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## Developing Vocal Agility of Light Lyric Coloratura Soprano Voices Through the Neglected Repertoire of French Opéra Comique

Valentine Baron

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DEVELOPING VOCAL AGILITY OF LIGHT LYRIC COLORATURA SOPRANO VOICES  
THROUGH THE NEGLECTED REPERTOIRE OF FRENCH *OPÉRA COMIQUE*

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of the requirements for the

Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance

School of Music  
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## Doctoral Project Approval

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The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Developing Vocal Agility of Light Lyric Coloratura Soprano Voices Through the  
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## ABSTRACT

Developing Vocal Agility of Light Lyric Coloratura Soprano Voices Through the Neglected Repertoire of French *Opéra Comique*

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This document explores light lyric coloratura soprano roles in the French *opéra comique* genre through an analysis of seven arias and their impact on the development of vocal agility. The *opéra comique* genre was popular at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but declined to disappear from the stage at the end of the nineteenth century. Despite the *opéra comique*'s influence on many other vocal genres, the genre is today neglected. Opportunities for singers to improve and practice challenging coloratura in this repertoire are limited. The two most famous arias from the genre which are the Doll Aria and Juliette's Waltz make the selection of arias in the voice studio repetitive. The disappearance of the genre from the stage took singers away from its large repertoire and limited them on their choice of French operatic arias. This document study poses the following question: How would a revival of neglected French *opéra comique* arias affect vocal agility practice?

The question is answered by presenting a brief history of the *opéra comique* genre from its creation to its decline. Then, to confer about vocal agility, the author presents a series of exercises from old and modern vocal methods. The purpose is to reconnect singers with the

practice of vocal agility and encourage the use of these methods in the repertoire. Finally, seven neglected coloratura arias of the *opéra comique* genre are analyzed to discuss the synopsis of the opera, character analysis, musical form, and the performance of demanding vocal agility parts.

To answer the question at hand, the methodology involved a historical analysis of eighteenth and nineteenth century operatic manuscripts, as well as study of contemporary vocal pedagogy books. Furthermore, vocal pedagogues and musicologists were interviewed throughout the project to offer their insights on the *opéra comique* genre, the repertoire, and exercises for vocal agility.

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In Dedication to my dear grandmother

Jacqueline Léone Denise Janin  
(1936 – 2020)



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 DEFINITION OF THE *OPÉRA COMIQUE*

The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines the *opéra comique* as a “term for a French stage work of the 18th, 19th or 20th centuries with vocal and instrumental music and spoken dialogue.”<sup>1</sup> This definition refers to the main difference between the *opéra comique* and the opera genre: the *opéra comique* uses spoken dialogue instead of recitatives. However, the definition of the genre is greater than merely this distinction, and defining it tends to be confusing because of the term “comique.” If most famous *opéra comiques* do not contain any comical elements in their plots, then, why call this genre “comique”? To answer this question, we must go back to its origins.

The *opéra comique* emerged from the popular entertainments of the Parisian fairs during the early eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> At the time of its creation, *opéra comique*’s subject matter was satirical, humoristic, and different from those performed by the *Tragédie Lyrique* and the *Comédie Française*. Theater entrepreneurs decided to call the genre “comique” to mark the differentiation. Promptly the *opéra comique* lost its meaning as the genre evolved to the serious playing historical topics, including drama and death scenes. Throughout its evolution, every aspect of the genre changed except its original name.

Despite its current neglect, the genre used to be internationally popular in its time. Many other genres emerged from the *opéra comique*, such as the French operetta, the German

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<sup>1</sup> M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet and Richard Langham Smith, "Opéra Comique" *Grove Music Online*. Accessed 20 January, 2001. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43715>.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique* (Paris: Les Publications Universitaires, 1978), 15.

*Singspiel*, and even Broadway musicals. Many fields used the *opéra comique* genre as a source of experimentation for their own development. Musicologist Edward J. Dent in *The Rise of Romantic Opera* (1976) studied the development of the romantic opera and found that some of its characteristics came from early French *opéra comique*.

## 1.2 DOMINANCE OF LIGHT VOICES IN THE GENRE

Composers of *opéra comique* always favored light voices. The reasons for this preference are still uncertain, but their admiration of the Italians allows us to suppose that they simply wanted to imitate the vocal line of Italian *intermezzi*. Another reason would be the type of song used in the genre, for example, the *ariette* and the *romance*. Both are bright, short songs that demand flexibility, agility, and lightness. Moreover, *opéra comique* composers enjoyed associating singing voices with birds. The comparison of coloratura singing to the singing of birds served as a source of inspiration. Finally, most of famous operatic divas of the nineteenth century in Paris were coloratura sopranos such as Caroline Miolan-Carvalho (1827–1895) and Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801–1863). The trend was to put them in the forefront of the scene to display their vocal virtuosity. Numerous *opéra comique* composers created roles for them, thus this also explain the dominance of light voices in the genre.

The *opéra comique* not only differed from opera with its use of spoken dialogue but also with its choice in lead roles. In the nineteenth century, grand operas featured two lead lyric

sopranos or one lyric and one dramatic, whereas in the *opéra comique* there was only one single leading role: a soprano with a “lighter” voice.<sup>3</sup>

Musicologist Sean Parr opines in *Vocal Virtuosity: The Origins of the Coloratura Soprano in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (2021) that the denomination “coloratura” became officially associated with the soprano voice during the nineteenth century with the influence of *bel canto* operas.<sup>4</sup> In the nineteenth century, women enjoyed the freedom to perform, and had an immense place in the star system. The statement of Parr is important to note because from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, the term coloratura often referred to melismatic singing only, at first it was just a vocal element commonly associated with the repertoire sung by castrati.

Not only were light soprano voices favored, all voices in the *opéra comique* genre were light. A famous example is the role of Chapelou (tenor) in *Le Postillon de Longjumeau* (1836), composed by Adolphe Adam (1803–1856). Chapelou is a famous tenor struggling to make a career in the operatic world. His famous aria “Mes amis, écoutez l’histoire” displays a D5 that many tenors today use for practice purposes. Popular singers at the time created roles for the genre, which was the case of nineteenth-century baritone Jean Blaise Martin (1768–1837). After performing numerous roles Martin created his own voice-type called the “Baryton Martin.” A Baryton martin voice is defined as agile, flexible in high notes, and with a voice color approaching that of a tenor.

Throughout the evolution of the *opéra comique*, the composer’s interest in light voices decreased in favor of heavier voices, approaching the style of the grand opera. From 1874, the

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Opera-Comique a Sourcebook* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), xv.

<sup>4</sup> Sean M. Parr, *Vocal Virtuosity: The Origins of the Coloratura Soprano in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 2.



genre turned to the serious character and made a radical change in its choice of voice type. The most famous example is the role of Bizet's *Carmen* (1875), when mezzo-sopranos and full lyric sopranos supplanted light soprano voices.

### 1.3 THE LIGHT LYRIC COLORATURA SOPRANO VOICE IN THE *FACH* SYSTEM

Arias and songs from the singing repertoire are associated with a specific *Fach*. This term is used in classical singing to define a voice type. In choral singing, we have six categories of voices: soprano 1, soprano 2 or mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass. These categories are fine in choral singing but for solo singing it is different. Indeed, a large amount of classical singing repertoire has been composed for specific voice types. An aria written for tenors is not meant for every singer of this voice type: one may have a more extended range than others, or have a lighter voice color with better flexibility and ease in extreme high notes. These distinctions are important to take in consideration in order to lead singers to their appropriate repertoire and self-protection of their voices.

The classification of these voice types has been designed by Rudolf Klotz (1899–1973) into a *Fach* system. This system consists of twenty-nine categories of voice.<sup>5</sup> This document focuses on the light lyric coloratura soprano voice and the main question to consider is: what is a light lyric coloratura soprano voice? Klotz divides the soprano voice into eight categories classified as serious *Fächer* (associated with serious characters) or comic *Fächer* (associated with comical characters).

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Hoch, *A Dictionary for the Modern Singer* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 63.

TABLE 1. List of soprano *Fach* from Kloiber (1973), 758–760 <sup>6</sup>

SERIOUS	COMICAL
<i>lyrischer Sopran</i> lyric soprano <i>Jugendlich-dramatischer sopran</i> young dramatic soprano <i>dramatischer Koloratursopran</i> dramatic coloratura soprano <i>dramatischer sopran</i> dramatic soprano	<i>lyrischer Koloratursopran</i> light lyric coloratura soprano <i>Soubrette</i> soubrette <i>Charaktersopran</i> Character soprano

Kloiber made a similar classification for the other five voice types. While this system helps place singers in their category, as the voice constantly develops and evolves, it is possible for singers to see their voice change with time.

Performance reviews on eighteenth and nineteenth-century newspapers displayed singer's voice types with the designation of Trial, Falcon, Dugazon, or Martin. During the nineteenth century in France, singers use to create their own voice type. Like the previously mentioned Martin, Louise Rosalie Lefebvre (1755–1821) known as Madame Dugazon, Cornelia Falcon (1814–1897), and Antoine Trial (1737–1795), saw their last name become a *Fach*. Any tenor close to the timbre of Antoine Trial were classified as Trial voice type. This type of designation could not last since every voice unique, but it was, at the time, an alternative way to classify

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Sandra Cotton, "Voice Classification and Fach: Recent, Historical and Conflicting Systems of Voice Categorization" (DMA diss, Greensboro: The University of North Carolina, 2007), 60-61.

voices. The *Fach* system of Kloiber facilitates the process and it seems to make it more specific, actually.

Light lyric coloratura soprano voices are defined by a high, bright, and flexible voice with ease in the upper register.<sup>7</sup> Kloiber says that the range is C4 to F6<sup>8</sup> and defines the voice as agile, soft with a great range.<sup>9</sup> The light lyric coloratura is listed under the comic *Fächer*, which means that the voice is often associated with comical characters or comic genres such as operetta. Soprano Natalie Dessay's teacher Jean Pierre Blivet (b.1938) defines the voice to be ample and light, but not always at ease in high range, while the middle voice is rounded and warm. Blivet makes a distinction between a light coloratura and a light lyric coloratura. Compared to the light lyric, the light coloratura can reach notes above F6 and the voice is lighter in sound and less rounded in the middle voice.<sup>10</sup> Usually, sopranos who are able to reach the *suraigu* (extreme high range) are called dramatic coloratura sopranos, but some sopranos are still able to reach this range without being able to sing the repertoire of a dramatic because they do not have as much weight in their voice. In that case, this voice type is defined as light and not light lyric. The repertoire discussed in this document is for light lyric coloratura sopranos since it does not require to sing above E6, however it is possible to extend the range during cadenzas or fermatas.

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<sup>7</sup> Pearl Yeadon McGinnis and Marith McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 20.

<sup>8</sup> C4 is middle C (Do) and F6 is (Fa 6) located two octaves higher than F4 on a keyboard.

<sup>9</sup> Cotton, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Pierre Blivet, *Les Voies du Chant, Traité de Technique Vocale* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 118-119.

## 1.4 VOCAL AGILITY IN THE VOICE STUDIO

The repertoire discussed in this paper requires a singing capable of fast agile runs or *roulades*, trills, staccato, and vocal ornaments such as turns and gruppettos. All of these components are part of vocal agility. Voice pedagogues such as Pier Francesco Tosi (c. 1653–1732) and Giovanni Battista Mancini (1714–1800) affirmed that agility could develop but it was for the most part a natural talent. Mancini believed that vocal agility was a gift, that it could not be acquired, and that working on it would be a waste of time.<sup>11</sup> Of course, some voices may be more at ease in agility than others, but since every voice has to be flexible to ensure vocal health and longevity, practicing agility is recommended. To work on vocal agility, the technical components to take into consideration are intonation, flexibility in the entire range of the voice, ability to sing fast runs and perform clean onsets and releases.<sup>12</sup> Other components are breath support, laryngeal flexibility, vocal and musical coordination, relaxed tongue and jaw, and an open throat.

Vocal agility is displayed in vocal methods from the *bel canto* era. These methods written by pedagogues such as Manuel Garcia II (1805–1906), Mathilde Marchesi (1821–1913), and Julius Stockhausen (1826–1906) offer numerous vocal exercises to develop agility and flexibility. They are series of vocalises that were composed for singers in training during the nineteenth century. Despite the lack of indications on how to practice the exercises, these methods continue to impact vocal pedagogy today. This document discusses exercises from two female pedagogues whose methods copied those of the *bel canto*. French coloratura soprano Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801–1863) wrote an earlier vocal method for singers studying at the

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<sup>11</sup> Berton Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics* (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1989), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Vanessa Harper Portia, “Comparative Study of the Bel Canto Teaching Styles and Their Effects on Vocal Agility” (master’s thesis, University of North-Texas, Denton, 1996), 63.

Paris Conservatoire in 1849. Her method was designed for every voice type, but had a strong emphasis on vocal agility with exercises directly related to female singing. The famous *cocottes* of Cinti-Damoreau were, at the time, an efficient method used to improve staccato technique. Estelle Liebling (1880–1970), voice teacher of famous coloratura Beverly Sills (1929–2007), wrote a vocal course for soprano coloraturas untitled *The Estelle Libeling Vocal Course for Coloratura Soprano, Lyric Soprano and Dramatic Soprano*. This course presents a series of vocal exercises centered on the improvement of coloratura technique. Every exercise is composed to help coloratura sopranos mastering elements of vocal agility. Estelle Liebling’s vocal course was inspired by her teacher Mathilde Marchesi.

Modern pedagogies on vocal agility are different; improvement in vocal science made the vocal pedagogy field able to indicate what must happen technically and physiologically when performing an exercise. Today, vocal methods display only one or two exercises with numerous indications on how to perform them. For this document, a literature review on modern vocal pedagogies discussing vocal agility, and coloratura technique has been conducted. Voice pedagogues were selected based on their knowledge and technical suggestions to work on agility. Selected voice pedagogues have published books or journal articles and have been interviewed throughout this project. Chapter 3 presents Jean Pierre Blivet, Stephen Smith, and Adam Kirkpatrick, who shared their techniques, experiences, and insights about vocal agility and coloratura practice during interviews (see Appendix C).

French pedagogue Jean Pierre Blivet wrote *Les Voix du Chant* (1999), a vocal pedagogy book discussing all the components of a healthy vocal technique. Blivet’s method includes exercises to develop agility, such as how to perform the trill, and the importance of using different vowels and consonants sounds when practicing agile singing (which are examined in

Chapter 3). Stephen Smith, on the other hand, created vocal exercises named “inventions” discussed in his vocal pedagogy book *The Naked Voice* (2007). From Smith’s six inventions, the fifth one, “The Wobble,” has been proven efficient to work on agility. Smith invented the use of the wobble while he was helping a student achieve flexibility and supple agility in his voice. Smith also developed a five-step process to learn *fioritura* passages while maintaining the legato in the vocal line. This process is described and applied in one of the seven arias of the document. Finally, Adam Kirkpatrick wrote a singing article in 2008 in which he introduces a method called “bouncy breath articulation,” created to perform coloratura avoiding over-articulation of notes and lack of legato.<sup>13</sup>

Vocal agility converged with blending registers. Indeed, soprano coloratura passages are commonly performed in the middle and head voice registers. Yet, some cadenzas demand extreme high notes, which require turning into another register called the flageolet. Richard Miller (1926–2009) developed a method to work on this register and corrects the pedagogical misuse in the voice studio of the term “whistle register” which is different from the flageolet.

## 1.5 FRENCH OPERATIC REPERTOIRE FOR LIGHT LYRIC COLORATURA VOICES

The common French repertoire for this voice type is the one of the *opéra comique* and operetta, with its florid passages and high notes. What singers want in a voice studio is to be prepared for auditions or competitions, so they are immediately led to a repertoire called standard. The standard repertoire includes arias from famous operas regularly performed on

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<sup>13</sup>Adam Kirkpatrick, “Useful Exercises for Private Studio Voice Teachers: How to Sing Coloratura,” *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 3 (January/February: 2008).

stages worldwide. Popular French *opéra comiques* still performed today are Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* (1866), Bizet's *Carmen* (1875), Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1881), and Massenet's *Manon* (1884). However, the popularity of these operas created a canon in the repertoire of the voice studio to be repetitive. Table 2 presents a list of arias for light lyric coloratura sopranos that has been made after research in different books on repertoire for the voices. Most of the arias studied in this document were part of the Berton Coffin's *The Singer's Repertoire, Part I* (1960), Noni Espina's *Repertoire for the Solo Voice* (1977), and Richard Boldrey's *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias* (1994).

Table 2. Light Lyric Coloratura French operatic repertoire <sup>14</sup>

André Grétry	Je ne le dis qu'à vous La fauvette avec ses petits	<i>La Fausse Magie</i> <i>Zémire et Azor</i>
Charles Adam	A vous dirais-je maman Je vais donc le revoir Mon petit mari	<i>Le Toréador</i> <i>Le Postillon de Longjumeau</i>
Daniel Auber	C'est l'histoire amoureuse Flamme vengeresse Quel bonheur	<i>Manon Lescaut</i> <i>Le domino noir</i> <i>Fra Diavolo</i>
Georges Bizet	O dieu Brahma	<i>Les Pêcheurs de perles</i>
Emmanuel Chabrier	Blonde aux yeux de Pervenche	<i>Gwendoline</i>
Félicien David	Charmant oiseau qui sous l'ombrage Si vous ne savez plus charmer	<i>La Perle du Brésil</i> <i>Lalla-Roukh</i>

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<sup>14</sup> Repertoire list made from Berton Coffin's *The Singer's Repertoire, Part I* (1960), Noni Espina's *Repertoire for the Solo Voice* (1977), and Richard Boldrey's *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias* (1994).

Charles Gounod	Il a perdu ma trace Je veux vivre Oh Légère hirondelle Tahir Vincent	<i>Philémon et Baucis</i> <i>Roméo et Juliette</i> <i>Mireille</i>
Fromental Halévy	O suave et douce Près de toi je crois	<i>La Fée aux roses</i>
Ferdinand Hérold	A la fleur du bel âge Jour de mon enfance	<i>Le Pré aux clercs</i>
Victor Massé	Au bord du chemin Fleur parfumée Sa couleur est blonde	<i>Les noces de Jeannette</i> <i>Galathée</i>
Jules Massenet	Ah Douce enfant Est-ce vrai? Obéissons Je suis encore toute étourdie Oui dans les bois et dans la plaine	<i>Cendrillon</i> <i>Manon</i>
Giacomo Meyerbeer Jacques Offenbach	Ombre légère Les oiseaux dans la charmille	<i>Dinorah</i> <i>Les Contes d'Hoffmann</i>
Ambroise Thomas	A vos jeux, mes amis Alerte, alerte Je connais un pauvre enfant Je suis Titania	<i>Hamlet</i> <i>Mignon</i>
Maurice Ravel	Air du feu	<i>L'Enfant et les Sortilèges</i>

The purpose of this document is to revive arias that are neglected from the studio due to their unpopularity on the modern stage. Some of the seven arias examined in this document form part of those listed above in Table 2, because they were extremely popular at the time. As such, they continue to be an important part of the vocal literature today, and while they are referenced



in vocal literature books, they are not sung in the studio. Every musical review in nineteenth-century newspapers displayed criticisms about singers making their debuts singing those arias. The decline of the *opéra comique* genre impacted the choice of the current French repertoire in the studio. Coloratura sopranos do not explore the opportunity to enlarge their operatic repertoire to practice important elements of their technique with arias appropriate for their voices and personality. Each coloratura figure displayed in these arias is varied and designed to improve agility practice. Moreover, character study, musical form, and musicality of these arias are similar to the ones in the canon today.

## CHAPTER 2: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE *OPÉRA COMIQUE*

### 2.1 CREATION OF THE *OPÉRA COMIQUE*

#### 2.1.1 THE PARISIAN FAIRS

In France, during the regime of Louis XIV, the *Académie Royale de Musique* (the Opera), the *Comédie Française* and the *Comédie Italienne* enjoyed the royal privilege to perform. Troupes that wanted to be recognized were required to receive this royal privilege from the King to perform in a permanent theater. While some people enjoyed performances sponsored by the King, others found their entertainment in the fairs, where actors, string dancers, and puppet players performed comical shows. Parisian fairs were popular and attracted many audience types. The Saint-Germain fair was swarmed with elegant customers in the Abbey of Saint Germain-des-Près.<sup>15</sup> The fairs offered tantalizing performances on trestles and removable theaters, called *Théâtres des loges*. Fairs were the center of divertissement and quickly stole the popularity of the King's troupes.

#### 2.1.2 STRUGGLE WITH THE RIVALS

Jealous of the fairs' successes, royal theaters started a long and painful war with the fairs. Louis XIV signed several ordinances to end the fairs' spectacles, yet did not succeed. The *Comédie Française* decided to discourage its rivals by forbidding the fairs' actors to sing or to speak dialogues during their performances. Actors responded to this by mimes and *écritaux* (placards) on which they wrote the texts for the audience to follow. The fairs would not desist and won the war against their rivals. In 1714, theater entrepreneur Catherine Baron named this

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<sup>15</sup> Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique* (Paris: Les Publications Universitaires, 1978), 15.

new flourishing genre: “Opéra-Comique.”<sup>16</sup> From 1715, the king’s theaters permitted the fairs to perform their shows; however, they were prohibited from copying the opera. Since they were not allowed to use recitatives, they were required to use songs that alternated with spoken dialogue. This nomadic troupe was acknowledged as a theater genre and kept performing at the fairs up until its association with the *Comédie Italienne*, in 1762.

### 2.1.3 FUSION WITH THE *COMÉDIE ITALIENNE*

Despite their authorization to perform and its acceptance as a genre, the *opéra comique* did not have a set theater in which to perform. Recognizing the tremendous success of the new genre the royal court directed the *opéra comique* to team up with the *Comédie Italienne*. They were ordered to perform together at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*. This fusion made the *opéra comique* a permanent troupe. By merging with the *opéra comique*, the *Comédie Italienne* believed it could retrieve its lost audience; however, the scenario planned by the *Comédie Italienne* did not transpire because the *Hôtel de Bourgogne* soon only performed *opéra comique* repertoire.

### 2.1.4 ESTABLISHMENT AT THE *SALLE FAVART*

The *opéra comique* was so successful it could not remain confined in the small *Hôtel de Bourgogne*. The troupe needed a larger theater; and the project to build it started in 1780. The contract of construction and sale was signed on December 20, 1781;<sup>17</sup> and in 1783, the theater finally opened as the *Salle Favart*, after Charles Favart (1710-1792), who was an important librettist of the genre. The theater closed twice (1838 and 1887) as the result of fires and was

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<sup>16</sup> Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l’Opéra-Comique* (Paris: Les Publications Universitaires, 1978), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Gourret, 66.

rebuilt on each occasion. During the closing of the *Salle Favart*, the *opéra comique* performed at the *Théâtre Feydeau*. Today, the *Salle Favart* is known as the *Théâtre National de l'Opéra Comique*, which is still active.

## 2.2 EVOLUTIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE GENRE

### 2.2.1 1715–1752

The subject matter of early *opéra comiques* was comical. Plots featured mythological characters or characters from the *commedia dell'arte*. The actors parodied performances of the *Comédie Italienne*, *Comédie Française* and the Opera. *Opéra comique* performances were provocative and displayed a variety of social issues. Librettists used allegorical characters to express morality and social differences. Allegorical characters are found in the *opéra comique* *Arlequin Traitant* (1716) by librettist Jacques Philippe d'Orneval (unknown date of birth–1766). Arlequin's clerks Bonnemain (Goodhand) and Transparent (Invisible) are so named to condemn and satirize how Arlequin treats them.

*Opéra comiques* performed during the fairs were called *comédies en vaudevilles*, a performance alternating spoken dialogue and *vaudeville* songs. *Opéra comique* librettists set their texts on popular *vaudeville* songs, keeping the original melody but changing the lyrics. Audiences enjoyed *vaudeville* songs because they could sing along with the actors. Yet, philosopher and composer Jean Jacques Rousseau opposed their use in the *opéra comique* genre. In his *Dictionnaire de Musique* (1738) he stated:

The *vaudeville* song is usually not very musical: as we only pay attention to the words, the air only serves to make the recitation a little more intense; in this, one usually feels neither taste, song, nor measure.<sup>18</sup>

The most important librettist of *comédies en vaudevilles* was Alain-René Lesage (1668–1747). In 1715, he wrote the libretto of the *opéra comique*: *Télémaque* (1715).

Figure 1. Air of Calypso from Lesage's *Télémaque*<sup>19</sup>

C A L Y P S O.  
A I R I. ( Réveille~~x~~-vous, belle Endormie )  
Il m'a fait entendre mon crime ;  
Lui-même il vient de me parler :  
Mais il demande une victime  
Que je ne puis plus immoler.

<sup>18</sup> “L'air des vaudevilles est communément peu musical: comme on n'y fait attention qu'aux paroles, l'air ne sert qu'à rendre la récitation un peu plus appuyée; du reste on n'y sent, pour l'ordinaire, ni goût, ni chant, ni mesure.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de Musique* (Paris: Chez la veuve Duchesne, 1767), 532.

<sup>19</sup> Alain-René Lesage, *Le Theatre de la Foire, ou L'Opera Comique* (Paris: Chez Etienne Ganeau, 1721), 323. Conserved in The *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, département Littérature et art, YF-5900. English translation of the text: He made me hear my crime; By himself he just spoke to me; But he asks for a victim that I can no longer immolate.

The new chosen lyrics of the songs were short and simple. Calypso's aria is four lines rhyming in an ABAB pattern. Singers knew which tune to sing, with the name of the *vaudeville* song written in parenthesis. Here the *vaudeville* song was "Réveillez-vous, belle Endormie." The notated music of *vaudeville* songs was located in the *Table des airs* at the end of the libretto.

Figure 2. Notated music, *vaudeville* song: "Réveillez-vous, belle endormie" <sup>20</sup>



*Vaudeville* songs were musically simple and short: 3/4 meter, 16 bars, quarter notes, half notes, dotted half notes, and ornamentation with trills (marked with +). During the time of the

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<sup>20</sup> Lesage, 1.

*vaudeville* songs, the role of the composer was insignificant. They only added small orchestral accompaniment, and transposed the melody to the comfortable range of singers.

### 2.2.2 1752–1850

In the 1750s, librettist Charles Simon Favart started reforming the *opéra comique*, blending wit with sentiments. The subject matter penetrated the human heart, displayed the language of love, and portrayed everyday life characters. The new *opéra comiques* explored dramatic situations; stories always had a happy conclusion. The goal was no longer to merely entertain audiences with buffooneries, but also to touch their souls romantically. Up to this point, *opéra comiques* still retained a touch of humor.

The French Revolution of 1789 strongly impacted *opéra comique* librettists. *Opéra comique*'s plots started to include political tensions, reflecting the French political climate of the time. These tensions led to the creation of the rescue opera, a sub-genre of *opéra comique*. For example, these operas displayed prison and death sentence scenes. An important librettist of this sub-genre was Michel-Jean Sedaine (1719–1797), whose famous rescue operas were *Le Déserteur* (1769) by composer Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny (1729–1817) and *Richard Coeur de Lion* (1784) by Belgian composer André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry (1741–1813). These rescue operas maintained the sentimental undertone of Favart, but paved the way to the darker side of the genre.

*Vaudeville* songs stayed popular until the *Querelle des Bouffons* (Bouffons's war). The war started on October 4<sup>th</sup> of 1746, when an Italian troupe settled in Paris. This troupe received praise and success with their performance of *La Serva Padrona* (1733) an *intermezzo* composed by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736). In 1752, Jean Jacques Rousseau answered the

Italian's composition with *Le Devin du Village*, a one-act opera in the style of this *intermezzo*. This short opera's charming song by the character Colette, "J'ai perdu tout mon Bonheur," inspired the *opéra comique* to abandon *vaudeville* songs and use songs entirely composed on new music.

The type of songs used after 1752 were the *ariette* and the *romance*. At this time the composer became as important as the librettist. The first composer of *ariettes* was Antoine Dauvergne (1713–1797), with his *comédie mêlée d'ariettes* (comedy alternated with *ariettes*) *Les Troqueurs* performed in 1753, at the Saint-Laurent fair on a libretto by Jean-Joseph Vadé. While the musical form of the *ariette* was mostly strophic, some composers used the A-B-A da capo in imitation of the Italians. Librettists urged to express sentimental materials in their plots by revisiting the *romance*, used by the troubadours during the Medieval era. The *romance* was a musical description of love using strophic form.<sup>21</sup> Each verse of the song was composed on the same music and differed with contrasts on dynamics. In her *romance*, "Dans quel trouble," in act II of *Le Déserteur*, Louise declares her love to Alexis through two strophes on the same music, contrasting her emotions using different dynamics. Charles Gounod (1818–1893) revisited the *ariette* in his operas at the end of the nineteenth century, abandoning the A-B-A da capo form for the rondo.

### 2.2.3 1850–1900

During the mid-nineteenth century, sentimental stories remained in the plot of the *opéra comique* genre, but soon moved to the tragic. From the end of the nineteenth century, the "happy ending" was abandoned. Librettists introduced tragic plots with characters suffering conflicts of

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<sup>21</sup> David Charlton, *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth Century Opera*, ed. Anthony R. DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 172.



passion. In the late *opéra comique* plots, death becomes inevitable at the end of the story.

Principal characters commit suicide, become murderers, or are killed. Librettists abandoned the sentimental for the serious. The most important example of this transition is the *opéra comique* *Carmen* (1875) by Georges Bizet (1838–1875). In the plot, Carmen is killed by her lover Don José.

As the genre evolved to the serious, songs became longer and more demanding in terms of vocal consideration. Orchestras became bigger, and powerful voices were needed to support this instrumental mass. The composition of charming, light, and short arias of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century reduced in favor for the passionate romantic aria. The French repeatedly imitated the Italians, with Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) and the *bel canto* significantly influencing this change. These long arias served for the musical expression of conflicted sentiments. The musical form used by composers for these arias was the rondo (ABACA). The repetitions in the rondo suited perfectly the expression of strong persistent emotions.

#### 2.2.4. EVOLUTION OF THE VOCAL STYLE

Early *opéra comiques* did not require a specific vocal style. Songs were composed with prose or verses on popular tunes. The vocal style employed was declamatory. In the mid-eighteenth century, the *ariette* and the *romance* aspired to be charming with light voices able to sustain legato lines and display flexibility. As the repertoire moved to the darker, the voice also followed this direction. To vocally paint the drama, singers used warm sounds, chest voice, and power.

In his *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique*, Jean Gourret expresses his opinion about this vocal style evolution:

What! There was an attempt to question a vocal technique used by successive generation of artists, made of legato sounds, light vocalises, long line and a correct use of head voice? We were going away from a method which allowed refinement and distinction and which gave the means to dazzle the audience with feats of agility in the vocalizations? Much more, we wanted to make believe that the height of success for the singers was to scream, to search first the power with dark colors and shrilled highs! What a display of vulgarity is this 'urlo francese' also disapproved by the Italians! <sup>22</sup>

Audiences completely disapproved of this warm vocal style in light operas. As librettists and composers moved away from the origins of the genre, the choice of singers also took a new turn. From 1874, the serious character of the *opéra comique* genre was set. The new vocal style supporting dark plots supplanted the previous light vocal style. The *opéra comique* genre officially entered the path to its decline.

## 2.3 DECLINE OF THE GENRE

### 2.3.1 REDUCTION OF SPOKEN DIALOGUE

The main difference between the *opéra comique* and the opera was the use of spoken dialogue. In 1807, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) decreed theaters must perform

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<sup>22</sup> “Quoi! on tentait de remettre en cause une technique d’émission vocale, éprouvée par des générations successives d’artistes, faite de sons filés, de vocalises légères, de longues tenues de souffle et d’utilisation adroite de la voix de tête? On faisait fi de cette méthode qui permettait d’obtenir le raffinement et la distinction et qui donnait les moyens d’éblouir le public par des prouesses d’agilité dans les vocalises? Bien plus, on voulait faire croire que le comble de la réussite pour les chanteurs, consistait à “hurler”, à rechercher avant tout les effets de puissance, avec des timbres sombres et des aigus criards! Quel étalage de vulgarité que ce ‘urlo francese’ désavoué même par les Italiens!” Jean Gourret, *Histoire de l'Opéra-Comique* (Paris: Les Publications Universitaires, 1978), 146-147.

compositions of their genres. The *Salle Favart* would play *opéra comiques* (with dialogue) and the *Opéra* would play operas (with recitatives). In 1851, the *Théâtre Lyrique* opened with the freedom to perform all genres, including foreign pieces translated into French. At the *Théâtre Lyrique*, composers were not restricted to spoken dialogue or recitatives; they could choose what they wanted to best suit their compositions. For example, Charles Gounod (1818–1893) composed most of his operas in two versions.

Gounod favored spoken dialogue for the premiere of *Roméo et Juliette* (1867) at the *Théâtre Lyrique* because he thought the audience deserved some musical rests.<sup>23</sup> Yet, despite his choice, Gounod still had to provide recitatives for other performances. In 1871, the Franco Prussian war led to the destruction of the *Théâtre Lyrique*, and its repertoire moved to the *Salle Favart*. At that time, Napoleon III (1808–1873) already signed an act allowing theaters to perform any genre. In 1871, *Roméo et Juliette* was performed with recitatives at the *Salle Favart*, making it the first official compositions to be performed with recitatives on that stage.

The *Salle Favart* continued to display performances of *opéra comiques* with spoken dialogue, but Napoleon III's authorization encouraged composers to present operatic pieces on continuous music, which influenced them to abandon spoken dialogue in favor of orchestral recitatives, or *mélodrames* (spoken dialogue on continuous music).

### 2.3.2 CRISIS OF THE REPERTOIRE

Since its establishment in 1783, the *Salle Favart* performed traditional repertoire of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The traditional repertoire referred to “true” *opéra comiques*, which include spoken dialogue and sentimental plots with happy conclusions. This

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<sup>23</sup> Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1990), 409.

routine remained as such until 1874. The *Salle Favart*'s director of that time, Adolphe De Leuven (1802–1884), teamed up with Camille Du Locle (1832–1903), who required only performances of serious operas.

In 1874, Gounod's *Mireille* (1864) was performed in its original composition: a five-act plot ending with the principal character Mireille dying from sunstroke and exhaustion in the arms of Vincent. This tragic ending also happens in Massenet's *Manon* (1884). In 1875, Bizet led the *opéra comique* genre to take an alternative trajectory. He abandoned the principal character of the *ingénue* (light coloratura soprano) for a "femme fatale" (dramatic mezzo-soprano or full lyric soprano) and gave composers the opportunity to introduce warmer voices in the genre. With *Carmen*'s plot set in Spain, Bizet featured Spanish musical elements and confirmed the path of the genre to exoticism previously explored by François-Adrien Boieldieu (1775–1834). This abrupt change continued with the premiere of Delibes's *Lakmé* (1883), telling the love story of an Indian princess who ends up poisoning herself. These compositions moved the *opéra comique* genre from its original form, which led to its decline in the early twentieth century. Richard Wagner's (1813–1883) influence, Giuseppe Verdi's (1813–1901) verismo, and the Impressionist and Neoclassicism movements provoked a complete disinterest in the ancient traditions of the *opéra comique* genre.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.3.3 SUCCESS OF THE FRENCH OPERETTA

This document asks two questions whose suggested answers may explain the decline of the *opéra comique*: (1) Is it because the grand opera's success that stimulated the desire in *opéra comique* composers to imitate its style? (2) Is it the theaters' freedom to perform any genre,

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Daniel-François-Esprit Auber: The Man and His Music* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), xxvii.

which encouraged *opéra comique* composers to explore new genres and start afresh? While these two suggestions are probable, they cannot be confirmed. In an 1873 letter written by *opéra comique* composer Victor Massé (1822–1884) to Du Locle, the director of the *Salle Favart*, an alternative reason is found: According to Massé, the *opéra comique* has been murdered by the operetta.<sup>25</sup>

The operetta is a vocal genre with popular songs, dance scenes, and spoken dialogue. This definition is similar to the earliest form of the *opéra comique*. Musicologist Carl Dahlhaus (1928–1989) compares the operetta to the Italian *intermezzi* and the French *vaudeville* songs, and employs Offenbach's definition as a “genre primitive et gai” (a genre primitive and cheerful).<sup>26</sup> The operetta genre appears after the 1850s, in the hand of composer Florimond Ronger (1825–1892) named “Hervé.” In 1954, this composer became the director of his own theater, *Les Folies Concertantes*, where he first gave pantomimes and one-act operettas. Yet, it is with Jacques Offenbach (1844–1880) that the genre reached its higher level with the opening of his theater *Les Bouffes Parisiennes*.

Offenbach admired *opéra comique* composers, and composed for the genre two of his own pieces: *Robinson Crusoé* (1867), and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1881). Despite his contributions to the *opéra comique*, Offenbach was and is considered today the father of the operetta. Offenbach's most famous operettas include *La Belle Hélène* (1864), *La Vie Parisienne* (1866), and *Orphée aux Enfers* (1874). A brief analysis of these pieces confirms the genre having similarity with the earliest form of the *opéra comique*: use of *vaudevilles*, dancing scenes,

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted from Mary Jean Speare, “The Transformation of Opera Comique: 1850-1880” (PhD diss., Washington University, Saint-Louis, 1997), 302, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. The letter written by Victor Massé was unavailable to me.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 227.

satire, use of mythological characters, parody, and humorous verse songs. In his book, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (1983), Richard Traubner states that entertainments performed in the Parisian Fairs during the seventeenth and eighteenth century influence the creation of the operetta.<sup>27</sup> Just as the *opéra comique* evolved, so too did the operetta, but its evolution appeared abroad. In Austria, the operetta used aristocratic characters and did not have the burlesque and erotic sides of Offenbach's works. In England, the operetta became sentimental, with the dramatist W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and the composer Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900).

The operetta became the new entertainment in Paris that attracted all classes. *Opéra comique* traditionalists who saw the genre decline retrieved a new enjoyment in Offenbach's works. With all of these observations, it is difficult to affirm if Victor Massé was right; however, the emergence of the operetta and its similarities with the earliest form of the *opéra comique* seems to have reassured *opéra comique* composers to keep deviating from its original form.

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<sup>27</sup> Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, INC., 1983), 9.

## CHAPTER 3: EXERCISES FOR VOCAL AGILITY

### 3.1 LAURE CINTI-DAMOREAU: CHROMATIC RUNS AND *COCOTTES*

Renowned nineteenth-century coloratura soprano Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801–1863) created many roles for the *opéra comique* genre. Cinti-Damoreau was also a voice teacher at the Paris Conservatoire in 1833, where she published a *Méthode de Chant* in 1849. Cinti-Damoreau’s method offers an exhaustive number of vocalises and *études* for agile voices. The method emphasizes on vocal agility and is associated with female singing. Two agility concepts from her method are discussed in this document: chromatic runs and *cocottes* (staccato singing).

Almost all nineteenth-century coloratura arias include chromatic runs. It is important to practice them regularly. Cinti-Damoreau recommends working on chromatic runs slowly while repeating in the head the name of each note of the exercise (see Figures 3, 4, and 5). All three exercises can be performed in different keys. The only indication given by Cinti-Damoreau for these exercises is that notes marked by an accent must be supported and vibrated. Examining the exercises helps us understand the marked legato which is important to consider because it means to avoid an exaggerated articulation of each note. Singers practice each run slowly and when at ease, increase the tempo. The performance of fast chromatic runs needs a somewhat loss of control of the voice. This “out-of-control” sensation is even more important for the exercise n. 33 because there is no time to breathe (see Figure 3). In the exercise n. 35, accents are included in the legato line, which means their function is different from exercises n. 33 and n. 34, in which the accentuated notes have to be vibrated and supported (see Figure 5). If singers try to vibrate the accentuated notes they could impair the legato of the vocal line, which is not desirable while

practicing runs. From this statement, we suppose that the accents in exercise n. 35 just serve as a “mental” re-articulation of every sixteenth notes.

Figure 3. Exercise n. 33 of Cinti-Damoreau's *Exercices Gammes*<sup>28</sup>



Figure 4. Exercise n. 34 of Cinti-Damoreau's *Exercices Gammes*<sup>29</sup>



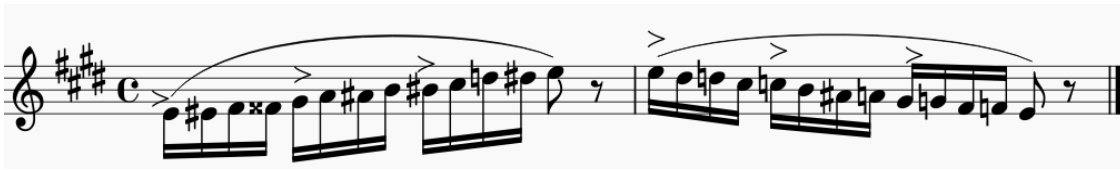
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<sup>28</sup> Laure Cinti-Damoreau, *Méthode de Chant* (Paris: A. Meissonnier, 1849), 19.

<sup>29</sup> Cinti-Damoreau, 19.



Figure 5. Exercise n. 35 of Cinti-Damoreau's *Exercices Gammes*<sup>30</sup>



Exercises n. 33 and n. 33 *bis* of the *Exercices Divers* of the method were composed to develop the *cocottes*, another term used by Cinti-Damoreau to describe the staccato articulation (see Figures 6 and 7). Not much research has been conducted about the reason Cinti-Damoreau called staccato singing: *cocottes*. In French, a *cocotte* refers to a hen and as an irreproachable voice pedagogue; it is obvious that Cinti-Damoreau did not mean to sound like a chicken. Musicologist Sean Parr, in *Vocal Virtuosity* (2021), states that the term *cocotte* was used at the time to qualify a woman as *demi-mondaine*.<sup>31</sup> During the nineteenth century, women on stage were often referred to as prostitutes; of course, such a denomination was pejorative, but perhaps Cinti-Damoreau employed this term to imply female singing. The author of this document suggests that because women of this period wore dresses and hats made with hen's feathers, this

<sup>30</sup> Cinti-Damoreau, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Sean M. Parr, *Vocal Virtuosity: The Origins of the Coloratura Soprano in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 38.

In the nineteenth century, women were called "demi-mondaine" when they were supported by wealthy men. Women qualified as *demi-mondaine* were often compared to prostitutes.

could explain why Cinti-Damoreau may have called her exercises *cocottes*, to refer to female voices.

Figure 6. Exercise n. 33 of Cinti-Damoreau's *Exercices Divers*<sup>32</sup>

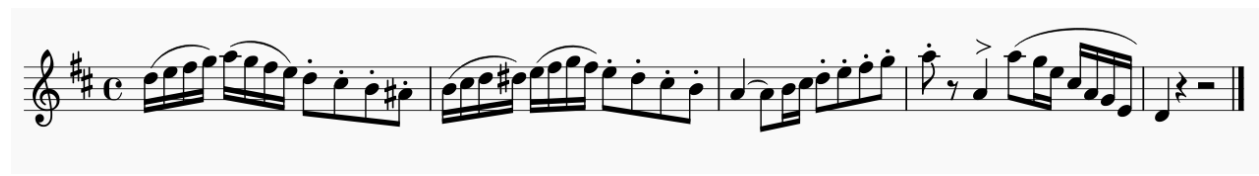


Cinti-Damoreau recommends not to overdo staccato notes and to never sing them with harshly. To practice staccato avoiding hardness in the sound, she suggests to support and vibrate the note preceding the staccato notes. In exercise n. 33, the notes marked with an accent are those which have to be vibrated (see Figure 6).

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<sup>32</sup> Cinti-Damoreau, 33.

Figure 7. Exercise n. 33 bis of Cinti-Damoreau's *Exercices Divers* <sup>33</sup>



In the exercise n. 33 bis, Cinti-Damoreau employs two articulations, legato going to staccato. There are no word indications, but while singing staccato, it is important to maintain the airflow. Here the staccato is approached by two groups of sixteenth notes sung legato. Singers sing both articulations trying to not change the airflow. The sound is stopped to perform the staccato articulation, but the airflow remains steady. The legato prepares the staccato.

### 3.2 ESTELLE LIEBLING: TURNS AND GRUPETTOS

Estelle Liebling (1880–1970) was an American soprano and voice teacher. Liebling published numerous vocal methods considered as an extension of the method written by her voice teacher Mathilde Marchesi (1821–1913). Liebling taught many famous singers, including coloratura Beverly Sills (1929–2007). The exercise discussed in this chapter is part of her vocal

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<sup>33</sup> Cinti-Damoreau, 34.

course: *The Estelle Liebling Vocal Course for Coloratura Soprano, Lyric Soprano and Dramatic Soprano* published in 1956.

The *grupetto* or vocal turn is a vocal ornament used to embellish a composition or a vocal line. In the baroque and eighteenth-century period, vocal turns were part of the word painting and increased the emotion of the character; meanwhile in the nineteenth century, it is part of vocal agility display. Written in scores, the turn resembles the *appoggiaturas* and *acciaccaturas*, but is not performed the same way. The vocal turn is a group of notes (*grupetto*), usually four, but can be divided into two or three notes. Often in a score, a vocal turn is marked by a sign similar to (~). Sometimes singers are recommended to write it entirely in order to ensure an accurate performance of the turn.

Figure 8 is the exercise n. 28 of Liebling's method. Indications given by Liebling are not exhaustive, but clear enough to have an idea on how to perform them: "Each of these grace-note groups forms a TURN or GRUPETTO. They must be sung quickly and delicately, but clearly."<sup>34</sup> The challenge with vocal turns is the rapidity of their execution, which demands precision. The exercise n. 28 shows different turns, and it is important to work on them to acquire flexibility. The turns are not trills – we do not want any back-and-forth movement of the larynx – yet the voice must be free of tensions and let go on the airflow otherwise the turns would be inaudible. To acquire a good technicity of the turn, it is best to start singing two notes, three, and then four. Once the voice is at ease on the first line of the exercise, it will be easier to add one more note each time, and then practicing the melodic ascent and descent of the turn. Because the turn's

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<sup>34</sup> Estelle Liebling, *The Estelle Liebling Vocal Course for coloratura soprano, lyric soprano and dramatic soprano*, ed. Bernard Whitefield (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1956), 43.

function is to embellish the vocal line only and not stop it, practicing the turn while maintaining constant airflow throughout the exercise is required.

Figure 8. Exercise n. 28 “Turns and Gruppetto” from Estelle Liebling's Vocal Course (1956) <sup>35</sup>



In her method *Bel Canto: A Theoretical & Practical Vocal Method* (1900), exercises 181 to 184, Mathilde Marchesi recommends practicing the turns on any vowel. In her exercise, Liebling suggests to use “la” but does not justify her choice. Some pedagogues preferred to use

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<sup>35</sup> Liebling, 43.

the vowel [a] because they think that it avoids vocal stiffness. Regarding the consonant [l], not a lot of pedagogues use it in their method. A previous Italian pedagogue who recommended the “la” was Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839–1910) in his *30 Preparatory Vocalises for Soprano*. Voice pedagogues have different opinions on the use of consonants while practicing vocalises. Some assert that it helps with projection and support, while others deem it serves only for the pronunciation of text. The dental consonant [l] is performed with the tip of the tongue on the alveolars right behind the front teeth, otherwise it creates tongue tension, and darkens the sound. Liebling’s use of the consonant [l] can be explained with the fact that vocal turns require a total relaxation of the tongue in order to avoid any tightness in the throat and tensions in the jaw. The consonant [l] helps release the root of the tongue which result in freeing the sound. Finally, dental consonants enhance resonance by bringing the sound forward.

### 3.3 JEAN-PIERRE BLIVET: THE TRILL AND VOCAL AGILITY THROUGH INTERVALS OF THIRDS

French voice pedagogue Jean-Pierre Blivet (b. 1938) contributed to French vocal pedagogy for many years. Voice teacher of numerous famous singers, including the coloratura soprano Natalie Dessay (b. 1965), he published his first book *Les Voies du Chant* (1999). The method is designed for every voice type, but includes exercises on vocal agility. Blivet’s exercise on the trill and the use of interval of thirds with unusual vowels and consonants are discussed in this chapter.

The trill is an ornament in which two notes, separated by a semitone or a tone, alternate in rapid movement. This musical ornament often used by composers from the Renaissance period remained an important compositional element for centuries. From the Renaissance to the

eighteenth century, the function of the trill was part of the character's emotions and the word-painting. In the nineteenth-century, the trill was part of the coloratura display and often used in a cadenza, or before final high notes. In the *opéra comique*, coloratura sopranos were often compared to the sound of the nightingale or birds in general, and composers regularly ornamented their arias with trills to reinforce this idea.

Blivet defines the trill as an ornament indicated in a musical score by the notation *tr*. In Renaissance and Baroque scores, it is often indicated by (+). Starting a trill from the same note, from the note above, or from the note below depends on the style and period of the aria or song. Blivet asserts that to correctly perform a trill, singers need to consider three elements:

1. The preparation of the sound
2. The rapid movement between the notes
3. The release

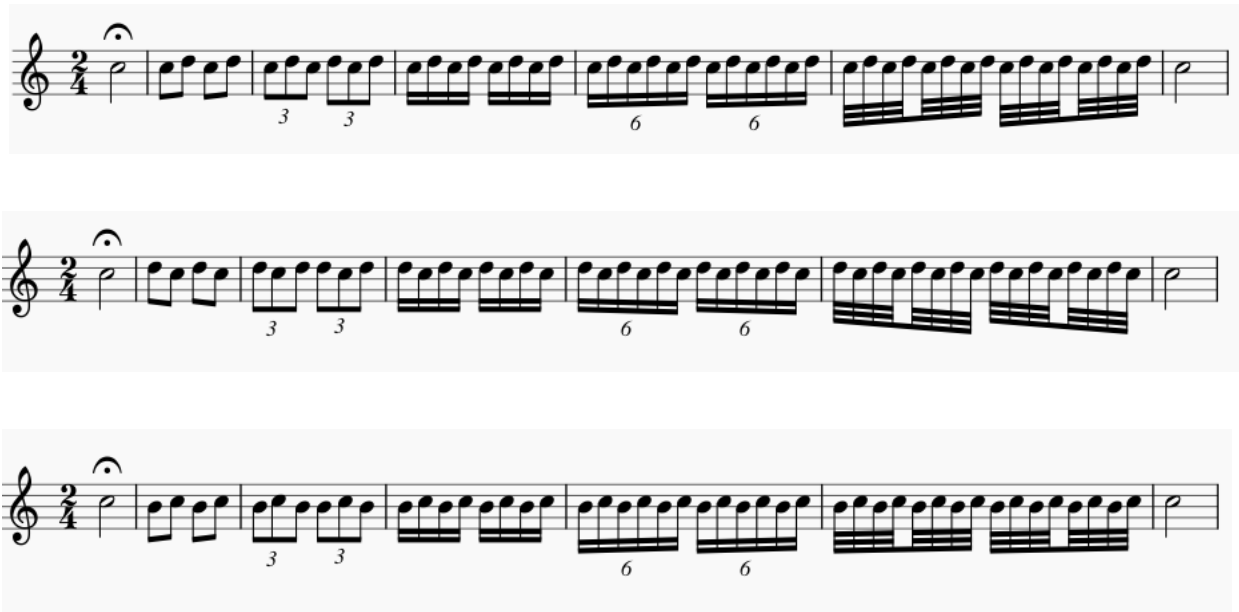
The necessary qualities to perform a good trill are: a clear execution of the speed between the two notes, regularity, and the flexibility of the voice.<sup>36</sup>

Blivet created three exercises to practice the trill, and recommends working them slowly and gradually to increase the speed. While increasing the speed, singers support the sound and slightly increase breath pressure.

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<sup>36</sup> Jean-Pierre Blivet, *Les Voies du Chant, Traité de Technique Vocale* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 49.

Figure 9. Blivet's exercises on the trill <sup>37</sup>



For the first exercise, singers practice the trill starting on the same note and then trill with the upper note. In the second exercise, singers practice the trill starting on the upper note, as opposed to starting on the lowest note as in the third exercise. The rhythmical figures imply the gradual increase of tempo (see Figure 9). Blivet always found that singers practice the trill too fast, and do not have the patience required to achieve it correctly. The trill must be practiced slowly, and should feel like a light oscillation of the voice. The ribs must be flexible while supporting the sound. Blivet suggests the movement of a kid's swing as the imagery tool to work on the trill.

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<sup>37</sup> Blivet, 49.



While a singer practices the trill the larynx moves, and the root of the tongue is free of tension otherwise it cannot be executed properly.<sup>38</sup>

It is important for singers to take into consideration what happens physiologically in the larynx during the trill, otherwise they will be led to confusion. Many singers perform the trill by spinning their sound in a continuous rapid movement thinking they are doing the right thing; however, an exaggerated vibration of a sound is not trilling. In contrast, with vibrato the larynx does not move and remains low; whereas in trilling, singers need constant laryngeal movements.<sup>39</sup>

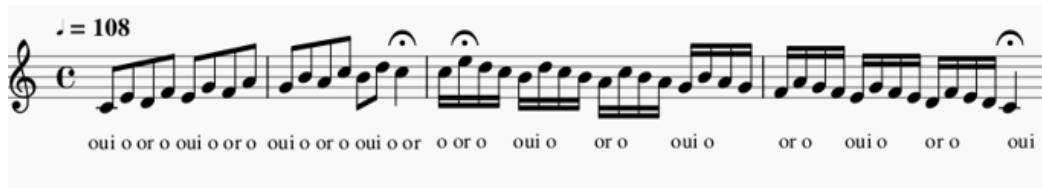
To work on developing agility, Blivet created an exercise for light sopranos because he noticed that many vocal agility exercises for this voice written by other pedagogues often employed continuous ascending patterns. According to Blivet, vocal ascents encourage laryngeal elevation; to resolve this issue, he wrote an exercise moving by intervals of thirds in ascending and descending movement. The succession of interval of thirds decreases the chance of laryngeal elevation throughout the exercise.

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<sup>38</sup> Jean-Pierre Blivet, interview by author conducted online, December 17, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 195.

Figure 10. Blivet's agility exercise <sup>40</sup>



The vowels and the consonant chosen for this exercise in figure 10 are unusual. The exercise has been composed for French singers but can be performed by any singer since the vowel sounds are Italian. There is no indication in Blivet's method whether the consonant [r] must be flipped or not, but in classical singing it is recommended to flip [r] in order to avoid harshness in the throat. If a singer struggles with it whether they are native French speakers or not, it is possible to practice the exercise without the [r]. Once at ease with the exercise memorized rhythmically and melodically, singers can add the [r]. Blivet explains his vowel's choice: starting the exercise on [o-u-i] maintains the sound forward with the [i], the [o] helps the sound of the voice to be rounded and resonant; and, finally, the [or] helps opening the throat, which helps the voice reaching a better projection.

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<sup>40</sup> Blivet, 50.

### 3.4 W. STEPHEN SMITH: THE WOBBLE INVENTION AND THE FIVE-STEP PROCESS TO LEARN *FIORITURA* PASSAGES

Dr. W. Stephen Smith (b. 1950) is a professor of voice at the Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music. Dr. Smith never planned to write a vocal pedagogy book, but after many years of teaching, his students encouraged him to publish one. Smith wrote, in collaboration with Michael Chipman, *The Naked Voice: A Wholistic Approach to Singing* (2007), where he introduces his singing method divided into what he calls "inventions." Smith named his exercises "inventions" because, for him, the word "exercise" tends to have a physical connotation, such as a workout, or something done mindlessly. The term "invention" encourages singers to see in his method a purpose and a function. Singers practice the inventions while being guided by their brain and not merely a physical action.<sup>41</sup>

In his book, Smith created eight inventions. The fifth invention is called "The Wobble," and was written specifically to improve vocal agility. The wobble is usually not desirable in singing because it is often the result of insufficient breath support, which leads to a tight throat and a wide slow vibrato in the voice. Smith found an interest in the wobble when he was teaching a tenor to stop controlling his voice, and let it go on the airflow.<sup>42</sup> Singers who wobble are usually considered to not have control of their voices, and because of this supposition, Smith found that the wobble could be used as a psychological tool to reach "a sensation of total loss of control."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> W. Stephen Smith, interview by author, conducted online, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> W. Stephen Smith and Michael Chipman, *The Naked Voice: A Wholistic Approach to Singing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, 93.

Physiologically a healthy singing requires a low and stable laryngeal position to produce a well-supported resonant sound. Yet, such control in maintaining the larynx low in position does not help singers achieve vocal movement and flexibility. Like many other voice pedagogues, Smith affirms that developing an agile voice requires working on flexibility, and a voice cannot reach flexibility with too much control of the larynx: “Flexibility (emotional, vocal, and psychological) requires vulnerability, and the wobble is impossible to do if a singer is not flexible and vulnerable.”<sup>44</sup> Singers who wobble should feel their larynx moving, and this feeling is a path to vocal freedom. In this, singers must stop controlling the position of their larynx and allow its movement. The wobble helps singers to become vulnerable, and sing fearless of not being perfect during vocal demonstration.

Figure 11. Smith's Fifth Invention - The Wobble <sup>45</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Smith, 93.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, 94.

The Wobble's invention (see Figure 11) alternates between pitches that are four tones apart on a [a] vowel. Smith recommends the [a] vowel because he thinks it is the most centered and neutral of all vowels, and the less tightened.<sup>46</sup> Singers practice the wobble moving up by half steps and then reverse the exercise to alternate from high to low. The voice starts wobbling on the sixteenth notes because of the fast movements of the voice. The four quarter notes prepare the voice to wobble. Smith suggests female voices to start around Bb3, A3 or Ab3. Physiologically, wobbling stretches and releases the vocal folds in a short period of time, which is why it needs to be practiced with large intervals and fast rhythmical figures. Smith states that the wobble's exercise must be performed carefully because such back-and-forth movements of the vocal folds can tense the adductors and tighten the throat. Singers practice the exercise with a steady pulse and rhythm to encourage the airflow flowing through the vocal folds: "In the Wobble, airflow is active and phonation is passive."<sup>47</sup> By creating The Wobble's invention, Smith offered singers a new resource to gain vocal flexibility. Practicing the wobble helps the voice reaching a sensation of total loss of control, while still maintaining steady airflow. During early practice of the wobble, singers feel their larynx moving widely, but after a couple more sessions, when mastering the wobble, the larynx does not move as much. This means the larynx does not move up and down widely, it just moves more freely.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, many pedagogues believe that agility is part of a natural talent. Smith's opinion on this statement is that any voice must be agile, but lighter voices have

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<sup>46</sup> W. Stephen Smith, interview by author, conducted online, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, 96.

the capability to remain agile, even if the voice is tense, which bigger voices cannot achieve.<sup>48</sup>

Smith justifies his statement by explaining that light voices have less mass in their vocal folds.<sup>49</sup>

Smith notices that a common mistake on singing coloratura is the over-articulation of every note.<sup>50</sup> Performing each note distinctively make singers think they are performing coloratura with precision; however, this is just an illusion. On the contrary, they build tensions in the voice, and interrupt the airflow and, thus, the vocal line. The key to perform good coloratura singing is to sing legato, with the voice being guided by the airflow, and not the contrary. In Chapter 10 of his book, Smith created a five-step process to learn *fioritura* passages without impairing the vocal line.

Learning coloratura passages requires long work in order to feel comfortable with the melody. Singers have a tendency to learn these passages in a short amount of time, and this precipitation will often result in musical imperfections. In his book, Smith describes the five-step process using a musical example from Handel's *Messiah*. In the following, the process is applied to a passage from the fauvette's *ariette* from Grétry's *Zémire et Azor* (1771), further examined in Chapter 4.

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<sup>48</sup> Smith, 119.

<sup>49</sup> W. Stephen Smith, interview by author, conducted online, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

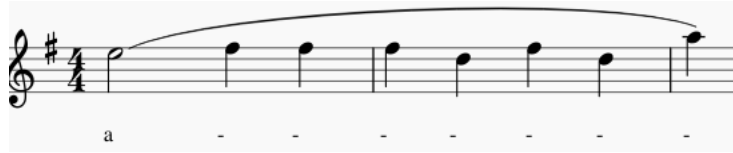
<sup>50</sup> Smith, 119.

Figure 12. Coloratura passage of Zémire's *ariette*, mm. 45–48 <sup>51</sup>



### Step two: Sing the pulses with legato

For this step, singers connect all the pitches:



In this step, singers do the contrary of the first step by singing all the pitches through one vocal line on one vowel.

### Step three: Sing all the notes, pulse by pulse

Using a slow tempo, singers sing all the notes in one pulse and the first note of the next pulse:



Similar to step one, singers do not stop the air or create hard onsets and releases.

### Step four: Combine two pulses at a time

Still using a slow tempo, singers combine two pulses and the first note of the next pulse:



### Step five: Combine all pulses

Singers sing the full passage and observe if the sound is free and clear. If it is, they can gradually increase the tempo.





maintain an uninterrupted airflow through the glottis and change the current of the airflow with subtle rhythmic pulses of the respiratory muscles. The coordination between these pulses of the breath with the articulation of pitches is controlled by the larynx which remains relaxed and low in position. This should result in a “pitch fluctuation.”<sup>54</sup> Pushing the abdominals in and out is incorrect and does not lead to the bouncy breath articulation technique. The pulses are created by slight bouncing actions in the epigastric area while the abdominals and the diaphragm act in antagonism that result in breath articulation.

Kirkpatrick developed a three-step process to practice the method: the first step includes no singing, in the second singers add a tone, and in the third singers sing the tone adding the articulation (changing the pitches).

#### First step: Practicing bouncy breath articulation without singing a tone

Singers take a deep breath and exhale slowly on the consonant [s] or the fricative [ʃ] while counting eight beats in their minds. Singers repeat the exercise by adding accents on each beat and must not stop the airflow. Singers should feel their breath bouncing.

#### Second step: Adding singing tones to the bouncy breath articulation exercise

Kirkpatrick suggests singers practicing the exercise on a comfortable pitch with a vowel of their choice. Singers sustain the tone over eight counts with an accent on each beat. The sensation of singing should sound similar to singing on a bumpy road. Singers should not try to vibrate on the exercise; rather, they must feel their voice being out of control and sound like they wobble. To achieve the bouncy breath articulation, singers must not be concentrated on producing a great sound, they have to primarily focus on the pulsing of their breath while

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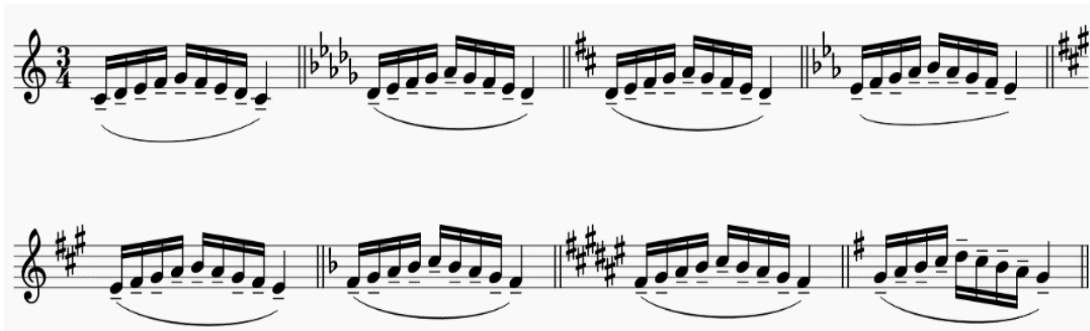
<sup>54</sup> Kirkpatrick, 360.

maintaining a low laryngeal position. Any motivation for producing good singing for this exercise would add pressure and unnecessary tension. As Kirkpatrick says, the singer's voice should "sounds like a wobbly old church singer who is past his or her time."<sup>55</sup>

Third step: adding articulation (changing pitches) to the bouncy breath articulation exercise

To change the pitches on the exercise, Kirkpatrick recommends to first practice on a five-note scale, ascending and descending, using a vowel of their choice. It is important to work on this exercise at different pitch levels and ranges to work throughout register shifts.

Figure 13. Vocal exercise based on Kirkpatrick's method



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<sup>55</sup> Kirkpatrick, 361.

Figure 13 is a five-note scale exercise in ascending and descending movement in half steps. While singers choose the vowel they want, [i], [e], and [a] are recommended for sopranos. The bouncy articulation is marked by (-) in this exercise; however, this articulation is not an accent, but an indication of a slight pulse of the breath. The legato marking encourages singers to not over exaggerate the pulse, otherwise the line will be broken. The goal of the exercise is to reach precision in the coloratura while maintaining the legato.

Kirkpatrick affirms that it is not desirable to vibrate while performing coloratura passages because coloratura and vibrato are not connected; there is a conflict between the movement of the vibrato and the articulation of changing pitches at a fast tempo. It is not recommended for singers to sing vibrato on every fast note of coloratura passages in their repertoire, as such action creates an interference.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.6 RICHARD MILLER: THE FLAGEOLET REGISTER

Richard Miller is a famous vocal pedagogue who contributed exhaustively to the vocal pedagogy research field. While this document focuses on agility for coloratura soprano, it is important to consider registers of the female voice. Every pedagogue cited in this study, encourages practicing their exercises at different pitches to work on register shifts. Agility passages of the seven arias examined in Chapter 4 center on switching between mixte and head registers, but they are not limited to these vocal registers. Several coloratura passages of the arias, especially during final cadenzas, include high notes above C6, which are difficult to perform in full head voice. To avoid any forced or cracking sounds in the upper range, sopranos

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<sup>56</sup> Adam Kirkpatrick, interview by author, conducted online, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

must switch to another type of register: the flageolet. Richard Miller has studied this register in detail in two of his publications: *The Structure of Singing* (1986) and *Training Soprano Voices* (2000).

While many voice teachers call the register “whistle,” the accurate name is flageolet because the term whistle is historically used to talk about the laryngeal whistle,<sup>57</sup> which is something different. Other terminologies for the flageolet are “flute register” and “bell register.” The flageolet register is defined as an extension of the upper range of female voices, which starts around D6 and can go over A6. The flageolet occurs when the head voice becomes very acute and the singer feels a change in timbre and vocal sensation. Singers feel like their voices are suddenly small, breathy, and childlike in timbre. Physiologically, when singing flageolet, the vocal folds elongate and tense to their maximum creating a strong closure of the glottis. Moreover, only the anterior portion of the vocal folds vibrate.<sup>58</sup>

Although practicing the flageolet is essential for coloratura voices, some voice teachers often omit this part of the technical routine. Working on flageolet helps the voice reach total freedom in the upper range with high notes free of tension contributing to vocal longevity. Many coloratura sopranos could eventually suffer from voice disorders at some point in their careers if there is a misuse of their upper range provoked by total neglect in practicing the flageolet. Miller asserts that switching from head voice to flageolet “requires aesthetic risk-taking and the letting go of all conscious control.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, singers must get rid of the idea of getting a full resonant sound while singing high pitches. The voice should feel small and whispery. While

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<sup>57</sup> Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 148.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 136.

<sup>59</sup> Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 137.

several singers naturally switch to flageolet without even noticing it, others need more practice. To facilitate the transition, the author of this document advises using imagery tools, such as the voice passing through a small tube located between the sinuses, or the use of an imaginary aspirate “h” to help reach this breathy sound sensation.

Miller wrote exercises, techniques, and strategies to develop the flageolet register. First, he recommends the use of non-singing exercises, which are preparatory to flageolet exercises: Imitation of light and high laughs to reach a childlike timbre, and the imitation of rapid siren sounds from low to high range, with no specific pitch in mind. Miller states that flageolet exercises can use either legato or staccato articulations, but the use of staccato would be more conducive to freedom (see Figure 14).<sup>60</sup>

Figure 14. Flageolet exercise from Miller's *The Structure of Singing* (1986)<sup>61</sup>



<sup>60</sup> Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 137.

<sup>61</sup> Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 149.

The author of this document suggests to practice the exercise one or two steps lower, and when the singer is at ease with the pattern, return to the original. While Miller recommends practicing the pattern on any vowel, it is actually better to use the [a] vowel in the upper range because it encourages the switch to flageolet. While many pedagogues would recommend [i], this vowel should be monitored carefully to avoid laryngeal elevation and tightness in the throat.

Figure 15. Flageolet exercise from Miller's *Training Soprano Voices* (2000)<sup>62</sup>



Miller created another exercise defined as a graceful pattern to be executed rhythmically and rapidly, in shifting tonalities without hesitation between consecutive keys (see Figure 15).

<sup>62</sup> Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 137.

Miller warns singers that the flageolet and pitch accuracy may not be perfect during early attempts of the exercise, but should improve with practice, time, confidence, and courage.<sup>63</sup> Jean-Pierre Blivet believes that light lyric coloratura soprano may have difficulty reaching notes higher than F6 (see Chapter 1). On the other hand, Miller's exercise goes up to G6 because once light lyric coloraturas or soubrette coloraturas, as he calls the voice type, would have developed the flageolet it will be possible for them to reach such notes.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 137.

<sup>64</sup> Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 137.



## CHAPTER 4: PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF SEVEN *OPÉRA COMIQUE* ARIAS

### 4.1 “LA FAUVETTE AVEC SES PETITS” FROM GRÉTRY’S *ZÉMIRE ET AZOR*

#### Composer

André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry (1741–1813) was a composer born in Liège, Belgium. Grétry had talent for singing but the tuberculosis from which he suffered forced him to turn to his second passion: composing. During his career, Grétry moved to Geneva, where he discovered the *opéra comique* genre in the music of composers François-André Danican Philidor (1726–1795) and Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny (1729–1817). Grétry appreciated the alternation between songs and spoken dialogue, and found it better than the monotonous Italian recitative.<sup>65</sup> He always thought that recitatives exhausted the dialogue by stopping its fluidity.<sup>66</sup> During the summer of 1767, Grétry moved to Paris where he became one of the most influential *opéra comique* composers in history. Grétry’s subject matter was not comical but realistic, political, and sometimes based on sentimental tales.<sup>67</sup>

#### *Zémire et Azor*

*Zémire et Azor* is an *opéra comique* or *comédie-ballet* in four acts which premiered in Fontainebleau on November 9, 1771. Composed by Grétry on a libretto by Jean-François Marmontel (1723–1799), the piece is dedicated to the Comtesse du Barry (1743–1793). *Zémire et Azor* is one of the composer’s most popular works and have been performed internationally.

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<sup>65</sup> Michel Brenet, *Grétry: Sa Vie et ses Oeuvres* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1884), 20.

<sup>66</sup> André Grétry, *Mémoires, ou Essais sur la Musique*, Tome I (Brussels: A. Wahlen, 1829), 130-131.

<sup>67</sup> David Charlton, *Grétry and the Growth of Opéra-Comique* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4.

The plot is based on the fairy tale *The Beauty and the Beast* by Gabrielle Villeneuve (1685–1755).

### Plot

The action takes place in Persia

With his slave Ali, Sander, a broke merchant, is trying to find refuge from a storm. They both arrive in a palace where they see a beautiful rose set next to a banquet. Extremely hungry, Sander and Ali start eating, but before running away, Sander steals the rose for his daughter, Zémire. Right before their escape, Azor, representing the beast, enters and accuses Sander of taking the rose without his permission. Azor condemns Sander, forcing him to choose between being killed or giving Zémire to him. After choosing the death sentence, Sander begs Azor to see his daughter at least one last time. Azor accepts and Sander joins Zémire, to which he gives the rose. Considering his decision unacceptable, Ali tells Zémire about her father's sacrifice. To save her father's life, Zémire secretly joins Azor in his palace.

### Context of the *ariette*

Act 3, Scene 5: Ariette: "La fauvette et ses petits"

Character: Zémire

Level: Intermediate to advanced

Azor wants Zémire to become the queen of his palace and promises her to reestablish her family's fortune. In this scene, Azor asks Zémire to sing a song for him, a challenge she immediately accepts. Zémire sees in this performance an opportunity to not only charm Azor, but

also to indirectly pass him a message regarding her doubts about abandoning her family to become a queen.

### Character analysis

Zémire is the youngest of three daughters. Receiving the rose from her dad makes her the principal character of the story. Zémire's personality is brave, as she wants to resolve a moral dilemma by sacrificing herself to protect her father from the death sentence. Her character evolves in the plot; by the time of the *ariette*, she has been a prisoner in the palace for three months.<sup>68</sup> Zémire trusts Azor's heart more than his bizarre appearance, and singing for him is not an intimidating task, as she sees an occasion to charm him with her delightful voice. Zémire is beyond excited about her future life as a queen; in the text of her song, she even compares herself to a warbler who is happy to take care of a family in a green countryside. Unfortunately, the happiness cannot last if the warbler is taken away from her family.

### Musical form

The *ariette* is in G major in a Da capo form A-B-A.' Section A is an *allegro moderato* in 4/4 meter, and section B is an *andantino* in 6/8 meter. Section B begins in the dominant and modulates to B minor. Section A' returns to G major, but repeats the initial text with decorative vocal ornamentations.

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<sup>68</sup> Charlton, 103.

### Vocal agility considerations

In his dissertation *The Operas of André-Ernest-Modeste-Grétry* (1965), Robert Jobe opines that Zémire's *ariette* is “not especially difficult”<sup>69</sup> but does not explain his statement. Possible elements may explain Jobe's opinion: the music is repetitive, the orchestra supports the vocal line, and the range is not extremely high for a coloratura aria. Despite these supposed justifications, the *ariette* still presents vocal difficulty in terms of agility.

An essential element of vocal agility in this *ariette* are the grace notes connected to the character's emotions, as they musically paint the flirting attitude of Zémire with Azor. Their vocal execution should be delicate and fast, not impairing the vocal line. Section A includes recurring sixteenth notes to be sung with precision and lightness in order to maintain the character of the piece. The coloratura of this passage requires solid breath energy in order to maintain the intonation, and ends the vocal run on the A5, without any laryngeal elevation or aggressive release in the voice. The breath is managed with the rests between sets of sixteenth notes, giving the singer the opportunity to breathe (see Music Example 1). The principal vowel of all coloratura passages of the *ariette* is [a], favored for any vocalise because of its ability to avoid stiffness in the voice and express strong feelings. Since the highest note of this aria is B5, the vowel position must remain open and vertical to get an efficient projection; attempts to spread the lips would make the sound metallic.

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Deroy Jobe, “The Operas of Andre-Ernest-Modeste Grétry” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1965), 147, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Music Example 1. Coloratura passages from section A, Zémire's *ariette*, mm. 41–48 <sup>70</sup>



In section A,' coloratura passages are longer and display more virtuosity, vocal runs start with an ascent, and end with a descent (see Music Example 2). Vocal ascents followed immediately by descents are technically preferred patterns in singing because as a vocal ascent encourages laryngeal elevation, the immediate descent following it puts the larynx back to its low position. Self-ornamentation is encouraged in the section A'. This does not mean to change the melody but to add contrasts by varying vocal articulations. Music Example 2 shows a suggestion of different articulations bringing more relief to the character's emotions.

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<sup>70</sup> André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, *Zémire et Azor: Comédie-Ballet en quatre actes* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1936), 163–164.

Music Example 2. Coloratura passages from section A', Zémire's *ariette*, mm. 125–138 <sup>71</sup>



The suggestion is to do two passages in legato and two in staccato. Zémire shows off her happiness with long legato lines, and ends each of them with short and precise staccato notes, imitating her laughs that confirm her excitement. To practice these passages, Cinti-Damoreau's exercise n. 33 *bis* (see Chapter 3) helps for this purpose, as she explains that any *cocotte* is well-prepared when preceded by short legato passages. Doing the first two descents legato should help in the singing of the staccato notes. The legato assists singers engage in their breath to build the vocal line and discourage over-articulation.

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<sup>71</sup> André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, *Zémire et Azor: Comédie-Ballet en quatre actes* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1936), 171–172.

## 4.2 “PROFITEZ DE LA VIE” FROM BOIELDIEU’S *LA FÊTE DU VILLAGE VOISIN*

### Composer

François-Adrien Boieldieu (1775–1834) was one of the last composers of the early form of the *opéra comique* genre. Boieldieu found his inspiration in the *opéra comiques* of Grétry, and had a deep admiration for Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868). During his career, he often observed how composers imitated Rossini’s musical style, and disliked this attitude because, for him, Rossini was unique and inimitable. Rather than copying the Italians, Boieldieu chose to reply to their successes by composing in his own style, which made him one of the most important composers of nineteenth-century French *opéra comiques*.

### *La fête du village voisin*

*La fête du village voisin* is a three-act *opéra comique* composed on a libretto by Charles-Augustin Sewrin (1771–1853), and premiered in 1816 at the *Salle Feydeau* in Paris. Despite Boieldieu’s success as a composer, this opera was not the favorite of his audience. They rejected not the music but the libretto. Music critic François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871) qualified the libretto as a “cold comedy not very favorable to music.”<sup>72</sup> Considered a pale copy of Marivaux’s *Le Jeu de l’Amour et du Hasard*, the audience hated this libretto displaying no sentiments or passions.

### Plot

The action takes place in the castle of the Baron located near to the village of Saint-Rieul

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<sup>72</sup> “Comédie froide et peu favorable à la musique” Gustave Héquet, *A. Boieldieu, Sa vie et ses Oeuvres* (Paris: Heugel et Cie, 1864), 69.

Madame Ligneul, the niece of the Baron, is a young widow promised to M. de Renneville, a friend of the Baron. Ligneul, who never met Renneville, is waiting impatiently for his visit. When Remi, the gardener, and his wife Genevieve come to ask Ligneul for permission to join a party at the village, she decides to join them with her servant Rose. Afraid to be recognized, Rose and Ligneul disguise themselves as peasants. Ligneul asks Remi to stay in the castle in order to cover their escape. Soon after they leave, M. de Renneville arrives at the castle with Henri, his valet. Remi informs Renneville about Ligneul and Rose being at the village. Renneville and Remi put on some disguises and join the party to trick them.

### Context of the couplets

Act I, scene 1: Couplets: “Profitez de la vie”

Character: Madame Ligneul

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Madame Ligneul and her servant Rose are alone in the Baron’s castle. Ligneul sings a song accompanying herself with a guitar. In the couplets, she advises Rose to enjoy life before it is too late.

### Character analysis

Madame Ligneul is an interesting character; her title could make us think that she is in her fifties, but she is a young widow in her twenties. Frustrated, she feels that she is not living the life she should have at such a young age. The plot does not mention her husband’s death or how long she has been living with her uncle. Despite her deep respect for him, Ligneul is bored and feels overprotected. Her acceptance of marrying Monsieur de Renneville without even knowing him proves her profound desire to build another life. Joining the party is proof of



Ligneul being desperate to the point of taking risky decisions that could make her life more enjoyable. Moreover, by attending this party, she sees an opportunity to provoke her uncle's anger, and indirectly makes him understand that the life she is living is not suitable for her. The aria is not as light as any other arias of the genre, since the musicality and rhythms of the bolero paint Ligneul's powerful personality. Her confidence is strong to the point of giving life's advice to Rose, who is close to her own age.

### Musical form

The aria is in G minor and set in two verses (couplets) in a strophic form. The couplets are in an *allegretto tempo*. The form of the couplets is AA coda. The aria ends with a slow coda in G major. The music is a bolero respecting all of its characteristics: fast tempo and 3/4 meter. The use of the bolero paves the genre's way into exoticism. The accompaniment displays Spanish's musical elements with rhythmical figures imitating the sound of the castanets.

### Vocal agility considerations

Boieldieu rarely composed coloratura in his arias because he favored the simple. When he did compose some, the coloratura passages never exceeded two bars in lengths.<sup>73</sup> This explains why the coloratura passages of this aria are not exhaustive. Yet, these passages remain challenging and good for practice, not only because of their speed, but also for their movement and vowel positions.

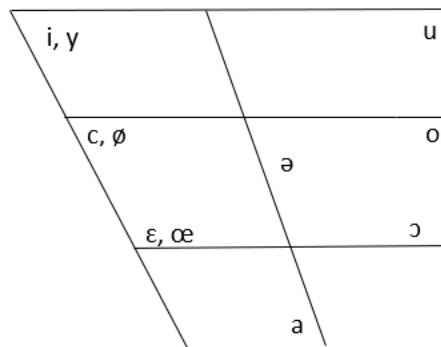
Commonly, coloratura passages in arias are sung on the [a] vowel because of its ability to express different emotions, such as happiness, excitement, or rage. Here, the coloratura passages

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<sup>73</sup> George Favre, "Boieldieu, (François-) Adrien" *Grove Music Online*. Revised by Thomas Betzwieser. Accessed 20 January, 2001 <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.03422>.

use other vowels because the melismas are set on the text itself. Perhaps, the composer chose to use coloratura to reinforce the dancing rhythm of the bolero, more than to express a particular emotion. The vowel diagram, or French *carré vocalique*, helps to understand what happens physiologically while speaking a vowel (see Figure 16). The area of [i] shows the tip of the tongue touching the bottom teeth, and [a] with the tongue being relaxed and down. When we modify a vowel by opening the mouth, moving the tongue, or spreading the lips, we produce another vowel sound that is darker or brighter. The use of the vowel diagram is useful for practicing the couplets, since many chosen vowels are not desirable and often require certain modifications.

Figure 16. Reproduction of the French vowel diagram from *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association* (1999).<sup>74</sup>



<sup>74</sup> *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association: A Guide to the Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Illustrated Edition, 1999), 78.

The coloratura passage of the first couplet is on the vowel [i] (see Music Example 3). Despite its ability to bring the voice forward and enhance resonance, this vowel is challenging on fast coloratura runs. The risk on this vowel is to spread the lips, which encourages laryngeal elevation. In order to keep a fully resonant sound, the mouth position is open but vertical. Moreover, if the vowel is not sung in this position, the text may be inaudible.

Music Example 3. Beginning of the first couplet of Madame Ligneul's aria, mm. 11–14 <sup>75</sup>



<sup>75</sup> François-Adrien Boieldieu, *La Fête du Village Voisin* (Brussels: Ed. Lauweryns, n.d.), 9.

The coloratura passage of the second couplet goes up to Bb5 on a nasal [ã] vowel (see Music Example 4). A modification of this nasal by a [a] vowel is recommended to avoid any dryness and aggressive release in the sound. Throughout the descents, sustaining the breath helps the rib cage remain open; otherwise, its collapse would render the coloratura chaotic and out of character. Engaging breath support does not mean creating tension in the body, but simply connecting the singing to the breath.

Music Example 4. End of the second couplet of Madame Ligneul's aria, mm. 56–59 <sup>76</sup>



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<sup>76</sup> Boieldieu, 12.

The coda does not display a variety of coloratura figures like other arias of the genre during this era. The coda is slow in tempo; the difficulty is breath control with the sustained G5 ending on a succession of turns and fermatas (see Music Example 5). Breath management should be prepared in advance for a clean execution of these vocal turns.

Music Example 5. End of the coda of Madame Ligneul's aria, mm. 68–76<sup>77</sup>

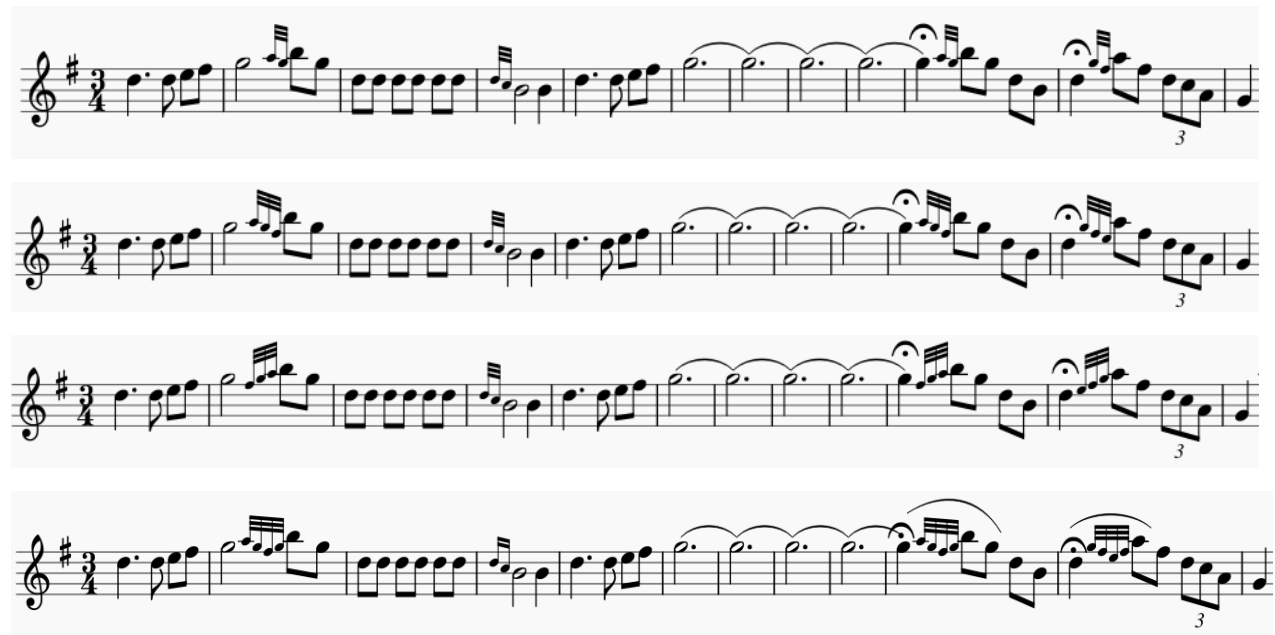
The image shows a musical score for the end of the coda of Madame Ligneul's aria, measures 68–76. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal line features a sustained G5 note with a fermata, followed by a succession of turns and fermatas. The lyrics are: "vous vou-lez l'en-ten-dre ne vous é-cou-te plus". The piano accompaniment consists of chords and arpeggiated figures. The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata.

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<sup>77</sup> Boieldieu, 12.

The coda contrasts with the tempo of the couplets. We left the atmosphere of the bolero for a slow tempo allowing the singer to display some vocalism. The end of the coda features vocal turns, which recall the cheerful and dancing character of the piece. A suggestion for the singer would be to apply Liebling's vocal turn exercise on this final phrase (see Figure 17). It is difficult to read a turn when it is marked with its symbol (~), though it is common in old editions. When not familiar with this notation, the singer tends to improvise and eventually sing the melody incorrectly. Writing the turn on a separate score is recommended in order to visualize the notes, making the practice clearer and easier.

Figure 17. Written vocal turns in the coda of Madame Ligneul's aria, mm. 65–76<sup>78</sup>



<sup>78</sup> Boieldieu, 12.

By applying Liebling's exercise, the singer writes the last phrase of the coda, and writes the turns following Liebling's order: two notes, three notes, three notes by reversing the direction of the melody, and four notes. The singer practices the exercise in order, at a slow tempo on the airflow, then once at ease increases the tempo, until the turns become fast and precise.

#### 4.3 "FLAMME VENGERESSE" FROM AUBER'S *LE DOMINO NOIR*

##### Composer

Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782–1871) was one of the greatest composers of French operas during the nineteenth century. Auber debuted in the composition of *opéra comiques* while studying with Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842), who introduced him to the Prince de Chimay (1771–1843). The prince held a small theater in Belgium, where Auber could premiere his first *opéra comiques*. Then, Auber saw his musical career flourishing upon starting his collaboration with the librettist Eugène Scribe (1791–1861). Their collaboration contributed to Auber's most renowned successes: *La muette de Portici* (1828), *Fra Diavolo* (1830), and *Le domino noir* (1837).

##### *Le domino noir*

*Le domino noir* is an *opéra comique* in three acts composed in 1837 on a libretto by Eugène Scribe, and is considered Auber's most elegant score.<sup>79</sup> For this composition, Auber found his inspiration in *La dama duende* (1629) by Calderon de la Barca (1600–1681). The

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<sup>79</sup> Charles Osborne, *The Opera Lover's Companion* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 1.

coloratura soprano and pedagogue Laure Cinti-Damoreau whose method is discussed in Chapter 3 created the role of Angèle.

Figure 18. Laure Cinti-Damoreau in the role of Angèle wearing the domino noir costume <sup>80</sup>



<sup>80</sup> *Le domino Noir, Opéra de Scribe et Auber: Costume de Mme Cinti-Damoreau (rôle d'Angèle)*, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1837. (Paris: Martinet, 1837). Conserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, BMO C-261 (12-1163). <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb397613991>.



## Plot

The action takes place in 1780 in Madrid.

Horace, a young Spanish nobleman, is in love with a girl he met the previous year at a ball, but does not know her identity. The girl is Angèle, the niece of the Queen of Spain, promised to become the future Abbess of the Annonciades convent. Angèle decides to return to the ball organized by the queen to enjoy her last freedom before taking her final vows. To conceal her identity as a novice nun, Angèle wears a black outfit and a mask, a costume called “black domino” (see Figure 18), and has until midnight to come back to the convent. However, she does not know that Count Juliano, a friend of Horace, sets the clock back an hour to give Horace more time to find his beloved. At the ball, Horace notices the black domino, asks who is hiding behind this black outfit, but Angèle stays silent as she dances with him all night. When the bells ring midnight, Angèle runs to the convent where she finds the gates closed. Angèle is in despair, trying to escape Horace who is chasing her.

## Context of the aria

Act III, scene IV: Aria “Flamme vengeresse”

Character: Angèle

Level: Advanced

Unable to join the convent on time, Angèle hides in the Count’s house with the help of the housekeeper, Jacinthe. Invited by the Count for a drink, Horace recognizes Angèle disguised as Inèsille, Jacinthe’s niece. Rapidly, Horace locks up Angèle in a room begging her to finally reveal her identity. Angèle successfully escapes the room before saying anything and finally

arrives safely at the convent, where she realizes that her feelings for Horace are not merely an illusion, and from this moment she sees her life as future abbess vanishing.

### Character analysis

Angèle is young and naïve; she is not rejecting her future of becoming an abbess because it gives her a sense of power. It is difficult to know at the beginning of the plot if she is interested in Horace or not, but her return to the ball may confirm this supposition. Wearing a black domino is not a common choice for a ball, since people usually wear colorful masks to blend in with the crowd; however, her disguise makes her feel safe. The black domino gives her power, warning people who might try to approach her that she is dangerous. Unfortunately, Angèle quickly discovers that the power of love is the strongest; her frustration in trying to forget Horace before taking her final vows pressures her in deep turmoil. She became a prisoner of a situation she created.

### Musical form

The aria is a rondo form (ABACA coda) in G major and *allegro* tempo. The aria follows the modulations of the rondo form (I – V – I – IV – I): section B modulates to the dominant D major, section C to the subdominant C major, and the aria ends with a coda in G major. The tempo is steady throughout the aria. The aria is in 3/8 meter with repetitive triplet motives, both characteristics of waltzes commonly used in this repertoire.

### Vocal agility considerations

Angèle's aria is a mad aria in which coloratura passages display emotions of frustration and turmoil. Usually, mad arias in French *opéra comiques* have a sense of humor and entertainment. Yet, this one has no touch of wit but is composed as a waltz. The range is B3–B5

with a possibility of extending it to a D6 in the final cadenza. The challenges in terms of vocal agility are the constant alternations between high and low registers, rapidity of the grace notes, fast ascents, and chromatic runs. Moreover, there is a succession of passages in the rondo that are low in tessitura for a light soprano, which the composer chose to reflect the loss of power felt by the character (see Music Example 6). Since this choice is vocally uncomfortable, a suggestion would be to apply some melodic modifications for each repeat of the rondo (see Figure 19).

Music Example 6. Coloratura passage from the rondo of Angèle's aria, mm. 46–49<sup>81</sup>



<sup>81</sup> Daniel Auber, *Le domino noir* (Paris: Benoit aîné, n.d), 192.

Figure 19. Suggested melodic changes for the rondo of Angèle's aria



Vocal ornaments of this aria do not display vocalism. The grace notes serve the text as they musically paint shivers associated with the fear felt by the character (see Music Example 7). The singing of those notes is fast and does not interrupt the vocal line. The singer can sing the phrase without the grace notes, and once the vocal line is set, can add the grace notes.

Music Example 7. Grace notes of the rondo, mm. 34–39 <sup>82</sup>

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano ensemble. The vocal line is written on a single staff in treble clef, featuring a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are in French: "Flamme ven-ge-res-se, Tourment qui m'oppres-se, Amour qui sans es-". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, also in the same key signature and time signature. The piano part includes chords and moving lines that support the vocal melody. The score is presented in a clear, black-and-white format with standard musical notation.

The coda is an explosion of madness with a succession of different fast runs in descending and ascending movement. One of the passages is a progression of ascending intervals of seconds that are difficult to perform (see Music example 8). For the vocal projection of this run to be even, it is important to have breath energy sustaining the sound. Practicing this passage with Stephen Smith's five-step process to learn fioritura passages can help achieve this evenness (see Chapter 3).

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<sup>82</sup> Auber, 191.

Music Example 8. Coloratura passage of the coda, Angèle's aria, mm. 129–134 <sup>83</sup>



The coda concludes the deep turmoil of the character with chromatic runs imitating the cries (see Music Example 9). The fast tempo should help in the projection of the chromaticism. Cinti-Damoreau mentions in her method that when singing chromatic runs the singer must not over-articulate each note.

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<sup>83</sup> Auber, 195.

Music Example 9. Chromatic runs, Angèle's aria, mm. 158–161<sup>84</sup>



Figure 21. Application of Cinti-Damoreau's chromaticism exercise n. 34 on Angèle's aria chromatic runs



Before practicing each exercise, the singer sings silently the name of each note in her mind. Once every note has been memorized, the singer applies Cinti-Damoreau's method on the runs and then sings the coda while gradually increasing the tempo.

#### 4.4 "AU BORD DU CHEMIN" FROM MASSÉ'S *LES NOCES DE JEANNETTE*

##### Composer

Victor Massé (1822–1884) began studying at the Paris Conservatoire in October 1834. At the beginning of his career, Massé only composed religious music and received multiple Prix de Rome for his religious compositions. Years later, Massé discovered his interest for the *opéra comique* genre. Throughout his career, he collaborated with librettists Eugène Scribe, Emile Perrin (1814–1885), Michel Carré (1821–1872), and Jules Barbier (1825–1901). Massé's most famous *opéra comiques* were *La chanteuse voilée* (1850), *Galathée* (1852), and his best success, *Les noces de Jeannette* (1853).



### Les noces de Jeannette

*Les noces de Jeannette* is a one-act *opéra comique* composed on a libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré. The opera premiered at the *Salle Favart* on February 4, 1853. This opera built Victor Massé's reputation. *Les noces de Jeannette* stimulated the admiration of numerous composers, including Wagner who was not originally an admirer of French music. Wagner reviewed Massé's composition, commenting on the singing as being simple and enjoyable, and stating that this *opéra comique* was the best he heard at the *Salle Favart*.<sup>85</sup> According to Ropartz's biography of Victor Massé, the composer found his inspiration for the plot of *Les noces de Jeannette* while reading in the newspaper a story about a groom saying "no" to his bride during a wedding ceremony at the city hall.<sup>86</sup>

### Plot

The action takes place in a French village.

Jean, a peasant, falls in love with Jeanette and proposes to her. On the day of the wedding, Jean is filled with doubt and leaves before saying "I do." Suffering from commitment issues, he joins his friends at a cabaret, where he meets other women and starts flirting with them. Jeanette wants her revenge after this humiliation, and warns Jean that her dad is coming to kill him. Afraid by her threats, Jean ends up signing the wedding contract; however, Jeanette chooses not to sign so the people will think she is the one rejecting the marriage. Yet, still in love with Jean, she finally decides to sign the wedding contract. Full of anger about the situation, Jean promises Jeannette a nightmarish life next to him.

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<sup>85</sup> Joseph-Guy Ropartz, *Victor Massé: Mars 1822–Juillet 1884* (Paris: Librairie Ed. Sagot, 1887), 10.

<sup>86</sup> Ropartz, 11.

### Context of the aria

Act I, scene 11: The Rossignol's aria "Au bord du chemin"

Character: Jeannette

Level: Advanced

After Jean destroys all the furniture in the house to express his furor, Jeannette takes time to repair everything. Once she is done, she goes to the kitchen to prepare the dinner, when, at the window, she sees a nightingale. Jeannette opens the window and sings with the bird.

### Character analysis

Jeannette is hurt by her current situation and searches for any solution to take away her pain. The nightingale is an opportunity to disconnect herself from reality. She sees the nightingale and slowly starts a dialogue with him. In the duet, Jeannette has two objectives: to forget her sadness through the pleasure of singing and to try calling Jean's attention. While imitating the nightingale's singing, Jeannette hopes to charm Jean with her beautiful voice.

### Musical form

The aria starts with an orchestral introduction in *allegretto moderato* in Ab major in 4/4 meter. The vocal part starts with a recitative *senza rigore* ending with a long fermata, followed by a dialogue between the flute and the voice. The aria is a modified rondo form ABA'CA'' coda. Section A is an *allegro moderato* in Ab major in 4/4 meter, immediately followed in the same tempo by a section B in the dominant Eb major. Section C is a *larghetto mosso* modulating to the submediant F major in 6/8 meter. A transitional section follows section C with another dialogue between the flute and the voice. A coda in *allegro moderato* in Ab major and 4/4 meter concludes the aria.

### Vocal agility considerations

The repertoire of the French *opéra comique* is often associated with birds' singing. Two parts of the aria are dialogues between Jeannette and the bird. The voice acts as a vocal mirror of the flute (the nightingale), similarly performing the trills and dynamics to render the echo as clearly as possible. The dialogue is *a cappella* but the coloratura soprano is not completely free in the tempo since she has to reply to the nightingale by echoing his singing. These dialogue passages can be considered as a vocal competition between the singer and the bird (see Music Example 10).

Music Example 10. Dialogue between voice and flute, the Rossignol's aria, mm. 25–29 <sup>87</sup>



The singing imitation is challenging due to vocal articulations, high tessitura, and vocal trills. An efficient collaboration with the flutist or pianist is necessary to render the dialogue as credible as possible. The first difficulty of the dialogue is the trill, since it must be practiced with clarity and precision to resemble the nightingale. To practice the trill, the singer can apply Blivet's method (see Figure 22). The trill is on Eb5, and to practice it, the singer lets the larynx

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<sup>87</sup> Victor Massé, *Les noces de Jeannette* (Paris: L. Grus & Cie, n.d.), 93.

move and shake rapidly. There are different options to perform this trill: the singer can start slowly, then accelerate, or immediately speed up.

Figure 22. Application of Blivet's trill exercise, voice part of the dialogue, m. 26



The character of the piece changes from section C, which is slow in tempo, and the vocal line, following the style of the Italian *bel canto* (see Music Example 11). At this moment, the nightingale lets the character sing her own emotions. Coloratura passages resemble recitatives, with one descent and one ascent. The ascent on “léger” is particularly challenging, but the tempo allows the voice to prepare it. The main difficulty on this ascent is the arrival on Bb5, which is an eighth note; releasing the voice suddenly on such a short note can create vocal tensions. A correct vowel position on “léger” will help the voice stop clearly without force in the sound. Despite the closed [e] of “léger” a vowel modification to an open [ɛ] is preferred in this context.

Music Example 11. Section C, Rossignol's aria, mm. 75–80 <sup>88</sup>

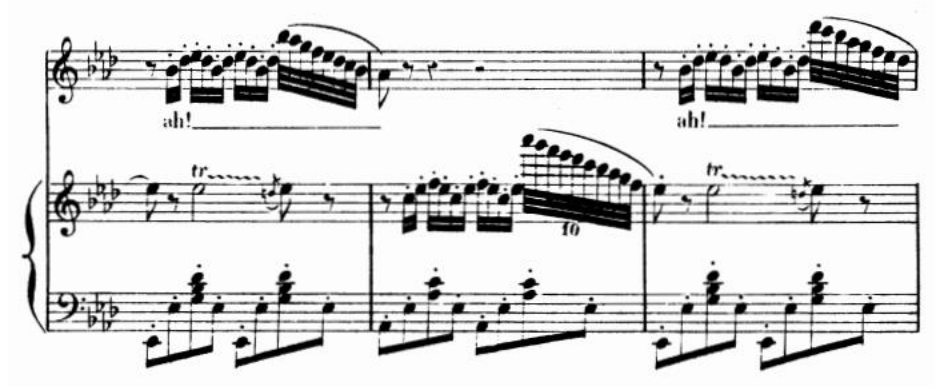
The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are in French. The first system shows the vocal line with a trill marked '10' and the lyrics '- se - e, L'oi-seau lé-ger Vint se lo-'. The piano accompaniment features arpeggiated chords and eighth-note patterns. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics '- ger! L'oi-seau lé-ger Poiseau léger vint se lo-'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar arpeggiated patterns. The score concludes with a final chord in the piano part.

The coda concludes the dialogue between the voice and the nightingale. Coloratura passages do not use the legato/staccato articulation illustrated in Cinti-Damoreau's method. In this coda, the singer sings a succession of staccato notes ending on a legato descending phrase both connected by a vocal leap (see Music Example 12).

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<sup>88</sup> Massé, 97.

Music Example 12. Coloratura passage of the coda, Rossignol's aria, mm. 122–124 <sup>89</sup>



Diverse strategies are possible to apply to this passage, the first one is to simply sing the staccato notes legato (see Figure 23). The second is to divide the staccato passage in two parts, singing the first one legato, and the second staccato. Finally, the third is applying Cinti-Damoreau's exercise n. 33 of the *cocottes*, in which the singer supports and vibrates the two accentuated notes preceding the *cocottes* (see Chapter 3).

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<sup>89</sup> Massé, 100.

Figure 23. Coloratura passage of the coda, Rossignol's aria, mm. 122–124 - First strategy of practice.



Figure 24. Coloratura passage of the coda, Rossignol's aria, mm. 122–124 - Second strategy of practice.



Figure 25. Coloratura passage of the coda, Rossignol's aria, mm. 122–124 - Third strategy of practice.



Applying these three strategies helps the singer sing clear and resonant staccato notes without interrupting the air, and engages the breath energy necessary to make them light and short.



#### 4.5 “OMBRE LÉGÈRE” FROM MEYERBEER’S *LE PARDON DE PLOËRMEL*

##### Composer

Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864), born Jakob Liebman Meyer Beer, was a German composer and pianist. From 1810, Meyerbeer created his own surname, reuniting the last name of his mother (Meyer) with the last name of his father (Beer).<sup>90</sup> Despite the rare performances of his operas, he remained one of the most important figures of the French grand opera. Meyerbeer studied composition with Abbé Vogler (1749–1814) in Darmstadt<sup>91</sup> and the composer Antonio Salieri (1750–1825), who advised him to travel to Italy to learn about Italian singing and *bel canto*. In Italy, Meyerbeer became a composer of six Italian operas and remained there until 1824. After his Italian experience, Meyerbeer moved to France to learn French art and history; there he built his reputation as a composer of both grand operas and *opéra comiques*. Meyerbeer composed his music on libretti treating historical, biblical and political subject matters. He collaborated with the most important librettists: Eugène Scribe, Jules Barbier, and Michel Carré.

##### *Le Pardon de Ploërmel*

*Le Pardon de Ploërmel* is a three-act *opéra comique* composed on a libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré. The *opéra comique* was premiered at the *Salle Favart* on April 4, 1859. While *Le Pardon de Ploërmel* is the original title of the *opéra comique*, it is internationally known as *Dinorah*. To perform the piece abroad, Meyerbeer replaced the spoken dialogue with recitatives. The source of the plot is based on two stories by Émile Souvestre (1806–1854): *La chasse aux trésors* (1850) and *Le Kacouss de l’amour* (1850) both published in the *Revue de*

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<sup>90</sup> Heinz Becker and Gudrun Becker, *Giacomo Meyerbeer, A Life in Letters* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1989), 9.

<sup>91</sup> Becker., 11.

*deux mondes*. The plot exhibits characters suffering from mental discord.<sup>92</sup> Picturing mental instability on stage was an early step towards modernism.

### Plot

The plot of the opera takes place during the nineteenth century in Ploërmel, Brittany.

The goatherd Hoël and his bride Dinorah join their wedding procession, when a thunderstorm interrupts the wedding, demolishing Dinorah's home. In despair, Hoël refuses to offer such a miserable life to his bride and remembers the existence of a legendary treasure. He soon decides to seek it and enlists his friend Corentin to help him recover the treasure, but not without sinister intent since, according to legend, the first to touch it will perish. Meanwhile, Dinorah, who is desperately searching for Hoël with her goat, feels abandoned. During their investigation, Corentin sees Dinorah from afar and hopes she will find the treasure and touch it. Instead, Dinorah becomes a prisoner of a storm, which throws her into a torrent. Hoël immediately rescues his fiancé and abandons the treasure, realizing nothing is more important than his bride.

### Context of the aria

Act 2, scene 1: Shadow's song "Ombre légère"

Character: Dinorah

Level: Advanced

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<sup>92</sup> Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 229.

At night in a forest, Dinorah is full of sadness after Hoël has abandoned her. She is complaining about her misfortune in love, but soon her mood changes with the moonshine creating a reflection of her.

### Character analysis

The character of Dinorah evolves to mental instability. Dinorah sees her wedding being destroyed by a storm and then thinks her fiancé abandoned her. She wanders into a forest at night and loses reason. Dinorah is alone, suddenly, in the moonlight, she sees a reflection of her shadow. Amused by it, she sings and dances with it. Dinorah sings to the shadow and waits for it to answer. Answers from the shadow are her own singing, but she is not aware of it. In this scene, musicologist Sean Parr compares Dinorah to a ventriloquist.<sup>93</sup> Her passive madness results in a total disillusion and amnesia because, when remembering Hoël during the aria, she tells the shadow that she is about to marry him today. Dinorah has lost her mind to the point of forgetting the recent tragic events of her marriage being destroyed. For a moment, a cloud enters, covering the moonlight, forcing the shadow to disappear. This causes Dinorah to be demented, and she feels abandoned a second time, as she cries and begs the shadow to come back. At the shadow's reappearance, Dinorah dances singing endless coloraturas, wanting to reach the shadow, resulting in a pursuit of the inaccessible.

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<sup>93</sup> Sean M. Parr, *Vocal Virtuosity: The Origins of the Coloratura Soprano in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 113.

### Musical form

The aria is a rondo form ABACA coda in Db major. Section A is an *allegretto ben moderato* in Db major in 3/8 meter. Section B is an *allegro animato* in Ab major in 6/8 meter, followed by a transition section with the voice *a cappella*. Section C is an *andantino quasi allegretto* in A major in 3/4 meter, followed by a *moderato* section in D minor. The coda is an *allegro con spirito* in Db major in 6/8 meter.

### Vocal agility considerations

The aria exhibits the madness of the character by long coloratura passages with a resting part in section C, when Dinorah remembers Hoël. The rondo imitates the lightness of the shadow's movements with an *allegretto* tempo, contrasting vocal line articulations and grace notes that reinforce the character of the text (see Music Example 13).

Music Example 13. Rondo, Dinorah's aria, mm. 21–28 <sup>94</sup>

136

légèrement

Ombre lé - gè - re Qui sans mes

pas, Ne t'en va pas! Non, non, non! Fée ou chi - mè - re Qui n'est si

Section B is the imaginary dialogue between Dinorah and the shadow. Dinorah echoes her own voice with softer dynamics. In this section, the orchestra follows the singer, who has time to breathe and prepare the repeat (see Music Example 14).

<sup>94</sup> Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Le Pardon de Ploërmel* (Paris: G. Brandus & S. Dufour, n.d.), 136.

Music Example 14. Section B, Dinorah's aria, mm. 60–70 <sup>95</sup>

The musical score for Dinorah's aria, Section B, measures 60–70, is presented in three systems. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked "Allegro animato. (♩ = 92.)". The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics "me. Ah! Ah! (dirige il tuo canto all'ombra.)" and the piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "a te! Ah! (all'ombra.) (crede udire la voce dell'ombra.)" and the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal line with lyrics "re - ply! Ah! (Echolo herself.)" and the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment includes dynamics "p" and "pp".

The singing of this passage has to be smooth without any force. Applying Adam Kirkpatrick's bouncy breath articulation may help the singer reach this result (see Chapter 3). Figures 26, 27, and 28 show how to apply Kirkpatrick's method on the first line of section B.

<sup>95</sup> Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Dinorah* (Milan: G. Ricordi & C., n.d.), 139.

[illegible]

Figure 27. Application of Kirkpatrick's method (second step), first line of section B

[illegible]

On the second step, the singer adds a tone; here, the author of this document suggests a Ab5 on a [a] vowel because it is the first note and the vowel of the aria's coloratura run. Each [a] must be a gentle pulse of breath felt in the epigastric region.

Figure 28. Application of Kirkpatrick's method (third step), first line of section B



On the final step, the singer sings the passage, with this same movement of the breath. Each note is a bouncy articulation marked by (-). The singer tries to maintain this pulse as gentle as possible to render the phrase smooth and avoid any over-articulation.



#### 4.6 “OH LÉGÈRE HIRONDELLE” FROM GOUNOD’S *MIREILLE*

##### Composer

Charles-François Gounod (1818–1893) was the most prolific French composer of sacred music, operas and melodies. Gounod studied fugue, harmony, counterpoint and composition at the Paris Conservatoire under the guidance of Jean-François Lesueur (1760–1837), Fromental Halévy (1799–1862), and Ferdinando Paër (1771–1839). After much success composing sacred music, Gounod turned to the composition of operas. He has a prominent place in the evolution of the *opéra comique* genre since he was the first to compose an *opéra comique* including recitatives. Gounod composed the most famous *opéra comiques*, which are still performed internationally today: *Faust* (1859), *Mireille* (1864), *Roméo et Juliette* (1867). Gounod collaborated with librettists Michel Carré and Jules Barbier.

##### Mireille

*Mireille* is a five-act *opéra comique* (which can also be considered as an opera when performed with recitatives) composed to a libretto by Michel Carré, and inspired from the Provençal poem *Mirèio* of Frédéric Mistral (1830–1914). Mistral’s poem includes the *couleur locales* showing off the cultures of the *Midi* (Southern France)<sup>96</sup> with a plot taking place in Arles and les Saintes-Maries-de la-Mer. The name of the Heroine Mireille refers to a Provençal costume that women wore in the city of Arles until they reached the age of 16.

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<sup>96</sup> “Midi” is a term employed to describe a part of the South of France.

Figure 29. Madame Vallandri in the role of Mireille wearing the costume of Mireille <sup>97</sup>



*Mireille* is a pastoral tragedy, which premiered at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1864 but did not meet the hoped-for success. Indeed, people rejected this idea of a pastoral tale ending tragically. From these disagreements, the composition encountered several modifications. In 1889, Gounod modified the opera into a three-act version ending with a happy conclusion. This version of the opera was performed at the *Salle Favart* for a decade before the original was finally accepted. From 1901, the verismo movement made the death of Mireille no longer an issue.<sup>98</sup> There is no evidence on the premiere being performed with recitatives or spoken dialogue.<sup>99</sup> While this opera

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<sup>97</sup> *Mireille, opéra de Michel Carré et Charles Gounod: illustrations de presse*, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1901. Conserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, Département Arts du spectacle, 4-ICO THE-3108

<sup>98</sup> Steven Huebner, *The Operas of Charles Gounod* (Oxford England: Clarendon Press, 1990), 141.

<sup>99</sup> Huebner, 142.

can be considered as a grand opera with its five-act version, musicologists often consider this composition as an *opéra comique* because of Gounod's habits to compose his operas in two versions: one with recitatives and one with spoken dialogue. The composition of the opera encountered other issues, notably with the tessitura of Mireille. When Gounod composed the role of Mireille, he thought about a young fifteen-year-old girl experiencing her first love. However, most of her arias, for example, the grand air de la Crau in Act IV require a heavy voice. At the premiere, Madame Caroline Miolan-Carvalho (1827–1895), who sang the role received negative critiques on her performance because her voice could not fit most of the demanding arias.<sup>100</sup> At her demand, Gounod modified the aria of la Crau and added two *ariettes* to suit her voice: “Heureux petit berger” and “Oh légère hirondelle.” The first one remained in the original version; however, the hirondelle is not part of it and is no longer performed in the opera but for concert purposes.

### Plot

The plot of the opera takes place in Arles, southern France. Mireille is in love with a young poor man named Vincent. Taven, a witch, tells her that three men are arguing to become her husband. Among them is Ourrias, a bull tamer that Mireille's father Ramon wishes for her to marry. Mireille swears that nobody will be as important as Vincent and rejects Ourrias. Full of anger after Mireille's rejection, Ourrias wants revenge and stabs Vincent. Earlier in the plot, Mireille and Vincent promised each other to make a pilgrimage to the desert of Saintes-Maries if something unfortunate were to happen to one of them. Mireille learns about Vincent being hurt

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<sup>100</sup> Huebner, 148.

and Mireille leaves for the Saintes-Maries to pray for help and the life of her beloved. After a long walk in the desert, she arrives and sees Vincent. Exhausted by the long walk she dies from sunstroke in his arms.

### Context of the *ariette*

Act 1, scene 2: Ariette “Oh légère hirondelle”

Character: Mireille

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

In a mulberry grove, groups of girls are singing. Among them, Clémence expresses her desire to one day marry a rich man, to which Mireille responds by insisting on her opinion about marriage, which is about love and not fortune. Once Mireille sees a swallow, she asks to deliver a message of love to Vincent.

### Character analysis

The character analysis of this particular scene does not match the character analysis of the entire opera. Throughout the opera, the character of Mireille evolves to the dark and the tragic. She becomes dramatic in style and moves away from her fifteen-years-old naiveté. Aware that Vincent might not be welcomed by her father, she cannot control her feelings. After the witch Taven tells her about the three men fighting for her hand, she feels forced to betray her lover by marrying someone else. Yet Mireille swears to never do it, a conviction which leads her to death. In this aria, Mireille is singing to a bird with total innocence, and something delightful emerges from her character in this scene. The aria is out-of-context regarding Mireille’s personality, as depicted throughout the opera.

### Musical form

The *ariette* is an *allegretto* rondo form (ABACA coda) in 4/4 meter. Section A is in G major, section B in the dominant D major, and section C in C major and B major. The coda concludes the *ariette* in G major.

### Vocal agility considerations

The *ariette* is a rondo, a form inviting singers to display virtuosity by modifying its melody. Some suggestions are offered in Figure 30. For example, the repetitive musical phrasing of “Oh légère hirondelle, messagère fidèle” can be sung on different articulations to increase the light character of the *ariette*, which allows for more vocal agility opportunities for practice (see Music Example 15). The author of this document suggests singing the first rondo legato, the second rondo staccato, and the third rondo using different rhythmic notations. The vocal ornaments of section A reinforce the character of the text; the grace notes can be practiced using Liebling’s method on the turns (see Chapter 3).

Music Example 15. Rondo, Mireille's *ariette*, mm. 32–41 <sup>101</sup>

**MIREILLE**

O légère hi-ron - del - le, Mes - sage -

re fi - dè - le, Vers men - a - mi

<sup>101</sup> Charles Gounod, *Mireille* (Paris: Choudens, n.d.), 32.

Figure 30. Suggested articulation changes for the Rondo of Mireille's *ariette*

The figure displays three musical staves in 3/4 time, each with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "O légère - - hi ron - del - - le, - - - - - Messagè- - - re fi - dè - - - - - le, - - - -".

- Staff 1 (Top):** Shows a legato line with slurs over the notes, indicating a smooth, connected vocal line.
- Staff 2 (Middle):** Shows staccato notes with accents (>) over the notes, indicating a more rhythmic and supported vocal line.
- Staff 3 (Bottom):** Shows a more complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and accents (>) over the notes, indicating a challenging vocal line.

The legato singing suggested as a first option helps the vocal ascent to be projected so that the singer controls her breath to avoid any aggressive release of the sound. The staccato on the second option follows Cinti-Damoreau's *cocotte*'s technique, as shown in the figure the two notes that have to be vibrated and supported are marked by accents. The third option is the most challenging because of the rhythmical figures that encourage instability of the larynx position, and such ascents by thirds are monitored with a solid breath energy to maintain the larynx low in position.

In this *ariette*, section B and C are vocalises on [a] vowel, where Mireille expresses her feelings of happiness (see Music Examples 16 and 17). Section B features recurring vocal leaps, where the singer may feel a switch between two registers (mix and head) and the intonation may

be unstable. The singer practices these runs using breath energy to facilitate the blend between the two registers, and avoid laryngeal elevation. If practicing the runs correctly there is less chance for the intonation to be impaired.

Music Example 16. Section B, Mireille's *ariette*, mm. 69–74 <sup>102</sup>



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<sup>102</sup> Gounod, 33.



Section C is low in tessitura, contrasted in terms of dynamics, and contains chromaticism. The singer sings the dynamics to avoid monotony, and to give some character meanings to the vocalises.

Music Example 17. Section C, Mireille's *ariette*, mm. 93–112 <sup>103</sup>

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line includes the lyrics "vo - le gai - ment! ah!" and "ah!". The piano accompaniment features various chords and melodic lines, with dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo) indicating changes in volume. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

<sup>103</sup> Gounod, 34–35.

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Section C passage can be practiced with Smith’s method on the wobble (see Chapter 3). While using the wobble, the singer feels vulnerable and stops controlling her voice. As Smith mentioned, flexibility cannot be achieved without vulnerability. The singer practices the Smith’s wobble exercise and once at ease with the feeling of wobbling, returns to the passage and lets her voice reach vocal freedom and flexibility.

#### 4.7 “CONDUISEZ-MOI VERS CELUI QUE J’ADORE” FROM OFFENBACH’S *ROBINSON CRUSOÉ*

##### Composer

Jakob Offenbach (1819–1880) was a German-born French composer who contributed to the development of nineteenth-century popular music by becoming the genius of the *musique*

*bouffe*.<sup>104</sup> At fourteen years old, he moved to Paris to study at the Conservatoire, but quit after a year. Offenbach developed his passion for theatrical shows during his appointment as a cellist at the *Opéra Comique*.<sup>105</sup> While working there he tried to play his compositions on the stage of the *Salle Favart*, but many of them resulted in total failure. Offenbach had a strong interest in light operas, and in 1850 became director of the *Comédie Française*.<sup>106</sup> In 1855, he opened his own theatre *Les Bouffes Parisiens* and pushed the French operetta of Florimond Roger (Hervé) (1825–1892), first official composer of the genre, to international recognition. After a collaboration with Jules Barbier, Offenbach finally reached his goal by composing *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1881) for the *Opéra Comique*. This composition met all successes that unfortunately Offenbach never ended-up seeing since he died before the premiere of Hoffmann.

### Robinson Crusoé

*Robinson Crusoé* is an *opéra comique* in three acts composed on a libretto by Eugène Cormon (1810–1903) and Hector Crémieux (1828–1892). Created on November 23, 1867 at the *Salle Favart*, the opera received moderate success. The plot of the *opéra comique* does not follow the original plot of Daniel Defoe's (1660–1731) *Robinson Crusoé* (1719). In the original plot, Robinson leaves York, United Kingdom for a sea voyage to escape his future career as a lawyer wished by his parents. After his escape, and different adventures, he is shipwrecked on an island in Venezuela where he meets his companion Vendredi, a prisoner captured by the cannibals of the island. To bring more actions and sentimental emotions to the plot, the librettists

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<sup>104</sup> Louis Schneider, *Les Maîtres de L'Opérette Françaises: Offenbach* (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin et Cie, 1923), 30.

<sup>105</sup> Schneider, 36.

<sup>106</sup> Andrew Lamb, "Offenbach, Jacques [Jacob]" *Grove Music Online*. Accessed 20 January, 2001. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.20271>.

changed Robinson's motivation to take on a sea and included new characters (Edwige, Suzanne, Toby, Jim).

### Plot

The action takes place on an island close to the Rio Orinoco in Venezuela. Lady Crusoe lives in Bristol with her family, including her niece Edwige and two servants, Toby and Suzanne. Robinson bought two boat tickets to Brazil and invites Toby, who refuses because he does not want to leave his beloved Suzanne. Robinson leaves alone to seek fortune. Edwige, in love with her cousin Robinson is in despair after his secret departure. During his trip, Robinson's ship wrecked and lands on a desert island in Venezuela. Six years later, worried of receiving no news from Robinson, Edwige, Suzanne, and Toby decide to go seek him. Once they arrive on the island, they are captured by cannibals and the indigenous.

### Context of the aria

Act II (deuxieme tableau), scene 14: "Conduisez-moi vers celui que j'adore"

Character: Edwige

Level: Advanced

After their arrival on the island, Suzanne and Toby are prisoners of the cannibals, while Edwige is taken away by the indigenous on another part of the island. In admiration of Edwige's beauty, whom they consider as a goddess, Edwige asks the indigenous to bring her to the one she loves.

### Character analysis

Edwige is a mischievous young girl who experiences her first love. Desperate about Robinson's departure, she never gave up on her hopes to find him again. Even after six years,

Edwige never forgot her desire to marry Robinson. On the island, she is captured by the indigenous and does not seem worried to have been separated from Suzanne and Toby. Being alone with the indigenous, she is not scared. On the contrary, she takes advantage of the admiration the indigenous feel for her to ask them to lead her to Robinson. It is difficult to affirm if Edwige's feelings at the time of the aria are of uncertainty or extreme confidence. Indeed, she insists that Robinson is still in love with her, even after six years, and her insistence is so strong that we could suppose she is trying to convince herself.

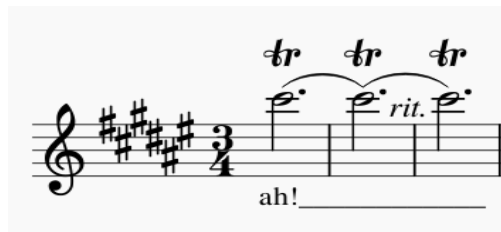
### Musical form

The aria is a waltz in a modified rondo form ABA'CA'' with no coda. The tempo of the rondo is *allegro*. The aria is in A major with section C in F# major. Except for the beginning of the rondo, which is *lento*, the *allegro* tempo is steady throughout the aria. Each verse of a section repeats twice, where each repeat is an ornamented version of the verse. Section B and C end with transitionary coloratura passages before the return of section A.

### Vocal agility considerations

As the other arias discussed in this document, Offenbach's aria presents similar coloratura passages: fast runs, chromaticism, and trills. Some passages are more complicated especially in terms of trills, ascents, and staccato on high notes involving a blend between head voice and flageolet register.

Music Example 18. Trills, Edwige's aria, mm. 148–150 <sup>107</sup>



The first vocal agility element of the aria to consider is the trill on a C#6 (see Music Example 18). A trill is performed by rapidly singing two notes separated by a half tone or a tone. Physiologically, trilling requires a fast movement of the larynx. Here, this movement can be challenging because of the tessitura, indeed, the higher the voice is, the higher the position of the larynx. Laryngeal movements can be detrimental for the voice, if the practice is not carefully executed. First, it is recommended to practice trilling the notes (C#6 to D#6) into the flageolet register to avoid extra tension. In order to switch into the register, the singer performs vocal sirens from C#6 to D#6.

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<sup>107</sup> Jacques Offenbach, *Robinson Crusoé*, n. 14 c valse chantée: “Conduisez-moi vers celui que j’adore” (Dublin: prima voce editions, 2012), 60.

Music Example 19. Vocal ascents, Edwige's aria, mm. 175–178 <sup>108</sup>



Music Example 19 shows two challenging vocal ascents from Edwige’s aria. On vocal ascents, breath energy is important to support the voice and avoid the release of the sound to be tense and aggressive. The upper lip must lightly spread for the sound to be clear and resonant. Keeping the mouth vertical through the ascent makes the sound dry and unprojected. This passage can be practiced using regular lip trills or any exercise that encourages airflow.

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<sup>108</sup> Offenbach, 61.

Music Example 20. End of the cadenza, Edwige's aria, m. 182 <sup>109</sup>





Figure 31. Application of Miller's flageolet exercise, end of the cadenza, Edwige's aria



Another method is using Miller's second strategy to practice the flageolet through graceful rhythmical patterns using legato articulation (see Figure 31). The singer takes only the section of the cadenza with the D6, applies a legato articulation, and practices the section as is. While it is important to prevent the voice from fatigue, the singer sings those exercises carefully with moderation.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Despite difficult beginnings, the French *opéra comique* genre found its place in history, and influenced many other genres. This study proves how important the *opéra comique* was to the art of singing, and how useful it could still be today if reintroduced into the current repertoire. The analysis of these seven *opéra comique* arias help us make an evident connection between the virtuosity they imply and the practice of vocal agility. Moreover, the preference of the genre for light voices offers singers of this voice-type numerous opportunities of vocal improvements through a repertoire that fits them. Characters' personalities, French diction, and vocal demands of these operas do not differ from the standard repertoire; the main difference resides mostly in their unpopularity on stage. This unpopularity should not discourage singers from being curious and exploring this repertoire. Due to the lack of available recordings and performances of these operas, singers can be creative and display their own artistry without being influenced by others.

Just as any vocal technique component, vocal agility is important to consider, and this study shows how Mancini's statement of vocal agility as being a natural talent must be reconsidered. Of course, research shows that some physiological components make light voices naturally more agile, but the practice of agility itself is a necessity for all voice categories. Examining vocal methods from different eras helps us realize that the improvement in scientific knowledge has had an impact on how to approach vocal agility. Indeed, nineteenth-century vocal methods, with their hundreds of written exercises, became today long paragraphs of descriptions about what singers should feel happening physiologically. Yet, it is possible to create a connection between one method with another. For example, the sensation of loss of control of

the voice implied by Laure Cinti-Damoreau in the practice of chromatic runs is somewhat revisited with modernity in the Stephen Smith's invention of the wobble. Whether vocal methods have been written many years ago or today, all are trying to reach the same result: to improve voice technique. What is most important is to know how to interpret them correctly.

The research conducted in this document by studying vocal agility exercises by different pedagogues and then applying them to passages from the arias examined in this study proves how easy it is to make a connection between an agility exercise and a coloratura figure. The practice of these neglected arias helps solidify vocal flexibility, which is extremely important in the development of light coloratura voices; however, because the current worldwide operatic stage performs a certain type of operas, it is normal for singers to be trained for this repertoire. Therefore, the results found in this study are not meant to encourage singers to give up one repertoire for another, or to even introduce it in their auditions and competition list; but to simply use it for practice purposes to eventually approach standard repertoire with more ease and confidence.

## APPENDIX A: SELECTED ARIA TEXTS, IPA, AND TRANSLATIONS

### IPA AND TRANSLATIONS BY VALENTINE BARON

Ariette: “La Fauvette avec ses petits”

**La Fauvette, avec ses petits, se croit la reine du bocage,**

la fo vɛtə avɛk sɛ pəti sɔ krwa la rɛ nɔ du bokaʒə

*The warbler, with its kids, believes herself to be the queen of the green countryside,*

**De leur réveil, par son ramage, tous les échos sont avertis.**

də lœr revɛj par sɔ̃ ramaʒə tu lɛz ɛko sɔ̃t avɛrti

*From their awakening, by its song, all echoes are warned.*

**Sa naissante famille autour d’elle sautille, voltige et prends l’essor.**

sa nɛ sɑ̃ tɔ fami jə o tur dɛlə sɔ ti jə vɔltiz ɛ prɑ̃ lɛsɔr

*Her budding family around her hopes, flies and takes off.*

**Rassemblés sous son aîle, de leur amour pour elle, elle jouit encor.**

ra sɑ̃ blɛ su sɔn ɛlə də lœr ʔamur pur ɛlə ɛlə ʒuit ɛnkɔrə

*Gathered under her wing, of their love for her, she still enjoys.*

**Mais par malheur vient l’oiseleur qui lui ravit son espérance;**

mɛ par ma lœr vʝɛ̃ lwazəlœr ki lyi ravi sɔn ɛspɛrɑ̃sə

*But unfortunately comes the fowler who takes away her hope;*

**La pauvre mère! Elle ne pense qu’à son malheur! Tout retentit de sa douleur.**

la pœvrə mɛrə ɛlə nɔ pɑ̃ sɔ̃ ka sɔ̃ mal ɛr tu rətɑ̃ ti də sa du lœr

*The poor mother! She only thinks about her misfortune! All her pain is revived.*

Couplets: “Profitez de la vie”

**Profitez de la vie et surtout du printemps**

prɔfite də la viə e syr tu dy prẽ tã

*Enjoy life and especially Spring*

**Le bonheur qu'on envie est dans l'emploi du temps**

lə bɔ nœr k ɔ̃n ɑ̃viə ɛ dã lãplwa dy tã

*The happiness we want is in our routine*

**Faites-en bon usage car leurs attraits perdus,**

fɛ tə zã bɔn yzaʒə kar lœrz ɑtre pɛr dy

*Put it in good use because once losing their beauty,*

**Les roses du bel âge ne refleurissent plus**

lə rɔzə dy bel laʒə nə rɛflø ri sɔ ply

*The roses of the young age do not bloom anymore again.*

**De la coquetterie vous qui suivez les lois**

də la kɔ kɛ tə riə vu ki sqive lɛ lwa

*From the coquetry you who follow the laws*

**Sur le soir de la vie, vous perdez tous vos droits;**

syr lə swar də la viə vu pɛrde tu vɔ draw

*On the evening of life you lose all your rights*

**L'amant dont le coeur tendre n'essuya que refus**

l am ɑ̃ dɔ̃ lə kœr tã drə n esqija kə rɛfy

*The lover with tender heart that you constantly rejected*

**Quand vous voulez l'entendre, ne vous écoutez plus**

kã vu vule l ătã drə nə vuz ɛkutə ply

*When you want to hear him, he does not listen to you anymore*

Aria: "Flamme vengeresse"

**Flamme vengeresse, tourment qui m'opprime,**

fla mə vã ʒə ɾesə tur mã ki mɔ prɛ sə

*Vengeful flame, torment that oppresses me,*

**Amour qui sans espoir me laisse, tu vois ma faiblesse,**

a mur ki sãz ɛspwar mə lɛsə tu vwa ma fɛ blɛ sə

*Love that without hope leaves me, you see my weakness,*

**Hélas pauvre abbesse, devant toi mon pouvoir s'abaisse.**

e las pœvr ɛb ɛsə də vã twa mɔ pu vwar sa bɛ sə

*Alas poor abbess, before you my power is lowered.*

**Rends à mon cœur le calme et la paix!**

rãz ɛa mɔ kœr lə kalm ɛ la pɛ

*Give back to my heart calm and peace!*

**Toi, qu'hélas! Autrefois je bravais,**

twa k elas o trɛfwa ʒə brave

*You, alas! Once I braved,*

**Comment le fuir et le bannir, le moyen ah! Mon Dieu! Je l'ignore!**

kɔ mã lə fujir ɛ lə banir lə mwajɛ a mɔ djø ʒə lijɔrə

*How to flee and banish it, the way ah! My god! I don't know!*

**Je veux ici l'oublier, oui je le veux, et je le vois encore**

ʒə vøz ʒi l u blije wi ʒə lə vøz e ʒə lə vwaz ɑ̃kɔrə

*Here I want to forget it, yes I want it, and I still see it!*

**Va t'en, amour, va t'en ah! Va t'en pour jamais.**

va tɑ̃ amur va tɑ̃ a va tɑ̃ pur ʒamɛ

*Go away, love, go away ah! Go away forever.*

Aria: "Au bord du chemin"

**Au bord du chemin qui passe à ma porte fleurit un bel aubépin,**

o bɔr dy ʃə mɛ ki pas a ma pɔrtə flørit œ̃ bɛl œbepɛ̃

*At the edge of a road that passes at my door blooms a beautiful hawthorn*

**Un bel aubépin, dont le vent m'apporte les parfums chaque matin!**

œ̃ bɛl œbepɛ̃ dɔ̃ lə vɑ̃ m a pɔr tə lɛ par fœ̃ ʃa kə ma tɛ̃

*A beautiful hawthorn whose wind brings me every day the morning smells!*

**Sur sa branche, qui se penche, un gentil rossignol vient depuis quelques jours**

syr sa brɑ̃ ʃə ki sə pɑ̃ ʃə œ̃ ʒɑ̃ ti rɔ si ɲɔl vʒɛ dɔpɥi kɛl kə ʒur

*For a few days on a leaning branch comes a nice nightingale*

**Chanter ses amours, chanter ses amours,**

ʃɑ̃ te sɛ zamur ʃɑ̃ te sɛ zamur

*To sing his loves, to sing his loves*

**Et sous la ramée parfois j'écoute charmée sa voix, sa voix!**

e su la rameə parfwa ʒe ku tə ʃar meə sa vwa sa vwa

*And under the branches sometimes I listen to his voice, his voice!*

**Voix légère, chanson passagère! Babil gracieux qui réjouit l'air et les cieux!**

vwa leʒerə ʃã sã pa sa ʒerə babil gra sjø ki re ʒwi lər ɛ le sjø

*Light voice, transient song! Graceful babble that rejoices the air and heavens!*

**Du zéphire le souffle t'inspire et l'amour s'éveille à tes accents mélodieux!**

dy ze fi rə lə su flə t ɛs pir ɛ l a mur sɛ vɛj ɑ tɛz ʌksã melɔdi jø

*From zephyr breath inspires you and love awakens to your melodious accents!*

**Babil gracieux qui réjouit l'air et les cieux!**

babil gra sjø ki reʒu i lər ɛ le sjø

*Graceful babble that rejoices the air and heavens!*

**Oui, l'amour s'éveille à tes accents mélodieux!**

wi la mur sɛ vɛj ɑ tɛz ʌksã melɔdi jø

*Yes, love awakens to your melodious accents!*

**Pour entendre mieux ta voix si pure, le flot clair apaise ton murmure,**

pur ã tã drə mjø ta vwa si purə lə flo kler ɑpeʒə tã murmurə

*To hear better your voice so pure, the clear stream soothes your whisper*

**Et dans l'air et dans la ramure le vent soupire plus tendrement et plus gaiement,**

e dã lər ɛ dã la ramyrə lə vã supirə ply tã drə mã e ply ge mã

*And in the air and antler the wind sighs more tenderly and more cheerfully,*

**Le vent soupire plus tendrement, plus doucement et plus gaiement!**

lə vã supirə ply tã drə mã ply du sə mã e ply ge mã

*The wind sighs more tenderly, more softly and more cheerfully!*

**Cette nuit, sur ma croisée, l'aile humide de rosée, l'oiseau léger vint se loger!**

setə nʊi sur ma krwazeə lel ʌmidə də rɔzeə lwaso leʒe vɛ sə loʒe

*That night, on my window, with the wing humid from the dew, the light bird came to lodge!*



**Triste et plaintive comme un soupir, sa voix moins vive semblait gémir!**

trist ʁe plɛ̃ tivə kɔm ʁe su pir sa vwa mwɛ̃ vivə sɑ̃ blɛ ʒemir

*Sad and plaintive like a sigh, his unlively voice seemed to moan!*

**Mais le jour luit et sa chanson va revenir!**

mɛ lə ʒur lɥi e sa ʃɑ̃sɔ̃ va rəvənir

*But the day shines and his song will come back!*

Aria: “Ombre légère”

**Ombre légère qui suis mes pas, ne t'en va pas! Non, non, non!**

ɔ̃mbrə leʒerə ki sɥi mɛ pa nə tɑ̃ va pa nɔ̃ nɔ̃ nɔ̃

*Fickle shadow, who follows my steps, do not go away, no!*

**Fée ou chimère, qui m'est si chère, ne t'en va pas, non, non, non!**

fe u ʃimɛrə ki mɛ si ʃerə nə tɑ̃ va pa nɔ̃ nɔ̃ nɔ̃

*Fairy or chimera, who to me is so dear, do not go away! No, no, no!*

**Courons ensemble, j'ai peur, je tremble quand tu t'en vas loin de moi!**

kurɔ̃z ɑ̃ sɑ̃blə ʒɛ pœr ʒə trɑ̃blə kɑ̃ ty tɑ̃ va lɛ̃ də mwa

*Let us run along together, I am afraid, I tremble when you go far away from me!*

**Ah! Ne t'en va pas, ne t'en va pas!**

a nə tɑ̃ va pa nə tɑ̃ va pa

*Ah, do not go away from me!*

**A chaque aurore je te revois! Ah! reste encore, danse à ma voix!**

a ʃak ʁorɔrə ʒə tɛ rəvwa a rɛst ɑ̃korə dɑ̃s ɑ̃ ma vwa

*At each daybreak I recover you! Ah, stay longer, dance to my voice!*

**Pour te séduire je viens sourire, je veux chanter!**

pur tə sedʒirə ʒə vjẽ su ri rə ʒə vø ʃã te

*To seduce you, I just smile, I want to sing!*

**Approches toi! Viens, réponds chante avec moi!**

a prə ʃə twa vjẽ repõ ʃãt \_ avøk mwa

*Come near me! Come, answer me, and sing with me!*

**Ah! réponds! Ah! c'est bien!**

a repõ a sɛ bjẽ

Ah, answer, ah, that's good!

**Ombre légère...**

õmbrə leʒerə

*Fickle Shadow...*

**Sais-tu bien qu'Hoël m'aime, et qu'aujourd'hui même**

sɛ ty bjẽ k œl m ɛmə e k ozur dʒi mɛmə

*Don't you know that Hoël loves me, and that today,*

**dieu va pour toujours, bénir nos amours!**

djø va pur tu ʒur benir noz \_amur

*God will forever bless our loves!*

**Le sais-tu?**

lə sɛ ty

*Do you know this?*

**Mais tu prends la fuite! Pourquoi me quitter?**

mɛ ty prã la fɥitə purkwa mə kite

*But you are going away! Why leaving me?*

**Quand ma voix t'invite, pourquoi me quitter?**

kã ma vwa tẽ vitə pur kwa mə kite

*When my voice invites you, why leaving me?*

**La nuit m'environne? Je suis seule, hélas!**

la nɥi m ã virɔnə ʒə sɥi sœlə elas

*The night encompasses me! I am alone, alas!*

**Ah! reviens, sois bonne! Ah! c'est elle!**

a rə vjẽ swa bɔ nə a sɛt ɛlə

*Ah! come back, be nice! Ah! it's she!*

**Ah! Méchante, est-ce moi qui l'on fuit?**

a me ʃã tə ɛ sə mwa kə lɔ̃ fɥi

*Ah! mean one, is it me you are fleeing from?*

**Ombre légère...**

õmbrə leʒɛrə

*Fickle Shadow...*

**Ah! danse! Reste avec moi!**

a dãsə rest ʁavɛk mwa

*Ah! Stay with me!*

Ariette: “Oh légère hirondelle”

**Le ciel rayonne, l’oiseau chante!**

lə sjɛl rɛjɔ nə lwazo ʃɑ̃ tɔ

*The sun is shining, the bird is singing!*

**Aujourd’hui rien ne peut m’attrister!**

o ʒur dʁi ʁjɛ̃ nə pø m atri s tɛ

*Today nothing can make me sad!*

**Oh légère hirondelle, messagère fidèle,**

o leʒɛrə i rɔ̃ dɛlə mɛsazɛrə fidɛlə

*Oh light swallow, faithful messenger,*

**Vers mon ami vole gaîment et conte-lui mon doux tourment.**

vɛr mɔ̃ ɑmi vɔlə ɡɛmɑ̃ e kɔ̃tə lɥi mɔ̃ du tɔ̃rmɑ̃

*To my friend fly cheerfully and tell him my sweet torment.*

**Parle-lui pour moi-même, et dis-lui que je l’aime!**

parlə lɥi pur mwa mɛmɑ̃ e di lɥi kə ʒə lɛmɑ̃

*Talk to him for myself, and tell him that I love him!*

**Vincent peut croire à mon serment!**

vɛ̃sɑ̃ pø krwaʁ ɑ mɔ̃ sɛʁmɑ̃

*Vincent can believe in my oath!*

**Vole, vole gaîment!**

vɔlə vɔlə ɡɛmɑ̃

*Fly, fly cheerfully!*

Aria: “Conduisez-moi vers celui que j’adore”

**Conduisez moi vers celui que j’adore,**

kɔ̃ dʁi zə mwa vɛr sɛlqi kə ʒadɔʁə

*Lead me to the one I love,*

**Il a ma foi je sais qu’il m’aime encore.**

il a ma fwa ʒə sɛ kil mɛm ɑ̃kɔʁə

*He has my faith; I know he still loves me.*

**Donnez moi mes bijoux, il m’attends il m’appelle**

dɔnə mwa mɛ bizu il matɑ̃ il m apɛlə

*Give me my jewels, he is waiting for me he is calling me*

**Et je veux être belle pour lui pour mon époux.**

e ʒə vøʒ ɛtrə bɛlə pur lɥi pur mɔn ɛpu

*I want to be beautiful for him for my spouse.*

**Ah! Du bal je suis la reine,**

a dy bal ʒə sɥi la rɛnə

*Ah! At the ball I am the queen*

**Chacun le dit tout bas et la valse m’entraîne dans ses bras, ah!**

ʃakœ̃ lə di tu ba e la valsə m ɑ̃ trɛnə dɑ̃ sɛ bra a

*Everyone whispers it and the waltz takes me to his arm, ah*

## APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHY OF THE INTERVIEWEES

### Dr. Patrick Taïeb

**Patrick Taïeb** is a university professor (Musicology department of the University Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3), former student of Jean Mongrédien and Jean Gribenski at the Sorbonne, former student of the Paris Conservatory (harmony and counterpoint), member of the University Institute of France (2000-2005) and director of the ANR program "Documentary tools for the history of musical practices in France, 16th-19th centuries" (2006-2009). Patrick Taïeb is a specialist in French music and musical life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He has published several articles and books in these fields, including *L'Ouverture Opéra en France from Monsigny to Méhul* (Société française de musicologie, 2007) and *Opéra-ci, Opéra-là* (Gallimard, 2009) in collaboration with Dorian Astor and Gérard Courchelle. He currently heads the R.P.C.F. (Directory of concert programs in France) whose objective is to publish the programs of concerts given in the national space from 1700 to the present day and a collection of monographs on the concert in France.<sup>110</sup>

### Dr. Sean Parr

**Sean M. Parr** is Professor of Music at Saint Anselm College where he teaches music history and voice performance, as well as humanities courses in the core curriculum. With a PhD in Historical Musicology from Columbia University, his research interests focus on nineteenth-century opera, the operatic voice, dance, and gender. He recently published his first book, *Vocal Virtuosity: The Origins of the Coloratura Soprano in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Oxford University Press, 2021). His work on singers and singing has also been published in the *Cambridge Opera Journal*, *19th-Century Music*, and *Current Musicology*. Supported by a Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies, he is currently a Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth College where he is beginning a new project on Wagner and the idea of the heroic voice. He also sings professionally as an operatic tenor and has taught voice for fifteen years.

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<sup>110</sup> "Patrick Taïeb," SYMÉTRIE, last modified October 3, 2020, <https://symetrie.com/fr/auteurs/patrick.taieb>.

## Jean-Pierre Blivet

**Jean-Pierre Blivet** graduated from the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris*. Blivet started his career as a soloist when he was 21 years old. During his singing career he caught tuberculosis which severely impact his career as a singer. Blivet found a new passion in teaching and found his inspiration from voice pedagogues Lamperti and Boralevi. In 1999 Blivet created his own *Institut International de Chant* called The Blivet School, and published his own singing method *Les Voies du Chant* (1999). Blivet has been director of several music conservatories, and taught at the Académie Internationale d'été de Nice (France), the CNIPAL (France), the Académie Internationale Supérieure de Biella (Italy), and the Académie de la voix in Torino (Italy). Blivet has taught master classes in Vienna, and at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Blivet has taught numerous famous French opera singers such as Natalie Dessay, Laurent Naouri, Yann Beuron, and Isabelle Kabatu.

## Dr. Stephen Smith

In the fall of 2011, **W. Stephen Smith** became a Professor of Voice and Opera at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music. Previously he served on the voice faculty at The Juilliard School from the fall of 1998 to the spring of 2011. He held a position on the voice faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School from 1996 to 2017, where he was honored in 2001 and in 2009 as a "New Horizons" faculty member. Mr. Smith has taught voice at Santa Fe Opera and Opera on the Avalon. He has also served on the adjunct voice faculty at Curtis Institute of Music, Teachers College of Columbia University, SUNY-Stony Brook University, University of Southern California, Los Angeles Young Artist Program, and the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Program. Mr. Smith was on the staff of Houston Grand Opera as Voice Instructor for the Houston Opera Studio from 1990 to 2003. Prior to his time at Juilliard, Mr. Smith served for eight years on the voice faculty at the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston. After moving to Houston from St. Louis where he was Chairman of the Voice Department at the Saint Louis Conservatory of Music, he maintained a voice studio in St. Louis for three years. He was a member of the music faculty at Oklahoma Christian College for eleven years and has also been on the artistic staff at Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony and the Cimarron Circuit Opera Company. Dr. Smith holds the Bachelor of Arts degree in Voice from Harding University (voice study with Erle T. Moore), the Master of Music degree in Voice from the University of Arkansas (voice study

with Richard Brothers), and the Master of Performing Arts degree in Opera from Oklahoma City University where he was a voice student of the late renowned Inez Lunsford Silberg. Other teachers include Dr. William White. In 2012, Mr. Smith was awarded the Honorary Doctor of Arts and Humane Letters from the University of Arkansas. Mr. Smith's book, *The Naked Voice: A Wholistic Approach to Singing*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2007. He has given master classes and clinics throughout the United States including the Aspen Music Festival and School, University of Southern California, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Oberlin Conservatory, Glimmerglass Opera, and at Regional and District NATS conventions. He has also been a guest lecturer at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil and at Yonsei University in Seoul, Republic of Korea.<sup>111</sup>

Dr. Adam Kirkpatrick

**Adam Kirkpatrick** started his teaching career at the University of Nebraska before joining the faculty of Georgia State University, then the Kennesaw State University School of Music in 2008. Dr. Kirkpatrick received his Bachelor and Master of Music in Voice performance from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and his Doctor of Musical Arts from Florida State University, after the writing of his dissertation “The Role of Metastasio’s Libretti in the Eighteenth Century: Opera as Propaganda.” Dr. Kirkpatrick has sung many performances and operatic roles throughout the United States: Atlanta Opera, Dayton Opera, Florida State Opera, and Santa Fe Opera. As a singer, Dr. Kirkpatrick won several competitions such as the Opera Birmingham Voice Competition (2007 and 2008), the South-East and Mid-South regional Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (2006 and 2007). In 2010, he is national finalist of NATSAA (NATS Artist Award), and has been honored as a recipient of the NATS Young Leaders Award in 2006. Dr. Kirkpatrick contributed to the vocal pedagogy field by regularly publishing articles in the *Journal of Singing* (NATS): “Teaching the Lower Laryngeal Position with EMG Biofeedback” (2012), “Chiaroscuro And The Quest For Optimal Resonance” (2009), “The Private Studio - Useful Exercises for Private Studio Voice Teachers: How to Sing Coloratura” (2008), “Teaching methods for correcting problematic vibratos: using sustained dynamic exercises to discover and foster

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<sup>111</sup> “Biography,” W. Stephen Smith, <https://www.wstephensmith.com/biography>.



healthy vibrato” (2008). Dr. Kirkpatrick is also the creator of a software called Voice Suite, and the mobile app Sing With The Best.

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWS

### Interview with Dr. Taïeb, Musicologist

- Interviewer Can you tell me more about your career as a musicologist?
- Interviewee I studied at the Paris Sorbonne University with a teacher whose specialty was the French Revolution. My interest historically was French History, and in music, the era of Rameau and Berlioz. All of my research guided me to the French *opéra comique*. I developed a passion for this genre, and it's been 30 years now that I am working on it. I concentrate on the French *opéra comique*, from 1762 to *Carmen* in 1875. I taught 15 years at the University of Rouen, and now it's been 10 years that I am teaching at the Paul Valéry University in Montpellier.
- Interviewer I know that your specialty is French *opéra comique*, can you provide more detail about why this genre is extremely interesting and important for you?
- Interviewee I would say because it is theater and music at the same time. It is an experimental genre, which is unfortunately neglected only by simple ignorance; but it is such a pleasing genre to study.
- Interviewer What is your definition of the *opéra comique* genre?
- Interviewee It is a genre between theater and opera. This genre is completely French. For me, it is the genre that encourages the experimentation of modernity, and it has been the first source of inspiration for many other genres. In my opinion the music of Mozart was born with the *opéra comique*. Musicologist Edward Dent said that the source of the Romantic opera is the *opéra comique*. Same for the German operas of Weber, they are also coming from the *opéra comique*. You know, in the past, in the east coast of the United States, we used to play Grétry before even knowing who Mozart was. The *opéra comique* was an international genre at the time. It was a field of experimentation for the theatrical and singing art.
- Interviewer What are the origins of the *opéra comique*?
- Interviewee I see three origins. The first one is the music of the Italians, especially Pergolesi. Post-1760, the *opéra comique*'s music is both Italian and French. The second is the fairs, but not completely, yes, the opera comique started in the Parisian fairs, but quickly, the genre became against the style of the fairs. Finally, the third one is the Drame Bourgeois.

- Interviewer Does the freedom of the theaters voted by Napoleon contribute to the popularity of the genre?
- Interviewee I would say that from 1791, with the theaters' freedom, everyone started to present *opéra comiques* on stage. In the second part of the eighteenth century, every French city built its theater; and what was performed on these theaters? Spoken plays and *opéra comiques*. From there, you can count thousands of *opéra comiques* being performed around the country. I would say that theaters' freedom contributed a little to the *opéra comique*'s popularity, but for me, it was already extremely popular even before 1791. What the theaters' freedom did is mostly give to the theaters in the province the opportunity to perform; Parisian theaters were no longer the only ones able to do so.
- Interviewer What is the subject matter of an *opéra comique*?
- Interviewee What a difficult question. In the *opéra comique*, you have subjects that are romantic, tragic, political, and comiques. I mean, the real definition of the *opéra comique* is the alternance between spoken dialogue and music, that's it. At the origins, the *opéra comique* was a form of entertainment for the audience, in which the goal was to make the audience laugh; however, quickly, it wasn't this anymore. Subjects can be extremely serious or be about society, with the French Revolution or even the war.
- Interviewer In the *opéra comique*'s history, many musicologists say that the creation of the *opéra comique* was made with the composer Grétry? Do you agree with this statement?
- Interviewee In the history of the *opéra comique*, the creation of the genre started with the *opéra comique* singing *vaudevilles* in which Grétry wasn't born yet. Moreover, at the creation of the genre, you cannot talk about composers because we used *vaudevilles*; however, if we talk about the *opéra comique* after the fairs, then, yes, composers such as Grétry, Duni, or Philidor were important for the genre. The *opéra comique* was already on stage for 10 years before the performance of Grétry's works. I would say that Grétry propelled and perfected the genre, but he wasn't the creator of it.
- Interviewer What are the differences between eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century *opéra comiques*?
- Interviewee I have difficulty comparing the eighteenth-century with the nineteenth-century, but the first difference to note is the voice style.

After reading your research in this document, I want to add that the drama really happened after the middle of the nineteenth century, and mostly at the end, but not before. It is important to not associate the entire nineteenth century with the dark side of the *opéra comique* because it came much later.

Interviewer                      Research showed that the *opéra comique* at some point in its history started imitating the grand opera. How would you explain this imitation?

Interviewee                      Yes, on several occasions there have been imitations of opera. There are many intersections between the *opéra comique* and the grand opera, but the causes are innumerable; it is very complicated to list them. I would say one thing: the principal purpose of the *opéra comique*, since its creation was morality, and from the end of the nineteenth century, especially with *Carmen*, I am wondering if we are still in this idea. Suddenly we have something completely different in terms of character and music.

Interviewer                      Why do you think the *opéra comique* always favored light voices?

Interviewee                      First, because it is beautiful. Then, because it is adapted to a dramaturgy which requires the intelligibility of the text. Finally, because the identity function of the *opéra comique*, as being an "eminently French" genre, according to a minister of the restoration, protected it from the rapid contagion of Italian vocality. Paradoxically, it is said that the *opéra comique* comes from the *opera buffa*, from the Buffon's war, but it is within it that French singing resisted the Italian technique during the nineteenth century.

Interviewer                      What can you tell us about the decline of the *opéra comique*?

Interviewee                      For my part, I do not see a decline of the *opéra comique* before the First World War. The institution creates and performs works from its repertoire until the beginning of the 20th century. Yet, by reading the chronological list of creations, you can see that there were still some until 1972. After this date, the institution is dissolved as such.

## Interview with Dr. Parr, Musicologist

- Interviewer Can you tell me more about your career as a musicologist?
- Interviewee At first, I wanted to be an opera singer, so I applied to schools for singing. I did my Master's in Vocal Performance at Florida State University. Then, while there, I started to really enjoy music history classes, and decided for it to be my second specialty. After my M.M. I wanted to live in a larger city, so I applied to Columbia University, and got accepted for my Ph.D. in Musicology. Soon after I graduated, I got hired at Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire, where I still teach today. I decided to publish my dissertation into a book, and also published articles about madness in singing, opera and technology, and now my new interest is Wagnerian singing.
- Interviewer Your principal area seems to be opera. Are you a singer yourself?
- Interviewee Yes, I am a tenor, I sang a lot of opera roles and oratorio. I sing in a lot of churches; I am doing two roles a year or so. I also take voice lessons at the New England Conservatory.
- Interviewer Where does this interest for female singing come from?
- Interviewee I wanted to focus on Baroque music, but quickly I changed my mind and focused on music of the nineteenth century. One day, my advisor asked me to talk with her about coloratura singing and its history, in general. I did talk about it for 15 minutes without breaks. My advisor enjoyed it and told me that this should be my research. I went for it, and I really enjoyed it. I traveled to Paris, to Milan, and researched there. My dissertation focuses mostly on France, but my book also focuses on Italy. Also, this interest in female singing comes from the fact that I like to talk about subjects that are not much discussed. I definitely can see a shift between the bel canto era and the late nineteenth century. I love studying sopranos from this era, and how women started to represent vocal virtuosity.
- Interviewer What do you think about the literature on coloratura sopranos today? Do you think this subject deserves more writings?
- Interviewee Definitively, there is room for discussion about this particular subject. Not only in the nineteenth century, you can also talk about coloratura roles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

- Interviewer In your book, you said the term coloratura became officially associated with female singers from the nineteenth century with the influence of the bel canto. Why do you think this happened? Is it because of the end of the castrati, or the women's power on stage with the growth of the star system?
- Interviewee Lots of things happened. Yes, the decline of the castrati with the birth of the contralto. The lead voices in operas started to be female voices only. For example, in Meyerbeer's operas, one female voice was light and the other one was dramatic. Yes, the star system with sopranos aligning coloratura with virtuosity made many composers create roles for them. So, yes, all of this made the term coloratura become associated with female vocality.
- Interviewer Do you think that the French operatic repertoire contributed to the evolution of the coloratura soprano in general?
- Interviewee For sure, we could say that there is a French coloratura tradition. You know, in the late nineteenth century, most French coloratura voice models were associated with a specific coloratura singer. For example, we were always in need of sopranos, whose voices would resemble the one of Caroline Carvalho.
- Interviewer Do you think French coloratura sopranos differ from Italian coloratura sopranos?
- Interviewee There are two sides to take in consideration: the singers and the arias. French coloratura voices are higher than Italians. Richard Miller used to say that French singers have a different approach to using whistle voice than Italians. French singers are more flexible in switching to whistle, while Italians wait more before switching. Also, regarding the coloratura and its meaning, in Italian arias, the coloratura often expresses states of crying or rage. In French aria, most of the coloratura is part of the vocal line, and do not obviously express such strong emotions.
- Interviewer You mentioned that during the Baroque era, melismatic singing was part of the word painting, and a mode of intense emotional expression, but contrarily the coloratura in bel canto's compositions did not obviously connect to the character. How do you explain this statement? Do you think that, all of a sudden, coloratura became only a form of virtuosity?
- Interviewee At the time of Rameau, Bach, and Handel, coloratura had a very specific meaning. Then, transitioning to Mozart, you still have that, but it became an element of vocalism. The voice supersedes the emotion.

Moreover, coloratura figures are very similar, whether it is for a mad scene or a love scene.

Interviewer Let's talk about vocal pedagogy and voice agility. You mentioned the "throat-articulation" technique that, with time, disappeared for a more legato articulation. Do you think this change is due to compositional choice or an increase of knowledge in the field of voice pedagogy?

Interviewee I would say the increase of scientific knowledge about the voice, and preference for voices that do not have any aspirate "hs." Also, articulating with the throat is very tricky and damaging for the voice. But you know, some singers still use throat articulation today.

Interviewer When you talk about the divide between flexibility and power, are you talking about the difference between a lyric voice and a light lyric voice? You know there is this school of singing that considers light voices able of agility but not power, and lyric voices able of power but not agility. Is this what you meant? What do you think about such a division?

Interviewee I am on the side that everyone should be singing coloratura, but teachers think that heavier voices struggle more with that kind of singing, so they adapt coloratura exercises for them. If you look at Laure Cinti-Damoreau's method, you see that she created an exercise for voices that are "too agile." What does too agile mean? It means that she believed some voices were more agile than others. I think that this divide still exists today, but really, I do think that everyone should be singing coloratura; flexibility is super important in voice technique.

Interviewer Laure Cinti-Damoreau is going to be part of my document; I will use her method, especially the one on *cocottes* to talk about the staccato technique. How did you discover this pedagogue? What do you think about her method? Why do you think it is called *cocottes*? You said it is associated with the demi-mondaine and the sound of the chicken, but what about the outfit and hats with feathers that women used to wear during this era? Don't you think this could be the connection with her *cocottes*?

Interviewee I discovered Cinti-Damoreau while reading an article about her by Austin Caswell in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. I wanted to know more for my own research and I discovered her treatise. She created many coloratura roles and her voice was unique. I think her method is complete and has a great emphasis on female vocality; I appreciate that. Well, I really did not spend much time trying to know why she was calling her exercises *cocottes*, but since at that time, women on stage were called *cocottes* or *demi-mondaine*, I saw a

connection there. I did not think about the feathers on their outfits, but maybe, who knows?

Interviewer I do think that Cinti-Damoreau's use of legato to prepare the staccato on her exercise is to help singers maintain a steady airflow, even while singing staccato. In my opinion, the legato is here to prepare the voice. What do you think?

Interviewee I have nothing to add on this point, I definitely agree.

Interviewer The Shadow's song is one of the arias I chose to be examined in my document. You mentioned that this opera is neglected, I totally agree with you on this point. Why do you think this repertoire is rarely performed today?

Interviewee This repertoire was very popular at the time. I think the issue is that today we care too much about the whole opera and not only the arias. In the nineteenth century, there were a lot of concerts where singers performed only parts of an opera or selected arias, and audiences did enjoy the performances of these arias without obviously knowing the full piece.

Interviewer When analyzing the Shadow's aria, you talked about the shadow as being a vocalic body; you also mentioned Dinorah as being a ventriloquist. Where do these observations come from?

Interviewee Dinorah is having a dialogue with her shadow. Dinorah sings a certain way, and the shadow sings in another way. Meyerbeer chose to contrast both singing by applying different dynamics. The singer plays with this to make the audience see that two different voices are singing. I think that the light coming from the shadow reflection has to be personified. About the ventriloquism, it is because I was thinking that some singers could eventually try to sing the shadow while trying to maintain their mouth closed, but of course, it is very difficult, but I like that idea to describe better what is really happening on stage in terms of acting and singing.

Interviewer What is the difference between the madness in Italian operas and the madness in French operas?

Interviewee There is this idea in *opéra comiques* that madness should be an entertainment more than a scene of rage. Compared to the Bel canto operas, French composers portray the madness differently to communicate a variety of different emotions.



Interview with Jean-Pierre Blivet, Voice teacher

- Interviewer Can you tell me more about your career as a singing teacher?
- Interviewee Very early on, I realized that I had a good ear, I was very attracted to teaching, and I have taught in various establishments. I created specific exercises and my own method, and student results were very positive. It was only much later that I wrote my first book. When I was director of the state-accredited conservatory of Epinay under Sénart, I created a voice studio. Quickly, a lot of my students won competitions. One day Mr. Richard Miller, author of *The Structure of Singing* wished to come and listen to my lessons with the singing inspector, Mrs. Inge Theiss. It was a very nice meeting, and their enthusiasm reinforced and encouraged me in my teaching. I taught at the *Centre National d'Insertion Professionnelle d'Art Lyrique* (CNIPAL) in Marseille. I had the chance to be a lecturer for the CAPES of Musicology. I gave master classes in many music academies: the Academy of Biella (Italy), the *Salzburg Mozarteum*, the Lausanne Conservatory, the Turin Voice Academy, the State Conservatory of Wien, and the International Summer Academy of Nice. I also taught private lessons, and had my own training center. Today, I am 83 years old and I have not only trained great soloists who have sung on the biggest stages of the world, but also a large number of professional choristers who still sing today in all the theaters of France. I count 24 international awards, 7 *Victoires de la Musique*, including one in Turkey (6 for Natalie Dessay and 1 for Serenad Burcu Uyar).
- Interviewer You are one of the rare French pedagogues to have written a book on vocal technique. What motivated you to write one?
- Interviewee I found that there were interesting books that dealt with the art of singing. Some very old works were established, yet the anatomical knowledge, physiology of the human, and speech pathology sphere were still not quite developed. I wanted to create my own method by offering progressive exercises with a complete program preparation for competitions and auditions.
- Interviewer Have you ever taught or gave Master Classes in the United States?
- Interviewee No, I have never taught in the United States. Yet many American students who came during internships, as well as Herbert Breslin (great artistic agent and press officer in particular of Luciano Pavarotti) insisted, but I had undertaken work with promising students in France, and I wanted to continue what I had begun.
- Interviewer What method do you use with your students to work on vocal agility?

- Interviewee      How to get flexibility? Regular practice! It is necessary to avoid too much effort and tension. What students need to do while singing agile passages is staying in their bodies while keeping flexibility, being very attentive to the choice and use of vowels. Moreover, it is necessary to work on the roundness of the sound. There are many light voices, but very few that are excellent. It is only a question of lack of real technique. One great exercise is to practice the dog who is out of breath after a long run. While doing such imitation of breath, students keep their hands on their ribs to control, they do the exercise slowly, and then increase the tempo. The best vowels to work on agility are [or], [ô], [oui], [i]. The [or] helps to open the throat, the [ô] helps to lower the larynx, and the [oui] going to the [i] brings the sound forward.
- Interviewer      Have you taught voice to many coloratura sopranos during your career?
- Interviewee      Yes, some were very musical with a flexible voice, and after some intense years of work, they ended up singing professionally in choirs or as soloists. Being coloratura means having an ability to vocalize. Light coloratura soprano voices are less common than one might think. This category is delightful and pleasant to work with. At the moment, I don't have one in my studio, but I wish I did.
- Interviewer      I know Natalie Dessay was one of your students. Are you proud? If it's not too personal, what was the most challenging while teaching her voice? How would you describe her voice?
- Interviewee      I am obviously very proud of the evolution and career of Natalie Dessay. Natalie was very musical and was very pleasant to work with because she always listened to me with enormous attention. We did not encounter any difficulties together, except maybe all of the contracts she had that did not allow her to rest, and she noticed for herself, while working with me, that her voice was not in the body and that she was singing with half of her possibilities. She talks about it in the preface of my book. Natalie's voice is a beautiful voice with great ease in vocalization. A voice round and supple, disconcerting in agility. The important and precise work carried out has allowed her to achieve such excellence.
- Interviewer      Tell me more about the agility exercises listed in your book. Do you still use them?
- Interviewee      Of course, I still use them because it took me years to find them and choose the ones that best suited my students. The work must be precise, very repetitive for the velocity, but we have no right to do it incorrectly because this voice (light coloratura) is more fragile than other categories. Plus, I did not want to multiply the exercises because the repertoire is full

of vocalizations. Every aria in this repertoire is an exercise in agility and a perpetual demonstration of virtuosity.

Interviewer Have you ever used nineteenth century vocal methods in the studio? Do you think we should use them more?

Interviewee I have studied them, analyzed them, but I hardly ever use them.

Interviewer Do you know Estelle Liebling's vocal course for coloratura soprano?

Interviewee I especially know her famous collection of cadenzas for coloraturas. I know she was the pupil of Mathilde Marchesi, who was herself a pupil of Manuel Garcia. She has trained many amateur and professional singers.

Interviewer What is, for you, the difference between a light coloratura and a light lyric coloratura?

Interviewee The light soprano is often called a coloratura soprano. This is the highest soprano voice, and very often the most agile. This tessitura is often not very powerful, but the timbre is pure, light and crystalline. I would like to point out that the term coloratura can be associated with other categories of voices. It should be remembered that the term coloratura refers to an ease in vocalizing (flexibility of the pharynx) and not a high tessitura. The lyric coloratura is a lyric soprano voice which therefore has flexibility and an easy vocalization, but the timbre is warmer than light soprano, and vocalizations are not quite as extensive.

Interviewer The French *opéra comique* repertoire favors light voices. Do you think it is the best repertoire to explore when training young light coloratura sopranos?

Interviewee This question is very relevant. There is no inherently better genre because even two voices of light sopranos are not identical in their qualities, defects, extents, or colors; there is no genre which is ideal and sufficient for the formation of a voice. It is possible to say that there exists in the French *opéra comique* repertoire many works favorable to the formation of a light coloratura soprano voice. However, it will also be necessary to teach these voices in the Italian repertoire, which is par excellence, the best language for the vocal art, but of course the French *opéra comique* repertoire is rich of airs with great freshness, and adorned with agility.

Interviewer Do you agree with that the French *opéra comique* repertoire should be included in the light lyric coloratura soprano's repertoire so it could help them in the practice of their voices?

Interviewee Yes, I completely agree. There are wonders in this repertoire for all

opera singers from all walks of life. It would be necessary to mobilize on this objective; it is worth it, really worth it. The disappearance of the genre impoverishes the repertoire everywhere in the world today, especially because given the musical and vocal richness that it represented.

Interviewer      What do you think about a revisit of the old authentic repertoire of French *opéra comique* (Grétry, Hérold, Boieldieu, Monsigny...)? Why do you think this repertoire isn't performed on stage anymore?

Interviewee      These are very interesting operas that I know for the good reason that they were still played in my youth. *Les voitures versées* de Boieldieu, *La Fauvette du Temple* by Messager or even Massenet's *Griselidis*. It was simple, but a real beauty. The causes of this decline are obvious; like for the operetta, these works have been underestimated and they have been entrusted more and more to second-rate singers. I will also be told, as for the *Fauvette du Temple*, that sometimes these works had a weak libretto, and this is also the case with many operas, alas! But above all, the reason is the fault of the programmers who considered these works as a minor art because of bad performers who could not defend these pieces when they sometimes included real little gems.

Interviewer      Do you think having a very wide vocal range is important to have a career as a light lyric coloratura soprano?

Interviewee      I think you are talking about a vast repertoire in terms of the number of roles. If that's what you mean, obviously, it is very desirable because we multiply the chances of being hired according to the works that are represented. This also allows replacing singers at the last minute; many singing careers started this way. But beware of what is good learning and good practice: many young singers impair their voices by singing songs or arias they should not.

Interviewer      When judging at auditions or competitions, do you think that the French operatic repertoire given to young light coloratura sopranos corresponds to their technical level?

Interviewee      Very often not, but this is valid for all voice types.

Interview with Dr. W. Stephen Smith, Voice Teacher

- Interviewer Can you tell me more about your career as a voice teacher?
- Interviewee I have been teaching constantly since 1975. I think people are getting better at what they do if they continue their activity. I learned a lot throughout my career. I started my teaching career in Oklahoma and I taught there for 11 years. Then, I taught at St. Louis Conservatory in Missouri, the University of Houston in Texas, and, for 22 consecutive summers, I taught at the Aspen Music Program in Colorado. Finally, I taught at Juilliard for 12 years, before being appointed Associate Voice Teacher in Northwestern University in Illinois, where I have been teaching for 11 years.
- Interviewer Do you currently teach voice to coloratura sopranos?
- Interviewee I have three coloraturas in my studio, all three are different, but I do not like to classify voices. I want to let my singers be who they are. Two of them are graduate students and one is an undergraduate.
- Interviewer Mancini and Tosi thought that agility was a natural talent, and that working on it was a waste of time. What do you think about this statement?
- Interviewee I do believe that light voices can be agile, no matter what, because they have less mass in their vocal folds. But vocal agility is not a question of voice type; there is not one technique for such voice type and another technique for another voice type. No, I do not believe in this. All voices must be agile and flexible. Vocal agility is important to take into consideration, if you gain in flexibility while studying your voice, your voice will be able to still move even at an old age. That is my belief.
- Interviewer What do you think about vocal agility in the studio today? Do you think that singers are proficient in this aspect?
- Interviewee Once again, some people think that light voices can sing fast and high, and bigger voices cannot. I do not think that this can be really accepted. It is like this, for example, I have a coloratura, so I am going to do only coloratura things, or on the other hand, I have a dramatic so I am going to teach only dramatic things. No, I do not change the way I teach based on the voice type. I think, if people are not proficient in agility, it is because we associate their voice type with the non-ability to sing with agility.

- Interviewer Can you tell me more about your book *The Naked Voice*? Where does this idea of “invention” instead of exercises come from?
- Interviewee With all of the teaching experiences I acquired, my approach became unique, and so my students encouraged me to write a book. I call my exercises “inventions” because, for me, the word “exercise” tends to have a connotation of being just a physical workout, and something you mindlessly do. I think that everything you do in singing has to be intentionally guided with your brain in order to make changes. The more guided you are, the more changes and improvements you can make in your voice. The concept of calling the exercises “inventions” is because an invention takes existing things and combines them together for a possible new purpose. All the elements of electricity existed before we knew what electricity was. Therefore, my exercises are not special because they are from things that people have already done, but by calling them inventions, I give them a specific purpose and function.
- Interviewer The wobble is usually rejected from voice teachers. Weren’t you scared of your method being rejected because of this?
- Interviewee Yes, I do acknowledge that the concept can be misunderstood, but this only if you do not read the book in its entirety. My book is full of double meanings. That is why sometimes non-native speakers have difficulty understanding what I am trying to say in my book. Sometimes I have to translate what I want to share in this book. There is a lot of irony in it, and the whole concept of the wobble is to intentionally be drastic because I want people to think this: if your voice is going to move, you cannot control it, you have to let your voice go.
- Interviewer You said that the wobble leads the voice to flexibility. Can you tell me more about this?
- Interviewee I invented the wobble technique while I was teaching a tenor to stop controlling his voice and let it go on the airflow. If I call it the wobble, it is because I want the voice to feel as loose as possible. The sound of the voice should feel like an old woman who sings in church, but of course, it is not the result I want, I just want the feeling. The idea is for singers to have flexibility, to let their voice loose and free. I call this invention the wobble to encourage singers letting their voice go rather than holding it.  
Working on the wobble with the exercise in my book on the intervals of fourths is to encourage the voice to move fast without any control.
- Interviewer In singing, singers must maintain their larynx low and stable, yet with the wobble, they feel their larynx moving back and forth. Is this movement really recommended?

- Interviewee I want to add that once singers get very good at practicing the wobble invention, their larynx does not move at all. Because the larynx is primarily the thyroid cartilage that we feel on the front and the arytenoids and cricoid on the back, and the vocal fold between the two, for a singer to have agility, arytenoids and cricoid have to be constantly moving in opposition to the thyroid cartilage that changes the shape of the vocal folds, so it is really this cartilage group (the arytenoids and cricoid) that are rocking, and so the wobble helps with that, the wobble helps this movement in which pitches change quickly. The interesting thing is that as singers practice the wobble, the thyroid cartilage does not move up and down very much. So, clearly, while practicing the wobble, the larynx does not go up, but it is also not held rigidly down. It is flexible.
- Interviewer Let's talk about the five-step process to learn *fioritura* passages. The main purpose of this exercise is to be able to move while maintaining a legato line, correct?
- Interviewee Correct, I designed this exercise to help singers singing *fioritura* passages while maintaining the legato. I want them to avoid any throat articulation that would stop the breath. I think that everything should be legato. For example, when you have a lot of staccati, singers have this bad habit of doing them secco by stopping the breath and tightening the throat, so no air is flowing through the folds. When I talk about the legato/staccato, it means that separation of sounds should be done without feeling like you stop your breath at the glottis. The five-step process divides *fioritura* passages in pulses and rhythm creating different new onsets. I want these onsets to be done with the air flowing between the folds, continuous flow of air throughout the entire coloratura passage.
- Interviewer What kind of French operatic repertoire do you give to your coloratura?
- Interviewee I do not assign my students a repertoire because I feel that if I assign them repertoire, they feel like they have to sing it. I do my best to not make decisions for my students; they need to make decisions for themselves. It's all about the artist's choice. I do not want them to feel like they cannot pick something that they would like to sing. I will make suggestions about languages and encourage them to explore a lot of different things, but I do not think that the repertoire I give to them is what will make them better or worse.
- Interviewer Do you consider the French operatic repertoire to be repetitive? In my opinion, it is repetitive. The goal of my document is to provide other ideas of French arias for practice purposes, and you know they are part

of the vocal literature, but with their non-popularity on stage, singers have no interest in them. Would you mind sharing your opinion on this?

Interviewee I think that a lot of time people sing only standard repertoire because they know that, when you do not know a piece well, you do not know how to evaluate the singing, and people prefer to listen to what they already know so they can make comparisons. That is the main reason why it is so limited. I think this is sad, we should offer a lot more variety.

Interviewer Do you think a revival of neglected arias could be useful for practice purposes?

Interviewee The Jewel Song, Juliette's waltz, and the Doll Aria are the most typical repertoire we hear for coloratura, and it's sad. I think there should be wider opportunities for repertoire. I think the exposure to more French *opéra comique* selections would be great for singers.

Interviewer Yes! In addition, you know I feel that Olympia's aria is pretty challenging. Of course, the arias I examine in this document are also challenging, but less, and I am convinced that practicing these arias beforehand would help singers approaching Olympia's aria differently.

Interviewee The most important thing is to give students arias that help them express emotions. Sometimes singers sing coloratura technique perfectly clear without giving any emotion. I do not want to hear a performance where you show me that you can hit those high notes; no, I want a performance where the coloratura has a meaning, otherwise it is boring to me.



Interview with Dr. Adam Kirkpatrick, Voice Teacher

- Interviewer Can you tell me more about your career as a voice teacher?
- Interviewee I grew up playing guitar and I did not really want to sing or teach. At the age of 13, I played in a band and we did not have a singer, so I decided to do it. I started singing with this band, but of course it was rock music. Then, at the age of 17, my mom made me listen to a recording of Pavarotti, and it was the first time I heard classical singing. I was super impressed by his voice. I think this is what made me go to school for singing. I did my Bachelor and Master in Voice Performance at Cincinnati Conservatory. Then, I started teaching in local music schools, where my students were mostly teenagers. I started singing professionally, but traveling all the time started to be difficult. I applied to do my doctorate at Florida State University and got accepted with a Graduate assistantship. While there, I taught voice to non-majors. My first teaching job was at the University of Nebraska where I taught mostly undergraduates, then I got hired at Georgia State University, where I taught undergraduate and graduate students, vocal pedagogy, and diction. This is where I started publishing about voice in the *Journal of Singing*. I also created a voice app. Then, I joined the faculty at the Kennesaw State University School of Music in 2008.
- Interviewer Did you teach a lot of coloratura sopranos in your studio?
- Interviewee I had a few. Although, it is not really about a voice type. I taught coloratura to every voice in my studio. I always tried to give repertoire asking for agility. It is an important vocal element to take into consideration. My specialty is mostly Italian coloratura of Donizetti, Bellini, and Rossini.
- Interviewer Your article titled “Useful exercises for private studio voice teachers: how to sing coloratura” in the *Journal of Singing* is very interesting. I am wondering what made you want to write about coloratura technique?
- Interviewee I was told that my coloratura was unusually good, so I decided to put on paper my method, and here we go. I wanted to show what I was doing, which for me, seemed natural. It was my first article published in the *Journal of Singing*.
- Interviewer You mentioned in your article that a lot of singers are not proficient in performing coloratura. What do you think can be the cause of this?
- Interviewee During my teaching experience, I found that many singers were unable to move their voices correctly. Vocal agility was in deficit for them. They

were unable to move fast on an arpeggio. I think the problem is from this idea of classifying voices as lyric and light. Some teachers assume that light voices can move but are unable to produce big sounds, and on the contrary, some think that lyric voices can produce big sounds, but are unable to move.

Interviewer In your article, I noticed you used a lot of references from Richard Miller. Did you use any other sources? Which vocal pedagogues inspired you during your career?

Interviewee I usually use my own ideas, so I always try to not quote other pedagogues but, yes, Miller wrote about agility, and I did refer to him in my articles. The pedagogues that inspire me, are of course, Richard Miller, I will say, Berton Coffin, William Vennard, and Ingo Titze.

Interviewer In your article you mentioned that one of the common mistakes singers make while performing coloratura is that they “lighten up the voice.” Can you tell me more?

Interviewee What I am trying to say is that, when singers start singing a coloratura passage, they immediately lighten up their voices, meaning they try to make their sound small rather than using their full voice.

Interviewer Can you describe the technical components of a good coloratura technique? What about physiological?

Interviewee I will say three things: control of the breath pressure, low laryngeal position, and an open throat.

Interviewer I am going to use your method for my document and apply it on selected coloratura passages of my chosen arias. Would you mind summarizing the goals of your method?

Interviewee My method is called “bouncy breath articulation” and it is to help students sing coloratura while maintaining a steady airflow. Singers add gentle pulses of breath on each articulation of pitches. Singers must maintain a low laryngeal position, and coordinate the pulses of the breath with changing pitches at the laryngeal level. This creates a pitch fluctuation and a feeling of wobbling the voice. The wobble feeling helps singers reach this sensation of losing the control of their voices and get a better flexibility.

Interviewer In the bouncy breath articulation exercises, is it possible to use semi-occluded vocal tract posture exercises, such as a lip trill?

- Interviewee Yes, it is possible to use semi-occluded vocal tract posture exercises on my method, but the teacher might have more difficulty hearing the articulation of pitches.
- Interviewer You do not recommend to vibrate on coloratura singing. Why is vibrato not recommended on agile vocal passages?
- Interviewee Well, there is a conflict between the movement of the vibrato and the articulation of changing pitches at a fast tempo. I do not recommend singers to sing vibrato on every fast note of the method or coloratura passage of their repertoire because this creates an interference. I think it is not desirable to vibrate while performing coloratura passage because coloratura and vibrato are not connected. The vibrato and the articulation of the rhythms are not aligned and out of kilter.
- Interviewer About your insights regarding the wobble feeling: I am currently working on Stephen Smith's book *The Naked Voice*, where he created an exercise named "The Wobble." According to him, students gain in flexibility by using the wobble as a psychological tool to reach a sensation of total loss of control which helps their voices moving fast on the airflow. Did you know about it?
- Interviewee I did not know about this book and this pedagogue. I guess it is just a coincidence. I definitely agree with him on the wobble feeling because this is what I feel myself performing coloratura.

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