

**INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

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**Drama, vocal virtuosity and ornamentation in  
the age of belcanto - Lyric soprano roles in  
Gaetano Donizetti's operas**

**SUMMARY**

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. The premises of this PhD thesis

This PhD thesis hopes to fill some existing gaps in the approach to a vocal style specific to certain historical musical eras, namely the well-known belcanto vocal style. To approach this style, a solid vocal technique is a continuous learning process. With proper guidance, as a young singer matures and evolves, his or her technique also develops, underpinned by a solid foundation that every performer needs. Focusing on the technical aspects of the voice is important, but equally the emotional components should not be neglected either. When mind, body and soul are exposed, they intertwine with each other, creating a focus, a sense of peace, and a partnership based on firm technique.

### 2. Why is this doctoral work important

This doctoral thesis is of great importance because two fundamental issues must be overcome:

1. The problem of teaching belcanto vocal technique and style.
2. The problem of the musical ornamentation of belcanto.

At the same time, the following questions related to the problem of musical ornamentation need to be clarified:

1. The distinction of the art of singing lies not in its principles, but in the way they are applied.
2. To acquire the art of singing, there must be both natural endowment and much assiduous practice.
3. A singer must have good musical hearing.
4. The voice must be polished to encompass the entire body of the (vocal) instrument with skillful management, quality tending towards perfection.
5. An important requirement is the crescendo and diminuendo.
6. Quick perception and distinct articulation are required which bring life, feeling and expression to each word.
7. Physical attributes include comprehensive and properly developed lungs.
8. Knowledge of musical composition is required.
9. A good voice does not require excessive work or vigorous imposition to achieve.

### 3. Preparing for a role

Preparing for an opera role is a process of great importance and of prime necessity by focusing the mind on the intended purpose, but with peace and serenity. Familiarising oneself with the compositional style, the composer's personality and historical position in the period, researching the

history of the opera, reading the libretto of the opera in order to familiarise oneself with the subject matter are some of the preliminary steps in approaching a role in an opera.

## CHAPTER I

### **The history and evolution of ornamentation in opera from the Renaissance to the Italian melodrama of the early 19th century.**

#### *1.1. Vocal and instrumental embellishments in the Renaissance: Manuals and techniques for applying ornamental improvisation*

In the long evolution of the opera genre, manuals were an effective means of propagating the vocal techniques proper to the vocal polyphony of the musical Renaissance. The main authors of these treatises were: Sylvestro di Ganassi and Giralamo dalla Casa (Italy), Diego Ortiz (Spain), Adrian Petit Coclicus (France), Hermann Finck (Germany). The main forms of ornamentation were diminutions, which imposed strict rules applied to the typical improvisatory character. They gave the musical discourse a sense of objective beauty, while having a particular aesthetic effect.

#### *1.2. Vocal ornament in the Baroque era of music*

A gradual change in the practice of ornamentation and embellishment took place in the 17th and 18th centuries, characterised primarily by the subordination of music to the poetic text. Secondly, rapid ornaments, grouped according to cultural space, *groppo* (Italy) and *agréments* (France), consisting of *apogiaturas*, *trills*, *mordents*, *groupettos*, *coulé*, *port-de voix*, gradually replaced *diminutives*, which at the time were considered cumbersome. Despite variations in style from early to late Baroque and from one part of Europe to another, there was a table of specific ornaments that were used consistently across most of the continent.

#### *1.3. Vocal Ornamentation in the 18th Century and the Beginnings of Belcanto*

The vocal style of the Neapolitan school, underlies the *belcanto* style, the vocal embellishments added by the singers being one of its main characteristics. The theorists who clearly define the course of vocal ornamentation in the 18th century are Pietro Francesco Tosi and Giovanni Battista Mancini. They are also the authors of the two manuals that strongly influenced the later development of the style known generically as *belcanto*: "*Opinioni de cantori antichi e moderni*" (P. Fr. Tosi) and "*Reflesioni pratiche sul Canto figurato*" (G. B. Mancini). Both manuals synthesised and ordered both the multitude of musical ornaments used by singers of the period (*messa di voce*, *appoggiatura*, *trill*, *passagio*, *divisions*, *strascino*, *volatina*) and the cadences used by vocal soloists (*cadenza da capo*, *cadenza superiore* and *cadenza inferior*, *cadenza finale*).

In those days it was said that only through hard practice and patience could the singer learn all these types of ornaments, the master having a crucial role in acquiring all the skills necessary to assimilate them.

## CHAPTER II

### Tradition and vocal virtuosity at the height of Italian belcanto

#### *II.1, Italian opera in the early 19th century*

The era of the heyday of Italian belcanto usually refers to its three great representatives: Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti. Chronologically it is placed at the beginning of the 19th century and geographically it is located in Italy. Historiographical studies on the opera confirm its origins as being located in the pre-dramatic poetry of ancient Greece followed by its later development and flourishing in the theatre. Just as Greek theatre was considered the most solemn platform for the expression of a society's culture, so too Italian opera was considered the pinnacle of the cultural achievements of late 18th and early 19th century society. Opera was in fact the only large-scale musical genre that could be taken seriously by Italians for whom 'music' meant 'opera'. The Italian lyrical tradition, dominated by poetry rather than drama, naturally relied more on the singer than the orchestra. It is necessary to understand the role of the libretto in early nineteenth-century opera from the point of view of the singer on the stage, since it was he who fulfilled through music all the poetry of the original text.

Vocal soloists had three means of expressing their ideas and feelings: through words, through vocal timbre, through gesture, which consisted of external movements and body postures.

The Italians considered the recitative, especially the accompanied declamation, to be the "foundation of the opera", while the texts of the arias were closely tied to a strict rhyme scheme and were treated as poetry rather than simply texts for musical expression. Since the artistic content of the music depended strictly on the poetry, the art of singing required the most elegant utterance of the words rather than their interpretation, so bel canto treatises emphasised the importance of a natural style of pronunciation rather than considerations of expressiveness,

Dramatic articulation through orchestral contributions is a concept that has little place in either the Italian idea of the power of music or their conception of drama in libretto. For the Italians the orchestra was not something that existed in its own right, but only as part of a larger whole, orchestral music being less developed in Italy than elsewhere in Europe.

#### *II.2, Italian Melodrama at the beginning of the 19th century: Belcanto, vocal virtuosity and ornamentation*

In Italian melodrama, the emphasis was particularly on the singer's artistic ability and good taste, the belcanto style of singing emphasising the natural features of the voice as an instrument designed to portray the expressiveness of a musical work. Belcanto was in fact a concept consisting in the emission of round, beautiful sounds that melt into each other, forming a line of singing that is the very essence of the art. The belcanto voice was notable for the consistency and firmness of the sounds emitted, supported by what the Italians called *vibrazione*.

The musical articulations of the belcanto style include a wide variety of dynamic accents (*sfz*, *sfp*, *rf*, *sf*), but also a particular rhythmic flexibility centred on a pronounced *rubato*. There are also two newly introduced dominant technical procedures characteristic of this style: *vibrato* and *portamento* (different in manner of execution from *legato*). Scores often had mentions such as *a piacere*, *col canto* or *colla voce*, leaving the singer free to proceed as he pleased, adding something simple or more elaborate, depending on the dramatic context.

There are five different styles of bel canto singing technique:

1. *Canto spianato*, an elegant, refined singing style based largely on *messa di voce*, *tempo rubato* and rich but not excessive ornamentation.
2. *Canto fiorito*, rich in ornamentation allowing singers to display both the richness of their imagination and the elasticity of their own voices.
3. *Canto di agilità*, abounding in arpeggios and trills characterised by adaptability to both varying loudness and multiple tempo changes.
4. *Canto di maniera*, characterized by sobriety and suppleness. And by its avoidance of ostentatious ornamentation and is often used in opera buffa.
5. *Canto di bravura*, a manner of singing suggesting strength and passion and using a veritable torrent of sounds and ornamentation.

The musical ornament of the belcanto style, very elaborate, was characterized both by good taste and by a great variety of procedures used. Embellishing notes such as *acciaciatura*, *apogiaturas*, *mordents*, *trills*, *grupettos*, were often grouped within *cadenzas* designed to highlight the ending of an aria or section. This musical ornament, which had reached its most elaborate stage, could also be used to create a wide variety of returns of a *da capo* aria or in a rondo form, but also to differentiate the verses in strophic musical pieces.

## CHAPTER III

### Gaetano Donizetti and Opera: Dramaturgy and style in the operas of Gaetano Donizetti

#### *III. 1, Gaetano Donizetti - Life and creation - a brief introduction*

Born in 1797, Gaetano Donizetti had no musical influence from his family. At the age of 9 he was admitted to the Bergamo music school thanks to Johann Simon Mayr (1763-1845). Here he took singing and piano lessons and even joined the choir of the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. At the age of fourteen he went to Bologna, where he studied composition and counterpoint with Padre Stanislau Mattei (former teacher of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart). Gaetano Donizetti's talent came to light with the success of his opera *Zoraida di Granata*, performed in Rome in 1822. From then on, his life would become a relentless struggle for success on an upward path, moving ceaselessly from one opera house to another throughout the Italian peninsula (Rome, Venice, Naples, Milan, Palermo). His speed of composition was proverbial, so that during his lifetime he composed 71 operas, some 200 songs with piano accompaniment, 20 string quartets, various instrumental pieces (mainly for woodwind instruments), a *Requiem* in memory of Vincenzo Bellini and a host of other religious vocal pieces. Among his important stage works can be listed: *Anna Bolena* (1830), *L'elisir d'amore* (1831), *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833), *Maria Stuarda* (1835), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), *Roberto Devereux* (1838), *La Fille du regiment* (1840), *La Favorite* (1840), *Linda de Chamounix* (1841), *Don Pasquale* (1841), *Maria di Rohan* (1843), *Dom Sébastien roi de Portugal* (1843), *Caterina Cornaro* (1844).

He died in 1848, struck down by a disease which before killing him destroyed both his creative force and his reason.

## *1.2, Gaetano Donizetti - Stil și influențe*

În primul rând au existat influențe majore ale lui Simon Mayr asupra lui Gaetano Donizetti materializate prin: Utilizarea unui stil componistic internațional (melodie de tip italian, armonie germană, declamație de tip francez), creșterea importanței trăsăturilor instrumentale individuale și extinderea paletii de culori orchestrale, cavatina folosită des (nu doar ca arie de final), secțiuni dramatice extinse (prin cumulara mai multor scene), dezvoltarea aspectelor dramatice, dezvoltarea intelectuală prin lectura operelor marilor scriitori ai lumii, credința fermă în Biserica Catolică. Gaetano Donizetti a fost influențat mai profund și mai durabil de Gioachino Rossini, ale cărui ritmuri alerte, orchestrații strălucitoare, crescendo-uri irepresibile și modulații spectaculoase, dar decisive și abordate cu discernământ, i-au influențat puternic primele lucrări. Influența lui Vincenzo Bellini l-a transformat iremediabil într-un compozitor romantic. Operele sale ulterioare, în special cele scrise pentru Paris și Viena, oferă indicii că Gaetano Donizetti i-a studiat cu interes pe Ludwig van Beethoven, Giacomo Meyerbeer și Carl Maria von Weber. Gaetano Donizetti nu a fost influențat doar de principalii compozitori contemporani cu el, de tendințele muzicale în vogă sau de stilul de cântat al vremii, ci el însuși a avut o influență puternică asupra operei compozitorilor mai tineri decât el, în special Giuseppe Verdi, multe anticipări directe ale operelor lui Verdi putând fi găsite în operele lui Gaetano Donizetti.

### *III.3, Gaetano Donizetti - Dramaturgy, style and expressiveness*

Gaetano Donizetti had a great ability to create a certain individuality for each character and a great power to lead him to the passionate heights of romantic love. But he balances this concept by also showing unpleasant aspects of the characters' psychology precisely for the purpose of ideational reorientation towards love.

One of the composer's great novelties is the individual characterisation of the ensemble characters, previously defined as anonymous.

Gaetano Donizetti proved to be a true master in the art of vocal ornamentation, his use of flourishes and colourings requiring great agility of the vocal apparatus. The taut sequencing, the succession of vocal ranges also demanded solid breath control, well centred and using a sustained legato. Beautiful singing, as the very name *belcanto* suggests, needs a means of transmission to manifest its individuality, in Gaetano Donizetti's conception the voice functioning as an independent instrument, supported by an elegant orchestral input.

One aspect in which Gaetano Donizetti is almost always at the highest level, consistently superior to Vincenzo Bellini, is the construction of the ensembles, especially those slow moments which concentrate the action at the beginning of a finale.

The great arias and duets do not always follow the conventional plan of a *cantabile* followed by a two stanza *cabaletta* and in the later operas this type of structure hardly occurs at all, as he abandons symmetry in favour of the logic of dramatic plot action. In this respect, a very effective innovation that Gaetano Donizetti used successfully is the introduction of the second voice in a duet through a change of both mode and new thematic material.

Another of Gaetano Donizetti's personal traits is to oscillate between major and minor modes throughout a melody, to produce a simple pathetic effect through an unexpected modulation just before the end of a musical phrase. He also makes convincing use of Gioachino Rossini's recipe of having a continuous melody in the orchestra, sometimes repeated in different keys, while on stage the voices perform independently, but he introduces a strong touch of irony into this process.

But Gaetano Donizetti's originality is most evident in the dynamism of his operas. Here, modern characters with directness and strong emotionality are given a fuller sonic wrapping than ever before. Gaetano Donizetti structured the vocal themes of his speaking sections, increasingly skilfully as he matured, to evoke the psycho-affective states of the dialogues that underpinned them. In his duets, Gaetano Donizetti gradually moved away from the common themes favoured by Gioachino Rossini and Vincenzo Bellini, with their limited expressive potential, emphasising instead the conflicting feelings of his characters through contrasting melodies.

### *III.4, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, and opera librettist Felice Romani*

There was a close collaboration between Gaetano Donizetti and opera librettist Felice Romani. With the sudden and unfortunate death of Vincenzo Bellini, Felice Romani, hitherto the late composer's exclusive librettist, turned his attention to Gaetano Donizetti, who was in a great creative flurry. Their collaboration resulted in works of inestimable value. These are *Chiara e Serafina* (1822), *Alina, Regina Golcondei* (1828), *Anna Bolena* (1830), *Gianni di Parigi* (1831), *Ugo, conte di Parigi* (1832), *L'elisir d'amore* (1831), *Parisina* (1833), *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* (1833) and *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833). The collaboration of the two would end with this last-mentioned work, the subject of which was at odds with the fastidious and old-fashioned sense of good literary-artistic taste of the famous man of letters.

#### CHAPTER IV:

##### Dramaturgy, ornamentation and vocal virtuosity in operatic soprano roles in operas by Gaetano Donizetti

###### *IV.1 - Lucia di Lammermoor - The role of Lucia*

The best known of Gaetano Donizetti's operas is an adaptation by the composer and librettist Salvatore Cammarano of Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Walter Scott's novel, in turn, was inspired by a real-life event that took place in present-day Scotland. Although the plot of the opera bears similarities to that of the novel, it is nevertheless a condensed version, the similarities between *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *The Bride of Lammermoor* being obvious. While Walter Scott's Lucy is a terse and rather ordinary character, Gaetano Donizetti's Lucia seems detached from reality, disarmingly voluble, expressing beautiful feelings in graceful and highly stylised language. In other words, compared to Lucy's disturbingly depressive realism, Lucia is aestheticized, celebrated through songful music and appealing visual representation. This aestheticization meant that Lucia was indeed able to captivate the audience, the excitement for the mad scene being long lasting.

Lucia's first aria, namely the Cavatina from Act I of the opera, irrevocably leads the way to the ultimate tragedy of the Aria of Madness. Imbued with a strong fatalism through the evocation of the apparition of a ghost, this highly developed cavatina, with a bright introduction dominated sonically by the undulations of the solo harp, illustrates both the sombre feeling dominant from the opera's prelude and the vocalicity of the whole aria which revolves around three essential elements of the belcanto style: legato, portamento and messa di voce. Gaetano Donizetti exploits the expressive possibilities of the lyric soprano voice, each word being wrapped in different timbral colours according to the psycho-affective situations of the different moments evoked. The gothic atmosphere, typical of early nineteenth-century Romanticism, is rendered with great plasticity, but also with a lot of

classical spirit by the composer, who could not afford at that time too many escapes from the somewhat rigid style of the canons of Italian opera.

In the second part of the cavatina, the vocals approach the singing mode called *sui-generis agilità di maniera*; this mode of execution is dominated by the elegance and sonorous intensity of the sounds in the high register, the ornamental forms concretized in elements of vocal virtuosity, *messa di voce*, *apogiaturas*, trills fully suggesting the final state of ecstasy of the protagonist.

In this cavatina, the music is strictly subordinate to the changes in the text; in a conventional manner, the madness does not affect the favourable, healthy image of the heroine whose voice, with its bursts of *coloratura*, remains closely linked to the text.

The highlight of *Lucia di Lammermoor* remains, however, the great scene of Lucia's madness. This very special moment in the opera's history is an important example of Gaetano Donizetti's use of musical elements such as tonality, tempo, elaborate and insistent ornamentation, musical themes and the sonorous colour of the text for dramatic purposes.

Lucia's vocal presence through extravagant embellishments, through sequences and melismas, through the famous flute cadenza (or *Glassharmonica*) seems to create an intimate intuitive connection between the madness and the vocal ornament used: the trills, the ornamental formulas combined with the high sounds of the supra-high register suggesting an unbearable breadth of emotion. Excessive vocal ornamentality has a strange effect: the seemingly balanced musical atmosphere is disturbed by these manneristic exaggerations, warning by their unusual length and frequency of the character's madness. In general, a certain amount of ornamentation can be accepted, but as soon as it becomes exaggerated, it indicates a situation dominated by abnormality.

#### *IV.2 - Don Pasquale, role of Norina*

The opera "*Don Pasquale*", created in 1841 by Gaetano Donizetti, represents the culmination, the ultimate fulfilment of the composer's creative spirit. The last great opera buffa of the 19th century (if we do not include Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff* in the list) is also the composer's most modern work in the way it deals with the topicality of the subject (for that era), with the sets and costumes suggesting everyday life, with the warning messages inserted especially in the second act of the opera, which warn against the intrusion of the city dweller, the aggressiveness of fashion in the home and in one's life.

The music of the opera carries out the same updating strategy in sound. The effect of everyday naturalness is achieved by various techniques:

1. The light and flexible character of the "conversational manner" that permeates many of the opera's dialogical parts;
2. The dismantling of the hitherto observed closed forms, which tend to dissipate into short episodes linked to the unfolding of the plot;

3. The melancholic-pathetic passionate nuances;

4. The predominant role played by the dances fashionable in Paris at the time, used in the shaping of the musical motifs of many of the closed numbers.

Don Pasquale represents one of the most popular models taken from the *comedia dell'arte*, as well as one of the most common plot patterns of the genre: the struggle of young lovers, or *innamorati*, whose union is prevented by one or more old men (*i vecchi*), or a jealous guardian. The correspondence of the characters of the *commedia dell'arte* in the opera *Don Pasquale* is as follows: DON PASQUALE: *Pantalone* (*i vecchi*); ERNESTO: *Pierrot* (*innamorati*); NORINA: *Colombina* (*innamorati*); Dr. MALATESTA: *Scapino* (*zanni*)

The capricious character of Norina, the central character of the opera, is fully manifested in the *cavatina* of Act I of the opera, "*Quel guardo il cavaliere*". Organised in two sections, an introductory narrative-recitative first part and the second, the *aria proper*, this *belcanto* gem has the gift of sonically illustrating the whole range of feelings of attitudes and non-conformist manifestations (some very well camouflaged), through the interplay of a whole arsenal of sonic means: punctuated rhythmic formulas, ornamented ascending and descending sequences, breaks in the melodic design, melodic lines laden with trills and *apogiaturas*, passages, flourishes, rhythmic-melodic structures in triplet values. The final trill, of long duration (7 bars), illustrates the enormous inner and outer energy of Norina, who in this way proclaims her absolute supremacy, this *aria* crowning as it could not be better the splendour of vocal virtuosity typical of the period of maximum brilliance of *belcanto*.

#### *IV.3, The Elixir of Love, Adina role*

In Gaetano Donizetti's creation, "*L'elisir d'amore*" and later "*Don Pasquale*" are masterpieces of his comic creation, not only in terms of sound architecture but also in terms of attractive and believable characters, all illustrated by scintillating music. Especially in the case of "*L'elisir d'amore*", the composer demonstrates a great ability to inject feeling into the texture of the comedy, thus differentiating himself from Gioachino Rossini's famous opera "*Il barbiere di Siviglia*", whose characters are presented rather outwardly, in the typical farcical manner. Gaetano Donizetti's characters live in a world that is no longer farce but romantic comedy, the superiority of *L'elisir d'amore* over earlier comic operas of the era being evident, especially in the musical characterisation. Five main roles are involved in this romantic opera, each of which offers a different perspective on the effects of love. Gaetano Donizetti's ideals of love are represented through the character outlines, the names - Adina, Nemorino, Belcore, Giannetta and Dulcamara - symbolically representing some of the many facets of love and its effects on the human spirit.

Throughout the opera, Gaetano Donizetti associates tonal centres and specific tonal steps with the drama and psychology of the characters on the one hand, and to some extent uses certain forms of modal borrowing on the other. The use of the third and sixth steps of the C major scale allows for

smooth tonal transitions. Interesting, however, is Gaetano Donizetti's use of these key steps, briefly suggesting the eponymous minor mode, yet remaining in the suggested minor key.

The entire opera focuses primarily on the relationship between Adina and Nemorino, the concept of true love, and their desire to experience it. Each of the two characters has their own vision of what they believe true love should be, suggesting in one way or another the appropriate behavioural skills to acquire it. This approach is actually not an uncommon act in either opera or real-life situations, with the specific thought process having some degree of influence on the sensibilities of the human spirit, both on stage and in everyday life.

Adina, as the central heroine of the opera, is a real magnetic force, managing to capture the attention of the other characters on stage at every appearance and influencing the narrative of the work.

Elements of vocal ornament support her rich character endowed with a naive imagination, but at the same time having that selflessness and power of sacrifice for the person she loves. In their unfolding, richly ornamented melodic vocal lines with divisions, ascending and descending melodic passages, ornamented cadences, arpeggiated rhythmic-melodic motives are succeeded. If in Act I, the melodic design is somewhat whimsical, searching, breathing a somewhat forced joy, the vocal lines in Act II of the opera, with their ample melodic movement and brilliant character, emphasize the sincere faith, passion, constancy and sacredness of love.

#### *IV.4, The Daughter of the Regiment, Marie role*

The opera *The Daughter of the Regiment* (*La fille du régiment*), written in French, premiered at the Paris Opera Comique in 1840. Initially received with some reservations, it would make a strong comeback, becoming the French patriotic opera par excellence. Even before the outbreak of the First World War, it had been performed over a thousand times. In 1840, audiences at the Opéra-Comique certainly recognised the patriotic overtones of these plays. Over the years, "Salut à la France" even acquired the status of the second national anthem, and from 1848 onwards, "La fille du régiment" was performed constantly on Bastille Day.

"La fille du régiment" was performed on stage in very different ways, depending on cities, political situations and the circulation of sources, and ended up being performed in a mixed form. In the last century, once the Parisian presence of the opera had faded, the Italian version enjoyed increased circulation. The difficulty of converting spoken dialogue into recitative, however, greatly hindered its subsequent revival.

In addition to the spontaneity of the melodic and rhythmic inventiveness, it can be seen that in *La fille du régiment* Gaetano Donizetti developed a recurring principle in French musical theatre, that the drama is based on an opposition of ideas, values or social spheres, represented by characteristic pieces of stage music.

The work represents Gaetano Donizetti's first foray into French opera; as the composer of many serious Italian operas, his venture into opéra comique was a comprehensive combination of his Italian compositional style with French musical and theatrical idioms. This musical-dramatic creation illustrates a fusion of lyrical traditions as well as the unusual portrayal of the opera's protagonist, Marie. Marie's role as a romantic heroine reflects contemporary changes in the social importance of women in 19th century society by presenting a unique synthesis of Italian opera buffa and French comic opera, a compositional convention that evokes the progressive evolution of the role of women in the era. Gender conflict and the plight of women are explored through the development of Maria's character throughout the work. Gaetano Donizetti's Marie, however, does not fit into this typology. For all her charm and courage, she shows honesty, unable to become an exploiter, and therefore unwilling to use her supposed feminine traits to impose her will. A particular curiosity is that the character of Marie is only rarely given her own personality (musically speaking). Of the seven arias or duets in which she sings, three are regimentals or patriotic songs ("Au bruit de la guerre", "Chacun le sait" and "Salut a la France") and in two others she plays music determined strictly by her dramatic connection to other characters ("Depuis l'instant"), in which she repeats Tonio's musical themes, and "Le jour naissait dans le bocage", a song sung at the Marquise's behest. Only two arias are representative of her own expressive nature, both of which are in fact lamentations in moments of despair. Of the three regimental songs, two are overtly patriotic in character: 'Au bruit de la guerre' and 'Salut à la France', both of which begin with an incisive perfect quatrain, followed by a punctuated rhythm supported by a pregnant arpeggiation of the orchestral accompaniment, suggesting a militant atmosphere.

Although this opera does not abound in elements of ornamentation, its very character as a comic opera with strong patriotic overtones imposing certain restrictions on its use, there are nevertheless substitutive stylistic elements (dotted rhythm, use of the rhythmic "*Rataplan*" pulsation peculiar to French Cisson music); ornamentation is nevertheless present but to a much lesser extent, being represented mainly by divisive passages and cadenzas.

## CHAPTER V: Conclusions

My conclusions regarding the validity, truth and importance of the teachings of the Old Italian School of Chant are rooted in both my passion for singing and my ongoing concern for the historically accurate approach. In my quest I have been encouraged both by my pupils and students and by those members of the public devoted to the operatic tradition, who have urged me to bring to light and popularise this method of singing. They all agreed that it was very important to write my doctoral thesis through the lens of this vision.

My approach is based on extensive professional experience both as a singer (soprano) and as a singing teacher. In the hundreds of performances I have tackled I have become aware of the beneficial effects of this ancient method, observing both the vocal stability achieved and the wonderful sound effects acquired, with great impact on the audience. The explanatory comments made tangentially on the original material were necessary to enable the reader to enter into that typical way of thinking and appreciation, difficult for us today to understand.

This thesis represents the point of view of a soprano, but the rules to be applied in the method of teaching belcanto are the same for any type of voice. Where instructions have been presented from different angles, this has been done to emphasise the importance of these rules and to crystallise the explanation.

In the research work undertaken for this thesis, I have assembled an entire private library of books on bel canto listed in the bibliography. Thus, biographies of singers, along with epistolary exchanges, sometimes even unpublished anecdotal aspects provided first-hand descriptions of the physical act of singing. These supplemented the manuals and instructions of the old masters. Also of great value to this research were the preserved recordings (often not in the best condition) of the old singers; they are remarkable both for the beauty and distinction of their musical phrasing and for their excellent demonstrated vocal technique, confirming the use of the old singing method.

The old method of the Italian school of belcanto was based on the attack and perfect delivery of the voice supported by a breath to match. Even though all this knowledge of the old masters was obtained by empirical methods, the natural quality of each voice was appreciated and as far as possible preserved. This is also the reason why many voices have endured, largely thanks to the method of emission, from which the great variety of inflections resulted, a method which has fortunately been passed down from generation to generation.

Today's professional vocal performers often sing according to the same method that is now taught in most conservatories around the world, but this method does not always seem to be sufficient to meet the demands of the classical repertoire in all its requirements. This is why singers who have based their vocal technique on the old Italian school of belcanto seem better prepared to sing demanding classical repertoire.

As I pointed out in my thesis, the ancient art of belcanto reached its final fulfilment in the first third of the nineteenth century, through the unparalleled works of three great composers: Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti. The last of these, Gaetano Donizetti, through the overwhelming quantity of his creation, through the sublimation of all the musical artistic conquests of previous and even contemporary creators, through the admirable compositional technique placed at the service of the human voice, by the brilliance of the wide range of operatic subjects tackled - from serious operas and tragedies to operas buffe or even so-called farces - he crowned, by the perfection of his art, all this concentrated and constant effort towards the perfection of the art of singing, begun

in the previous century, in the age of the great castrato singers. This painstaking research undertaken over more than a hundred years by the great masters of the vocal art and directed towards the fulfilment of the sublime "most natural instrument" offered by God to man has finally found its fulfilment in the great art of Italian opera composers. The principles of this method are universal, having been founded and further developed on the pure vocals of the Italian language, and are valid and can be applied to other European languages as well, with all the above-mentioned historical natural vocal qualities being applicable today to professional voices.