

A COUNTERTENOR ARIA COLLECTION CONTINUUM FOR  
STUDIO TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE

David T. Stanley

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2018

APPROVED:

Jeffrey Snider, Major Professor

Stephen Austin, Committee Member

Stephen Morscheck, Committee Member

Molly Fillmore, Chair of the Division of Vocal  
Studies

Benjamin Brand, Director of Graduate Studies in  
the College of Music

John W. Richmond, Dean of the College of  
Music

Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate  
School

Stanley, David T. *A Countertenor Aria Collection Continuum for Studio Training and Performance*. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), August 2018, 53 pp., 16 tables, 4 musical examples, bibliography, 64 titles.

An assessment of the standard voice instructor or performer collection of printed music would likely reveal numerous operatic repertoire volumes in anthology format appropriated to the primary four voice categories. However, thorough investigation divulges little in comparable printed material accessible to the countertenor. This scarcity of systemized collections is especially evident in the territory of comprehensive countertenor operatic repertoire. This project fills that present void by creating a compilation of sixteen countertenor arias drawn from various styles and historical periods for suggested application in studio instruction and performance. Perhaps, a more meaningful project intent is the presentation of a beneficial graded literature continuum resource for the studio teacher who instructs a countertenor in various stages of vocal development. For this purpose, each of the 16 arias is categorized into four difficulty levels based on considerations of range, tessitura, coloratura demands, rhythm, sustained phrase length, tonality, melodic considerations/overall musical difficulty, accompaniment support, and ornamentation requirements. The project also addresses common issues of pedagogy and ornamentation for voice teacher consideration when instructing a developing countertenor.

Copyright 2018

by

David T. Stanley

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	v
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES .....	vi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2. PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE COUNTERTENOR .....	4
CHAPTER 3. COMPILATION INCLUSION AND ARIA EVALUATION RATIONALIZATION .....	9
CHAPTER 4. ARIAS FROM LEVELS I AND II .....	14
Level I Arias .....	14
Aria I: Speranze, fermate .....	14
Aria II: Here’s the Summer.....	16
Aria III: Sorge nel petto .....	17
Aria IV: Chiamo il mio ben così.....	19
Level II Arias .....	20
Aria I: I call you all to Woden’s Hall .....	20
Aria II: Verdi allori .....	22
Aria III: Torna mio bene, ascolta.....	23
Aria IV: Hymn to the Sun.....	25
CHAPTER 5. ARIAS FROM LEVELS III AND IV .....	27
Level III Arias.....	27
Aria I: Sì, spietata, il tuo rigore.....	27
Aria II: Ah, come rapida .....	29
Aria III: I know a bank.....	30
Aria IV: I am Gaspar.....	32
Level IV Arias.....	34
Aria I: Cervo al bosco .....	34
Aria II: Venga pur minacci e frema .....	35
Aria III: Perchè mai le luci aprimmo .....	37
Aria IV: Dawn, still darkness.....	39

CHAPTER 6. ORNAMENTATION .....	41
CHAPTER 7. AFTERWARD .....	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	50

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Aria I: Speranze, fermate .....	15
Table 2. Aria II: Here's the Summer .....	17
Table 3. Aria III: Sorge nel petto .....	18
Table 4. Aria IV: Chiamo il mio ben così.....	20
Table 5. Aria I: I call you all to Woden's Hall .....	21
Table 6. Aria II: Verdi allori .....	23
Table 7. Aria III: Torna mio bene, ascolta.....	24
Table 8. Aria IV: Hymn to the Sun.....	26
Table 9. Aria I: Sì, spietata, il tuo rigore .....	28
Table 10. Aria II: Ah, come rapida .....	30
Table 11. Aria III: I know a bank .....	32
Table 12. Aria IV: I am Gaspar .....	33
Table 13. Aria I: Cervo al bosco.....	35
Table 14. Aria II: Venga pur minacci e frema .....	36
Table 15. Aria III: Perchè mai le luci aprimmo .....	38
Table 16. Aria IV: Dawn, still darkness .....	40

## LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

	Page
Example 1: Basic appoggiatura samples.....	44
Example 2: Basic turn samples .....	44
Example 3: Common trill samples.....	45
Example 4: Division samples from historical sources .....	46

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

An assessment of the standard voice instructor or performer collection of printed music would likely reveal numerous operatic repertoire volumes in anthology format appropriated to the primary four voice categories – soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and baritone or bass. Within the publishing domain, these anthologies are often further divided into ‘subcategory’ volumes - soprano into coloratura soprano, lyric soprano, et cetera. Conversely, thorough investigation divulges little in comparable printed material accessible to the countertenor. This scarcity of systemized collected anthologies is especially evident in the territory of comprehensive countertenor operatic repertoire, including both arias and ‘songs’ drawn from similar large-scale theatrical works, such as those composed by Henry Purcell in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. This project seeks to fill that present void by creating a compilation of countertenor arias for suggested application in studio instruction and performance. While the development of a standard countertenor anthology remains a significant goal, perhaps a more meaningful objective is the production of a beneficial graded literature continuum resource for the studio teacher who instructs a countertenor in various stages of vocal development.

Though a limited number of assorted countertenor repertoire volumes have been published in the past several decades, these generally fail to comprehensively address the operatic genre from the past four centuries to provide a resource for the modern performer. Alejandro Garri self-published a four-volume collection of arias from the Baroque and early Classical periods; these selections, however, are particularly specific to the early and mid-castrati period and are largely drawn from somewhat obscure stage works. Likewise, Frederic Hodgson generated a brief two-volume set of countertenor songs; but both volumes comprise only sixteen



short pieces, and no operatic arias are incorporated. As a matter of fact, the Hal Leonard Corporation, the largest printed music publishing firm in the United States with a market share of 46.4% in 2017, does not feature a single countertenor-focused anthology in a 200,000-volume catalogue.<sup>1</sup>

While certainly not competitive in terms of performer ranks with more common vocal classifications, the countertenor sphere has developed into an established norm, even in conventional operatic jurisdictions.<sup>2</sup> Since Alfred Deller first appeared in the public spotlight in the BBC Third Programme's initial broadcast, the countertenor has endured as a recognizable and guiding influence in both 'early music' resurgence and 'new music' proliferation in the operatic genre.<sup>3</sup> Though a number of male altos certainly did exist in ecclesiastical choral venues prior to Deller's emergence, no outstanding singers of distinctive solo career had been acknowledged for generations. Today, the countertenor is a familiar entity across all genres of solo performance. Countertenor scholar and performer Ian Howell claims "...there are currently more high-quality countertenors than at any other time in modern history..."<sup>4</sup>

Though universally recognized at present, the countertenor was somewhat slow to proliferate the operatic arena in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. While Deller was the principal initiator of the solo countertenor movement, another British singer, James Bowman, truly carved a significant path in the operatic repertory in the late 1960's and 1970's.<sup>5</sup> In an extensive New

---

<sup>1</sup> IBISWorld, "Sheet Music Publishers – US Market Research Report," <http://clients1.ibisworld.com/reports/us/industry/majorcompanies.aspx?entid=4845#MP440797> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Simon Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2014), 206.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Howell, "The Countertenor Voice: About," *The Countertenor Voice*, entry posted July 7, 2011, <http://blog.counterpointspublishing.com/about-2/> (accessed March 2, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Fernanda Eberstadt, "Who Can Resist a Man Who Sings Like a Woman," *The New York Times*, November 21, 2010, MM38.

York Times article focused on the career of current French countertenor Philippe Jaroussky, the author pointed out that, “Forty years ago, there were perhaps half a dozen countertenors on the world stage. Today...every season brings a new wonder boy from Croatia or the Ukraine.”<sup>6</sup> In the same article Jaroussky himself states that he was “excited to discover new countertenors on the internet on a weekly basis.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, even with this countertenor proliferation of recent decades, no general, noteworthy operatic anthology has been widely published for the vocal specialization.

This present-day abundance of countertenors, whether in studio training or in the professional arena, necessitates a need for printed musical resources for singer and teacher for both qualified studio purposes and performance. The lack of suitable teaching and performing literature accessibility is a substantial instructional inconvenience and a particular challenge to the teacher less familiar with the vocal classification and associated repertoire. While characteristic pedagogical concepts of vocal physiology, registration and tone production, breathing, timbre, acoustics, and musicianship apply universally to all vocal classifications, the standard instructor, inexperienced in the genre, might be somewhat unfamiliar with the broader countertenor repertoire.

---

<sup>6</sup> Eberstadt, “Who Can Resist a Man Who Sings Like a Woman,” MM38.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE COUNTERTENOR

Concerning the selection of suitable, effective aria repertoire for the countertenor in diverse stages of technical and artistic development, both teacher and performer should possess an essential awareness of countertenor vocal function and physiological structure. Recognizably, the human vocal mechanism is a minute, yet remarkably intricate instrument; the countertenor vocal apparatus exists as a specialized element of the broader functional spectrum, primarily focused on registration concepts and terminology, correct or not, of ‘falsetto’ or ‘head voice.’ While not the explicit topic of this project, functional registration, tessitura, and range, as with all voice types, are paramount to countertenor repertoire selection. Not only is this matter crucial when managing vocal register transitions in performance, but basic discernment of aria appropriateness for the individual’s vocal range is imperative when initiating aria selection processes. From the selections of the earliest Baroque to the modern compositions of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, available repertoire includes vast range requisites, and each singer will present different capabilities and limitations pertaining to particular tessitura.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, advances in voice science and anatomical awareness have yielded considerable scientific understanding of voice registers. Perhaps, Manuel García provided the best definition of a vocal register in the 1840’s in which he suggested a register is made of consecutive pitches created in the same physiological manner with a similar timbre. Even so, George Edward Stubbs, as recently as the earliest decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, offers this misconstrued reflection on the following page on the common countertenor voice misnomer– the male ‘falsetto’ in a volume he wrote on the male alto voice:

It is not our objective to venture into a scientific explanation of the falsetto vocal mechanism, or to attempt to solve hidden mysteries that have long eluded the grasp of the

most celebrated voice scientists. To this day we do not know exactly what the falsetto register is. All sorts of conflicting theories have been advanced in regard to it, and yet we seem to be as far away from a consensus of opinion as ever.<sup>8</sup>

Even in his noted pedagogy book, James McKinney describes the male falsetto as breathy and flutelike, to be used principally in male choirs, yodeling, and for comic effects in performance.<sup>9</sup> While McKinney deemphasizes this vocalism as not quite a legitimate method of phonation, Cornelius Reid addresses its value.

Now that the *castrati* have long since gone out of fashion it is not surprising that teachers of the modern age are inclined to doubt the value of the falsetto, especially the male falsetto, to a sound technique of tone production. However, when it is recalled that from the earliest times boy sopranos and male altos were in great demand as choristers in the cathedrals and churches, it is only natural that the instructors of the *Schola Cantorum* should have thoroughly studied and experimented with the vocal resources of the boy soprano whose main reliance was the falsetto register. The next logical step was to observe its presence in every male voice, leading to a later appreciation of its over-all importance to effective tone production.<sup>10</sup>

In his in-depth countertenor method book, Peter Giles cautions against the countertenor association with the term *falsetto*:

...the pejorative term 'falsetto' is a most unfortunate one, implying, as it does, an unnatural usage. It is nothing of the sort. Theoretically, every voice-type, male and female, has the ability to produce this mode. Musical fashion plays a part to our attitude in all this, and 'falsetto,' better thought of as Mode Two, seems to have been used variously and expertly over many centuries in many cultures.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than utilizing misleading terminology, perhaps a more astute pedagogical method is designating registers by these production manners – *Mode One* and *Mode Two*. The most distinguishable, fundamental male register is labeled Mode One, frequently referred to as the 'chest voice,' another common misnomer. This mode relies on the active engagement of the

---

<sup>8</sup> George Edward Stubbs, *The Adult Male Alto or Counter-tenor Voice* (New York: The H.W. Gray Co., 1908), 30.

<sup>9</sup> James McKinney, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), 101.

<sup>10</sup> Cornelius Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* (New York: Coleman-Ross Company, Inc., 1950), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Giles, *A Basic Countertenor Method for Teacher and Student* (London: Kahn & Averill, 2005), 20.

thyroarytenoid muscles to shorten and thicken the vocal folds, thus producing lower tones. Conversely, Mode Two, regularly dubbed ‘head voice’ or ‘falsetto,’ refers to higher sounds generated through engagement of the cricothyroid muscles which thin and elongate the vocal folds. While all male singers possess both Mode One and Mode Two capabilities, the well-trained countertenor generally presents and fosters a substantially focused, developed, and colorful manner of Mode Two tone production to set himself apart from other male vocal fach.

Within the body of countertenor operatic repertoire, particularly that of past centuries, diverse role tessituras are commonly encountered – from the lower alto range of the title role in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* to the soprano variety such as that of Idamante in Mozart’s *Idomeneo*, both sung by castrati in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to the lower alto range of Britten’s Oberon in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As each singer is a unique species in terms of vocal range abilities, composers historically have created roles for a variety of vocal faculties.

In respect to castrato vocal varieties, Laura E. DeMarco explains the diversity in this way:

Castrati were actually divided into two vocal categories: the soprano castrato and the alto castrato. Thus, the castrato perhaps best known to us, Farinelli, was a soprano, while the castrato Handel employed most, Senesino, was an alto. The differentiation is a matter of range, in much the same (but probably not the identical) way that a female soprano differs from a female mezzo-soprano. Contemporaneous reports do vary as to the timbre of the castrato voice within either vocal category – more so than the difference in timbre a trained ear might hear within most single voice types today...<sup>12</sup>

For modern countertenors, Peter Giles provides a vocal classification link to these singers of the past in which he suggests a ‘high countertenor’ associates with the soprano castrato and sings almost entirely in Mode Two at all times, with only an optional sporadic application of

---

<sup>12</sup> Laura DeMarco, “The Fact of the Castrato and the Myth of the Countertenor,” *The Musical Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2002), 177.

Mode One, and a lower countertenor who regularly employs both Modes Two and One. Giles goes on to say:

I would underline that these categories are rather simplistic. ‘High’ and ‘low’ seem to suggest extremes, which are in fact misleading at times when we are considering range. They are better thought of as *specialisms*.<sup>13</sup>

Castrati vocal distinctions were typically designated by composer in published musical scores of previous centuries. For instance, in Handel’s *Serse*, the composer indicated the title role should be performed by a ‘soprano castrato’ while he indicated the title role in *Orlando* should be sung by an ‘alto castrato.’ While the castrati are phenomena of the past – the last known castrati, Alessandro Moreschi, died in 1922 – modern composers likewise construct roles for contemporary countertenors of various vocal ranges and abilities, though these distinctions are not often delineated in finalized published scores. These more contemporary roles range from those such as the aforementioned lower/medium alto of Oberon to a more soprano scope of the Refugee in Jonathan Dove’s *Flight* with a multitude of other selections for consideration as well. Within the current notable countertenor domain, performing ‘specialists’ are employed in both contexts of historically-informed early music and new music, undertaking higher and lower-tessitura roles – for example, Michael Maniaci exemplifying a higher countertenor, at times termed a *sopranist*, and David Daniels a lower alto countertenor.

Though all voice types share basic mechanical commonalities, specifics of production will obviously vary from performer to performer. Alfred Deller offers this explanation on the countertenor voice production:

There are generally recognized to be two types of countertenor voice. The first, and more usual, is where the fundamental voice is baritone or bass, and the head-voice, or so-called falsetto, is developed to the maximum range. My own voice is of this type. You produce this head voice naturally, and you work on it as you would on any other voice. But, if you

---

<sup>13</sup> Giles, *A Basic Countertenor Method for Teacher and Student*, 49.

wish, you can still sing off the chest, so to speak. Purcell was a countertenor of great ability; he also sang bass in the Chapel Choir. The other type of countertenor is essentially a high tenor who can either dispense with falsetto entirely, or uses it for the top fourth or fifth of the compass, without perceptible break. Some people say this is the true countertenor; others that it isn't countertenor at all, but merely a very high, light tenor. Certainly, some singers one hears who are billed as countertenors seem to be just tenors with exceptionally high range.<sup>14</sup>

To further explore this topic from a methodology standpoint, numerous publications, both recent and from previous decades, provide detailed exercises suitable for transitioning between the two modes in as straightforward and seamless a manner as possible.

When considering register transitions in all tessituras of countertenor aria performance repertoire, most pedagogues favor a method in which both Modes One and Two are homogeneously accessed through transitions to create a balanced sound from the lowest to highest vocal extremes. Though the performer depends primarily on Mode Two production, he should likewise continue to develop a somewhat veiled, lighter mechanism, particularly below C4 and occasionally up to E4, in Mode One to exhibit a fully complete, effective vocalism. Though the precise position will vary from performer to performer, the most commonly accepted turning point from Mode One to Mode Two for the countertenor is E4 – F4.<sup>15</sup> When choosing repertoire and approaching a piece of music, these transitions, along with comprehensive range requirements, should be considered at all times by teacher and student.

---

<sup>14</sup> Michael Hardwick, *Alfred Deller: A Singularity of Voice* (London: Proteus Books, 1980), 78-79.

<sup>15</sup> Giles, *A Basic Countertenor Method*, 88.

## CHAPTER 3

### COMPILATION INCLUSION AND ARIA EVALUATION RATIONALIZATION

Whether choosing operatic arias or any piece of song literature for the developing countertenor, a number of elements should be deliberated. According to Barbara Doscher, principal factors include singer limitations, vocal type and mechanism, expressive/emotional matters, and fundamental musicianship skills.<sup>16</sup> Just as the young tenor or mezzosoprano is guided by the instructor to repertoire for appropriate vocal development level, so should the countertenor be driven in a similar manner. As standard operatic literature is not commonly recognized as a foundational point of study for any vocal student, the beginning countertenor should be directed to sing suitable repertoire from various genres of song literature under a qualified teacher's conscientious supervision. Naturally, this preliminary repertoire should be rudimentary enough to allow proper attention to developing durable, fundamental singing skills.

In her practical book written on the developing singer, Sharon Stohrer states this:

It is vitally important to be on the cautious side when choosing repertoire. You are learning a very physical art that must unfold slowly and organically. Just as you would not expect a runner to begin training with a five-mile run, nor should you expect to tackle difficult repertoire...In my opinion, most beginning students of all ages should focus on singing songs, with judicious use of lighter arias. After several years of study, they can begin adding arias...<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, Cornelius L. Reid in *The Free Voice: A Guide to Natural Singing* says about the student and vocal literature:

A rich and varied musical literature is open to the student who has gained a reasonable degree of technical mastery. The repertoire chosen for study must be carefully selected, however, to avoid the inclusion of material which is too demanding. While a sound musical discipline must be cultivated from the beginning of training, technical adequacy

---

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Doscher, *From Studio to Stage: Repertoire for the Voice* (Landham: Scarecrow Press, 2002), vii.

<sup>17</sup> Sharon Stohrer, *The Singer's Companion* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 6.



must always be considered, a student should never be allowed to plunge into a body of literature his technique is not equipped to handle.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, the countertenor and teacher should proceed at the pace of the student's vocal and musical progress. While not addressed specifically in this project, a number of beginning singer resources, such as the volumes by Doscher or Stohrer, are easily accessible for guidance in choosing elementary repertoire.

As the student countertenor continues advancing to a more reliable and evolved vocal technique, the operatic repertoire may be introduced in phases to supplement and enhance vocal study. Just as the voice instructor might assign a modest Mozart aria, in addition to various song selections, to a developing soprano or baritone, so should similar operatic repertoire be introduced to the countertenor.<sup>19</sup> The studio inclusion of this literature is significant in continued progression to advanced vocal study and even more meaningful if the singer wishes to pursue a professional stage performance career. Determining a suitable aria for appropriate developmental stage is paramount and should contribute positively to the countertenor's vocal growth in the studio.

Recognizably, the vast majority of repertoire from which to choose is drawn from the historical period of castrato domination. From operatic origins of Peri's *Euridice* and Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in the very early 17<sup>th</sup> century through the 18<sup>th</sup> century *opera seria* and finally to the 19<sup>th</sup> century *bel canto* movement in Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto*, castrati performed dominant roles in the majority of stage productions, particularly in Italianate operatic propagation. Two of 18<sup>th</sup> century opera's most eminent personages routinely engaged castrati in

---

<sup>18</sup> Cornelius Reid, *The Free Voice* (New York: Coleman-Ross Company, Inc., 1965), 157.

<sup>19</sup> Kari Ragan, "Serious about Singing: Age Appropriate Repertoire for the Talented Teen," *Journal of Singing* 72, no. 3 (2016), 300.

numerous productions. In his compositional career, Handel composed 42 operas, most which in their original design showcased one or multiple roles for the castrati. Likewise, seven of Mozart's earlier stage works featured substantial roles for the castrato, including several many critics consider to be among his finest.<sup>20</sup> In modern performance venues, these roles have consequently transformed into the domain of the contemporary countertenor.

Progressing through the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, despite the presence of numerous *trouser* roles composed for female singers outfitted *en travesti*, little operatic repertoire for the male treble voice was created in the period from 1824 to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The castrato phenomenon in operatic outlets was severely waning in popularity, and composers and audiences alike were commencing an enduring infatuation with the female *prima donna* and tenors. Mentioned previously, however, the male treble opera singer began increasing in acceptance in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century operatic circles with a renewed interest in both Baroque performance practice and newly composed material, particularly in England, with Deller and Bowman. In the years spanning 1960 to 2000, Steven Rickards catalogues over one hundred newly composed stage works featuring one or more countertenor roles.<sup>21</sup> These operas range from the serious subject matter of Britten's *A Death in Venice* to the comically absurd *The Abduction of Figaro* by Peter Shickele (known more commonly as P.D.Q. Bach) and entirety between extremes.

In order to give the performing countertenor a comprehensive experience in both studio and performance, arias from diverse musical periods of the past four centuries are incorporated to encapsulate a stylistically distinct set of male treble selections from Baroque foundations to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Additionally, the arias represent a versatile sample of modes, affects, and tempi.

---

<sup>20</sup> John S. Jenkins, "Mozart and the castrati," *The Musical Times* 151 (2010), 68.

<sup>21</sup> Rickards, *Twentieth-century Countertenor Repertoire* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 385.

The suggested literature is drawn from both the familiar and the obscure; while several pieces likely may not be recognized by the performer, others are drawn from commonly performed works in today's opera houses. With respect to identifying and quantifying standard operas featuring countertenor roles currently being produced, the website [www.operabase.com](http://www.operabase.com) proves to be an immensely valuable resource. Operabase offers a wealth of worldwide operatic performance and statistical information, including both academic institutions and professional houses, from the past several decades in a searchable archive format.

For pedagogical purposes, the literature recommended in the next two chapters is arranged into a four-level continuum, from beginning (Level I) to advanced (Level IV), based on considerations of range, tessitura, coloratura demands, rhythm, sustained phrase length, tonality, melodic considerations/overall musical difficulty, accompaniment support, and ornamentation requirements. Naturally, the ranges and tessituras of the arias in the first continuum levels will be of a narrower characteristic than those of the latter. However, throughout all levels, arias for both lower and higher countertenor voices are suggested. While varying coloratura complexities are undoubtedly anticipated in regards to castrato arias composed leading up to and concluding with Meyerbeer's *Il crociato* in 1824, more contemporary operas such as Britten's 20<sup>th</sup> century Purcellian-influenced *A Midsummer Night's Dream* likewise present certain coloratura challenges. Similarly, obligatory ornamentation inclusion in arias drawn from earlier operas and how this matter affects perceived difficulty are discussed at a later point. Because rhythmic challenge, harmonic and tonal ambiguity, and piano accompaniment or orchestral reduction support become broader issues in more recent 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century compositions, these factors are additionally reflected in aria classification. While these selections are categorized solely based on the individual aria's technical and musical concerns, matters of complete role

appropriateness and other somewhat subjective issues such as a particular role's emotional depth are entrusted to instructor discretion. This project is not intended to be an all-encompassing reference for training the countertenor, nor a comprehensive catalogue of arias. Rather, it attempts to fill a current void in the cannon of available studio anthologies and provide a valuable resource for both teacher and performer.

## CHAPTER 4

### ARIAS FROM LEVELS I AND II

The eight selections suggested in this chapter comprise the first two aria continuum levels. These arias are designed to be the countertenor's initial venture into the canon of operatic literature. Naturally, Level I arias are deemed to be less demanding than Level II selections. However, within each individual continuum unit, no attempt is made to compare challenges between each piece. For example, the first aria offered in the level is not necessarily considered easier than the fourth in the same level. Selection should be at the discretion of the instructor and performer. As with all repertoire election processes, flexibility with exploration is advisable.

#### Level I Arias

##### Aria I: Speranze, fermate

Aria: Speranze, fermate (Act II, Scene XI)

Opera: *La Dori* or *La Schiava Fedele*, 1657 (Innsbruck)

Character: Oronte (premier cast unknown)

Composer: Pietro 'Antonio' Cesti on a libretto by Giovanni Filippo Apollini

In print (vocal score): *The Art of the Castrato: Volume IV*

Alejandro Garri, editor

Garri Editions, 2000

Justification for inclusion: Not only was Cesti well-regarded by his contemporaries as a composer of music for the theatrical stage, he was likewise an accomplished singer. Undeniably, his own performing abilities influenced his vocal compositional aptitude. Easily accessible to singers of diverse capabilities, Cesti's melodic lines often feature graceful, stepwise movement and sensitive text settings. The composer is considered one of the primary proponents of the

initial *bel canto* movement of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> At the time of his death, the composer, with Luigi Rossi and Giacomo Carissimi, was considered to be one of the three primary operatic luminaries of the latter 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> *La Dori*, also known as *La Schiava Fedele*, was one of the most frequently performed of Cesti’s stage works in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In regards to this particular aria, the simple melodic line, combined with a narrow range and slow tempo provide an excellent entry point to the Italian operatic repertoire for the young countertenor. The *da capo* allows for modest ornamentation, and the brief B Section provides a manageable introduction to the Italian *secco recitative* tradition. The orchestral reduction, which doubles the melodic line in the recommended edition, provides an especially supportive collaboration for the growing singer.

**Table 1. Aria I: Speranze, fermate**

	Basic	In-Depth
Range	C4 – C5	
Tessitura	Medium	The tessitura remains within a fairly narrow range of Eb4 – Bb4 with brief excursions.
Tempo/Modality	Largo/Minor	
Intricate Coloratura	None	
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Short	Though most melodic phrases are brief, the performer may choose to combine and lengthen phrases based on breathing economics if preferred.
Melodic Considerations	Simple	The melodic line moves in a predictable manner and is conjunct with few large intervals. Wider intervals are modest.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Very supportive	
Ornamentation	Obligatory	Because of the slow tempo and simple melodic line, this is a fine aria in which to introduce ornamentation concepts. Editorial markings in

<sup>22</sup> David Burrows, *Grove Music Online*, “Cesti, Antonio,” <http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2173/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005335> (accessed March 1, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Carl Schmidt, “Antonio Cesti’s “La Dori:” A Study of Sources, Performance Traditions and Musical Style,” *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 10 (1975), 455.

Basic	In-Depth
	this particular edition indicate where appoggiaturas should be included in the recitative.

Aria II: Here's the Summer

Aria: Here's the Summer, sprightly, gay (Act IV)

Opera: *The Fairy Queen*, 1692 (London)

Character: Summer (premier cast unknown)

Composer: Henry Purcell on an anonymous libretto freely adapted from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In print (vocal score): *The Music in the Fairy Queen*  
Henry Purcell; Anthony Jones, editor  
Novello Publishing, Ltd., 1966

Justification for inclusion: The stage offerings of Henry Purcell are remarkably significant to modern countertenor heritage from a musicological perspective. With Purcell's compositions, the renaissance of countertenor solo singing commenced with Alfred Deller's performances in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century England. *The Fairy Queen*, Purcell's English *semi-opera* or *masque*, is the composer's second most produced stage work in contemporary opera houses worldwide.<sup>24</sup> Essentially a play with ample vocal incidental music assigned to secondary, generically named characters, the semi-opera format is not a through-sung performance with major players performing arias. *The Fairy Queen* is loosely based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, though none of the original Shakespearean text is set in the work. Instead, the work evokes the fairy world of the original source material.<sup>25</sup> An ode to the pleasures of nature, the suggested aria offers a bright, dance-like appeal set in the lower male alto range. Though the

<sup>24</sup> Operabase, "Opera Statistics," <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Curtis Price, "Henry Purcell," *Early Music* 18, no. 3 (1990): 494.

tempo is lively, the aria does not make extensive coloratura demands of the developing singer. It features both a relatively simple melodic line and narrow range and is very brief with a repeated 8-measure A Section progressing to a 16-measure B Section, all in one page in the suggested edition. Ornamentation demands, while anticipated in the stylistic period, are manageable for all stages of singer proficiency.

**Table 2. Aria II: Here’s the Summer**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	G3 – A4	
Tessitura	Low	The tessitura remains within a fairly narrow range of B3 – G4 with brief excursions.
Tempo/Mode	Allegro moderato/Major	The tempo and time signature evoke dance.
Intricate Coloratura	Simple	The aria features simple sixteenth note episodes.
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Short	Though phrases are short, they are adaptable based on breathing capabilities.
Melodic Considerations	Simple	Melody moves conjunctly with few large intervals. Much of the melodic line proceeds in predictable harmonic patterns.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Supportive	
Ornamentation	Obligatory	Because the work falls within the context of the Baroque period, some form of ornamentation is suggested.

### Aria III: Sorge nel petto

Aria: Sorge nel petto (Act III, Scene IV)

Opera: *Rinaldo*, 1711 (London)

Character: Goffredo (premiered by Francesca Vanini-Boschi)

Composer: George Frideric Handel on a libretto by Giacomo Rossi on source material by Aaron Hill

In print (vocal score): *Rinaldo*

George Frideric Handel, edited by Michael Rot Bärenreiter, 1998



Justification for inclusion: *Rinaldo* was Handel’s first Italian opera composed for the London stage. Currently, the work is among his most produced in contemporary opera houses.<sup>26</sup> It was performed 53 times in the composer’s lifetime, more than any of his other operatic offerings.<sup>27</sup> In 1984, *Rinaldo* was the first Handel work to be performed by the Metropolitan Opera. *Rinaldo* offers three roles for the modern countertenor, including the title character, Goffredo, and Eustazio. As opposed to a slightly higher role tessitura of Rinaldo, Goffredo’s role lies more toward the midpoint of the average countertenor tessitura. Though Goffredo was sung by a female *en travesti* in the London premier performance, the role is often performed by a countertenor in today’s opera houses and has been recorded by several countertenors including Paul Esswood, David Walker, and Lawrence Zazzo. Chosen from Goffredo’s five arias, the suggested selection provides an accessible introduction to Handel’s operatic repertoire. Coupled with a lack of broad coloratura passages, the adagio tempo marking allows the performer to explore various manners of ornamentation, especially in the *da capo*.

**Table 3. Aria III: Sorge nel petto**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	B3 – D5	
Tessitura	Medium	The tessitura remains within a fairly narrow range of E4 – B4.
Tempo/Mode	Adagio/Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Simple	Handel interpolates practically no coloratura demands in this aria.
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Lengthy	Likely the most challenging aspect of this aria, phrase length is adaptable based on performer capabilities.
Melodic Considerations	Simple	The vocal line moves relatively conjunctly with a scattered few larger intervals throughout the piece.

<sup>26</sup> Operabase, “Opera Statistics,” <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>27</sup> Winton Dean, *Handel’s Operas: 1704-1726* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 183.

	Basics	In-Depth
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Supportive	
Ornamentation	Obligatory	The slower tempo should allow a good entry point for embellishment.

#### Aria IV: Chiamo il mio ben così

Aria: Chiamo il mio ben così (Act I, Scene I)

Opera: *Orfeo ed Euridice*, 1762 (Vienna)

Character: Orfeo (Role premiered by Gaetano Guadagni)

Composer: Christoph Willibald Gluck on a libretto by Raniero de' Calzabigi

In print (vocal score): *Orfeo ed Euridice*

Christoph Willibald Gluck, edited by Heinz Moehn  
Bärenreiter, 1962

Justification for inclusion: Inspired by principles of ancient Greek drama, Gluck was a leading operatic reform trailblazer in the transition from the Baroque to Classical periods. With these new paradigms, he sought to defy conventions of the *opera seria* genre which had dominated theatrical style for the previous century.<sup>28</sup> A few of these key reforms included little use of the *da capo* aria format, a through-composed dramatic and musical structure, a natural vocal style devoid of spectacular coloratura, and a much shorter entire-opera performance length. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Gluck's *Orfeo* has been the most often performed opera featuring a major countertenor role. Worldwide, over 2,000 performances of the work have taken place in the past five years alone.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the work's prominence in the countertenor genre is noteworthy. Though Orfeo's Act III aria "Che faro senza Euridice" is found in numerous anthologies and is, perhaps, more familiar, the opera supplies the title character with a number of other worthwhile selections. The aria here is drawn from Act I. Set in a major mode, the persistent descent of the

<sup>28</sup> Christoph Willibald Gluck, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Kassel: Bärenreiter 2014), VII.

<sup>29</sup> Operabase, "Opera Statistics," <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

melodic line in a conjunct fashion foreshadows Orfeo’s descent into Elysium to rescue Euridice. As the suggested aria is moderately brief, potential expansion is possible by incorporating the two short recitatives and arias which follow to create a combined longer piece. These subsequent arias utilize identical musical settings to “Chiamo il mio ben così” with altered texts.

**Table 4. Aria IV: Chiamo il mio ben così**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	A3 – C5	
Tessitura	Medium	The tessitura remains within a fairly narrow range of F4 – C5 with brief excursions.
Tempo/Mode	Andante non presto/Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Simple	The aria features a few mostly syllabic sixteenth note episodes.
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Short	The vocal line is typically structured in two measure phrases.
Melodic Considerations	Simple	The melodic line moves conjunctly with occasional movement in thirds.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Very supportive	
Ornamentation	Not encouraged	Because of both Gluck’s reform ideologies and as this aria is not in da capo format, excessive ornamentation is not necessary. Tasteful cadenzas may be employed if desired.

## Level II Arias

### Aria I: I call you all to Woden’s Hall

Aria: I call you all to Woden’s Hall (Act I)

Opera: *King Arthur*, 1691 (London)

Character: Unnamed Countertenor (Premier cast unknown)

Composer: Henry Purcell on a libretto by John Dryden

In print (vocal score): *The Music in King Arthur*

Henry Purcell, edited by Margaret Laurie

Novello, 1972

Justification for inclusion: *King Arthur* has been the most often performed of Henry Purcell’s theatrical works in modern opera houses.<sup>30</sup> Very popular in 17<sup>th</sup> century London, Purcell’s work, like *The Fairy Queen*, is classified as a *semi-opera* in which the principal characters express themselves in spoken lines, rather than through song. With the exception of supernatural or pastoral characters, the secondary cast members and chorus provide the songs and arias in *King Arthur*. Numerous published editions and stage adaptations of the work have been produced by musicologists and opera companies since Purcell’s original appeared. The selected aria offers a flowing melodic line with a few brief episodes of coloratura and features an identical structure to the aforementioned “Here’s the Summer, sprightly, gay” – a repeated opening section followed by a non-repeated second section. Judicious ornamentation should be incorporated.

**Table 5. Aria I: I call you all to Woden’s Hall**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	G3 – A4	
Tessitura	Low to medium	The majority of the aria lies within a fairly narrow range of C4 – G4.
Tempo/Mode	Allegro/Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Simple	Purcell offers a short coloratura passage in the first section and some brief coloratura passages in the second.
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Medium	The phrase structure is adaptable.
Melodic Considerations	Simple	The melodic line moves conjunctly with only a few larger intervals.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Very Supportive	

<sup>30</sup> Operabase, “Opera Statistics,” <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

	Basics	In-Depth
Ornamentation	Obligatory	Judicious employment of ornamentation is encouraged, though Purcell has provided a sense of improvisation in the movement of the vocal line.

## Aria II: Verdi allori

Aria: Verdi allori (Act II, Scene V)

Opera: Orlando, 1733 (London)

Character: Medoro (role premiered by Francesca Bertolli)

Composer: George Frideric Handel, on a libretto adapted from Carlo Sigismondo Capeci's L'Orlando after Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso

In print (vocal score): Orlando

George Frideric Handel, edited by Siefried Flesch  
Bärenreiter, 2001

Justification for inclusion: In the past five years, *Orlando* has been among the top five produced Handel operas worldwide.<sup>31</sup> Winton Dean describes the opera as "...one of the most original of Handel's operas in design and one of the richest in musical invention."<sup>32</sup> With *Orlando*, Handel stretched the bounds of the *opera seria*, and, contrary to many operas being composed at the same time, incorporated a wide variety of human experience.<sup>33</sup> Though the role of Medoro was originally sung by a female in the premier performance, it is frequently the performing domain of the modern countertenor. "Verdi allori" is one of several arias supplied to Medoro. The selection offers an elegant mostly conjunct vocal line and possesses a narrower range than comparable Handel arias. The *da capo* offers ample opportunity for graceful ornamentation to the mostly vocal line.

<sup>31</sup> Operabase, "Opera Statistics," <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Winton Dean, *Handel and the Opera Seria* (Oakland: University of California Press 1969), 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, *Handel's Operas: 1726-1741* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 241.

**Table 6. Aria II: Verdi allori**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	C#4 – D#5	
Tessitura	Medium	The majority of the aria lies within the tessitura of E4 – B4.
Tempo/Mode	Andante/Major	
Intricate Coloratura	None	
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Long	Likely the most challenging aspect of this aria, several opportunities for alternate breathing patterns are possible to allow the young singer flexibility in phrasing.
Melodic Considerations	Simple	The vocal line moves in conjunct manner with few leaps or skips.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Very supportive	The vocal line is often doubled in the provided orchestral reduction.
Ornamentation	Obligatory	The andante tempo allows for thoughtful employment of ornamentation without overwhelming the developing singer.

Aria III: Torna mio bene, ascolta

Aria: Torna mio bene, ascolta (Act II)

Opera: *Ascanio in Alba*, 1771 (Milan)

Character: Ascanio (premiered by Giovanni Manzoli)

Composer: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart on a libretto by Giuseppe Parini

In print (vocal score): *Ascanio in Alba*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, edited by Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini  
Bärenreiter, 2003

Justification for inclusion: Following *Mitridate*, Mozart's *Ascanio in Alba* was his second Milanese opera. It was composed in a short period in the late summer and early fall of 1771. Created for the wedding of Archduke Ferdinand to Maria Ricciarda Berenice d'Este, the opera, branded a *festa teatrale* (pastoral opera) in two acts, resembles *opera seria* in some respects, especially in regard to dramatic construction. Manzoli, the soprano castrato who performed the

title role of Ascanio in the premier production, was actually Mozart’s singing teacher.<sup>34</sup> Though Mozart had not reached his full maturity as an operatic composer with the music of *Ascanio*, this work provides several worthy arias. The suggested aria is a fine introduction to slightly more demanding coloratura passages for the developing singer and features a wealth of elegant melodic organization in a dance-like quality. Compared to many of Mozart’s earlier operatic arias, this particular selection is relatively brief and is an excellent initiation to the composer’s works for the male treble singer. The aria is well-suited to a countertenor possessing a medium to medium high range ability.

**Table 7. Aria III: Torna mio bene, ascolta**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	C4-F5	
Tessitura	Medium to high	The tessitura remains primarily within a range of F4 – C5.
Tempo/Mode	Andante grazioso/Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Simple to medium	Several brief passages throughout the aria offer an accessible introduction to more difficult coloratura demands. These episodes are organized into predictable patterns.
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Simple	Though much of the aria is composed in two measure phrases, Mozart extends these structures at the end of primary sections.
Melodic Considerations	Simple	Melodic line proceeds fairly conjunctly with some accidentals mixed in.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Very supportive	
Ornamentation	Minimal	Though excessive ornamentation is not required, additional embellishment is recommended.

<sup>34</sup> Julian Rushton, *Grove Music Online*, “Ascanio in Alba,” <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000900221> (accessed March 1, 2018).

## Aria IV: Hymn to the Sun

Aria: Hymn to the Sun (Act II, Scene IV)

Opera: *Akhnaten*, 1984 (Stuttgart)

Character: Akhnaten (premiered by Paul Esswood)

Composer: Philip Glass, on a libretto compiled by the composer, Shalom Goldman, Robert Israel, and Richard Riddell

In print (vocal score): *Akhnaten*  
Philip Glass  
Dunvagen Music Publishers, 1983

Justification for inclusion: The operatic works of contemporary American Philip Glass are among the most performed of living composers.<sup>35</sup> Together, *Akhnaten*, *Einstein on the Beach*, and *Satyagraha* are labeled a ‘portrait’ opera trilogy by the composer in which each character initiated a radical cultural transformation in the time in which he lived.<sup>36</sup> Based on historical personages, the controversial title character in *Akhnaten* was the first Egyptian Pharaoh in history to lead his people as a religious monotheist. Characteristic of Glass, the minimalist opera features spoken dialogue in various languages and lengthy orchestral interludes. In a 2016 British production review, Michael Church quoted, “Glass’s score may seem simple, but it’s actually very clever with Baroque interpolations punctuating the minimalist figurations, and luminous shifts from minor to major.”<sup>37</sup> The suggested aria, the only passage of the opera sung in English (or in the language of the specific audience for which it is being performed), is an extended ode requiring sensitive musicianship. The piece is a fantastic beginning point in an exploration of contemporary operatic literature and is not the technical challenge one might

---

<sup>35</sup> Operabase, “Opera Statistics,” <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Tim Page, *Grove Music Online*, “Akhnaten,” <http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2173/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000009554> (accessed March 13 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Michael Church, “Akhnaten, Coliseum, review” *The Independent*, March 5, 2016.



expect due to Glass's minimalistic compositional techniques. Because of considerable length, the aria may be pared if necessary by condensing repeats and orchestral interludes.

**Table 8. Aria IV: Hymn to the Sun**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	E4 – D5	
Tessitura	Medium to high	The tessitura remains within a narrow range of F4 – C5.
Tempo/Mode	Allegretto/Major and Minor	The tonality shifts between major and minor throughout the duration of the aria.
Intricate Coloratura	None	
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Simple	Phrase lengths are manageable for the developing singer.
Melodic Considerations	Simple to medium	The melodic line moves somewhat conjunctly with a few leaps incorporated. Glass is acknowledged as a minimalist composer, and this piece represents his distinctive style of repetition. Though the aria is drawn from a contemporary work, the work stays firmly tonal.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Simple	
Ornamentation	None required	

## CHAPTER 5

### ARIAS FROM LEVELS III AND IV

The eight selections proposed in this chapter constitute Levels III and IV of the countertenor aria continuum. Following analysis, these individual selections are deemed to be of greater difficulty than those delineated in the previous chapter. Musical characteristics and demands, phrase lengths, coloratura requirements, and range extremes are intended to enhance the studies and provide fitting performance literature for the more advanced, pre-professional, or professionally emerging countertenor. Once again, no endeavor is made to compare challenges of each aria within an individual continuum unit, and teacher and performer flexibility is advised.

#### Level III Arias

Aria I: Sì, spietata, il tuo rigore

Aria: Sì, spietata, il tuo rigore (Act II, Scene V)

Opera: *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, 1724 (London)

Character: Tolomeo (role premiered by Gaetano Berenstadt)

Composer: George Frideric Handel on a libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym based on earlier source material by Giacomo Francesco Bussani

In print (vocal score): *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*

George Frideric Handel, edited by Karl-Heinz Müller  
Bärenreiter, 2005

Justification for inclusion: Distinguished for vivid dramatic scenes, lyrical vocal writing, rich orchestrations, and a quality libretto, particularly when measured against comparable texts of the time period, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* is the most commonly performed Handel piece in modern opera houses according to Operabase.<sup>38</sup> The work features four male treble roles which

---

<sup>38</sup> Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966), 181.

could be performed by modern countertenors of various range capabilities. Though one or more of these roles are on occasion sung by baritones or tenors in modern productions, Winton Dean points out that, “Handel’s score is too preoccupied with the passions of youth, a point fatally obscured when the high male parts are transposed down an octave.”<sup>39</sup> The suggested aria is performed by Tolomeo, an antagonist to the title character. Each of Tolomeo’s three arias occur complete with broad vocal intervals and musical leaps. With these pieces, Handel often borrows and appropriates from his own existing operas with slight modifications – the selected aria is also employed as “Nobil cor non può mirare” from Act I of *Berenice*. Tolomeo’s piece is dominated by coloratura passages in triplet form and is in characteristic *da capo* format.

**Table 9. Aria I: Sì, spietata, il tuo rigore**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	C4 – C5	
Tessitura	Medium	The aria does not cover a considerable range. The majority lies from D4 – A4.
Tempo/Mode	Allegro, Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Challenging	Handel has written several extended coloratura passages, mostly in triplets with similar recurring patterns.
Rhythm	Simple to medium	Though not necessarily challenging upon first glance, rhythmic accuracy and detail are vital in this aria.
Phrase Length	Long	Though the phrases are lengthy, alternate breath placement is possible, particularly when managing extended coloratura passages.
Melodic Considerations	Simple to medium	The vocal line moves rather conjunctly with some skips and leaps incorporated.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Very Supportive	The vocal line is often doubled in the orchestral reduction.
Ornamentation	Obligatory	The tempo and tone of the aria justifies liberal embellishment, particularly in the repeated A Section.

<sup>39</sup> Dean, *Handel’s Operas: 1704-1726*, 489.

Aria II: Ah, come rapida

Aria: Ah, come rapida (Act II, appendix)

Opera: *Il crociato in Egitto*, 1824 (Venice)

Character: Armando (role premiered by Giovanni Battista Velluti)

Composer: Giacomo Meyerbeer on a libretto by Gaetano Rossi

In print (vocal score): *Il crociato in Egitto*  
Giacomo Meyerbeer  
Marquerie Frères, 1839

Justification for inclusion: As Meyerbeer's final production for the Italian theatre, this work, rarely performed in modern opera houses, also features the last major operatic role composed for one of the final castrati, Giovanni Battista Velluti. Known principally for pioneering French grand opera traditions, *Il crociato* was also the German-born composer's most successful Italian opera during his lifetime.<sup>40</sup> The work, a moderately intimate piece compared to Meyerbeer's more widely-known theatrical output, links the later French grand opera tradition and its earlier Italian predecessors. With detailed embellished vocal coloratura notated by the composer and application of traditional music forms, the work remains securely in the early *bel canto* Italian style.<sup>41</sup> Reflecting Meyerbeer's early training, the work is likewise influenced by German composers such as Carl Maria von Weber. A review of an early performance of *Il crociato* stated this:

Of all living composers, Meyerbeer is the one who most happily combines the easy, flowing, and expressive melodies of Italy, with the severer beauties, the grander accompaniments, of the German school; to which I would add that he unites the still greater merit of painting the various feelings of the heart with perfect truth, and of carefully adapting his orchestral effects to the character of the melody which they are made to illustrate and enforce.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Steven Huebner, *Grove Music Online*, "Il crociato in Egitto," <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O008977> (accessed March 1, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> William Ayrton, *The Harmonicon* (London: Samuel Leigh, 1825), 96.

The performance history of the work remains somewhat convoluted, as Meyerbeer made multiple revisions throughout the work's early performance history. Composed for a soprano castrato, the aria suggested here is an excellent example of Meyerbeer's elegant early Italian style. Though the coloratura passages appear formidable, the graciously slow tempo provides an approachable framework for the singer. Meyerbeer has indicated, in detail, all his own 'ornamentation' of the vocal line through extensive coloratura.

**Table 10. Aria II: Ah, come rapida**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	D4 – G5	
Tessitura	High	Though the majority of the vocal line remains around A4 – E5, the composer interpolates several passages up to G5.
Tempo/Mode	Andantino quasi, Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Challenging	Though the coloratura appears daunting upon first glance, the slower tempo allows for approachability.
Rhythm	Simple to medium	
Phrase Length	Long	
Melodic Considerations	Simple to medium	The vocal line moves rather conjunctly with some skips and leaps incorporated.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Very Supportive	
Ornamentation	None required	Meyerbeer 'ornaments' the vocal line with his own notated embellishment.

### Aria III: I know a bank

Aria: I know a bank (Act I)

Opera: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1960 (Aldeburgh)

Character: Oberon (role premiered by Alfred Deller)

Composer: Benjamin Britten on a libretto adapted by the composer and Peter Pears from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In print (vocal score): *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Benjamin Britten  
Boosey & Hawkes, 1961

Justification for inclusion: According to Operabase, Britten's adaptation of the Shakespearean classic garnered the most performances worldwide in the past five years of any 20<sup>th</sup> century opera featuring a key countertenor role.<sup>43</sup> An aficionado of the countertenor voice, Britten would later create the role of the Voice of Apollo for countertenor James Bowman in the composer's adaptation of *A Death in Venice*. Britten's harmonic language in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is essentially tonal, though widespread chromaticism permeates the score. The opera fashions an ethereal sonic atmosphere, particularly in the music given to the fairy king Oberon, through peculiar, angular melodies and orchestral colors of blurred portamenti strings, harps, and celeste. Referring to Britten's setting of the familiar Shakespearean text of the suggested aria, Christina J. Burrige articulates the following:

Britten's way of dealing with this passage, one of the best-known and most 'poetic' in all Shakespeare, is a testament to his success in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It might have been tempting to let the words do the work here, to leave the passage as the set-piece it has become from so much anthologizing. Instead... "I know a bank" becomes an integral part of the musical and dramatic fabric of the opera. The air opens with Oberon's characteristic celesta ostinato and a reiteration of the charm motive: a clear indication of the relationship between his words and his overriding jealousy... while the scalic passages in both vocal line and harp accompaniment for the flowers and the snake not only recreate the beauty of the Fairy Queen's bower, but, through their association with the Fairy scales and the sinuousness of the wood music, remind us of the non-human character of the wood and its inhabitants.<sup>44</sup>

Though not replete with extreme range demands, the aria is a subtle challenge for the countertenor in terms of abundant use of chromaticism, demanding challenges of angular musical skips and jumps, and collaboration with the moody orchestral reduction. For a most compelling performance, the aria requires a great deal of sensitivity in both dynamics and vocal

---

<sup>43</sup> Operabase, "Opera Statistics," <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>44</sup> Christina J. Burrige, "Music, Such as Charmeth Sleep:" Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1981), 155.

color. Easily excerptible from the complete score, this aria has become a staple of the modern countertenor repertoire.

**Table 11. Aria III: I know a bank**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	G3 – C5	
Tessitura	Low to medium	The majority of the aria lies within a fairly narrow range of C4 – G4 with slight excursions beyond.
Tempo/Mode	Languid, Major and minor	The aria presents several shifts in tempo and mood.
Intricate Coloratura	Medium	In an homage to Baroque style, Britten crafted several moments of Purcellian-influenced sixteenth note coloratura in the aria. Similar to ornamentation style, these passages are intended to give a languid improvisation impression.
Rhythm	Medium	
Phrase Length	Medium	Phrase lengths are adaptable.
Melodic Considerations	Medium to difficult	The vocal line moves in an often-unexpected manner with a generous employment of chromaticism. The vocal line is also full of skips and unusual leaps.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Challenging	Coordinating the vocal line with the orchestral reduction will likely prove to be challenging. The performer’s awareness of the orchestration should prove beneficial to recognizing the manner in which the piece proceeds.
Ornamentation	None required	

#### Aria IV: I am Gaspar

Aria: I am Gaspar (Part 2, Number 16)

Opera: *El Niño*, 2000 (Paris)

Character: Countertenor 3/Gaspar (premiered by Steven Rickards)

Composer: John Adams, on a libretto compiled from numerous sources by Peter Sellars

In print (vocal score): *El Niño*

John Adams

Boosey & Hawkes, 2012

Justification for inclusion: One of modern America’s most recognizable composers, John Adams’ stage works have been among the most regularly performed worldwide composed by a living composer in the previous decade.<sup>45</sup> Adam’s Spanish-influenced work centers around the birth of Jesus Christ and is, in reality, regarded as a staged opera-oratorio. The work features three countertenor roles who appear together throughout the performance. The suggested brief aria is an excerpt of a larger ensemble number. The melodic line lies low in the countertenor range and is, like many contemporary compositions, somewhat challenging in terms of vocal demand incorporating several extreme melodic leaps and unpredictable chromaticism and tonality. The orchestral reduction also proves to be challenging in terms of coordination with the vocal line. This short aria is an excellent venture into more tonally complex 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century countertenor operatic repertoire.

**Table 12. Aria IV: I am Gaspar**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	D3 – B4	
Tessitura	Low	The tessitura remains within a fairly narrow range of G3 – E4 with brief excursions.
Tempo/Mode	Moderato	
Intricate Coloratura	None	The aria features brief sixteenth note episodes.
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Short	Phrase lengths are adaptable based on performer capability.
Melodic Considerations	Medium to difficult	The melodic line moves somewhat conjunctly at times, but also moves in large intervals at others. Musical tonality is challenging.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Challenging	The orchestral reduction provides very little in terms of support to the vocal line.
Ornamentation	None required	

<sup>45</sup> Operabase, “Opera Statistics,” <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).



## Level IV Arias

### Aria I: Cervo al bosco

Aria: Cervo al bosco (Act III, Scene VI)

Opera: *Cleofide*, 1731 (Dresden)

Character: Alessandro (role premiered by Domenico Annibali)

Composer: Johann Adolf Hasse on a libretto adapted from Pietro Metastasio by  
Michelangelo Boccardi

In print (vocal score): *Cleofide*

Johann Adolf Hasse, edited by Zenon Mojzysz  
Carus-Verlag, 2006

Justification for inclusion: Though not particularly standard in today's opera houses, Hasse's *Cleofide* was much admired and common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The opera marked a new epochal high point by facilitating the establishment of Italian opera permanence in Dresden, the Saxon capital.<sup>46</sup> The opera featured four castrati singers in the 1731 premier – three alto castrati (the roles of Alessandro, Poro, and Timagene) and one soprano (Gandarte); the initial performance also featured Hasse's celebrated wife soprano Faustina Bordoni in the title role. The only other principal role is assigned to a female soprano, excluding any roles for 'traditional' male vocal soloists. This *opera seria* is based on an original text by Metastasio, perhaps the most eminent librettist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century seria movement. Hasse's opera, on the same libretto material, was substantially revised, including the vocal reassignment of roles, for a 1736 Venetian production for which the composer created an almost entirely new score. Most conspicuously, the title role was adapted from soprano to contralto, and the role of Alessandro converted to a tenor. Like arias of most roles drawn from *Cleofide*, the suggested piece, one of five for Alessandro, presents striking vocal demands of the countertenor. The coloratura passages

---

<sup>46</sup> Johann Adolf Hasse, *Cleofide* (Stuttgart: Carus-Verlag, 2006), VII.

traverse extensive ranges and often include wide leaps. Ample embellishment is also anticipated of the singer, particularly in the da capo.

**Table 13. Aria I: Cervo al bosco**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	A3 – E5	
Tessitura	Medium	The aria covers a wide range consistently. The primary tessitura stays within D4 – D5.
Tempo/Mode	Allegro/Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Difficult	The aria features many rapid coloratura passages in various rhythmic configurations. The passages often cover a wide range from the bottom of the voice to the top.
Rhythm	Simple to medium	
Phrase Length	Long	The phrase lengths are substantial. If desired, extended coloratura sections may be partitioned for supplementary breathing purposes.
Melodic Considerations	Simple to medium	Though the vocal line is not necessarily difficult in terms of harmonic progression, Hasse has incorporated a number of skips and jumps.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Supportive	
Ornamentation	Obligatory	The ornamentation should showcase the singer's boldest embellishment abilities.

**Aria II: Venga pur minacci e frema**

Aria: Venga pur minacci e frema (Act I, Scene IX)

Opera: *Mitridate, Re di Ponto*, 1770 (Milan)

Character: Farnace (role premiered by Giuseppe Cicognani)

Composer: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, on a libretto by Vittorio Amedeo Cigna-Santi after Giuseppe Parini's translation of Jean Racine's *Mithridate*

In print (vocal score): *Mitridate, Re di Ponto*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, edited by Eugene Epplée  
Bärenreiter, 2001

Justification for inclusion: Mozart, age 14 when *Mitridate* premiered during the Milan Carnival season, created numerous roles for the esteemed castrati of his time period. The work, a conventional *opera seria* labeled a *dramma per musica* in the original libretto, features traditional elements of the genre in the primary plotline, particularly those of stereotyped, schematic human conflicts between duty and affection mingled with affairs of the state.<sup>47</sup> Though the bonds of strict operatic compositional style were loosening, *Mitridate* was the composer's first attempt at the *seria* archetype.<sup>48</sup> While the opera was completely neglected until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the work was revived 21 times in Mozart's lifetime despite a performance duration, complete with an extended ballet, of approximately six hours. The suggested aria is a lengthy, multi-section piece full of challenges for the performer, including wide-ranging, rapid coloratura in the self-assured opening and closing sections and a sensitive, gentler spirit in a minor mode of the middle section. Sadie described this particular archetype of a Mozart aria in this way:

The longest arias are of the *dal segno* type, akin to the baroque *da capo* aria but recapitulating, after a central section, not from the head (*capo*) but, to avoid excessive length, from a sign (*segno*) placed at some point in the course of the principal section. Often the central section is set in a contrasting tempo and meter, particularly where the words carry a different sense.<sup>49</sup>

The distinct disparity between sections of this particular aria is one of the most recognizable qualities of the work.

**Table 14. Aria II: Venga pur minacci e fremà**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	G3 – G5	
Tessitura	Medium to High	Though fairly wide ranging, the primary tessitura is C4 – C5.

<sup>47</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Mitridate, Re di Ponto* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), VI.

<sup>48</sup> Stanley Sadie, *Mozart: The Early Years* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 216.

<sup>49</sup> Sadie, *Mozart: The Early Years*, 224.

	Basics	In-Depth
Tempo/Mode	Allegro/Major and Andante/Minor	The majority of the aria is quick. The middle section contrasts the surrounding sections at a slower tempo, meter, and mode.
Intricate Coloratura	Medium	
Rhythm	Simple	
Phrase Length	Long	Opportunities for alternate breathing patterns are possible to allow a singer flexibility in phrasing.
Melodic Considerations	Medium	Always completely tonal, the vocal line often contains wide leaps of an octave or more requiring multiple register negotiations.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Supportive	The vocal line is often doubled in the traditional orchestral reduction.
Ornamentation	Suggested	Mozart allots space for required cadenzas which end the multiple segments of the aria. The performer should also embellish the repeated section.

### Aria III: Perchè mai le luci aprimmo

Aria: Perchè mai le luci aprimmo (Act II, Scene VI)

Opera: *Aureliano in Palmira*, 1813 (Milan)

Character: Arsace (role premiered by Giambattista Velluti)

Composer: Gioachino Rossini on a libretto by Felice Romani after Gaetano Sertor

In print (vocal score): *Aureliano in Palmira*

Gioachino Rossini

Schonenberger, 1840s

Justification for inclusion: Though Rossini composed a number of operatic roles throughout his career for females playing males *en travesti*, the role of Arsace is the single role he wrote expressly for the castrato. To some extent, this *dramma seria*, rarely performed today, resembles an intimate chamber opera in terms of general scale, particularly when compared to competing operas of the time period. As is Rossini's custom, the composer would later recycle music from *Aureliano* in other operas – most famously, the overture employed here would be

utilized as an overture to *Il barbiere di Siviglia* several years later. Lindner discussed *Aureliano* in this way:

*Aureliano in Palmira* may be called both a retrospective and a progressive work if one takes into account its constitutive elements as well as the development of Rossinian macrostructures. For the first time, a mixed chorus is deployed, often with dramatic impact. The opera is quite modern in that it antedates certain formal, structural, and harmonic features of the Neapolitan period...Yet, with regard to the traditional arias and their rich melodic invention, it is also a very lyrical, even intimate work.<sup>50</sup>

Once a recognizably familiar cavatina among 19<sup>th</sup> century performers, the suggested aria has since fallen out of fashion with contemporary singers and audiences.<sup>51</sup> Because Velluti, the castrato originator of the role, notoriously overindulged in his own personal vocal ornamentation, Rossini eventually transcribed his desired coloratura embellishments precisely.<sup>52</sup> When preparing the aria, Arsace’s preceding recitative scene may be incorporated by the performer if desired. However, the combined recitative and aria constitutes a lengthy undertaking.

**Table 15. Aria III: Perchè mai le luci aprimmo**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	C#4 – G5	
Tessitura	Medium to High	Though fairly wide ranging, the primary tessitura is G4 – D5.
Tempo/Mode	Andantino/Major	
Intricate Coloratura	Difficult	With many passages of running sixteenth notes, this will likely be the most challenging aspect for the performer.
Rhythm	Simple to medium	
Phrase Length	Long	The phrases are substantial in length. The vocal line is typical of the <i>bel canto</i> period, graceful and wide-ranging. It moves in a mixture of conjunct and disjunct patterns.
Melodic Considerations	Medium	Rossini also incorporates multiple accidentals throughout the piece as well.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Lindner, “Rossini’s *Aureliano in Palmira*: A descriptive analysis,” *The Opera Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1999), 30.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>52</sup> Lindner, “Rossini’s *Aureliano in Palmira*: A descriptive analysis,” 32.

	Basics	In-Depth
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Supportive	
Ornamentation	None required	Rossini has specified his preferred 'ornamentation' through the written coloratura in the vocal line.

#### Aria IV: Dawn, still darkness

Aria: Dawn, still darkness (Act III)

Opera: *Flight*, 1999 (Glyndebourne)

Character: Refugee (role premiered by Christopher Robson)

Composer: Jonathan Dove, on a libretto by April De Angelis

In print (vocal score): *Flight*

Jonathan Dove

Edition Peters, 1998

Justification for inclusion: Of living composers, productions of Englishman Jonathan Dove are among the most consistently produced worldwide in recent generations, trailing just behind operas of Phillip Glass and Jake Heggie.<sup>53</sup> In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Dove created several operas featuring significant countertenor roles including *The Adventures of Pinocchio* and *Tobias and the Angel*. *Flight* is a contemporary comic opera mingled with *opera seria* influences – principal characters are placed under duress in awkward situations and the audience observes the outcomes.<sup>54</sup> Though composed in a contemporary operatic idiom, Dove's score is exceedingly accessible to the majority of standard audiences owing to both consequential popular music and musical theatre influences. Michael Magnusson had this to say:

Dove's sound world does have an instinctive feel and sounds like a melting pot of musical styles assembled with the same seeming ease Sondheim blended the fairy tale

<sup>53</sup> Operabase, "Opera Statistics," <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?id=none&lang=en&splash=t> (accessed March 18, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> Robert Hugill, "Snappily Executed," Music and Vision Blog, March 2008, <http://www.mvdaily.com/articles/2008/09/flight.htm> (accessed March 3, 2018).

music of Tchaikovsky and Ravel with his own orchestral palette in *Into the Woods* or a good film composer transfers symphonic though into visual support.<sup>55</sup>

The selected aria is a dramatic monologue in several facets given to the Refugee. The range demands are quite extensive, and the aria compels brave vocalism.

**Table 16. Aria IV: Dawn, still darkness**

	Basics	In-Depth
Range	B3 – E5	
Tessitura	Medium High	The tessitura demands are fairly wide ranging, and the singer must possess proficient command of both middle voice and upper range. Certain passages linger from C5 – E5.
Tempo/Mode	Multiple sections and tempi	
Intricate Coloratura	None	
Rhythm	Medium	Some use of modern rhythms and changing meters.
Phrase Length	Long	
Melodic Considerations	Challenging	Much employment of nonharmonic tones, accidentals, and wide-ranging skips and jumps provide a healthy challenge for the performer.
Coordinating Orchestral Reduction/Accompaniment	Challenging	The orchestral reduction provides atmosphere, but little harmonic or melodic support to the singer.
Ornamentation	None required	

<sup>55</sup> Michael Magnusson, “Dove: Flight,” *Opera Today*, March 9, 2006, [http://www.operatoday.com/content/2006/03/dove\\_flight.php](http://www.operatoday.com/content/2006/03/dove_flight.php) (accessed March 3, 2018).

## CHAPTER 6

### ORNAMENTATION

When evaluating operatic arias from the Baroque and earlier Classical periods, a noteworthy performance concern is improvisatory vocal ornamentation and embellishment. Auxiliary embellishment of a composer's original vocal line may significantly amplify an aria's perceived degree of complexity. Regarding the proper time period, ornamentation extending from fundamental *graces* to the most intricate *cadenzas* and *divisions* should be integrated into arias of varied tempi, styles, and affects.<sup>56</sup> Not only utilized for decorative purposes, Robert Toft suggests these embellishments historically “corrected defects in compositions and concealed weaknesses in vocal technique” of the time period.<sup>57</sup> This custom increasingly yielded to more composer-imposed parameters and less performer interpolation as the Baroque progressed into the Classical period and beyond. Maria Anfossi explained this particular transition to her students in this way:

According to the ancient custom, the composer wrote his melodies quite simply, leaving to the singer the important task of rendering them agreeable to the hearer, by means of suitable ornaments and variations. If we consider the very small number of persons who are really competent to embellish music, we may readily see that it was continually exposed either to be sung just as it was written (which not being the intention of the composer, could not in consequence produce the intended effect) or still more unfortunately, it fell into the hands of the ignorant and presumptuous, who undertook to adorn it, and often ruined it in the attempt. The composers seeing this, took the prudent step of ornamenting their own music, and in this stage, they now present it to the public.<sup>58</sup>

If an aria from the Baroque or early Classical period is to be performed in a historically suitable manner, ornamentation is reasonably obligatory in most performance circumstances, and

---

<sup>56</sup> Robert Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performer's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 106.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>58</sup> Maria Anfossi, *A Theoretical and Practical Treatise on the Art of Singing* (London: by the author, 1840), 72.



the nature of elaboration employed should be grounded on relevant dramatic and communicative intent.

For an operatic aria in question, Alejandro Garri advises that ornamentation should function in the subsequent modes: display the creativity and good taste of the singer; accentuate the dramatic ideas of the aria in a meaningful way; exhibit the technical abilities and agility of the singer; and compliment the harmonic progression and structure of collaborating instrumental music.<sup>59</sup> Naturally, the manner, quantity, and form should be based upon the performer's capacity to accurately execute the conceived embellishments. Though ornamentation was reasonably standard in most performances of past centuries, singers did occasionally perform without supplemental musical embellishment. Domenico Corri suggests a worthy reason for this lack of improvisation:

...(singers) would content themselves with singing according to their ability...and though their performances be not ornamented, they may be entitled to as much admiration, as sometimes is excited by a display of superfluous decoration.<sup>60</sup>

As music composition customs progressed and matured, requisite performer-extemporized ornamentation gradually conceded to the composer's explicit vocal lines, which often convey an improvisatory impression, until essentially disappearing with diverse compositional reforms.

As the predominant *da capo* aria format of previous centuries necessitates ornamentation, Garri, suggests both the initial A and the B Sections of a traditional form include few, if any, judicious ornaments at the discretion of the performer.<sup>61</sup> However, when the A Section is repeated, generous embellishment, always in keeping with harmonic progression and traditional

---

<sup>59</sup> Alejandro Garri, *The Art of the Castrato Volume IV* (Los Angeles: Garri Editions, 2000), viii.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Maunder, *Domenico Corri's Treatises on Singing* (New York: Garland, 1995), 3.

<sup>61</sup> Garri, *The Art of the Castrato Volume IV*, viii.

voice leading, rhythm, and style of the piece, is customary. Reiteratively, the anticipation is that these additions further dramatic purposes and expressive intent of the aria. A brief explanation of the most conventional vocal ornaments is included below. For detailed, comprehensive commentary, the teacher or performer should refer to resources listed in the bibliography.

The most fundamental vocal embellishments are universally categorized as *graces*. These musical additions customarily supported the individualization of melodies by Baroque performers. Graces also accorded a superior elegance and deeper intensity to a vocal line.<sup>62</sup> In modern performances, just as in previous centuries, graces both emphasize syllabic prosody and soften broader melodic intervals as well. *Appoggiaturas*, *turns*, and *trills* comprise three sub-categories of graces.

Though the appoggiatura exists in a number of distinguishing arrangements, it is most commonly defined as an added leaning note approaching the principal note by step, either above or below, depending on harmonic progression and ultimately resolving to the principal note. If the vocal line leaps down by third, the interval is often filled with a step-wise interval. Generally, upper appoggiaturas gradually soften into the principal note while lower ones rise in strength.<sup>63</sup> The appoggiatura should be tailored to the text's emotional content in terms of length, accent, and configuration. Slower appoggiaturas suggest sorrow and grief or tenderness, while quicker ones are indicative of joy and happiness. Though upper appoggiaturas are more frequently employed than their lower counterparts, the lower are occasionally useful.<sup>64</sup> On the following page is a musical illustration of the standard appoggiatura drawn from Robert Toft's *Bel Canto: A Performer's Guide*.

---

<sup>62</sup> Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performer's Guide*, 110.

<sup>63</sup> Lanza, *Abridgment of His Work on the Art of Singing* (London: S. Chappell, 1826), 14.

<sup>64</sup> Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performer's Guide*, 122.

### Example 1: Basic appoggiatura samples



The *turn* appears in two forms – the *common* (descending) and the *inverted* (ascending). Turns, frequently introduced in combination with other graces, are comprised of four notes – the note above or below the composer’s given note, the note itself, the note above or below the given note, and the given note again. The *common* turn begins from the note above the composer’s written note and the *inverted* originates from the note below. Both are typically employed to embellish leaps of a third to ornament either the middle of a phrase or the phrase ending. They also assist in decorating repeated notes. From Toft’s book, a musical illustration detailing the *turn* is presented below. The turn often will conclude a *trill* if placed at the conclusion of a passage.

### Example 2: Basic turn samples



Jean Jousse defines one of the most conventional graces, the *trill*, also referred to as a *shake*, in this manner:

This grace consists in the alternate reiteration of two notes, beginning from the highest, which must be a semitone, or a tone distant from the principal (never more); the shake may be shorter or longer according to the length of the note, the time of piece, or the

judgment of the performer, the turned shake is chiefly used in final close or cadence...Both the notes that compose the shake must be sung at first slowly, gradually increasing till it comes to the greatest quickness; this must be sung in one breath.<sup>65</sup>

While unhurried trills convey sentiments of sorrow or tenderness, quicker trills indicate any number passions – joy, defiance, and power, among others. Below are a variety of trill musical examples from the Toft volume.

### Example 3: Common trill samples

The image displays five musical examples of trills, each consisting of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (treble clef).  
 1. **Common**: Shows a trill on a single note with a 'tr' marking. The piano accompaniment features a series of eighth notes.  
 2. **Turned**: Shows a trill on a single note with a 'tr' marking. The piano accompaniment features a series of eighth notes.  
 3. **With appoggiatura**: Shows a trill on a single note with a 'tr' marking. The piano accompaniment features a series of eighth notes.  
 4. **Prepared**: Shows a trill on a single note with a 'tr' marking. The piano accompaniment features a series of eighth notes.  
 5. **Transient or Passing [often indicated by W]**: Shows a trill on a single note with a 'tr' marking. The piano accompaniment features a series of eighth notes.

*Divisions* are best recognized as a series of brisk notes sung on a single syllable and in one breath. Divisions appear in two categories – *marked* and *gliding*. While light articulation connects musical notes in a clean and distinct manner in a *marked* division, notes are slurred together in the *gliding* variety. Ascending divisions convey joy and hope, and descending divisions should indicate sorrow or despair. Divisions likewise embellish repeated text,

<sup>65</sup> Jean Jousse, *Introduction to the Art of Sol-fa-ing and Singing* (London: Goulding and D'Almaine, 1815), 30.

ornament simple vocal lines, or fill expansive melodic leaps; they also should continually comply with the musical phrase's harmonic mobility. The components of a division may be either conjunct or disjunct. Divisions are practical in both arias and also recitative passages. Toft has supplied examples of various divisions from a choice of historical sources.

#### Example 4: Division samples from historical sources

Recitative

With divisions

Plain

mi - ta

nuoce a miei de - si - ri

nuoce a miei de - si - ri

confor te ag - giungi

confor te ag - giungi

Mazzinghi, "In mezzo all' armi"  
(anonymous handwritten embellishments)

J.C. Bach, "Già Febo riconduce"  
*Cefalo e Procri*  
(anonymous handwritten embellishments)

Aria

With divisions

Plain

a - ro - ben

ca - ro - ben

pal pi - tar

pal pi - tar

Zingarelli, "Sommo ciel"  
*Romeo e Giuletta*  
(anonymous handwritten embellishments)

John Fane, "L' amor tímido"  
(embellished by Giovanni Velluti)

Akin to divisions, *cadenzas* are among the most essential ornamentation varieties. These extemporized episodes bring an aria or a primary segment of an aria to a satisfactory conclusion. Garri suggests cadenzas should be included “...at the end of the A Section (sometimes appearing just as a cadential trill); a more elaborate, and occasionally the most elaborate, cadenza at the end of the B section; and finally, a display of virtuosity and, if appropriate, bravura at the end of the *da capo*.”<sup>66</sup> As in all manner of ornamentation, the cadenza should befit the disposition of the aria or aria section it concludes and should graciously emanate from the music. According to historical practitioners, the length of the cadenza should be comparatively relative to the duration of the musical piece – lengthy arias feature longer cadenzas while shorter selections present proportional ones.<sup>67</sup> Historically, print editors marked specified cadenza locations with a fermata spanning a bar. Lanza lists four kinds of cadenzas – suspended (*sospesa*), returning (*ripresa*), passing (*passante*), and final (*finale*). He describes them in detail in this way:

Performers introduced suspended cadences in the middle of a song either on a VII<sup>6</sup> of V moving to the dominant or on the dominant going to the tonic, and they inserted returning cadenzas on the dominant proceeding to the tonic. Vocalists placed passing cadences at or near the end of an air and sang them over a tonic 6-4 chord moving to the dominant, but when these cadenzas occurred at the conclusion of the song singers often introduced a shake on the dominant chord just before the close on the tonic. Final cadences appeared at the end of the last strain and were formed on the concluding tonic harmony.<sup>68</sup>

No matter the cadenza model and style employed, the embellishment, like any other, must accentuate the aria’s style and spirit to draw the selection to an attractive conclusion.

Two further forms of ornamentation include the unequalization of rhythm and engagement of the *messa di voce*. In unequalizing rhythms, pairs of eighth or sixteenth notes are adjusted to be dotted or stressed in an unlike manner from the original intent. The *messa di voce*

---

<sup>66</sup> Garri, *The Art of the Castrato Volume IV*, viii.

<sup>67</sup> Gesualdo Lanza, *Elements of Singing* (London: Chappell and Co., 1820), 161.

<sup>68</sup> Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performer’s Guide*, 154.

engages not the interpolation of additional notes or alteration of a melody but demands a unique vocal technique. In Johann Friedrich Agricola's translation of Pier Francesco Tosi's *Observation of the Florid Song*, this technique is described in this manner:

The *messa di voce* consists in the beginning the note very gently and softly and letting it swell little by little to the loudest forte and thereafter recede with the same artistry from loud to soft. This beautiful drawing forth of the voice achieves beautiful effect in the mouth of a skilled singer when used sparingly and only on bright vowels.<sup>69</sup>

The *messa di voce* is ordinarily employed on longer sustained notes. Though the embellishments briefly addressed here are elemental models, several further classes exist – including anticipation of a note or syllable, falls, and various forms of portamenti. To present a most effective performance of an aria from an appropriate historical time period, the countertenor should explore and employ these various forms of ornamentation to display his own good taste and creativity.

---

<sup>69</sup> Tosi, Agricola, *Introduction to the Art of Singing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 84.

## CHAPTER 7

### AFTERWARD

Though an immense body of operatic repertoire for the male treble voice arises from centuries long past, modern composers continue to be inspired by the countertenor voice – some handle the vocalism as an object of beauty and drama, while others exploit its otherworldliness for comic effect. This compilation of arias barely surveys both old and new alike. In recent years, several fresh and innovative countertenor roles have emerged in major opera houses. Whether considering Theodore Morrison's *Oscar* from the Santa Fe Opera, Jake Heggie's *Great Scott* from the Dallas Opera, Thomas Adès' *The Exterminating Angel* from the Metropolitan Opera, Peter Eötvös' *Three Sisters* at the Opéra National de Lyon or Judith Weir's *Miss Fortune* at Covent Garden, a wealth of modern material exists for the countertenor. While selections from these recent works emerge as more musically challenging for singer and audience and are often somewhat difficult to excerpt from a broader musical score, they nonetheless serve notice that the countertenor is a vital, vibrant component of the modern operatic community, just as was the castrato centuries ago. Perhaps, as the body of repertoire expands with contemporary new works and rediscovery of older ones, countertenor aria collections, like the one presented here, will remain an indispensable entity of the teacher and performer library.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, John. *El Niño*. New York: Herndon Music, Inc., 2012.
- Anfossi, Maria. *A Theoretical and Practical Treatise on the Art of Singing*. London: by the author, 1840.
- Ayrton, William. *The Harmonicon*. London: Samuel Leigh, 1825.
- Beicken, Suzanne J. *Treatise on Vocal Performance and Ornamentation by Johann Adam Hiller*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Bronner, Eric. "The Private Studio: A Beginning Voice Teacher's Guide to Repertoire for the Beginning Voice Student." *Journal of Singing* 60, no. 1 (2003): 85-87.
- Britten, Benjamin. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1960.
- Burrows, David L., Carl B. Schmidt, and Jennifer Williams Brown. "Cesti, Antonio." *Grove Music Online*. 11 Mar. 2018.  
<http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2173/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005335>.
- Christina J. Burrige. "'Music, Such as Charmeth Sleep': Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1981): 149-160.
- Church, Michael. "Akhnaten, Coliseum, London, review: Superb singing and breath-taking theatrical moments." *The Independent*, March 5, 2016.
- Dean, Winton. *Handel and the Opera Seria*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Handel's Operas: 1704-1726*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Handel's Operas: 1726-1741*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006.
- DeMarco, Laura. "The Fact of the Castrato and the Myth of the Countertenor." *The Musical Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2002): 174-185.
- Doscher, Barbara. *From Studio to Stage: Repertoire for the Voice*. Edited by John Nix. Landham: Scarecrow Press, 2002.
- Dove, Jonathan. *Flight*. Frankfurt: Edition Peters, 1998.
- Eberstadt, Fernanda. "Who Can Resist a Man Who Sings Like a Woman." *The New York Times*, November 21, 2010, MM38.
- García, Manuel, and Donald Paschke. *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing: Complete and Unabridged*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1975.
- Garri, Alejandro, ed. *The Art of the Castrato, Volume IV*. Los Angeles: Garri Editions, 2000.

- Giles, Peter. *A Basic Countertenor Method for Teacher and Student*. London: Kahn & Averill, 2005.
- Glass, Philip. *Akhnaten*. New York: Dunvagen Music Publishers, 1983.
- Gluck, Christoph Willibald. *Orfeo ed Euridice: versione Vienna 1762*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2014.
- Händel, Georg Friedrich. *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Orlando*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Rinaldo*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998.
- Hardwick, Michael, and Mollie Hardwick. *Alfred Deller: A Singularity of Voice*. London: Proteus Books, 1980.
- Hasse, Johann Adolf. *Cleofide*. Stuttgart: Carus-Verlag, 2006.
- Hicks, Anthony. "Alcina." Grove Music Online.
- Holland, Bernard. "The Met Gets Handel Opera – At Last." *The New York Times*, January 15, 1984.
- Howell, Ian. "The Countertenor Voice: About." The Countertenor Voice. <http://blog.counterpointspublishing.com/about-2/.html> (accessed January 7, 2018).
- Huebner, Steven. "Il crociato in Egitto." *Grove Music Online*.
- Hugill, Robert. "Snappily Executed." Music and Vision blog, March 2008. <http://www.mvdaily.com/articles/2008/09/flight.htm>.
- IBISWorld. "Sheet Music Publishers – US Market Research Report." IBISWorld. <http://clients1.ibisworld.com/reports/us/industry/majorcompanies.aspx?entid=4845#MP407970> (accessed March 15, 2018).
- Jenkins, John S. "Mozart and the castrati." *The Musical Times* 151, no. 1913 (2010): 55-68.
- Jousse, Jean. *Introduction to the Art of Sol-fa-ing and Singing*. London: Goulding and D'Almaine, 1815.
- Lang, Paul Henry. *George Frideric Handel*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966.
- Lanza, Gesualdo. *Abridgment of His Work on the Art of Singing*. London: S. Chappell, 1826.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Elements of Singing*. London: Chappell and Co., 1820.
- Linder, Thomas. "Rossini's Aureliano in Palmira: A Descriptive Analysis." *The Opera Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 18-32.

- Maunder, Richard. *Domenico Corri's Treatises on Singing*. New York: Garland, 1995.
- Magnusson, Michael. "Dove: Flight" *Opera Today*. March 9, 2006.  
[http://www.operatoday.com/content/2006/03/dove\\_flight.php](http://www.operatoday.com/content/2006/03/dove_flight.php).
- McKinney, James. *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982.
- Meyerbeer, Giacomo. *Il crociato in Egitto*. Paris: Marquerie Frères, 1839
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Ascanio in Alba*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Mitridate, Re di Ponto*. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001.
- Operabase.com. "Statistics." <http://www.operabase.com/> (accessed January 7, 2018).
- Page, Tim. "Akhnaten." *Grove Music Online*. 5 April 2018.  
<http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2173/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000009554>.
- Purcell, Henry. *The Music in The Fairy Queen*. Edited by Anthony Lewis. London: Novello Publishing Ltd., 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Music in King Arthur*. Edited by Margaret Laurie. London: Novello Publishing Ltd., 1972.
- Price, Curtis. "Henry Purcell." *Early Music* 18, no. 3 (1990): 493-96.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Fairy-Queen, The." *Grove Music Online*. 11 March 2018.  
<http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2173/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000009948>.
- Ragan, Kari. "Serious about Singing: Age Appropriate Repertoire for the Talented Teen." *Journal of Singing* 72, no. 3 (2016): 299-304.
- Ravens, Simon. *The Supernatural Voice*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014.
- Reid, Cornelius L. *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*. New York: Coleman-Ross Company, Inc., 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Free Voice: A Guide to Natural Singing*. New York: Coleman-Ross Company, Inc., 1965.
- Rickards, Steven L. *Twentieth-Century Countertenor Repertoire: A Guide*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008.
- Rossini, Gioachino. *Aureliano in Palmira*. Paris: Schonenberger, 1840.

- Rushton, Julian. "Ascanio in Alba." *Grove Music Online*. 14 March 2018.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000900221>.
- Sadie, Stanley. *Mozart: The Early Years*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.
- Schmidt Carl B. "Antonio Cesti's "La Dori:" A Study of Sources, Performance Traditions and Musical Style." *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 10 (1975): 455-498.
- Stohrer, Sharon. *The Singer's Companion*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.
- Stubbs, George Edward. *The Adult Male Alto or Counter-Tenor Voice*. New York: The H.W. Gray Co., 1908.
- Toft, Robert. *Bel Canto: A Performer's Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Tosi, Pier Francesco, Johann Friedrich Agricola, and Julianne Baird. *Introduction to the Art of Singing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Ware, Clifton. *Adventures in Singing*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995.