporary writer on singing, a fierce adversary of the glottal stroke, who says:

> I have before me a treatise by one of the great masters of singing (J.B. Faure), who recommends the glottal attack but who, when he himself sings, does his best to avoid the practice. I repeat, M. Faure has always attacked the tone with a great deal of clarity and has always sung very accurately without ever having recourse to the glottal stroke.[38]

Remember Henderson's impression of Melba's attack!

It can be seen how hotly the stroke of the glottis was debated and at the same time obtain a clear view of the source of all the misunderstanding. An examination of *La Voix et le Chant* of J.B. Faure shows pages and pages full of little arrows printed underneath the notes of the exercises, the little arrow standing for a *coup de glotte*.

The difficulty was and is that a *coup de glotte* is not actually heard as such by the listener, as pointed out before and as evidenced in the comment on Faure's singing.

Knowing this, the debate becomes understandable and the adversaries of the *coup*

de glotte who did not understand it themselves have succeeded in abolishing it from teaching, for nowadays it is considered a most dangerous practice that must eventually lead to the ruin of the voice. Kelsey realized the paramount importance of an accurate *coup de glotte*, having been taught the correct method by Journet. He says that the attack of the sound and the control of the breath are the two foundations on which the art of singing is built. The second follows the first for it depends largely on the first. The singer has two ways to emit a sound: with partial or complete closure of the glottis. Partial closure means with breath escaping, leading with the breath, complete closure can only be a stroke of the glottis leading with the larynx, resulting in the precise and accurate start of the note. Kelsey stresses this fact, "There is no single act of vocal technique more vital, or of greater importance, than the gesture of the larynx which the true singer employs in order to launch the sound."[39] The importance of the right attack of the sound becomes all the more obvious as soon as we begin to realize that the right attack and breath control are closely entwined. The first act in breath control is executed by the perfect closure of the glottis.

Back to Reynaldo Hahn, for he heard J.B. Faure sing when the singer was over 70 and he was deeply impressed by the quality of his voice. "If the glottal stroke played a role in his singing, well then, I am all for it. Indeed, I must admit, I do not believe that one can sing with no recourse whatsoever to the stroke of the glottis, and even those who profess to avoid it use it."[40] Hahn gives us a lively picture of the time when singing was in transition. He heard all the great historical singers of his day and accompanied many of them, which makes him a competent witness to the evolution in singing methods at that time.

The Wrong *Coup de glotte*

How then is a wrong *coup de glotte* produced? Mary Garden[41] describes the process as taught by "bad teachers":

> What is the stroke of the glottis? The lips of the vocal cords in the larynx are pressed together so that air becomes compressed behind them and instead of coming out in a steady, unimpeded stream, it causes a kind of explosion. Say the word "up" in the throat very forcibly and you will get the right idea.[42]

Forcibly saying "up" in the throat causes the action to go up indeed, whereas a *coup de glotte* is directed downwards into the chest. In her book *Mary Garden's Story* she advises the Italian method to study voice, for according to her with that method one can acquire the mastery to sing in any language.[43] Listening to her wonderful singing, full of clear and perfect attacks, she is a good example of the singer who employs a splendid *coup de glotte* perhaps unconsciously, just like Hahn points out above. Nellie Melba did not call her own perfect attack *coup de glotte* understandably because already in her days the term was a hotly disputed item and tragically misunderstood. She describes the right *coup de glotte* as follows: "There must be no breathiness in the attack. Nor will there be, if the ribs have been held still until after the attack. There must be no jerk or click

in the attack." She continues with the description of the incorrect *coup de glotte* as mentioned above by Mary Garden: "This is known as the 'Coup de Glotte,' and has ruined many voices. It is usually caused by allowing too much breath to collect behind the vocal chords, before releasing them to begin to sing."[44] Her description illustrates the confusion associated with the term.

Both Mary Garden and Nellie Melba had the great advantage to have Scottish as their mother tongue, a language with a brisk attack of the sound producing sonorous speaking and singing voices. The same goes for the legendary singer Gracie Fields[45] who spoke and sung with the natural "hard attack" of the Lancashire-born girl.

Another description of a wrong *coup de glotte* is presented in Percy Judd's little book:

> This must not be preceded by the sound of the breath or initiated by the glottal stop, the consonantal sound heard with accented initial vowels in German and in some English dialects in place of "t" in "water," "bottle," etc. [the "T" is substituted by a sort of burp, like something coming up in your throat]. Many writers have mistaken the glottal stop for the *coup de glotte* of Manuel Garcia and have criticized this accordingly. Nothing could resemble less Garcia's ideal of attack.[46]

The Right *Coup de glotte*

J.B. Faure gives a clear explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of the two forms of attack. He completely agrees with Kelsey on the two possible ways open to the singer to start the sound: by expiration or by a stroke of the glottis and then he discards the first way for two reasons. Expiratory singing causes a great loss of air and is never instantaneous, so the singer appears to be slightly late and in many cases even slurs up to the note. If we compare the same aria sung by a modern singer and a historical one, the difference in accuracy will become clear.

> Before attacking the sound with the coup de glotte, the larynx has to be closed instantly after introducing a certain quantity of air into the lungs, and good care has to be taken not to let any air escape in the emission of the chosen sound. It is the pinching of the glottis that one applies at this moment that should give to that note the explosive character called: le Son piqué (spiccato). The stroke of the glottis is for the voice what the touch of the finger is for the piano; according to the heaviness or lightness of the touch, the sound is more intense or weaker, but the attack suffers no change of intensity.... So to begin with, exercise this important job by a limitless number of attacks, short and always equal, before applying yourself to prolonging the sound indefinitely.[47]

Faure proceeds to give us 30 pages full of *coups de la glotte* over the whole range of the voice. And how right he is in saying that you have to get the attack right before you can apply yourself to keep the ensuing sound going. He knows how the voice benefits by performing the stroke of the glottis in the right manner; the laryngeal muscles react very quickly to regular practice and the singer will be able to perform the *coup de glotte* as a skillfully executed gesture into the permanent pressure necessary for historical voice production.

Staccato

Adelina Patti[48] was famous for her use of *staccato*.

> The first time I heard Adelina Patti sing, I sat in the last row of the gallery, and the *diva* on the stage looked so remote and small I thought I should not hear her when she sang. It was music that seemed to come from a different world, so wonderful it was and so simple; but I shall never forget her first staccato notes. The bell-like tone, with its peculiar carrying power was so intense that I, with several others, looked about to see if some one nearer to us was singing. This illustrates how the staccato of the human voice, in regard to balance and carrying power, represents the minimum effort and the maximum result.[49]

Staccato exercises are extremely beneficial and can be of great help to find the self-placing capacity of the human voice. Faure instructs the singer (soprano and tenor) to execute *staccato* exercises starting on G1 (altos and bass voices on C1), repeating eight *staccatos* and then sustaining the ninth without changing or darkening the tone, continuing the exercise by half-step intervals to G2. With this exercise the singer realizes how easy it is to achieve a good singing tone, particularly a soft one, and how to hold on to it without deforming it, feeling the point of control necessary for good tone production.

The teacher who employs the *coup de glotte* will be most aware that at the end of a day of teaching it, his own voice is sonorous and fresh. Teaching expiratory singing will most likely tire the voice and require a recovery period. On a personal note, having done both, I can vouch for the veracity of this statement.

The *Coup de glotte* as Therapy for Damaged Vocal Cords

It is common knowledge to laryngologists and speech therapists that the vocal cords of patients who have lost the power of speech for physical rather than psychological reasons can be brought into full action again by shock and cough exercises.

In a series of lectures given at a congress in the Netherlands, one of the lecturers advocated for the treatment of this problem using a hard attack that we would take to mean a good voiceless *coup de glotte*, coughing and staccato exercises.

The very same experts, however, tell you that the singing voice should only be started with a "soft attack." It is a paradox that healthy vocal cords are strictly forbidden to do their job properly, whereas injured ones are healed by vigorous attacks.[50]

Personal experiences confirm the above. An eleven-year-old girl came to me suffering from permanent hoarseness and nodules on her vocal cords. It turned out that she regularly sang along with pop CDs where the singers generally sing too low for little girls' voices. Girls of this age have very high voices and when they force themselves to sing low they run the risk of damaging the vocal cords. In the first lesson I instructed her to imitate me singing higher and higher in the normal soprano range with a brisk attack of the sound on the English vowel "E." She did this effortlessly. Then I asked her to read aloud to me; she did that in a husky speaking voice with hardly any sound

on the vowels. I demonstrated how she might elongate the vowels and intone her voice higher, thereby improving her sound. She came to me regularly once a week for half a year and I had her sing simple, songs vocalizing them. To my surprise her mother told me that the checkup at the laryngologist who had previously diagnosed the nodules now showed her to be healed.

The Difference Between the Nordic Larynx and the Italian Larynx

Frederick Husler and Yvonne Rodd-Marling[51] give us an excellent survey of present-day singing methods. They profess, however, that Nordic larynxes differ from Italian larynxes and they advise against a glottal stroke implying that this act can only be performed by the healthy Italian larynx. The *Glottisschlag*, as they understand the act, is really identical with the abovementioned wrong *coup de glotte*: "In advance of the start of the tone, the breath is being stowed beneath the vocal cords that are pressed together."[52] This obviously is not the *coup de glotte* as meant by Garcia, but the pathetic parody of bad teachers who taught the *coup de glotte* as an explosive release of the vocal cords by the stowed breath, instead of a well executed gesture into a certain pressure.

The supposed physical difference between the Nordic and the Italian larynx, however, is not adequately explained. The writers describe the Nordic larynx as generally poorly conditioned, but this is not a physical difference. If you listen to the speaking of Germans, then you hear a very hard attack on the vowel-commencing words. The Scandinavian languages are related to German. These countries have produced the most astounding singers, such as Lind, Flagstad and Björling. Husler and Rodd-Marling proceed to give us, indicated on a diagram of the human head and chest, all the various places to attack the sound in present-day singing, such as behind the front teeth, at the root of the nose (mask), at the forehead, at the soft palate and right on top of the head. They marvel at the fact that the Italians practice the hard attack for the special reason of perfecting a "soft" attack. They describe on this diagram attack No. 2 above the breastbone "as the most thorough way to close the glottis," and, they add, "also as the safest way with the least danger of clamping up the muscles of the throat. Through this attack, a sonorous, vigorously sounding, so-called open sound quality is achieved as it is preferred and practiced in Italian schools. The procedure ... partly covers what these schools understand as the conception of *appogiare la voce*."[53] They hereby acknowledge the supremacy of the method of the Old Italian School, but unfortunately they limit its use to Italians only, obviously through the misunderstanding around the stroke of the glottis, whereas the historical singers of diverse nations all sang after the Italian method.

Husler and Rodd-Marling give comment on the record that accompanies their book with examples of voice production illustrating their findings on the many places of attacking the sound. They comment on the singing of John McCormack[54] by say-

ing that he attacks his voice with No. 3 on the same diagram behind the front teeth, thereby showing unintentionally that the Old Italian method as used by McCormack obeys the laws of nature. The combination of McCormack's perfect (glottal!) attack, vowel-sound and consonant finds its own natural place to resonate depending on the pitch of the note.

Attack and Appoggio

The Old Italian School knows the true nature of cause (glottal attack, start of the sound) and effect (acoustic locality where the sound comes to rest or focus). To illustrate the attack above the breastbone on No. 2 of the Husler diagram, listen to the historical soprano Luisa Tetrazzini singing, for instance, "Io son Titania" by Thomas.[55] Her attacks are certainly *sec et vigoureux* (as Garcia describes the *coup de glotte*) and always result in a glorious and brilliant sound. She describes the spot where she attacks the sound as follows, after giving a concise description of her breathing method (the Old Italian School):

> The physical sensation should first be an effort on the part of the diaphragm to press the air up against the chest box, then the sensation of a perfectly open throat, and, lastly, the sensation that the air is passing freely into the cavities of the head.... This feeling of singing against the chest with the weight of air pressing up against it is known as "breath support," and in Italian we have an even better word—"appoggio" which is "breath prop." The attack of the sound must come from the appoggio.[56]

Tetrazzini felt that her throat was open because she applied the point of pressure underneath it, causing the sensation "that the air is passing freely into the cavities of the head." She sang into the concentration of sound underneath her throat; she sang against or above the breath. We will take a closer look at her breathing in the next chapter. Her description complies perfectly with Mancini's observations:

> to derive and sustain the voice from the natural strength of the chest [implying two things: the right attack and the right breathing]. Every scholar must then tirelessly accustom his chest to give forth the voice with naturalness, and to use simply the light action of the fauces [sensation of slight surprise]. If the union of these two parts arrives at the required point of perfection, the voice cannot fail to be clear and melodious.[57]

We shall come back to Mancini in the following chapter on breathing. We will then see how the right attack is connected intimately with the chest's power to produce sonority of voice. In giving the chest priority all the old masters like Mancini implied an attack like Tetrazzini describes.

Kelsey confirms Tetrazzini's description as follows: "In true singing, so closely coordinated are the processes of air-compression, phonation and articulation, that the voice, whether male or female, high or low, always seems to proceed from some part of the windpipe or the breastbone."[58] Husler and Rodd-Marling acknowledge the supremacy of the Old Italian School and even advocate it. Their excellent survey of the modern means of attacking the note encapsulates all the alternative means of attack-

ing the note since the abandonment of the *coup de glotte*. For want of understanding the Old Italian School of Singing, the Germans have developed their own typical school of singing. If we read some German translations of old Italian Masters like Mancini, Tosi and Garcia, this lack of understanding of the method of the Old Italian School becomes evident.

Practical Observations

It is most important in order to execute the right attack that you start to listen to and watch singers and speakers with what you know now. Keep in mind that we are born with a healthy larynx. Listen to a baby crying; the piercing sound it produces never harms its vocal cords. The piercing sound is the product of automatic action and control of the human instrument, not of volitional action. It is when we grow up that we imitate the speech of our parents and most of the damage is done by demands to speak softly instead of normally. Many pupils confess to this treatment when I ask them how they had to speak at home. They speak with a hushed voice and complain that they have a small voice, until I ask them to imitate my firm attack and their bright sound startles them. Go shopping on the market and listen to the powerful voices shouting out their slogans. Listen to workmen shouting from the roof of a house to their mates in the street below. Clear speech with a firm attack is always more beneficial to the vocal cords than hushed speech. Blanche Marchesi made the following interesting observation in the course of her 23 years of teaching singing in London:

> As long as I taught in London only I hardly ever met phenomenal voices. But since I have visited Manchester once a week.... I have been confronted with such a wealth of British voices that I cry for those long years in which I devoted all my energies to London only, when there, up in Lancashire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, slumbered the most wonderful instruments ever made by nature. I was called to Derby by special request, and among thirty voices tried two only were mediocre, twenty-five were excellent and three so phenomenal that if they work they will stir the world.[59]

Here we see that Marchesi was confronted with voices like that of Gracie Fields who employed a hard attack contrary to the Southerners in London who spoke "on the point" with an exaggerated forward projection, high in the throat and therefore without a good attack.

The Glottal Attack in Speech and Song

A glottal attack of the singing voice means nothing more than a precise and accurate start of the sound and is only different to a glottal attack of the healthy speaking voice in degree but not in kind. A glottal attack is unavoidable if we want to render a passionate outcry, be it from love, hate or agony with true expression, in speaking as in singing. Remember what was said of singers like Nellie Melba, Mary Garden and

Gracie Fields; they all speak and sing with an equally firm attack thanks to the Scottish and Lancashire tongue they were brought up in. Emma Calvé[60] speaks a message to the French people when she is 84 and we can enjoy her firm glottal attack on the "Aux" in her passionate rendering of the famous Marseillaise refrain "Aux armes citoyens."[61] Adelina Patti speaks a message to her husband in a clear and melodious speaking voice when she is well over 60 we admire her perfect enunciation.[62] Gracie Fields kept her singing and speaking voice in the true Lancashire manner both with a very firm attack, as we can hear on her records and in her movies. The famous accompanist Ivor Newton[63] was deeply impressed, testifying to her vocal art:

> Gracie's energy was amazing, and unlike the singers with whom I normally work, the idea of saving or nursing her voice never occurred to her; it was, when she sang a quiet song, a voice of great beauty, and the strange uses to which she put it — the hoots and yells of derision with which she would turn and rend a sentimental old favourite, or the raucous comedy that was one of her specialties — seemed unable to harm it.[64]

As we have seen above the *coup de glotte* or right attack is at the basis of the Old Italian method, and also in speaking, as can be heard anywhere in Italy. The Italian way of speaking does not have to be confined to Italy. Everyone can speak more clearly with a good attack. Before the invention of the microphone, people involved in public speaking, such as teachers, preachers and politicians, had to speak loudly and clearly enough in order to be understood. Listen carefully to people around you. How do they speak? What kind of speaking voice do they produce? Is it husky, breathy, squeaky, rasping, rough, wavering, screechy, monotonous, tiring, or clear, sonorous, resounding, booming, metallic, bright, happy, light, warm, melodious, enchanting, pleasant, beautiful and haunting?

Surprisingly all these qualities of the speaking voice are in the first place dependent on the attack. Only if a voice is attacked in the right manner on the glottis can it develop full sonority and consequently fill the cavities for resonance in the chest, throat and head in a natural way. The vocal cords can never vibrate in their full capacity unless enabled by the right glottal attack. Any other means of attack will unfailingly result in an accompanied breath escape, which will then result in various aberrations of sound. These aberrations are fully accepted as normal and fashionable nowadays. To obtain certain effects like, for instance, a sexy sound, it will be made deliberately husky. "The effect of establishing an approximation of the glottal lips of such a nature that all the breath is turned into sound is to pull the vowel right down to the larynx, and this obtains at speaking pitches, where the tension is low, just as it does in the upper part of the vocal compass, where the tension is high."[65] Our speaking voice will become sonorous, melodious and pleasant if we articulate the vowel first and foremost, never using the consonant as a springboard to launch the sound. "The real mouth of the singer ought to be considered the pharynx."[66] This also applies to speakers. The voice is felt as if it is made at the bottom of the throat and by the proper articulation it receives carrying power and clarity of enunciation — in short, natural and spontaneous forward production. The forward production of the Old Italian School is the effect of the right attack at the very bottom of the throat where the "real mouth of the singer" is. The physical

mouth is but a gate or a door through which the sound passes. The two mouths should do their work independently; as soon as one interferes with the other, a conflicting situation is set up. If a pupil gets exercises on the do-re-mi system, that pupil will never learn to sing in the true manner. Vocalizes on the vowel "ah" is the only way to develop a continuous vocal sound. All the old masters agree on this point.

Many present-day singers confess that they refrain from speaking before a performance, in some cases as much as two weeks. Some say that they could never teach singing because it involves speaking and singing alternatively. The cause is the discrepancy between the speaking voice and the modern singing voice.

As already mentioned, one can wonder at the many conflicting instructions contained in modern books on singing and think that there must be one way to learn to sing just as an instrumentalist like a pianist or a violinist can learn to play his instrument. Even more striking is a close observation of wind instrument players; just look how they have to apply a very strong pressure with their lips to the mouthpieces of trumpets to establish the necessary embouchure. There is only one way to develop this embouchure by strengthening their lip musculature. By learning a good attack we employ a mechanism in our larynx that can be compared to the trumpet players' embouchure, although far more special and refined.

Present-day singing instructions using consonantal syllables like "ma," "la," "bi," "ni," "yo," etc., as a springboard to launch the tone invariably lead you away from the automatic action of your instrument, disguising the faulty articulation of the glottis, and they always produce expiratory singing. It is common knowledge that inactive muscles will eventually collapse. If all the newspapers and magazines are to be believed, there are plenty of suffering voices on our opera stages and concert halls.

Clara Louise Kellogg[67] stressed the importance of keeping the chest up and said the following: "It is astonishing how few people use the voice properly. For instance I could read in this tone all the afternoon without fatigue.... The sounds comes from here (touching her chest) and are free and musical."[68]

Old Masters and Historical Singers Agree on the Method of Vocalizing on the Vowel "Ah"

The greatest singers and teachers of the past were in no doubt that there was only one method to sing. Books and methods by Tosi, Mancini, Nathan, Garcia, both Lampertis, Faure, Stockhausen,[69] Félia Litvinne,[70] Kelsey, Lunn, Santley, Tetrazzini, Jenny Lind, Melba and Schumann-Heink[71] all agreed about the basics.

They all give the instruction to sing on the vowel "ah" pronounced as in "father," knowing full well that exercising on an "ah" will give us the complete mastery over our larynx. In the Old Italian method the transparency of the sound of this vowel made your mistakes or faults very clearly audible. Practice on the vowel "ah" implies the most favorable position of the throat as well as the mouth, which is free to move to other vowel positions. Training in this method took many years, while your technique slowly

advanced. Vocalizing on the vowel "ah" will make the pupil aware of his defects, whereas the do-re-mi system of *solfeggi* or exercises on syllables such as ma-mi-moo will only help to cover them up and prevent his improvement. Lunn is very outspoken on this matter: "All use of consonants with voice keeps up the evil we want to destroy, distracts the pupil from his own stagnation, and prevents the detection of his own incompetence."[72] One of the characteristics of the Old Italian School is its pure vowel sounds resulting in clear enunciation for which the historical singers are justly famous.

Ernestine Schumann-Heink insists that she always uses the Italian vowel "ah" in her exercises. She reckons that it is important to perfect vocal tone first by employing the vowel that is most open. Once this mastery is achieved through practice the voice can be further colored by the use of the other vowels. Her sound advice is

> smile naturally, as though you were genuinely amused at something — smile until your upper teeth are uncovered. Then, try these exercises with the vowel "ah." Don't be afraid of getting a trivial, colourless tone. It is easy enough to make the tone sombre by willing it so, when the occasion demands. You will be amazed what this smiling, genial, liebenswürdig expression will do to relieve stiffness and help you in placing your voice right. The old Italians knew about it and advocated it strongly. There is nothing like it to keep the voice youthful, fresh and in the prime of condition.[73]

One of the greatest American historical sopranos, Minnie Hauk,[74] was also adamant on the use of the vowel "ah" for vocal development; she says: "...I use only one [vowel]; 'ah.' I studied with Errani, Strakosh and Curto; they all taught me with the same one and I have used nothing but 'ah' all my life."[75]

The above advice will be absolutely confirmed when practicing exercises on the "ah." Schumann-Heink's remarks about the colorless tone you first seem to produce are extremely reassuring, if the pure "ah" sound is the basis of your exercises. The real coloration is mainly the result of the composer's capacity to write advantageously for the human voice. The smiling expression is not only helpful in making the singer look pleasant but, as Schumann-Heink rightly remarks, "help[s] you in placing your voice right." This is very true and you will notice that the smiling position of the mouth enables you to execute the best possible glottal attack. It is the smile that opens the throat by enabling the lower jaw to drop naturally. This position beautifies the voice keeping it youthful, exactly as Schumann-Heink mentions above.[76]

Similarity of Speaking and Singing Voice of Historical Singers

Fortunately we can listen to historical voices on the CDs and hear that they stay fresh and young into advanced age. Also there is no marked discrepancy between their singing voice and their speaking voice. Listen to Melba's farewell performance in Covent Garden; after an evening of wonderful singing with her well preserved voice (at the age of 65), she thanks all present with a full and warm speaking voice that rings out into the opera house. Her speaking voice was described by some as being harsh and stri-

dent, but we can hear no trace of that in the opera house where the acoustics certainly are in its favor.[77] The stupendous soprano Blanche Arral also gives us a fascinating example of the superiority of the method of the Old Italian School. We listen to her enthralling performances of arias and songs at the age of 45 and then get a surprise when we hear her sing the same repertoire at 71 in radio programs. Her speaking voice is extremely clear; she speaks with a very brisk and hard attack of the sound and her singing voice still rings out vigorously and has stood the wear and tear of many years of singing in opera, traveling around the world with her own opera company.

The magical singing of Fedor Chaliapin has been described by many famous contemporaries; Arthur Rubinstein,[78] for instance, made this poignant observation: "Then he began to sing with a voice of unique quality, powerful and caressing, softly as a baritone's and flexible as a tenor's it sounded as natural as a speaking voice."[79]

In many modern singers there is a marked discrepancy between their singing and speaking voices. As a rule the singing voice sounds much older than its owner. Reynaldo Hahn already speaks of this phenomenon in singers who he compares to ventriloquists: "These singers possess both a speaking voice and a singing voice. Nothing could be more absurd...." Hahn describes this phenomenon, telling us that this kind of singer has just introduced himself in the most natural way, but when he commences to sing, "the voice that has just spoken can no longer be recognized. One has the impulse to look under the furniture, but no! It is indeed the same person who is now singing."[80] Faure also noticed a tendency in his colleagues to give their singing voice a color and timbre alien to their speaking voice. He mentions that the bass will attack all his pieces with an imposing voice, emphatically and exaggeratedly voluminous. "The tenor giving his voice an added emotion, vibrating and even dramatic when he only has to sing: "Dinner is served, let us sit down at the table!"[81] This phenomenon we can observe regularly on our television screen, where singers are interviewed before or after they sing, and the difference between the speaking and singing voice is usually striking. Modern singers often speak with a decent attack of the voice but are not allowed to sing with one with the resulting difference. If they employed the *coup de glotte* in their singing voice then everyone would recognize that the speaking and singing voice belonged to the same person.

The Attack of the Castrati

One of the most striking written testimonies of the singing of the castrati is left by the composer Charles Gounod who visited the Sistine Chapel frequently in the year 1839:

> I went to the Sistine, as often as I possibly could. The severe, ascetic music, level and calm like an ocean horizon, serene even to monotony, anti-sensuous, and yet so intense in its fervor of religious contemplation as sometimes to rise to ecstasy, had a strange, almost a disagreeable effect on me at first.
>
> Whether it was the actual style of composition, then quite new to me — the distinctive

> sonority of those peculiar voices, now heard for the first time — or the firm, almost harsh attack, the strong accentuation which gives such a startling effect to the general execution of the score, by the way it marks the opening of each vocal part in the closely woven web of sound — I know not. The first impression, unpleasant as it was, did not dismay me. I returned again and again, until at last I could not stay away.[82]

Gounod's description becomes even more valuable when we know that as a young boy his mother had him tested on musicality by a composer musician. Little Charles was put in a corner with his face to the wall and was asked to name the various keys of the modulations played on the piano. He never made a single mistake in all his answers. When Gounod heard the castrati sing in the Sistine Chapel, he was 21 years old.

Not only was I thrilled by the manner in which he accurately describes the manner of singing, the way the castrati attacked the note, I was also particularly struck by the similarity of my own first experience of the castrato voice. It was the voice of Moreschi,[83] the last castrato, called "the angel of Rome." Just so, "the first impression," strange and rather grotesque as it seemed, "did not dismay me." Its "serenity," "yet so intense in its fervor of religious contemplation," hit me just as it did Gounod and I came to love the voice of Moreschi for its uniquely focused tone (no woman's voice could ever hope to match) and for its power of feeling and expression. His trio singing with a tenor and bass was a revelation to me. For the first time I heard the voices "bite" one another, exactly how Gounod describes above, because as a result of the hard attack, each voice had its own definite character. Here was no "homogenous" vocal sound which has become the standard for 20th century choirs; here was a conversation on a higher level in the contrapuntal music that Palestrina and Capocci wrote; here I heard the music as it was meant by the composer. Moreschi often starts the tone with a grace note, common practice in the Old Italian School. Tosi deals with grace notes in his second chapter[84] and Andreas Herbst[85] gives as the first exercise, a free occurring grace note.[86] This common practice also had an important practical function. Stockhausen gives the example of the bass solo opening the final movement of the Beethoven 9th Symphony, where he must sing "O Freunde," from "O" to "Freu" with a leap of a fifth. If he attacked the higher note on the "Fr" the sound is likely to be squeezed and unpleasant, whereas if the "Fr" is sounded on the same note as the "O" treated as an *acciaccatura* to the "eu" on the higher note, then the high note is sounded on a open vowel with a much fuller and brighter volume. In general, all notes should be attacked on an open vowel and if the word begins with a consonant, that should be attached to the previous note.

More than a hundred years before Gounod's description, we can share the adventurous career of the castrato Filippo Balatri[87] who left us his fascinating memoirs in flowing verse. We come across his hilarious account of a confrontation with the French style of singing in Lyon, where he happened to pass through on his way to England, a country that loved the Italian style. Not so the French; they actually laughed at the singing of Balatri as soon as he started off on his "Ah-ah-ah," for this comes across to the audience as a deliberate joke. He in his turn gave a brilliant parody of the French manner of singing that he had just been treated to that consisted of caterwauling on

"OOs" and "EEs." Thereby he created such a genuine success that the French entreated him to stay and join the Paris Opera. The "Ah-ah-ah" of Balatri shows clearly that he began his singing with brilliant attacks on the vowel "ah." He mentioned that the manner of singing of the French put a heavy pressure on the larynx and that he was afraid that it would cause the singer a nasty catarrh of the throat.[88]

After these testimonies we come to understand and respect the profound knowledge of the old Italian masters of singing; they knew that the "physical" vowel "ah" with the right attack and a smiling mouth position brings out all the beauty in the voice, for it is this vowel that favors the open throat best of all. For the aspiring singer who wishes to sing in the manner of the Old Italian School, the first step is to execute the attack this school of singing advocated. It will bring out the individual and natural singing voice we are all endowed with and surprise its possessor greatly, for generally this voice slumbers like Sleeping Beauty waiting to be woken up by her Prince Charming.

The Importance of the Action of the Arytenoid Cartilages for Historical Singing

In the singing after the Old Method there is no pressure on the vocal cords themselves because the preparation for the emission of voice is so perfectly executed by the situation around them, the false cords and the arytenoid cartilages, that the vocal cords can do their work of vibration easily. The vocal longevity, elasticity, youth and freshness of the historical singers thus become understandable. To enable the vocal cords to vibrate freely, it is necessary to keep them in close approximation by means other than the vocal cords themselves. They can stand quite a bit of pressure but this will diminish their ability to vibrate considerably. There is a mechanism that acts on the vocal cords in the form of a pair of cartilages similar to a pair of lever-quadrants fastened to the posterior ends of the vocal cords. This mechanism consists of the arytenoid cartilages that open the glottal lips for breathing silently and close them for vocal sound production. We have a fascinating testimony of a doctor of medicine and pioneer in the field of scientific exploration, Félix Despiney,[89] on the functioning of the human voice. He convinced himself of the truth of the important discovery of the action of the arytenoids by activating them with his own fingers in the throat of a fresh corpse and he found that by pressing them together a vocal sound came into existence. The vocal sound thus obtained went higher when he increased his pressure on the cartilages. He published his experiences in 1841 at approximately the same time of Garcia's publications. He certainly knew Garcia and his teaching. We can assume that Garcia knew him and his work, too. It is truly fascinating to follow Despiney's experiments and to share his eagerness to come to valuable results. His enthusiasm when he gets a 23-year-old victim only half an hour after his death on the guillotine is really infectious. We share his moment of success:

> I make an incision, ordinarily on the right side of the neck following the edge of the larynx, I introduce my fingers through that incision, I recognize the posterior part of the cricoid carti-

> lage, I arrive at the arytenoids that I let approach each other, and I obtain at the moment of inhalation sounds that are more or less clear.... This necessity of the approach of the arytenoid cartilages for the formation of the voice was already known.... I wish to remind it here for it is a fact of great importance.[90]

Through his own experiments Despiney now knows that the contact of the arytenoids has to be intensified to obtain higher sounds, he then tries to find out how the low sounds are obtained, he does not succeed until he approximates the arytenoids. "Eventually after many efforts I found out that to produce them [the low sounds] first of all the arytenoid cartilages have to be approximated to the first degree. As I have already said so more than once, the glottis, in a state of repose, of normal immobility, does not vibrate; for the formation of a sound, firstly this approximation of the arytenoids cartilages is necessary."[91]

In connection with the registers of the voice Garcia mentions the arytenoid cartilages, saying that they are engaged in the emission of a low chest note, bringing the vocal cords together, and that they will increase their approximation as the tone rises higher into the medium. "In both registers the glottis has its length diminished from the back, by the arytenoids, which advance their contact till their adhesion is complete."[92]

Kelsey compares the pressure point of the arytenoid cartilages to the pressure point that we obtain by pressing our first finger and thumb together. We feel the sensation at the point of contact of the fingers but not the action of the muscles that set the finger points in motion.

"Just as the pressing together of thumb and finger, however lightly, is always felt as positive act of pressure, so in the case of the arytenoids, their mutual adherence is always felt as a point of pressure somewhere at the back of the larynx. Thus the singer makes his 'lip' by means of a continuous act of pressure at the posterior end of the glottal lips."[93]

We see that the singer has a much more refined mechanism to establish his embouchure, point of pressure or point of control than the trumpet player. The method of the Old Italian School offers the mastery of this mechanism as an access to the immense power of the human voice. It is this mechanism that is the key to the natural functions of the human voice, disclosing a voice that people do not know that they possess. If the speaking voice is naturally sonorous, this mechanism is usually employed unconsciously by the speaker.

Practical Hints

Tell yourself firmly: "I sing with my chest, I do not have a throat, I do not have a mouth." Stand upright in a convincing and confident manner with your chest up and your stomach drawn in. Breathe slowly in through your mouth and open throat and feel your chest lift pleasantly. Stop the breath with your mouth open and you will feel a grip on top of your breastbone; keep this grip firmly and you will feel it pulling your stomach muscles inward.

You have now established "the squeeze of the chest." If you have trouble to find the position it can be of help to prepare it as follows: put one hand on your stomach just above your belly button while the fingers of your other hand shut your nose. Now blow your nose firmly and you will feel your stomach pull in. Register this sensation consciously and now repeat the "blow your nose" action at the top of your windpipe just above your breastbone. Notice that your stomach pulls in just like before when blowing your nose. This approach can help you to find the squeeze of the chest. Remember, however, that it is only an aid towards the right physical position for sound production that should be established as described above with "breathe slowly in through your mouth."

Towards the grip just above the breastbone, articulate the vowel "ah" firmly on a low chest note, preferably below middle C, so that you feel the continued sound going into your chest, and hold the note long enough to experience the point of control you have established. If you are doubtful about the place of attack, give a tiny cough, really only the beginning of a cough and you will experience the spontaneous action of the glottis.

The fascinating story of Helen Keller, the blind, deaf and mute girl who was taught by her governess Ann Sullivan to speak, can be of help here. Helen learned to speak through the process of touch with her hand on Ann's throat. "I had to use the sense of touch in catching the vibrations of the throat...."[94] Proceed to do exactly the same by putting your hand on your own throat, on the spot where your throat merges into your chest, letting yourself feel the attack just above the breastbone in the chest voice, on the B flat below middle C. Keeping your hand there, give a slight cough, very delicately, and then say a definite "ah" on the spot where you feel the cough. Now you have found the right place to attack the voice and you can be assured that all the notes of your voice start exactly there, high and low. To experience this law of nature, articulate "ah" in the middle voice on the note A above middle C. If you keep your hand on your throat you will feel that the action produces the same sensation but that the ensuing sound is more in your throat than in your chest.

The spontaneous action of the glottis can also be easily evoked if you imagine someone pinching your arm suddenly, resulting in your exclamation "Ow!" Watch dart players throw the darts onto the board. Imagine your chest is the dartboard and the darts being the sound attacking you; realize that the sound is always coming from outside onto you, hitting you like a flash of lightning, and you have to be ready for it, catching it when it hits you and continuing the sound by means of your permanent grip on what we can also call the point of pressure or the point of control, established by the complete stoppage of the breath. Direct the received tone downwards into your chest and never upwards and away from yourself. J. B. Faure compares the exercise to being attacked by numerous arrows![95]

From the above it might be concluded that it is a complicated action to start the tone in the historical manner but in reality it is a very simple mechanical action. The necessity for this elaborate description is to be found in the complete rejection of its employment for vocal development over the last hundred years. Teaching the histori-

cal attack has proved that its very simplicity is difficult to grasp for the aspiring singer who expects singing to be complicated rather than simple. Here then are some images that might help to understand the process of historical sound production by comparing it to a practical craft. A carpenter smoothing a plank with a plane iron only looks at his plane iron doing the job and never at the lovely curly shavings; if he would do so he would immediately lose control. The same goes for the singer; you have to get the job done of attacking and continuing the sound without any wish to influence or predetermine the sound that comes out.

Continue the sound like the violinist. He has to keep a considerable amount of tension on his bow, otherwise he will produce a horrid scraping sound. The singer has to apply his pressure on the point of control continuously; this is the "binding" of Jenny Lind's instruction to her friend Gusti. Envision a funnel, the narrow end pointing down into your chest. You always sing downwards into that narrow end, squeezing the top of the narrow end continuously, the sound will travel of its own accord towards the wide end, coming to rest in the various places of acoustic locality that depend on the pitch.

Think of a kite high up in the air. The higher it flies, the harder you have to pull the cord with your hands. The higher the note you sing, the tighter the squeeze on the point of control. After you have established a good attack in your chest voice proceed to attack the sound in your middle voice, which means A1 for sopranos. Sing the notes down to D1 in your middle voice. Follow this rule first until you are able to execute the attack on D1 in your middle voice. Read the words of Schumann-Heink again and smile so that your lower jaw can drop naturally, this opens the back of the throat and gives you the feeling that your mouth has disappeared; one finger between the opened lips is quite enough. At the same time you will get the sensation of a new mouth, your sound-emitting mouth (Garcia's dictum that the singer's true mouth is the pharynx). As soon as you attack with the vowel "ah" on the same spot in your chest (of the little cough) in your middle voice on A1, you will have the sensation that the emitted sound is mainly at the back of your throat, from whence it appears to radiate freely of its own accord to its appointed place of resonance.

It is a great help to know where the sound that you obtained by executing the right attack will come to rest or focus. The attack is never changing, always on top of the breastbone at the point of control, but the sound can be completely in the chest for the lowest notes, in the throat and from there reflected to the palate, in the head for the high notes starting at E and even at F# for the soprano. The head tones will give the sensation that the vowel is considerably narrowed and the contraction of the glottis increased. The higher the note, the firmer you squeeze. The high note means a solid grip on the point of control, no "singing" involved here. Listen to the prolonged high notes of the historical sopranos with what you know now and you will notice that grip. In the course of the book the abovementioned will be extended, but for now we have concentrated solely on the attack. Remember to let the retracted stomach muscles pull inwards while you are singing; never try to save your breath by clamping down on them.

Be well aware that the sound is never to be attacked other than glottally; from there it radiates over the whole range of the singer's voice and it reaches the acoustical localities easily. Only then can the emitted sound have all the necessary harmonics and colors it should have. If attacked on the localities of acoustic manifestation, the sound will always be impaired and suffer from diverse aberrations, which will be explored further in this book.

Compare your efforts of learning to do the right attack of the sound to the days when you learned to drive a car. At first every move had to be carefully premeditated, but after a while your limbs took over and you did not have to think before your foot hit the brake or your hand went to the gear shift. It can be a great reassurance to realize that soon your posture, attack and continuous squeeze will be performed automatically and spontaneously, too.

Singing in the manner of the Old Italian School means to make use of the collision of two forces: the compression of air in your chest by means of the diaphragm striving upwards and the closed valve on top of your windpipe providing you with a platform of inertia on which you can "bow" your sound continuously downwards into the concentration of that sound with a good pressure like the violinist. The old masters used to say that the singer has a bag at the bottom of his throat to be filled with sound. Every musical instrument must be played in the right manner to produce the most perfectly resonant tone it possesses and the human instrument is no exception to this law as will become evident in the course of this book.

The *Coup de glotte* in a Nutshell

To sum up, who could better close this chapter than Jenny Lind's great master Manuel Garcia, who restored her poor, overworked wreck of a voice, achieving a complete vocal metamorphosis with which she conquered the world? She was one of many famous singers he helped to achieve this change of technique, establishing their true voices. Let us see what Manuel Garcia has to say to Hermann Klein[96] about the right attack described by him as *coup de glotte*[97]:

> Q: How are sounds to be attacked?
>
> A: With the stroke of the glottis just described. The Italian vowels, a, e, as in the words "alma, sempre," must be used. They will bring out all the ring in the voice. The notes must be kept full and in equal force. This is the best manner of developing the voice. At first the exercise must not exceed two or three minutes in duration.[98]

Garcia adds to his description of the *coup de glotte* (Part 1 p. 25) in his "Traité complet de l'Art du Chant" of 1847 that the execution of the *coup de glotte* is similar to the energetic pronunciation of the "p" with our lips. Kelsey explains: "Regard the stroke of the glottis as having the same nature as the articulation of the syllable 'Pah' with your lips but an articulation of the vowel by the glottis into the very bottom of your throat, and not into your mouth."[99] The glottal stroke also resembles the action of the palatal arch necessary to articulate the letter K.

The historical singer always leads with the larynx (as we can see nowhere clearer than in Jenny Lind's instructions to her friend quoted above) whereas singers employing modern methods invariably lead with the breath (expiratory singing).

We have seen that all historical singers and teachers agree on open vowels "ah" or "e" for exercises, which will stimulate the larynx into activity, whereas all the modern ones offer us a variation of "ma," "la," "ni," "do," "yo" etc., using the consonant as a springboard and thereby forcing us into expiratory singing, leaving the larynx passive. The comments above clearly show us how completely historical singers and teachers agree on this most important aspect of singing, a good attack via the *coup de glotte* as explained by Manuel Garcia.

Many historical recordings give us a fascinating picture of the singer's voice, particularly if we are treated to the same aria or song sung at different stages of the singer's career. The longevity of the voice staying fresh and bright (for instance, Melba's, Nezhdanova's[100], Calvé's, Santley's, Tetrazzini's, Patti's and Arral's) seems to go hand in hand with the manner of attack they used. Countless written testimonies of the castrati who sang beautifully with well preserved voices into advanced age are there for us to read. From the account of Gounod it follows that the castrati attacked their tones vigorously, complying with Garcia's description, "*Coup de glotte sec et vigoureux*." ("There can be no real singing without a good attack").[101] Nellie Melba's little sentence contains a world of wisdom.

2

The Breath

This chapter follows the preceding chapter on purpose, thereby illustrating the golden rule of the Old Italian School of singing that is both simple and unyielding. It is simple because it obeys the natural laws of phonation and unyielding because the slightest deviation of this rule leads to various complications. The golden rule implies that the larynx always leads with the right attack, to be followed by the breath. "Your voice begins first. Your breath comes next."[1] If we attack our voice accurately and instantly following the instructions of the method of the Old Italian School, breath control can be set in motion remarkably simply.

We realize immediately that our breath reacts to our perfect attack and with the right instruction on how to coordinate the two, our singing will develop our breath control. Breath control in the historical manner is amazingly simple because it follows the natural pattern of inhaling in preparation of an action requiring increased physical activity. This is the reason we find so little information about the breathing method of the Old Italian School in the books of the old masters. Its simplicity comes as a surprise and evokes something like a disillusion in people who have come into contact with complicated breathing methods for singing. Like the previous chapter on the attack of the voice, the chapter on breathing has to be elaborate. A careful scrutiny of the process of breathing for singing is necessary to understand and revalue the simplicity of the Old School as well as showing its profound knowledge of the effects of the right breathing on sound production. Some astonishing facts can be detected underlying the apparent simplicity that might be misleading to the superficial critic of the old method.

When we talk about the breathing of the Old Italian School for singing, it is important to realize that the old masters taught that there are two kinds of breathing:

1. The breathing we have in our sleep that is carried out chiefly by the diaphragm, called abdominal, has as its characteristic the protrusion of the abdominal wall and the lower chest.
2. The breathing we automatically set in motion when we have to perform an activity that needs a heightened and continuous amount of tension supplied by our physique and characterized by the swelling of the upper chest and inward movement of the abdominal wall. The old masters recognized breathing of the second kind called thoracic or intercostal as best suited for singing because singing is a form of activity

that needs a certain supply of energy to make the sound production effortless. In thoracic breathing, the necessary action of the diaphragm is automatically incorporated, following the physical anatomical laws.

The Collision of Forces Required for Sound Production

Sound production on a musical instrument is caused by a collision of forces. On a violin the bow has to come into contact with the string and the contact has to be of such a perfect nature that a beautiful sound is the result of the collision. To produce a continuous sound, there must be a point of pressure that can be permanently applied. Everyone knows that it takes a lot of practice to learn to play the violin. The legato tones of a violin can stimulate us to sing legato. The French composer Duparc underlines this in a telling remark, declaring: "The ideal is not a voice which shows greater strength by volume, but rather the violin-voice, as I call it, a voice which gives the maximum of intensity by virtue of impeccable diction."[2] A singer like Melba certainly realized his "ideal" of the *voix-violon* with her unbroken legato tone combined with crisp and clear diction.

The trumpeter's lip resembles the mechanical action of the attack with the larynx that has to supply the necessary "embouchure" to produce a sound. In historical singing, the sound is produced by a collision of two opposing forces exactly as the sound of a trumpet. The trumpet player has to supply compressed breath by tensing his stomach muscles. "The singing voice in reality is born of the clash of opposing principals, the tension of conflicting forces, brought to an equilibrium."[3] To establish this equilibrium we need a point of control supplied by the larynx to oppose the force of the compressed breath. The Old Italian School tells the singer to sing downwards into the concentration of sound against the diaphragm that is striving upwards. The chest thus keeps its raised position, held between the larynx and the diaphragm. All depends on the point of control or point of pressure; if this is managed perfectly and applied unremittingly, our breath support will respond to the action of the larynx and the pair will be in harmony, producing the unbroken legato sound of historical singing. If this point of control is deficient because we do not know how to establish it, the consequence will be that other less effective means of control are applied which obscure the access to our own natural voice and lead to yet more problems which have to be solved. Freedom in singing is attained by perfect coordination of the attack and the breath. The old masters all agree on the golden rules to acquire this freedom. They have discovered them by empiricism and they have preserved them in their books of instruction for our benefit, if we read them again with common sense and understanding.

A laryngeal attack of the voice followed by a continuation of the ensuing sound, combined with breath support in the historical manner, produces a marked feeling of retaining the breath instead of spending it. There are, moreover, no signs of effort in the physiognomy of the singer. All the hard work is done inside, so to speak. The old masters give little information about breathing in the first place because their teaching

was focused on the perfect attack of the sound, resulting in brilliant vocal utterance as well as being the first control of the breath, and in the second place because historical singers of both sexes wore corsets providing them with the right posture, thus facilitating the maintenance of the necessary compression of the breath.

The Right Posture

The condition necessary to experience the sensation of the larynx leading the breath is the right posture. We have the right posture if we straighten ourselves up to look like proud and therefore authoritative people who have "something to say" to our fellow men. A full-length mirror will help to show you how much better you look if you raise your chest and pull your stomach in. Particularly if you look at yourself sideways, the improvement in your appearance will be striking. The right posture for singing is authoritative but not pompous; it is composed but not rigid. It is fascinating to notice the agreement of the old masters on the posture for singing. In a handwritten manuscript of 1833, the instructions for posture are quite elaborate, telling us that it is extremely essential to adopt a good position of the body: "it has to be standing upright, one foot forward, the shoulders relaxed, the chest up, the head straight." Then follows a list of facial contortions that ought to be avoided and the advice to practice in front of a mirror, followed by the practical hint to fix our eyes on the music at the piano to avoid looking sideways or up in the air when we start a difficult exercise. "We need a great and complete calm in our whole being and a noble and elegant immobility, solely that immobility affords the concentration of our means to develop our voice, any kind of agitation will diminish its intensity."[4]

There should be no visible signs of breathing. The historical singers that we admire for their perfect technique and beautiful singing all wore corsets that helped them enormously to sustain their lovely tones. We certainly do not want to go back to wearing corsets but we have to realize the importance of good posture. Modern clothing does not encourage good posture unless we dress for very formal occasions; for the rest of the time we move around in clothes designed for comfort and not posture, with problems for singing being the reward. The right posture ensures that we are well prepared to inhale the breath and retain it to supply the force of permanent compression on which the force of the larynx can perform, the collision of forces resulting in the historical vocal sound.

It is very important to keep good posture continuously during singing; by inhaling the air the chest will be expanded and raised, a "high chest," but we should keep it that way permanently by keeping our belly in even when we have a period of rest between phrases. In this way we do not have to apply much effort to regain the raised chest and we need only a little breath to top up. We do not exhale the air as such but we retain it as much as we can because we need the compression of air to establish the collision of forces.

Our posture ensures optimal economy of effort. We can now see the often quoted

well known remark of Battistini[5] in the proper light when he says that for singing he takes as much breath as when he smells the scent of a flower. Our posture can be improved if we supply our own corset by strengthening our stomach muscles. Regular swimming will work wonders not only because it tones up your stomach muscles but also because it increases your lung capacity.

The Spinal Fluid

If we straighten our backs and pull ourselves up to our true height, the spinal fluid will rise with inhalation, with the result that our awareness is raised and we can sing with clear heads. By keeping the chest raised and the stomach in, we can maintain this greater awareness. Caruso's famous remark that we should sing with a warm heart and a cool head illustrates this process perfectly.

Present-Day Breathing Methods

Modern breathing methods for singing differ totally from breathing methods for all other physical activities, where instructions for posture all agree to keep the chest up and the stomach in. If we watch weight lifters we notice that they wear a belt, pulling their stomachs in strongly. Sprinters' chests are up and their stomachs held in. A little observation on your own posture will tell you that you too pull in your stomach unconsciously and hold your breath whenever you want to lift something rather heavy. The stomach or belly indicates the region above the belt, or, more accurately, the upper abdominal area, implying the lower abdominal region below the belt should be permanently pulled in.

Present-day breathing instructions for singing are the exception in that they advise the isolated abdominal breathing of sleep as the best suitable for singing. In sleep we are in a condition of physical passivity. A condition of physical activity goes hand in hand with an expanded chest and tight waist. "To sing well you must continually feel 'hollow-headed,' 'full-throated,' 'broad-chested,' and 'tight-waisted.'"[6]

In the previous chapter we read that Garcia's famous pupil Sir Charles Santley, whose voice stayed fresh into old age, always attacked his voice with the *coup de glotte*. What then has he to say about breathing? Santley did not breathe in the modern manner; he was not an abdominal breather, letting the front wall protrude, but he said: "I have heard and read the most amusing instructions for breathing, but of all, I think, 'abdominal breathing' is the most comical." Santley practiced the breath control that was started by the "pinch of the glottis," as Garcia called it.[7]

Breathing methods that imply pushing down on the diaphragm can lead to complaints in the lower back of the singer, particularly the female. To teach their pupils abdominal breathing certain teachers instruct their pupils to simulate the act of relieving the bowels, which puts a strain on the lower back. Anyone suffering from lower

back trouble will be instructed by the physiotherapist to do stretching exercises to relieve the tension. The historical posture is no different from the posture that the physiotherapist will show his patient and will contribute to the health of the singer.

"With the Breath" versus "Above the Breath"

Modern singing methods are based on expiratory singing. Expiratory singing means leading with the breath. The modern singing methods always lead with the breath and never with the larynx, as the Old Italian School instructs. To lead with the breath means to follow instructions to let the voice "float on an even flow of breath." As a consequence the vocal cords can never come together as perfectly as they can after a total stoppage of the breath preceding a firm laryngeal attack. By leading with the breath the air loss is larger than necessary. There is no collision of forces in present-day singing. The norm that is applied to all musical instruments is not applied to modern singing as a branch of music.

To illustrate the difference between historical singing "above the breath" or "against the breath" and present-day singing "with the breath," two arrows can be of great help in visualizing the process.

In historical singing the arrows are pointing at one another, one from the larynx downwards into the chest, the other from the stomach upwards into the chest. Present-day singing shows the arrows pointing away from one another, one downwards pushing into the diaphragm and the other upwards past the larynx into the head, with the result that the flow of breath pushes the tone into the head because it does not meet with the necessary obstruction of the larynx. This procedure can never occur with the right posture because the raised chest will prevent the possibility of pushing down on the diaphragm. In historical singing the tone is never flowing out on the breath but might be described as radiating out from a center, the point of pressure applied permanently, like the sun radiating its rays. The larynx has to be developed into an organ of the greatest elasticity and strength by practicing agility and it is the larynx that controls breath expenditure by its firm downward pressure, regulating the responsive power of the diaphragm. If you produce a tone in the historical manner, leading with the larynx, the sensation is very strong that the tone comes into existence somewhere below the throat where you stop the breath. You feel that you steady the voice "above the breath," it is the embouchure applied by the trumpet player. This point of pressure permanently applied on a surface supplied by compressed breath produces a pliable vocal sound that can be colored and modified by the composer through his interpreter. This is what Crescentini[8] meant with his aphorism saying that the Old Italian School of singing is a school of the voice above the breath. He can never have meant that the voice floats on a flow of breath out of the mouth, for the historical singers had to sing in front of a mirror without clouding the surface, or in front of a candle without causing the flame to flicker. If you sing in the historical manner you feel that you are retaining your breath, for you always sing into the concentration of sound and never away from it.

The Chest

To acquire the manner of breathing of the historical singers, it is imperative to learn to breathe deeply in the same position as we wish to sing: standing up. The old masters invariably associate singing with the power of the chest. We will take a look at the comments of some of the greatest experts in historical singing with what we know now about the cooperation of the larynx and the breath.

Nathan describes the act of breathing before singing in a poetical manner but the essential facts are practical and clear. He begins telling us that we should take an "inspiration" breath "as if to sigh," so he stresses the importance of actually inhaling the air. After this action he advises to take care "to keep the breath" "under command." He implies the right posture for with the inward tension of the stomach muscles we can keep "command." Now we come to the important action of the rib cage or thorax that will be expanded by our "inspiration." Nathan describes this action as "the chest being thus inflated."[9]

The expansion of the chest by inhaling the air implies deep breathing in the historical manner. It is completely different from some schools that advise to "put the ribs out." This is an isolated action and will disturb the harmonious process caused by actually inhaling the air. American historical soprano Lillian Nordica underlines Nathan's instruction, saying: "And above all things, do not have your dress tight across the chest. It does not so much matter at the waist-line, but be sure to have your chest and shoulders free, so that you are able to draw deep breaths."[10]

Nathan's next remark tells us to lead with the larynx, saying we should sing the note "before any of the breath expires,"[11] meaning a total stoppage of the breath before we perform the laryngeal attack. He does not have to mention the right posture, for people in Nathan's days had the right posture from sheer force of habit supported by their clothing, as mentioned above. The legendary tenor John Braham[12] was a close friend of Nathan's and he presents a fine example of the importance of the singer's chest. An interesting comment on his method of breathing:

> Braham got up to sing one single line of recitative [in "Israel in Egypt"]; he stood with his head well on one side, held his music also on one side, and far out before him gave a funny little stamp with his foot [stamping was a practice of the old tragedians], and then proceeded to lay in his provision of breath with such a tremendous shrug of his shoulders and swelling of his chest that I very nearly burst out laughing.[13]

The choirboy learns unconsciously to keep the chest up and the stomach in, for he has to sing while he is walking. His head is held high because his throat is enveloped in the ruff above his surplice. Striding in this way with his hymnbook held out high in front, he can never push down on the diaphragm. Just try it for yourself. Reynaldo Hahn stresses that there is no better way to learn to sing for boys than in the church accompanied by the organ, for there can be no cheating with the organ like heavy use of pedaling to cover up the singer's weaknesses.[14]

If we stand before a mirror in our underwear we can observe the miraculous process

of nature caused by inhaling the air slowly and deliberately. We see our chest raise and our rib cage expand after the descent of the diaphragm (visible in the slight protrusion situated in the triangle below the breastbone). The process of expanding spontaneously stops, the diaphragm assumes its position in readiness to ascend and the stomach muscles pull in just that little bit more of their own accord. It is of the greatest importance not to try to overfill the lungs. As soon as we notice the spontaneous action of the slight inward movement of the stomach muscles we have to realize that the inhalation is completed. All we have to do is to keep this position throughout the singing of a phrase, allowing the stomach muscles to retract under the impetus of the diaphragm. It is a physical impossibility to execute the process of deep breathing quickly. Quick deep breathing will result in jerking the diaphragm down, thereby pushing the larynx out of position by suddenly taking the compression away. Historical singers adopt the right posture for singing and keep this permanently with the result that they are able to maintain the continuous compression needed for their unbroken legato phrases and take half breaths quickly and easily. We can watch the historical tenors of the 20th century, Björling, Tagliavini, Tauber and Tucker, on DVD and Youtube and see clearly how they keep the posture with the raised chest; we can see them breathe high in the chest.

The Half-Breath

It is often necessary to snatch a quick breath to complete a phrase. This is called a half-breath and is always clavicular. Only after the deep breath has been mastered thoroughly should a half-breath be practiced. The permanent squeeze of the chest must not be abandoned and will enable the singer to top up. If the attack of the next note is performed in the right glottal manner, there is hardly any disturbance in the position for singing. The well-trained muscles of the larynx can act as quickly as lightning. Indeed, we notice again how true it is that the larynx leads the breath. For as soon as we attack the next note we feel that the security of our breath support is not disturbed. The agility of the larynx enables us to take a half-breath.

The Action of the Diaphragm

The historical way of breathing teaches that breathing for singing is a closed circle. This is the reason that breathing for singing as the old masters taught it remained a perfectly natural process in which all organs involved retain their natural functions. It even improved on those functions by the raised chest, enabling us to draw deep breaths so indispensable to our health. The old masters never isolate certain parts. The diaphragm is a muscle that is self-acting as part of the breathing process. It performs in coordination with the larynx; remember the arrows. It is most important, however, to realize that the primary function of the diaphragm consists of expelling the air out of the lungs by pressing upwards into the thorax. When we breathe in, the diaphragm

is forced to give way, but as soon as we are full, it starts to perform its job by striving upwards. In singing, this process can and must be decelerated by the inward tension of the stomach muscles, but the natural function of the diaphragm should never be reversed and isolated. This will have a negative influence on the voice, by robbing it of its individual sound quality. We notice that the historical singers have their own personal sound. They seem to be able to pour their individuality into their vocal utterance. The sounds of the historical singers are never identical, and although it is produced by the same method that stamps them as historical singers, that method brings out their individuality, providing their singing with a strong personal touch and color. It is the result of following nature's laws thereby harmonizing the spiritual and the physical aspects of song. We will see further down that the diaphragm harbors both these aspects.

If the diaphragm has to be stirred to greater activity, it then becomes an organ of response as the normal function is altered through an increase in activity, causing the diaphragm to work in partnership with that which is causing the alteration in the activity. Put one hand on the area above the belt and blow your nose vigorously with the other; you will feel the diaphragm rapidly ascending. We have already tried this out in the previous chapter. Press your lips together and blow the air our forcibly. Again you feel the diaphragm ascending. So you know that the diaphragm responds to actions taken elsewhere. If you want the diaphragm to supply a force to keep the air in your lungs under compression, you have to start the force of compression at your larynx. Think again of the arrows. "Your voice begins first. Your breath comes next." This simple remark has the whole chapter in a nutshell.

We begin to understand now why the Old Italian School gave so much attention to executing the right attack. It all depends on the larynx to set the right action of breath expenditure in motion. "Breath expenditure is controlled by the firmness of the downward pressure of the larynx, which regulates the vigour with which the diaphragm responds."[15] The word "pressure" might give the idea that the action is forceful. This is not so because the mechanism we possess in the larynx is of such perfection that the sensation is never one of heavy labor but rather of pleasant activity. Regular practice and agility exercises, as Jenny Lind advises her friend Gusti in the previous chapter, form the key to the coordination of voice and breath or larynx and diaphragm.

Homer mentions the diaphragm as the *phren* innumerable times in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as the seat of all our feelings and impulses; *phren* can be translated as heart, feelings, mind and understanding. When we react strongly on messages of any kind, music, beauty or violence, we feel that reaction in the pit of our stomach. It seems all the more logical, then, that in singing, the diaphragm should be permanently striving upwards. In this way the circle is unbroken as the larynx at the top and the diaphragm at the bottom enclose the lungs, the producers of the voice, allowing the individual expression to be channeled into the timbre of the voice. Then and only then will we be able to convey the true meaning of our song unto our listeners, not through the words alone but through the music. Our hearts will speak to the hearts of our audience.

Many legendary historical singers sang blissfully unconscious of the existence of

their diaphragm. Adelina Patti is a famous example and we have a vivid description by Sir Henry Wood who accompanied her when she was 73. He tells us:

> Here was no low diaphragmatic breather, I said to myself, for Patti had a tiny waist and a very full bust. She had ... a delightful speaking voice. We rehearsed "*Voi che sapete*." I felt the marvelous evenness of her warm quality. Her voice was not powerful but it excelled anything I had imagined in red-rose-quality and voluptuous sweetness.... She sang me some scales and arpeggios. Her flawless technique and even timbre throughout her compass were proof of the perfection of her training; no signs of headiness in the top notes nor "mouthiness" in the medium, and certainly no over-brightness or vulgarity in her chest tones. Hers was my ideal of a great technique. Her vowel articulation was perfect and there was not the slightest trace of breathiness or jerking. It was truly wonderful and I was entranced.[16]

Recently a recording of Patti's rendering of "Ah non credea mirarti" from Bellini's *La Sonnambula* was played on the radio during the interval of an opera broadcast. Two commentators who came across as being serious intellectuals discussed her singing and it was amazing to hear them say how much Patti's voice and interpretation moved and touched their hearts. On that primitive recording Patti was 65 years old but apparently her power to communicate was not diminished by either age or poor recording quality.

Magda Olivero,[17] a much-loved soprano of the 20th century who made her Metropolitan debut at 65 in the role of Tosca still breathes in the historical manner and she describes the action of the diaphragm accurately, telling her interviewer that pushing down on the diaphragm is excluded for her: "Many people say that the stomach area expands. No! Not the stomach, not the abdomen. The ribcage enlarges like a bellows, and then ... *pam* ... the diaphragm goes up, and *vooo* ... the column of air is already in the mask. In front [she indicated the stomach area] the diaphragm goes *up*, and the stomach and the abdomen go in."[18] When she mentions that the column of air goes straight into the mask, she makes it clear that her actual voice production is different from that of Patti who sang without a trace of headiness. Another popular 20th-century soprano who still breathed high in chest is Licia Albanese,[19] agreeing with Olivero that "expanding down and pushing up to sing" did not work for her, instead: "You should leave your belly in, expand your chest and back, and you should use your hands in an upward sweep to get a full breath. It is a taller feeling and pulls the shoulders back to a good posture."[20] Like Olivero she believes in the mask production of the sounds. We can watch both singers on Youtube, keeping their chest up and singing with abandon in spite of their advanced age.

The Squeeze of the Chest or Breath Support

With the information now obtained we can unravel the meaning of this expression. Again the image of the inward pointing arrows will help to understand it. If we want the diaphragm to respond to our command to sing, we have to start the compression at our larynx which continues down into our chest. Its associated muscles control

the compression; as Kelsey says: "A steadily applied pressure of the chest, downward toward the surface of the diaphragm, causes the diaphragm to push upward with equal steadiness against the base of the lungs, and thus squeeze the air against the closed glottis."[21] It follows that if you wish to produce a steady tone that keeps the same quality and evenness, you have to apply your point of control supplied by the action of the larynx, continuously and firmly. "The downward pressure of the larynx must be applied with unremitting steadiness."[22] This act of squeezing the breath out of the lungs, this controlled "squeeze," is the way the historical singers sang, hence the steadiness and evenness of their tones. It is most interesting to read that Mancini uses the Italian word *spremersi* in the first edition of his work on singing and voice production; *spremersi* means to press out. He describes the connection of lung capacity and open throat to voice production. He means the abovementioned "squeeze."[23]

Tetrazzini describes the squeeze of the chest most accurately; her description quoted in the previous chapter to illustrate the attack must figure again in this chapter showing the coordination of voice and breath. After saying that the diaphragm has to press the air up against the chest, she continues, "This feeling of singing against the chest with the weight of air pressing up against it is known as 'breath support' and in Italian we have an even better word — '*appoggio*' which is 'breath prop.'"[24] We can experience her sensation when we take a deep breath as described above and hold it firmly. Our throat, above the squeeze of the chest now established, feels open and free. Listening to her rock-steady tones and perfect breath control, we hear that she understood the squeeze of the chest to perfection.

Melba, whose evenness of tone was praised and admired by both listeners and colleagues, describes her squeeze of the chest as follows: "Stand erect, with chest expanded and shoulders back, and inhale by expanding the ribs, allowing the front of the body to expand at the same time. Remember that the tension must be on the rib muscles.... Steady the ribs as you attack the note."[25] The ribs are steadied by the permanent inward tension of the stomach muscles. It is a revelation to watch some of the last historical tenors singing on DVDs now available. Jussi Björling and Richard Tucker both sing with the squeeze of the chest. We see them breathe high in chest, keeping this position throughout their performance. All the hard work is done inside, for their faces stay relaxed and pleasant. They never open their mouths too wide. Their enunciation is very clear and understandable. As a boy Björling was taught by his father, David Björling, who was a tenor trained in New York and Vienna and gifted with a voice of great beauty. The four young Björling brothers formed a quartet and performed professionally in Europe and America. In a little booklet their father David wrote singing instructions for the teaching of children. He says:

> In inhaling air, raise the chest and imagine that you extend it on all sides in order to give the lungs plenty of room to receive the air that is used in producing the tone. Contract the lower part of the stomach when inhaling the air and the diaphragm will swell. In exhaling air, the action is reversed. Never allow the chest to sink in when exhaling or when singing. Train yourself and the children to keep the chest high and the back straight.
>
> To allow the chest to sink in, when in a sitting position, is quite pernicious.[26]

A very interesting testimony is presented by a pupil of Crescentini, Scafati, who tells a bass that he can sing several notes lower by breathing high in chest. This bass had been trained in England to produce the low notes by breathing very low in the abdomen. “Voi respirate troppo basso, signore”; “You breathe too low, sir.”[27]

Chaliapin describes the squeeze of the chest in his autobiographies: “If he [his teacher Usatov] detected that a pupil’s voice was weakening Usatov used to hammer the singer on the chest and shout: ‘Sustain it, the deuce take you! Hold it!’”[28] In this autobiography Chaliapin adds that it took him quite a while to understand that the meaning of this sustaining was to keep the tone supported on the breath. Another time he says: “If he [Usatov] heard a pupil’s voice weakening he immediately began thumping his chest, exclaiming loudly, ‘Press down, you fool, press down.’” And here Chaliapin adds: “It took some time for me to realize that this indicated to the pupil that he must concentrate the sound.”[29] Usatov means to sing downwards into the concentration of sound. On the copious photo material available of Chaliapin we can see clearly how he keeps his chest up and on his many recordings we can hear his effortless vocal production giving evidence of the “the tone supported on the breath” and “concentrating the sound.”

The Windpipe

We have seen that in historical singing the chest is considered as the source of all singing and we will understand why if we look into the physical reactions of our vocal instrument as a consequence of inflating and thereby raising the chest.

“The chest, as containing the great natural organs of respiration, is the most important of all the requisites for a singer,” says Nathan, and he continues to explain that it is in our power to regulate the processes of inhaling or exhaling “at pleasure to a considerable extent, and thereby render them subservient to the rules of music.” He rounds off his explanations on the importance of the chest with the following highly poignant observation: “The trachea, or windpipe, with its several appendages, is of vast importance in the management of the voice, which is considerably governed by its contraction and elongation.”[30]

The windpipe consists of a series of cartilages and membrane, each repeating itself at each imperfect ring. The imperfect rings are similar in shape to horseshoes, connected at the back by a membrane that goes down the whole length of the windpipe. It is easy to understand that the position of the larynx as attached to the windpipe can be influenced by this member. This is confirmed by X-ray observation of the anatomy of the human chest.[31] In historical singing the windpipe can be considered as both the anchor and prop up of the larynx, holding this instrument in the desired position. This is one of the most important factors in causing the vocal longevity of the historical singers. They anchored their larynx, holding it firmly against the pressure of the compressed breath by the squeeze of the chest. By singing downwards into the concentration of sound against the raised chest, evenness and stability of tone can be maintained into advanced age. The dangers of a wobble or a tremolo are non-existent. The old

masters taught, as we have mentioned repeatedly, mostly by empiricism, without the help of X-ray or other technical devices.

When we look at the following observations of Charles Lunn, we must take into consideration that he had lessons in Italy from Vencesleo Cattaneo, who, claiming to teach with Porpora's method, reputedly produced big voices in his pupils. Lunn's observation that the larynx is in a higher position through elongation of the windpipe complies with Nathan's remark above and with the medical evidence. Nathan had the method of Porpora poured into him by Porpora's pupil Domenico Corri. Lunn explains the elongation of the windpipe through its "resisted pressure" that is obtained by the squeeze of the chest.[32] The resisted pressure not only elongates the windpipe but also distends it, "thereby increasing the circumference."[33] This has a marked bearing on the chest resonance of the voice. Lunn also stresses the important part played by the false cords that come together, enabling the true cords to meet perfectly. The result of the false cords[34] coming together is of immense importance because the ventricles[35] are then blown up and this again has tremendous bearing on the quality of tone in both volume and sonority. In historical voice production all the work is done inside, thereby keeping the face serene. Lunn gives a simple illustration of the action of the ventricles in good sound production: blow out the cheeks and put vocal tone through them buzzing the consonant B. Notice that the compressed air in your cheeks increases your tone considerably compared to buzzing with flaccid cheeks. This phenomenon of volume increase is similar to the effect on your artistic voice by the ventricles blown out through compressed air.[36] It is imperative, however, to realize that these complicated processes can be unconsciously set into motion by perfect coordination of the parts of the vocal machinery. The mechanics of voice are automatic, not volitional, meaning that all the hard work is done by our instrument and its associated organs, which can be put into action by following the simple instructions of the old method. We see that Tetrazzini illustrates Lunn's observations when she says that the attack of the sound must come from the *appoggio*. She kept her chest up and thereby her larynx was kept firmly in position through the elongation of the windpipe. By keeping a firm grip on the point of pressure she holds her larynx steadily against the prop up of the windpipe. Her tones then attain and keep that solid anchored quality we admire so much. She complies with the old masters and if you sing like that you definitely have the sensation that every note originates at the top of the windpipe. Mancini repeatedly mentions the power of the chest. We can only understand what he means if we begin to sing like the historical singers. If we practice singing in the historical manner with a raised chest, it is amazing to feel how easily the tones get the necessary amount of resonance. "When the old masters advised students to *appoggiare la voce* (prop up the voice), they meant prop up the instrument that produces it."[37]

Breathe Through the Mouth for Singing

Nature has taken good care to provide us with a filter of tiny hairs in our nose, protecting our sensitive throat from harmful environmental influences such as cold, dirt,

etc. However beneficial and necessary breathing through the nose can be if we wish to protect ourselves, for singing it must be strongly discouraged. It is easy to feel: put your hand on your throat and breathe deeply inhaling the air through your nose. The sensation in your throat is one of tension or rather a feeling that you have tightened it. Your quick breathing will also be noisy producing a snuffle. Now smile and breathe deeply through your open mouth and the sensation is the opposite. Your throat opens towards the back and disappears: you do not feel that you have a throat. You become aware of your real mouth deep down in your pharynx. All the concentration is focused on your chest. It is most interesting that there is a saying in Dutch, "*zingen uit volle borst*," translated literally as "to sing from a full chest" in English, or "to sing with all your heart."

Breathing through the nose in singing is impractical, for it takes too much time and throws the larynx out of position. Quick vocal-display arias like singing the Champagne aria in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* or Rossini's bravura aria of the Barber will be impossible to perform in the required tempo.

We have to make it a rule to breathe through the mouth for singing. If we step out into the cold, rough weather, or any other adverse circumstances, however, we must breathe through the nose in order to protect our throat.

Hold the Breath

It is very important to realize that the Old Italian School teaches a complete stoppage of the breath after inhalation before executing the laryngeal attack. "It is the silent pause before the sounding note that puts it right."[38] By stopping the breath which is done by the false cords, we have established an equal pressure on both sides of the glottis. Through this equalized pressure, the arytenoid cartilages can come together more firmly. We have then created the condition for the continuation of the sound supported by the squeeze of the chest. The historical singer who starts to sing after a complete stoppage of the breath always transfers from a light pressure into a firm pressure established by the squeeze of the chest. There is no pressure on the vocal cords because all the hard work is done elsewhere by muscles that can be trained to do it.

Breath Capacity

It is generally believed that the singer needs large breath capacity to sing well. Fortunately this is not so, otherwise we would have been deprived of some of the greatest singers in history. Lamperti remarks: "It is not necessary to have large breath capacity (Patti and Sembrich had little) but you must know how to condense and retain the breath and not spill any of it from one tone to another — but sing the phrase like a single tone."[39]

By mentioning two of the most celebrated singers of the Golden Age we realize

once more that it is the larynx that regulates breath expenditure, for both ladies had the perfect attack, resulting in a brilliantly focused legato sound, as we can hear from their recordings. Listen to Sembrich's rendering of Handel's aria "Lusinghe più caro" from *Allesandro* or "Qui la voce" from *I Puritani* by Bellini and you will be surprised what "little breath capacity" can do when you hear her immaculate phrasing and endless coloratura runs.[40] Notice her perfect attack of the extremely pure tones she produces. Lamperti says, "Sing the phrase like a single tone," and this is only another way to illustrate the action of unremitting pressure combined with the right attack as mentioned above. Present-day singing instructions generally put too much emphasis on breathing instead of concentrating on a good attack. The historical singers with "little breath capacity" managed to turn this supposed weakness into a powerful means of expression. The historical singers with large breath capacity always put this in service of the message conveyed, fortified by the composers' phrasing.

Breathing as a Means of Expression

Listening to the historical singers we cannot but be impressed by their elegant and expressive phrasing. The perfect legato technique supported by good breathing enables them to mold the phrase in such a way that the meaning of the song comes across exceptionally strongly. We read in Crescentini's instructions that pupils should be taught good phrasing by "training their lungs to be economic with and support the breath and thus to give to singing the suitable expression as well as conform to the intentions of the composer."[41] The suitable expression is acquired by good phrasing made possible by well-trained lungs. Crescentini condemns showy breathing to obtain expression. He will only allow choppy, visible or labored breathing in a few cases like the expression of great fury, joy or grief. "In the other types of song one should always avoid audible breathing, in order not to rob singing of its demands of charm and sweetness."[42]

A hundred years later we read in Reynaldo Hahn an extended version of Crescentini's instructions. Hahn begins to say that the words have to be pronounced distinctly and understandably.

> But in addition, through sensitive, hardly noticeable interruptions ... words must be harmoniously grouped.... It is breathing that brings all this about. One phrase must be uttered in a single outflow ... another must be broken up systematically or irregularly.... One breath must be imperceptible; another must be obvious, strongly marked, almost noisy, as expression demands.[43]

All in One Breath

Historical singers sing the phrase illustrating the meaning of the message. They always make use of all the possibilities to stress and underline the utterances of the character they are impersonating. They will sing a phrase in one breath only if this meets

the demands of the phrase, but not to show off their breathing capacity. In the present day it is a normal practice to sing very long phrases in one breath without punctuation and repeated exclamations of despair such as "mai più, mai più"[44] in one and the same breath, thereby robbing them completely of their dramatic impact. The listener does not get the message in its full force, for the emphasis on the dramatic character of the utterance is smoothed over. Consequently the listener is not given the opportunity to identify with the heroine's emotions. Nordica is very clear on the matter of breathing and she agrees completely with Hahn on the many different ways of punctuation in singing a phrase. She has stinging comments on the "all in one breath" rendition of the singer with long breath, saying: "If the singer has a very long breath available, for example, she may, of course, sing more in that one breath. Another old idea used to be that the more you could sing in one breath the more cultivated you were. But that is a great mistake. One would rather hear a tone and phrase well rounded out to the end than to feel that you had done your utmost to the end of your breath, had reached the end of your resources in every way." She stresses the advantage of acquiring the ability to snatch a half-breath. "You never want your public to feel you have done your utmost — you may have, but always cover the machinery, keep it dark from the public. However, it is sometimes effective, especially in certain dramatic songs, for example, for the public to see you take a breath. It sometimes helps toward making a great effect."[45]

Practical Hints

The information on the effects of breathing in the historical manner should contribute to erasing from our mind advice on breathing for singing that breaks up the closed circle that formed the solid basis for singing a century ago. It has been made clear that good breathing is always accompanied by the right attack that ensures the larynx regulating the expenditure of breath economically and efficiently.

Take care that the practice room is always well aired and never too dry through central heating. Place yourself in front of a large mirror so that you can see what happens when you breathe for the purpose of historical singing. First correct your posture; straighten up (this pulls your stomach in), raise your breastbone, push shoulders down and turn sideways to observe your figure after this transformation. If you have difficulty in raising your chest, it can help to cross your arms behind your back, keeping the arms straight and holding hands. Now turn back to face the mirror again, keep your head straight, smile with your lips parted enough to put a finger between your teeth and inhale the air slowly and silently through a well opened throat (caused by the smiling-mouth position). If you feel no expansion in your chest, perhaps you have not inhaled air at all, so try it now with an audible sigh (as Nathan mentions in the above mentioned quote). Watch carefully how your whole torso from the waist up raises itself and expands. Notice how your stomach is pulled in automatically when you have taken enough breath.

Hold the breath before you emit your voice with a firm attack. Keep the position of the raised chest and pulled-in stomach while singing little basic scales of two and three notes. If you sing downwards into the concentration of sound, you will feel your stomach muscles pulling in. Let them do this, it keeps your chest up. Never try to save breath by clamping down on the stomach muscles. You have to make use of the breath compression by keeping the chest up permanently, supported by the tensed stomach muscles. The squeeze of the chest will come through persistent practice. Do not worry about your breath capacity. Remember that all depends on the perfect closure of the glottis. Practicing the right attack while keeping the body in the right posture will lead to the right breath control. Do not overdo practicing breathing without singing, just maintain the squeeze of the chest by singing into the concentration of sound. Singing simple exercises will develop your breathing steadily and surely. Take ample time dividing the exercise to repeat the slow process of inhalation as described above. Follow the clear instructions of Garcia on where to breathe in exercises, observing strict discipline executing the simple exercises well within your breath capacity.[46] Never sing exercises to the end of your resources. Increasing the duration of each exercise will gradually increase your breath control. Do not try to sing words before you have developed a smooth legato sound; this might take three months or more. If you cannot practice singing, just remember to adopt the right posture as often as you can during the daytime. Straighten yourself up and raise yourself to your true height. It is amazing how much energy this simple act gives us.

It cannot be stressed enough that breathing for singing as the Old Italian School teaches is a natural process following the laws of physical science and therefore beneficial to health and general well being.

Historical Breathing in a Nutshell

Just as the chapter on the attack can be condensed into Garcia's clear and concise instructions, this chapter can be summarized in just a few sentences by taking Concone's advice, which offers complete agreement with Garcia's and the above from Nathan. It illustrates how closely the attack and the breath are connected and in what way they were inseparable from one another in the Old Italian School.

Concone tells us that the act of taking breath preceding the attack of the sound should be "*naturelle*." We see that Concone's advice is based on the right posture of the aspiring singer. He continues to say that we should never try to overfill our lungs. The surplus quantity of air will have to be expelled by its own weight tiring the singer. Therefore, the most efficient way of managing the process of exhalation must be applied and this is obtained by attacking the sound "*prompte et déterminéé*." This complies with Garcia's expression "*sec et vigoureux*." Concone illustrates his instruction as follows: "the air ready to be converted into sound should escape only on the very beginning of its mission, otherwise we might be tempted to attack a sound with a lot of breath causing the vibration only to start after a lot of air has already escaped."[47] We see here the

fact clearly confirmed that the larynx must lead the breath just as Melba says in her dictum on the attack and we begin to understand what she means when she says, “It is easy to sing well and very difficult to sing badly!” or “In order to sing well, it is necessary to sing easily.”[48] The rules for historical singing are natural and simple; if they seem difficult to follow, this is caused by wrong habits that we must eradicate. “The only method that can be helpful must be built on common sense and a close observation of Nature’s laws.”[49]

Magda Olivero, contemporary of the tenors Björling, Tagliavini and Tauber, preferred to breathe in the historical manner as she has confirmed previously in this chapter, describing her act of slow breathing in clear terminology. She says that she has the impression of seeing her breath with inner eyes. She has an awareness of her diaphragm and if this has not moved she misses its function. “But when I feel right, the mouth relaxed, the throat relaxed above all ... breathing lovingly, gently.... I feel this breath going down.... Beautiful! The thorax enlarges, and then at a certain point at the end of the inhalation, I feel my diaphragm do ... tac! It raises and blocks.”[50] She implies, of course, that the breath should be taken to suit the length of the phrase. It seems a logical consequence of the 20th-century emphasis on breathing that Olivero should have become so consciously aware of the process of breathing, as she was obliged to make the choice between the modern method and the historical one. Therefore, her impressions come at the close of this chapter. To acquire the natural method of breathing of the historical singers, we have to perform the act of breathing consciously before it will be imprinted in our system, coordinating automatically with the right attack.

3

The Resonance

Musical instruments have been created, designed and built to produce sounds that can delight us. Great care and attention have always been given to create a proper body of resonance for the sound to be fortified and enhanced, provided that the instruments were going to be played in the right manner. This means that the actual production of the sound has to be of such a perfect nature that it can make optimal use of the body around it.

Everyone will agree willingly that there is a considerable amount of training necessary to produce a perfect violin tone that makes optimal use of its resonance and moreover that there are no two ways of producing that perfect tone. The violin must make use of a point of pressure: the collision of bow and string. And this point of pressure must be applied with such precision and professional skill that the ensuing sound permeates the body of the violin. The trumpet player has to make his embouchure by means of a continuous strong pressure of his lips. The singer can apply this point of pressure through the mechanical action supplied by his larynx with a much finer developed mechanism than the trumpeter's lips: the arytenoid cartilages. If for some reason the pressure of the bow or the lips is not applied to perfection, neither the violinist nor the trumpet player can influence the resonance of their instrument in any other way. The singer, on the other hand, who does not apply the point of pressure obtained by a perfect attack and continuation of the sound supported by good breathing, has the possibility to manufacture a sort of pseudo-resonance, thereby creating the vocal sound recognizable as being the sound of the professional present-day singer.

The Natural Resonance of the Old Italian School

In the Old Italian School, there always was complete agreement on how to produce a perfect singing tone; consequently, there was no need to overemphasize resonance in singing, for the simple reason that the right sound production combined with good articulation implies optimal use of the resonance of the chest, throat and head, which form the natural resonance chambers for the human voice. If the instrument of the human voice is played in the right manner, then the resonance chambers will be functioning in the best possible way. We can compare the function of the human res-

onator to that of the tube of a horn, an extremely complicated process of the greatest delicacy. The singer cannot follow this complicated process consciously; all he can do consciously is to attack and continue the sound above the compressed breath and articulate clearly, and this combination will make the resonator fulfill its function. From the previous chapters, it has become quite clear that the Old Italian School developed an expressive and accessible way of singing by following the physical anatomical laws of nature. We have seen that having the right posture has its important consequences, that the right way of breathing sets crucial physical and spiritual reactions in motion and together with the right attack leads to freedom in singing. It should not come as a surprise that the resonance of the voice as part of this perfect system is following the pattern of the laws of nature. The Old Italian School knew by empiricism that the resonator (chambers of resonance) of the voice should function as an effect of the collision of forces. Its masters therefore focused on the attainment of perfect tone production, by perfect management of the larynx and the breath. If we speak of resonance in the historical way of singing, the concept of resonance differs completely from what present-day singing considers resonance to be. The historical concept of voice emission might be called centrifugal, concentrating the sound on the place of attack, as opposed to modern concepts that might be called peripheral, attacking the sound on the places where it arrives as outward radiating sound. The historical voice is always concentrated on the point of pressure and radiates its sound, which reaches the necessary resonance depending on the pitch of the note. The result is that you sing with the voice that is unalterably yours; you can make your own voice sound as beautiful as possible but you cannot change its individual, basic timbre. The historical way of singing enables the singer to color the vocal sound he produces. The singer can modulate his vocal utterance according to the message he has to bring across. He has all the shades of bright and dark timbre at his disposal containing the colors of the voice.

Pseudo-Resonance Obtained by Forward Production as Opposed to Natural Resonance

The modern voice induces and applies resonance by means of a forward production independent of the pitch of the note to obtain a predetermined ideal resonance not naturally appropriate to the note. Certain exercises stimulate supposed places of resonance, thereby working on the effect and not the cause of sound production, in other words putting the cart before the horse. The result is that you sing with the voice that is predetermined and now in fashionable demand, not, however, your own individual voice, which was the fashion for several hundreds of years. Blanche Arral illustrates this very clearly remembering the great voices she heard in her day:

> Each of these voices had a color which was peculiar to it. One voice might be said to be golden, another silver, one a brilliant vermilion, one a rich dark purple. There was a wide variety in texture, color, and tone, and I attribute all this to the method of emission of which I have spoken.... To my ears most of the young singers I hear now possess what we would

> have called in my youth *la voix blanche.* This means, as well as I can describe it, a voice lacking in musical ring, lacking overtones, as they are called now, in fact having very little true tone of any sort — colorless, flat, artificial, and far from the genuine article, the true natural quality, for few voices are naturally white.[1]

We see that Arral knows exactly why voices in 1937 sounded different compared to the voices she used to hear from her colleagues when she mentions the "method of emission" as the cause of good or bad vocal sound. A quarter-century later Herbert-Caesari completely agreed with Arral condemning the modern "method of emission" in no uncertain terms: "The so-called 'forward production' method is largely responsible for the general low standard of singing, technically speaking, and for the ruin of innumerable voices. Its history is inglorious. It is invariably wedded to that obsession: Diaphragmatic drive. The nefarious marriage has wrought untold harm."[2]

It is the combination of projecting the voice by means of the downward thrust of the diaphragm that Herbert-Caesari is criticizing here. He maintains that the concept of forward production might well have its origins in the deceptive qualitative impression the singer makes on a lay observer who has no knowledge of vocal technique. Remember even professional observers like Husler and Rodd Marling placed McCormack as a singer who used the attack behind the teeth. Herbert-Caesari mentions that looking at the singer might also give the deceptive impression that the tone is produced forward. This impression to the eye of the observer combined with the misinterpreted dictum "Cantare a fior' di labbra," suggesting that one should sing "on the edge of the lips," might have contributed, according to Herbert-Caesari, to the development of the method of forward production. He sums up some of the dangerous consequences of its application:

> The forward production is monofocal, that is, it inculcates the principle that all tones, irrespective of pitch and vowel, should be placed or (shall we say "driven") "well forward" on the hard palate, preferably "just over the upper teeth." An extension of this method requires all tones to be placed "in the mask," and "just between the eyes on the bridge of the nose."[3]

If the singer places his voice in the mask, he is unconsciously closing himself off from the world, for he restricts the acoustic manifestation of the sound he produces. The sound of the vowel "ah" produced in the mask is featureless, undistinguished, and very different from that produced in the historical way.

For the emission of the "ah" in the method of the Old Italian School, we can listen to Tagliavini who succeeds to pierce our heart with the repeated "ah" in the opening words of the famous aria "Un*a* furtiv*a* l*a*grim*a*," catching our undivided attention and setting the mood of the whole aria. We hang on his lips throughout the aria, following his every shade of tone from the softest piano to the most powerful forte, amazed by the ease and comfort of his vocal emission adorned by his crystal-clear diction, lifting the plainest words to a high level of beauty.[4]

A major disadvantage, however, of forward production is the fact that the vibrator is forced to make the wrong adjustments for the tone to be produced. Every perfectly produced laryngeal tone has its particular focus in the resonator, so it is obvious

that a predestined focus in a deliberately chosen place of acoustics will exercise undue tension on the vibrator. Could it be possible, therefore, through the discomfort caused by this undue tension on the vibrator, that the sopranos would rather sing in the mezzo-soprano range? One phenomenon of the last fifty years is the increase of singers singing mezzo-soprano.

The high soprano tones attacked in the historical manner travel via the back of the head to their place of acoustical manifestation. If we listen to the historical sopranos' high notes, we notice that they come into existence instantaneously like a flash of lightning. Present-day sopranos tend to slide into the notes resulting in the tendency to stay behind the beat, instead of taking the lead. If the high tones are forced into the mask, they require a lot of extra push to get there and they will be difficult to attain because the laryngeal muscles are not allowed to make the right adjustment for their production. Pushing the tone forwards can lead to shrillness. The mask, or the other preferred places mentioned above by Herbert-Caesari, do not offer the singer enough room for the sound to attain its proper development and the consequence of this cramped setup is that the singer sings slightly flat all the time. The inner ear of the singer plays an important part in his intonation, as will be described further down. If the pupil gets the instruction to place the tone forward, his attention will be focused there and he will drive the tone forward, as Kelsey tells us: "This evokes an instantaneous response from the muscles of the larynx and windpipe, which abruptly cease to hold the instrument with the requisite degree of firmness against the weight of air pressure pressing up against it, and the entire mechanism is unbalanced."[5] Remember that the old masters always instructed the pupil to sing downwards into the concentration of sound and never away from it. Lamperti sums up: "A conscious 'placing' of the tone hampers the voice. Each utterance must 'find its own place.'"[6]

Localities of Acoustical Manifestation of the Historical Voice

The term "resonance" as it is understood nowadays really is confusing and not applicable in its modern meaning to the Old School. In the Old School resonance as such is not isolated and dissected as a means for practice to fortify the sound but instead manifests itself as the effect of perfect sound production. For the singer it is of great importance, however, to know where the sound comes to rest or focus. The old masters are never in doubt and always agree on this point. Nathan mentions three localities of acoustic manifestation of the sound: "There is one voice which we associate with the chest; a second which we associate with the throat; and a third with the head."[7] Modern methods might agree on the first and the last but they will be in doubt on the second. If you sing a great scale from the lowest to the highest of your range on the vowel "ah" in the historical way, you clearly feel that the sound radiates and comes to rest or focus in the abovementioned areas of resonance.

It has to be stressed that this marked sensation can only be achieved by attacking

the voice with a *coup de glotte* or, as Tetrazzini says, "from the bottom of my throat" and continuing the ensuing sound by keeping a firm grip on the point of pressure, which is also the only possible way to sing an even scale without a jolt connecting chest tones with the rest of the scale. By singing a great scale, the sensation of the three different localities of acoustical manifestation becomes self-evident: chest, throat and head.

Chest Resonance

The management of the breath of the Old School resulting in the squeeze of the chest supplies the singer with a great nobility of tone that has its origin in the resonance of the chest. We have seen that the attack of the sound is always just above the breastbone, giving the singer the feeling that every tone originates on top of the windpipe. The vocal cords are two-way vibrators with sound waves going up into the pharynx and from there into the head, but also down into the chest. Full chest resonance can only be obtained through the coordinated action of the attack and the breath: the two opposing arrows. The chest is unanimously regarded by the old masters as the source of all singing and this goes for women as well as for men. Historical singers like Arral, Tetrazzini, Boninsegna and Nezhdanova retain a warm sound even in their highest head tones and this is due to their solid *appoggio* where all their tones are anchored. All the historical lady singers including high sopranos made use of their pure chest register and emitted the most thrilling tones in that register. Their recordings give ample evidence of this fact. Singing their lowest tones in full chest never inflicted the slightest harm upon their highest tones. To achieve the feeling of true chest resonance, it is conducive to sing with the expanded and raised chest of the old singers.

Throat Resonance in the Medium Voice

The middle part of the historical soprano or mezzo-soprano voice was trained with the greatest care and with good reason, for without careful guidance it is the middle part of this type of voice that usually is the weakest in the beginning of vocal training. With proper care, attention, and, above all, patience, it can be developed into a medium of great strength and enormous expressive powers. The most important aspect of its healthy development is to let nature work its way slowly and surely. The voice must be attacked with a *coup de glotte* and from E1 the tone will then manifest itself at the top of the throat surrounded by the soft palate, the posterior part of the tongue and the back wall of the throat, from there it is reflected on the palate but it should never be pushed or forced in the slightest manner. The walls of the throat and soft palate are lined with moist membranes. Our notes in the middle voice will be therefore full of warmth and the vowels will be round and colorful.

In ascending the scale, the tone will be felt to move further back into the bone of the head and reach an almost completely closed sensation at the F#. If we articulate the

vowel "ah" on the glottis in the middle part of the voice and ascend the scale, we will notice that the transition from medium voice into head voice will occur seamlessly. The mouth has to be in a smiling position, causing the locality of resonance to be in a wide arch on the palate and above it, therefore brightening the sound considerably. It is important to remember that in the medium voice the tone will first hit against the back wall of the throat and from there it will be reflected onto the palate. The sensation that the real mouth of the singer is in the pharynx is extremely marked, and it is the smile that opens our throat with the feeling of pleasant surprise. In the beginning of our transition to historical singing practicing the tones on the vowel "ah," these will be colorless and weak but they will gather in strength. The natural resonance of the vowel "ah" will manifest itself at the back of the throat and from there simultaneously in a wide arch above the palate. The sound will be open, bright, brilliant and highlighted; it is the icing on the cake. The sensation of freedom is marked, for the sound is felt to be radiating into the venue, giving the singer a definite feeling of communication with the audience. We must always remember that our real mouth for singing is the pharynx. When the singer pushes the sound to the front against the hard palate, he reduces his pharynx to inactivity, losing the most valuable space for beauty and natural resonance with the loss of the different colors and expression that can give his voice heart and soul.

The message of a song or aria is usually in the middle part of the voice and can be perfectly clearly enunciated with the natural individual sound of the singer if the voice is trained in the historical manner. The importance of patience in the development of this part of the voice cannot be overestimated. If the singer is tempted too early to sing repertoire, she can easily be seduced into forcing her voice for fear of being overruled by the accompaniment. If the voice is not developed properly, this part can sound childish and feeble with the result of sounding out of balance with the high notes that will sound mature and strong. Persistent practice on scales and arpeggios is an absolute must. When we have gained complete mastery over the middle part of the voice, great freedom of expression is our reward, manifesting itself in facial muscles that function normally and easily without undue tension and distortion. One of the great advantages of the historical method is the obvious freedom of expression and enunciation caused by the sound production that stays independent of the other mechanisms of the voice. The middle part of the voice is for expression, or rather, to express the music with heart and soul. If the voice is trained from the start in the historical method with the smiling mouth position, it will sound bright and can be darkened at will, thus bringing out all the colors necessary for painting the mood of the repertoire. Garcia tells us: "It is in the pharynx that is found the causation of *timbres*."[8] The historical sopranos followed this law with the result that their voices stayed full of expression in the middle part, if they had lost some of their top notes with advanced age.

The Resonance of the Ventricles

We have been acquainted with the importance of the ventricles in the laryngeal chamber that play a considerable part in fortifying the sound. Lamperti tells us in a

nutshell how they are inflated: "Ventricular pouches in the larynx inflate when both false and true vocal bands (vocal cords) approach and meet like two pairs of lips when kissing. Ventricular action is as necessary to the singing voice as the pulsation of the glottis."[9]

The ventricles can only perform their job efficiently if the singer starts the tone after a complete stoppage of the breath with the chest expanded, establishing the squeeze of the chest. The singer who sings down into the concentration of sound makes use of the ventricles, producing a big voice with the greatest economy, giving the impression of ease and effortless superiority. It must be well understood that the ventricles can only function after taking the necessary steps for perfect sound production; the action on the ventricles themselves is always indirect and unconscious. The sensation of ease and comfort of the singer is, however, very strong. He makes his forte tones without noticeable effort but with great economy of production. Listen to the full and pleasant forte tones of Chaliapin and Tagliavini; they never give the impression that there is great effort involved.

If you take the organ pipes called reeds and examine them, you see the long tube that gives the color to the sound. Underneath is a solid piece of metal looking interestingly enough like the windpipe. This part contains the reed. Under the reed is the chamber where the air is accumulated under pressure and which comes into contact with the reed, which vibrates to give the sound of the pipe. In all the reed pipes, this chamber is of the same size, the only difference being that the various families of reeds are under different pressures; the pipes under the greatest pressure have a volume that can be deafening. Similarly if the false vocal cords are closed properly, then the ventricles can expand and amplify the sound produced at the larynx exactly as in the organ pipe.[10]

If the middle part of the voice is well developed through persistent practice, it will benefit greatly by the action of the blown-up ventricles and the vowels will get their particular characteristics, thereby increasing the potential of the singer to fill the words with more poetical expression than their everyday meaning. At the same time the increase in volume of the voice will be amazing and thrilling.

Head Resonance

In historical singing the head tones of the soprano are solidly anchored by the *appoggio*. The sensation of singing high notes is one of "pinching" or "squeezing" as hard as possible. If we listen to historical singers like Sembrich, Arral, Tetrazzini, Burzio, Boronat and Nezhdanova, we can hear clearly how they keep the point of pressure in an iron grip, thereby giving the sound all the freedom to reach the resonance it requires. Notice how their high notes always retain a warm and agreeable basic sound, preserving the individual sound of the singer. They were literally performers on the larynx and they had developed this organ to a similar level of perfection and agility as a ballet dancer's legs: through years of training.

In the soprano voice, full head resonance is attained on the F#, and from there all her vowels will be gradually narrowed to a general sound of the greatest penetration. If the middle part of the voice is attacked with a *coup de glotte*, the voice will have no difficulty at all in passing from the middle into the head. The sound issuing from the laryngeal attack will follow the path of self-placement. If, however, the voice is attacked in the middle voice on the hard palate, the transition will be problematic, because the sound is pushed directly to the front and does not travel there reflected from the back wall of the throat. Consequently, the larynx has to make an adjustment when the notes have to go into the head resonance. This is the reason why the soprano who attacks the middle voice on the hard palate, or in the mask, might feel that she is transferring to another register, whereas it is only the locality of acoustical manifestation of the sound that changes. There is no laryngeal jerk indicating a transition between different registers.

The "Ring" of the Historical Voice

In the books of the old masters we find no mention of resonance as a phenomenon to get special attention and stimulation through exercises. Garcia is straightforward and clear in his instructions to develop the voice. For the problem of a weak and veiled middle voice that lets the air escape, he gives this advice: "The leakage is caused by the lips of the glottis being imperfectly closed. The ring can be obtained by attacking with a sharp stroke of the glottis every sound of the interval E1 to C2 in the Italian vowels."[11] The sharp attack on the vowels A and E as in *alma* and *sempre* causes the voice to reach the resonance, bringing out the ring of the voice. We see that the sharp attack provides the voice with resonance because of the perfect closure of the glottis. This holds true for speaking as well as singing purposes. There is absolutely no need for special exercises to stimulate resonance. Lamperti describes the historical concept of resonance in a few words: "Resonance is but the working of the law of radiation, not a physical effort."[12]

Projection in Perspective to Historical Concepts

Professional voices are trained nowadays to face the enormous task of singing with big orchestras or booming grand pianos unfit for vocal accompaniment in oversized venues that do not offer the intimacy for Lieder programs. The abandonment of the sharp glottal attack that Garcia mentions above led to a search for other means to increase the volume of the voice quickly and easily. As we have seen earlier on, the singer, contrary to the violinist or trumpet player, has the possibility to influence the body of his resonance. The keyword in present-day singing is projection. The voice has to be projected and this idea is illustrated by comparisons of throwing a baseball, or a javelin that has to hit the last row of the concert hall. To bring the voice well forward on the

hard palate into the mask causes a reaction of the larynx that is not held firmly against the pressure (the arrow pointing up instead of down) and the windpipe (relaxed instead of toned up) and is accompanied by a surplus of breath flow needed to push the sound to this palatal attack. The flow of breath, even if it is only tiny, will prevent the glottis from closing perfectly. At the same time the facial muscles are activated for the maintenance of the achieved concentration of energy in the mask. The historical singer who sings from the chest, the source of all singing, saturates his voice first with heart, soul and mind through his way of breathing and the attack before it reaches the chambers of resonance. The resonance is the final polish in the stages of historical voice production and never the means to an end. The historical singer does not throw his sound at the listener but he is a magnet drawing the listener towards him by singing into the concentration of sound. Historical resonance always functions in sympathy with the vocal sound that is acquired through a perfect glottal attack. It is part of the voice production and never isolated as such. Through the manner that the historical sound radiates out from the localities of acoustics of chest, throat and head, it is much more evenly and generally divided than the present-day vocal sound that is concentrated in certain localities of the head specially prepared for the purpose of its formation. All that the historical singer has to do is to attack and continue the sound, maintaining the squeeze of the chest and then the coordinated vocal organs will take care of acoustics. Kelsey emphasizes:

> All that the singer can do at the level of consciousness is to keep the instrument in correct physical adjustment for the pitch and intensity of the note, and at the same time, to manage correctly the conscious physical process of breath management, attack and articulation, when the resonator will do all that is asked of it. If, however, he tries to predetermine the nature of the resonance, then no matter at what part of the resonator he attacks, the entire instrument will suffer.[13]

The old masters always took the natural voice of their pupils as a starting point and stimulated its development with the right exercises. We get a good impression of how they worked from the individual vocal qualities of the pupil in the well-defined remarks of Blanche Arral:

> The main thing that has changed, I think, is the method of emission taught now [the year is 1937]. Madame Marchesi, Garcia, and other great teachers of the past began with the voice as it naturally existed.... If the scale is built on what is already there, the beautiful, personal quality of the individual voice is retained. Those teachers found the natural quality of each voice and preserved it, so that what nature had begun was developed, polished and equalized, not changed. That is why such voices lasted.... In short, all must be built on nature. This would seem to be a truism, but in singing it seems frequently to be forgotten now.[14]

Modern methods that take the resonance as their starting point really begin to work at the end phase of sound production, the periphery. The beauty of the voice that originates in the pharynx can be intensified and enhanced by the functions of the resonator as implied by the historical concept of resonance. Any practice that consists in creating chambers of resonance separated from this historical concept by particular exercises develop the singer's voice into an instrument that is alienated from the true voice of its

owner. It should be clear by now that present-day concepts of resonance differ completely from historical concepts of resonance. By training the voice in the historical way, we soon notice the different aspect that resonance assumes. The focus of our training is on the attack of the sound and its continuation. This sound acquires a general resonance, enveloping us, whereas we keep the center of the sound permanently in our own breast. The sound from the heart thus communicates with the hearts of the listeners, provided that they listen with their hearts and not with their heads. "Oh, how great a master is the heart!... Own, when the heart sings you cannot dissemble nor has truth a greater power of persuading."[15]

Causes and Effects of Historical and Present-Day Nasal Resonance

The old masters invariably warn against two serious dangers in singing. Tosi puts it in no uncertain terms, warning singing teachers:

> Let the master attend with great care to the voice of the scholar [pupil], which, whether it be *di petto* or *di testa*, should always come forth neat and clear, without passing through the nose or being choked in the throat (which are the two most horrible defects in a singer, and past all remedy if once grown into a habit).[16]

Lablache and Garcia completely agree on the remedy for curing nasality. They tell us that it is fairly easy to cure in a beginner and they give the remedy for the pupil who acquired the habit of singing through the nose.

> [The nasal tone] is produced by pushing the breath into the nasal cavities. With some attention beginners, who are prone to this defect, can easily avoid it; to get those ones who are used to it over a long period of time out of it, there is no other way but to let them vocalise, beginning on O, then on A and E, while one holds the nose in such a manner that no breath can get through. This method is the only one that experience proves to be effective; we advise it, without fear of being ridiculed, convinced that the defect will disappear completely. One should not try to sing on words and apply this remedy at the same time: That is utterly impossible.[17]

We see how carefully Lablache words the remedy, preventing readers from ridiculing his advice.

At approximately the same time, Garcia tells us that the voice disposed towards the bright timbre can obtain a nasal character if the breath goes straight into the nasal cavities before flowing out of the mouth. Fifty years later he is very concise, saying: "Sounds become nasal when the soft palate is so much lowered that the voice resounds chiefly from the nasal cavities. This defect may be detected by pinching the nose while singing. To correct it, the soft palate must be raised as if in yawning."[18] Delle Sedie describes clearly how the negative influence of nasal resonance ought to be avoided in high notes. He states the consequences of opening the mouth too wide:

> The excessive lowering of the jaw contracts considerably the isthmus of the throat and the fullness of the vibrations of the sound ... by this excessive separation [of the lower jaw], the

> *tongue* must rise and swell at its base; this muscular contraction makes it almost touch the *soft palate* ... and the sound which comes from the *larynx,* not finding its natural egress, must necessarily stop in the *pharynx,* and escape greatly from the nostrils.[19]

We see that nasality was considered as a serious aberration or defect in historical singing. By some schools it is now regarded, however, as a means of improving voice production. Two decades ago a well-known German voice specialist surgeon promoted the method of *nasalieren*, to "nasalize." This consists of sticking out the tongue and then pushing the sound through the nose; the sound produced in this manner could be described as goat-like. It is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Old Italian School that the exercises prescribed are invariably restricted to vocal sound belonging to the human species. The only animal that is taken as an example is the nightingale that trills its wonderful melodies unequalled by man. When he advises the singing teacher to instruct the pupil in the swelling of the tone, Tosi recommends imitating the nightingale as being "the origin of it [the swelling of the tone] and the only thing which the voice can well imitate."[20] Nightingales have become scarcer but for the singers given the chance to experience the sound, they must not refuse the chance to hear this dramatic songster in its natural habitat.

The cello is a beautiful instrument with a warm sound. The most expensive cello, however, is worth nothing if it possesses a "wolf tone," meaning a tone extraneous and alien to the instrument. Kelsey maintains that singing with nasal resonance produces a "wolf tone," a sound that does not belong to the natural resonance chambers of the voice. He also mentions that nasal resonance practice will inflict serious harm on the beauty of the voice because it tends to make the sensitive edges of the glottal lips brittle and coarse by putting a permanent strain on the vocal cords. Exercises for nasal resonance by using syllables like "mee," "may," "my," "nay," "ng" that the singer places forward on the hard palate in such a way that the mask and nose are felt to be vibrating are nowadays considered necessary for voice production. Kelsey explains:

> What the singer really does in such a case is to establish a vowel cavity at the very front of the mouth whose periodicity is in close harmonic relationship with that of the air-passages in the nose and the turbinated bones above and behind the nostrils. He manufactures an artificial "tuning fork" in the front of the mouth which sets the nasal "tuning fork" into sympathetic vibration.[21]

Singing with nasal resonance always puts a strain on the instrument with the result that sopranos can only reach their high notes under a great amount of unnecessary tension. French might be classified as a language with plenty of nasality. In historical singing, however, its nasal characteristics are never overemphasized but stay in keeping with the right delivery of the words. The historical manner of enunciation enables the singer to stay close to pure vowel formation. A great disadvantage of nasal resonance practice is the deformity of the vowels that unavoidably take on a different color and sound, closed when they should be open or thin when they should be warm and round.

Some schools of singing advise using "ng" to develop head resonance. This can lead to the irritating habit of singers to precede every vowel with this "ng" sound. The

"ng" closes the throat and consequently forces the sound through the nose. Its origin will never be found in the method of the Old Italian School for the Italian language does not possess that sound. Lilli Lehmann seems to like its use and is one of its first advocates, extolling its use in her book on singing.

The masters of the Old Italian School scorn the modern practice of humming through the nose with the aim to acquire the head sound. True head sound, according to them, can only be acquired by means of a fully developed pharynx. The practice of humming does not contribute to opening the throat; on the contrary, it keeps the tone throaty. Lamperti Sr. warns the pupil against it, saying: "The pupil is also warned to avoid humming, as, wanting in the support of the chest, there is nothing which more fatigues the throat, or renders more uncertain the intonation."[22]

Historical and Modern Sound Production: Its Effects on the Ear of the Singer

Experience with the voice production in the historical manner has led to the observation that this way of singing does not interfere with the natural function of the ear. The sound is produced in the bottom of our throat, resonating in the pharynx and in the ventricles before traveling further. We read in Helmholtz: "The drum of the ear is ... completely shut off from the external passage and from the labyrinth. But it has free access to the upper part of the pharynx or throat, through the so-called 'Eustachian tube.'"[23] Helmholtz explains that the [Eustachian] tube is not usually open, but "is only opened during swallowing, and this is explained by the fact that the muscles which raise the *velum palati* or soft palate are set in action on swallowing."[24] Singing with a permanently exaggeratedly high soft palate affects the sound of the voice, making it too heady, and should be restricted for certain effects. Further down we read in Helmholtz: "For a strong pressure of the air the tube opens even without the action of swallowing, and its power of resistance seems to be very different in different individuals."[25]

Our inner ear, an organ of an incredibly complicated delicacy, tunes itself to the vibrations it receives. As long as no interference occurs with the natural voice production of the Old Italian School, our ears will function normally because the valve connecting the inner ear and the pharynx remains closed. If, however, we produce our singing tones with predetermined and especially cultivated places of resonance, it is obvious that this will have its effects on our ears, which will not receive the natural vibrations they should receive. The inner ear will tune itself to the vibrations it receives and if we restrict the resonance to mask nasal resonance and head resonance, certain partials of our tones will be lacking. This is one of the reasons why many singers nowadays sing permanently slightly flat, producing tones that have now become generally accepted and expected by the listeners.

If we eat a crunchy cookie or cracker, we momentarily impair our hearing considerably by the crackle our chewing produces. The sound of the crunch affects our ears. If we attack our tones on the hard palate and in the mask, we will create sound

waves that will cause a reaction in our ears. We all know how our ears suffer from the painful exposure to pressure in the landing procedure of an aircraft. This pressure is exerted from without. It is only logical to conclude that pressure from within through tone placement in forward production will also have considerable effects on our ears.

If we open our mouth very wide we hear the rushing of our blood pulsating through the arteries. The valve in the Eustachian tubes between the ears and the pharynx opens. So if the singer opens his mouth very wide, he will cause this valve to be permanently open, thereby exerting pressure on his ears. A widely opened mouth causes the throat to contract. Consequently, a situation of conflict is created for the ear, which loses its access to the pharynx. The singer who sings with forced forward production usually combines this with a downward thrust of the diaphragm. This diaphragmatic drive, as Herbert-Caesari calls it, also exerts considerable pressure on our ears. The singer who sings into the mask virtually deafens himself. Some singers when practicing have developed the habit of cupping their hands over their ears, maintaining that this enables them to hear their inner sound.

The historical singer who sings according to Lamperti Sr. and Tetrazzini "from the bottom of his or her throat," as previously quoted, keeps the sound production going well below the ears, which consequently stay free from unwanted pressure. The result is an open sound quality with tones that are free from "taints," as mentioned by Sir Henry Wood in the introduction of this book.

The Origins of Nasal Resonance in Modern-Day Singing

If we look for an explanation of the origins of nasal resonance as an important feature of present-day singing practice, we hit upon two historical singers of great fame who influenced the voice production of their day considerably. Both suffered chronically from sore throats and one was troubled by a cough. They made no secret of their problems during their career and mentioned these in their (auto)biographies. Jean de Reszke[26] and Lilli Lehmann[27] were artists of the first rank and represented the highest ideals of their art. Jean de Reszke, originally a baritone became the favorite Wagner tenor of the day and together with his brother, the bass Edouard,[28] dominated the opera stages of the European and American capitals. We have ample evidence from his colleagues and friends that Jean was extremely sensitive with regards to his throat and that it made him excessively nervous when performing. "Jean de Reszke was one of the most apprehensive singers imaginable, and wore an expression of terror in his eyes during the whole performance. He always had with him a laryngoscope and frequently examined his throat and larynx." These are the words of his colleague Emma Eames,[29] who also states that before 1893–94 singers only consulted a throat specialist when they were really ill. "Jean made it the fashion for singers to be treated, and persuaded me to be examined, although there was nothing the matter with me, with the above result [an unnecessary operation removing a piece of bone from her nose]. Eames continued that Jean consulted a famous throat specialist who treated singers with a solution of cocaine

to make the voice more brilliant, relaxing it dangerously on the rebound. "Jean de Reszke always went to this doctor before a performance, and almost invariably smelled of iodoform and ether through the whole of the opera."[30]

Reynaldo Hahn, a fervent admirer of Jean, praised his performances when he was forced to appear before the public suffering from hoarseness and singing with hardly any voice. Let it be clearly understood that the artistic quality of the performances of Jean de Reszke and Lilli Lehmann was probably gained by compensating through other means than perfect vocalizing. In other words they turned the vice into a virtue, as Hahn testifies, watching de Reszke in a performance of *Lohengrin.* De Reszke suffered from tracheitis, causing him to be short of breath. He realized when he started to sing on the big stage in the spacious hall that he faced a struggle with the condition of his voice for the whole evening.

> Yet somehow, his performance was even more beautiful than it would have been without his slight indisposition.... His singing became more expressive and appealing than ever before. Not only did his verbal interpretation improve noticeably as a result of his indisposition ... this admirable singer...concealed his discomfort behind the beauty of an original interpretation.[31]

In the case of Jean de Reszke, however, vocal problems of his and of his brother Edouard forced him to seek advice and help from the famous laryngologist Dr. Curtis[32] in New York. After long consultations they came to the solution that the vocal cords had to be relieved from what they believed to be their heavy task of starting the tone. Rejecting any method that closed the vocal cords instantly and perfectly for singing, they decided that the vocal cords should come together in a gradual manner. They believed this to benefit the health of the vocal cords. How can we close the vocal cords in a gradual manner? It can be done by starting the tone with a H but this has the disadvantage of starting the sound husky and late. The other possibility is to start the tone with a preceding consonant. The letter M was chosen as ideal for their purpose; sung with a closed mouth, it causes the sound to pass straight into the nose. They were convinced that singing through the nose would have a beneficial effect on the vocal cords, whereas exactly the opposite is achieved. What happens when the sound is directed straight into the nasal passages is clearly demonstrated by the quote of Lablache above. You have to use the force of the breath to achieve nasal resonance and this means that the glottis is not shut optimally, resulting in a breathy, unfocused vocal production. Nasal resonance renders natural voice production of the historical singers acquired through the method of the "voice above the breath" impossible. One of the reasons of the popularity of the practice for nasal resonance must be that it is the easiest and quickest way to produce a voice that projects, for it does not require long and serious training as does the mastery of the perfect glottal attack and continuation of the sound "above the breath." The singer who uses this method to produce his voice does not have to worry about different timbres because he is restricted to one timbre only: the dark one. The activity of the laryngeal muscles on the cartilages is not used to produce the tone and muscles deteriorate through misdirected stimulation or no stimulation at all.

Both brothers de Reszke had to resign from opera singing at a comparatively early

age. "The serious fact witnessed by the whole world was that Edouard de Reszke's voice failed completely when he was still a fine, strong man [of 53]. His instrument was beautiful, but the nasal method destroyed it. His brother Jean de Reszke, one of the finest singers the world ever knew, fell a victim to the same practice in the prime of life [at 54]."[33]

Jean became a famous teacher who carried the torch of nasal resonance and placing the voice in the mask further with great success. The brothers convinced many of their famous colleagues of the danger they risked of ruining their voices by attacking with a glottal attack and they even managed to lead Nellie Melba, famous for her perfect attack, astray for a while until her teacher Mathilde Marchesi scolded her in no uncertain terms. Melba, who used to return to Marchesi each year to work with her, "suddenly started attacking all her notes with *ha* and avoided her lovely *staccato.*"[34] Marchesi immediately realized that Melba was under the influence of the new nasal method and was naturally offended that the method producing the perfect singing of Melba could possibly be disputed. She fortunately was successful in convincing Melba to go back to her perfect attack and way of singing. Melba remained faithful and loyal to the teacher who had launched her, paving the way for her world fame. Blanche Marchesi has been a witness of the efforts to produce the voice by a method completely opposed to that of the Old Italian School, since her childhood. Her first confrontation with the fatal consequences of nasal resonance occurred in Vienna when she was a little girl. Her father met Rokitansky, the first bass of the Vienna Opera, who complained of problems with his high notes and of singing flat. Salvatore Marchesi,[35] himself an accomplished singer and teacher, offered him help. Rokitansky, however, did not believe in the possibility of curing the defects but tried to regain the high notes by singing through the nose, thereby speeding up the process of diminishing his vocal power. In those days (around 1870) nasal resonance was not cultivated by teaching, so this was the first time in her life that Blanche was confronted with the phenomenon and its consequences. "Scaria [pupil of Garcia], who took Rokitansky's place [in 1873] and was, if possible, vocally and physically a still more powerful bass than he, had a perfectly well-placed voice and never experienced any trouble. You would never hear a nasal tone uttered by this fine artist, who sang right to the very end of his career with a perfect voice."[36] Blanche herself learned to sing from her mother and continued to teach in the historical tradition handed down by Garcia.

Another strong impulse towards the application of nasal resonance came through the influence of Lilli Lehmann, the legendary soprano who left us a great legacy in her singing and writing. Her singing was remarkable in the way how she kept her high notes at an advanced age. The quality of her middle notes, however, diminished and whatever was left of them was attacked in a most awkward manner. From her book *Meine Gesangskunst* we gather that she sang with a sore throat most of the time. In her instructions we look in vain for the description of the glottal attack of the Old Italian School, instead of that Lilli presents us with her subjective sensations and not with the clear and simple method of the old masters. In the chapter "The Sensation of the Nose — the Nose Form" of her book *How to Sing* (the title of the English edition) we read:

> By distending the nostrils the pillars of the fauces inflate. The nose therefore effects this function. Without the action of the nose it would remain inactive. The energetic drawing up of the tendons at the nose towards the eyes and forehead, and toward the temples and beyond to the ears while singing is an exceptionally important help.... We singers must therefore renew continually these given nose functions.[37]

She adds further:

> As I have said before in speaking of the attack, in order to make the vowel sound _, the larynx is with energy brought into closer relation with the nose. By dilating the nostrils a preparation is made. The sensation is then as if the larynx were under the nose in the chin.[38]

These instructions demonstrate the level of absurdity to which the interchange of cause and effect in singing can lead. The subjective sensation of the nose functions can never occur when the tone is produced in the manner of the Old Italian School. The resonator then fulfills its functions perfectly without additional local interference. Compared to the complicated instructions in her book on every aspect of the voice, the books of the old masters inspire us with courage for they always agree on the essential points and their instructions are refreshingly concise and clear. This agreement on the basics of the historical method fills the reader and aspiring singer with confidence. Because Lilli Lehmann was a very successful teacher, she spread her knowledge to her pupils, who could pass it on. When information about singing comes from such a famous and celebrated singer, it is bound to impress and to be accepted as the truth.

For an interesting comparison in vocal sound emission, we can listen to Lilli Lehmann aged 58 and Adelina Patti aged 62 singing the same song: *Robin Adair* and the same Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria*. Both singers were at the end of a long singing career, with Patti's spanning half a century. Notice the difference in the attack of the sound, with Lehmann carefully placed in the mask with the result that the tone is thin and the vowels closed, particularly the A in "Gr*a*tia plena"; with Patti the attack is solidly glottal, resulting in a warm, communicative sound full of expression and a glowing open A in the same "Gr*a*tia plena."[39] Patti sings in the true method of the Old Italian School and with her Albani, Melba, Boronat and Burzio, who also recorded the Bach-Gounod "*Ave Maria*." Their voices are beautified by the natural "ring" of resonance obtained through perfect attack and continuation of the sound.

Possible Side Effects of Sinus, Nasal and Mask Resonance Practice

Many years of experience with the present-day method of singing as well as the historical method have led to some interesting observations on the health of the singer. Pupils confessed spontaneously that they had noticed changes following instruction in the historical method. Some pupils suffered from recurring sinus trouble before they made the transition to historical singing. They were pleasantly surprised to experience relief from this affliction after only a year of practicing. On a personal note I can say

that after a few years of practice in the historical method, attacks of laryngitis and colds became a rarity instead of a regularly occurring event. Some years never saw me suffering from a cold. This set me thinking and it has led me to suspect that there is a connection between sinus trouble and singing with a forced forward production. If the singer has sensitive sinuses that are easily infected, the unnatural vibrations effected by singing into the mask might well have a negative repercussion on these organs. Some famous singers of the twentieth century who suffered severely from colds and sinus trouble had founded their technique on nasal resonance and mask singing. In the biographies of the historical singers, we come across the odd cancelled performance due to laryngitis, cold or influenza, but sinus trouble is not mentioned as a chronic affliction.

The modern experiments with refined mechanical registration of the vibration and resonance of the singing voice have no value where the Old Italian School is concerned, since they are performed on singers who sing in the present-day manner. As regards resonance it is interesting to mention that recent experiments result in the conclusion that "neither 'nasal resonance' nor 'sinus resonance' has validity."[40] Experiments with simulated resonators corroborate the tenets of the old masters who discovered them empirically. Taylor quotes Dr. Albert who writes: "Many prominent authorities have felt (because of its juxtaposition to the larynx) that the pharynx, or back throat, was the most important resonator. Researches of Dr. Albert demonstrate very convincingly the fact that the effective combination of cavities in voice production includes the trachea at all times."[41] In the course of the previous chapters, the pharynx and the trachea have been mentioned many times by Nathan and Garcia, stressing their importance for the sound production of the singer.

Joan Sutherland

The greatest coloratura soprano of the twentieth century, Joan Sutherland,[42] is a striking example of the possible link between health and forward-production singing. She also makes us question the validity of twentieth-century concepts of resonance in voice production. In her biography we read the detailed description of her chronic sinus and antrum infections, from a very young age, developing later on abscesses in her ears, causing deafness. Several times such an abscess would burst in performance when she hit a high note in alt. "Then in the middle of Elvira's Mad Scene, on a forbidding and vibrating high E flat, the abscess burst.... Blood was running from the ear down her neck. Without losing a note, she turned her head away from the audience and completed the scene."[43]

She often suffered from colds and sore throats but sang her performances brilliantly in spite of "the fact that every vital resonance chamber was clogged with sponge-like polyps."[44] She was treated regularly by a specialist who used to bring her relief by puncturing her sinuses. Just after her great breakthrough with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Covent Garden that turned her overnight into a star, she was due to undergo major surgery to clean out her sinuses and remove the polyps. Her surgeon, however,

was reluctant to operate, realizing the responsibility he took upon himself now that she was famous, depending on her voice to fulfill the demands of a heavy career, saying: "Now look, Joan, you've got to the top — God knows how, because with sinuses and antrums like yours it isn't possible: but you have. You've learned to sing like an angel *with* all that muck in your head. How do we know you'll still be able to sing like an angel without it? Every resonance chamber will be different."[45] The operation went ahead and we shiver reading how the surgeon performed his cutting, hammering and scraping out of the sinus cavities. He advised a period of rest after her stay in the hospital and told her to start singing again after that period. "She started practising her singing; and her voice felt terrible — dry and hard, with no resonance at all." On the advice to sing softer she exclaimed: "I don't seem to be able to get any resonance at all."[46] It turned out that this great singer, who emitted the most extraordinary high notes, never sang with a clear head, for soon enough she caught cold again; her sinus trouble returned and with it the abscesses in her ears. She apparently had the sensation that she used her "resonance" when all those cavities were "full of muck," as her doctor stated. When her cavities were cleaned, her sensations were different and she experienced the inability to get resonance.

Joan was interviewed by Jerome Hines and answered his question on "placement" of the voice: "[Placement] is projecting into the correct sinus cavities. One feels as if the sound were being projected against the front of the hard palate ... the dome of the palate ... the front of the dome."[47] This statement, of course, applies to her middle voice that she says she takes up to A or B below high C, higher up than most sopranos, describing the placement of the *acuti* (high notes) in a conversation with a colleague: "Deary, they come right out of the back of my head — just stand straight up there."[48]

Scientists doing research on the acoustics for the singer present us with their conclusion on the resonating values of the sinuses:

> In comparing the resonating values of sinuses by applying the formula of the Helmholtz resonator,[49] we find that the contribution could be very small even under the most optimum conditions and only at very high frequencies. Actually in many cases the openings to the sinuses are so filled with mucous or the sinus itself is filled with fluid, so that in actual practice their contribution amounts to practically nothing. Those who believe otherwise will often quote the fact that sinus infection of irritation will severely affect or handicap singing.[50]

Joan Sutherland seems destined to defy all followers of nasal and sinus resonance, emitting her most beautiful and ravishing sounds with these resources completely blocked, and she can certainly set us thinking about their value for singing. If we look at her generous lower jaw and long solid neck, we realize she must have had great pharynx-resonance at all times. When she sings we see that her head is thrown back, showing us her wonderful neck surrounding her spacious throat, which is wide open with this head position. Singers who rely mostly on forward production and projection of the sound tend to throw their heads forward, thereby contracting their throat. Her recordings from 1955 have the same qualities as those after the operation in 1959; the Joan Sutherland sound is present and unaltered.

Practical Hints to Acquire the Natural Resonance of the Old Italian School

If you make a transition from present-day singing to historical singing, try your utmost to make a clean start. Forget about resonance completely and just practice the right attack with simple little exercises of thirds as Garcia gives them. Gradually increase the thirds to fifths and scales. Do not assume a physical position that you may have been used to previously while singing. Check your new posture as mentioned before in the mirror, particularly with reference to facial expression. Remember to smile in a relaxed manner with a jaw that feels weightless, giving the impression that it has disappeared. Just do your exercises carefully and patiently. Soon enough you will notice that the tone seeks its own locality of resonance in chest, throat and head. In your middle voice the sound will be reflected from the back wall of the throat towards the palate. You will find that you do not have to push it there; it comes to rest and is focused there as long as you keep the smiling mouth position. For the vowels you practice, begin with A and later E (ital. *alma* and *sempre*). When you add English EE take care that the vowel is sounding behind the hump of the raised tongue and never pushed into the mask, where it will sound cold, hard and unfeeling instead of warm and beautiful. Listen to the EE in "Mar*i*a" of the historical singers mentioned above.

Keep in mind that the sound must always be attacked in the bottom of your throat and never on the place where it comes to rest or focus. It will provide you with a feeling of reassurance to experience the focus of the sound that comes from the *appoggio* (remember Tetrazzini's description) being reflected on the palate in your middle voice. There is no feeling of pushing involved, no extra effort — all you have to do is to maintain the point of pressure after a firm glottal attack. Imagine a ball-point pen writing on paper; never lift the pen off the paper, draw an unbroken line. Resist the inclination to lift the pen off the paper with each rising note, but press the pen harder on the paper. Always sing into the concentration of the sound. The better you do this, the more clearly you will feel where the sound comes to rest or focus in the appropriate locality of resonance.

The higher you sing up the scale, the more you will have to abandon the idea of "singing"; all you must do is pinch and squeeze harder at the point of pressure obtained by the attack. Think of the embouchure of the trumpet player or press your index finger hard against your thumb to visualize the action of the arytenoid cartilages doing their work for you when they shut establishing your embouchure. The essential work occurs deep down under your throat on top of the breastbone so that your throat just stays relaxed and open as the important resonance chamber that it is. Open the throat when you ascend the scale but do not overstretch the opening of the mouth. Keep the smiling position; check it regularly in the mirror and then feel your smile. The smiling mouth position is of extreme importance in obtaining the resonance of the Old Italian School. You will feel the sound penetrating the palate and radiating above it. Visualize a beautiful halo in a half circle around your head. The difference in vocal sound between the vowel "ah" placed well into the mask by pushing it there through

forward production and the sound that radiates upwards by means of reflection from the back wall of the throat with its origin in perfect approximation of the glottal lips is enormous. Demonstrate it to a friend and he or she will certainly notice the difference. You will feel the difference and so you will be able to make progress by fulfilling the conditions for the emission of your own individual voice.

It is very important that you feel rather than listen to everything you are doing. Your ears are of no help at all in the first stages of singing. Your vocal instrument has to reveal its mechanism to you so that you can obey its natural laws. Always remember that you have to submit to these laws and that this is the clue to freedom in singing. The historical singers all obeyed these laws and obtained in return the complete mastery over their own voice. You will soon realize what an intense relief this school of singing brings, because you do not have to worry about placement and resonance for your voice will "place" itself. You will have a confrontation with your very own voice and that can be extremely exciting. It is a pronounced feeling of freedom to sing with a full heart and a clear head. Tell yourself repeatedly: "I sing with my chest" before every spell of practice. You have to imprint this new concept on your body in order to stir your vocal organs into a new awareness that has been dormant — for years, perhaps — but can be roused by your positive thinking, practice and perseverance. To use the words of Lablache, "without fear of being ridiculed," the sensation of singing with your chest where the voice has its origin (cause) reaching the chambers of resonance (effect) can only be experienced by singing in the historical manner with your own individual voice that nature presented you with.

To sing like the historical singers we simply have to follow the same rules they have followed for hundreds of years.

4

Mouth Position and Articulation

In the previous chapters we have acquainted ourselves with the basic principles of the Old Italian School of Singing and we have seen that historical singing starts first and foremost with a good attack. We have seen that the right attack will give optimal results in good sound production if combined with the right breathing and now we will take a closer look at the right mouth position that takes prominence as the third condition for historical singing.

The Natural Smile

The Old Italian School of Singing was unanimous on a smiling mouth position as being ideal for the best vocal sound. Garcia passes the advice of the old masters on. What was valid for them was still valid for Garcia and is still valid for us: "The best position for the mouth is the one that Tosi and Mancini advise. According to them, 'every singer should put his mouth the way he does when he smiles naturally, that means in such a way that the upper teeth are perpendicularly and moderately separated from the ones below.'"[1]

The smiling mouth position also greatly contributes to the sweetest tone as well as facilitating a good attack. Our respect for the old masters will increase considerably when we feel how right they were in advocating a smiling position of the mouth. It is worth repeating what Schumann-Heink mentions in her instructions for the right attack: "Smile naturally, as though you were genuinely amused at something."

The natural smile helps to remove tension; it improves our mood and our looks, lifting the cheeks. We feel younger and look it. The smiling position not only enables us to start a better singing tone, but it also makes the formation of clear vowels much easier. The voice sounds young and fresh, as a rule younger than the singer's actual age. Another important effect of the smiling position is the natural fall of the lower jaw. We then feel more room in the throat at the back and the sides, giving our larynx the freedom to perform. Our well-focused singing tones will be brighter and warmer as a result. The tone also benefits greatly as regards pitch. One of the instructions to choral singers always used to be to land on top of the note and not to approach it from underneath. The smile facilitates this and always gives the impression of being right in the middle

of the note. If the voice is attacked with the larynx in the right manner, the smiling mouth stays completely free to form the vowels, keeping the facial expression in harmony with the message we want to communicate. To feel the sensation of an open throat caused by the smiling mouth position, put your hand around your throat just underneath your lower jaw and then smile with lips that are free from the teeth, which are kept a finger's thickness apart. Breathe in slowly through your mouth and open throat. You will feel that your hand is pushed away by your throat that expands noticeably. Keep your hand around your throat and open your mouth by dropping your lower jaw without a smile and feel the difference. Your throat does not push your hand away as before when you smiled. Check your smile in the mirror and remember the feeling by focusing your attention on the corners of your mouth. Repeat this until your facial muscles obey your command.

We can experience how the smiling mouth position favors the formation of pure vowels. Try to sing a bright "ah" as in "father" without a smile, and you will notice that it is impossible. Your "ah" will sound more like "aw" as in "law." Now sing the vowel with a smile and feel the difference. Go back to a non-smiling, slightly drooping mouth position and notice how tight your throat is. Give attention to the sound you produce; it has a tendency to be off pitch, lacking overtones. Now try to sing up the scale to your highest notes, first on a bright "ah," then change the mouth position to "aw" and sing the scale again. Notice the difference. The smiling mouth also favors the high notes. The drooping mouth makes going up the scale harder. If you want to sing in Italian, French or German or any other European language, a bright "ah" is indispensable. Not only a bright "ah" but also a bright "i" (English "ee"). Both vowels are produced with a smile. You will find that the vowels ah, ay, ee are very easy to articulate from a smiling mouth position. Only a slight rounding of the lips is necessary for O and U (English "OO").

Practice will prove that the smiling mouth moves very easily to different vowels and this is, of course, extremely important for clear enunciation. Listening to the historical singers we notice that their enunciation is very clear and seemingly effortless with no vowel distortion.

The Smile as Essential Requirement of the Whisper

It is an interesting observation that an energetic closure of the glottis automatically causes a broadening of the lips into a smiling position. This even happens in whispering. A little experiment whispering an urgent message will demonstrate very clearly what happens in your throat and in what position your lips are in.

The whisper pulls your lips into a wide smile and your body is stirred into activity supporting your whisper. Now try to whisper in the same urgent manner with a drooping mouth and relaxed physique. Your whisper remains unclear and seems to be trapped in your throat. The sound of the whisper with a broad smile is brighter and carries further. Whispering also causes our lip movements to be very marked if we face

the person to whom we wish to convey our message. The addressed person listens and lip-reads our clear articulation at the same time. Whispering activates the lips and facial muscles. The experience with the whisper can increase our awareness of the connection between our larynx and our mouth position in the production of our voice. What is relevant for a whisper is even more relevant for the historical singing voice.

The Artificial Smile

The natural smile gradually disappeared concurrently with the changes in singing technique and, if it remained, became artificial and not associated with the act of singing. The artificial smile is the result of pushing the sound into the mask. There has to be a lot of tension on the upper lip to keep this mask sound production going. In some singers, dilated nostrils give the face added tension, causing it to adopt an expression of a bad smell under the nose. The mouth position seems opposed to the desired vowel. The singers will eventually acquire an outspoken "mask" face with ugly protruding cheeks, due to the constant unnatural strain of the facial muscles. Many "mask" singers also sing with an exaggerated high palate; their vocal sound is pompous and quite out of character with most of the repertoire they sing. This sound should be used only for special effects and is called *cupo* meaning "dark." Composers such as Verdi marked in their scores where they wanted the *cupo* sound, implying that it was not appropriate to use it continuously.

The Open Mouth and the Fall of the Jaw

Asked if the mouth should be opened wide to emit a beautiful and powerful sound, Garcia answers with emphasis: "This is a common error. The mouth should be opened by the natural fall of the jaw. This movement, which separates the jaws by the thickness of a finger and leaves the lips alone, gives the mouth an easy and natural form."[2]

It is a real eye-opener to feel the difference between the natural fall of the jaw and the forced drop of this important member. To experience the difference, put the tips of your fingers on the sides of your face on the join of the upper and lower jaw and let the jaw drop with a non-smiling mouth position, your fingertips will be pushed away by the jawbones. Now repeat the action with a smiling mouth position and you will feel that the fingertips are not pushed out to the same extent. At the same time you will experience a marked difference in your throat that stays free and relaxed. Without the smile, the dropping of your lower jaw will tighten your throat. The old masters like Garcia were never in favor of opening the mouth too wide: "The exaggerated opening favours neither low nor high notes. In the latter case it may help the vocalist to scream, but that is not singing; the face loses charm and the voice assumes a violent and vulgar tone."[3]

The historical singer always attacks the tone with a firm attack on top of the breast-

bone and keeps this point of control by squeezing it permanently. Understandably, the widely opened mouth will impair his grip on the point of control. Put your hand on your throat and open your mouth wide. Now feel the tension this causes in the throat, where all has to be relaxation. The proverb "l'Italiano non ha gola" ("the Italian has no throat") can be clearly understood. The "ethereal" high notes of the historical sopranos cannot be produced with a widely opened mouth. Tetrazzini was the last historical soprano who could satisfy Verdi's indication for *un fil de voce* above the final note, the high A in the aria "Addio del passato" from *La Traviata*.[4] The widely opened mouth position forms an impediment to clear enunciation because it robs the lips and the tongue of their freedom to do their job quickly and easily.

The Real Mouth

As soon as practicing the attack of the voice and continuation of sound has become a daily routine, the existence of another mouth in the bottom of your throat will be felt. The resultant sensation created by this mouth is one of great power and confidence. A simple experiment can illustrate this. If we look into the mirror while producing a vocal sound *mezzo forte*, our face stays in repose and does not participate in the action of producing the sound apart from a slightly open mouth. Swelling the sound into a forte will not change our facial expression of repose. In this way we can see with our own eyes that the work of the vibrator is completely independent from the articulator and we understand Garcia's dictum that "the real mouth of a singer ought to be considered the pharynx."[5] This is the most vitally important fact if we wish to sing in the manner of the Old Italian School. We have to realize that the sound produced by the vibrator is completely independent of the articulator. They perform simultaneously and complement each other, yet their action should never interfere with one another. Your real mouth to emit singing sounds is deep down in your throat. Of course your facial mouth must be sufficiently open for the sound to pass through. Garcia adds: "It is in the pharynx that is found the causation of timbres. The facial mouth is but a door through which the voice passes. Still, if this door were not sufficiently open, sounds could not issue freely."[6] A finger between your teeth should open the mouth enough in the middle voice; for the higher regions, slightly more open is sufficient.

Facial Expression

Ideally, facial expression has to underline the meaning of the song or aria, bringing the message across more strongly. The well-known proverb tells us "the eyes are the mirror of the soul." Our facial expression thus is intimately connected with the seat of our emotions. Our voice is seated at the bottom of our throat, where it is produced by automatic action. We do not have to use facial muscles other than a smile to produce our vocal sound if we follow the method of the Old Italian School. If other facial mus-

cles are activated to help produce our vocal sound, this indicates insufficient action of the vibrator. "The face loses charm."[7] As long as the classical repertoire is performed both in opera and in concert, the facial expression of the singer has to agree with the message. The historical singers sound so natural, they sing with so little distortion of the vowels and with such easy and crisp consonants that the words are clearly understandable. The present-day singer not using the historical method is at a disadvantage because he does not employ his pharynx as his real mouth. As soon as he realizes that his real mouth is his pharynx, he has made the biggest step forward in singing in the historical manner. He can then separate sound from articulation "because it is in the pharynx that is found the causation of timbres."[8]

It is therefore important to practice in front of a mirror to correct the current defects in facial expression like "pushing the lips out like a funnel; protruding the jaws, separating the lips for the sake of showing fine teeth, and knitting the brows."[9] Obviously Garcia did not allow personal vanities in his singers.

A beautiful vocal sound in which we can feel the heart and soul of the performer caressing us has to have its origin in the pharynx, the real mouth of the singer. The Old Italian School knew this, for the historical singers all possess their own individual sound, easily recognizable. A vocal sound that is made by pushing the sound into the resonance of the head can never genuinely convey our individuality, because our skull has no elasticity and warmth like our pharynx, which is connected with our chest. "And the voice assumes a violent and vulgar tone."[10]

Timbre

The smiling mouth position favors the various timbres the voice may assume. There are two timbres: the clear (bright), or open, and the dark, or closed. They are obtained by movements of the larynx and the palate, which always function in opposition. The bright timbre is obtained by a high larynx and a low palate, the dark timbre by a low larynx and a high palate. The bright timbre can only be obtained with a smiling mouth position. This explains why modern singing only produces the dark timbre formed with a high palate and a widely opened drooping mouth. Historical singing gives the singer the opportunity to produce a voice with many colors, whereas his modern counterpart is much more restricted. The main Italian vowels A, E, I, and O must be exercised in the various timbres. Garcia gives the following exercise: "In the same breath, on the same note, and on each of the vowels a, e, i, o, the student must pass through every shade of *timbre*, from the most open (or bright) to the most closed (or dark). The sounds must be maintained with an equal degree of force."[11]

Widely Opened Mouth

To experience the effects of an exaggeratedly opened mouth, put your hand on your throat and open your mouth, stretching it very wide. You feel your throat con-

tract and your jaws stiffen. The Rossini vocalizes will teach you how little you need to open your mouth to produce notes in the historical manner. In practicing them you will be singing high without the feeling of a high note. Tetrazzini did not open her mouth very wide. "It is odd to see how little she opens her mouth. Yet the tones comes forth pure sterling silver, unalloyed by a single vocal blur resulting from misplaced effort."[12] Obviously composers expected no problems with the enunciation on the high notes, as most of them had been trained in singing and knew the possibilities and compatibility of note and vowel. They wrote with the knowledge that the text would be distinguishable when sung by the singer to whom they dedicated their composition.

You can never hope to produce a historical singing tone of beautiful quality on a high note with an exaggeratedly opened mouth. Through regular practice you will find out for yourself how the right attack goes hand in hand with a natural smile as described by Garcia. You will also experience that the too widely opened mouth does not lead to the historical "ring" or resonance in the voice. Somehow the tone cannot start on the glottis and find its way into the corresponding resonance chambers. As soon as you sing the notes with a natural mouth position, the experience of strong natural resonance is remarkable.

> Tetrazzini used to say "I sing from the bottom of my throat." She knew. The singer should always be conscious of, and live with, the vibrating principle within the larynx and with the tonal sensations accruing there from. That was an essential teaching of the old Italian school curriculum.[13]

In the previous chapter we have seen that the natural functions of the ear are of major importance for historical singing. The old masters knew by empiricism that the widely opened mouth did not favor good voice production. Science has confirmed this through the observation that the widely opened mouth causes the valve in the Eustachian tubes to open, thereby leading to the possibility of exerting inner pressure on the ears.

Further to the potential problems within the region of the ear, Prof. Dr. W.A.M. van der Kwast, oral/dental surgeon, reports the following problem for singers, emphasizing the possible risks from regularly opening the mouth too widely:

> During their training, singers in particular have to execute very divergent movements of the lower jaw including extremely large movements in opening the mouth. This can result in a habitual hyper-mobility that sometimes leads to crepitation [rattling] of the mandibular joints [jaws], in other cases to chronically radiating pain in the region of the ear.[14]

If you sing in the historical manner with a normal smiling mouth position keeping the valve closed, the sensation of your own tones will not seem as loud inside your head as when you sing with the present-day forward production with a widely opened mouth, causing the valve to open.

So forward production creates a louder, stronger impression inside your head. These sensations are quite deceptive, as you will notice when you record your singing with both productions of sound alternatively. The recorded historical sound will be amazingly loud, penetrating and bright, particularly so in the middle voice. This is the region where you least expected to sound loud, because there the sensation of your

voice is not strong in your own experience. The recorded sound with forward production will not be louder externally, outside your head, but more spread out and lacking in brightness. The conclusion is that you are virtually deafening yourself when singing with predetermined forward resonance. This is easily understood, since with the forward production the sound is produced with force, pushed into places (mask and sinuses) on the same level or higher than the ears. In the historical manner, the sound is always produced at the bottom of the throat well below the ears. With the smiling mouth position, the ears stay free of excessive pressure. The historical singers were instructed not to open their mouth wide because this would prevent their clear diction and impair their intonation, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

Comments of Isaac Nathan on the Mouth Position

Isaac Nathan is very outspoken on the mouth position and he is in complete agreement with Garcia as we can see from the following:

> The voice can neither improve in strength, nor in quality, if the mouth be distorted like that of a person writhing in convulsions, or suffering under violent corporal agony. All extravagancies are absurd, and destroy the very purpose which they were intended to promote.[15]

He continues to give some good reasons for keeping the mouth in a natural position:

> Exclusive of external appearances, it is extremely disadvantageous to the voice to keep the mouth in so open a position; for the fleshy substance of the cheek must thus necessarily press against the teeth and deaden the sound, as a handkerchief of any kind of drapery would affect the tones of a violin, if it came in contact with the strings, while the performer was producing the notes.[16]

We can check Nathan's remark on our cheeks pressing against our teeth by opening our mouths wide from a drooping mouth position. It is easily understood that the quality of the sound produced with a widely opened mouth must of necessity be affected. Open your mouth widely and you will feel clearly that the space in the mouth is considerably narrowed. "Further, it is not difficult to imagine, that when the mouth is so absurdly opened, the concavity of the throat becomes proportionally contracted."[17] We have already tried this out on our own throat.

It is important to keep in mind that these comments have a bearing on the historical singing sound, which finds an important part of its resonance in the pharynx and the ventricles as we have seen in the previous chapter. It is with this ideal natural sound in mind that old masters like Nathan give their instructions:

> From the reduced capacity of the vocal organs, when so ridiculously gaping for sound, it is evident, that soft tones lose their sweetness, and that those intended to be loud meet with obstruction. It is when the mouth is in a smiling form, that the sweetest tones are produced.[18]

The Happy Medium

Nathan comes to the conclusion that the mouth should not be opened too wide but of course never be too closed. He calls this "the happy medium."[19] If the mouth is too closed, the sound will be nasal. "The beautiful arched form of the roof of the mouth is evidently adapted for increasing the sound of the voice."[20] It is clear from this remark that the old masters definitely knew the importance of the resonance they desired and they knew that by combination of the right attack with a relaxed throat and the right mouth position the ideal sound could be emitted. Open your mouth wide and notice how the "beautiful arched roof" is reduced to a narrow dome-shaped roof. Now smile pleasantly and get the sensation of slight surprise after taking breath through a relaxed throat. You will not only feel a lot more space inside your mouth but also more freedom to move your lips for good articulation.

Mancini's Instructions on Articulation

Some 60 years before Nathan's *Musurgia Vocalis* appeared, Mancini published his findings. Garcia quotes him, as we have seen, and the three old masters are in complete agreement. After advising the natural smiling-mouth position for singing, Mancini continues to mention that the mouth keeps the same position for the five vowels as mentioned above.

> And in this manner the mouth does not go far from its natural position, but remains in its original form, and avoids and shuns all the pernicious affectations. One should not believe however, that for this reason the mouth should be deprived of its customary motion, and one should admit its necessity, not only to interpret the words, but also to expand and clarify the voice to that degree taught by the same art.[21]

We see from Mancini's remarks that the mouth must move easily to pronounce the words without excessive movement, the quality of tone being therefore unaffected. To convince yourself of the truth of this, observe the movement of your mouth in the mirror as you practice the vowels. Remember that the vowels are formed in the pharynx and not in the mouth.

The Smile Beautifies the Sound

The last remark of Mancini "to expand and clarify the voice" gives evidence of the great knowledge that the old masters possessed, for with the smiling position, the spaces of natural resonance are in direct connection with the sound produced by the vocal cords after a perfect attack. The sound can travel freely to where it is enhanced, developed and beautified, stimulated by good articulation. If you sing with a smiling mouth position and articulate your text crisply with pliable lips and tongue, you will

get the sensation that the sound is radiating out and stretching over your head on all sides. Yet there is never a sensation of pushing it, for you never push the sound into an area of resonance. On the contrary, you keep a firm grip on the point of control that you obtained by executing a firm glottal attack. The better you retain the sound, the better it radiates out.

From what Mancini says, complete independence of the vibrator and the articulator is inherent in the Old Italian School. We see that he advises a free movement of the facial mouth. This is only possible when this mouth is "but a door through which the sound passes."[22]

The Independency of Sound and Articulation

The sound production and articulation must be completely independent. The unbroken legato sound is produced by the vibrator against the squeeze of the chest, forming an unbroken unity for the duration of the phrase. On this permanent sound, the articulator performs ideally in such a manner that the consonants formed by the tongue and lips help to consolidate the work of the vibrator. Never are the words to be mouthed, as this always leads to stiffness of the equipment used in articulation, namely the jaws and lips. Never must the upper lip be stiffened, a result of expiratory singing. By keeping the sound going through at all times, we then notice how we can flip off easy and snappy consonants with tongue and lips. Paradoxically the singer must give the music precedence over the words in order for the words to acquire the desired expression and prominence as Kelsey underlines: "It is not possible to achieve a musical type of phrasing in word and note passages unless the tone-generator is made to function independently of the articulative process."[23]

Articulation

The following remarks on articulation will be better understood after some practice in the historical manner of singing, keeping a strong laryngeal point of control that results in a well-focused tone. It is precisely the well-focused tone that can be positively influenced by a crisp articulation of consonants, provided they are formed with free lips and a pliable tongue. Diligent practice in front of a mirror is an absolute necessity if we want to get rid of bad habits as, for instance, knitting or pulling up the eyebrows, fluttering the eyelids, fixing the eyes in a stare and other involuntary movements.

Always keep in mind that the sound production should be completely detached from the articulation. The vowel is articulated at the bottom of the throat and embedded in the sound. One of the greatest handicaps of the present expiratory singing method is the mixing of sound and articulation in the mouth. All present-day singing methods are consonant-based, meaning that the consonants are used as a springboard for voice production and the vowels are consequent, hence their distorted and poor qual-

ity. As soon as you start practicing the technique of the Old Italian School you will notice how important the right mouth position is. The slightest deviation of the right position for the desired vowel will affect its purity.

The Tongue

The tongue should always be in a natural curve and never should the tip be curled up. This invariably causes a blockage of the throat and will break up the sound. To keep the tongue in its natural curve, all you have to do is to feel the tip of the curved tongue against your lower teeth. The tongue plays an important part in the formation of the vowels, as we will feel when we move from Italian A to E. The tongue is slightly raised in the middle for the formation vowel E as in *sempre*. The vowel I (English EE) raises the tongue even more, touching the insides of the upper molars. The vowel O (English *glory*) hollows the tongue at the back.

It is important to know exactly which part of the tongue should be used for articulating certain consonants. It is not the extreme end of the tongue but the flat middle part that we must employ to articulate the linguals: L, D, T, and N. We then keep the natural curve intact and the throat stays free and open. It takes a fair amount of practice to employ the articulator independently of the vibrator. The best practice is always to start on an open vowel firmly placed on the glottis after a vigorous attack, to keep the sound going and then to add the consonant. The next step is to start with the consonant producing the same sound.

Always attack a high note on the open vowel and break the word up as follows: for instance *ret-our* and never *re-tour* if the second syllable falls on the high note. You will realize how quick your tongue can act, keeping its natural curve and flipping the T off with the flat middle part. If executed perfectly, nobody has heard the procedure. Listen to Melba singing "Depuis le jour" from Charpentier's opera *Louise*[24] and notice how dexterously she always attacks the high note on the vowel after flipping off the consonant. Take care not to abuse the rolled consonant R, which should only be rolled at the start of the word (initial R) and when it is double or in combination with another consonant forming a syllable. There are singers who elongate the rolled R excessively and this can become an annoying mannerism. When the R occurs otherwise, it should only be tapped by touching the tongue against the teeth. Notice that many words in German like *Herz*, *sicher*, *dir*, etc., in so-called *Hoch-Deutsch* (the equivalent of the Queen's English) are pronounced with a burred R and not with a rolled R. If this pronunciation is applied in song, the German language will sound less aggressive and much more agreeable.

Practice regularly and you will soon find out how much freedom you gain by employing the mechanisms of the vibrator and the articulator independently. Also you will notice how pleasant and relaxed your face remains. Phrasing suddenly seems to become self-acting. Words become soulful, transported by beautiful vowels, and their meaning is enhanced naturally instead of manipulated and full of affectation. Diction becomes clear through focused tone, clear vowels and crisp consonants. Always keep in

mind that the phrasing is the composer's job and that you do yours well if you obey him strictly. Refrain from word painting unless the composer asks you to do so. If you keep the phrase going, the words will be highlighted through the phrasing.

The Lips

With the smiling mouth position, the lips can be used to flip off the labial consonants easily and snappily. There is absolutely no pressure involved; it is a "hit and run" action. Because the mouth is not opened wide the lips can move independently of the jaws.

If a labial consonant—like, for instance, B, P, or M—is formed and produced with the free lips it will always consolidate the sound generated on the point of control. It can be experienced like a sort of backlash, meaning that the snappy contact of the lips seems to tighten the laryngeal grip thus fortifying the sound. Lamperti gives some valuable advice to improve certain consonants. "To cure the 'nasality' of the consonant 'm,' cross it with 'b,' as if you had a 'cold in the head.' The guttural quality of 'b' disappears when combined with 'm.' It then vibrates more on the lips." He tells us to be moderate saying: "Use these 'cures' 'homeopathetically,' or they will do more harm than good."[25]

The Modification of Vowels in Singing

It is common knowledge that vowels in singing need to be modified slightly. This is to a certain degree dependent on the singer's technique and physique. But apart from these there are natural laws in singing as in any branch of music. Garcia's instructions have been mentioned above under the subheading *Timbre*.

The general law for the formation of vowels is that the higher the note, the narrower the vowel. In song the message is usually in the middle part of the voice with accents in the higher regions of the head voice. The smiling mouth position favors pure vowels in the middle part of the voice; therefore, the message of the song can come across strongly. In this middle part, the vowel feels most open. When we ascend the scale, the vowels narrow progressively, giving the sensation to the singer that the diameter of the vowel is contracting inwards. A historical soprano modifies her vowels beginning at D2 upwards, narrowing them progressively from there. Consequently, she experiences all high notes as the same piercing sound. As long as she keeps an extremely tight grip on the point of control at the bottom of her throat, the high notes will be beautiful, round and full in the venue where she stands. In the high notes, it is very obvious that she must feel what she is doing rather than listen to what she is doing, as her ears are of no use on that level.

Song translations are apt to create problems for the singer on the high notes, for they might involve substitutions of the original vowels of the composer's hand into others that prove uncomfortable. The singer should feel free to change the words of the translation to suite his voice. Jacques Urlus,[26] the legendary Wagner tenor, tells us how

he learned to do this early in his career. He was rehearsing Raoul's aria in the fourth act of Meyerbeer's *The Huguenots* in Leipzig and had to sing (in German) three consecutive high Bs. Urlus intended to sing each one differently: piano, mezzo forte and forte. Each time, however, the high B had to be uttered on the German vowel I (English EE). The notes did not come out the way he wanted them to and he got angry with himself, showing this in his facial expression. The director called him aside and said quietly: "Young man, look here, this won't do. You are pulling an angry and anxious face in that passage, which is forbidden; that is impossible. Always try to sing in such a way that it brings joy to you. If therefore that I forms an obstacle then simply take another vowel that is more convenient to you. How can the public enjoy your singing when you yourself have none?" Urlus immediately changed the passage in such a way that the meaning stayed the same but the vowel on the high note suited him better. He continues to mention that theorists might maintain that all vowels ought to be sung with the same ease on the highest notes, but that theory and practice are sometimes far apart. "I have repeatedly noticed that even the best among the Italian singers are handicapped for 30% when they have to sing in a foreign language."[27]

A Practical Survey of Historical Vowel Formation

We have seen above that the smiling mouth is conducive to the formation of the vowels. The Italian vowels A, E, I, O and U (English "ah" as in *father*, E as in *peasant*, I as in *sea*, O as in *glory*, and OO as in *boot*). Check your smiling mouth position in the mirror, starting with the vowel "ah" in your chest voice and continue the sound while moving your mouth naturally from vowel to vowel. You will notice your mouth widening slightly on the E. From there to the I, the corners of your mouth will move a fraction more outwards. For the O the mouth will assume a round shape, moving slightly further forward and forming the position of the U, resembling a mouth that wants to kiss.

Take good notice that the sound keeps the same level of intensity that should never be disturbed or interrupted by the movements of your mouth. See to it that you make the movements of the mouth completely independent of the sound production. If you make the transition from A to E and I too extreme, you will pull the sound off the larynx. Practice slowly and carefully on minimizing the mouth movements and avoid sharp movements of your jaws at all costs. Ascend the scale step by step until you can execute the five consecutive vowels in your middle voice, where they will be used later to give full expression to the message in your songs. Ascending above D2, they will have to be narrowed gradually as we have seen above.

The historical I is a strong and brilliant vowel, formed at the bottom of the throat. It should stay behind the hump of the elevated tongue (touching the sides of the upper teeth) where it will stay round and warm. If the I is being forced into the mask right between the eyes, as in present-day singing, it will lose its peculiar characteristic brilliancy and glowing warmth, instead assuming a sharp sneering quality. This is then remedied by singing German Ü instead of I, resulting in *Hümmel* instead of *Himmel*, etc.

The Italian O is a closed vowel with a low position of the larynx and can be employed successfully as we have seen in chapter 1 to practice the *Attaque du Son* recommended by Faure in his instructions, showing us pages full of arrows pointed at the notes indicating the attack with a *coup de glotte* on the Italian vowel O (French *botte*).[28]

The historical emission of the vowel U needs to be practiced with special care. This vowel lends itself easily to a forced forward production and has become the perfect vehicle for the hooting voice production favored by female singers. The best way to start the historical U for sopranos is to choose the notes from A1 upwards, form the mouth in the round kiss position and attack the sound energetically. Imagine your breast to be a dartboard and start your tone as if a dart is thrown at the top of your breastbone on the spot where you attack your voice. Remember that the sound comes from outside, towards you, and you suck it in like a flash of lightning. The historical Italian U is the opposite of the present-day U that is projected through the mask like throwing a javelin. When you sing an ascending scale on the U vowel, it will feel more closed and narrow than all the other vowels when you move into full head voice. Allow this process of narrowing and closing to take its course and sustain it by keeping the jaw very relaxed and yielding. The arch of the palate is expanded. The vowel U is very suitable for easy and smooth transition from chest to middle when ascending the scale. Descending the scale the transition is made easy by singing the vowel I. The old masters advise against practicing on the vowel U as being unsuitable for vocal development because of its closed quality. Chest notes on U can never attain the power of notes on A or E.

A vowel that deserves special attention is the mute E in French words, occurring within the word or at the end. The historical voice production of this vowel should be modified to French EU according to Berard. His instruction for the pronunciation of mute E modified to EU is already offered in 1755, telling us after condemning the mistake of modifying E to O: "One will correct this mistake by pronouncing the mute E every time like the diphthong EU in such a way that the U is not prominent and just a half U."[29] He means the prominent U in EU of the French words *amoureux* and *feu*. A hundred years later Faure is violently opposed to this modification of the mute E, defending the variety of the French language. Faure stresses the use of the different timbres as a valuable tool to add spice and color to singing. He underlines the benefits of the closed French vowels I, É and U for consolidating the sound. His advice for improving bad articulation is to sing pieces with clenched teeth, for this will activate the muscles of the lips and tongue that have to develop their strength and agility to overcome this obstacle.[30]

The historical articulation of the French diphthong EU (English *urn*) in the aria "Mon co*eur* s'ouvre à ta voix" from the opera *Samson and Delilah* can be heard on the historical recordings available. This EU is a lovely, warm, open sound when articulated in the historical manner, produced at the bottom of the throat. If, however, this vowel is formed in the mask, it will be closed and uncommunicative.

Stockhausen observes that the study of the mute E at German word endings should be started in the early stages of training. He calls this E sound *Naturlaut*, natural sound,

and mentions: "Most beginners form this sound in a wrong manner. Some sing 'Rosèn,' others 'Rosön,' also 'Rosòn' or even 'Rosan,' and emphasize the light end syllable in an irritating manner. Rarely they succeed to render the colorless end E in its proper form."[31] The advice of Stockhausen is to sing this *Naturlaut* E with the tongue in a neutral position by which he means that the root of the tongue should not press on the epiglottis.

German diphthongs like EI (English *eye*), AU (English *how*) and AI (English *my*) should be sung like the Italian vowel A keeping the bright "ah" sound going until the very last moment when the end consonant will supply the sound of the diphthong by closing off the vowel sound.

Garcia tells us the functions of the vowels and the consonants:

> Intonation, sustaining of the voice, expression or quality of timbres, tonic accent, and vocalization are all entrusted to the care of the vowel.... Consonants are the skeletons of words. Applied to song, they have three distinct functions: 1. To convey the sense of words. 2. To beat time and mark the rhythm by their percussions. 3. Through their varied degrees of energy they declare the state of activity of the sentiment, just as the vowels its nature.[32]

We see from his observations how important pure vowels are for historical singing. The voice has to be attacked by means of the vowel that determines the abovementioned five functions. The consonants, being the skeletons of the flesh of the vowel, should therefore never be used as a springboard to launch the sound. Garcia's comparison speaks for itself. For the advanced pupil, the solfeggi of Jenny Lind offer excellent practice on the main Italian vowels through the entire compass of the voice. (See App. 1.)

The Smile: Obligatory in Historical Singing

The smiling facial mouth enables the singer through relaxation of the throat to feel his real mouth. The voice that is made by the real mouth will come to rest or focus in the resonance chambers by a miraculously delicate system. The lips and tongue performing independently of the real mouth stimulate a natural forward production of the sound that is never felt in the mouth but in the chest on the low notes, and in the throat in the middle part of the voice (reflected from there unto the palate), moving progressively further back for the head voice. This delicately coordinated system should not be overthrown by pushing the voice into predetermined places of resonance. The smiling facial mouth favors a sweet and mellow vocal sound that can be colored easily by the composer according to his wishes.

The advice of Tosi proves to be most valuable and simple for the development of the voice that will stay sweet, fresh and pleasing as a result: "Let him [the aspiring singer] rigorously correct all grimaces and tricks of the head, the body, and particularly the mouth, which ought to be composed in a manner (if the sense of the words permit it) rather inclined to a smile than to too much gravity."[33]

Garcia gives an excellent survey of the vowels and consonants as they have to be formed in historical singing. He answers all the questions that might come up concerning their functions when singing is coupled with words.[34]

5

The Registers

It is not by accident that in the middle of this book we have come to the very heart of the matter, so to speak, for the phenomenon of the registers of the human voice represent the very foundation on which the natural art of singing of the Old Italian School is built.

Studying the books of the masters we are struck by the complete agreement on the question of registers in the human voice. The old masters consistently mention the existence of two separate registers in male and female voices. They stressed the necessity of equalizing the registers and provided aspiring singers with the means to bring this about by special exercises. It was well known that this study was not easy and for some singers, including the greatest, the attainment of an even scale presented difficulties. These singers made the best of their shortcomings, however, turning their weak points into means of expression. Dynamics in music are obtained by strong contrasts of low and high notes, just as in painting there must be light and shade. The classical composers were well aware of these laws and composed their music accordingly. The singers had to emit low notes as well as high notes and this was precisely what made their singing so exciting.

What and How of Registers

It is generally understood that a register of the voice is a sequence of tones with the same quality of sound. Because the notes of the singing voice take on a different character from the resonance they obtain, it seemed logical to define homogeneous-sounding consecutive notes by the term "register," hence the names of "chest," "medium" and "head." In the historical method medium and head were always considered as being one and the same register, because the attack of the sound was made at the bottom of the throat by a *coup de glotte*, causing the transition from medium to head to be seamless. If, however, the sound in the middle voice is attacked on the hard palate, currently the accepted manner, the concept of the registers will undergo a change for the simple reason that the larynx is not in the same position as when it executes the glottal attack and this altered laryngeal position causing the singer's sensations to change. The interchange of cause (attack and sound production) and effect (resonance) has led to many

misunderstandings in the matter of the registers. In the introduction to the 1985 reprint edition of Garcia's 1847 *Traité Complet de l'Art du Chant* we read: "Garcia's book provides evidence that, in the Italian tradition, the question of registers lay at the heart of vocal study. The book written by Lilli Lehmann at the beginning of the 20th century puts forward a completely different case in which vocal pedagogy is no longer based on registers but on vocal corporal sensations."[1] This perspicacious remark gives a clear picture in a nutshell of the development of singing in the 20th century. For a technical explanation of the functioning of the registers Garcia gives us a concise survey. He tells us that "a register is a series of homogeneous sounds produced by one mechanism, differing essentially from another series of sounds equally homogeneous produced by another mechanism, whatever modification of *timbre* and strength they may offer."[2]

Garcia then explains the chest register, saying that the sides of the glottis tense a little. The lips of the glottis, including the arytenoid cartilages, vibrate in their whole length and breadth. The tensions of the lips increase with the rising sounds and the thickness decreases. The arytenoid cartilages tighten up and so decrease the length of the lips. The medium, or, as Garcia also calls it, the falsetto,[3] is obtained in the same manner, except that now only the edges of the lips come together. The arytenoid cartilages perform their action of adhesive tightening in both registers. When their closure is complete the glottis produces the head register by the vocal cords alone. To repeat, the chest register is obtained by the large surfaces, consisting of the glottal lips (including the arytenoid cartilages) in their whole length and breadth resisting the air pressure and the medium register is obtained by the smaller surface of the edges of the glottal lips and weaker resistance. We see the importance of the arytenoid cartilages performing the job of pulling the lips of the glottis together in both registers and we understand the difference in sound production between a glottal attack and an attack on the hard palate performed in the medium voice.

Nature's Law of Two Registers in the Human Voice

As we have seen in the previous chapters from the testimony of historical singers and teachers the Old School followed the laws of nature. In *Santley's Singing Master* we read: "Every singing voice consists of two registers — the *natural* and the *falsetto*."[4] In Ferrari's *Concise Treatise* of 1825 the writer begins to tell us that the voice possesses three registers: "the Grave, the Medium, and the Acute. Two of its qualities are distinguished by the appellations *voce di petto*, *voce di testa*, chest and head voice, although both are generated in the throat by the impulsion of the lungs. The Falsetto is an acute artificial voice, which seldom unites with the chest voice." Further on, however, when he comes to the instructions for uniting them "medium" is not mentioned as such but is included in the head voice, for we read: "It is difficult to unite the chest with the head voice, and maintain equality and mellowness"; so we see that Ferrari recognizes the chest and head voice as the two registers in the voice, since he does not mention the necessity to unite the "medium" with the "acute" voice, as he calls them.[5] By saying that

both chest and head voice are "generated in the throat," he is in agreement with all the other old masters that all sounds are made in the throat combined with varying places of acoustical manifestation.

To repeat, we find the existence of two registers in the human voice clearly recognized and defined and at the same time three places are mentioned where the sound would come to rest or focus: chest, throat and head.

If we sing an ascending scale, beginning at the middle C in our chest voice, we will invariably come to a certain point in the scale where we feel our larynx making a definite jerk, then we experience a relief from pressure and we notice the change of character in the tone we produce. This marked experience of three changes — the jerk of the larynx, the relief from pressure and the change in character of the following tone — we only have once in the whole range of our singing voice. Other changes we experience are related to acoustic sensations, when the focus of the sound we produce changes position, the sensation is very clear for the soprano when she goes from the so-called middle voice to the head voice. This terminology of *middle* and *head* was only applied for practical reasons and never intended by the old masters to suggest that there were more than two registers. In 1836 Nathan is one of the first to describe the three different localities where the voice can sound, very accurately mentioning the organs that play an important part in its formation:

> 1st, where the sound appears to issue almost entirely from the lungs, it is distinguished as *chest voice*, called by the Italians, *voce di petto*; also, *voce naturale*, the natural voice: 2ndly, where the throat appears the chief organ connected with the production of sound, it is called a *throat voice*, termed in Italian, *falsetto*; and 3rdly, ... it is termed a *head voice*, in Italian, *voce di testa*.[6]

We see how clearly Nathan describes the phenomenon of the registers with their localities of acoustical manifestation. He mentions a fourth voice that he calls the "feigned voice,"[7] practiced by the Jewish singers and called the "voice of a child." Nathan describes it in detail: "a species of ventriloquism, a soft and distant sound produced apparently in the chest, and chiefly in the back of the throat and head — an inward and suppressed quality of tone, that conveys the illusion of being heard at a distance ... formed at the back part of the head and throat, just above the glottis, where the uvula is situated." He considers that Jewish singers who cultivate this special vocal sound "possess that peculiar sweetness of voice that has ever distinguished them from other singers."[8] We can hear this "voice of a child" on the CDs of the Jewish cantors Berele Chagy and Gershon Sirota.[9] Jewish singers like Tauber, Schmidt and Tucker, who was originally a cantor, all possess this "peculiar sweetness of tone"; they are honey voiced.

Tosi's remarks on the chest and head voice get the following explanation of Mr. Galliard, his English translator:

> Voce di petto is a full voice, which comes from the breast by strength, and is the most sonorous and impressive. Voce di testa comes more from the throat than from the breast and capable of more volubility. Falsetto is a feigned voice which is entirely formed in the throat, has more volubility than any but [is] of no substance.[10]

The year that Galliard wrote was 1743, nearly a hundred years earlier than Nathan and it is fascinating to see how the terminology "the feigned voice" is applied already to mean the falsetto, in its historical sense. Michael Pilkington, the editor of *The Observations on the Florid Song*, writes in his explanatory notes: "It is clear that 'falsetto' means the same as 'di testa,' and most singing teachers of the time agreed."[11] In *A Complete Dictionary of Music* published in 1806, we read the following definitions: "Voce di Petto (Ital.) The natural voice." And "Voce di Testa (Ital.) A falsetto, or feigned voice."[12] It is clear that in those days, a voice that did not come naturally from the chest must be feigned because it is produced by a further action of the vocal organs manifesting itself in the throat and head.

From personal experience, the author can vouch for the truth of these observations: through persistent practice with the feigned voice, as called by Mr. Galliard, the registers can be united; the tone starts in the throat and is weak at first but gathers in strength and finally joins with the chest voice. It is this tone on the vowel "ah" formed with the smiling mouth position that Schumann-Heink describes as being colorless at first but gradually gathering in strength.

Mancini also leaves no room for doubt on the existence of two registers, chest and head or falsetto, in the human voice, adding that their union is difficult:

> Every scholar, whether he be soprano, contralto, tenor or bass, can ascertain for himself the difference between these two separate registers.... Have no doubt that of all the difficulties that one encounters in the art of singing, the greatest by far is the union of the two registers: but to overcome this is not impossible to him who will seriously study how it is to be done.[13]

The Old Italian School was based on the natural phenomenon of two registers, acknowledging and maintaining this as the true foundation of the development of the human voice for artistic purposes. The testimony of the famous 19th-century laryngologist Sir Morell Mackenzie, who treated and observed all the great historical singers of his day, confirms the knowledge of the old masters: "It is certain that however over-refining musicians may multiply the 'registers' of the voice, physiologically there are but two. These fundamental divisions are the so-called 'chest' and 'head' modes of production, the falsetto mechanism in man corresponding to the head register of the female voice, of which in fact it is an imitation."[14] We shall come back to the last interesting observation later in this chapter.

As soon as we practice the old method of singing we will realize the golden truth of these laws of nature. There is no way that we can avoid the jerk of the larynx when we ascend the scale from C1 to C2. If we keep on singing up the scale in our natural low voice without "changing gear," we will experience an increase in tension in our larynx and end up producing a raucous shout instead of a vocal sound. If, however, we "change gear" somewhere between C1 and G1 we will feel a relief of tension as we have seen above, though producing a sound that is so completely different from our natural low voice that we can hardly believe that this feeble, weak, veiled voice can be turned into a voice of power and expression. We must keep in mind that by perseverance in practicing with the right exercises, we can obtain this metamorphosis. It takes time and

patience and above all infinite trust in the positive result of obedience to the physical anatomical laws of phonation. Remember that the sound production in the middle voice must never be pushed forward but must reach its place of resonance at the palate reflected from the back wall of the throat of its own accord. Kelsey is right when he maintains that it cannot be stressed enough that

> in addition to the two Registers, however, there are *three general localities of acoustic sensation* which are brought into play whenever a voice is used over its full compass.... It should be remembered, however, that if the notes are *attacked* at these localities, instead of below the instrument, they will always sound wrong. These localities are the localities of *acoustic manifestation* of the sound, and never the places where the note is attacked.[15]

Emphasis on the Development of the Middle and Low Notes of the Female Voice in Historical Singing

We come across a rare and fascinating testimony and survey of the historical method in the biography of Malibran by the Countess Merlin.[16] Merlin was herself a talented singer and a pupil of Garcia Sr.[17] A concise and clear description of his method and therefore of the Old Italian School is presented to us in the first chapter of her biography. Her description is all the more valuable for it is first-hand information about her brilliant teacher by one of his very intelligent and gifted pupils. She is much more elaborate about Garcia Sr.'s method of tuition than Jenny Lind about her master Garcia Jr. Madame Merlin stresses and illustrates the superiority of the Italian School of Singing by mentioning the most famous singers of her time, like Grassini,[18] Colbran,[19] Pizzaroni[20] and Pasta,[21] who represented its method with their spectacular performances. She points out as the first task of the aspiring singer the equalization of the vocal instrument, correcting the inherent imperfections of the voice, implying the establishment of a smooth transition and union between chest and head voice. Then she mentions the importance of taking breath quietly and preparing the throat for perfect tone emission, implying a good, clean attack. She tells us to swell the note decisively and vigorously in order to develop the fullest power of the voice, by harnessing the ventricles. Madame Merlin indicates that the notes should be legato by saying that they should be in "*a straight line* and then form a curve, the intermediate tones being given merely by sympathetic vibration, and the voice should again fall on the required note with decision and clearness."[22] This description of the principles of historical singing is included here to demonstrate her full understanding of the method.

Following on, Merlin mentions the rules of the Old Italian School to develop the voice into an organ of the greatest expression, saying that the high notes should not be practiced too much because that part of the voice is the most delicate and easily spoiled by overexertion. "On the contrary, by practising more particularly on the middle and lower notes, they acquire strength, and an important object is gained (which is in strict accordance with one of the essential principles of acoustics), namely, that of making the grave tones strike the ear with the same degree of force as the acute tones."[23] Here

we are confronted with the superiority of the historical method by the proper development of the middle and low voice for the soprano. The historical sopranos like Patti, Albani, Melba and Nezhdanova kept their middle and low voice intact into advanced age, as we can witness on their recordings. They all possess a powerful means of expression in their middle voice through clear enunciation, pure vowels and a remarkably warm sound. Madame Merlin stresses the importance of strengthening the low and middle notes of the soprano: "first, because, in general, that part of the voice is most feeble; and next, because the transition from the *voce di petto* to the *voce di testa* tends to deteriorate the purity of some tones, and to impart a feebler ... or, a *stifled* effect to others."[24] She stresses the necessity of continuous practice on the transition notes connecting the weak note with the strong one to impart the strength and purity of the good note to the weak one. There is no shortcut to the development of the weak middle voice because the vocal organs have to be trained slowly to respond to the demands of artistic singing. There is no better counsel than that of the young Liszt when he advises his pupil Valérie Boissier repeatedly:

> Be patient with yourself, you will spoil everything if you want to go too fast; put your foot slowly on every step of the ladder in order to arrive safely at the top; be patient; nature itself works slowly, imitate her. Your efforts will be crowned by success if wisely channelled, whereas if you wish to acquire everything too fast, you will lose time and you will not attain your goal.[25]

These words must be engraved in our mind, particularly because the comparison to nature makes them all the more valuable. Your natural voice, to be acquired for artistic singing, cannot be developed by exotic and fast methods but has to follow the rules laid down by its very own resources. With care and patience these resources can be formed into an organ of great power, but any method that oversteps or neglects the natural resources of the voice and forces certain effects in vocal production will inevitably harm the individual quality and beauty of the voice. It will produce a general vocal sound recognizable through the method of the singer rather than one that communicates the essential vocal and spiritual qualities of that singer.

It is most exciting to read the instructions of Garcia Jr. for uniting the chest register with the head register since we notice how perfectly the historical method was passed on from father to son.

Patti gives her opinion on the development of the middle voice, saying:

> If I gave lessons I should cultivate the middle notes, and the voice of the singer would be good at the age of hundred.... How many can sing very high and yet cannot sing *Home, Sweet Home*! Some pooh-pooh the idea of the difficulty in that simple melody. But it is more difficult to sing *Home, Sweet Home* than the waltz song from *Romeo and Juliet*, because of its demands on the development of the voice. Without the beautiful middle notes there is no cantabile, and upon the proper development of these, and the avoidance of strain by forcing high and low notes, the enduring powers of the singer depend.[26]

We see that Patti completely agrees with the instructions of Garcia Sr. as related by Madame Merlin. Patti is herself wonderful proof of the good development of the middle voice gained by the historical method, as we can witness on the few recordings

she left us that were made at the end of her long career. Her advice, however, must be seen in the right perspective, coming from a historical soprano who had no difficulty at all with her high notes. The high notes of the soprano will influence the middle notes positively if these high notes are easily produced. The Rossini vocalizes (see Appendix # 2) are proof of the importance of exercising the voice over great scales that cover the entire compass of the voice. In this manner, the middle and low notes will acquire the bite of the high notes. The soprano, however, who transfers to singing mezzo-soprano because she has difficulty with her high notes will not attain the full beauty of her middle notes, because her laryngeal muscles never get the training of keeping a firm grip on the pinch of the glottis, a grip that gets tighter and tighter for the high notes. The firm pinch of the glottis is highly necessary for producing the middle and low notes perfectly because in this region the vocal cords are less tensed than on the high notes. The sound quality of the voice will always suffer if it is not regularly used over its whole compass. The notes in the middle part will stay dull and colorless. The historical mezzo-soprano voice had to possess a ringing high B as well as a strong G below middle C to sing the arias that Rossini composed for this type of voice.

Middle or Falsetto Voice and Head Voice Form One Register

Manuel Garcia states clearly that there are two registers in the human voice and, as we have seen, he inherited the knowledge of the Old Italian School from his father. Garcia explains in his precise and lucid manner that the medium (in his terminology "falsetto," he uses the same terminology as Mancini) and head voice form one register and that the sensations of transition from medium to head voice result from a change in timbre and not from the laryngeal action that we can experience in going from chest to medium. Garcia writes: "Falsetto-head register is one and the same." He tells us why we might think that we have made a transition of register in going from medium to head voice. The reason is that we ascend in the middle voice from inner compunction in the bright timbre and when we arrive on the D#2 we generally change into the dark timbre. This will impart more roundness to the sounds above D#2 and the singer will have the sensation of a ringing sound towards the pituitary gland. These effects have made people believe that singers possess two registers separated by the notes D#2 and E2: falsetto and head. Garcia says that he must oppose this belief since the separation is not the effect of a different mechanical action of the larynx, but of timbre. There is no shift in the position of the larynx, causing a jerk as also occurs in the transition from chest to middle voice. In the case of a shift of the larynx, there should be common notes between middle and head, as there are between chest and middle. The tones of the middle and head voice follow one another and the larynx works accordingly as the tones of one register. Conclusion: middle or falsetto voice and head voice form one register.[27]

The Chest Voice of Historical Lady Singers

Madame Merlin mentions the most striking aspect of the Old Italian School when she says that the important point in its method consists of the secret of how to develop the chest voice in soprano voices. "Garcia [Sr.] was convinced that breast tones existed in all voices of that class, but that the only difficulty consisted in the art of developing them."[28]

The registers in the human voice have become a sad source of misunderstanding as soon as the *coup de glotte* had been abandoned for a softer attack. All the historical lady singers sang their low notes with healthy and beautiful chest tones as required by the composers who understood the laws of the human voice. Vocal training methods later became much opposed to the use of the chest voice, understandably so because these methods are based on the principle of keeping the voice as much as possible in the head, "hooting" most of the time. This is a great impediment to employing a healthy chest voice. In fact, it is wrongly suggested by present-day singing teachers that the notes one gained at the bottom would cause one to lose the same number at the top. If singing is practiced in the historical manner, this dictum is proved to be wrong. It is a fact for everyone to hear that the historical sopranos kept their high notes brilliantly intact into their advanced years while using their chest voice generously on the low notes. One of the first to be alarmed by the threats for the abandonment of the use of the chest voice was Reynaldo Hahn, who strongly came to its defense:

> One has only to read the accounts of master teachers, to recall the leading singers we have heard and their own comments on this subject, or to listen to recordings made by the great cantatrices to be convinced that, first, chest tones are absolutely necessary to obtain richness, power, warmth, in any female voice; and, second, the use of chest tones has never caused harm to the upper register of the voice, as some would have it believed.[29]

Hahn continues his defense of the use of the chest voice for lady singers, saying that all the great singers have used their chest voice "with discernment and taste, with force or with tenderness as expression required." Hahn means with low register, for the contralto, beginning at E below middle C, and for the soprano, extending from middle C up to first-space F. These notes are the pivotal points at which the voice must make the change; they should be possible to produce in either the chest or the medium register.

> Nothing is weaker, more woeful, duller and more distressing than the mixed register used below F. Many teachers today say that if the mixed voice is "correctly placed," "correctly set" and sounds good in the forehead cavities, it can replace the chest voice. Never, never ... can this be a true substitute."[30]

This "substitute" is now generally accepted and to refrain from using the chest voice has become a common trend; very seldom one hears chest voice in phrases where it is absolutely indispensable. The list of historical sopranos who used their chest voice would fill many pages. We can listen to the historical recordings and judge for ourselves. Hahn singles out Patti, whom he accompanied himself: Patti was well over 60

then: "in Zerlina's first aria from Don Giovanni and in Cherubino's second aria from *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mme Patti used a well-supported and extremely mellow chest voice in all the low registers, to the delight of the listening ear and to Mozart's greater glory."[31]

Emma Calvé who could sing Carmen better than most contraltos possessed a soprano voice of great brilliance. She wrote to Hahn confirming his views on the use of the chest voice: "You are hundred times right.... I am convinced that I have preserved my voice thanks to the well-supported low notes which I consider the foundation of the vocal apparatus."[32]

Husler and Rodd-Marling mention that the use of the chest register can never harm the voice because it activates the muscles and maintains the cooperation of these muscles with the vocal cord stretching muscles of the falsetto. The full use of the chest-voice muscles will keep the voice healthy, the production of a strong forte as well as the lowest tones are impossible without them. The chest register should therefore always be practiced. The writers admit that sopranos who sing mostly in their head voice producing "beautiful head tones" without a proper use of the chest voice tend to develop muscle atrophy in the later stages of their career. They advise practice in the chest voice to prevent this, adding that the quickest way to mend "pinched" and above all "timid" voices is the practice of the chest voice for a certain amount of time.[33] Unlike Hahn and Stendhal[34] they do not mention the special beauty and enchantment of the female chest voice.

The contralto voice is even more endangered by the neglect of the chest voice and Hahn cannot but be extremely alarmed, saying that contemporary teachers have even forbidden the use of the chest voice among contraltos: "The contralto will eventually become extinct, like animal or plant species we fail to protect."[35] He mentions some of the real contraltos of his day: Kirkby-Lunn,[36] Schumann-Heink and Clara Butt,[37] to whose recordings we have to turn in order to hear the real contralto voice. Hahn gives this alarming observation on the extinction of the contralto species in 1914; his doom-laden prophecy may well be coming true with the increase in popularity of the mezzo-soprano voice.

The Connection of the Female Chest Voice and the Male Falsetto

We come across a most interesting phenomenon and that is the virile aspect of the chest voice of women; in the same breath we could say that male singers can produce some very feminine tones in their head voice, pointing to the fact that every human being is potentially bisexual. The definite and audible break in the voice announces that the voice has made the transition from one register into the other. The female singer mostly uses her upper register as opposed to the male singer, who does most of his singing in the lower register. According to Kelsey, it seems logical "that every vocal organ

is potentially bisexual, and that while the Lower Register constitutes the manifestation of the male or abnormal aspect of the female larynx, the Upper Register constitutes that of the female or abnormal aspect of the male larynx."[38] Hahn quotes from a poem of Théophile Gautier,[39] who touches on this mystery, moved by the contralto voice:

How you please me, oh strange timbre,
Twofold sound, man and woman at once,
Contralto, bizarre mixture,
Hermaphrodite of the voice![40]

The legendary contralto Clara Butt, who fortunately made many recordings, a treasured legacy for lovers of truly grand singing, possessed a singing voice that was definitely female although enormously powerful and a speaking voice that fooled many people into thinking she was a man. "Her speaking voice was so like a man's that acquaintances telephoning to her often thought her reply came from the butler. In hotels, the ease with which this mistake could be made led at times to comic embarrassments. A masseuse, sent to her room in Harrogate, heard Dame Clara's 'Come in,' and fled."[41] Sir Adrian Boult remembers a rehearsal when she sang through four high B flats with ease: at the top it was sure and brilliant, in the lower reaches vast and powerful.[42] Much more impressive, however, than her superiority among the singers of her time is her attitude to her own singing: "Yet to Clara Butt her voice is only a means to express something greater than any voice — greater even than music itself — a spiritual force that must have found expression through her by some means even if she had had no voice at all."[43]

Clara Butt could bridge the break perfectly smoothly if she chose, but in later years she loved to "change gear" ostentatiously, as the critics used to call her audible transition from chest in to head. If she wanted, she could take her chest voice up to Bb 1; apparently it could stand the pressure. It seems that a good contralto voice can put a stronger spell on audiences than any other type of voice. Could it be that the poem of Gautier lifts a tip of the veil, touching on the male/female character it so strongly represents and stirring in our hearts the longing for completeness as human beings? Rossini described the contralto voice as "the foundation stone of all music" and it is certain that contraltos occupied a very special place in the time of historical singing. Their full-bodied chest tones accounted for much of their attraction, and fortunately we can enjoy these tones on historical CDs.

The Historical Tenor Voice

The tenor voice trained in the method of the Old Italian School is a voice of great beauty and charm. The tenor performs in the classical operas the role of the noble lover who has to sing the most seductively haunting airs as well as the most graceful of love duets with his heroine. If we take a look at the scores of the operas by Donizetti, Rossini, Mozart and Meyerbeer, we notice that the highest notes of the tenor are around Ab and G with the occasional high C in passing or playfully attacked, like in Donizetti's

Fille du Regiment. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* gives the tenor nothing above the G in the beautiful air of Don Ottavio "Dalla sua pace." The historical tenor invariably sang the notes above A in falsetto as meant by Garcia in middle or head voice and consequently these notes could be sung lightly and softly if so required by the composer.

The fate of the tenor was sealed in Paris on the day that Duprez[44] delivered his top C in full chest voice, thereby rousing the audience to hysterical enthusiasm. Duprez's example was followed by other tenors who wished to sing like him, just as Caruso was imitated by hordes of singers who did not realize that Caruso was unique in his art and as such not a singer to be imitated. A composer like Rossini, however, was less pleased with Duprez's top C and remarked that it struck his Italian ear like "the squawk of a capon whose throat is being cut," implying that the high C should be sung like Nourrit sang it: in head voice. The reigning Paris tenor Adolphe Nourrit,[45] pupil of Garcia Sr., could not cope with the reaction of the audience to Duprez's high C. He left for Italy to take lessons from Donizetti and performed in Naples. Donizetti taught him to darken his voice and "Italianize" it, meaning vowel adaptation, which he did but at the cost of losing the command over his falsetto. Consequently he tried to recover his previous voice but failed because, after the full 13 years of opera career he had served, his vocal organs could not adapt themselves easily to change. Although he was successful in Naples, he sunk into a deep depression combined with serious physical complaints that ended with suicide.

The tenor can only emit pleasant high notes if he is trained in the historical method. The last historical tenors were Björling, Tagliavini and Tucker, whose high notes, even if they were full chest were effortless and beautiful, produced above the breath.

Another confirmation of the existence of only two registers in the human voice comes from Levien talking about Braham:

> Only these two registers are spoken of: the chest voice, "voce di petto," implying what Sir Morell Mackenzie called the long reed, i.e., the fuller though of course varying length of the vocal cords; and the "falsetto," signifying the mechanism of the "stop closure," i.e., part of the cords clinging together, leaving a smaller and different sort of aperture.[46]

This description is in complete accordance with Garcia's that is mentioned above. If we go back in historical singing, we come across a tenor like John Braham who could sing through his impressive compass extending from low A to E in alt (twenty notes) without the hint of a transition from chest into falsetto. "In all the accounts of Braham his ability of passing from the chest voice to the falsetto and from the falsetto to the chest voice is commented on as something quite exceptional: it was impossible to detect the moment of transition, so perfect was his artifice."[47] Some historical tenors, like Sobinov and later Kozlovsky as well as Tagliavini and McCormack, can remind us of this gift.

With the change in opera repertoire to verismo opera, the demand for tenors who could sustain a powerful top C grew. Here were no sweet romantic airs but heart-rending "tear-jerkers" that had their climax in the loudest high note the tenor could emit. The high C in *La Bohème* of Björling still sounds good, however, because he produces

his tones in the historical manner. Björling's chest is up and he evidently sings above the breath into the concentration of sound; all the hard work is done inside. As soon as the tenor pushes the sound out, his high notes can only be loud and forced. A number of very famous tenors never sang top Cs at all; Caruso evaded them and Tauber hardly ever sang above A. If we take into account that the tuning fork of Handel was half a tone down from present-day standard pitch we can also understand better why a top C of a tenor in the present day manner of singing can sound tight because he is in fact singing in historical terms a C#. The whole history of pitch has been written about and the commentators make it obvious that the human voice is being expected to sing uncomfortably higher.[48] This raises questions about the performance of music written in the time of the historical voice production.

The beauty of the tenor voice is greatly enhanced by a good management of the registers and contributes to a sweetness of tone in his lower notes as well. The tenor who wishes to sing the aria "Ecco ridente il cielo" from Rossini's *Barber of Seville* has to be able to use his head voice, otherwise he will make a poor show of the coloratura.

Both the tenor and the soprano will suffer the most from the neglect of the right use of the registers. The present-day manner of expiratory singing has all but eliminated the different types of tenor that used to be highly discernable, like the Russian or the English tenor voice. The tenor of today could learn from these lines that were written of Charles Lunn: "Everyone who has had the privilege of hearing Mr. Lunn sing must have been struck by the rare union of power and sweetness in his noble voice."[49] Today's tenors might have power but do they have sweetness?

The Voice of Creation in Connection with the Voice of Man

God's angel once with spirit wand
Asunder smote the mystic bond
Sealing the mute lips of the soul:
And lo! With full melodious roll-
With wondrous cadence born along-
Sprang forth the glorious gift of song.

Anna de Brémont[50]

It is fascinating to see the lips of the glottis on the film screen and there is no escape from their striking similarity to the lips and entrance of the vagina. The glottis really gives birth to the sounds it can emit, just as the vagina gives birth. The male and female glottis is identical in shape. This confronts us again with the bisexual aspect of the voice in man and woman. Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created man in his *own* image; in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them."[51] These are words that can give us the clue to the why of the mini-vagina we carry in our throat. If we go from Genesis to the Gospel of St. John we read: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was turned towards God, and God was the word. This was in the

beginning turned towards God."[52] The fascination and charm of the castrato voice, combining male and female sounds without being either one or the other, becomes understandable when we consider it in the light of these Bible texts. The greatest compliment that can be paid to a singer is that he sings like an angel. Moreschi was known as the "Angel of Rome." Braham too was compared to an angel: "In *Jephthah*, his singing of the air, 'Deeper and deeper still,' was so extraordinary in its changes of tone and splendour of conception, that people were awed into the belief, for the time, that it was not the voice of a mortal, but the song of an angel descended in their midst."[53]

The Jewish cantors worshipped their God by singing with voices of immense range and power. In the days before the invention of the microphone, priests had to sing the service and the words were clearly understandable for the congregation. Ministers in Protestant churches spoke from the pulpit with big voices that could impress people. These voices have all but disappeared, except in the Russian Orthodox Church, where we can still be thrilled and impressed by the phenomenal voices of the priests. The powerful contralto voice has disappeared as a result of neglecting the proper development of the chest register. The voices of priests and ministers that should communicate God's word have dwindled into vocal caricatures in front of the microphone.

If we let the words of the Bible really sink into our heart and soul, we realize that the voice that has to communicate its truths must of necessity try to meet the ideal of its heavenly twin. With these texts in mind we might certainly intensify and deepen the relationship with our own voice, considering that we were created after God's own image.

The Indispensability of the Female Chest Voice for Expressive Singing

Hahn makes a plea for art, quoting Faure, imploring teachers and singers to abandon the prejudice against the use of the chest voice that deprives singing

> of its most beautiful means of expression. "One cannot ignore," writes Faure, "the profound effects that women create by using their chest register" [*La Voix et le Chant*, p. 41]. It is truly presumptuous to pretend to a deeper knowledge than such a master, to deny the truth of his observations or the accounts of great artists ... who have penetrated the mysteries of this art ... to disregard the examples of the many excellent female singers who have depended upon this approach that is absurdly condemned and prohibited today.[54]

These strong words of Hahn have not lost anything of their urgency in the present day as we can observe in the comment of Ward Marston, who echoes Hahn when he mentions the use of the chest voice in the singing of the historical sopranos, like Tetrazzini, Patti, Sembrich, Melba and Boninsegna, who all carried their chest voice up to E and F# above middle C. Boninsegna could still produce a ringing top C at the age of 62, which shows that the use of a well-anchored chest voice will not impair the high notes of the soprano.

> The misunderstanding of the chest register in general is a an exclusively mid–20th century fault [beginning of the 20th century, according to Hahn!], which has resulted in some horrendous consequences, not the least of which is the omnipresent irritating and debilitating "wobble" heard in so many singers of the past 50 years, and in almost none of the previous 50.[55]

The misunderstanding of the chest register is one of the causes of the "wobble," another cause being the use of an overdose of breath to push the sound into the resonance with an unanchored larynx—in other words, expiratory singing. The greatest Wagnerian soprano of the 20th century, Kirsten Flagstad, thrills us with her perfectly produced chest voice as well as her brilliant high Cs in her performance of Brünnhilde's battle cry.[56]

We see that the German singer Elena Gerhardt,[57] who was not trained in the method of the Old Italian School, is prejudiced against the use of the chest voice from her reaction to Melba's use of it: "She [Melba] had this incomparable thrill and fluency in her coloratura, but how common it sounded when she forced her lower notes up to F and even G from the chest register!"[58] Listening to the singing of Gerhardt recorded when she was 56 years of age, we notice that her voice is not as fresh as Melba's at that age. Gerhardt stands alone in her criticism of Melba's chest tones, for it was common knowledge that Melba possessed a perfectly even scale from top to bottom without ever forcing any of its beautiful tones.

Isn't it significant that the most popular dramatic soprano singer of the 20th century, Maria Callas, generously used her chest voice? Although not always in the refined manner of the historical singers, and it is evident that she was loved for her other "apparent defects"—the strangely burning sound that set her apart from other singers, the notes that sounded as if sung into a bottle, the wobble like "Isolde's veil" (comment of Walter Legge), the occasional rough attack—we not only forgive her these aberrations, we love her all the more for them. We have the most wonderful comment on Callas' predecessor Giuditta Pasta[59] by Stendhal in his book on Rossini. Stendhal tells us that Pasta possessed a voice of great compass, from bottom A to high C# or even D, and that she could sing contralto as well as soprano:

> This leads me to the consideration of one of the most uncommon features of Madame Pasta's voice: it is *not all moulded from the same metallo*, as they would say in Italy (i.e., it possesses more than one *timbre*); and this fundamental variety of tone produced by a single voice affords one of the richest veins of musical expression which the artistry of a great *cantatrice* is able to exploit.[60]

We see that Stendhal puts his finger on the importance of the use of the chest voice for dynamics and expression in singing. He continues to underline the great art of making positive use of "apparent defects," saying that the Italians usually describe this kind of voice as having "several different *registers*" or rather "several *clearly distinguishable physical aspects*" that can be used by the singer depending on the notes of the scale he sings. "Outstanding singers of the old school long ago demonstrated how easily an apparent defect might be transformed into a source of beauty, and how it might be used to bring about a most fascinating touch of originality."[61] Stendhal stresses that this phenome-

non might imply that it is not the perfectly formed voice that gives the greatest artistic satisfaction, but rather a voice that is capable of a variation in timbre.

We know that Jenny Lind had difficulties with the notes just above the break, due to forcing her voice, before she went to Garcia. She complained that those notes never got quite right again, but from her listeners we gather that her A above middle C had therefore a charming veiled quality and that the first note the A of "Casta Diva" from Bellini's opera *Norma* took their breath away for the sheer beauty of it.[62]

A remark of Mancini illustrates this very well with "a charming paradox," arousing our amazement:

> I say that there may be natural defects which are more beautiful and more attractive in the voice when they are not corrected by art. Give me a veiled [velata] voice, which has enough body to be heard in any place no matter how large; it entices, pleases and softly seizes the human heart by means of its marvelous thick color; never crude, never strident.

He warns, however, that this natural defect should only be allowed in a soprano or contralto voice but not in a tenor or bass for the reason that

> these last natural voices, as the sustenance and foundations of the harmony, ought to be sonorous, robust, and virile; and the veiled voice cannot ever be so, so behold how nature brings good out of ill, and we bring good out of defects through study, and let us then emulate nature in art.[63]

It is a general phenomenon nowadays that male singers, noticeably Lieder singers and particularly baritones, produce a veiled and breathy sound.

Most singers will have trouble spots on certain notes in certain repertoire. The great art is to make the best of these little defects. Among the historical singers we will find many singers who were absolutely perfect in all they sang. Patti, Melba, Sembrich and Nezhdanova belong to this category, but then we have to take into account that they stuck to the repertoire that suited their type of voice. Melba only once attempted to sing the role of Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Ring Cycle* but realized straightaway that she would ruin her voice if she continued; in her typically honest and blunt manner she openly conceded that she had been a fool. Patti attempted to sing Carmen but that was not a success. Lilli Lehmann struggled with serious problems with her middle voice, which had became virtually non-existent with advanced age. The transition from chest to middle posed a real obstacle. This was caused by the fact that she did not have a good attack and consequently hooted in the middle voice. She made up for her perceived defects, however, by possessing great ease on the high notes. She had an immensely impressive stage personality combined with self-assurance and stamina that allowed her to present a fascinating performance. Her singing certainly is completely personal in its weird technical devices, all invented by a singer of genius who had to overcome deficient basic knowledge of the laws of vocal production by clever but highly individual manipulation. Many of her pupils had difficulty in following her instructions.

Instructions of the Old Italian School for Uniting the Registers in Women's Voices

For practical guidelines to the union of the registers, we can do no better than read how Garcia has set them down for us. He begins by revealing the true reason why teachers generally reject or deny the use of the chest register: not because its use does not imply great advantages, not because neglect of the low notes robs the singer of her best dramatic effects and dynamics, but because it needs profound knowledge to study this register. Misdirected instruction can easily ruin the instrument of the pupil. The union of the chest register with that of the falsetto can only be established by long and skillful work. This is why it seems easier and more natural to free oneself of the burden by avoiding it completely. Garcia continues to tell us that as soon as the chest voice is available, work should begin to unite this register with the next one. It is an exception when nature has already made this union in a voice. On each of the notes D1, Eb, E, and F, the exercise[64] consists of passing from one register into the other uninterrupted and without breathing during the transition, at first slowly and sparingly repetitive, attacking the transition vigorously. Then the speed should be increased as well as the number of repeats. The first notes will alternatively be chest and falsetto. Garcia stresses the importance of not being afraid to "give a firm attack to the kind of jerk that links the transition from one register to the other: only continuous exercise will soften it at first and next make it disappear." The chest notes will stop at F. If a certain facility is achieved this might extended from D to F#. Garcia stresses the importance of giving the chest notes power as well as the notes of the medium: "One should be careful to refrain from reducing the brilliancy and the force of the notes of the chest voice, just as one should give the falsetto all the energy it is capable of." It is a mistake to give in to the temptation to reduce the power of the stronger note proportionally to the weaker one. This will result in weakening the voice.

Garcia concludes with the basic principle of the historical method: "I make the chest and falsetto register coincide between the five notes C1 to F# inclusive because one has to have the ability to change register on one of those notes and I evade the transition on the lowest and the highest notes, because below D1 the falsetto notes are too weak to be heard and above F# the chest voice will tire the instrument too much."[65]

Furthermore, Garcia says that the same procedure can be applied to male voices, to unite chest register with falsetto register for tenors in the same way as sopranos, with baritones and basses a minor third lower. To do justice as a singer to classical repertoire, it is necessary to acquire the notes from C1 to F1 in both chest and medium voice. This means that even within a word one has to be able to transfer from chest to medium and vice versa smoothly and without any disturbing change in vocal sound.

"Madame Pasta's incredible mastery of technique is revealed in the amazing facility with which she alternates head-notes with chest-notes; she possesses to a superlative degree the art of producing an immense variety of charming and thrilling effects

from the use of *both* voices."[66] We can hear some of these effects in the singing of Blanche Arral, who seemed to enjoy herself enormously in a Spanish song "La Cruche casséé" by Léon Vasseur. She yodeled down to a bottom A below middle C in full chest and yodeled up again into her middle voice. The yodel was a legitimate means to change registers for the historical singer. At the end of the spirited song full of *Olé* yells and spiced by rattling her castanets, she ascended effortlessly to a top D. It is obvious that the union of the registers leads to complete freedom in singing the repertoire that was written for the full compass of the voice.[67]

The Head Voice

As we have seen above, the head voice in its historical production is just a prolongation of the middle voice. The historical sopranos produced their high notes with ease and evident pleasure. Listening to Boronat, Tetrazzini, Nezhdanova, Melba, Sembrich and Arral, we never get the impression of effort. There is no excessive vibrato, just the impression that the tone is alive and soaring away. Some high notes were legendary, like Melba's top C. Mary Garden described the way Melba sang the high C, which comes at the end of the first act of *La Bohème* as "the strangest and weirdest thing I have experienced in my life," and went on:

> The note came floating over the auditorium of Covent Garden; it left Melba's throat, it left Melba's body, it left everything, and came over like a star and passed us in our box, and went out into the infinite. I have never heard anything like it in my life, not from any other singer, ever. It just rolled over the hall of Covent Garden. My God, how beautiful it was.[68]

The high notes of the historical sopranos are always attacked instantly, brilliantly and vigorously with a certain victorious and joyful elation, those high notes are never slurred into or overblown. Tetrazzini can play around with her high notes, echo the forte ones with a whisper and sing the highest ones with an immense and glorious open ringing sound. Sopranos like Tetrazzini and Sembrich possess a formidable "soprano" chin. This chin, as you look at the singer, is pronouncedly deeper and fuller, jutting forwards. The point we draw from this is a very important lesson given by Delle Sedie who demonstrates clearly that the ideal position of the vocal organs for the high notes is formed by jutting the lower jaw slightly, not by opening the mouth widely. The widely opened mouth narrows the throat considerably through the rising and swelling of the base of the tongue, whereas the slightly jutted lower jaw opens the throat. "The lower jaw, when slightly jutted out, leaves the larynx all freedom of action; but if it is drawn back, the larynx will assuredly make an ascending movement."[69] An open throat contributes to a full generous sound of the high notes. The widely opened mouth makes the high notes sound aggressive and by overstretching the jaws, we completely lose our grip on the point of control. It is quite amazing how little the mouth has to be open for historical singing, especially for the high notes. The sensation that the real mouth of the singer is the pharynx is never stronger than in the emission of high notes. The

image of the lips of the glottis pressing together like the trumpet player's lips becomes extremely realistic; the higher we sing, the harder our lips press.

If we ascend the scale on the vowel "ah," we will experience the vowel becoming gradually narrower and, once arrived at the E2, the sensation of singing will merge into a marked feeling of pinching the vowel instead of singing. This feeling of pinching has to be increased as we ascend higher than F#, the tone when the soprano reaches full head voice. The firmer we keep the pinching of our tones, the stronger their resonance. The sensation is that the higher the tone, the lower and stronger we feel the pinching. The danger of practicing the high notes only in passing is that we do not pinch them enough.

Octave exercises are extremely instructive to experience the amount of pinching instead of singing that we have to do to produce the higher note. Take No. 15 of the Rossini vocalizes, starting at C1 with a firm attack, and continue the sound on the point of pressure, never letting go for a moment. You will feel that your larynx does the job for you if only you keep the point of control and direct the sound downwards into its concentration. Proceed slowly with the exercise, elongating the highest note of every exercise in order to feel that you have to pinch it hard. This way your muscles become gradually used to the required activity you ask of them. Think of a ballet dancer. Many exercises that build up slowly in intensity mold the legs into the right shape. It is exactly the same in singing. Your throat muscles will respond awkwardly at first but, like a draught horse, they love their job and they will serve you soon enough as best they can. Choose the Rossini vocalizes that you like best and when you do them well, add the ones you did not like at first.

Never practice just the high notes, always start at least a fifth below the high note. Never sing up to the highest notes of your compass at the beginning of your practicing, always stay a third lower. When you are well and truly warmed up and you throat feels like it, then you are ready for them. Take Rossini No. 13 and every time that you sing the highest note of the pattern of four, pinch that note stronger; do not sing it but feel it singing itself by pinching harder. As soon as you teach yourself in this manner, your larynx will begin to respond and you will find that singing will seem effortless as long as you pinch. Keep the image of the funnel well in mind: as you sing higher you descend simultaneously into the narrow end, while the sound will radiate into the wide end.

Staccato notes can be of the greatest benefit in two ways: for beginners to locate the place of attack and for advanced singers to warm up the voice. Jenny Lind has some wonderful staccato exercises in her vocalizes and if practiced daily they improve the strength of the laryngeal muscles like no other exercise can.

Practical Hints

A confrontation with your chest voice will give you courage, particularly if you are a timid person by nature. For the soprano first try the notes Bb, B, and C1 on the

vowels A and E (Italian *alma*, *sempre*) and if you do not succeed try the vowel I (English EE) firmly but not violently. Ascend to E1, attacking every note vigorously on top of the breastbone. As soon as you feel confident through the powerful tones in that area, attempt to ascend by thirds and fourths. Do not be afraid to ascend into a lighter kind of voice. Just accept this change in sound; it will diminish and gradually disappear through regular practicing.

Regularly practice downward scales in the medium voice to the middle C. This enables you in singing repertoire to stay in the middle voice going down intervals. Start on a solid chest voice if you have to jump up intervals beginning on the notes below F1.

Practice octave leaps as Rossini gives you and always attack the notes below E1 in the chest voice. Your voice loves it and performs the octaves effortlessly, provided it is attacked on a stroke of the glottis.

As soon as you notice that you can sing the notes in between D1 and F# inclusive in both registers, establishing their connection, you will understand the words of Nathan when he says: "It is only by voices so formed that the higher effects of the heart can be produced."[70]

These words give us access to the following poem:

> There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;
> And as the mind is pitch'd, the ear is pleas'd
> With melting airs, or martial, brisk or grave:
> Some chord, in unison with what we hear,
> Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies.
>
> William Cowper[71]

6

Movement and Agility of the Voice

The study of the movement and agility of the voice in the Old Italian School was regarded as an absolutely unavoidable practice by its masters. It can be compared to the study of the piano or the violin to develop agility of the fingers, because the laryngeal muscles have to be trained to be able to meet the demands of classical and modern singing. Ballet dancers have to go through the same routine of hours of training and it is an interesting fact to realize that they have to be able to perform the classical historical ballets as well as modern dance repertoire. Singers are a rare exception in that the modern training methods based on expiratory singing are nowadays considered adequate to perform the classical repertoire authentically that was written exclusively for the method of the Old Italian School.

There is no shortcut to learn to sing in the historical method, just as there is no shortcut to learn to play an instrument of any kind. It is, however, extremely important to realize that the movement and agility of the historical method is based on the elasticity and strength of the laryngeal muscles, the vibrator, which manages the voice completely independently of the other mechanisms, the air compressor, the resonator and the articulator. According to Crescentini: "The flexibility is a suppleness that the voice acquires through study enabling it to attack, increase and diminish the sounds."[1]

The old masters agree that the study of agility results in rendering the organ "flexible, even, mellow, besides strengthening and preparing it for the florid style as well as for the plain and declamatory."[2] Singers cannot do without it, says Garcia: "Anyone who wishes to obtain proficiency in the art can no more avoid this amount of study than a violinist, a pianist, or any other instrumentalist."[3] The historical singers practiced agility regularly and thereby secured the longevity of their vocal resources, as did Braham, who kept his voice fresh until well into his seventies, as observed by witnesses to his performances. "For these accomplishments of word and note he did many exercises in scales, turns and shakes on *ah*, and also on other vowels, and sang many *solfeggi*."[4] Jenny Lind molded the newly found voice that she discovered through Garcia's tuition of nine months into a pliable one through unremitting agility practice so that it could master the most difficult coloratura repertoire. Her voice originally was stiff and unyielding.

> Mdlle. Lind's voice was not by nature a flexible one. The rich sustained tones of the soprano drammatico were far more congenial to it, than the rapid execution which usually charac-

> terises the lighter class of soprano voices. But this she attained also, by almost superhuman labour. Her perseverance was indefatigable.... She once, at the zenith of her career, told ... that she had practiced such passages [scale passages ascending chromatically to the upper Eb] all her life, but that it was only quite lately that she had succeeded in satisfying herself with them.[5]

In the account of Lillie Hegermann—de Lindencrone, also a pupil of Garcia and a highly accomplished soprano in regular demand by the Emperor, she visits Jenny Lind around 1860 and gives some idea of the mastery of the "Swedish Nightingale." Jenny is curious to know which vocalizes Lillie uses. One is the first sixteen bars of the Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. "I don't think that I could do that," Jenny replied, but on Lillie's encouraging "I am sure you could," Jenny launched into it with her eyes closed "as if feeling her way cautiously, for the intonations are very difficult."[6] Remember that there were no recordings in those days so Jenny probably did not hear the music more than a few times if even that. Try to sing those sixteen bars and you will find that your throat is taxed to the utmost. It just gives us a good idea of the capability of the historically trained larynx.

In historical singing the movement of the voice is based on the elasticity of the larynx that functions above the breath. The various ways to sing in a musical passage are *legato*, *marcato*, *staccato*, *portamento* and *aspirato*.

Legato

The movement of the voice in singing *legato* is the backbone of the Old Italian School. It is acquired by the combination of the squeeze of the chest "binding" and at the same time "striking" the desired notes with the larynx. In the words of Garcia: "The *legato*, in which notes should flow distinctly and evenly, 'perlées,' *i.e.*, smoothly, without either gliding or aspiration. This is the dominant characteristic of good vocalization; all the others may be considered as varieties of colouring. The *legato* requires no special sign or indication."[7] To get the effect of "pearling the notes" in singing, that which is needed first and foremost is the string or thread itself. "It is said that Braham would pass through the whole of his extensive compass of nineteen or twenty notes by semitones with the utmost rapidity, each note and the joining thread of tone being perfect."[8] The "thread" or string of pearls can only be formed when the string is threaded through the pearls. This is a very important point, for if we try to get the string of pearls by jumping from pearl to pearl without the binding of the string we do not get the true and genuine historical *legato*. Singing quick passages with the help of consonants or Hs can of course be done, for they enable the singer to jump from note to note through the release of tension on the larynx, but this will not be the same as agility produced by the larynx alone and acting above the breath. The larynx has to do the striking and has to learn to tap out the notes as a percussive act like a tiny hammer in the throat as Emma Albani[9] is reputed to have said. Little exercises in patterns of two and three notes up and down form the beginning of the movement of the voice. They

can be extended gradually. The larynx will get used to tapping out the notes. In the beginning the exercises should be done at a slow speed, for speed will come through persistent practice. The sensation of movement, threading the notes, has no connection whatsoever to the notes, "high" or "low," on the written score. The rate of vibrating that the notes need is either fast or slow and, in connection with historical singing, this implies heavier (for the high note) or lighter (for the low note) compression. If we ascend the scale, the point of pressure just above the breastbone is felt progressively further down and we have to apply it firmer if we wish to produce good high notes. Therefore, it was strictly observed by the old masters that words were not allowed in this stage of study until vowels could be purely and clearly sung *legato* in scales and arpeggios like the Rossini vocalizes. Thus, only when the vibrator could feel that it was doing the right thing had the time come to introduce the action of the articulator. Merlin illustrates this from the teaching of her master: "Garcia [Sr.] never permitted his pupils, whilst they were in the course of tuition, to sing vocal compositions with words: he confined them strictly to Solfeggi."[10] Historical singers were literally "performers on the larynx," as Berlioz used to say in a deprecating manner, implying that singers only wanted to display their acrobatics. The violinist who can play the Paganini *Capriccio's*, however, is not necessarily a superficial virtuoso, limited to pyrotechnics. He will be able to express himself with abandon thanks to his mastering of the technical difficulties. This applies to the singer trained in the historical method. The larynx has to be developed into an organ that functions actively and independently. The resonator reacts passively to the action of the larynx and the articulator functions independently with total freedom. "The Garcia-Santley 'attack' was one of Braham's secrets of *tone*, and of his ability to say words with the independence they require for their perfect pronunciation."[11] This observation reveals the secret of the Old Italian School where the functions of the air compressor, vibrator, resonator and articulator are developed methodically into functioning independently and simultaneously. Present-day singing has not only reversed the functions of the resonator and the vibrator by promoting the so-called forward production but has mixed the articulator into the reversing procedure too with the result that each mechanism is burdened with interference from the other ones.

To acquire the *legato* of the historical singers, it is important to keep in mind that the mechanical action of the glottis in producing the tone is a purely physical act and has to be executed by the action of the laryngeal muscles. Therefore, the ears of the singer are of no use in this stage of development. The singer should have no desire to produce a preconceived sound from an aesthetical point of view because this will result in wrongly applied muscular tension. In fact one should not wish to "sing" the way one generally understands "singing."

All the concentration has to be on the continuation of the attack into a steady grip on the point of control and in ascending from a note to the next one the pressure has to be firmer, meaning that the singer descends into a compression of a heavier weight. The feeling of continuous "pinching" must be very marked for the muscles to get used to this action. A muscle that is slowly and regularly trained can develop great power

and this applies also to our laryngeal muscles. Used in the right way, the voice can be trained to have enormous power without fatigue, for it is the pressure of the arytenoid cartilages at the posterior end of the vocal cords that is applied and never the vocal cords themselves that are called upon for heavy duty. This is the eminent superiority of the historical method, "the voice above the breath." In historical singing the pressure at the larynx itself is light and the larynx has total freedom to "pearl" the notes by its tiny impulses.

The historical singer increases the pressure when ascending the scale and the instinctive urge would be to let go of the pressure in descending. The comparison with mountain climbing can be of use here, illustrating the fact that the descent is harder work than the ascent. It is the same for historical singing. The position of the raised chest and pulled in stomach muscles maintaining the support of the breath should be kept descending the scale exactly as in ascending.

Marcato

The *marcato* means that accents should be given to the notes. Garcia says that the *marcato* is obtained by pressing slightly on the pit of the stomach with the effect of a sort of rebound for every sound. He expects that the larynx is held firmly and is supported by the squeeze of the chest. Present-day methods that press on the pit of the stomach to get a *marcato* do so without the perfect closure of the glottis and consequently the produced effect will not be the same. We can also obtain *marcato* by starting with a vowel on every sound. A historical *marcato* is not obtained by using a consonant to initiate the *marcato*. The method of overdoing the consonants will always impair the vowel sound.

Staccato

We have already seen that *staccato* exercises can be very beneficial to the voice to help find the placement and action of the attack, but it is also a means to strengthen the laryngeal muscles that react very favorably to its use. The practice of *staccato* is important for the development of the larynx and for the support of the breath, particularly in connection with sustained notes. It is indispensable as a warming up exercise and is included in the Lind *solfeggi* and Rossini vocalizes. Composers always include *staccato* notes in arias and some have become real favorites of the public, like, for instance, the *staccato* notes of the arias of the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*, or *La Traviata*. Those *staccato* notes never fail in producing the most thrilling effects on the ears of the audience. Is it the combination of the bite and spice of the notes with the quasi-painful sensation on the ears that delight people by waking them up out of their everyday reverie? Mozart even introduced some fine *staccato* notes in Pamina's melancholy aria, "Ach, ich fühls," from *The Magic Flute*.

To practice *staccato* notes in the historical manner means that the *staccato* attack has to be executed by the larynx while maintaining the right posture with the raised chest and the pulled-in stomach. We will feel a slight reaction of the diaphragm to each *staccato*. The present-day method of producing *staccato* notes from an increased action of the diaphragm can never replicate the historical *staccato*, for this method cannot lead to the necessary speed of executing *staccatos*. It is only the tiny hammer in the throat that can hit as quickly as lightning. In historical singing the diaphragm always reacts to a command given elsewhere; it is acted upon but should never lead an action itself.

In the initial stages of trying to establish the right attack, it can be of great help to have the soprano voice do *staccatos* beginning on C2, and never lower than A1, because the laryngeal muscles are not up to them in that region. The English vowel "EE" can be beneficial, for this vowel pinches the sound more than the vowel "ah." It depends on the person which vowel is easiest. Most sopranos will be happy on "EE" and can easily throw off *staccatos* as high as they can. *Staccato* exercises are the best way to let the aspiring singer experience the automatic action of his tone-producing instrument. He feels clearly that something at the bottom of his throat starts the tone, comparable to the reflex action of the knee when hit by the doctor's little hammer. He can also experience on the high notes how narrow the vowel has to be for singing. The higher the note, the narrower the vowel shape. As an illustration of this point listen to the staccato attacks of Nezhdanova[12] and notice how fine and narrow she keeps the ensuing sound, underlining the great advantage of practicing *staccatos* in order to feel this narrowness of the sound as well as the grip on the point of control through this manner of production. This is another good reason for not introducing words in the first stages of singing. The words would certainly tempt the inexperienced singer to keep the throat in tension by trying to sing on the word and by maintaining the "word" position to create a situation of conflict instead of following the way of historical singing by emitting the vowel sound in the word in the desired narrow production.

Staccato exercises are also beneficial to stimulate singing in time. This goes, of course, for all exercises. The voice benefits by keeping correct time at the chosen tempo. Singing in time will reduce the risk of tiring the voice and this goes for singing repertoire as well as exercises.

Staccato notes can help enormously to develop laryngeal agility. Frida Leider, famous Wagner soprano and legendary Isolde, gives us this interesting view of a German singer on *staccato* exercises. She goes to a German teacher, a well-known professor, who helps her greatly in perfecting her vocal technique: "My head resonance being perfect he put me on *staccato* exercises with an open throat. Let it be well understood, however that this is a function that has nothing whatsoever in common with the 'stroke of the glottis.' On this place of *staccato* he let me sing all the coloratura and trills that I could swell and diminish endlessly through means of this placement."[13] The German expression *Glottisschlag* that Leider uses is wrongly translated as "glottal stop" in the English version of her book.[14] According to Julius Stockhausen on page 31 of his *Gesangs Methode*, the *Glottisschlag* is a *coup de glotte*.

The correct English translation of *Glottisschlag* is literally "glottal stroke," commonly "stroke of the glottis." It will be quite clear from the preceding observations that a *staccato* is only obtained by means of a glottal (stroke) attack. Obviously Leider did not realize that she benefited so much by the very *Glottisschlag* that she emphatically denied using.

Husler and Rodd-Marling are outspoken on the production of *staccato* and observe rightly so:

> The staccato is a "Coup de Glotte" (this is also acknowledged by voice-doctors who otherwise reject the stroke of the glottis), consequently it has to be executed by the throat and not, as attempted in many schools, from the diaphragm by abruptly executed contractions of the diaphragm and forced impulses of breath.... At best this leads to a sort of "marcato." The most appropriate place of "attack" for the production of a staccato is the type of attack No. 2.[15]

From Husler and Rodd-Marling's observations on the attack, it seems highly improbable that they themselves knew through personal experience the sensation of a *coup de glotte*, either through a *staccato* or as the true attack of the sound. They agree with the voice doctors that the soft attack is to be preferred whereas the *coup de glotte* should remain the privilege of the Italians possessing a healthy larynx.[16] Experience shows, however, that non–Italian larynxes can easily execute *staccato* notes with adequate instruction. Imitation plays a very important role in singing and so it depends on the voice teacher to demonstrate the *staccato* perfectly and to lead the pupil into following it up. According to Mancini the teacher has to be able to imitate the pupil's mistakes perfectly so that the pupil becomes aware of what is going wrong and can correct himself.[17] For examples of staccato attacks with an extraordinary force and brilliance, listen to Melba singing staccatos at the end of the Sevillana from Massenet's *Don César de Bazan*[18] and the aria "Des larmes de la nuit ... Pâle et blonde" from Thomas's *Hamlet*, full of the most spectacular staccatos.[19]

Portamento

A well-executed *portamento* can become a beautiful asset to the art of the singer who uses it with taste and discretion. Garcia's definition is clear: "The portamento, or slur ... is the gliding of the voice through every possible sound between note and note."[20] If we have learned to sing a true *legato*, then a lovely *portamento* will pose no problems. The trained larynx will execute a slur easily by keeping the grip on the point of control with a continuous pressure. We will notice that in singing certain passages with considerable intervals, a slur is unavoidable and necessary to arrive precisely on the desired note. If we try to sing the interval without a slur, the larynx does not seem to be able to get exactly on the second note, which inevitably will sound slightly flat; moreover, without the use of the slur, the quality of the sound cannot be transferred from the lower to the higher note and vice versa. Practice on the Rossini vocalizes will lead to perfect mastery of the *portamento* in all its possibilities. *Portamento* is also a considerable means of expression. It can hold the tension in a phrase where this is needed and will keep the phrase poetic.

If we practice the octave jumps of the Rossini vocalizes No. 15 (see appendix 2), we will notice how the "jump" really consists of a continuous "pinch" of the glottis by which we will reach the upper note. It is this continuous pinching that enables the singer to slide and obtain a perfect mastery of *portamento*. In descending No. 15 Rossini has us playfully meandering, and if we do this seemingly simple exercise regularly, the results will be amazing. Again, we will notice how much more difficult it is to sing a descending passage than an ascending one. Persistent practice will make our laryngeal muscles supple and pliable. To reverse the procedure, No. 7 is ideal. Always start at a slow speed and do two or three patterns at the most. Make a deliberate slur down with the octave and speed up the exercise gradually.

Our heartstrings are pulled well and truly if we hear the *portamento* in "Casta Diva" at the very end where the singer can descend at leisure from a sustained Bb. For an example of beautiful *portamenti*, listen to Patti singing "Robin Adair," "Ah, non credea mirarti, " or "Ave Maria" and notice the amount of feeling she manages to put into the delicate slurs that she always keeps well adapted to the style of the music.[21] Also in Lieder, the expression can be intensified by a delicate *portamento* in a word and so deepen its meaning considerably. As a rule of thumb for the characteristics of expressive *portamento*, Garcia's advice remains as adequate today as it was 150 years ago: "Energy and grace. Applied to the expression of powerful feelings, it should be strong and rapid; less so for moderate or tender sentiments."[22]

Aspirato

This is a manner of singing whereby every note is started by a slight escape of the breath. The singer utters, "Ha, ha, ha," and this can be very disturbing in runs and coloratura because they become aggressive and jolting instead of smooth and flowing. The effect of starting a vowel commencing word with an H instead of a firm attack on the vowel can distort the meaning of the word to such an extent that it becomes ridiculous. According to Garcia, the use of an H can be legitimate in "a very exceptional way, only used when a note is repeated without a syllable belonging to it."[23] It is easy to execute quick passages by means of a stepping stone in the form of a consonant or an H from note to note, enabling the larynx by the tension releases to jump from note to note, but this will not lead to agility of the larynx.[24]

The Importance of Agility for Historical Singing

The practice of agility is of the greatest importance and this applies to every type of voice, male or female. Particularly, a stiff and unyielding voice will get the greatest benefit of agility exercises, which will bring out the true beauty of this voice. It is nothing more than a display of ignorance in matters of vocal development if teachers consider the practice of agility unnecessary. The vocal mastery thus achieved can be attained

in no other way, and neither can the time of practice be abridged. "Exercises on the Scales cannot be practiced too often and with too much care, they tend to form the voice, to render it flexible, to the purposes which expression and taste may suggest." This advice, given in 1821, is as fresh today as it was 200 years ago.[25] Fifty years earlier Mancini gives exactly the same advice, telling us to sing "solfeggios of agility with the two vowels A and E" to acquire the mastery of "colouring at will any passage with that true expression ... so necessary in every style of singing."[26] Again, the comparison with instrumentalists can illustrate this. Generally the laryngeal muscles begin their apprenticeship in much the same way as the pianist's fingers or the ballet dancer's legs. They have to be trained slowly and regularly into great elasticity. The vocal instrument can only meet the demands of the repertoire if the singer has trained it into the most obedient and pliable servant possible. The singer has to train his true mouth down in his pharynx to emit a continuous thread of sound and maintain this thread, while simultaneously, his articulator performs its job and, by joining the sound, molds it into an amalgam of meaningful interpretation. It is therefore obvious how solid the basis must be of the production of the vowel sounds, "the painting," to combine it with the consonants, "the frame."

We can gather from testimonies of the great historical singers that the practice of agility never stops during a career and even afterwards to preserve the vocal level for teaching purposes. Horncastle advises: "Those singers who have not a natural flexibility of Voice must earnestly cultivate it, by repeated practice of Divisions (or running passages) otherwise in Compositions of a quick and lively character they retard the Time so much as to appear to be singing out of tune."[27] This advice has to be followed and will be found right after regular practice and perseverance. Agility exercises can be a source of joy and good fun, since they imply progress in the vocal mastery of the singer who will notice the improvement well enough.

For good results it is very important to start slowly and easily on little exercises, like the ones Garcia gives,[28] and to breathe often, slowly and regularly, breaking up the patterns of notes in small amounts, and to sing well in time to drill the voice into evenness of tone first and foremost. Any activity that is done rhythmically becomes easier and this applies to singing in particular. Gradually the tiny hammer in the throat will manifest itself and then the exercises can be taken at a higher speed, and the breathing places reduced. Care should be taken always to sing the exercises as beautifully as possible. Never should the speed be such that the individual notes are not clear; they have to be the pearls on the string. Sing the exercises in full voice and refrain from trying to sing softly until the ability of singing even, sustained tones is established. Then switch to the Rossini vocalizes and sing them according to his instructions. Choose a few easy ones like Nos. 2, 3, 9, 12 and 15. Practice them every day for about twenty minutes. Continue this for several weeks and then add some difficult ones like Nos. 4, 5, 10, 11 and 13. Keep the easy ones for warming up, adding some difficult ones. If you sing the vocalize, slowly break it up halfway or more often, and never sing to the end of your breath. The time will come when you can sing them in one breath at great speed. Finish your practice off with *arpeggios* that go over the octave and sing them

lightly over your entire compass. Garcia teaches the pupil that to sing the *arpeggios* well, you have to pass through the notes "with precision and firmness ... neither aspirating, detaching nor slurring but executing the sounds as in playing the organ."[29] Sing the straight *arpeggios* lightly and tighten your throat a little when you execute them.[30] Vocal ornaments or preparation for them, like turns (No. 6), *acciaccaturas* (*solfeggi*), *mordents* (Nos. 5 and 10), and trills (No. 11) are included in the Rossini vocalizes.

The Trill

In historical singing the trill was the visiting card of the great singers. Each of them possessed a special ability to fascinate their audience giving them a real "thrill." When they performed their famous trills, time literally stood still because the conductor just waited till the diva chose to round off her acrobatic feat and the audience held their breath.

The genuine trill or shake is a moment of suspense building up a tension that is anticipated and then resolved. It is this moment and the anticipation of its relief that we enjoy and that the singer can stretch out into eternity as did the singers of old. Tetrazzini was famous for her long trill in *La Traviata* still trilling away when she gathered up the train of her dress and swept off the stage. Melba displayed her special "crescendo trill" in the mad scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor*. "It began pianissimo. It grew steadily stronger and stronger, more and more intense, and at last ... that vast auditorium which is the Metropolitan Opera House of New York, just vibrated with its wonderful fortissimo of crystalline purity. What a thing to have heard!"[31] How much the trill meant to the historical singers can be gathered from the memoirs of Lillie de Hegermann-Lindencrone. She also described in the visit mentioned above how Jenny Lind suddenly asked her, "Make a trill for me." Lillie looked around for a piano but did not see one and so trilled away as best she could, earning a "Very good" from Jenny. Then Jenny trilled for her and explained that she made her trill by accentuating the upper note. Now came the demand for Lillie to try it that way; she tried it and managed, pointing out that it was difficult for someone who had not learned it that way. Lillie took her leave and told us how she was treated to this extraordinary demonstration: "I left her still standing on the veranda in her white brocade, and as I walked off she made the trill as an adieu." [32] It must have been quite an eventful visit for Lillie who was herself quite proficient in the art of the trill, so much so that she duelled with a nightingale singing his heart out in her garden to attract his mate: "I try hard ... to imitate his song, especially the trill and the long sad note."[33] The composer Auber wrote a cadenza for her to the *Nightingale* of Alabieff, one of the most popular songs of the time.[34] We have recordings of the song by Boronat [35] and Nezhdanova[36] with beautiful trills.

According to Garcia, it is generally presumed that a trill is a gift of nature and that people who have not got it have to go without. Nothing could be further from the truth, he maintains, and illustrates his opinion with Pasta who, he tells us, initially had

a hard and veiled voice. "In spite of the most obstinate study she could not do a trill.... Ascending scales presented an insurmountable difficulty for her; but not so the trill of which she finally managed to acquire the mechanism."[37] After a brilliant career of ten years Pasta demonstrated the most wonderful trill in *Tancredi*. "The trill is only a regular oscillation up and down and *vice versa*, of the larynx. That convulsive oscillation originates in the pharynx by an oscillation of the muscles of that organ."[38] Garcia mentions the nightingales as a striking example of the phenomenon of the trill. He strongly rejects the practice of the trill by the movement of two notes but tells his pupils "to find the trill by the spontaneous shaking of the throat." [39] His advice for beginners is to practice first low in the voice from B below middle C to the octave above as the contraction of the instrument is less in this area than on the higher notes. "As soon as the movement of the trill is ample and easy, one should immediately regulate its size."[40] We are treated to as many as eight variations of the major and minor trill, all clearly described. The faulty production of a trill usually has its origin in its uneven movement. The vocalized trill is not a trill but results in a so-called goat's trill, *trillo di caprino or trillo cavalino*."[41]

If we listen to Nezhdanova in Taubert's "The Bird in the Forest," we can hear a really lovely trill suitable to the bird, particularly when she ends the song by a trill ascending in pitch. Her rendering of Alabieff's "Nightingale" is, of course, the perfect illustration of Garcia's dictum above that the nightingale is the ideal model for the trill.[42] Notice also how Nezhdanova takes the octave jumps in this song; you can hear how she pinches the sound and keeps it as narrow as possible. This can be an illustration to the Rossini No. 15.

The Appogiatura

The use of the *appoggiatura* is both a means of expression by accentuation and a means to protect the voice from harm inflicted upon it through critical spots where words and music are in conflict. It is not just an ornament in music but it has a technical foundation and if it is omitted, bad singing is the result. The descending *appoggiatura* must be applied whether the composer writes it or not because here the conditions of music and words are at odds. "The appoggiature, as their Italian name implies, are notes on which the voice leans."[43] This explanation can be taken literally for we know now that the voice is a gliding instrument emitting a continuous thread of sound and this sound has its own particular demands in the realm of mechanics.

The proper accent of the penultimate syllable in a word without the use of a descending *appoggiatura* demands a mechanical adjustment of the instrument that it cannot provide without inflicting harm on its healthy functioning. To give an accent on the syllable we need an increase of air pressure that makes the verbal accent, whereas simultaneously the descending pitch necessitates a decrease. It means that if the singer wants to give the penultimate syllable the full accent, he will first have to go slightly under the note, for only the increased pressure that is needed for the accentuation will

make him arrive at the required pitch. This act cannot be performed without a tiny, but distinctive slur. The *appoggiatura* will safeguard the voice from this inartistic and harmful effect. The ascending *appoggiatura* protects the singer from falling into the trap of speech technique instead of using singing technique. To have to resort to speech technique higher in the voice will put a heavy strain on the larynx. The gradual abandonment of the use of *appoggiatura* has evolved in combination with the development of expiratory singing technique methods as well as following the fashion of "sobriety" of interpretation. The old masters knew that the demands of singing in connection with text had to be met in such a way that the health of the singing voice had to have precedence while doing the text as much justice as possible by the device of an *appoggiatura.* They therefore inserted the *appoggiatura* and solved a possible conflict between music and text with an elegant and significant compromise.

The Vibrato

The voices of the historical singers all possessed their own individual *vibrato*, consisting of a regular, natural pulse that gave the voice character and expression. It is the same kind that Kreisler produced on his violin: light and quick. We can listen to the historical *vibrato* voices on the many recordings available and hear for ourselves that this pleasant *vibrato* is not the norm anymore. It has developed in two opposite directions: the artificially straight sound of ancient music singers and the exaggerated heavy *vibrato* popularly called the wobble of opera and song performers. Both kinds of singers use the technique of pushing down on the diaphragm that produces expiratory singing. Sopranos who perform in early music ensembles often sing with a squeezed voice, imitating the high voice production of a counter tenor, resulting in a fluty, expressionless sort of voice. The effect of this kind of voice production is a sound that is stripped of its human elements: heart and soul. If we look at the paintings of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, we are struck by the brilliance of the colors, the richness of the clothes and their luscious draperies. It seems improbable that the music of those days should be rendered without the pulse of *vibrato*, robbing it completely of expression.

A downward thrust of the diaphragm coupled with forward production can result in a perverse *vibrato* or wobble. The larynx is submitted to irregular oscillations by the windpipe that comes into an uncontrollable oscillation because the singer sings in the direction of the outward-going sound. The breath is not stopped by the false cords so the arytenoid cartilages cannot come together perfectly; therefore the ensuing sound is too thick, requiring an ever increasing impulse of breath which results in an oscillation of the instrument that cannot resist the pressure anymore. This vicious circle leads to a tremolo or a wobble. Consistent pushing down on the diaphragm can lead to the oscillation of this muscle and cause a tremolo. To produce a steady tone with a natural *vibrato*, the singer has to sing downwards into the concentration of sound against the weight of air pressure caused by the diaphragm striving upwards. The larynx is held

firmly against the pressure and cannot come into an uncontrollable oscillation. This is the secret of the steadiness and evenness of tone of the historical singers.

In historical singing, as documented on the recordings, we can follow some singers through a span of many years—as, for instance, Nezhdanova, over 34 years—and observe that the *vibrato* stays the same throughout this long period of performing. She sings the "Brindisi" at 33 years of age and the duet "Parigi, o cara," both from *La Traviata*, at 66 on consecutive tracks of one of her CDs.[44] Her *vibrato* is still natural and regular, her voice well anchored, her breath support generous, and her performance full of passion and expression suited to the music. Sembrich sings with a wonderful quick and even *vibrato* as does Melba. Battistini sings with a lovely fast *vibrato*, one consistently natural and regular and that stays over the years. He sings effortlessly, with a mellow and flexible baritone that does not have a trace of heaviness or darkness; his vowels are bright and ringing and his enunciation is clear. Today there is no baritone who can match his natural *vibrato*. The method of the present day does not seem to evoke that natural *vibrato* in the voice; instead it produces a heavier, darker sound that is not as flexible.

The *vibrato* of the historical singers is never intrusive or disturbing. It brings the voice to life, adding an invigorating essential quality. This kind of *vibrato* is absolutely individual and renders the voice truly human. In fact, the singer writes his own biography with it, for it manifests itself of its own accord and not through the will of the singer. The real *vibrato*, therefore, is a most precious quality of the voice and should be protected from forcing of any kind.

The Art of Swelling and Diminishing the Sound

> At last, a soft and solemn breathing sound,
> Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
> And stole upon the air, that even silence
> Was took, ere she was ware, and wished she might
> Deny her nature, and be never more
> Still, to be displac'd...
>
> Milton, *Comus*[45]

The ability to make a beautiful *crescendo* and *decrescendo* lifts singing into the realms of great art. The Old Italian School possessed the key to the mastery of this asset, the *messa di voce* in singing that is very important and easily acquired, according to Nathan: "on it depends the principal art of singing, for it sweetens, enriches, and gives that delicious roundness and fullness to the tone, so desirable for every branch of vocal science. It is this swell and dying of the voice, which makes music respond to the various passions, and passes the feeling of one mind to another."[46]

To inspire his readers Nathan illustrates his point with a choice of poems by Milton, Shakespeare, Dante and others, some quoted here, that tell us repeatedly of celestial music uplifting our senses. He explains that monotonous tones weary our mind.

Tosi tells us "a beautiful *messa di voce* from a singer that uses it sparingly, and only on the open vowels, can never fail of having an exquisite effect."[47] He scolds the contemporary singers who do not like to use it: "It is, however, a manifest injury they do to the nightingale, who was the origin of it and the only thing which the voice can well imitate."[48]

How can we swell the sound? If we try to swell the sound by the force of outward flowing breath the quality of the sound will suffer and become woolly. A real *messa di voce* can only be produced when the larynx leads the breath. It means to tighten the grip on the point of pressure, thereby causing a firmer approximation of the glottal lips to which action the diaphragm will respond by pushing steadily upwards. As the swell increases, the squeeze of the chest becomes firmer. Decreasing the swell implies diminishing the pressure gradually while keeping the larynx firm. The singer must direct his will downwards into the concentration of sound and never upwards away from it. Remember the image of the funnel; the singer keeps a tight grip on the narrow end and tightening that grip increases the sound that will radiate into the wide end of the funnel. At first it might be necessary to divide the exercise of swelling and diminishing the sound into two separate exercises — one from soft to loud and the other from loud to soft — until the whole exercise can be executed easily in one breath. The exercise itself is extremely beneficial to consolidate the grip on the point of control. For encouragement and inspiration in practicing, we can only agree with Nathan's choice from the poem "*Rome*" by an unnamed poet:

Soft as evening dews
Sinks in the heart, and all the soul subdues:
Sweet as Aeolian sounds, that gently rise,
As blows the fragrant breeze, or languid dies;
Now tremulously sweet the zephyr's wing
Touches with tones of heav'n the trembling string;
Now gradual swells, as on the distant shore,
At crimson eve, the crested billows roar.[49]

Repeated reading of these strong images will not fail to benefit your efforts during practice. They will certainly help to clear your mind by chasing away the everyday worries that might disturb your concentration.

It is an interesting phenomenon that old masters (except Mancini) like Tosi, Nathan, Salomon, Horncastle, Garcia Sr., the Singer's Assistant, Cinti-Damoreau, Duprez, Rossini, and without exception, singers themselves, some of them very celebrated, too, start their instructions for vocal development with the exercise of the *messa di voce*. They obviously considered the study beneficial to develop the voice and supposedly took it for granted that their pupils possessed a good attack and posture that are the main conditions for its successful execution. Rossini, who was a great singer and an authority on good singing, put the exercise at the beginning of his *gorgheggi*, his vocalizes, as you can see in the appendix. Other old masters like Garcia Jr., Concone, Lablache, Delle Sedie, Faure and Schmitt follow the path of exercising the voice first on small note sequences of three, four and five notes before practice of the *messa di voce*

is allowed. Marchesi warns: "The messa di voce should not be practised until the voice has acquired a certain degree of suppleness and flexibility, and should never be attempted by beginners."[50]

The Nightmare of the Nightingale

To round off this exposition on the movement and agility of the historical voice, we can by now estimate the early 18th-century castrato Filippo Balatri's mastery of his art, when he tells us in his witty manner that he could easily sing the melancholy scales of the nightingale, a rare skill of the throat that not many people possess, either because their voice lacks sweetness or because of the nature of their larynx: "In London I used to have a nightingale in my room and I fell so passionately in love with its singing that I started, at first only for fun, to study its phrases until one day I could really imitate them with my voice."[51]

Balatri composes his own aria of the nightingale and this aria earns such a success that it makes him famous and he can hardly meet the demands for performance:

> It was the nightingale aria, that nearly killed me in Venice, because I had to sing it continuously for a good seven weeks from morning till night. On the canals of Venice you could not hear the stroke of an oar that was not accompanied by a bit of nightingale, no lady singer was prepared to sign a contract with the impresario of the opera without a definite promise of a nightingale [aria] and at last the fishmongers, the cobblers, the greengrocers and the bag makers went about in the streets with a nightingale in their mouths.[52]

Balatri flees to Bologna where the hysteria only increases. It seemed to him that in the end he was not good for anything but singing the nightingale aria. The great Farinelli[53] was obliged to sing Giacomelli's nightingale aria every night for nine years at the Spanish court to keep the king from serious depression.

The singing of the 18th century was dominated by the image of the nightingale and its popularity lasted right through to the end of the 19th century up to the time of the verismo style that drove the bird away. The hysteria for the nightingale might be over but the attainment of flexibility remains as important an aspect of singing now as it did then.

Practical Hints

If you wish to sing in the historical manner you have to submit to the rules of practice that the old masters gave. Lamperti Sr. sums them up in a few sentences:

> *Agility should be studied slowly*. The exercises should be executed so that the intervals are clearly distinguishable. The breath should be held steady in the passage from one note to the other, and the notes should be produced clearly and with a shock of the *Glottis*. By this means the pupil will acquire the power of taking the exact note without sliding up to it, a fault which a beginner is very likely to confound with singing *Legato*.[54]

Lamperti Sr. adds a word of warning that the acquisition of agility depends first and foremost on the mastery of the basic rules of singing that he just mentioned: steady breath (squeeze of the chest) and attack of the notes with a *coup de glotte*. This instruction completely agrees with the instructions of the old masters mentioned above and contributes to inspiring us with confidence in the method of teaching they all followed unanimously, leading to the results in singing that we can witness on the recordings.

You will soon find that regular practice with your newly found voice is very satisfying. You will learn to love the voice that nature bestowed on you. This is much more important than you might think. Many people do not feel at home with their own voice; they do not seem to identify with it either through upbringing or through various complexes. On top of that comes the desire to sing after a certain idol or model. All these conscious and unconscious desires and handicaps prevent us from identifying with our own voice. Our true voice for singing is analogous to Sleeping Beauty. As soon as we attack her she rouses herself and all we have to do is clear away all the thorny roses. We have seen before that the historical singing voice is a voice people generally do not know they possess. Remember that there should be no preconceived notion of the vocal sound you are about to produce. Let it be a complete surprise. The confrontation with your own true voice can have a very strong effect in giving you confidence and a new awareness of yourself. Now that you have found your voice through a good attack and supported by the right posture that forms the condition for good breathing, you are about to enter upon a new phase in developing it through regular practice as recommended by Garcia Sr.: "Those who wish to sing well should not practice without knowing how to practice. It is only by learning the secret of practicing well that there is any possibility of learning to sing well."[55] Practicing well is a matter of experience but there are general rules that might help. Always practice without the danger of being overheard by family or friends. You need the freedom to repeat scales again and again. What's more, you need the freedom to make mistakes and utter what you might consider ugly sounds. Plan your hours of practice regularly at a fixed time before meals, never after. Remember that two half-hours a day are more economical than several hours once a week. Regular practice will show good results already after a spell of three months.

Practice with a hand mirror in the following way: look at yourself and smile so that you have the right mouth position to attack on the "ah." Put the mirror down and smile again. Feel the mouth position and now look in the mirror to check it. Repeat this every time you begin your practice until you can feel the mouth position. Check your face in the mirror at the end of the scale you sing. The scale will be a lot easier if you keep the smiling mouth position. You will get used to the bright and happy sound of your voice on the vowel "ah." A hand mirror is to be preferred to a wall mirror in this stage because that might render your efforts stiff. Practice slowly and strictly in the beat, for this will benefit progress enormously. Practice as long as you feel fresh and concentrated; this will vary from voice to voice. A big voice that is stiff and heavy takes longer to loosen up than a light and more pliable one. Regularity of practice is the key to progress. Remember that you are training a set of muscles.

7

The Words in Singing

In historical singing the aspiring singer had to submit to an extensive training to achieve total mastery of his voice, rendering it pliable and agile by exercising it on the main vowels before he was allowed to sing the words of an aria or song. The current question of whether song is an extension of speech or vice versa did not arise until the method of vocal emission changed into a forward production of the sound. The old masters would certainly never have been in doubt as to the answer for they knew that singing is a law in itself and therefore gave precedence to the development of perfect vocal sound before they allowed words to be introduced in the tuition. They demanded, however, that the pronunciation of the singer's words should be clear and it was precisely for this reason that they observed patience in the development and perfection of the sound. Garcia Sr., the teacher of Madame Merlin, never allowed his pupils "to sing vocal compositions with words"[1] during the time of tuition. He agrees with Tosi's advice: "Next, let him study on the three open vowels, particularly on the first ["ah"], but not always upon the same, as is practised nowadays — in order that from this frequent exercise he may not confound one with the other and that, from hence, he may the easier come to the words."[2] If the vowels are clear then the words will not only be understandable but they will convey the intentions of the composer, and the articulation of the consonants will be easy to execute adequately giving the words their final shape. The vowels are the vehicle for the musical phrasing of the singer.

The old masters had defined the ends they wanted to obtain, expressive and musical performance of vocal repertoire, and accordingly knew how to attain these. Words can be uttered clearly by the singer who sings in the historical manner, because the four mechanisms that together form the human instrument function independently and simultaneously. It might be of use to repeat what we have seen in the previous chapters: there is a basic vocal sound through the simultaneous functioning of the vibrator, the air compressor and the resonator. The articulator supplies this vocal sound with the color and spice of the vowels and consonants for the formation of the words. The four mechanisms that function independently fuse into a harmonious entity, producing words in singing imbued with various timbres and shades, lifting the words on a different level and intensifying their meaning by the musical sound with which they are saturated.

The Effect of Vowel Emission with Purity or Distortion

The historical singers acquired the freedom to sing with complete abandon and they could even extend this abandon to the heavy Wagner roles that take their toll on every singer who does not follow the abovementioned rules of nature in singing. Wagner himself wanted his works to be sung in the Italian manner and not barked out, which was the custom in Germany. A method of singing that involves forward production of the sound destroys the freedom of the articulator because the sound is pushed into the front of the face, the mask, and it has to be kept there through the tension of the facial muscles. The articulator is burdened with overwork through forced participation in the sound-generating process and so loses its freedom. The result is that the vowels are distorted because the sound is forced into a place of resonance where it normally would not come to rest or focus, implying also a mouth position that is unfavorable for good articulation. Vowel distortion renders the word unintelligible and it cannot be remedied by over-pronouncing the consonants. The Old Italian School prescribed perfection of sound in the vowels and this perfection of sound implied the right mouth, lips and tongue position for easy articulation of the consonants. The purity of the vowels in the words enables the singer to convey any amount of expression by means of the musical phrasing supplied by the composer.

Pure Vowels in the Words of Historical Singing

To illustrate the enunciation of pure vowels in the words we can take a look at a very famous "Ave Maria," the Bach-Gounod, that was originally composed for violin and not for the voice. Interesting that it should be a composition for violin performed by the human voice that attained such popularity. The performances of historical singers like Patti, Albani, Melba, Boronat and Burzio show us clearly how eloquent words can become through the right vowel shades. It is also quite evident that the pure vowels give a much greater expressiveness to the words, conveying the genuine religious fervor they require. The vowels are the vehicle of sound and they enable the words to travel in the musical phrasing (of the violin). The intensity and magic of the invocation "Ave Maria" reaches believers and non-believers alike. The vowels are in the bright timbre, suited to the purity of the young virgin. The historical singers who have this bright timbre at their disposal can give these words wings, transmitting the genuine appeal of the imploring sinner. The present-day technique of singing that is restricted to the dark and sombre timbre leaves the singer no such choice of expression.

Historical Speech and Present-Day Speech with Their Effects on Singing

If we listen to the manner of public speaking of a hundred years ago, we notice that the speakers elongate the vowels and utter crisp and brilliant consonants, thereby

obtaining a very clear utterance of the words. They also are masters in the phrasing and melodious aspect of their speaking. Through careful accents combined with ascending and descending in pitch, they could modify their utterance exactly how they desired. They could give certain words a whiplash to intensify their meaning, whereas they could soften other words to render them contemplative. They could literally play on the emotions of their listeners by making their speech musical, reaching the heart and soul of the audience. Listen to the speech of the French actor and director of various theatres, Firmin Gémier, in 1912, introducing the recordings that were going to be sealed in urns to be opened one hundred years later. We are not only astonished noticing the difference in singing technique of the recorded historical singers, the "historical" speaking technique strikes us with the same astonishment.[3] Sixty years later the speaking technique in France is still excellent when we listen to the orator André Malraux. His manner of speaking is still definitely "historical."[4] A stunning example of someone who, suffering from a serious speech defect, overcame this by following Demosthenes' cure of chewing pebbles is Sir Winston Churchill. His voice rings out with urgency, fortifying English morale in wartime (1940–1945) and he reads lines of poetry like a born actor.[5]

The evolution of singing into the forward production of the voice had its effect on speech which suffered simultaneously. The consonants were used as a springboard to obtain voice production and this applied to singing as well as speaking. Speech has become a prosaic utterance, losing the musical aspect and melodious phrasing of days gone by; for example, listen to news readers who deliver their message in a monotone. Actors nowadays do not seem to acquire the mastery of the voices of their predecessors anymore and we have to go back some 60 years to witness the musical speech of Richard Burton or Sir Lawrence Olivier in their filmed legacy. In the days of historical singing people who suffered from throat trouble caused by deficient speech habits could be cured by the historical method. Lunn was famous as a singing pedagogue who could also cure "clergyman's throat" as can be seen from the testimonies of grateful pupils.[6]

The circle was closed when singing came to be considered as an extension of speech and the words took pre-eminence in vocal repertoire. The transformation of words by the musical element was a thing of the past. The emphasis of the historical method on vocal mastery acquired by years of training in agility was overruled by the simple method of forward production of the voice and the consonantal aspect of the word received exaggerated attention. This has led to the common practice of spitting out the end consonants, elongating the beginning labials, and releasing explosives with the sound of a shotgun, thereby eliminating the musical content of the vowels. The words are stripped of their possible poetic meaning through the absence of pure vowel emission. It is also impossible to convey true feeling in the words for the barrier of mannerisms prevents real communication.

Recited poetry possessing its own rhythm is much more variable and freer in rhythm than musical rhythm. The skilled singer will always follow the musical rhythm of the composer, whereas the unskilled singer might well be tempted to drop into speech rhythm. It follows, therefore, that we have to offer the composer our instrument tuned

in such a way that we can do justice to his musical ideas. We have to let the composer play on our instrument and trust him to color our words in the way he wishes. Ideally the composer wrote for voices he knew and cut his compositions to size. We have to be well prepared vocally to do a piece justice and it is of no use to us whether we understand the verbal contents if we cannot meet the composer's musical demands. It is always an advantage to sing repertoire in the original language, for the composer will have written the notes to match the color of the vowels, determining the atmosphere of the piece. A translated text gives the singer the freedom to change the words for more suitable ones if he so wishes, as we have already read in the observation of Jacques Urlus on vowel exchange for singing purposes.

The Pronunciation of Words in Historical Singing

It is no exaggeration to say that the singer has to learn a new way of articulation if he wishes to sing in the historical manner. This articulation is different from ordinary speech because it has to be completely independent of the voice-producing mechanisms. It means that any "mouthing" of the words must be avoided, since this involves movements of the jaw that can interfere with the free movement of the larynx. Remember what Garcia said: "The real mouth of the singer ought to be considered the pharynx." "It is in the pharynx that is found the causation of *timbres*. The facial mouth is but a door through which the sound passes."[7] We have to acquire a manner of diction in singing that does not disturb the unbroken legato sound but fortifies it through correct and crisp articulation of the consonants coupled with the pure emission of vowels by our mouth position and vowel-molding apparatus, the pharynx. All the vowels are formed in the pharynx, where the voice is made, and they are perfected by the mouth position and formation of the lips and tongue. Mancini has described clearly how easily the smiling mouth can reach all the positions for the five main vowels. Because the historical vocal sound has its origin on the point of pressure just above the breastbone, and is continued in an unbroken legato, the organs of articulation are completely free to do their job. The singer has to learn "to disassociate his consonantal gestures from the vowel-articulative process."[8]

The intoning exercise of Garcia is excellent to acquire the ability to join words to music.[9] The words and syllables must be joined together by the uninterrupted vowel-articulative process that should not be broken up by the articulation of the consonants. These can be softened to allow the singer to maintain the unbroken legato obtained by keeping the point of control in a steady grip. In this stage it can be of help to "think" not only the vowel but also the whole word on the top of the windpipe or just above the breastbone. This mentally directed instruction has two positive reactions: the singer will be corrected in his wanting to "mouth" the words and the tendency to use the consonants as a springboard is avoided. Steadiness of tone is the primary object of the singer when he wishes to achieve good pronunciation.

In the beginning of singing on the words, it is a great help to start each line of a

song with a firm attack on the vowel "ah" to establish the right sound production, implying steadiness of tone. If the consonant of the first word is then articulated crisply and quickly, the sound will not be broken up. The vowel must beautify the word and it is the sound in the word that gives it magic. Here again a mental image may help. In singing, we have to get out of the word and ride on the vowel, or rather we have to get out of the word to get truly into it. If we are imprisoned by the word caused by keeping the mouth position of the spoken word, our vowel will not be pure and free and consequently unable to pour its magic into the word. To feel the vowel sound in the words we have to sing, it is a good preparation to sing the phrase purely on the given vowels like a vocalize. This means to articulate clearly every vowel in the words of the phrase. In this way the unbroken legato is established first and foremost and we feel the quality of sound in every vowel needed to do justice to the words. By singing the phrase first on the vowels and then with the words, we will experience where the quality of vowel sound in the word does not meet the quality of the vowel sound from our previous vocalising of the phrase. Through this comparison we can improve our performance because we can then bring the vowels up to standard in the words, if a certain word did not have the right sound. This procedure will also keep us from the inclination to "mouth" certain words. Through vocalising on the vowels we will get a clear picture of the colors the words can assume if we practice with piano accompaniment supplying us with the harmonies the composer created.

Pauline Viardot, who in Berlin sang the role of Valentine in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, describes having to sing in German as a *tour de force* not because she does not master the language perfectly but because the words graze her throat "as so many brambles over which the voice tries to pave itself a way. First you have to memorize the text in your head, then in your tongue, then in your voice, it is an arduous task in comparison to a piece in Italian that is soft as a spoonful of oil on a burn."[10] Lamperti warns students "against too much *Lied*-singing at first, the range being too limited and the numerous tone-repetitions calculated to tire the voice; coloratura sopranos, in particular, should take this warning to heart."[11] Lamperti's warning carries more weight when we realize that he worked as a singing teacher in Dresden for many years, so he was confronted with the problems of singing in German. It is the most severe test of the singer's ability to sing German words in a musical and poetical way, singing on the vowels without over-pronouncing the consonants.

Singers like Kirsten Flagstad and Richard Tauber pass this test with flying colors. Flagstad is not even German and yet her mastery of pure vowels and softened but clear consonants form the words clearer than any native-born soprano. Her way to learn a new song (see below) is an illustration and logical extension of the advice of the old masters mentioned above.[12] Tauber's honeyed, flowing legato seems unhindered by obstacles like consonant clusters. His steadiness of tone lets him sail through the phrases. This underlines once again the importance of the independent functioning of the vibrator and the articulator. It is this independent functioning that enables Flagstad and Tauber to bewitch us with their seemingly effortless musical phrasing of the word and note passages. The words are truly wedded to the music and the spontaneous overall

impression is that the music is born of the words and the words of the music. In this way we do not just hear and understand the words with our ears, we feel the words with our heart.

The Priority of the Musical Phrase in the Combination of Words and Music

As mentioned above, it is an unconscious tendency of the beginner to keep the mouth position of the spoken word while singing. To remedy this habit, the process of learning a new song must be started with its musical phrases. The beautiful and clear pronunciation of the words that singles out Flagstad is illustrated in her autobiography, where she gives a clear answer to the question of how she learns a new song. She tells us that the process is "quite simple and far from mysterious" and begins with repeatedly playing the song on the piano and singing it through. "Next, I would let the phrases filter through my mind till they haunted me day and night, the musical phrases, that is, with fragments of text." This is continued until she wonders: "Now what was that word that went with those notes?" That was the moment when Flagstad would write down the words in a little notebook that she always carried with her. She learned the song easily, reading through the text repeatedly. "When I no longer had to think of the text, when, I suppose, the words and the notes had become one thing in my mind, or wherever it is that a song stays, then I knew I had it. And once I had it, it was mine forever."[13]

Flagstad entered the song through the music and saturated herself with the phrases before she started thinking of the words. This means that she gave the composer precedence and she certainly achieved the highest level of perfection in her performances of opera and song. She understood intuitively that the task of the singer consists of acquiring a phrasing that is essentially musical in combining words with music. It is excellent practice to write down the words from the sheet music for then we keep the musical phrase in which the words are embedded in our mind in combination with the words. Flagstad's approach also underlines the importance of the fact that speech rhythm is essentially different from musical rhythm. As a singer she rightly begins with the music before concentrating on the words. In this way she enters in the atmosphere of the song, thereby acquiring a verbal rendition that is acutely described by Hahn in saying that the meaning of a word comes across to the hearer just a split second in advance of the music: "when the music, itself saturated with this meaning, touches the mind in its turn, completing, reinforcing, clarifying by musical means the overall significance of that word. The music will sometimes adjust, reduce or amplify the basic meaning of a word, adding connotations the word lacked in itself."[14] Grillparzer might well have addressed the following poem entitled *Einer Sängerin* ("To a singer") to Flagstad:

We say that poets sing;
If so the poet must be *you*, not *I*,

For when your tones are sounding
Song and speech together lie.[15]

Verbal Rhythm Differs from Musical Rhythm

The composer has made the conversion of the verbal rhythm into musical rhythm. Therefore, the words in the musical phrase can have different syllabic accents from the words in the printed poem. "To match syllabic values with note values is the task of the composer and not of the singer; the singer's job is to sing the phrases as the composer wrote them."[16] Composers are known to let the music have precedence over the words. They have been scolded for doing so. A well-known example is the setting of the Goethe poem "Mignon" by Liszt. He placed the word *du* on the first beat of the bar so that the phrase became "Kennst ***du*** das Land" instead of "Kennst du das ***Land***" and he repeated the emphasis in the second line. German specialists attacked him heavily for this trespass, emphatically ignoring the fact that Schubert and Schumann also took liberties in their songs, repeating words and even complete lines to such an extent that Goethe was very much averse to his poems being used for songs, fearing that the words would be forced to yield to the music. Liszt later revised the beginning of *Mignon*, keeping the poem's verbal rhythm, and interestingly the later version is definitely the inferior one from a musical aspect. "A comparison between the two versions brings us to the rub of the matter. The revision may be more respectful of Goethe's verbal rhythms, but it is by no means superior, musically speaking, to the first version. It is now the words which are bending music to their will."[17]

Word Painting

There is no need in historical singing for the singer to apply his own arbitrary word painting; the composer either has already done that for him using certain harmonies or he will give specific indications of the mood he wishes the singer to convey. "Liszt often asked his singers to 'color' their voices where the poem required it. Scattered through his manuscripts are such unusual imperatives as *fast gesprochen* (almost spoken), *mit halber Stimme* (with half voice), *geheimnisvoll* (mysterious), *phlegmatisch* (dull or heavy), and *hinträumend* (daydreaming)."[18] These shades of color, however can only emerge if the singer can sing the phrase in the historical legato manner with the bright and dark timbre at his disposal. The vowels will bring the various colors into the voice by their different character. The ability to sing the melodic phrase with a continuous vocal sound belongs to the realm of a consciously performed physical act. Simultaneously but independently, the singer articulates the words containing the various vowel shades. He imposes the words and his mental conceptions of them on the music. By joining words and music in this manner, the singer enters the realm of creation, for the result of a perfect fusion of the words and music will be transmitted to

the audience as an act of spontaneous creation. Music is the language of the heart and if we sing with heart and soul, our words will come to life in the appropriate colors and enter the hearts of our listeners. Deryck Cooke tells us that: "Music is, in fact, 'extra-musical' in the sense that poetry is 'extra-verbal,' since notes, like words, have emotional connotations; it is ... the supreme expression of universal emotions, in an entirely personal way, by the great composers."[19]

The poet tells us his view on the two Muses in the little poem entitled "*Poesie und Musik*"

From day and night He who is Lord
of all that lives creates the world,
Poetry is *day* in beauty bright,
Music the universe's prophet, *night*.
Franz Grillparzer[20]

Practical Hints

As soon as words are introduced into singing, it is important to realize that we have to perform our task as a singer. We have to make the melody as beautiful as we possibly can. If our understanding of the poem is not clear from the start it will gradually reveal itself through the music. After all, it is the composer who gives us his interpretation. Do not separate the words from the music in learning the words by heart. Just sing them silently in the process.

Practice your singing with full voice in front of a mirror to check the tendency of "mouthing" or over-pronouncing the words. Look at yourself with the eyes of the audience. Does your facial expression match the words? If you are not familiar with the language you have to sing, it is advisable to double-check the printed words of your sheet music. There can be a printing error, changing the meaning of the word you have to sing. Always try to get the help of a native speaker to instruct you to perfect your pronunciation. For optimal results you must "sing the song" rather than "speak the words" to your instructor. The instruction on the correct pronunciation will be much more beneficial, since it is your singing of the foreign language that has to be understandable. Again it is the vowels that characterize the foreign language that you have to sing, so get them right first.

8

Interpretation

If we listen to the historical singers, we get the impression that they were individual and genuine in the interpretation of the work they performed. In those days there were no recordings or films like we have today. The singers had to create their own performance and that meant long and arduous work of years. Most of the great singers also designed their own costumes and they took lessons in drama and stage deportment from the famous actors of the day.

We get a lively impression of a 19th-century singer's career and its hardships in the biography of Lilian Nordica, who traveled with her mother to France and Italy to study singing before starting her great career.[1] Further back, the extraordinary and colorful story of the adventurous early 18th-century career of the castrato Filippo Balatri as told by himself holds us fascinated.[2] It is to be hoped that this will soon be made available in an English translation.

The historical singers are able to communicate the contents of the repertoire to us in an urgent manner. Very often they were first performers of newly composed music and the composer had cooperated with them or written expressly for their voices. They let themselves be guided by the composer and with their singing technique they could give the composer every opportunity to put his ideals into reality.

Lilli Lehmann shares the thrilling and legendary performances of the first Wagner *Ring* with us giving us a clear insight in the hurdles that the singers have to take with this utterly new and exciting music. She tells us that even in their free time the singers attended all the rehearsals to see, hear and learn.

> Music and text both filled us with ecstasy at the same time puzzling us, until one finally understood the whole intricate web. One understood straightaway when Wagner demonstrated a scene. That which many singers could not understand, could neither sing nor act, they grasped quickly through Wagner's personal corrections....The more we understood, the greater became the attraction; one lived only in exaltation, one dissolved in enthusiasm towards the creation.[3]

If the singer, however, is not so fortunate to be guided by the composer himself, he need not despair; the attainment of a genuine manner of interpretation of the repertoire is within his reach with closer observation and study, as will be shown.

The Connection of Interpretation and Creation

The following observation underlines the abovementioned individual approach of the historical singers, saying that a genuine interpretation is really an act of creation. This can be clearly seen in the interpretation of original repertoire by great artists.

> For every great artist interprets the work according to his own personality. The manner in which he understands the work, and the kind of interpretation he considers most suitable to it, spring from a necessity rooted in his own nature.... It is therefore, of great importance in our judgement of an artist to determine whether his interpretation is based on mere external imitation or on his own understanding of the work.[4]

Chopin agrees from the point of the composer, saying "that a composer must write his music in such a way that out of a hundred people playing it everyone may be right in his own interpretation without diminishing or spoiling the composer's idea."[5]

Verdi, however, is very much opposed to the singer's own creativity and tells us clearly what he expects of performers of his music.

> When singers take it upon themselves to *create* (as the French still say) their parts, nonsense and confusion result. No! I want only one creator, and will rest content when performance is *just simply and exactly as the music is written*. The mischief is that music is never rendered as written. For my part, I have never found the "effects not imagined by the composer" that we often read about in the papers. I do not admit the right of singers, or conductors, who create, because that is a principle which leads to the bottomless pit.[6]

Verdi might well be referring to Toscanini when he says: "It is indispensable to know the composer's intentions. No success is possible, whatever the music, without intelligent, aye, *devoted rendition*."[7] Fortunately we can witness a sample of "devoted rendition" of one of Verdi's great operas watching the DVD of the concert performance of *Aida* with Toscanini conducting. Verdi himself took the greatest pains to rehearse and instruct the first performers of his operas, as we can read in the testimonies of Marianna Barbieri Nini, the first Lady Macbeth. She mentions that it took her three months to study the sleepwalking scene. "I tried to imitate those people who talk in their sleep, who utter words (as Verdi assured me) almost without moving their lips, and keep other parts of their face, eyes included, motionless. It was enough to drive you insane." After the first performance she meets him in her dressing room and is rewarded by an overcome Verdi. Her duet "Fatal mia donna, un murmure" with the baritone was rehearsed more than 150 times "to ensure, the Maestro said, that it was more *said* than *sung*."[8] Verdi rehearsed it on the very night of the dress rehearsal for the 151st time while the audience was waiting impatiently in the theatre. Verdi's extreme thoroughness seems to have paid off, for this duet had to be repeated four to five times ever after in the performance. It shows that Verdi not only knew exactly what he himself wanted but also that he instinctively knew the potential of the singers better than the singers knew it themselves. Following his instinct he proceeded to continue working until he was satisfied. So he knew that he was the creator but he made the singers excel themselves in recreation of his creation. In this way the circle is closed, for we realize that the singers create their parts although Verdi might not use this word for their achievement.

On the contrary, we know that Wagner was so moved by the performance of the tenor Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld[9] as Tannhäuser in his opera of the same name that he exclaimed that the tenor had given him "a glimpse into my own creation ... such as has been seldom, perhaps never, yet vouchsafed an artist." The tenor died young and the loss was a terrible blow to Wagner who cried out: "In him I lost ... the great granite block needed to raise my building and now found myself directed to seek his replacement in a pile of bricks."[10] This underlines the situation in Germany, where Wagner could not find singers with the technique of the Old Italian School who could sing his roles. Schnorr must have been an exception as a singer. Verdi obviously was the luckier composer who could pick and choose singers with a perfect mastery of their instrument, the first condition for the interpretation that he demanded of his roles.

The historical singers certainly give us the impression that they offer us their own individual understanding of the work they interpret, "from a necessity rooted in their own nature" (see above quote from Révész, note 4). They meet the demands and intentions of the composer in their recreation thanks to their technique of singing, which enables the composer to play upon the comprehensive qualities, physically and mentally of their voices. Their interpretation can even go beyond the composer's own conceptions of the work and by their creation reveal aspects of the work unknown to the composer till then. It is a twofold process. The composer has a deep understanding of the effect that his music can have on the interpretative and vocal qualities of the singer and so he plays on the singer's qualities; the final outcome depends on the reservoir of feeling and emotions additional to the technique the singer has to offer. This means that if the composer is good, he will push the singer into the right interpretation of his work by means of the musical devices available to him. The stronger the personality of the singer, the more he has to offer the composer in the way of fertile soil to sow his seed in. It can be considered of a secondary importance how the singer understands the words himself as long as he fulfils the composer's intentions. This is not to mean that the words themselves are of secondary importance. The words are the vehicle of the composer to create his music. It is interesting to look at the importance of the words from the composer's point of view and that is quite astonishing in some cases.

The Interpretation of Words as Opposed to Music

Mendelssohn remarks in a letter he wrote in 1812:

> People usually complain that music is so ambiguous; that they are doubtful as to what they should think when they hear it, whereas everyone understands words. For me it is just the reverse. And that is so not only for whole speeches, but for single words also: they too seem to me so ambiguous, so indefinite, so open to misunderstanding in comparison with real music which fills one's soul with a thousand better things than words. To me, the music I love does not express thoughts too indefinite to be put into words, but too definite.[11]

This quote illustrates that the composer lives in the realm of music and that is

completely different from the realm of the word. Mendelssohn's compositions of vocal music, however, are excellently written for the voice. His music impregnates the word so that the listener can have access to it other than by his intellectual faculties. Mendelssohn possesses the means to lead the singer into the right interpretation, playing upon his voice and coloring it after his fashion and desire. The natural voice production enables the composer to play upon the singer's interpretive qualities, if the singer has any to play upon.

We approach Mendelssohn's view from the position of the listener by reading the exposé of Countess Merlin, who tells us of a conversation on the subject in her mother's salon. Someone remarks that certain bars in a piece of vocal music by Handel seem to be insignificant. This observation is opposed by someone else maintaining that where the words fall short, the music has to take over and bring the message of the author into our hearts with greater perfection. Countess Merlin corroborates this statement, adding that:

> Consequently the [musical] inflexions that are not determined by the word are livelier and deeper. The soul, already prepared, does not have to divide itself; it stays complete in itself; its emotion does not depend on judgment; it is not distracted by the motion of the spirit, it does not retard its development, and the indeterminate sensations get a new force. It means that the wordless passage makes a general and simultaneous appeal to all the sensitive faculties; it is an instinctive emotion, in a manner of speaking, of all the fibers of the soul.[12]

This is illustrated by listeners who confess to enjoy the romances of Rachmaninov in the Russian language enormously for the simple reason that they do not have to make an effort to understand and follow the meaning of the words that the singer is enunciating. They can surrender themselves completely to the wonderful expressive music; in other words they listen with their heart and not with their head. A German Lied, however, will always be difficult to follow even if the listener knows the language because German grammar, with its declensions, has a variable word sequence. Without the written text it is impossible for most listeners to unravel its complications on a first hearing. With the (translated) text in front of him the listener will not be able to hear the music as he should hear it, for his attention is focused on the words and their current meaning as the listener knows it without the charm of the music. The main obstacle to listening to a song is the human intellect that wants to "understand" the words. The music then becomes a disturbing factor. The important question to answer is: how do we listen to music? If we listen with our intellect we will unfailingly have trouble in plenty in listening to songs. The intellectual listener is not aware that he prevents his true receptacles, his heart and soul, from enjoying the music. He does not even realize that he misses out on the charm of the music. If we become more alert to the language of music, we will surely begin to notice how poorly words interpret that which music can express in a superior fashion.

Stendhal makes the observation that the language of the average Italian aria, containing approximately 50–60 words thrown about in a haphazard manner, "can never be anything more than a *bare canvas*; the task of decorating this canvas with all the glint and glitter of a thousand tints and colours lies with the music."[13] Wagner's operas

have attained their immense popularity through the music. We might say that the lovers of opera have the advantage that they will be more inclined to let themselves be saturated with the music whereas the lovers of the Lied are liable to let the words have precedence.

We have looked at the controversy of words and music from the perspective of the composer and the listener. To fill in the picture we need the third party and that is the poet. How does he evaluate the musical edition of his poem? We know that Goethe never even answered Schubert, who sent him the setting of his poems. A poet who was extremely honored that a poem of his was set to music by a great composer was Georg Herwegh. He wrote Liszt that he was delighted by the composer's setting of the *Rheinweinlied*, begging him for a copy of the composition with the allowance "to insert it as a very special jewel" into the third edition of his "outlawed" poems.[14] Composers have said that in order to set a poem to music, they first had to destroy it. They probably meant that they had to get away from the speech and metrical rhythms of the poem. This could throw a light on Goethe's aversion to Schubert's settings. The metamorphosis of a poem into a song is of such a nature that the poem is no more; the song has taken over and the rhythm of music reigns supreme. The composer's conception of the poem has to be respected for the true interpretation to appear.

This leaves us with the singer as the fourth party to consider. Duprez, who was a very dramatic singer himself and a successful teacher, has left us his remarkable views in a book of instruction. He is very outspoken on the importance of the music: "The music has no need of the help of the words to express whatever sentiment is required and a good piece ought to carry a style, a color of its own, either in the simplicity or in the elegance, the pathetic, the grandiose, the power [etc.]." Duprez continues to make the observation that the pupil of singing generally considers the notes as nothing more than a succession of sounds without any meaning. "The music on the paper is no more than black on white: but it is the thought of the composer that we have to make ourselves interpreter of: now then the material interpreter [of the composer] consists of the written notes, the interpreter of the mind [of the composer] is the singer."[15] So, according to Duprez, the singer has to study the aspects like phrasing, accentuating and coloring at the same time as practicing the mechanical side of singing. Therefore, it is very important for the singer to choose repertoire well within his range; in songs and Lieder, this means choosing the right key, enabling him to enunciate the words clearly and effortlessly. It will give him a better chance to bring his interpretation across. It is demanded from present-day opera singers that they emit great volumes of sound, reducing the possibility of clear enunciation as well as dynamic diversity. This is counterbalanced by an increase in the acting ability of the singer to intensify the interpretation of the text.

The Interpretation of the Words Through the Music

The composer's art enables the listener to have access other than by recitation to the poetic or dramatic meaning of the words by means of the music that he composed.

There are also cases in the Lieder repertoire where the difference in approach of the same text by its composers completely changes the meaning of the message. It therefore follows that if we wish to do justice to the work of the composer we will have to accept his musical conception of the text instead of insisting on our own interpretation. Ideally the composer has put the idea behind the words to music and not just the words. We can try our best to understand a poem and form our own ideas about it only to find that the composer is of another opinion that he expresses strongly in his music. The poem "*O ihr kleinmütig Volk*" ("Oh, ye narrow minded people") by Christian Morgenstern[16] can be understood to express the most profound pity of the poet with the people who do not wish to alter their ways for the better. The composer Burghardt, however, has set this text to music, changing its meaning radically into a thunderous speech of reproach uttered in the strongest accents in the manner of St. John the Baptist's "Change your ways!"[17]

Identification as a Means to Interpretation

The stronger the composition, the easier the singer's job to contribute consciously and actively in interpretation. All he has to do is to identify with the character in the song or aria. If it is a descriptive type of song, he has to see the picture before him. Hahn tells us that singers have to hold the image in their mind's eye of what the words suggest in a clear outline or of a vague character. If the words refer to objects, they have to be seen by the performer to be able to communicate them to the listener. "If the words describe a state of mind, the singer must delve into his own experience, must search inwardly for all that is deeply felt and human, and must create in his own mind the very attitude he wishes to convey — he must experience, at that moment, the emotion he seeks to express."[18]

The Vocal Timbres and Interpretation

The historical singers were trained to sing in contrasting timbres, bright and dark, that enabled them to set the mood of the song they performed in a clear and definite manner, so much so that understanding of the language they used was not necessary to grasp the character of the song. A guide to the matter of interpretation we find in the words of Herbert-Caesari, who explains, after saying that the vocal sound itself is a product of a physical nature, that the heart and center of the perfect vocal sound contains all the mental ingredients inherent to interpretation: "The central core gives life and soul to the issuing tone which, thus loaded, stirs the heartstrings of an audience. Such *completed* tone expresses the combined personalities of poet, composer and singer. When every tone, every word, is thus made to *live*, we have what is called 'interpretation' at its highest."[19]

Present-day methods teaching the forward production restrict singers to the use

of one timbre only, the dark or closed one, as Garcia calls it and as mentioned repeatedly. This singing manner, called hooting, produces a general sound in singers that always tends to melancholy. Consequently, the repertoire suffers. A simple song is turned into a drama and if we have no written text we get no inkling what kind of song we hear. Listen to any modern recording of the lovely song "The Rose and the Nightingale" by Rimski-Korsakov and then to the performance of historical soprano Antonina Nezhdanova.[20] In the performance of the modern singers, the meaning of the song is unclear; an artificially darkened voice sings too slowly through the lines of this witty tongue-in-cheek song, leaving the listener with the wrong impression as to its message. Nezhdanova pulls us into the picture of the song straightaway and keeps us spellbound by its charm and movement (tempo and phrasing), her bright positive voice telling us a convincing little story. We hear the warbling of the nightingale, we see the rose in its haughty beauty, we watch the young lover singing his plaintive love songs and we smile at the girls who do not take him seriously; we remember our own foolish youth. At the end of the song we instinctively smile. Even if we have no written text and we do not understand Russian we certainly get a good impression as to what kind of song we hear. The musical language comes across very strongly by the clear vocal line and coloring of the performer using the different timbres of the voice.

The Right Tempo and Interpretation

The example of the Russian song mentioned above also raises one of the most important questions in the matter of interpretation: the right tempo. Herbert-Caesari once again provides one of his astute observations:

> The *tempo* of a composition comes within the field of "interpretation." A composer writes a song or an aria with a definite tempo in mind. Even if unmarked the music itself speaks clearly in this respect. Now if the tempo is slowed down, or hurried, even in the slightest degree, it will probably lose many of its characteristics, and the music itself much of its idiosyncrasy, charm, attraction, atmosphere, personality, form, colouring, expression, and so forth, to the extent almost of no longer being an emanation of the composer's mind.[21]

Before Toscanini's star rose in the musical world, German conductors were considered the acme of conducting. Harold Schonberg in his biography of Horowitz tells us that:

> Toscanini felt that the German conductors played too slowly, just as Horowitz felt that the German pianists played too slowly. "Everything adagio," said Horowitz. "So Toscanini reacted against that, perhaps a little too much. He wanted to show how the music should really sound, and sometimes he overdid it, playing too fast. Now everybody is too slow. They all want to show what profound musicians they are. If you play slow, you are profound."[22]

It has become the hallmark of many singers to take the tempo of a song or aria too slowly. There might be several reasons for this: they have not trained their voice on agility exercises making the voice pliable and easily manageable, they might be under the illusion that a slow tempo renders their performance more interesting, or perhaps

the singers have difficulty in identifying with the feelings and emotions they have to depict and so take refuge in what they consider to be additional resources.

To illustrate this let us take a closer look (see Appendix 3) at the famous aria by Gluck from *Orfeo* "Che faro." ("J'ai perdu" in the French edition.) Gluck gives us rather clear tempo markings: at first *andante*, then *adagio*, then tempo 1 again, followed by *adagio* and to wrap up with tempo 1. Listen to the many recordings of this aria and you'll soon notice that Gluck's tempo, *alla breve*, is completely ignored and a strange *tradition* has developed to sing this whole aria as slow and therefore devoid of anything remotely resembling true feeling. Would anyone in utter anguish, crying out for his lost love, do this slowly and deliberately, or would a terrible frenzy take possession of him, causing his eruptions of grief to alternate, now hurried and then slow with despair? Hahn tells us of Gluck's composing procedure:

> But it was Gluck ... who sought to portray fury, supreme heart-rending sorrow, heroic delusion, the confusion of gesture and accent that reveal inner turmoil. He maintained that, in the process of composing, he drew his inspiration directly from life, from the "spoken" accent upon which, through music, he imposed a purely artistic transformation, a simple act of transposition that kept the basic realism intact.[23]

Hahn continues to give us a lively picture of Gluck "acting out the various roles in his room, while shouting, pulling his hair, falling on his knees, crawling on the floor, reproducing every movement of his characters." Hahn's conclusion is a withering comment on performance practices: "And this is the music that some people today would sing calmly, temperately, with the barest trace of emotion, stripping away every shred of excitement, emotion, extravagance? How absurd!"[24] The right tempo is the first step to good interpretation, for if this is right, the singer can give genuine expression.

We have the right tempo when the phrase seems to have a natural movement, underlining the mood of the words and their meaning. Listen to Flagstad's rendering of the "Four Last Songs" by Richard Strauss, at the London premiere conducted by Furtwängler. The songs have a wonderful flow; everything seems to fall into place. The listener can follow the words even in the long *melisma* Strauss sets them to. In *Frühling* and *Beim Schlafengehen* there are many instances where a word is stretched out over several bars. If the tempo is taken slower, these words become problematic as the listener will easily lose track of them. Flagstad sings them in a superior manner that has few equals.[25]

Over the last hundred years tempi have become slower and slower. If we consider that the long sequences of notes in the works of Bach have to be divided into several partitions to allow the singer to take a breath, it seems logical that in a quicker tempo this problem would be reduced. The same can be said for Handel. We know that Mendelssohn took very fast tempi and that makes some of his arias — like, for instance, "Hear Ye Israel" from *Elijah*— easier to sing. The well-known song "On Wings of Song" by Mendelssohn is enchanting in the right tempo but if we listen to an interpretation maintaining a very slow tempo, the charm is gone and we are left with a demonstration of singing technique and nothing else. The wings of song cannot take the flight of imagination.

The Language of Music Reveals the Right Interpretation

An understanding of the language of music and what the message is behind a certain key or sequence of notes, chord, or phrase can be a great help. To illustrate this, take a favorite song and at a special moment change the music by one note or alter a chord from major to minor and then see your reaction to the changes. You will very quickly see the need to understand why the composer used the notes he did and what he was trying to say to illustrate the words that he has set. For a deeper understanding of the language of music, *The Language of Music*" by Deryck Cooke[26] deserves a warm recommendation. You might agree with him or not over his individual findings, but the important point is to realize that music is a language with its own grammar and, correctly applied, the composer's message is understandable by non-musicians.

Harvey Grace puts it poetically when he says that the composer accomplishes the heavy task of setting poetry to music with the help of "the thrilling voice of melody and the wonderful colouring of harmonic combinations that accompany, support, and embellish the throbbing tones as they rise and fall in stately undulation; a change of key and of time reflecting a change of mood or emotion, an added sharp, or flat, or natural, meaning worlds, or just a fleeting emphasis."[27] We should never wish to improve on the composer's work, just as we would not attempt to improve a painting by Rembrandt or a statue by Michelangelo. Harvey Grace continues:

> Why then in the name of reason do singers, and conductors, vainly imagine that they are "interpreting," aye, improving, the work of a master-composer by adding personal frills of "expression," exaggerated display of emotions, fake feeling, stabbed and hammered accents, mostly in the wrong places; andante slowed down to funereal, moderato whipped up to a gallop, turning p [*piano*] into f [*forte*], and so forth. Verdi once said, "I write five p's to get one."[28]

Phrasing and Interpretation

The art of elegant and meaningful phrasing can be considered one of the hallmarks of the Old Italian School of Singing. For the purpose of interpretation, phrasing is very important.

It is the musical phrase that provides the words with the right meaning as intended by the composer. Garcia's definition of phrasing covers the concept: "It may be simply to carry out the musical punctuation, or it may be, taken in a wider sense, to give to each phrase its proper effect in the general conception of a piece."[29] Legato singing and good phrasing go hand in hand. Beautiful phrasing inspired by the music is always preferable and far more effective as a means of interpretation than word painting. The phrasing will be colorful through the purity of the vowels. As we have already seen in the chapter on breathing the ability to sing extremely long passages in one breath must be modified by the phrasing and punctuation of the text. We see this fact confirmed in

the advice given to Joan Sutherland at the beginning of her London career 1951: "Also he [Professor Clive Carey] began to correct her phenomenal breath control. It had become too phenomenal. It seemed that she no longer needed to draw breath from the beginning of an aria to its end; but Carey pointed out that, although this was a remarkable achievement, it did not make for remarkable interpretation. The drawing of breath could, he explained, add to the emotion and warmth of a line; could improve expression; could help her high notes."[30] This is in complete agreement with the remarks of Nordica in the chapter on breathing.

Style and Interpretation

As soon as we approach the subject of style, we find there are different meanings behind its conception. Faure gives us a little summary that shows him as a very perspicacious observer of his colleagues. He says that in matters of singing, style and method are often confused and that it means two different things to have style or to have *a* style. Of the first he says: "To have style, means to interpret a role or a song after a thorough penetration of the intimate thoughts of the composer, by applying the established rules sanctioned by taste."[31] To get an idea of these established rules we can consult the works one of the old masters. Horncastle provides an interesting survey of various styles. He lists three kinds of recitative: church, theatre and cantata (chamber). He warns the pupil: "Do not sing Dramatic Recitative like that of the Church or Chamber, neither confusedly nor in a hurried manner. Do not force out the last syllable or sing through the teeth. Be careful to pronounce the words distinctly and in a declamatory manner."[32] He divides the recitative in two kinds: simple and accompanied. Simple recitative is given to "passages of narrative or dialogue, devoid of passion and sentiment; such as by their nature can never become the subject of musical expression." As a contrast Horncastle shows us that in accompanied recitative, passion reigns supreme. The music will play an important part "to produce such sounds as serve to awaken in the audience sensations and emotions similar to those which agitate the Singer."[33] In the same vein Horncastle continues to list the various kinds of ballads and remarks that no certain rules can be given for singing them: "they must depend upon the Singer's feeling, knowledge of the national peculiarities, and his aptitude for identifying himself with them by hearing Native Singers &c." The style of the sacred song is "the most difficult of all styles to excel in, because dignity, simplicity and pathos, with the full command of a steady equal voice, are requisite to its development"; as Horncastle rightly observes, "The nature of the subjects of such Songs demanding more intensity than perhaps any other." For the cantata style "a more dramatic kind of Singing is necessary. The passion or feeling of the words must form the ground work of the Singer's study." He ranks Purcell's works as an example of "natural passion, feeling, pathos, hilarity and energy" higher than all the modern composers of his time, the 1840s. The operatic styles would need volumes to describe them all so he restricts himself to some special items like the new romantic style of German operas of Weber whose genius

he rates highly for "supplying a ready illustration in Musical ideas," because Weber set "the *whole*" of the drama in his poetic imagination before composing the parts of the drama. To render Weber's music adequately the singer needs to be well educated and equipped with "*poetical* as well as *musical* feeling"[34]

Back to Faure, who gives us his interesting ideas on the meaning of his second comment that to have "*a* style" is to add a personal touch to the interpretation distinguishing the singer from his fellow artists. He tells us that the singers who have their own style are those who are most frequently imitated. A recent example is Maria Callas, who is being imitated up to this day by several generations of singers. Faure has a word of warning for the singer who is told continuously that he is original to be on his guard against "exaggeration of the very qualities that will turn them into his defects." He tells us that in most cases where the singer looks for an original interpretation, he is bound to fall into the trap of copying some artist he has watched in performance. Faure is not against being inspired by great artists, but he reckons that copying them too slavishly will result in getting a secondary place. "You can only follow someone, in effect, by putting yourself behind him."[35] Listening to the recordings of the historical singers we get the impression that they frequently possess both kinds of style mentioned by Faure.

Tradition as a Handicap to Interpretation

To sing with style really should not mean any more than to give an adequate interpretation of the music in question. Some weird "traditions" have been established and the sharp wit of Hahn shows us what happened. He maintains that all the arias of, for example, Gluck are the victims of wrong interpretation caused by "false stylistic notions" and this is brought about by a particular singer who inserts his own personal "nuances, variations in timbre and tempi" and who is then copied slavishly and badly by another singer who has not understood the first one sufficiently and so forth. Finally "a hard shell of stylistic convention surrounds the living arias, concealing their true beauty and accorded the honourable name of *traditions*."[36] To sing in the style of the music we have to manage the music judiciously and at the same time bring "*to the interpretation a significant share, an immense share, a preponderant share, of expression, thought and realism.*"[37] Looking back on the comments and advice to singers related to the various styles Horncastle discusses, we realize the truth of Hahn's emphatic dictum.

If we listen to the performances under the baton of Toscanini we are confronted with music as pure and fresh as we have never heard it before, for Toscanini possessed the genius and the courage to deliver the music of the composer as it was written. He discarded the traditions that had obscured music and stripped the singers of their petty vanities. They sang like they never sang before, as some of them confessed later. "Herva Nelli,[38] who sang Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello*, listened two years afterwards to a recording taken from the performance and exclaimed: 'How did I do it? He must have hypnotized me.'"[39] To watch the concert performance of *Aida* with Toscanini conducting is a revelation.[40]

Interpretation as an Inborn Individual Quality

The great Russian historical soprano Anna Eltour[41] used to say to her pupils (so the author was told by one of them whom she knew intimately): “I can teach you the technique to sing, but I will not teach you interpretation, for if you cannot give that you should not present yourself to an audience.” We might not agree with her nowadays but it certainly shows us the attitude of the historical singer. Garcia said it even more sharply as we gather from his pupil Lillie Hegermann-de Lindencrone: “If, when your voice is well oiled (that is what he calls the scaling process), you are not intelligent enough to sing a song by yourself, then you had better knit stockings for the poor.”[42]

The Liszt pupil August Stradal, virtuoso, composer and transcriber, completely agrees with Eltour that a good technique is only the foundation of an artistic interpretation: “for the other essential factors, spirit, understanding and demonic power, warmth and melodious (*gesanglich!*) playing cannot be acquired by learning, but have to be inborn.”[43] We see that all three mean the same principle for the teacher of singing: to bring out what is latent in the pupil by providing him with the tools to do so. If the pupil had “something to say” then he could say it. Busoni writes: “Established performers should seldom be heard, and then only if they have something important and new to impart.”[44] The historical singers definitely had “something to say” and they were not afraid to say it.

The Interpretation of Repertoire Composed for the Historical Voice

It is well worth serious consideration that the classical vocal music was originally written for the voice trained in the method of the Old Italian School. The historical singers had the advantage that their singing technique enabled them to meet the demands of the composer and their interpretation was their very own. They did not suffer from the handicap that present-day singers have in the accessibility of recordings. If they listened to their colleagues it was always in the flesh and only occasionally. They could never play recordings over and over again as some present-day singers testify to doing. It safeguarded them against conscious as well as unconscious imitation.

Differentiation in the interpretation of the historical singers was greatly appreciated and demanded by the audience. We have a first-hand account of the musicality of Pauline Viardot performing the last aria of Gluck’s opera *Orpheus*, in French, of course. The three repeats of the phrase “J’ai perdu mon Eurydice” were each rendered with a different interpretation: “singing the motive in full voice without any nuances, expressing complete dejection; the second time with more emotion in the voice, more tenderly, as if choked by tears, and finally in the last repeat, with full power and giving way to the most violent despair.”[45] It shows us the intelligence of this singer preparing

her interpretation in the most thorough and effective manner, knowing how to build up to a powerful climax as we gather from the respectful and appreciative description of the expert Faure.

The Interpretation of Ideas and Not Words

The real meaning of interpretation seems to be forgotten because performers nowadays often confuse interpretation with mannerism. They usually resort to "word painting" to try and fill the void resulting from lack of understanding what the composer demands of them. Nathan observed this phenomenon in his own time, telling us that singers as well as composers should express ideas and not words. "The duty of the composer is to express the sense, not of this or that particular word, but the comprehensive meaning of all the words in the air." This applies also to singers, encouraging them to sing the composition according to the wishes of the composer: "without the absurd attempt to improve the author's ideas, by the common clap-trap, of catching at any particular word, to mouth, to mince, or lisp upon with unmeaning grace." Nathan warns singers against accentuating isolated words, because in this way they are apt to obscure the message of the ideas.

> Instead of considering how this or that word should be played upon, the first object should be to study the true meaning and character of the subject, so that effect may not only be given to a word here and there, but the sense of a whole sentence expressed, so as to be understood and felt by others."[46]

The arbitrary use of word painting can easily lead to disruption of the musical phrase. The practice then results in detracting rather than focusing the attention of the listener on the composition.

The "Simple Song" as the Supreme Test in Interpretation

Many historical CDs contain items that are so-called "simple songs," sometimes they are folksongs, that the historical singers used as encores. It seems strange but it is a fact nevertheless that a "simple song" is the severest test for a singer. Here is the greatest danger of succumbing to sentimentality and here too is the heaviest test on how genuine the singer is. Listening to Melba's rendering of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," we are amazed and deeply impressed that the interpreter can sing that song with such genuine feeling. Here Melba's superb musicianship (she is aged 65) shines even brighter than in her famous "warhorses." Other wizards at simple songs are Patti, Calvé, Nezhdanova, Clara Butt, John McCormack, Emilio de Gogorza and Caruso to name a few. Here there is nowhere to hide, no technical feats to dazzle us; here all depends on the intention of the singer: can he stand the exposure of the simple melody line, the sim-

ple, straightforward words, and communicate the message in the song? If he can, there is nothing that moves the audience deeper than this genuine interpretation.

> With her coloratura she has astounded everybody and through her soulful performance she moved everyone's heart, and yet she is at one and the same time naive and sings a children's song by Tauber, or the "Sonnenschein," so that one is totally rejuvenated again.[47]

A description of Jenny Lind's powers of interpretation in the realm of "simple songs." Patti invariably had to sing "Home, Sweet Home" after her opera performances.

Recordings as Obstacles to Individual Interpretation

The singers of today naturally are tempted to listen to recordings of the repertoire they wish to sing. They do not seem to realize that our subconscious mind takes in a performance so thoroughly that erasing it is very difficult. Studio recordings that can be heavily edited present us with a ghost performance, lacking the spontaneity of a live performance. Present-day singers confess to their urge to listen to recordings of new repertoire they want to prepare before studying it. They prevent themselves from experiencing the joy of a fresh approach to new repertoire. Faculties like fantasy and imagination that have to be stimulated and developed by regular use and training thus remain dormant.

The recordings of the historical singers were never edited so at least we are presented with a real sample of what the singer was able to do, although the recording circumstances were not the most favorable. What their voices must have sounded like in the concert hall we can only imagine through reading the testimonies of their listeners.

The Lieder of Schubert, Schumann and Wolf have suffered from being extensively recorded by a few leading singers who put their stamp of authority on the Lied interpretation. A tradition emerged, nurtured by authorities who professed to know how these Lieder should be sung. A fresh and creative approach has become a rarity. The listeners contribute to this state of affairs by coming to a concert already heavily biased towards the recorded interpretations, expecting to hear performances as near as possible to those of their idols. In a recent book by Kenneth Hamilton over the current state of piano playing, he argues that the pianists suffer from the same interpretive problems as discussed above, it is not just a phenomenon of singers.

> There are no doubt many factors, but one obvious culprit is recordings, which have changed so much about the way we listen to music, and further ossified the classical concert experience. They, rather than live performances, are now the largest source of our exposure to music. We now tend to listen to live music in the same way as we do to recordings.[48]

Practical Hints

Widen your horizon by extensively reading singers' and composers' biographies or memoirs and historical novels. Visit the museums in the main cities of your country or your holiday country. Look carefully at the paintings of the Renaissance and the Romantic Age. Study the expression on the faces. Let the colors of the velvet and silk

garments caress you. Study the jewelry. Visit exhibitions of historical costumes. Visit castles and imagine how people of the previous centuries lived and loved. For religious orientation, leaf through the Rembrandt Bible or the Bible of Gustave Doré and you will certainly find inspiration. Watch the videos and DVDs of the historical singers as well as the films of the Jewish cantors, particularly those of Moishe Oysher,[49] to hear his thrilling voice and brilliant singing. His film *Overture to Glory* can be warmly recommended. It is about a cantor discovered in a Polish town and brought to Warsaw to pursue a career as an opera singer and find stardom. Notice the incredible agility and range of his beautiful, sweet tenor voice.

For study choose an aria or song you do not know and have not heard on a recording. Let the piece of your choice be in the original language; this will be much easier than a translation. Choose as the language possibly Italian, because that is, after all, the first language of singing.

Train yourself to listen to the music of the song or aria you wish to study, but not from a recording. Play it yourself or have someone play it for you. Let the music haunt you just like Flagstad used to do. Copy the words from the score in your own handwriting, for by writing them yourself, forming the characters, the words will come to life and speak to you more clearly than if you type them out.

Sing the vocal line on “Ah.” Enjoy the musical phrases. When you know the melody by heart, sing it on the vowels only. Adhere strictly to the given tempi and stay in the beat with iron discipline. When all your notes are perfectly beautiful on the vowels start singing the words.

If the sound of the word does not coincide with the sound of its vowel, correct yourself until the sound in the word is the same as the one you vocalized. Look in the mirror when you do this delicate tuning job, so then you can correct yourself easily.

If you happen to have a good accompanist, discuss with him where the logical breathing spots are from a musical point of view. Work strictly in the beat with the pianist, as this will help towards your final interpretation, when artistic freedom can mold the phrase without distorting the rhythms.

Record yourself with the accompaniment and listen critically. You can learn to correct yourself without the help of a coach. Learn to trust your own judgment and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the song or the aria coherent as a whole?
- Is the climax brought out sufficiently?
- Is there enough variation in sound or can I sing some phrases softer, thereby making more contrast with the climax?
- Are the words understandable due to a clear enunciation of the vowels and adequate articulation of the consonants?
- Do I sing with abandon because I have to sing from a burning urge within myself?
- Does my performance come across as my own or do I try to sound like one of my idols?
- How would the composer of the piece I sing react to my interpretation?
- Would I dare to sing it for him if he asked me to?

9

Expression

And if they spend their due reward
Applauding loud the wonders of thy throat,
Here is no body, hardly any sound,
I hear but your own soul.

Franz Grillparzer[1]

Once upon a time singing evoked poetry. Numerous singers of the 19th and previous centuries had poems dedicated to them by the famous poets of the times, comparing them to angels, seraphs, roses, nightingales and, in this poem for Jenny Lind, even light itself: "You are not colour, but are light itself, all colours' prophet."[2] From these poems we not only get an idea about the singing of these great artists but also about the magic they must have radiated on the stage. They managed to set hearts aflame, which means they communicated from heart to heart, from soul to soul. Even on their recordings, the historical singers have retained that magic. In a way we hear them "live," for they had to sing their items straight through without editing and mostly under extremely difficult circumstances. On the odd live performance recordings, like Melba's farewell in Covent Garden, we share the exciting atmosphere marking this occasion and we are overwhelmed by the spirited and expressive performance of the grand old diva. Her powerful stage presence and superiority come through impressively.[3]

We see that singers could establish a connection to a better world, a world of beauty, harmony and peace. Listening to those singers we are fortified by the knowledge that there is a better world; the impression of their voices will never leave us, and we return to our daily duties stronger than before.

How did the historical singers acquire the magic with which they can fascinate us, defying the changes of fashion and taste that have occurred after a hundred years? We shall endeavor to approach their powers of fascination by looking at the comments of those actively employed in the musical world of bygone days.

From the previous chapter we have seen that there cannot be a genuine interpretation without true expression. Interpretation and expression are inseparable companions in art.

To give an average interpretation of a piece of music is, however, not enough to render a performance outstanding. We can appreciate an interpretation that contains the ingredients mentioned, like the right tempo, phrasing, stylistic notions, etc., yet

the performance can leave us indifferent. It is the added expression that casts a spell on us, for with this powerful weapon, the singer can give us a lasting impression of the song or aria. The expression can afford us a glimpse into the other reality or transcendental sphere of the music, nourishing our hungry soul with the food it so desperately needs. Nathan illustrates this when he says that our "finer feelings" wake up from listening to music, that its power "chains the soul and the various passions which dwell in it" and that music can pacify our soul. Music can intensify our devotion by "an additional fervour from her spell." Music fills our mind with feelings of "piety and sacred joy." But, so Nathan assures us, this is not just caused by rhythm and melody alone. "It is the power of expression that, like a vision of light, illumines the whole."[4] Teachers of singing who read the following lines will certainly agree from their own experience:

> But the power of expression is the great secret of Genius: it is a secret, because it is rarely to be acquired, unless there be a natural talent for it: it depends on feeling and accurate perception, and if these be wanting, how can any teacher supply them?[5]

Nathan continues saying that we are gifted with eyes to see and hearts to feel. We have to let our listeners see and feel for themselves what we see and feel. To express our feelings and emotion in poetry and music in such a way that our hearers can share our experience, we need to identify completely with our object.

Verdi give us a clear picture of the qualities that he expects in the singer in the role of Amneris in a letter he writes to Ricordi: "You know the libretto of Aida, and you know that the role of Amneris requires an artist of great dramatic feeling who can really hold the stage.... Voice alone, however beautiful ... is not enough for this role. So-called vocal finesse means little to me. I like to have roles sung the way I want them, but I can't provide the voice, the temperament, the 'je ne sais quoi' that one might call the spark. It's what is usually understood by the phrase, 'to be possessed by the devil.'"[6] According to Garcia, expression is "the manifestation of the feelings." The singer can get them across to the audience "by feeling strongly himself.... Sympathy is the sole transmitter of emotion and the feelings of an audience are excited by our own."[7] The definitions of expression can vary but expression seems to be clearly noticeable when it is there and sadly missed when it is not.

Vocal Timbres and Colors to Convey Feeling and Emotion

Great historical singers were able to imbue even superficial and trite words with genuine meaning, lifting them out of their ordinariness. Liszt bewails the repertoire that Caroline Ungher-Sabatier sometimes has to sing as being far beneath her level. "And whilst breaking through the barriers of ice that the banalities of a foolish text or a colourless piece of music drew up between her and the audience, she becomes sublime where it would seem hardly possible, and where others hardly succeed in covering the repulsive words and the music, she creates the liveliest emotion."[8] Liszt mentions,

however, that she had reached this level of singing after 10 years of continuous, thorough study and that she represented the most beautiful dramatic talent on stage since Pasta and Malibran.

The legendary John Braham possessed

> the power of colouring the tone according to the passion. He could increase or attenuate its volume, not merely making it louder or softer, but by a distinctly different expression of tone, so to speak. [Braham was able to] produce sounds breathing hope, adoration, and fervent pity — sounds most touching and full of beauty. Whoever has heard him in the recitative preceding this air, "Deeper and deeper still," will have listened to extraordinary changes of tone, expressing remorse, hesitation, the deepest anguish and despair, awe, heart-rending yet firm and resolute obedience to Divine power....[9]

Composers like Rimsky-Korsakov and Rossini possessed an uncanny gift for coloring the voice of the singer. A stunning example of Rimsky-Korsakov's art we find in the aria of Snegurotchka, the Snow Maiden, where she announces her death from the warmth of her love for Ljel. The historical soprano recorded in this aria gives a heart-rending performance and her voice takes on such dramatic colors and timbre that we share Snegurotchka's agony and wonder. The next track on the CD presents the same soprano with the famous Rossini aria "Una voce poco fa" and gone are the magical colors in the soprano's voice. Now we have a virtually colorless voice, a silly girl called Rosina whose sole weapon is coloratura without the special colors and thrilling timbre of Rimski-Korsakov's fairy-tale wonder world.[10] This is a perfect example of how the historically trained voice could communicate two completely different characters.

We might not even realize it but in everyday speech we modulate our vocal timbre in expressing words of

> love, hate, joy, sadness, fear, courage, resentment, sarcasm, bitterness, anger, suffering, anguish, mental and physical pain ... peculiar to each of these moods and emotions. It comes natural to one and all. But why is it that so many singers seem unable to include in their singing tone, even in moderate degree, these varicoloured inflections?[11]

This question was asked in the 1960s when the singing technique of the Old Italian School had been replaced by the modern method of forward production.

Crescentini points out that just as we make vocal inflections in speaking when we grumble, flatter or grow tender, it is the singer's task to color his voice accordingly to suit the music he sings, through developing brilliancy or softness, dark or bright, large or small.[12] The following quotation of Sir Henry Wood used in the introduction is worthy here of being repeated: "A voice should possess a clear, definite, rich, fundamental tone quality in which the singer's own personality predominates. No imitation of prominent and popular singers having a voice like his own should ever be allowed in a student."[13]

We modulate our voice in speaking; how much more do we need the possibility to modulate our voice in singing, where we express feelings to be able, as Nathan says, "to implant these feelings in our ... hearers?" The dynamics needed for the modulation of our voice are to be found in the use of the contrasting timbres and the fluctuating pitch. It takes patient study to obtain perfect mastery in the production of pure vow-

els for singing complementary with the different timbres. It has been made quite clear that the vowels will have to be slightly modified in singing, but they can keep their pure character as we can hear in the articulation of the historical singers. In the Old Italian School, the vowels are slightly modified but never distorted. A glorious testimony of the superb art of historical singing was released in October 2010 in Russia[14]: a CD of Nezhdanova, whom we admire at the age of 64–68 singing a great variety of songs not just in Russian but also in French, German and Spanish with a wealth of expression unrivaled by her Western colleagues. Particularly the well-known French and German songs by Debussy and Strauss strike us as being freshly created; her convincing individual approach takes us completely by surprise. It seems that she breathes new life into every song, charming us with highlights we never suspected to be there. The simple lullaby of the Reger *Mariä Wiegenlied*, Op.76, No. 52, is comparable only to one of Rafael's Madonnas painted in warm colors and perfect to the smallest detail. Nezhdanova takes a slow tempo and so underlines the peaceful picture of mother and child; in the second couplet she makes a meaningful *rubato* on "an der Mutter Brust" giving expression to this special intimate moment.

Nezhdanova is the magnet drawing us into her wonderful world by the sheer power of her expression. Her vocal technique is superb: the Old Italian School in the acme of perfection, enabling her to sing with real vocal beauty at an age when most singers have retired. She is certainly on a par with Caroline Ungher in rendering the simplest folksong into a real gem with its own atmosphere, reaching our heart in spite of a language barrier. It is interesting to hear that Nezhdanova's voice seems to acquire a special glow in her mother tongue, demonstrating at the same time that Russian is the second singing language after Italian. She is able to transfer her typically Russian intensity of feeling and power of expression onto the Western European repertoire. Her enunciation is crystal clear in Russian as well as in the other languages. With her sparkling performance of the Spanish songs, she can easily rival or beat a native singer of that country, her French songs are more coquettish and impish than many a French singer and her German Lieder more sensitive and melodious with her beautiful phrasing, better than we have ever heard them. The Russian language with its wonderful vowels endows her with a wide range of colors in the use of the two timbres of historical singing. Listening to her we are reminded of Braham's wizardry in expression. Faure observes that singers who excel in parts delivered in their mother tongue sometimes cannot keep the same level when they have to sing in a foreign language. It is not enough in singing to pronounce the words of the foreign language well. "Every nation has its style in harmony with its temperament, its impressionability, its ways of expression and its genius."[15] Nezdanova succeeds in entering the spirit of each nation, giving us the impression she has become a native of the country where her song originates.

Historical Expression Applicable to All Genres

The art of the historical singers embraced all genres, opera, Lied and folk song. We notice this clearly in singers like Nezhdanova or Chaliapin, who elevated the Rus-

sian folk song into an art song. We can hear Nezhdanova sing the Traviata arias with exactly the same voice production and appropriate depth of expression as Lieder or folk songs. The CDs now available of the historical singers usually provide a mixture of opera arias and songs all sharing the same vocal production, showing wealth and intensity of expression throughout, without the listener experiencing the feeling that the treatment was inappropriate to the music being performed. As soon as the old method was abandoned, a simple song posed problems. A simple song requires a natural vocal sound and cannot be rendered credible in the present-day operatic vocal sound. If we have trained our voice in the method of the Old Italian School we can sing any genre we wish, be it opera, Lied, lullaby, or folk song. The species of Lieder singer did not exist in the old days. A Lieder recital given by one and the same singer as we know it was not a normal occurrence. Liszt was the first to introduce the piano solo recital. The first professional Lieder recital given in England took place in 1882.[16] Before this the programs were always a mixture of genres, vocal and instrumental, performed by various artists. Art song, in the form of the Lied, was in fact a German invention as a reaction to Italian dominance.[17]

Expression from the Heart and Soul

Emotion and feeling are seated in our heart and soul, never in our head. The American singer Emma Thursby makes the striking observation:

> We really sing with that which leaves the body after death. It is in the cultivation of this mystery of mysteries, the soul, that most singers fail. The mental ideal is, after all, that which makes the singer. Patti possessed this ideal as a child, and with it the wonderful bodily qualifications that made her immortal.[18]

Thursby assures us that our vocal shortcomings can be overcome by ceaseless work, like Patti, who as a child worked and thought continuously how to elevate herself to the highest artistic interpretation of a certain passage.

Historical pianist Mark Hambourg deplores the fact that the recording technique requiring faultless technical playing has taken its toll on expression. The pianists seem to play just the same in the concert hall as in the recording studio, with the result of generating little pleasure through a lifeless performance, making the music amount to no more than many notes played in the accorded time "as the keys are manipulated on a speedy typewriter, but the soul is not there."[19] Jenny Lind's singing seems to have been the expression of the soul, as many other sources than Grillparzer testify:

> Her Art, with all its perfection, is but the outward interpretation of an inspiring Spirit ... a visible touch of heaven. In the words of the Address [an honor presented to her by the Swedish people]: "It is the beauty of the Soul that finds its expression through the medium of Song." It is the world beyond death, "of which, in Music's language, she has been the messenger to us." ...Whenever they spoke of her effect, they found themselves using terms that belonged to religion.[20]

Tosi stresses in glowing terms the importance of the heart in singing: "Oh, how

great a master is the heart." He urges singers to confess that they would not have reached the summit of their profession if they had not been its pupils. "Own that in a few lessons from it you learned the most beautiful expressions, the most refined taste, the most noble action, and the most exquisite graces." He even goes so far as to convince us that the heart "corrects the defects of nature, since it softens a voice that's harsh, betters an indifferent one, and perfects a good one." And now he comes to the most important point, saying that "when the heart sings you cannot dissemble nor has truth a greater power of persuading."[21] We are told that Malibran possessed this gift of communication to the highest degree. "Her impassioned soul, by some irresistible power of sympathy, communicated to others the sentiments which she so well experienced and expressed. Talent alone, whatever be its degree of superiority, is incapable of producing this magical effect: true feeling is the secret spell. That which emanates from the heart has alone the power to reach the hearts of others."[22]

Crescentini approaches the heart from music itself saying:

> Music reveals the heart and mind of those who perform her; consequently in order to attain perfection and execute a tender, religious, joyful, expressive or passionate piece well, the singer needs a sensitive heart, a penetrating mind and a sound intelligence: without those qualities he will never be able to execute the different sorts of music, running the risk of presenting just the opposite, insupportable in art in general and specially in music.[23]

Tosi and Crescentini stress the crucial role of the heart in singing that has been overshadowed in the 20th century through the practice and popularity of an intellectual approach to singing. This approach has now culminated in a kind of pseudo-expression persuading those listeners who listen intellectually to believe it to be genuine.

Verdi formulated his advice to advanced students of composition as follows: "Now put your hand on your heart and write."[24] We have seen in the Introduction that Rachmaninov also believed in this advice. The ideas Verdi put forth on the instruction of singing are to combine study of the past with modern declamation. It appears that Verdi wanted singers, who, like the students of composition could put their hand on their heart and sing. He pointed out clearly how they should be trained to attain this: "For singing I should like the students to have a wide knowledge of music; exercises in voice production; very long courses in solfeggi, as in the past; exercises for singing and speaking with clear and perfect enunciation." Having acquired a good singing technique and a sound knowledge of music, Verdi wished the student "to sing, guided only by his own feelings. This will be singing, not of such-and-such a school, but of inspiration. The artist will be an individual. He will be himself, or, better still, he will be the character he has to represent in the opera."[25] We see that Verdi definitely wanted singers to be individuals "who have something to say." Verdi wanted singers who can sing with the technique of the Old Italian School, but he wanted more than just "vocal finesse." He knew very well that only the perfect mastery of the voice allows the singer to sing with true feeling and emotion — in other words, with heart and soul. A fervent admirer of Patti, he praised her powers of expression: "Perfect equilibrium between singer and actress, a born artist in every sense of the word.... In the recitative preced-

ing the quartet in *Rigoletto*, when her father points out her lover in the tavern and says 'And you still love him?' and she replies, 'I love him.' I cannot describe the sublime effect of those words as she sang them."[26] Knowing that Verdi very rarely praised a singer makes this comment all the more special.

How to Stay in Command in the Expression of Feeling and Emotion

The singer has to identify with the true feeling and emotion in the song or aria he has to sing. Nathan already notices that not everyone has the gift "to identify the thoughts of others with their own" or has such a strong love of music "to give effect where feeling, unaided by the more showy blandishments of execution, is required."[27] To be able to give expression by identification with the character to be performed, it is extremely important not to get carried away by the emotions experienced. We have to make the audience believe we experience them at that moment. Hahn describes how the singer must proceed to satisfy both himself and the audience.

> In order to convey emotion, one must enter into an altered state which is neither complete and absolute abandonment of self, nor one's native personality, nor a cold and clever self-control. One must split off a different personality, but one must do it quite consciously. It is the ability to combine two distinct mental states that defines the talent of the singer.[28]

This is certainly the only way to give a truly balanced performance. To illustrate this desirable condition, the avowal of a clergyman saying, "I act the part, but in earnest!" can help. Jenny Lind broke off her operatic career fairly early because she "carried herself into her parts" and consequently exhausted herself to such an extent that she needed days to recuperate after performing.[29] Magda Olivero tells us: "I am like two persons: one lives in the character, and the other vigilantly watches, saying 'Why did you do this? Why did you do that?' It's all brain, like an electronic machine that perceives all ... absorbs all. Fortunately, I have this. All orders come from the brain."[30] She completely agrees with Hahn, putting his advice in practice.

Too Much "Expression" Leads Away from Expression

Since World War II the singing of Lieder has been dominated by an intellectually expressive approach. The expression is not organic; that is to say, it does not come out of the singing line but is applied to each note and syllable separately. Each note becomes an event in itself, overloaded with expression; there is no continuity. Compare this with the old recordings where the musical line takes precedence over the word.

Schubert is still every Lieder singer's favorite composer; it is highly interesting to notice his own ideas on the matter of expression of his songs. We know for a fact that Schubert was averse to great affectation in the performance of his songs. His close friend Leopold von Sonnleithner regularly attended when Schubert accompanied and coached

his own songs: "Above all he always kept strictly to the same tempo, except in the few cases where he clearly writes ritardando, morendo, accelerando in the score. Furthermore he never allowed violent expression in the performance." In this genre the task of the singer mostly is of a descriptive nature, according to Sonnleithner, and the song should be interpreted by the poet, the composer and the singer in a lyrical, not a dramatic, manner. "Especially in Schubert the true expression, the deepest emotion is already hidden in the melody as such and adequately supported in the accompaniment." Sonnleithner concludes that it follows, therefore, that stopping the flow of the melody or the accompaniment means a serious neglect of the intention of the composer damaging the action of the music.[31] The practice of performing Schubert songs in big venues has led to an exaggerated way of expression and prevents rendition of the songs in the truly authentic manner as sung in small intimate salons.

Expression Unaided by Vocal Beauty

Strangely enough everyone would agree that a beautiful voice is no absolute condition for giving expression as we can see from the following account: "Marianne Brandt rehearsed his [Liszt's] songs, a famous pianist of the old school accompanied her. 'Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen aß,' sounded with powerful dramatic expression, as I had never heard anything like it — thrilling to the very bone: 'der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlische Mächte.' Due to the direct power of expression one could momentarily forget that the singer was not in her prime anymore."[32] This anecdote might seem in conflict with the advice given above and would be true if Marianne Brandt sang in the current manner, but as she was trained historically she obviously gave the musical line more importance, allowing the expression to come through naturally.

The legendary contralto Schumann-Heink, who was filmed singing Schubert's *Erlking*, gives us a sample of singing with expression when the voice is no longer young.[33] This film is all the more interesting because an earlier recording of the *Erlking* with the singer in her prime is available.[34] Schumann-Heink at 66 is still singing with complete abandonment, introducing the different voices required for the *Erlking*. She is the communicator *par excellence*. Her body language without the use of physical gestures speaks volumes before she has even uttered a note. She draws us into the drama that develops before our fascinated eyes. Although she is lavish in giving a powerful expression and appears to experience the drama herself at that very moment, she stays completely in command of her performance (complying with Hahn's observation above). At the point where the *Erlking* threatens "So brauch ich Gewalt," she makes an unexpected forward move that really fortifies the text by its sharp contrast to the static posture that she maintained previously, making our hair stand on end. Her facial expression matches the text and is nowhere hampered by unwanted tension. It is obvious to see with what we know now that her voice is solidly anchored on the *appoggio* and her chest is up at all times, her shoulders rising slightly when she breathes high in the chest. In the next song on the film she stands like a statue and her voice is her major tool of expression, just once

she raises her arms with a charming gesture in "Trees."[35] Clearly noticeable is her inner smile at all times, and in the songs the smile is also very marked on her face. It must be mentioned that in the earlier of the two performances, 16 years earlier at age 50, of the *Erlking* she sings the song in the soprano setting of Bb (!) with a much smoother legato; however, notice how much more conducive the lyrical English songs "Trees" and "Pirate Dreams" are for the production of a mellow and legato singing sound undisturbed by the many consonants of the German language. Take good notice of her wonderful chest voice, strong and of a still thrilling expressive beauty. We realize that this is a singer who knows exactly what she does and when to do it. Her great art is that her expression seems to spring naturally from the contents of the song.

In extreme cases, beauty of voice and physique can be a definite impediment to the expression desired by the composer. Verdi flew into a rage on hearing that the role of Lady Macbeth was given to Tadolini,[36] otherwise a great favorite of his, and he listed his reasons, airing his astonishment that Tadolini had undertaken the part because she was far too gifted and fine for it.

> Tadolini has a beautiful and attractive figure, and I want Lady Macbeth to be ugly and evil. Tadolini sings to perfection, and I don't want Lady Macbeth to sing at all. Tadolini has a wonderful voice, clear, flexible, strong, while Lady Macbeth's voice should be hard, stifled and dark. Tadolini's voice is angelic; I want Lady Macbeth's voice to be diabolic.[37]

Verdi found his ideal Lady Macbeth in the singer Barbieri-Nini, whose experience with Verdi is mentioned in the previous chapter.

Expression in Religious Music

To meet the demands of religious music, the singer is faced with the communication of its spiritual contents, which ask for identification with and conviction of its all-embracing truths.

Braham seems to have been the exceptional singer who could condense the contents of a piece like Handel's *Israel in Egypt* in just a few words, captivating his audience as appears from the account of a listener:

> Braham said, "But the children of Israel went on dry land," and then paused; and every sound was hushed throughout the great space. And then, as if carved out upon the solid stillness, came these three little words: "Through the sea"; our breath failed us, our pulses ceased to beat, and we bent our heads, as all the wonder of the miracle seemed to pass over us with those accents. Awful, radiant, resonant, triumphant, he sat down, while the whole house thundered its applause.[38]

By reading accounts like this over and over again, we begin to understand that the role of the singer in religious repertoire really is identical with that of the priest and preacher. In our time of religious decay and empty churches, it seems a paradox that churches are always full whenever performances of Handel's oratoria and Bach's cantatas and passion music are being performed. The most convinced atheists are not ashamed to attend these performances. There is a tendency to ignore that the composer

certainly never meant this kind of music to be enjoyed for its own sake. He could use the music as a powerful means to bring home the truth of the message to the listener.

Singers like Jenny Lind and Clara Butt could sing religious music with genuine expression and people who attended their performances confessed to having had the experience of attending a church service. Herman Klein was a young boy of twelve when he heard Jenny Lind (at the age of 43) sing in a concert performance in Norwich in 1863 and although he could not judge her great art because of his tender age, the impression of her well preserved voice and sincere rendition of Agathe's prayer from *Der Freischütz* was a lasting one: "The voice, I remember perfectly, was as exquisitely clear and fresh as a young girl's; its sweet tones haunted me long afterward.... I shall never forget what she sang, or the rare wealth of religious sentiment with which she invested the prayer of Agathe."[39] Klein tells us that Jenny Lind actually knelt down on the concert platform while singing the prayer, just as the role demands on the stage.

Religious repertoire needs genuine expression more than any other repertoire. It can never attain the level of true communication if the singer cannot identify with its feeling and emotion, believing in the message he has to convey. Jenny Lind's rendering of the opening words "I know" of Handel's famous aria "I know that my Redeemer liveth" is reported to have had such a burning devotion that she created the impression of absolute conviction of the truth of what she was singing. A beautiful vocal display alone will never be sufficient to bring the grand message of this aria across as the statement that it is meant to be.

In the time of Nathan, the repetition of a word in a religious aria required variety of a kind that is completely unknown to the modern ear. He takes the example of the word "holy" that occurs nineteen times in Handel's song "Holy Lord Almighty," providing us with exact instructions to vary its expression "without departing from its devotional character."

Nathan continues to tell us that it is in this repertoire "that the singer of *mind* excels; for the soul chastens down the whole performance, and inspires him with the same power of feeling, the just meaning of the words, which must have dwelt in the breast of the composer while writing the music."[40] It seems that it is not for everyone to excel in this genre. A singer like Jenny Lind was overjoyed that she could transfer from singing opera on the stage to the performance of oratorio of which she says that the words make her feel like a better being. She could certainly have complied with Nathan's advice: "The first time of uttering the word *holy*, it should be sung with a degree of humble piety, which warms on a repetition into enthusiastic fervour; and, as the word is again and again repeated, the judgment of the singer should display itself by the variety of pious readings, which he is capable of giving."[41] The critics were jubilant about Jenny Lind's first Messiah performed in Liverpool 20 August 1850. "Her energy and brilliant execution of 'Rejoice greatly'; her expression in 'He shall feed his flock,' this divine melody fell from her lips like water from a spring; her tenderness in 'How beautiful are the feet'; her fervid devotion in 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'" Jenny Lind acknowledged, beside Garcia, from whom she says she learned "some few important things," only one teacher.

> My ideal was (and is) so high, that no mortal was to be found who, in the least degree, could satisfy my demands; therefore I sing after no one's "méthode"—only after that of the birds (as far as I am able); for their Teacher was the only one who responded to my requirements for truth, clearness and expression.[42]

We know from her biographers that Jenny Lind was an indefatigable worker given to practicing and perfecting her mastery of the most difficult technical vocal accomplishments in order to be able to give the full dramatic expression that she was endowed with naturally.

Some Special Lessons in Dramatic Expression

In the biographies of great singers we come across many testimonies telling of extreme awkwardness on their first stage appearances. Some, like Chaliapin, developed a great stage presence despite the fact that in his first performances he acted extremely woodenly. A phenomenon in Paris we meet in the persona of the teacher of the German baritone Ernst Pasqué,[43] who took some very special lessons in dramatic expression in singing from him. Pasqué was a student at the Paris Conservatory in 1872 where he was taught to sing beautifully but without any dramatic expression. He now applies for lessons with Delsarte,[44] the legendary drama teacher who is regarded as a genius in this field and who was an exceptionally gifted tenor in his prime as we read in an eyewitness account of Countess Marie d'Agoult: "I have heard an excellent singer, Delsarte. He renders Gluck's music in a way to make you shudder. It is Nourrit in his most beautiful moments, except for the voice that is detestable, but it is still more noble, more simple, more sustained than Nourrit."[45] Pasqué gives us inside information on Delsarte's manner of teaching. Beauty of tone is not in demand, on the contrary, when Pasqué presented himself in an aria he did not get very far with it. "He [Delsarte] had hardly heard a few measures when he stopped [me] with the strange remark: 'Good voice! However, much will have to be spoilt to improve it.'"

As Pasqué could not afford to pay for his lessons, Delsarte accepted him for the group lessons he gave. Our baritone soon noticed that the other pupils did not possess singing voices at all, yet hoped to attain fame and good fortune following Delsarte's method. The method rarely allowed for any singing and consists mainly of single tones all in the dark timbre, produced on O instead of A or rather OA, wherein the pupils were to put the expression Delsarte demanded. That could lead to some funny moments!

> "Just imagine" Delsarte taught, "a hall full of sick people suffering from the plague. Deserted by all, these wretches have fallen into its clutches. Terrible screams of anguish drown those of pain, the rattling of the dying. Then all of a sudden the ceiling opens and out of the heavenly blue sky an angel wings his way down, sent by the Almighty to alleviate the pain of the suffering. He is fully conscious of his holy mission, and his heart filled with endless love he descends whilst speaking words of heavenly consolation.... How would the voice of this angel sound? Which expression would you give your voices, if you were called upon to solve a similar task in a work of musical art?'"[46]

The pupils, trying to give the expression Delsarte desired, sang, "o-â-h!— l-â-o!— h-â-o!" in a row with their ugly voices, that they darkened as much as they could. They did not succeed.

Following Delsarte's instruction, the pupil was to sing at most the first few bars, usually only the first note of an aria. "If the expression of the first note and word is right, then you can sing the whole aria" was his dictum. So Delsarte kept Pasqué several months on the same aria, beginning with "Mais, quand je songe au nom de sa famille" and in the single word *mais* his pupil ardently put everything he possibly could of that which the part and the situation desired. Pasqué apparently succeeded, for Delsarte promoted him to the greater task of Tell's prayer. Pasqué now studied Rossini's composition, always with a covered sound of the *voix sombre* that Delsarte accepted as the only true method, thereby completely opposing the method of the conservatoire. Pasqué tells us that Delsarte himself could produce the most impressing and thrilling effect in the *voix sombre* when he sang the prayer. For months on end, Pasqué sang the aria and acted as well, using a chair representing his son Jemmy. He confessed that he later felt at home on stage immediately, being able to act his roles and that this was exclusively thanks to Delsarte's exercises.[47] It seems that Delsarte could awaken slumbering dramatic talents in his pupil, for Pasqué subsequently made a brilliant career.

Lillie de Hegermann-Lindencrone has also left us with a vivid account of Delsarte's talents as a pedagogue and performer. She tells us that the walls of his music room were decorated by drawings of faces depicting "every emotion that the human face is capable of expressing, such as love, sorrow, murder, terror, joy, surprise, etc." If Delsarte desired one of these emotions in the voice he would point at one of these drawings to get the right vocal expression. Lillie was requested to sing false in a certain passage that needed expression of great emotion, but she could not do it.

> To show that it could be done he sang it for me, and actually did sing it false. Curiously enough, it sounded quite right, tremolo and all. There is no doubt that he is a *great artiste*. One can see that [Jean-Baptiste] Faure and Coquelin (the actor) have both profited by his unique teaching. [Delsarte told her that there is] no art like that of making people believe what you want them to. [He teaches her also to] make your chin tremble; just try it once ... and everyone will be overcome.[48]

Lillie tried it on her audience and noticed the effect.

It is clear from the abovementioned that a talented pupil can be stirred into a greater awareness of his talents and profit greatly from lessons such as these. Artists like Jenny Lind and Chaliapin did not need a Delsarte; they possessed a magical power of expression and just needed the technique as a vehicle to follow their unfailing intuition. We are told that Malibran[49] spent hours singing scales and polishing her voice on the mornings of her performance, but "without ever trying to sing the role she had to sing that evening in order to save all her inspiration, however, to render her voice agile and obedient enough for all the artistic fantasies that she improvised so delightfully to be executed with the perfection that was hers always."[50]

It is nearly always counter-productive to practice the music of the concert on the same day. Your inspiration will then have the room to be creative for the performance.

Personal Experience Fortifies Expression in Singing

It is only logical that personal experience of the sentiments that the singer has to transmit will enhance the quality of expression he possesses. A singer's voice will mirror his heart and soul and consequently his personal life's experiences will influence his singing beneficially in most cases. Lilli Lehmann knew only too well what the singer has to go through; she tells us how she aspired to sing Isolde and she muses on all that has molded her into the great singer she had become:

> How much had I gone through! Love, misery, disappointments, illness, death of my loved ones, endless sorrow and all those many factors that mould a simple girl's heart into a complete artists soul. If only this "growing" would not hurt the poor heart so much. It is tortured and trodden upon, and if it is not destroyed and can achieve something from all the misery, well then it has to be something great to compensate for all the suffering.[51]

Another kind of personal experience is the ability of observation recognizing expression in other people, as, for instance, Pasta could when a little beggar boy approached her asking for alms to help his blind mother. Pasta gave him all she had and was praised for her charity and compassion by the friend who accompanied her. She reacted violently, exclaiming:

> And I am *not* virtuous! But when that child came begging to me, he begged like a great artist. In a flash, I could see in his gesture all the despair of his mother, all the poverty of their home, the clothes which they need and the biting cold which is their relentless enemy. If, when the scene called for it, *I* could discover a gesture so faithfully portraying every suggestion of indescribable misery, I should be a very great actress indeed.[52]

Perhaps this little incident and Pasta's reaction could give us a clue to her phenomenal means of expression and stimulate our own powers of observation.

Sincerity as the Key to Expression

Wondering about the reason of Pasta's greatness, Stendhal tells us that it lies not in the timbre of her voice, not in her technique and vocal control, not in the range of her voice, all of which are not abnormal or astonishing, but "her secret lies wholly in her deep and passionate sincerity—*Il canto che nell' anima si sente*, (the melody which echoes in the soul)—which, in the short space of a couple of bars, can enthral and fascinate the wariest spectator."[53]

Here we have arrived at a crucial quality that many historical singers possessed and without which a performance might surprise and even dazzle us but the impression will stay superficial. It is the sincerity in a singer that will enable him to convince us and above all move us, leading us into the world that the composer has created. To be able to sing with sincerity, the singer needs his voice to sound natural. The Old Italian School holds the key to the natural singing voice that we may acquire through

patient study and perseverance. With this key we can open a source of well-being in ourselves and eventually sing "the melody which echoes in the soul" of our listeners. Verdi's advice to his librettist — "Work yourself into a proper state of feeling and write some beautiful verses"[54] — might certainly apply to singers who are faced with the task of expressing feeling and emotion. We can learn from the Italians to cultivate the passion in our heart.

Taste and Expression: Mind and Soul

Concone begins his *Méthode* by making a clear division between the mechanical and the so-called mental element of vocal development. Duprez also makes this division, as we have seen previously. The mental element includes "The *Taste* and the *genuine and sincerely felt Expression*" in the interpretation of compositions. This mental element originates "straight from the soul and for that reason might not always be awakened by the skill that can only communicate an artificial or imitated expression accordingly."[55] We see that Concone concurs with Emma Thursby, quoted above.

Later Concone distinguishes between taste and expression quoting Castil-Blaize[56] who says: "One can possess lots of taste with a cold soul," so taste is more associated with the mind while expression is associated with the soul. Concone advises the singer to choose repertoire in a style that he likes best in order to succeed in giving all the expression susceptible of the composition.

The old masters are in complete unison on the instructions for the development of our natural singing voice; they give us the skill to sing with our own individual voice. They also knew that the secret of genuine expression is hidden in our soul and that only the well-developed natural voice can reveal it. Kelsey assures the singer who has gained complete control over his voice that "the vocal 'colours' exhibit themselves in response to the play of his emotions, and need little in the way of special training — always provided, of course, that he has any emotions to play upon! Far too many singers seem to lose the capacity of emotional expression during their technical training."[57] The singers who were taught to sing on subjective sensations are forced to give too much attention to these very sensations, keeping them from singing with abandonment and spontaneity, necessary conditions for expression. Currently, technique has become the visible expression of singing when technique in fact should be invisible. In all the great artists of the past, the audience was never aware of their technique, only the artistic results of their years of study.

To arrive at the perfect expression, Concone passes on the following advice of Castil-Blaize, who tells us to first try to understand the character of the song, how it relates to the meaning of the words, its phrasing, its very own tone, the tone that it supposes in the voice of the performer, the energy flowing from the composer to the poet, and the energy that you in your turn can give to the composer; "then abandon yourself to all the warmth inspired by these considerations. Imagine that you are at the same time the poet, the composer, the actor and the singer and you will have all the expression you can possibly give to the composition."[58] The keyword is "abandon your-

self" and that moment will come when you have mastered the technique of the Old Italian School, allowing you to sing with true spontaneity and infectiousness, conquering the hearts of your listeners.

Practical Hints for Interpretation and Expression

It seems a paradox that everyone agrees with that expression is something that is not to be taught and yet on a personal note it can be maintained that nowadays the power of expression is still to be found but not always given a fair chance. This is due for the greater part to the popularity of esteemed "authoritative" performances and recordings.

Listen to any present-day performance at random of well-known repertoire by current pianists and then play the same repertoire by historical pianists, preferably several. The advantage of choosing pianists is that they are solo performers, free to follow their own intuition and inspiration. We singers can therefore learn a lot from them in the way of expression. Another advantage of listening to a pianist is that your attention will be focused on his expression, whereas listening to a singer might keep your attention focused on the technique of the singer instead of his expression. You will be surprised how different the pianists' approach, handling and expression of the repertoire can be. Take, for instance, the Hungarian Rhapsodies of Liszt. The difference between the approach of the modern and historical pianists will be spectacular. The historical pianists, like Hambourg and Paderewski, take us into the exotic world of the gypsies, thereby bringing the rhapsodies to life and possibly confronting us with the gypsy in ourselves. Listening to their sensitive and emotional playing might well stir the feeling and emotion that are dormant in you and give you the confidence to bring them out in your performance. Take good notice of the daring they exhibit. They do not seem to be afraid of giving their individual interpretation of a piece, adding their (to modern standards) reckless ways of expression. Notice how your view of a certain piece can be broadened. One of the greatest and most frequently played composers, Chopin, tells his pupils "to play his own and other works as they feel them, and that a piece of music must be made alive by the performer's thoughts and feeling."[59] This must not be taken as controversial to what was previously said in this book about letting the composer play on your vocal instrument. Never forget that in doing so he also plays upon your feeling and emotion. So it seems to be a matter of communication and engagement. You put yourself wholeheartedly into the service of the composer, giving him all your treasures of talent, and he will take care of you. Do not be afraid to follow your intuition; it usually knows more than you yourself know rationally. Expression, the "je ne sais quoi," the indefinable will manifest itself if you let yourself be inspired by the historical performers. Choose new repertoire that is unknown to you and investigate it with your newly found voice. Let the music speak to you, think of what Mendelssohn said regarding words and music and of Flagstad who gives the music preference, let the music haunt you and your feeling and emotion will answer giving you confidence and courage to say what you have to say.

A Summary of Essential Directions for Historical Singing

If we read through " On the Formation of the Voice" and the "General Directions to Singers" of 1821 (Appendix 4), we will notice that they cover in three pages the main contents of this book. In "The Formation of the Voice," we are told that "each note should be taken up readily." "Readily" is an exceptionally good description of the act of preparing to sing promptly, quickly, instantly, without hesitation. The only way to start the voice readily is through the means of a good attack: a *coup de glotte*. Then follows the advice to practice with our readily started voice on the "monosyllable 'ah'" as the best suited for good mouth position resulting in a "free and clear tone"—free, not stuck in the throat, and clear, not passing through the nose.

The "General Directions to Singers" mentions in the few lines of introduction the importance of the smiling mouth position, called "Bocca Ridente" to be followed by the first advice "to keep the voice steady," meaning a well-supported vocal sound obtained by the squeeze of the chest.

Second, the voice should be "pleasing"; this means without any taints, as mentioned by Sir Henry Wood.

Third, the intonation should be perfect and will be when the larynx is well anchored and the sound is allowed to radiate out.

Fourth and fifth, pure vowels and clear articulation are the result of the independent functioning of the vibrator, resonator and articulator. Your real mouth is at the bottom of your throat and it is in the pharynx that the vowels are formed.

Sixth, regular agility practice by singing scales renders the voice pliable and preserves its freshness.

Seventh, swell and diminish the sound singing the first vocalize of Rossini that is virtually the same as that given on the page " On the Formation of the Voice."

Eighth, Jenny Lind's *solfeggi* introduce: "solfaing with the Monosyllables, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, &c." in a very artistic and playful manner; however, they should not be attempted until the singer can vocalize perfectly on "ah." If solfaing is started too soon it will do more harm than good.

Ninth, to blend the registers, avoid forcing the chest voice too high but join chest and head in such a way that both registers can be used in the few notes above middle C.

Tenth, sing your exercises in front of a mirror to correct unwanted facial distortions.

Eleventh, practice more frequently for shorter periods and make it a rule to practice standing up. "And to appear at the Piano-forte with a cheerful countenance." This is a valuable reminder of a smiling mouth position and well worth repeating.

Twelfth, disciplined and well-chosen spots for taking breath must be strictly adhered to. Note values, particularly at the end of phrases, must be strictly observed.

Thirteenth, the right posture for singing—"the body should be kept erect and the head rather elevated"—favors good breath control and renders our general appearance composed and noble.

Fourteenth, it is customary to use half-voice, *mezza di voce* or a *crescendo* (often paired with a *ritardando*), as a means of preparation for a cadenza; it prepares the audience for the excitement to come.

Fifteenth, our singing should be *legato*, "the tones of the voice must be united."

Sixteenth, if the trill does not come spontaneously, it can be practiced "with the greatest care and attention" beginning on the higher note of the two.

Seventeenth, these were the times when the singers introduced their own embellishments that had to be in good taste and harmony with the message of the song.

We notice that the concept of resonance in its present-day meaning is never mentioned except indirectly in the ninth direction and then in a negative way as a warning to avoid singing in the throat or through the nose.

After reading the foregoing chapters that give us access to the profound wisdom of the historical method, the words of appendix 4 should begin to speak for themselves. Similarly, the writings of the great masters such as Tosi, Mancini, Garcia and both Lampertis will speak to us, urgently telling us that the Italian School is not Old but Modern and Universal. There is no shortage of potentially great and beautiful voices waiting to bring joy and happiness to their possessors, who are burning to learn how to cultivate and develop them as the author has discovered with her pupils. The voyage of vocal discovery in the historical manner has been and is the most thrilling experience of the author's life and has fortified her desire to share it with the readers of this book. If singers are motivated and encouraged to undertake the voyage of vocal discovery, putting their trust and confidence in the teachings of the great masters, this book will have well and truly fulfilled its purpose.

Appendix 1

Jenny Lind Solfeggi

* Translation "Come to me!"

XII

Appendix 2

Rossini Gorgheggi (Vocalizes)

Gorgheggi e Solfeggi.

Twenty two

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2

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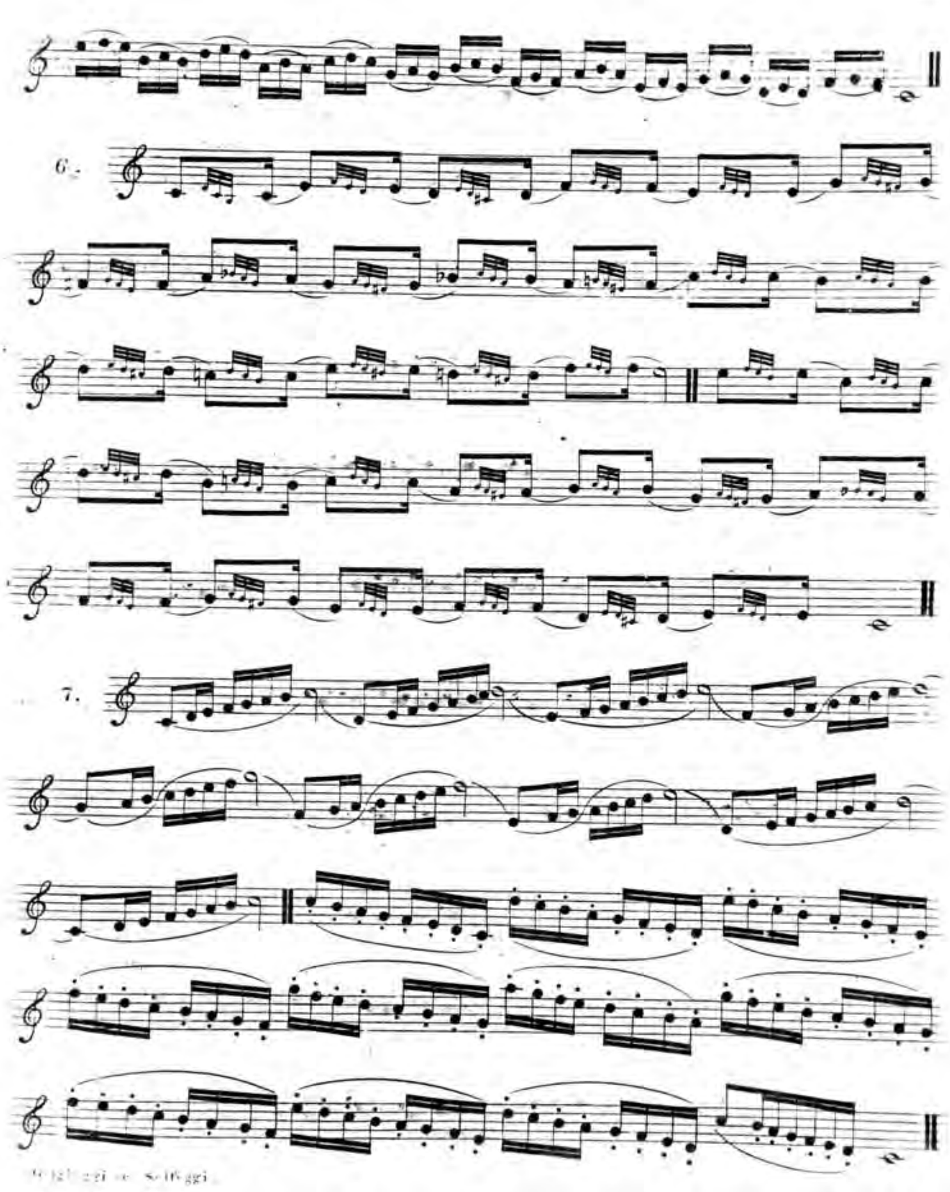
the third time very quick and loud.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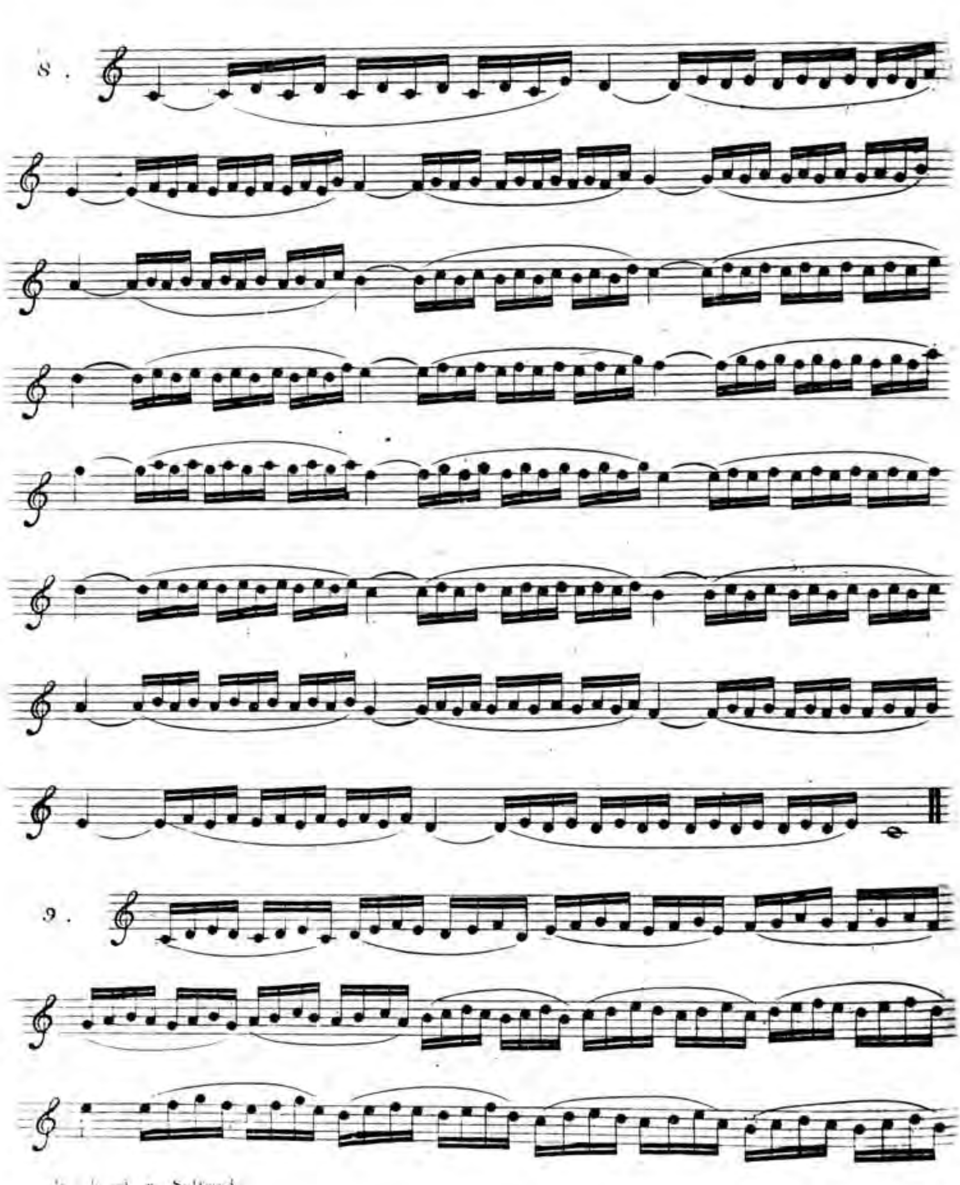
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Gorgheggi e Solfeggi.

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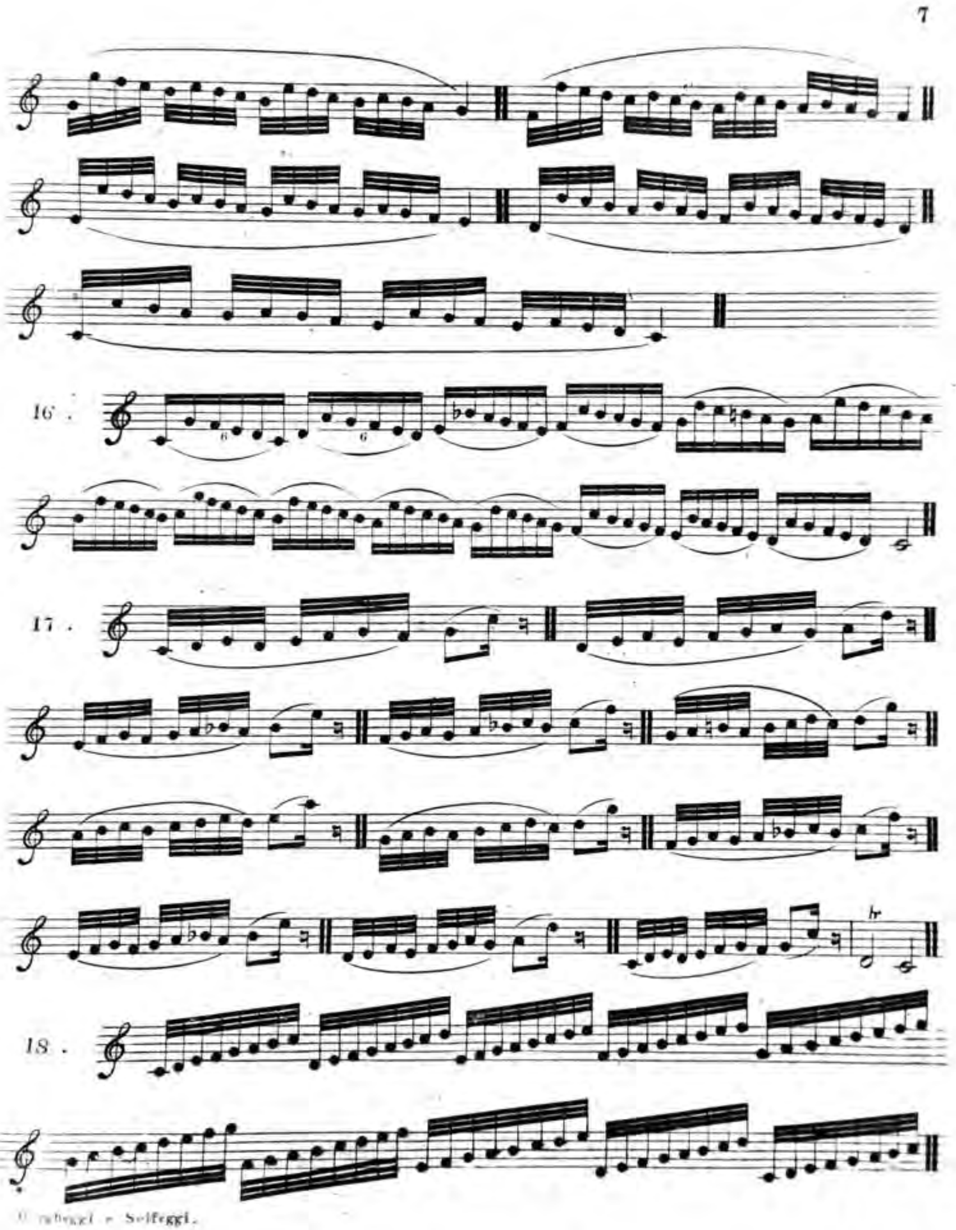
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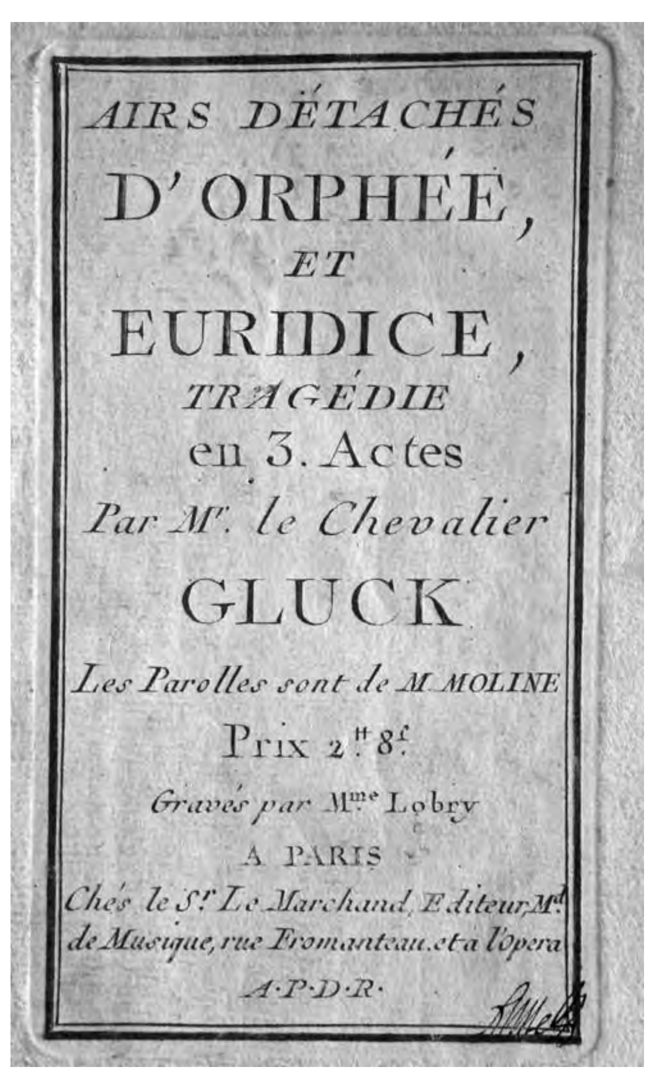
Gorgheggi e Solfeggi.

Appendix 3

Cover: Airs détachés d'Orphée et Euridice par Gluck; Air: J'ai perdu



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A·P·D·R·

19
Andante
Orphée
J'ay perdu mon
Eu-ri- -di-ce rien n'e- -
- - -gale mon malheur
sort cru- -el quelle ri-
- -gueur rien n'e- -gale mon ma
- -lheur je succombe a ma dou
- - -leur Euri-dice
Euri - dice reponds
quel su-pli-ce reponds

Appendix 4

The Singer's Assistant "On the Formation of the Voice"; "General Directions to Singers"

ON THE FORMATION OF THE VOICE.

The formation of the Voice is the most essential point to a Singer, he must by a careful and constant course of study, learn to give out every Note with purity, equality and force. To effect this desirable purpose each note should be taken up readily, and sustained firmly, gradually swelling the sound to Fortissimo, and then decreasing it to Pianissimo, this is called in Italian filar la voce or Messa di voce, and cannot be too strongly recommended, being the principal source of expression. This gradation in the force of the sounds is generally expressed by the figure of a lozenge placed over a note, thus:

Each note in the foregoing exercise must be sustained the length of four Crotchets, in slow time; to effect this the pupil must take as much breath as he can, and give it out slowly, avoiding any motion of the tongue lips &c. this difficult, yet absolutely necessary qualification of the vocal art, can only be acquired by frequent, yet moderate practice.

To keep the voice to the proper pitch, the upper note of each chord in the Accompaniment must be struck four times, holding the other two notes pressed down.

The monosyllable "AH," is the best adapted to give the pupil a proper formation of the mouth, its position in uttering this syllable being most favourable to produce a free and clear tone.

NB: The pupil should rest a few seconds after each note to give time to the lungs to recover from their exertion.

9193

General Directions to Singers.

When the Student prepares to sing he should prefer a standing posture, and should open his mouth moderately and gracefully, so as to discover both rows of teeth, this the Italians call "Bocca Ridente" the most important Rules in Singing are.

1st To keep the voice steady.

2d To form the voice in as pleasing a tone, as is in the power of the Singer.

3d To be exactly in tune, as without a perfect intonation it is useless to attempt singing.

4th To vocalize correctly, that is to give as open and clear a sound to the vowels as the nature of the language will admit.

5th To articulate each syllable perfectly, the mere utterance of sounds without a distinct articulation of the words, does not deserve to be called singing.

NB: In pronouncing the words, double consonants in the Italian language must be particularly expressed, and care must be taken not to make those that are single appear double.

6th To sing the scales frequently, allowing to each sound the duration of a Semibreve, which must be sung in the same breath.

7th To practise often the Messa di voce. that is the swelling and diminishing of the sounds (see page 3.)

8th To exercise the voice by solfaing with the Monosyllables, DO, RE, MI, FA, SOL, &c.

9th Never to force the voice in order to extend its compass from the voce di petto upwards, but rather to cultivate the voce di testa, or what is called Falsetto, in order to unite it easily and imperceptibly to the voce di petto, for fear of incurring the disagreable habit of singing in the throat or through the nose, which are great faults in a singer, the acute sounds particularly, must never be forced, or they will be rendered similar to shricks.

10th Never to discover any pain or difficulty in practising singing, by distortions of the mouth, or grimace of any kind: this may be a-voided by examining the countenance in a looking glass during the performance of difficult passages, or practising before a friend.

11th To sing a little at a time, but often, and if standing so much the better, and to appear at the Piano-forte with a cheerful countenance.

12th To take breath in proper time, that is to say when the periods or portions of the melody allow, they generally terminate on the accen-ted part of the bar.

This Rule is the more necessary, as by dwelling too long upon the last note of a musical period, the Singer looses the opportunity afford-ed of taking breath without breaking the passage.

13th The words must never be broken or divided without the most urgent necessity of either a long passage or of an affecting expression. It is a great fault to take breath, audibly (except where the expression requires it) as it appears as if you were in pain, and every thing of that kind must be avoided; to prevent this the body should be kept erect, the head rather elevated and the throat in a line with the body, that there may be no angle or curve in the wind pipe, to prevent the free entrance and exit of the air.

14th A good mezza di voce or swell of the voice must always precede the ad libitum pause 𝄐 and Cadenza.

15th In singing, the tones of the voice must be united, except in the case of Staccato notes.

16th Practise the shake with the greatest care and attention; it generally begins with the higher of the two notes and ends with the lower (see page 15.)

17th The embellishments introduced into an air should be suited to its cha-racter, and the meaning of the words.

Lastly. Occasionally copy some music to accustom the eye to divide the time quickly into its proportions.

Notes

Introduction

1. Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto ii, p. 194.

2. Singers of the 19th century and before. They were trained in the method of the Old Italian School. Also called historical singers.

3. Method of singing developed in Italy in the 17th century and for the greater part practiced by the then popular castrati. Various conservatories were founded which all taught along the same principles of developing the voice. Quite a number of famous castrati left books of instruction showing complete agreement in their contents.

4. Wood, *The Gentle Art of Singing*, London, 1930, p. 8. Sir Henry Wood was accompanist of Manuel Garcia when the latter taught in London.

5. Hambourg, *The Eighth Octave*, London, 1951, p. 28.

6. "The best argument to prove the excellence and the value of this art [singing] is without doubt experience itself, which is proved to every man through the wondrous effects which are produced in the human heart: by an occult divine force the heart is seized and turned and turned again by its talent. Now it disturbs, now it speeds up, now fills with love, or pride, now moves to a smile and now to a tear, and all this is the result of the virtue of song." Mancini, *Reflections on Figured Singing*, translated and edited by Edward V. Foreman, Repr. ed., Minneapolis, 1996, pp. 4–5.

7. Figes, *Natascha's Dance*, London, 2002, pp. 542–43.

8. Wood, *The Gentle Art of Singing*, p. 8.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Manuel Garcia II (1805–1906), one of the greatest and most brilliant teachers of the Old Italian School which method of singing he clearly and meticulously described for posterity in his book *Traité Complet de l'Art du Chant*, Paris, 1847. Summarized in *Hints on Singing*, London, 1894. Many famous singers were his pupils such as Jenny Lind, Mathilde Marchesi, Charles Santley, Julius Stockhausen to name but a few. We can trace second and third generation pupils among the most celebrated singers like Melba and Chaliapin. Garcia invented the laryngoscope enabling him to observe the action of the glottal lips. This invention later contributed to the misunderstanding of the method of the Old Italian School of Singing because it transferred the art of singing from the realm of empiricism into the realm of medical science causing its decline. The immense and comprehensive knowledge of Garcia forms a treasure trove for the singer who wishes to develop his voice in the manner of the Old Italian School of Singing. For more information on Garcia: *Garcia the Centenarian, and His Times,* by Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, New York, 1908.

12. Blanche Marchesi (1863–1940) daughter of Mathilde Marchesi and herself a brilliant singer with a dazzling technique. She continued to teach in the method of the Old Italian School. She made some fascinating recordings that clearly demonstrate her great artistry.

13. Marchesi Mathilde (1821–1913) illustrious singing teacher. Her pupils became famous stars: Melba Calvé, Eames, Arral and Alda to name just a few. She left her singing method *Bel Canto: A Theoretical & Practical Vocal Method*, repr. New York, 1970.

14. *The Marchesi School*, Pearl Gemm, 0067, tracks 1 & 2.

15. Blanche Arral (1864–1945) Belgian soprano with a phenomenal technique and a very enterpris-

ing personality who travelled with her own opera company around the world. Pupil of the celebrated baritone Alfred Cabel and Mathilde Marchesi. She possessed a soprano of great brilliance and agility. The joy in singing, preserved into her seventies is infectious. Her autobiography as told to well-known writer Ira Glackens is one of the most colourful and adventurous of a soprano in the 19th century. She preserved her wonderful voice and zest for life well into her seventies as we can hear in her radio broadcasts of 1935 with "Monsieur Mac" as she calls him with her charming French accent.

16. Arral, *The Extraordinary Operatic Adventures of Blanche Arral*, Portland 2002, pp. 298–300.

17. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, Paris, 1866, p. 22.

18. Cinti-Damoreau, *Méthode de Chant*, Paris, 1849, introduction by J.-L. Heugel, p. 4.

19. Nimbus Records, *Tetrazzini*, Prima Voce, NI 7808, track 7. Nimbus Records, *Tetrazzini*, Vol.2, Prima Voce, NI 7891, track 11.

20. Sergei Lemeshev (1902–1977) Russian tenor possessing a voice of great beauty. Recorded and filmed.

21. Leonid Sobinov (1868–1934) Russian tenor who became a legend during his lifetime. He possessed the typical Russian sweet toned tenor voice. Recorded.

22. Ivan Kozlovsky (1900–1993) Famous Russian tenor who sang with great dramatic expression. Recorded and filmed.

23. Ferruccio Tagliavini (1913–1995) Italian tenor and true representative of the Old Italian School of Singing. Recorded and filmed.

24. Jussi Björling (1911–1960) Swedish tenor of great renown, trained in the method of the Old Italian School of Singing by his father David Björling also a tenor gifted with a voice of great beauty. He founded a quartet of his sons with Jussi as boy alto and toured extensively with the quartet in America. Recorded and filmed extensively.

25. Richard Tauber (1891–1948) Austrian-Jewish tenor with a voice as sweet as honey. Perfect technique in the manner of the Old Italian School. Enjoyed immense popularity. Recorded and filmed extensively.

26. Richard Tucker (1913–1975) American Jewish tenor who originally was a cantor, but switched to opera where he made a great career at the New York Metropolitan. His performance of Radames under Toscanini's baton is preserved and available on DVD.

27. Tito Gobbi (1913–1984) Italian baritone gifted with a voice of great beauty. He had a long and successful career worldwide.

28. Fedor Chaliapin (1873–1938) Pupil of the tenor Dimitri Usatov (1847–1913) who was a "grandson" of Garcia through his teacher Camillo Everardi (1824–1899). So Chaliapin was a true representative of the Old Italian School. He created the roles of *Boris Godunov*, *Ivan the Terrible* and *Mephisto* and gave a new impulse to opera singing and acting in Russia. He recorded extensively and can be seen singing in the film of *Don Quichotte* to the music of Jacques Ibert.

29. Jacob van Lennep (1802–1868) Famous Dutch novelist known for his sense of humor, prolific writer of historical novels. Respected patrician who promoted Dutch literature and poetry by editions of Vondel, Multatuli and his father the poet David Jacob van Lennep.

30. Hans-Georg Burghardt (1909–1993) German composer who created his very own musical idiom by using a style that is firmly based on traditional values however with a modern touch reaching into the future. He was a prolific song composer. His other works comprise symphonies, opera, piano and organ works. The harmonium occupies a special place in his work and the music that he wrote for this instrument brings out its soul in a compelling manner. The listener experiences the "harmony of the spheres."

31. Franklyn Kelsey (1891–1958) English bass. Studied with Marcel Journet in Paris. Journet was a well-known bass trained in the Old Italian School of Singing, he has been recorded. Kelsey made the transition from modern singing to historical singing and became first bass of the British National Opera Company. Then he sang in the Sadler's Wells Theatre (now English National Opera) and in Covent Garden. He performed regularly for the radio. He taught at the University of South Wales. After his retirement he worked as a pedagogue. As a music critic he published many articles on historical singing in English and American periodicals beside his excellent book *The Foundations of Singing*, London, 1950.

32. Mancini, Giovanni Battista (1714–1800) Singer and pedagogue of great renown. *Pensieri e riflessione pratiche sopra il canto figurato*, Vienna 1774. Pioneer of singing pedagogy whose instructions are still invaluable to the singer who wishes to sing in the manner of the Old Italian School.

33. Pier Francesco Tosi (1647–1727) Italian castrato singer of great fame who left us his valuable singing instructions, *Observations on the Florid Song*, translated by Mr. Galliard, London, 1727, repr.

1987 ed. by Michael Pilkington. Tosi is reported to have sung with a great deal of expression and passion.

34. Isaac Nathan (1791–1864) Canterbury, England. Jewish singer and composer. Pupil of Domenico Corri (1746–1825) who was himself a pupil of the great singing teacher Nicola Porpora (1686–1768). Set poems of Lord Byron to music: *Hebrew Melodies*. Emigrated to Australia where he received the name "Father of Australian Music." Left us his fascinating book *Musurgia Vocalis, an Essay on the History and Theory of Music and on the Qualities, Capabilities and Management of the Human Voice*, London, 1836. A source of inspiration to the singer. As a Jew Nathan was also well acquainted with the singing of the Jewish cantors famous for their stupendous singing technique. Nathan is therefore a special authority on singing because he was closely associated with the two main schools of real performers on the larynx, Italian and Jewish.

35. Kelsey, in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (July 1951), p. 300.

36. Mancini, *Practical Reflexions on Figured Singing*, Article VI, p. 27.

37. Bashkirtseff, Marie, *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, transl by Mathilde Blind, London, 1890, p. 28.

Chapter 1

1. William James Henderson (1855–1937) famous American music critic, who studied singing with an Italian teacher. He could therefore write trustworthy comments on the singing of the great historical singers of his time. He also wrote many books including *The Art of the Singer*, New York, 1906.

2. Wechsberg, *Red Plush and Black Velvet*, London, 1962, p. 56.

3. Dame Nellie Melba (1861–1931) Australian born legendary historical soprano. She reigned supreme at Covent Garden for many years. Also in America, where she saved the Manhattan Opera from bankruptcy. Her voice is silvery, brilliant and crystal clear, her technique is perfect, her musicianship outstanding, she was an accomplished pianist as well. Her perfection seems to irritate some critics who accuse her of lack of expression. She was one of those rare singers, however who give the composer's ideas precedence and interpret his intentions. Her singing is marked by the right tempo, perfect phrasing and voice production combined with perfect diction. Composers of the day considered her a great artist and consequently wrote opera and songs for her. She created the first Mimi in Puccini's opera *La Bohème* in Covent Garden, after studying the part with Puccini. She was recorded extensively. Aspiring singers who wish to sing in the historical method are strongly advised to listen to her recordings.

4. "Voiced attack": this expression seems a paradox, for the simple reason that a good attack means precisely that the voice is attacked or started from silence. If the attack is "voiced" which implies that the vocal cords are already vibrating, it can never lead to a well-focussed tone. It does not seem an improvement on a "soft attack."

5. Charles Lunn (1838–1906) English tenor and brilliant teacher as well as writer of one of the best books on the Old Italian Method: *The Philosophy of Voice,* 9th ed. London, 1900.

6. Lunn, *Philosophy of Voice*, p. 84.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

8. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 49.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

10. Garcia, *L'Art du Chant,* 1847, reprint edition, p. 25.

11. Marcel Journet (1867–1933) French bass. Nimbus CD, Prima Voce, NI 7822, track 1.

12. Marchesi, "*L'Art du Chant,"* Leipzig, 1890, pages III and 3.

13. Sir Morell Mackenzie (1837–1892) famous London physician and throat specialist who knew and treated many historical singers. He wrote *The Hygiene of the Vocal Organs*, London, 1886, based on his extensive practical experience.

14. Idem, "*Hygiene of the Vocal Organs*," London, 1886, pp 119–120.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

16. Louisa Tetrazzini (1871–1940) Italian historical soprano with dazzling coloratura technique. After a career in South America she created a big hit in Covent Garden in *La Traviata* during the season that Melba was in Australia and from then on her career took wings in England and America. She was a great friend of Caruso and sang at his funeral in Naples. Her top notes are extraordinary generous and brilliant and fortunately we can admire her singing when she is still in her prime. She was one of the great rivals of Melba who considered herself more sophisticated. Tetrazzini's singing might be classified as intoxicating through its infectious joy and open throated Italian exuberance. She recorded extensively.

17. Lunn, *Philosophy of Voice*, pp. 102–103.
18. Lamperti, Francesco. *A Treatise on the Art of Singing*, London, 1877, p. 7.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
20. Sir Charles Santley (1834–1922) English historical baritone. He studied first in Italy with Gaetano Nava and then in London with Manuel Garcia.
21. Levien, "*Sir Charles Santley, A Lecture*" London approx. 1924, p. 15.
22. Marcella Sembrich (1858–1935) great historical soprano who also was a virtuoso on the piano and the violin. Liszt advised her to take up singing. Pupil of both Lampertis. She recorded extensively.
23. Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839–1910) and Francesco Lamperti (1813–1892). Son and father, teachers of the Old Italian School. Pupils include Bispham, Sembrich, Schumann- Heink and Stagno. Lamperti Jr. wrote *The Technics of Bel Canto,* New York*,* 1905.
24. Hartog, *Beroemde Zangeressen* (Famous Singers), Amsterdam, 1916, p. 274.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 268–269 "Through her perfection in the best method of singing, there was not the slightest negative influence with the advancing years; on the contrary one might say that the art of her singing became steadily greater."
26. Jerome Hines (b.1921) American bass-baritone. *Great Singers on Great Singing,* New York, 1982.
27. Cornell MacNeil (b.1922) American baritone.
28. Hines, *Great Singers on Great Singing,* p. 154.
29. Jenny Lind (1820–1887) legendary Swedish soprano called "the Swedish Nightingale" a pupil of Garcia in 1841/42. Her singing was extremely suggestive and caused riots of ardent fans at the theatres wishing to obtain a ticket. She abandoned her operatic career after a few years, however to switch to oratorio and concerts. Mendelssohn, Schumann and Meyerbeer were her ardent admirers and wrote works for her, as did Verdi with his opera *I Masnadieri*.
30. Schmitt, *Grosse Gesangschule für Deutschland*, Munich,1854.
31. Rockstro, *Jenny Lind, the "Method,"* p. 17. "Naturally he does not mean that you are to attack a note twice; but that, before you sound the note, the larynx must be properly prepared in the position in which the forthcoming sound lies, whether high or low. The result of this is a firm attack; and as soon as you have sounded one note, you must spring so nimbly on all those above-or below it- that no rift can be detected between the sounds; and in this way, the completion of the phrase is accomplished without a break. For instance the notes a-c-e above middle c must so hang together that they make one whole; and this results from binding and striking them, at one and the same time — if I may so express myself— though it is almost impossible to explain this clearly in words...It lies in the flexibility of the larynx, and must therefore be practiced. Sing your exercise, then, so that this flexibility of the throat may be quickly developed. The attack of the single notes will thus be improved; and the string of notes will follow."
32. Emma Thursby (1854–1931) American soprano.
33. Hermine Rudersdorff (1822–1882) Russian-Ukranian born soprano who settled in America at the end of her singing career to teach. Pupil of Bordogni and Micherout.
34. McCandless Gipson, *The Life of Emma Thursby*, p. 163.
35. Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947) Venezuelan born French composer and singer whose fascinating speeches on singing are compiled in *On Singers and Singing* (Du Chant), London, 1990, p. 84.
36. Jean Baptiste Faure (1830–1914) French baritone and writer of *La Voix et le Chant Traité Pratique*, Paris, 1886.
37. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 84.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
39. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing,* p. 14.
40. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 92.
41. Mary Garden (1874–1967) Scottish soprano and Debussy's favorite Mélisande. She recorded extensively.
42. Brower and Cooke, *Great Singers on the Art of Singing*, New York: Dover, 1996, p. 64.
43. Garden and Biancolli*, Mary Garden's Story*, p. 92. "If anybody is going to study voice, I say take the Italian method. When you sing correctly in that method you can sing any language and any repertoire. Your voice is then placed: gloriously open and free."
44. Melba, *Melba Method*, London, 1926, p. 7.
45. Gracie Fields (1898–1979) popular singer with a voice of great agility who started in music hall and advanced into singing in films. Tetrazzini heard her sing arias from *La Traviata* and advised her to change to opera. But Gracie did not want to change.

46. Judd, *The Physiology of the Voice,* London, 1951, p. 54.
47. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, p. 52.
48. Adelina Patti (1843–1919) Italian born American soprano and reigning “queen of song” of the 19th century sopranos. Golden voiced child prodigy turned into a magical singer who charmed her audiences including emperors and kings for over 60 years. Her legacy in recording is limited but at the age of 63 she can still enthrall us with her superb phrasing, the wonderful warm quality of her voice and her powerful and thrilling expression and interpretation. Greatly admired by Verdi.
49. Proschowsky, *The Way to Sing*, Boston, 1923, pp. 100–101.
50. *Aspecten van de Stem* (Aspects of the Voice), p. 87.
51. Husler and Rodd-Marling, *Singen*, Mainz, 1965, diagram pp. 100–101.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
54. John McCormack (1884–1945) Irish tenor. He sang superbly and was a perfect representative of the Old Italian School, studied in Italy with Vincenzo Sabbatini. Caruso acknowledged him as his superior. He recorded extensively.
55. CD by Nimbus Records NI 7808, Track 7.
56. Gattey, *Luisa Tetrazzini*, Portland, 1995, p. 225.
57. Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, the editions of 1774 and 1777 comp. transl. and edited by Foreman, Minneapolis, 1996, p. 7.
58. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 109.
59. Blanche Marchesi, *Singer's Pilgrimage*, London, 1923, p. 22.
60. Emma Calvé (1858–1942) French historical soprano. Studied with Rosine Laborde and Mathilde Marchesi. She became the most celebrated Carmen of her day. She recorded extensively.
61. *The Complete Victor Recordings*, Romophone 81024–2 track 22.
62. Pearl Gemm 93312 track 16.
63. Ivor Newton (1892–1981) well known English accompanist. He wrote an interesting book about his career that associated him with the great singers like Chaliapin, Flagstad, Melba and Tetrazzini of his day: *At the Piano, the World of an Accompanist*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966.
64. Idem, *At the Piano*, p. 232.
65. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, pp. 82–83.
66. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 12.
67. Clara Louise Kellogg (1842–1916) one of the first American divas.
68. Idem, *Memoirs of an American Prima Donna*, London, 1913, pp. 368–369.
69. Julius Stockhausen (1826–1906) German baritone, pupil of Garcia. Famous for his German Lied interpretations. He became a well-known pedagogue and wrote his *Gesangs Methode,* Leipzig, 1884.
70. Félia Litvinne (1860–1936) Russian dramatic soprano. She recorded extensively: *The Complete Félia Litvinne*, 2CD set by Marston Records 52049–2. In her book *Ma Vie et mon Art,* Paris, 1933 she explains her technique.
71. Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861–1936) Austrian contralto, whose powerful voice of great compass we can enjoy on many recordings. She sang well into her seventies and possessed great expression coupled with a crystal clear pronunciation.
72. Lunn, *Philosophy of Voice*, p. 106.
73. Brower and Cooke, *Great Singers on the Art of Singing*, pp. 109–110.
74. Minnie Hauk (1851–1929) American born soprano of German origin. Pupil of Courteau and Errani (1823–1897). First American Carmen, Juliet and Minnie (!). Also brilliant career in Europe.
75. Idem, *Memories of a Singer*, London, 1925, p. 255.
76. See also the instructions of Mancini and Lunn for the mouth position in chapter 5.
77. *Farewell Appearance of Dame Nellie Melba in Opera at Covent Garden*. Eklipse Records Ltd. 1992.
78. Arthur Rubinstein (1887–1982) Polish born American pianist
79. *Chaliapin*, Nimbus Records, Prima Voce, NI 7823/4, remark of Arthur Rubinstein in the commentary of Victor Borovsky.
80. Hahn, *On Singing and Singers*, p. 73.
81. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, pp. 225–226.
82. Charles Gounod (1818–1893) French composer. *Mémoires d'un Artiste*, Paris, 1896, pp. 99–100. Engl. Edition. *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, London, 1896, pp. 69–70.
83. Alessandro Moreschi (1858–1921) soprano castrato. The last castrato called “the Angel of Rome” must have had a magical voice. Fortunately he has been recorded and although he was past his prime

we get a wonderful impression of the castrato voice. *The Last Castrato, Complete Vatican Recordings*, Pearl Opal CD 9823.

84. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, Chapter II.

85. Andreas Herbst (1588–1666) German composer and *Kapelmeister*. *Musica Moderna Prattica*, Nürnberg, 1653.

86. Stockhausen, *Gesangs-Methode*, p. 18.

87. Filippo Balatri (1682–1756) castrato who left us his memoirs *Frutti del Mondo, esperimentati da F.b., nativo dell'Alfea in Toscana* 1735. He also wrote 9 volumes of autobiography *Vita e Viaggi di F.B.* As this found its way to Moscow it was kept well hidden behind the Iron Curtain and was only mentioned in a Russian magazine that is not widely known to Western experts on baroque music history. The edition of this manuscript by Maria di Salvo from Milan is shortly to be published.

88. Wunnicke, *Die Nachtigall des Zaren*, München, 2010, pp. 100–103.

89. Felix Despiney, *Physiologie de la Voix et du Chant,* Paris, 1841, p. 6–7. Doctor of medicine and surgeon in Paris who dissected numerous human as well as animal larynxes.

90. Idem, pp. 6–7.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

92. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 8.

93. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing,* p. 44.

94. Helen Keller, *The Story of my Life*, p. 45.

95. Faure, *La Voix et Le Chant*, p. 54, "Attaque du Son."

96. Herman Klein (1856–1934) English critic and teacher. Pupil of Garcia. Many publications on singing.

97. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, 13–14. After describing the right posture, mouth position (the real mouth of the singer ought to be considered the Pharynx) Garcia proceeds to explain the attack in his simple and straightforward manner answering Klein's questions:

> "Q. What follows after the preparation above noted? A. The actual articulation or 'stroke of the glottis.' Q. What do you mean by the stroke of the glottis? A. The neat articulation of the glottis that gives a precise and clean start to a sound. Q. How do you acquire that articulation? A. By imitation, which is the quickest of all; but in the absence of a model, let it be remembered that by slightly coughing we become conscious of the existence and position of the glottis, and also of its shutting and opening action. The stroke of the glottis is somewhat similar to the cough, though differing essentially in that it needs only the delicate action of the lips and not the impulse of the air. The lightness of the movement is considerably facilitated if it be tried with the mouth shut. Once understood, it may be used with the mouth open on any vowel. The object of this is that at the start sounds should be free from the defect of slurring up to a note or the noise of breathing."

98. *Ibid.*

99. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 69.

100. Antonina Nezhdanova (1873–1950) Russian historical soprano pupil of Masetti. One of the most beautiful coloratura voices of her time. She sang with utter perfection, her warm and brilliant soprano conveying the message of the song or aria with an amazing simplicity, quite rare for a prima donna. Her voice stayed fresh well into her seventies, as we can hear in her recording of the Glinka duet with the tenor Kozlovsky on Pearl GEMM CD 9995 track 3. She is a wonderful exponent of the Old Italian School.

101. Melba, *Melba Method*, London 1926, p. 7.

Chapter 2

1. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, p. 48.

2. Panzera, *50 Mélodies Françaises*, Paris, 1964, p. 29.

3. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, p. 63.

4. Salomon, de. *Méthode de Chant*, handwritten manuscript of 1833, p. 4.

5. Mattia Battistini (1856–1928) Italian baritone "La gloria d'Italia" or "Il rè dei baritoni" as he was called. Splendid representative of the Old Italian School of Singing as we can hear on his recordings. He kept his voice amazingly fresh throughout his career of more than fifty years and gave his last concert in 1927!

6. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, p. 29.

7. Levien*, Sir Charles Santley,* London, 1927, pp. 15–16.

8. Girolamo Crescentini (1762–1846) Famous castrato who spent many years in Paris as a favorite of Napoleon. He left us his singing instructions *Raccolta di Esercizi per il Canto, Receuils d'Exercises*, Paris, 1811.
9. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 121.
10. Glackens, *Yankee Diva*, New York, 1963, p. 305.
11. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 121.
12. John Braham (1774–1856) Jewish tenor with phenomenal technique and expression. Close friend of Nathan. Weber who called him "the greatest singer in Europe" composed a bravura aria especially for Braham.
13. Levien, *The Singing of John Braham*, London, 1945, p. 32.
14. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, pp. 142–143.
15. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 63.
16. Wood, *My Life of Music, London*, 1938, pp. 295–296.
17. Olivero, Magda (b.1910) Italian soprano, who was the favorite *Adriana Lecouvreur* of Cilea, a great favorite in the Puccini rôles of Liu, Suor Angelica, Tosca and Minnie. She was recorded and filmed extensively.
18. Hines, *Great Singers on Great Singing*, New York, 1982, p. 207–208.
19. Licia Albanese (b.1913) Italian soprano who was a great favorite of Toscanini. She performed the title roles in the radio recordings of *La Bohème* and *La Traviata* under his baton. Member of the Metropolitan during 25 years until 1966.
20. Hines, *Great Singers on Great Singing*, p. 22.
21. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 62.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
23. Ulrich, *Die altitalienische Gesangmethode*, Leipzig, 1933, p. 16, footnote 7.
24. See Chapter 2, note 56.
25. Melba, *Melba Method*, pp. 11–12.
26. Björling, David. *Hur man skall sjunga*, Stockholm, 1978, no page numbers. Mentioned in the section "Care of the Vocal Organs" under subhead "Breath Control."
27. George C. Cathcart M.D., "A scientific justification of the historic method of voice production." In Levien, *The Singing of John Braham*, London, 1944, pp. 26–27.
28. Chaliapine, *Pages from my life*, New York 1927.
29. *Chaliapin,* An autobiography as told to Maxim Gorky, London, 1967, p. 103.
30. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 118.
31. http://www.prd-online.com/user/coursedat/c38/Marmed/sect1.php.
32. Lunn, *Philosophy of Voice*, London, 1900, p. 88.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 83. Two ventricles of Morgagni situated above the true vocal cords possess a great value as resonators in the Old Italian School.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
39. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, p. 48.
40. *The Age of Bel Canto*, 2CD set, OPD-8006, track 1. *The Era of Adelina Patti*, 2CD set, NI 7841, track 3.
41. Crescentini, *Recueil d'Exercises*, Paris, 1811, p. 9.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
43. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, pp. 56–57.
44. The aria "Ebben?...N'andrò lontana" from *La Wally* by Catalani, bar 33–35.
45. Glackens, *Yankee Diva*, p. 304.
46. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 22.
47. Concone, *Méthode Élémentaire de Chant*, pp. 3–4.
48. Melba, *Melba Method*, p. 5.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
50. Hines, *Great Singers on Great Singing*. p. 207.

Chapter 3

1. Arral, *The Extraordinary operatic adventures of Blanche Arral*, p. 300.
2. Herbert-Caesari, *The voice of the mind*, p. 45.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
4. *Ferruccio Tagliavini*, VA 1131, track 1. Also on Youtube.
5. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 46.
6. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, p. 90.
7. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 117.
8. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 13.
9. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, pp. 101–102.
10. Lunn, *Philosophy of Voice*, p. 82–83, illustrating the effect on the ventricles with the false cords in approximation.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
12. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, p. 91.
13. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 73.
14. Arral, *The Extraordinary operatic adventures of Blanche Arral*, p. 289.
15. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, p. 71.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
17. Lablache, *Méthode Complète de Chant*, p. 4. Footnote No.2.
18. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 18.
19. Delle Sedie, *Esthetics of the Art of Singing*, pp. 25–26.
20. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, p. 8.
21. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 74.
22. Lamperti, F. *The Art of Singing*, p. 15.
23. Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone*, London, 1912, p. 130.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Jean de Reszke (1850–1925) famous tenor who started his career as a baritone and eventually became the ideal interpreter of the Wagner heroes. There are no recordings of him except for an extremely poor quality duet at the Met from which his voice is indistinguishable. After finishing his career he took to teaching for the last 25 years of his life. The soprano Maggie Teyte was one of his pupils.
27. Lilli Lehmann (1848–1929) German dramatic soprano who sang a most extensive repertoire and was a great favorite of Wagner whose music she premiered together with her sisters. She is recorded after a long career of singing heavy roles and her voice is still amazing. Her memoirs are fascinating to read, they present an excellent picture of the artistic world of the 19th century and beyond. Her singing technique was entirely personal as can be gathered from her book *Meine Gesangskunst* meaning literally "My Art of Singing."
28. Edouard de Reszke (1853–1917) brother of Jean de Reszke and gifted with a beautiful bass voice joining him on the stage. The brothers performed extensively in the Met and Covent Garden where they were great favourites.
29. Emma Eames (1865–1952) American soprano, pupil of Marchesi. Married to the popular baritone Emilio de Gogorza. She was one of the prima donnas of the Metropolitan over a period of 18 years. She was recorded extensively.
30. Eames, *Some Memories and Reflections*, p. 155.
31. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, pp. 68–69.
32. Henry Holbrook Curtis (1856–1920) famous throat specialist in New York. He was violently opposed to the *coup de glotte* and wrote *Voice Building and Tone Placing*, London, 1901.
33. Blanche Marchesi, *The Singer's Catechism and Creed*, p. 93.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
35. Salvatore Marchesi (1822–1908) baritone and vocal pedagogue, husband of Mathilde Marchesi. He belonged to the high aristocracy of Italy and was a pupil of Francesco Lamperti and later of Garcia where he met Mathilde. This was after he made his debut at the Met in New York. The couple became the most famous singing teaching couple of the 2nd half of the 19th century. They started as professors at the Vienna Conservatory and then moved to Paris where they founded their Marchesi singing school of world renown.
36. Blanche Marchesi, *The Singer's Catechism and Creed*, p. 97.

37. Lehmann, *How to Sing*, p. 50.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
39. *Lehmann*, Symposium, 1207, tracks 6 & 7. *Patti*, Pearl Gemm 9312, tracks 8 & 9.
40. Joseph Shore, *A Right to Sing*, Essays on Singing, posted by him on the Internet, India.
41. Taylor, *Acoustics for the Singer*, p. 29. Quote from Vernon Albert, "Experimental and Theoretical Analysis of Network of Resonators," Ph.D. Thesis, Philadelphia: Temple University, 1951.
42. Joan Sutherland (1926–2011) Australian coloratura soprano whose high notes thrilled audiences in the great Bellini, Donizetti, Offenbach and Meyerbeer operas that require dazzling agility.
43. Braddon, *Joan Sutherland*, p. 162.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.
47. Hines, *Great Singers on Great Singing*, p. 328.
48. Meryman, "A Tour of Two Great Throats," *Life*, Vol. 68, No. 24, 26th of June 1970. pp. 64–70.
49. Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone*, London, 1912, Appendix II, pp. 372–374. On the size and construction of resonators.
50. Taylor, *Acoustics for the Singer*, published in the Emporia State Research Studies, Vol.6, No. 4, June 1958.

Chapter 4

1. Garcia, *Traité Complet*, p. 25.
2. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 12.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
4. *Luisa Tetrazzini* EMI Classics 3CD's CHS 7 63802 2, CD 2 track 20.
5. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 12.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
11. *Ibid.* Garcia indicates the shading of the vowels between the timbres clearly: "The following table shows what change each vowel undergoes in passing from clear to dark; the process must also be inverted: A approximates to o. E appr. to eu in French. I appr. to u in French. O appr. to u in Italian. The Italian I and the French U in the head and high chest notes must be rounded rather more than in speaking, or their tint would be unpleasant. Carried to excess, these *timbres* would render the voice respectively hoarse and hollow, or harsh and trivial, like the quack of a duck."
12. Josephine Hart Phelps quoted in Gattey, *Luisa Tetrazzini*, p. 46.
13. Herbert-Caesari, *The Alchemy of Voice*, London, 1965, p. 83.
14. Kwast, "Mondzaken en Musiceren," *Harm and Harmony in Musicians,* edited Wentges. Amsterdam, 1988, p. 11.
15. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 160.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
21. Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, Article VI, ed. Foreman, p. 26.
22. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p,13.
23. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 106.
24. *Nellie Melba, "Un Ange est Venu,"* Pearl GEMM CD 9471 track 18.
25. Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, pp. 86–87.
26. Jaques Urlus (1867–1935) Dutch heroic tenor who made a successful career as a Wagner singer in Europe and America. He also excelled as Raoul in *The Huguenots* as Otello, Samson, Tamino and José.
27. Urlus, *Mijn Loopbaan,* Amsterdam, 1930, pp. 246–247.
28. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, Chapters IX and X.

29. Berard, *L'Art du Chant*, Paris, 1755, fasc. Reprint, p. 81.
30. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, p. 88.
31. Stockhausen, *Gesangs-Methode*, Leipzig, 1884, p. 45.
32. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, pp. 46–47.
33. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, p. 5, Par.26.
34. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, Part II, pp. 45–49.

Chapter 5

1. L.J. Rondeleux is the author of the introduction.
2. Garcia*, Hints on Singing,* p. 8.
3. This should not be confused with the present meaning of falsetto, which we understand currently to mean the voice of a man sounding an octave higher through using only half the length of the vocal cords, as used by counter-tenors.
4. Santley, *Santley's Singing Master*, London: 1900, Part I, p. 6.
5. Ferrari, *Concise Treatise on Italian Singing*, London, 1825. p. 3.
6. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis.* pp. 117–118.
7. The terminology "feigned" can be used for the middle voice, meaning falsetto like Garcia indicates.
8. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis* p. 118.
9. *Legendary Cantors*, Prima Voce, NI 7905, tracks 1&2.
10. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, Para.I.18. p. 5.
11. *Ibid.*, Para.I.20. p. 5.
12. Busby, *A Complete Dictionary of Music*, London, 1806.
13. Mancini, Article No. IV, repr.ed. 1996, p. 17.
14. Sir Morell Mackenzie, *The Hygiene of the Vocal Organs*, pp. 54–55.
15. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, pp. 53 and 55.
16. Maria de las Mercedes Santa Cruz y Montalvo (1789–1852): born in Havana she went to Madrid as a young girl where she joined her mother and received a broad education. Her mother's salon was frequented by celebrities such as Goya. She married the count Merlin and arrived in Paris in 1814 after an eventful flight out of Spain that she recorded in her *Memoirs.* She presided over one of the most famous salons of Paris where all the celebrities of the times frequented such as Rossini and Malibran whom she knew intimately. She possessed a beautiful mezzo-soprano voice and took singing lessons from Garcia Sr. She often sang duets with Malibran. She wrote many books that give a fascinating testimony of her eventful life and times.
17. Manuel del Pópulo Vicente Rodríguez García (1775–1832) the famous Spanish tenor, composer and teacher for whom Rossini composed the role of Count Almaviva in the *Barbiere di Siviglia.* Father and teacher of the legendary singers Malibran, Pauline Viardot and the great singing pedagogue Manuel Garcia. He introduced the Italian Opera in America where he toured with his family in the leading parts. He was a prolific composer. He had many famous pupils such as Adolphe Nourrit and Henriette Méric-Lalande. We have first hand information on his teaching of the Old Italian School of Singing through his pupil the Countess Merlin: *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, London, 1840.
18. Giussepina Grassini (1773–1850) Italian contralto possessing a voice of great beauty. Pupil of the castrato Crescentini. Favorite of Napoleon who invited her to Paris where she had enormous success. At the end of her career she took to teaching and amongst her pupils were Pasta as well as Grassini's own niece Grisi.
19. Isabella Colbran (1785–1845) Italian dramatic coloratura soprano with a phenomenal technique and expression. Pupil of Crescentini. She married Rossini and became one of the greatest interpreters of his operas.
20. Benedetta Pisaroni (1793–1872) Italian soprano-contralto pupil of the castratos Marchesi, Velluti and Pacchierotti. Started as a soprano, lost her top notes through illness and then became one of the most celebrated contraltos. Famous for her interpretation of Rossini operas.
21. See note 59.
22. Countess Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran,* Vol.I, pp. 17–18.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
25. Boissier, *Liszt Pédagogue,* Paris, 1832, repr. ed. 1993, pp. 57–58.

26. Fuchs, *The Art of Singing,* London, 1963, p. 87.
27. Garcia, *Traité Complet*, 1847, p. 11.
28. Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran,* Vol.I, p. 21.
29. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing,* p. 216.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 216–217.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
32. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 227.
33. Husler und Rodd-Marling, *Singen,* Mainz, 1965, 2nd ed. 1978, pp. 92–93.
34. Stendhal (Henri Beyle) 1783–1842 French novelist.
35. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing,* pp. 220–221.
36. Louisa Kirkby-Lunn (1873–1930) English contralto, possessed a voluminous voice with a great range. She sang Ortrud, Kundry, Fricka, Brangäne, Amneris and the first London Dalila.
37. Clara Butt (1873–1936) English legendary contralto, possessed a phenomenal voice of great compass. Triumphal career. Elgar composed especially for her. She excelled in oratorio and songs with a religious content that she communicated with genuine and deep expression. Recorded extensively.
38. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 53.
39. Théophile Gautier (1811–1872) French poet, novelist and critic.
40. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 222.
41. Newton, *At the Piano*, p. 81.
42. Scott, *The Record of Singing,* Vol. I, Boston, 1979, p. 46.
43. Ponder, *Clara Butt: Her Life Story,* London, 1928, p. 17.
44. Gilbert Duprez (1806–1896) French tenor, made his career in Italy before he became famous in Paris where he took over from Nourrit in the roles of the operas from Meyerbeer and Halévy. He opened a singing school and had many famous pupils, such as Marie Miolan-Carvalho, Marie Battu and Emma Albani. He left memoirs as well as highly interesting singing instruction books. *L'Art du Chant*, Paris, 1846.
45. Adolphe Nourrit (1802–1839) the first French dramatic tenor, pupil of Garcia Sr. Great singing actor who created many roles in the operas of Meyerbeer, he introduced Schubert songs to the Parisians accompanied at the piano by Liszt. After an immensely successful career in Paris of 13 years, he left for Italy because Duprez took over his rôles. Initially he had great success at the Naples opera but it seemed he was severely suffering from a liver ailment that exacerbated his depressed state of mind. He committed suicide from sheer desperation with his situation as a singer because he abandoned his method of singing feeling that his voice did not like the procedure for he suffered from throat trouble aggravated by colds. He not only was a singer but also a poet and writer as well as a great actor.
46. Levien, *The Singing of John Braham,* p. 37.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
48. *The Journal of The Society of Arts*, June 8, 1860. Meeting held 5th of June to discuss the question of musical pitch and of agreeing on a new standard. "That, as the basis of any recommendation of a definite pitch the capabilities and convenience of the human voice in singing the compositions of the great vocal writers should be the first consideration."
49. Mackenzie, *The Hygiene of the Vocal Organs,* 3rd ed. London, 1886, p 98.
50. Brémont, *The World of Music*, *The Great Singers,* London, 1892, title page
51. *The Self-Interpreting Family Bible,* 1756, Gen. 1, 27.
52. *The Gospel of St, John*, 1, 1.
53. Brémont, *The World of Music, The Great Singers*, London, 1892, p. 3.
54. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, pp. 222–223.
55. Cover notes of the CD Pearl, Gemm 9980.
56. To be seen on the internet Youtube.
57. Elena Gerhardt (1883–1961) German mezzo soprano, famous Lieder singer who emigrated to England before World War II. She also made a name as a pedagogue. *Schubert Lieder on Record*, Vol. 1 1898–1939, 3 CD set EMI 7243 5 66150, CD 2 track 9.
58. Hetherington, *Melba*, London 1967, p. 100.
59. Giuditta Pasta (1797–1865) Jewish, Italian born soprano, leading diva of her time, "Muse of Bellini." She possessed a voice of tremendous compass from A below middle C up to D3. She created the role of Norma written for her by Bellini.
60. Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, London, 1956, pp. 364–365.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 365.

62. Rockstro, *Jenny Lind, A Record and Analysis of the "Method" of the late Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt,* London 1894, p. 11.
63. Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, Art. No. IV, p. 18.
64. See also Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 21.
65. Garcia, *Traité Complet*, pp. 27–28.
66. Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, p. 366.
67. *Blanche Arral*, Truesound Transfers, TT-2016, track 8.
68. Garden and Biancolli, *Mary Garden's Story,* London, 1952, p. 91.
69. Delle Sedie, *Esthetics of the Art of Singing,* Paris, 1886, p. 27.
70. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 146.
71. William Cowper (1731–1800), *The Task*, Book VI, "Winter walk at Noon," line 1.

Chapter 6

1. Crescentini, *Recueil d'Exercises*, Paris, 1811, p. 9, section 3.
2. Garcia, *Hints on Singing,* p. 19.
3. *Ibid.,* pp. 19–20.
4. Levien, *The Singing of John Braham*, p. 36.
5. Rockstro, *Jenny Lind*, p. 13.
6. Hegermann-Lindencrone, de, *In the Courts of Memory*, p. 88.
7. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 20.
8. Levien, *The Singing of John Braham*, p. 36.
9. Dame Emma Albani (1847–1930) Canadian soprano, child prodigy like Patti, pupil of Duprez and Francesco Lamperti. One of the favorite singers of Queen Victoria. Albani had an illustrious career creating many first performances of opera and oratoria. On her recordings we can hear her superior technique of the Old Italian School, the warmth and beauty of her voice still come through strongly even though she is not in her prime anymore. She sang Elizabeth in the first English performance of the oratorio *The Legend of Saint Elizabeth* of Franz Liszt in London 1886, a performance attended by Liszt.
10. Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, p. 22.
11. Levien, *The Singing of John Braham*, p. 32.
12. Pearl CD GEMM 9995, Track 24.
13. Leider, *Das war mein Teil*, authorized abridged edition, Berlin, 1981, p. 78.
14. Leider, *Playing my Part*, London, 1966, pp. 72–73.
15. Husler & Rodd-Marling*, Singen,* p. 110.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.
17. Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, Article VI, p. 27.
18. Naxos, 8.110743, tracks 4, 13 and 14.
19. *The Complete Victor Recordings*, Romophone, 81011–2, CD 1, track 15.
20. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 20.
21. Pearl Gemm CD 9312, tracks 9, 21 and 8 respectively.
22. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 63.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
24. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 87.
25. *The Singer's Assistant*, London, 1821, footnote on p. 6.
26. Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, Article VIII, p. 35.
27. Horncastle, *A Treatise on the Art of Singing*, London, appr. 1840, p. 4.
28. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, pp. 22–24.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.
30. Garcia, *Traité Complet,* 1847, Part One, reprint ed. 1985, p. 51.
31. Moran, *Nellie Melba*, pp. 75–76.
32. Hegermann-Lindencrone, de. *In the Courts of Memory*, New York, 1912, pp. 78–88.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Marston, 51001–2, tracks 2 and 19.
36. Nimbus, NI 7877, track 11.
37. Garcia, *Traité Complet,* 1847, Part One, reprint ed. 1985, p. 70.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
42. Nimbus, NI 7877, tracks 11 and 13.
43. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 41.
44. Pearl Gemm, 9995, tracks 5 and 6.
45. Milton, *Comus*. Line 568.
46. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 150.
47. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, p. 8, Para. 29.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 8, Para. 29.
49. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 154. *Rome*, part i. line 344.
50. Marchesi, *Bel Canto*, p. 39.
51. Wunnicke, *Die Nachtigall des Zaren*, Munich, 2010, p. 118.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
53. Carlo Broschi Farinelli (1705–1782) Italian castrato soprano. Regarded by many as the greatest singer of all time. Mancini, as a friend and one of the most reliable witnesses of his singing gives us the following description; "His voice was considered surprising because perfect, strong, and sonorous in its quality, and rich in its range from the deepest notes to the high, the equal of which has not been heard in our times. He was gifted with a natural creativity which, led by wisdom, made strange things be heard, so individual that they left no room for others to be able to imitate them" (Practical Reflections, Article IX). Farinelli conquered Europe with his singing and was requested in 1737 by the queen of Spain to sing and heal her husband the king, of a depression, which he did singing four arias for his patient every night, until the king died in 1746. Farinelli became one of the most respected and influential persons at the Spanish court. He returned to Italy in 1759, where he built a palazzo in Bologna to spend the remaining years of his life.
54. Lamperti, F. *The Art of Singing*, p. 11.
55. Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, London, 1840, p. 17.

Chapter 7

1. Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, p. 22.
2. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, p. 9. Para. 31.
3. *Les Urnes de l'Opéra*, EMI Classics, 50999 206267, 3 CD's, track 1.
4. André Malraux, *Grands Discours*, Frémeaux & Associés, FA 5115, 3 CD's.
5. Churchill, *A Celebration in Words & Music*, Classical Communications, CCL CD G1125.
6. Lunn, *Philosophy of Voice*, "Opinions" at the end of the book, no page number.
7. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, pp. 12–13.
8. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 103.
9. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 49.
10. Barry, *Pauline Viardot*, Paris, 1990, p. 150.
11. Lamperti, G.B. *The Technics of Bel Canto*, p. 33, footnote.
12. *Kirsten Flagstad, live in Berlin*, 1952, Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, 2CD Audite, 23.416
13. Flagstad, *the Flagstad Manuscript*, narrated to Louis Biancolli, p. 224.
14. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 172.
15. Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgart, 1887, Vol.1, Section IV, "Musik und Musiker," p. 188.
16. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 107.
17. Walker, *Reflections on Liszt*, Ithaca, 2005, p. 159.
18. Idem, p. 169.
19. Cooke, *The language of music*, London, 1959, p. 33.
20. Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgart, 1887, Vol.1, Section IV, p. 188.

Chapter 8

1. Glackens, *Yankee Diva*, New York, 1963.
2. Wunnicke, *Die Nachtigall des Zaren*, München, 2010.
3. Lehmann, *Mein Weg*, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1913, pp. 286 and 288.
4. Révész, *The Psychology of a Musical Prodigy*, London, 1925, p. 26.

5. Hambourg, *The Eighth Octave*, London, 1951, p. 52.
6. Herbert-Caesari, *The Voice of the Mind*, Chapter XX, p. 280, quoting from Verdi's "Letters" *I Copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi*, Letter CCXXI, April 11, 1871.
7. *Ibid.*, Letter, CCXXXIV.
8. *Encounters with Verdi*, edited by Marcello Connato, New York, 1984, pp. 26–27.
9. Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1836–1865) German tenor and legendary Wagner interpreter. First tenor of the Dresden Court Opera House. Created the first Tristan and contracted heart failure five weeks after the premiere leading to his death.
10. Gutman, *Richard Wagner*, Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 370–371.
11. Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times*, London, 1959, pp. 185–186.
12. Merlin, *Souvenirs et Mémoires*, Paris, 1990, p. 233.
13. Stendhal. *Life of Rossini*, London, 1956, p. 358.
14. La Mara, *Briefe Hervorragender Zeitgenossen an Franz Liszt*, Band 1, 1824–1854, Leipzig, 1895, pp. 30–31.
15. Duprez, *L'Art du chant*, Paris, 1846, p. 8.
16. Morgenstern, Christian. (1871–1914) German poet commonly known for his humorous poems *Galgenlieder*.
17. Burghardt, Hans-Georg. *Christus Gesänge*, Op. 38, Breslau: Konrad Littmann, 1941, No.6.
18. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 121.
19. Herbert-Caesari, *The Voice of the Mind*, p. 250.
20. *Antonina Nezhdanova*, Pearl GEMM CD 9995, track 10.
21. Herbert-Caesari, *The Voice of the Mind*, p. 302.
22. Schonberg, *Horowitz*, New York, 1992, pp. 139–140.
23. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 102
24. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
25. *Kirsten Flagstad in Concert*, 2CD's , EKR CD 15, CD 1 tracks 6–9.
Kirsten Flagstad, live in Berlin, Audite, 2CD's, 23.416, CD II, tracks 2–4.
26. Cooke, *The language of music*, London, 1959.
27. Grace, Dr. Harvey, "Technique and Interpretation" in Herbert-Caesari, *The Voice of the Mind*, p. 283.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 285.
29. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, p. 51.
30. Braddon, *Joan Sutherland*, London, 1962, p. 41.
31. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, p. 217.
32. Horncastle, *A Treatise on the Art of Singing*, London, c. 1840, pp. 34–35.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.
35. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, pp. 216–217.
36. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, p. 103.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
38. Herva Nelli (1923–1994) Italian soprano who moved to America when she was twelve. Toscanini played an important role in her career. He promoted the young soprano and was responsible for her first operatic engagements. He later chose her for a series of Verdi Opera recordings of *Aida, Otello, La Forza del Destino, Falstaff* and the *Requiem*. She was one of the most wonderful and poetic Desdemonas.
39. Taubman, *Toscanini*, London, 1951, p. 252.
40. *Verdi, Aida, Toscanini*, UPV DVD 300.
41. Anna Eltour (1886–1954) Russian soprano who made a great name for herself as a teacher in Moscow and Paris. Toured East Asia extensively and from 1925 taught in Paris. Famous for her interpretation of Lieder. Some of her pupils like Jenny Tourel made international careers. *Conseils sur l'Art du Chant,* The Hague: J. Philip Kruseman, 1934.
42. Hegermann-Lindencrone, *In the Courts of Memory*, New York, 1912, p. 14.
43. Stradal, *Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt*, Bern, 1929, p. 18.
44. Busoni, *The Essence of Music*, New York, 1987, p. 182.
45. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, p. 183.
46. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 204.
47. Smidak, *Isaak-Ignaz Moscheles*, England, 1989, p. 180.
48. Hamilton, *After the Golden Age*, New York, 2008, p. 96.

49. Oysher, Moishe. (1907–1958) Russian born Jewish cantor gifted with a beautiful tenor voice. He emigrated to America where he made a number of films: *The Cantor's Son, Overture to Glory* and *The Singing Blacksmith*. In these films we can admire his glorious voice and wonderful singing.

Chapter 9

1. Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1. Section IV, p. 178. (Jenny Lind).
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Nellie Melba. Farewell*, EKRCD4
4. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 199.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
6. *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*, translated and edited by Charles Osborne, New York: 1971, letter 178, p. 178.
7. Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, pp. 70–71.
8. La Mara, *Liszt und die Frauen*, Leipzig, 1919, BiblioLife, LLC, Reproduction 2009, pp. 75–76.
9. Levien, *The Singing of John Braham*, p. 38.
10. *Singers of Imperial Russia*, Vol. III, GEMM CD 9004–6, CD 9004, tracks 22–23.
11. Herbert-Caesari, *The Voice of the Mind*, p. 270.
12. Crescentini, *Recueil d'Exercises*, Paris, 1811, p. 9, Para. 2.
13. Wood, *The Gentle Art of Singing,* abridged ed., London, 1930, p. 8.
14. *Antonina Nezhdanova*, Russian Vocal Art Series, AQVR 349–2.
15. Faure, *La Voix et le Chant*, Paris, 1866, p. 217.
16. Potter, Editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, Cambridge, 2001, p. 121.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
18. Brower and Cooke, G*reat Singers on the Art of Singing*, New York, 1996, p. 115.
19. Hambourg, *The Eighth Octave*, London, 1951, p. 52.
20. Holland and Rockstro, *Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, London, 1891, Vol. II, p. 402.
21. Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song*, Chapter IX, Para. 44.
22. Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, pp. 43–44.
23. Crescentini, *Recueils d'Exercises*, Paris, 1811, p. 9, Para.4.
24. *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*, Osborne ed., New York, 1971, letter 167, p. 168.
25. *Ibid.*, letter 173, pp. 175–176.
26. *Ibid.*, letter 209, p. 202.
27. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 219.
28. Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, pp. 123–124.
29. Holland and Rockstro, *Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, London, 1891, Vol. II, p. 434.
30. Hines, *Great Singers on Great Singing*, New York, 1982, p. 210.
31. Brand-Seltei, *Belcanto:Eine Kulturgeschichte der Gesangskunst*, Wilhelmshaven, 1972, p. 287.
32. Ramann, *Lisztiana*, edited by Arthur Seidl, New York, 1983, p. 331.
33. Vitaphone Shortfilm, 18 July 1927.
34. *Schumann-Heink*, NI 7811, track 10.
35. Parlour song composed by Oscar Rasbach, words by Joyce Kilmer, London: Chappell & Co. Ltd., 1922.
36. Eugenia Tadolini (1809-?) Italian soprano and great favorite of Donizetti who composed various operas with her in mind as the leading lady. She created his *Linda di Chamounix, Maria de Nohan* and *La Favorita*. Verdi liked her very much and she sang the title roles in *Ernani* and *Alzira.*
37. *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*, Osborne ed., letter 53, p. 59.
38. Levien, *The Singing of John Braham*, p. 15.
39. Klein, *Hermann Klein and the Gramophone*, Oregon, 1990, p. 2.
40. Nathan, *Musurgia Vocalis*, p. 213.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
42. Holland and Rockstro, *Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, London, 1891, Vol. II, p. 446.
43. Ernst Pasqué (1821–1892) German baritone who went to Paris to study singing and was accepted at the Paris Conservatoire on the recommendation of Auber. His teacher was the famous tenor Louis-

Antoine Ponchard. After six years of study he started his career at the Mainz Opera and from there he went to Darmstadt and Leipzig. He was also employed as stage producer and director in Weimar, Darmstadt and Amsterdam. He left many works as a writer for example *Goethes Theaterleitung in Weimar*.

44. François Delsarte (1811–1871) French tenor and pedagogue. He studied with Ponchard at the Paris Conservatoire. He had great success as a declamatory artist in the fashionable Paris salons. He became a member of the sect of Saint-Simon. He was a pioneer of ancient music performances. His method of teaching dramatic expression was eccentric for those times.

45. *Correspondence de Liszt et de Madame d'Agoult*, Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1934, p. 97. Letter of Madame d'Agoult, Sunday 3rd of January 1841.

46. Pasqué, *In Paris. Heitere Geschichten aus den Lehrjahren eines Sängers*, Berlin, 1872, p. 84.

47. *Ibid*., pp. 84–86.

48. Hegermann-Lindencrone, *In the Courts of Memory*, New York, 1922, pp. 77, 79–80.

49. Maria-Felicia Malibran (1808–1836) legendary mezzo-soprano. Daughter of Garcia Sr. who taught her to sing. She made a brilliant career and was the most wanted artist of her time. She went with the Garcia family on tour in America where they introduced Italian Opera. To escape from her father she married Malibran, to divorce him later, however keeping his name as stage name. She created Desdemona in Rossini's *Otello* and Amina in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* as well as the main part in Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*, to name but a few. Her second marriage to the Belgian violinist Charles de Bériot was a very happy one. Her untimely death shocked the musical world.

50. Adam, *Souvenirs d'un Musicien*, Paris 1868, p. 167.

51. Lehmann, *Mein Weg*, Leipzig, 1913, p. 303.

52. Stendhal, *Life of Rossini*, London, 1956, p. 375.

53. *Ibid*., p. 374.

54. *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*, letter No. 7, p. 23.

55. Concone, *Méthode Élémentaire de Chant,* Paris, p. 1.

56. Castil-Blaize (1784–1857) French musicologist, music critic, composer and editor.

57. Kelsey, *Foundations of Singing*, p. 75.

58. Concone, p. 45.

59. Hambourg, *The Eighth Octave*, p. 52.

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Index

acciaccatura 31, 116
"Ach, ich fühl's" (*The Magic Flute*) 111
acoustic 25, 35–36, 57, 59, 62, 91; acoustics 30, 58, 63, 72, 93
"Agathe's Prayer" (*Der Freischutz*) 155
agility 14, 18, 20, 42, 44–45, 61, 87, 108–109, 112, 114–115, 121–122, 125, 137, 145, 161
"Ah non credea mirarti" (*La Sonnambula*) 46, 114
Aida (Giuseppe Verdi) 132, 141, 147
air compressor 14, 108, 110, 123
Albanese, Licia 46
Albert, Dr. Vernon 71
Allesandro (George Frederick Handel) 51
Amneris (*Aida*) 147
Angel of Rome *see* Moreschi
appoggiatura 117–118
appoggio 25, 47, 49, 59, 61, 73, 153
appogiare la voce 49
arpeggio 46, 60, 110, 115–116
Arral, Blanche 8, 30, 56, 63, 105
articulation 25, 27–28, 36, 46, 55, 63, 75, 77, 79, 82–83, 87, 123–124, 126, 145, 149, 161, 184
articulator 14, 16, 18, 78, 83–84, 108, 110, 115, 123–124, 127, 161
arytenoid cartilage 32–33, 50, 55, 73, 90, 111, 118
aspirato 109, 114
atrophy 97
attack 8, 13, 15–45, 47, 49–59, 62–64, 66, 68–71, 73, 75–78, 80, 82–84, 87–90, 93, 96, 98, 102–108, 110–114, 120, 122, 127, 129, 161, 181–182; soft 16–17, 23–24, 113, 181; voiced 16, 181
Auber, Daniel 116, 193
"Aux armes citoyens" (*La Marseillaise*) 27
"Ave Maria" 114
"Ave Maria" (Charles Gounod) 70, 124

Bach, Johann Sebastian 10, 70, 124, 138, 154
Balatri, Filippo 31–32, 121, 131
Barber of Seville (Gioachino Rossini) 100
Barbieri-Nini, Marianna 132, 154
baritone voice 30, 103–104, 119
bass voice 23, 30, 48, 92, 103–104
Battistini, Mattia 8, 41, 119
Beim Schlafengehen *see* Strauss, Richard
bel canto 5, 12
Berard, Jean-Antoine 87
Berlioz, Hector 110
Bible 101
"The Bird in the Forest" (Taubert) 117
Björling, David 47
Björling, Jussi 9, 24, 44, 47, 54, 99–100
bocca ridente 161
La Bohème (Giacomo Puccini) 99, 105, 181
Boissier, Valérie 94
Boninsegna, Celestina 59, 101
Boronat, Olimpia 61, 70, 105, 116, 124
Boult, Sir Adrian 98
Braham, John 43, 99, 101, 108–110, 148–149, 154
breastbone 18, 24–25, 33–35, 44, 52, 59, 73, 87, 107, 110, 126
breath control 21, 38, 41, 47, 53, 140, 162
breath expenditure 42, 45, 51
breath support 19, 25, 39, 44, 46–47, 119
breathing 8, 14–15, 25, 32, 38–41, 43–44, 48, 50–56, 63, 75, 104, 115, 119, 122, 139–140, 145, 148, 184; abdominal 41; clavicular 44; thoracic 38–39
Brémont, Anna de 100
"Brindisi" *see La Traviata*
bronchial tubes 9
Brünnhilde 102–103; *see also Ring* cycle
Burghardt, Hans-Georg 11, 136
Burzio, Eugenia 61, 70, 124
Busoni, Ferruccio 142
Butt, Clara 97–98, 143, 155

Callas, Maria 102, 141
Calvé, Emma 8, 27, 37, 97, 143
Capocci, Gaetano 31
Carey, Prof. Clive 140
Caruso, Enrico 41, 99–100, 143
"Casta diva" (*Norma*) 103, 114
Castil-Blaize (François-Henri-Joseph Blaze) 159
castrati 30–31, 37
castrato 31, 101, 121, 131
catarrh 32
Cattaneo, Vencesleo 49
Cecchi, Pietro 17
Chagy, Berele 91
Chaliapin, Fedor 8–9, 30, 48, 61, 149, 156–157
Chaminade, Cécile 7
"Champagne Aria" (*Don Giovanni*) 50

"Che faro" (*Orfeo*) 138
chest, squeeze of 34–36, 44, 46–50, 53, 59, 61, 63, 73, 83, 109, 111, 120, 122, 161
chest voice 7, 34–35, 86, 90–92, 96–99, 101–102, 104, 106–107, 154, 161
choir 31
choirboy 43
Chopin, Frédéric 132, 160
Churchill, Sir Winston 125
clergyman's throat 125
Colbran, Isabella Angela 93
coloratura 51, 71, 100, 102, 108, 112, 114, 127, 144, 148
compass 27, 46, 88, 93, 95, 99, 102, 105–106, 109, 116, 183
Concone, Giuseppe 13, 53, 120, 159
consonants 14, 29, 79, 83–85, 88, 109, 111, 115, 123–127, 145, 154
contralto voice 92, 96–98, 101, 103
Cooke, Deryck 130, 139
Corri, Domenico 49
corset 40–41
counter-tenor voice 118
coup de glotte 15, 17–18, 20–27, 30, 36–37, 41, 59, 62, 87, 89, 96, 112–113, 122, 161
Covent Garden 29, 71, 105, 146
Cowper, William 107
Crescentini, Girolamo 42, 48, 51, 108, 148, 151
cricoid cartilage 32
"La Cruche cassée" (Leon Vasseur) 105
cupo 77
Curtis, Dr. Henry Holbrook 68

d'Agoult, Marie 156
Dante 119
Debussy, Claude 149
Delsarte, François 156–157
Demosthenes 125
"Depuis le jour" (*Louise*) 84
Desdemona (*Otello*) 141
Despiney, Félix 32–33
Destinn, Emmy 8
diaphragm 25, 36, 38–39 41–47, 54, 57, 67, 112–113, 118, 120
diction 18, 39, 57, 81, 84, 126
Dinorah (Giacomo Meyerbeer) 9
Don Giovanni (W.A.Mozart) 50, 97, 99
Doré, Gustave 145
Duprez, Gilbert 99, 120, 135, 159

Eames, Emma 67
"Ecco ridente al cielo" (*Barber of Seville*) 100
Einer Sängerin see Grillparzer, Franz
Eltour, Anna 142
embouchure 10, 28, 33, 39, 42, 55, 73
emission 8, 15–16, 22, 32–33, 56–57, 63, 70, 74, 87, 93, 105, 123–126
empiricism 8, 16, 39, 49, 56, 80
enunciation 27, 29, 47, 60, 65, 76, 78, 80, 94, 119, 124, 135, 145, 149, 151
epiglottis 9, 88
equilibrium 39, 151
The Era of Adelina Patti (Nimbus CD) 18
The Erlking (Franz Schubert) 153–154
"L'Été" (Cécile Chaminade) 7
Eustachian tube 66–67, 80
expiratory singing 16, 20, 22–23, 28, 37, 42, 83, 100, 102, 108, 118
expression 5, 7, 9–11, 14, 20, 26, 29, 31, 45–46, 51, 53, 60–61, 67, 70, 73, 76–79, 83, 86, 88–89, 92–94, 96, 98, 101–102, 112–115, 117–119, 124, 130, 137–141, 144, 146–160

falsetto 90–92, 95, 97, 99, 104, 188
Farinelli (Carlo Broschi) 121
"Fatal mia donna, un murmure" (*Macbeth*) 132
fauces 25, 70
Faure, Jean-Baptiste 13, 20–23, 28, 30, 34, 87, 101, 120, 140–141, 143, 149, 157
feigned voice 91–92
Ferrari, Giacomo Gotifredo 90
Fields, Gracie 22, 26–27
La Fille du régiment (Gaetano Donizetti) 99
Flagstad, Kirsten 24, 102, 127–128, 138, 145, 160
flexibility 18, 20, 108, 115, 121, 182
focus 14, 16, 18, 25, 31, 35, 40, 50–51, 57–58, 69, 73, 75–76, 83–84, 88, 91, 124, 181
folksong 143, 149
forward production 27, 56–57, 67, 71–72, 74, 80–81, 87–88, 110, 118, 123–125, 136, 148
The Foundations of Singing 12; *see also* Kelsey, Franklyn
Four Last Songs see Strauss, Richard
Frühling see Strauss, Richard
Furtwängler, Wilhelm 138

Galliard, Mr. 91–92
Garcia, Manuel, Jr. 4, 7–8, 12–13, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24–26, 28, 32–33, 35–37, 41, 53, 60, 62–64, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77–82, 85, 88, 90, 93–95, 99, 103–104, 108–111, 113–117, 120, 126, 137, 139, 142, 147, 155, 162; *see also Hints on Singing*; *Traité complet de l'art du chant*
Garcia, Manuel, Sr. 93–94, 96, 99, 110, 120, 122–123
Garden, Mary 21–22, 26, 105
Gautier, Théophile 98
Gémier, Firmin 125
Gerhardt, Elena 102
Gesangs Methode see Stockhausen, Julius
Giacomelli, Geminiano 121
glottal stop 22, 112
glottis, pinch of 22, 41, 61, 73, 95, 106, 110, 112, 114, 117
Glottisschlag 24, 112–113; *see also* coup de glotte
Gluck, Christophe Willibald von 138, 141–142, 156
Gobbi, Tito 9
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 129, 135
Gogorza, Emilio de 8, 143
Golden Age 1, 50
Gounod, Charles 30–31, 37, 70, 124
Grace, Harvey 139
grace notes 31
Grassini, Josephina 93
Grillparzer, Franz 128, 130, 146, 150
Guildhall School of Music 19

Hahn, Reynaldo 20–21, 30, 43, 51–52, 68, 96–98, 101–102, 128, 136, 138, 141, 152–153
Hambourg, Mark, 6, 150, 160
Hamilton, Kenneth 144
Handel, George Frederick 10, 51, 100, 134, 138, 154–155
Hauk, Minnie 29
"He Shall Feed his Flock" (*The Messiah*) 155
head voice 60, 85, 87–88, 90–91, 93, 95, 97, 99–100, 105–106
health 3, 13–14, 18, 23–24, 26, 42, 44, 53, 59, 68, 70–71, 96–97, 113, 117–118
"Hear Ye Israel" (*Elijah*) 138
Hegermann-Lindencrone, Lillie de 109, 116, 142, 157
Henderson, William James 15, 17, 20
Herbert-Caesari, Edgar F. 57–58, 67, 136–137
Herbst, Andreas 13, 31
Herwegh, Georg 135
Hines, Jerome 19, 72
Hints on Singing 4; *see also* Garcia, Manuel, Jr.
hoarseness 23, 68
"Holy Lord Almighty" (Handel) 155
"Home, Sweet Home" (Sir Henry Bishop) 94, 144
Homer *see* phren
Horncastle, Frederick William 115, 120, 140–141
Horowitz, Vladimir 137
"How Beautiful Are the Feet" (*The Messiah*) 155
How to Sing see *Meine Gesangskunst*
The Huguenots (Giacomo Meyerbeer) 86, 127
humming 66
Hungarian Rhapsodies (Franz Liszt) 160
Husler, Frederick & Yvonne Rodd-Marling 24–25, 57, 97, 113

"I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" (*The Messiah*) 155
imitation 5, 9, 11–13, 92, 113, 132, 142, 148, 184
inhalation 33, 41, 44, 50, 53–54
interpretation 5, 14, 46, 68, 115, 118, 130–146, 150, 159–160
intonation 5, 58, 66, 81, 88, 109, 161
"Io son Titania" (*Mignon*) 9, 25
Isolde (*Tristan und Isolde*) 102, 112, 158
Israel in Egypt (Handel) 43

"J'ai perdu mon Eurydice" (*Orfeo*) 138, 142
Jephthah (Handel) 101
Journet, Marcel 8, 17, 21
Judd, Percy 22

Keller, Helen 34,
Kellogg, Clara Louise 28
Kelsey, Franklyn 12, 17, 21–22, 25, 28, 33, 36, 47, 58, 63, 83, 93, 97, 159; *see also The Foundations of Singing*
Kirkby-Lunn, Louise 97
Klein, Hermann 36, 155
Koslovsky, Ivan 9
Kreisler, Fritz 10, 118
Kwast, Prof. Dr. W.A.M. van der 80

Lablache, Luigi 64, 68, 74, 80
Lamperti, Francesco 4, 18–19, 28, 66–67, 121–122, 162
Lamperti, Giovanni Battista 4, 13, 19, 28, 50–51, 58, 60, 62, 85, 127, 162
Lancashire 22, 26–27
The Language of Music (Deryck Cooke) 139
"Des Larmes de la nuit…Pâle et blonde" (*Hamlet*) 113
laryngologist 23–24, 68, 92
laryngoscope 67, 179
larynx 8–10, 15–17, 19–22, 24, 26–28, 32–33, 37–40, 42–52, 54–56, 58, 61–63, 65, 67, 70–71, 75–77, 79–80, 86–87, 89, 91–92, 95, 98, 102, 105–106, 109–114, 117–118, 120–121, 126, 161
legato 13, 39, 44, 51, 83, 93, 109–110, 113, 121, 126–127, 129, 139, 154, 162
Legge, Walter 102
Lehmann, Lilli 66–70, 90, 103, 131, 158; *see also How to Sing*; *Meine Gesangskunst*
Leider, Frida 112–113
Lemeshev, Sergei 9
Lennep, Jacob van 10
Levien, John Mewburn 18–19, 99
Lind, Jenny 13, 19–20, 24, 28, 34–37, 45, 88, 93, 103, 106, 108–109, 111, 116, 144, 146, 150, 152, 155–157
Liszt, Franz 19, 94, 129, 135, 142, 147, 150, 153, 160
Litvinne, Félia 28
Lohengrin (Richard Wagner) 68
Louise (Gustave Charpentier) 84
Lucia di Lammermoor (Gaetano Donizetti) 71, 116
Lunn, Charles 13, 16, 18, 28–29, 49, 97, 100, 125
"Lusinghe più caro" (*Allesandro*) 51

Mackenzie, Sir Morell 17–18, 92, 99
Macneil, Cornell 19
"Mais, quand je songe au non de sa famille" 157
Malibran, Maria 93, 148, 151, 157
Malraux, André 125
Mancini, Giambattista 12–13, 25–26, 28, 47, 49, 75, 82–83, 92, 95, 103, 113, 115, 120, 126, 162
marcato 109, 111, 113
Marchesi, Blanche 7, 13, 26, 69
Marchesi, Mathilde 7, 17, 69
Mariä Wiegenlied (Reger) 149
The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart) 97
Marston, Ward 12, 101
mask 24, 46, 57–58, 62–63, 65–67, 69–71, 73, 77, 81, 86–87, 124
Massenet, Jules 113
McCormack, John 24–25, 57, 99, 143
Meine Gesangskunst (Lilli Lehmann) 69
Melba, Nellie 8, 13, 15, 17–18, 20–22, 26, 28–29, 37, 39, 47, 54, 69–70, 84, 94, 101–103, 105, 113, 116, 119, 124, 143, 146
Mendelssohn, Felix 109, 133–134, 138, 160
Merlin, Countess María de las Mercedes 93–94, 96, 110, 123, 134
messa di voce 119–121
The Messiah (Handel) 155
mezza di voce 162
mezzo-soprano voice 58–59, 95, 97

microphone 27, 101
middle voice 7, 34–35, 59, 62, 72–73, 78, 80, 86, 89, 91, 93–95, 103, 105
A Midsummer Night's Dream (Mendelssohn) 109
Mignon (Ambroise Thomas) 9
Mignon (Goethe) 129
Milton, John 119
"Mon Coeur s'ouvre à ta voix" (*Samson and Delilah*) 87
mordent 116
Moreschi, Alessandro 31, 101
Morgenstern, Christian 136
mouth: drooping 76, 79, 81; smiling 32, 60, 73, 75–77, 79–82, 85–86, 92, 122, 126, 161–162

nasality 64–65, 85
Nathan, Isaac 12–13, 28, 43, 48–49, 52–53, 58, 71, 81–82, 91–92, 107, 119–120, 143, 147–148, 152, 155
Nelli, Herva 141
Newton, Ivor 27
Nezhdanova, Antonina 8, 37, 59, 61, 94, 103, 105, 112, 116–117, 119, 137, 143, 149–150
nightingale (bird) 11, 65, 116–117, 120–121, 137, 146
The Nightingale (Alabieff) 116–117
Nordica, Lilian 8, 43, 52, 131, 140
Norma (Vincenzo Bellini) 103
Nourrit, Adolphe 99, 156

"O ihr kleinmütig Volk" (Christian Morgenstern) 136
Observations on the Florid Song 92; *see also* Tosi, Pier Francesco
Olivero, Magda 46, 54, 152
Olivier, Sir Lawrence 125
"Ombra leggiera" (*Dinorah*) 9
"On Wings of Song" (Mendelssohn) 138
oratorio 154–155
Orfeo (Gluck) 138
overtones 8, 57, 76
Overture to Glory (film) 145
Oysher, Moshe 145

Paderewski, Ignaz 160
palate, hard 57, 60, 62–63, 65–66, 72, 89–90; soft 24, 59, 64–66
Palestrina, Giovanni Pierluigi 31
"Parigi, o cara" 119; *see also La Traviata*
Paris Opera 32
Pasqué, Ernst 156–157
Pasta, Giuditta 93, 102, 104, 116–117, 148, 158
Patti, Adelina,, 8, 18, 23, 27, 37, 46, 50, 70, 94, 96–97, 101, 103, 114, 124, 143–144, 150–151
pharynx 16, 27, 35, 50, 59–60, 63, 65–67, 71–72, 78–79, 81–82, 105, 115, 117, 126, 161
phonation 3, 5, 15, 25, 38, 93
phrase 19, 40, 44, 50–54, 83, 85, 96, 113, 121, 121, 127–129, 138–139, 142–143, 145, 147, 162, 182
phren 45
Pilkington, Michael 92; *see also Observations on the Florid Song*"
Pirate Dreams 154; *see also* Schumann-Heink, Ernestine
pitch 25, 27, 35, 56–57, 63, 75–76, 100, 107, 117–118, 125, 148
Pizzaroni (Pisaroni), Benedetta 93
placement 19, 62, 67, 72, 74, 111–112, 133
Poesie und Musik (Franz Grillparzer) 130
point of control 23, 33–35, 39, 47, 78, 83, 85, 105–106, 110, 112–113, 120, 126
point of pressure 25, 33–34, 39, 42, 49, 55–56, 59, 61, 73, 106, 110, 120, 126
Porpora, Niccolo 49
portamento 109, 113–114
posture 9, 36, 40–44, 46, 52–53, 56, 73, 112, 120, 122, 153, 162
projection 26, 62, 72
pronunciation 5, 14, 36, 84, 87, 110, 123, 126, 128, 130
Purcell, Henry 140
I Puritani (Vincenzo Bellini) 51

Queen of the Night (*The Magic Flute*) 111
"Qui la voce" (*I Puritani*) 51

Rachmaninov, Sergei 6–7, 134, 151
recording as an aid to understanding 4–7, 12, 18, 37, 46, 48, 51, 59, 87, 94, 96–97, 116, 118–119, 122, 125, 137, 141, 146, 152–153; negative value 142, 144–145, 150, 160
Reger, Max 149
register 13–14, 33–34, 59, 62, 89–105, 107, 161
"Rejoice Greatly" (*The Messiah*) 155
Renaissance painting 118, 144
resonance 14, 16, 27, 35, 49, 55–74, 79–83, 88–89, 93, 102, 106, 112, 124, 162; chest 49, 59; head 61–62, 65–66, 112; nasal 16, 64–69, 71; natural 55–56, 60, 65, 73, 80, 82; sinus 71–72
resonator 14, 16, 18, 56–57, 63, 70–72, 108, 110, 123, 161
Reszke, Edouard de 69
Reszke, Jean de 67–69
Révész, G. 132–133
Rheinweinlied (Georg Herwegh) 135
Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolay 148
Ring cycle (Wagner) 103, 131
ring of voice 7, 36, 57, 62, 70, 80
Robin Adair 70, 114
Rodd-Marling, Yvonne *see* Husler, Frederick
Rokitansky, Freiherr Hans von 69
Romantic Age 114
Romeo and Juliet (Gounod) 94
The Rose and the Nightingale (Rimsky-Korsakov) 137
Rosina (*Barber of Seville*) 148
Rossini, Gioachino 9, 80, 95, 98–99, 102, 106–107, 110–111, 113–117, 120, 148, 161
rubato 149
Rubinstein, Arthur 30
Rudersdorff, Hermine 20

Salomon, Eugène de 120
Samson and Delilah (Camille Saint-Saëns) 87
Santley, Sir Charles 8, 13, 18–19, 28, 37, 41, 90, 110
Scaria, Emil 69
Schmidt, Joseph 91
Schmitt, Friedrich 19, 120

Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Ludwig 133
Schonberg, Harold 137
Schubert, Franz 129, 135, 144, 152–153, 189
Schumann, Robert 129, 144
Schumann-Heink, Ernestine 8, 28–29, 35, 75, 92, 97, 153
Sembrich, Marcella 8, 19, 50–51, 61, 101, 103, 105, 119
"Sevillana" (*Don César de Bazan*) 113
Shakespeare, William (playwright) 119
"Sicilian Cart-Driver's Song" 7
sinus-tone 13; *see also* resonance
Sirota, Gershon 91
Sistine Chapel 30–31
smile 29, 35, 50, 52, 60, 73, 76–78, 82, 88, 122, 137, 154, 179; artificial 77; natural 29, 75, 77, 80
Snegurotchka (The Snow Maiden) 148
Sobinov, Leonid 9, 99
solfeggi 20, 29, 88, 108, 110–111, 115–116, 151, 161
le son piqué 22
La Sonnambula (Vincenzo Bellini) 46
Sonnleithner, Leopold von 152–153
sonority 25, 27, 31, 49
soprano voice 11, 20, 59, 62, 96–97, 109, 112
speech therapist 23
spiccato 22
staccato 23, 69, 106, 109, 111–113
Stendhal (Henri Beyle) 97, 102, 134, 158
Stockhausen, Julius 13, 28, 31, 87–88, 112
Stradal, August 142
Strauss, Richard 138, 149
"stroke of the glottis" 15, 17–22, 24, 36, 62, 107, 112–113, 184; *see also* "coup de glotte"
style 11, 30–31, 108, 114–115, 121, 135, 140–141, 149, 159
Sullivan, Ann 34
Supervia, Conchita 8
Sutherland, Joan 71–72, 140
"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" 143

Tadolini, Eugenia 154
Tagliavini, Ferruccio 9, 44, 54, 57, 61, 99
Tancredi (Gioachino Rossini) 117
Tannhäuser (Wagner) 133
Tauber, Richard 9, 44, 54, 91, 100, 127, 144
Taubert, Carl 117
Taylor, Robert M. 71
"Tell's Prayer" (*Guillaume Tell*) 157
tempo 7, 9, 50, 112, 137–138, 146, 149, 153
tenor voice 9, 23, 30, 98–100, 103–104
Tetrazzini, Luisa 13, 18, 25, 28, 37, 47, 49, 59, 61, 67, 73, 78, 80, 101, 105, 116
Thomas, Ambroise 9, 25, 113
Thursby, Emma 20, 150, 159
timbre 6, 18, 30, 45–46, 56, 60, 64, 68, 78–79, 85, 87–88, 90, 95, 98, 102–103, 123–124, 126, 129, 136–137, 141, 147–149, 156, 158; bright 64, 79, 95, 124; dark 56, 79, 95, 129, 156; sombre 124
Tosca (Puccini) 46
Toscanini, Arturo 132, 137, 141
Tosi, Pier Francesco 12–13, 26, 28, 31, 64–65, 75, 88, 91, 120, 123, 150–151, 162
trachea 48, 71; *see also* windpipe
tracheitis 68
tradition 69, 90, 138, 141, 144
Traité complet de l'art du chant 36, 90; *see also* Garcia, Manuel, Jr.
La Traviata (Giuseppe Verdi) 78, 111, 116, 119, 150
"Trees" (Rasbach) 154
tremolo 48, 118, 157
trill 65, 112, 116–117, 162
trillo di caprino (trillo cavalino) 117
trumpet 10, 28, 33, 39, 42, 55, 62, 73, 106
Tucker, Richard 9, 44, 47, 91, 99

Ungher-Sabatier, Caroline 147, 149
Urlus, Jacques 85–86, 126
Usatov, Dimitri 48

Valentine 127 *see* Les Huguenots
veiled voice 92, 103, 117
ventricles 49, 60–61, 66, 81, 93
ventriloquist 30
Verdi, Giuseppe 77–78, 132–133, 137, 139, 141, 147, 151–152, 154, 159
Via Crucis (Franz Liszt) 19
Viardot, Pauline 127, 142
vibrato 105, 118–119
vibrator 13, 16, 57–59, 78–79, 83–84, 108, 110, 123, 127, 161; *see also* larynx
violin 10–11, 16, 28, 35–36, 39, 55, 62, 81, 108, 110, 118, 124
vocal cords 8, 21, 23–24, 26–27, 32–33, 42, 50, 59, 61, 65, 68, 82, 95, 99, 111, 181
vocalization 9, 28, 80, 95, 106, 109–111, 113–116, 120
voce di petto 90–92, 94, 99; *see also* chest voice
voce di testa 90–92, 94; *see also* head voice
"Una voce poco fa" (*Barber of Seville*) 148
"Voi che sapete"(Mozart) 46
La Voix et le chant (Jean-Baptiste Faure) 20, 101
voix sombre 157; *see also* timbre
voix-violon 39
vowels 5, 14, 17–18, 22–25, 27–29, 31–32, 34–37, 46, 57–62, 65, 70, 73, 75–77, 79–80, 82–88, 92, 94, 99, 106–108, 110–112, 114–115, 119–120, 122–127, 129–130, 139, 145, 149, 161

Wagner, Richard 67, 85, 102–103, 112, 124, 131, 133–134
Weber, Carl Maria von 140–141
"Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen aß" (Schubert) 153
windpipe 25, 34, 36, 48–49, 58–59, 61, 63, 118, 126
wobble 48, 102, 118
Wolf, Hugo 144
wolf tone 65
Wood, Sir Henry 7–8, 13, 46, 67, 148, 161

YouTube 9, 44, 46