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Faculty of Music

Edith Georgiana ADETU

STYLE AND VOCALITY IN DONIZETTI'S AND VERDI'S MATURE CREATION: *LUCREZIA BORGIA* AND *A MASKED BALL*

SUMMARY

Scientific supervisor

Prof. Dr. Habil. Petruța-Maria COROIU

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INTRODUCTION

The doctoral thesis entitled *Style and vocality in Donizetti's and Verdi's mature creation: Lucrezia Borgia and A Masked Ball* represents the fruit of an intense individual study, from a double position: that of the performer, respectively that of the researcher. Curiosity and affinity towards the *belcanto* repertoire (especially towards what we call *dramatic belcanto*) has been encouraged since our undergraduate studies, during which we assimilated technically and interpretatively some specific elements of this style (structuring of an ample recitative, phrasing, *legato*, vocal agility). Along with the study of some Mozartian female roles of a dramatic/dramatic agility facture (Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Elettra, Vitellia) and some Verden arias (from *La Traviata* and *Il Trovatore*), the masters who guided us over time intuited the repertoire possibilities that our vocals possess, with timbrality representing the main indicator. During the master's studies and afterwards, we enriched our repertoire with works belonging to the composer Gaetano Donizetti, tackling a series of far-reaching arias from operas such as *Anna Bolena, Fausta, Lucrezia Borgia, Maria Stuarda, Roberto Devereux*. In parallel, we continued the study of some Verdian roles such as Medora from *Il Corsaro*, Leonora from *Il Trovatore*, Amelia from *Un ballo in maschera*, Desdemona from *Otello*. In this way, we have "balanced" the approached repertoire, having within the arias and roles mentioned above all the necessary elements of the *dramatic belcanto* style; we further approached a repertoire that contains agility, which requires flexibility and an extended vocal range (usually exceeding two octaves), because an eminently dramatic repertoire would have forced us to increase and damage the vocal line acquired through extensive study.

During these years of doctoral studies, our attention was particularly directed to the works *Lucrezia Borgia* and *Un ballo in maschera*[1]. The melodic richness, the tender and challenging vocal writing of the female roles, the innovative dramaturgical situations – all these represented solid arguments in the choice to systematically analyze the two operas. Furthermore, we found it intriguing to draw a "parallel" between the vocality of Lucrezia Borgia and Amelia; in our own interpretation, within these roles, we have approached the most significant moments (the solo arias) - real touchstones and at the same time sources of great artistic satisfaction. If Amelia can be "won" through just vocality and a sensitive, truthful interpretation, Lucrezia requires a total vocal discipline, similar to that found in the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Regarding the structure of the thesis, we chose to divide it into three extensive chapters, followed by the final conclusions. The first chapter, *Italian Opera: From Gaetano Donizetti to Giuseppe Verdi*, presents an evolutionary approach to the Italian lyric-dramatic genre throughout the 19th century. We highlighted stylistic aspects relevant to the works of composers such as Gioacchino

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[1] In the title of the thesis we used the Romanian translation for greater accessibility.

Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Saverio Mercadante. The compositional journey of Gaetano Donizetti and Giuseppe Verdi was presented in detail, focusing particularly on their mature works. We emphasized relevant stylistic and vocal aspects, noting certain similarities in their creations. To provide a broader perspective on stylistic continuity, we also presented some information about the generation of composers who succeeded Giuseppe Verdi.

The second chapter, *The belcanto concept: between pedagogical approaches and the shaping of a new interpretative style*, deals with historical aspects of belcanto style and technique; at the same time, it presents essential aspects of vocal technique, offering information and suggestions in the realization of some constituent elements such as: breathing, *appoggio*, equalization of registers, vocal agility, articulation, etc. Also, this chapter includes information related to the interpretative style associated with the belcanto work, the viability of the interpretation and the association of this style with other currents found in lyrical art. We have also presented here the pedagogical approaches of recognized singing masters. Last but not least, we made a short foray into the interpretative art of opera soloists, revealing vocal peculiarities and interpretative paradigms, from the period of *castrati singers* to the modern era.

The third chapter, *Stylistic and expressive peculiarities in Donizetti's and Verdi's mature creation*, represents the most substantial part of the thesis. It examines the operas *Lucrezia Borgia* and *A Masked Ball*[2] from historical, structural, stylistic, dramaturgical, and interpretative perspectives. Significantly, a substantial part of this chapter constitutes a detailed structural-interpretative analysis of the female roles Lucrezia Borgia in Donizetti's eponymous opera and Amelia in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. Concurrently with these two roles, we present relevant structural-interpretative aspects of other main characters, revealing a comprehensive tableau of Donizetti's and Verdi's vocal styles in these two operatic works.

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[2] *Un ballo in maschera, the Italian title.*

CHAPTER I – ITALIAN OPERA: FROM GAETANO DONIZETTI TO GIUSEPPE VERDI

I. Brief stylistic incursion into Italian opera of the first half of the 19th century

The journey of Italian opera until its consolidation and recognition as a musical genre was often marked by socio-political factors. While in the 16th century the essence of opera consisted of liberating music from the influence of Catholic clerical power, the 17th and 18th centuries brought about a series of metamorphoses, one of which was the association of opera music with the concept of spectacle. The Risorgimento movement (1815-1870) represented a defining stage in Italy's evolution, both historically and politically. Compared to the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the unification of Germany (1864-1871), the Risorgimento marked Italy's becoming a nation and its entry into the modern world. During this period, notable figures such as Camille Benso, Count of Cavour, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Giuseppe Garibaldi emerged, whose political ideas, closely linked to liberalism and nationalism, laid the foundations for coordinating Italian political classes.

I.1. Assertion of romantic nationalism within the opera genre

During this period, nationalism consisted of the valorization of historical past, equally providing a goal in terms of cultural development. Additionally, within the collective vision, there was a parallel between Italy's glorious past and its independent future. The development of nationalism represented one of the most important aspects of cultural and artistic evolution, as well as the press and scientific activities of that period. Italy's past was represented in art through imposing and vehement political messages deliberately placed in a different historical and temporal context to avoid censorship.

I.2. Group of representative composers

The group of Italian composers whose operas were performed in the lyric theaters of Italy during that period consisted of names such as Gioacchino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti, Nicola Zingarelli, Federico Ricci, Nicola Vaccai, Giovanni Pacini, and Saverio Mercadante.

I.3. Stylistic directions and vocal representations in some opera creations

I.3.1. Comic style

The diversity of genres found in romantic lyric theater influenced the field of vocal art and imposed certain defining characteristics. Regarding this diversity, Grigore Constantinescu states the following: "(...) the variety of facets greatly expands the nuanced interpretation of defining data, creating an extended chromaticism of effects. Aria, as well as ensembles, rely on the criterion of spontaneous address and cantability, without giving the sound images the complexity of symbolic edifices or extensive symphonizing discourses."[3]

Opera *buffa*, this highly varied musical comedy, underwent a long historical journey, with its characteristics consisting of:

- the alert melodic specificity;

- vocal agility;

- an affinity for easily memorable themes.

I.3.2. Dramatic Style

The definition of opera *seria* cannot be other than what its name implies. This style, characteristic of the 18th century, was perpetuated in Italian lyric theater of the 19th century following the model of Mozart's last operas, such as *La clemenza di Tito* (1791). Extremely diverse in theatrical terms, opera *seria* provides a wide range of expressions, from melodrama and tragedy to historical opera. It is a domain where a richer demand for expressive resources offered by melodic profiles, connected to the theatrical situation.

I.4. Gaetano DONIZETTI - Compositional path and stylistic valences

Associated with Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Giuseppe Verdi, Gaetano Donizetti is now recognized not only as a prodigious theater personality but also as an extraordinarily vigorous artistic figure. Through a detailed analysis of Donizetti's works, we can assert that his art reveals a complexity that is hard to match. Unfortunately, many of his spectacular works are rarely performed in

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[3] Constantinescu, Grigore. *Diversitatea stilistică a melodiei în opera romantică*, p. 160

major opera houses, and in Romania, except for productions of *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Pasquale*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Donizetti is not well-known.

I.4.1. Compositional peculiarities in mature creation

As we well know, the beginning of Donizetti's compositions is under the influence of Rossini, the dominant Italian composer in Europe during that period. The opera *Anna Bolena* (1830) represents the culmination of various previous attempts and, at the same time, the starting point for a decisive affirmation of Donizetti's own artistic personality. During this period, there is an interest in deepening the style of French grand opéra and a simultaneous affinity for Viennese symphonism.

In general, the narrative thread tends to be more elastic in Donizetti, including both dramatic overall moments and quiet moments that contribute to the expression of a mood, even when from the point of view of the narrative exposition these moments are not imperatively necessary. Complementing this exposition, an important role is played by tonality (key changes) and harmonic fluctuations. In this sense, we offer the following arias as examples:

- *Una furtiva lagrima* (Nemorino's aria from Act II of the opera The Elixir of Love); 6/8, B flat minor – B flat major;

- *Quando di luce rosea* (Maria Stuarda aria from Act III - homonymous opera) 4/4, G minor-G Major.

Less contemplative than Bellini and less architectural than Rossini (creators who lend themselves to great stage productions), Donizetti does not anticipate the conclusion of the musical-dramatic action like Verdi. However, it provides a dramatic impetus to the sequence of events, which tends to create a balance between elegy and action, between static moments and other fast moments. This factor becomes more significant in the last works. Very important is the use of "quasi-parlato" recitative (found in Lucrezia Borgia, Maria Stuarda, Lucia di Lammermoor, etc.) which, with short phrases, stimulates the action of the opera. The pathos that enlivens the drama – existing in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Maria di Rudenz* et al. – represents a Donizetti peculiarity, a kind of "slowing down" in the pressing of events. In the dialogues between the characters, this slowing down is achieved in a nuanced, orchestral-colored manner (we are referring here to the great duet-scenes from the operas of maturity, starting with Anna Bolena).

I.4.2. Themes and representative characters in Donizetti's universe

The most significant themes and characters found in Donizetti's universe have been presented, such as the theme of love and the vocal and psychological evolution of the male character, among others.

I.4.2.1. The destiny of the female character

In Donizetti's melodrama, the female character represents the core of any musical-dramatic action. A detailed examination of this character (from all relevant aspects of the lyrical-dramatic genre: vocal, character, etc.) reveals a significant part of the "heritage" left by Donizetti to future generations of composers. This has been investigated progressively since his early works. A comparative look between some Donizetti characters and some Verdi characters can be enlightening, such as the moral portrait and vocality of Maria di Rohan in Donizetti's eponymous opera compared to Amelia in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. The latter character is presented in a much more psychologically detailed manner, with a much more extensive vocal discourse.

I.4.2.2. History and fantasy

Starting from 1830, the theme of Donizetti's operas seems to concentrate on great historical dramas. These operas abound in attractive subjects from the perspective of musical-dramatic exposition, such as furious and impossible loves, violent deaths, oppositions, and political intrigues. The history of the Tudor Dynasty served this purpose very well. In lyric theater, this history (which places Elizabeth I of England as the protagonist) was initially approached by Rossini in the opera *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra* (1815).

I.4.2.3. The recurrent theme of death

This theme dominates Donizetti's theater and joins the most important romantic motifs. The fatalism of the characters is truthfully shaped in terms of vocality: their discourse is diversified with numerous types of recitatives and scenes leading up to the grand final moments.

I.4.3. Representative aspects of Donizetti's musical language

I.4.3.1. Characteristics of melody in opera creation

In Donizetti's works, we do not find the same "art of elegy" characteristic of Bellini's melodies, although Bellini's melodic style deeply influences him. However, Donizetti's melodies are extraordinarily beautiful and stand out for their spontaneity and fluidity. At the same time, the following aspect must be noted: ornamental singing is not used merely for decorative purposes, to showcase the technical abilities of the performer. Virtuosity serves an expressive function appropriate to the dramatic context.

I.4.3.2. Orchestral approach and expressive implications

Donizetti treats the orchestral apparatus in a varied and efficient manner, highlighting a series of instrumental timbres. His education in Mayr's school imbued him with the spirit of Austrian Classicism, characterized by harmonic clarity and instrumental refinement.

Fig. 1 The harp's discourse in the final duet of the opera *La Favorita*

I.4.3.3. Comedy – a stylistic dominant in Donizetti's creations

In Donizetti's comedies, we find the musician's cordiality and innate understanding of human weaknesses - moral habits, cunning types, and various forms of love. *Don Pasquale*, this bourgeois spectacle, concludes the stylistic incursion within comic opera. The titular characters in the operas *Falstaff* or *Gianni Schicchi* will represent similar vocal and character structures (also inspired by *commedia dell'arte*). However, each of them presents their own expressive universes: John Falstaff - superficial and cowardly, Gianni Schicchi - deceitful and opportunistic.

I.4.3.4. Donizetti's vocality – particular aspects

In Donizetti's opera creation, dramatic criteria exerted a substantial influence on the elaboration of musical form and, implicitly, on vocal writing. Furthermore, Verdi's melodrama was about to accentuate these criteria, shaping another interpretative paradigm. We could say that from a technical-interpretative point of view, Donizetti demands everything from a singer. Of course, this approach would be too lax, so we will highlight some essential elements of Donizetti's vocality:

- vocal drama derived from timbral versatility,

- the ability to deliver coloratura impeccably,

- mastery and maintenance of *legato* even in passages of great technical difficulty,

- the ease of declaiming the text in moments of dramatic intensity (neat but "flat" singing not being satisfactory).

I.5. Giuseppe VERDI - compositional journey and stylistic qualities

I.5.1. The creator Giuseppe Verdi in the context of his era

A dominant figure in Italian musical culture of the 19th century was undoubtedly Giuseppe Verdi. This fact is not only due to his long existence and compositional genius but especially to the important position he held in the society of his time. Unlike many contemporary artists who exhibited attitudes of discomfort and even disregard for the surrounding bourgeoisie, Verdi always demonstrated a kind of spontaneous sharing of ideas and values of the society in which he lived.

I.5.1.1. Opera creations from the period 1842-1849 - representative dramaturgical and structural elements

The revolutionary impulse was materialized in the works of Verdi's predecessors as well, but the Milanese audience did not greet any spectacle with the enthusiasm displayed at the debut of the opera *Nabucco*. In this work, the audience hears new elements of a musical-dramatic nature, although Verdi was still following in the footsteps of his predecessors. In this stage of creation, we encounter austere music dominated by simplicity in terms of the vocal discourse of the main characters. Comparing scenes of the same type written within a few years (for example, the conspiracy scene in *Ernani* and the plot in *La battaglia di Legnano*) confirms the progress of Verdi's operas in terms of the melodic element.

I.5.1.2. Socially relevant aspects of Verdi's creation

Throughout European history, there have always been stages of transformation in which the conflict between social classes becomes a conflict between ideologies and moral systems; these stages usually occur in turbulent periods, in eras of revolution. Verdi's characters do not exhibit predictability in terms of dramatic evolution. Alive and impetuous, they are, in fact, forces that oppose questionable moral principles.

I.5.2. Compositional peculiarities and thematic affinities

In the 1840s, Verdi alternated works with patriotic themes (*La battaglia di Legnano*, 1849; *Attila*, 1846, and *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*, 1843) with personal and familial dramas (*I due Foscari*, 1844, *I masnadieri*, 1847, *Luisa Miller* 1849). The stories that are most frequently repeated in all these operas revolve around themes of power, family, and love, all already widely present in the previous melodramatic tradition but renewed by Verdi with original variations. The "stage word," which Verdi invited us to seek, primarily consisted of the ability to outline the substance of situations in a few extremely significant traits.

I.5.2.1. Structural and scenographic components

Like the narrative themes used, the musical forms found in Verdi's creations from the 1840s largely continued the experience of the previous melodrama, renewing it in some essential aspects. Musical unity is no longer given as in the old tradition of the 18th-century theater with the schematic succession of recitatives and arias, but it is not entirely free either. The presence of predetermined formal schemes of "closed numbers" is still alive in this period and also compatible with the expectations of the audience. In its most frequently encountered scheme, this narrative included:

- a series of initial recitatives (dialogues between different characters on stage) sustained and introduced by thematic and orchestral punctuations;

- a first aria (often called *cavatina*) of the protagonist, supported by orchestral formulas that served to create the psychological atmosphere of the episode;

- free discourse with interventions by different characters or the chorus or with changes in their presence on stage;

- finally, a second intervention of the protagonist (called *cabaletta*) with a more brilliant vocal character.

I.5.2.2. The Great *Popular Trilogy* – dramaturgical and interpretative aspects

The first years of Verdi's career (years of imprisonment, as Verdi defined them due to the frenetic pace of work) ended with three operas that appeared in the early 1850s: *Rigoletto* (1851), *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*, both from 1853. All three titles represent exceptional moments of inventive maturity. Stage-musical techniques increasingly tend to adapt traditional forms to the needs of modern theater. Thus, recitative sometimes assumes a continuity of melodic lines and an expressive commitment. Abramo Basevi noted the following aspects: "With *La traviata* Verdi very successfully transferred to the stage this musica *da camera*, to which the chosen subject lends itself admirably. In this score we find greater simplicity than in the composer's other works, especially in the orchestra, where the strings almost always dominate. *Parlanti* occupy a great part of the score, and there are a

good number of arias that are repeated in the manner of couplets. Finally, the principal melodies are by and large set in "small" binary and ternary meters, and generally do not have the expansiveness characteristic of the Italian spirit. Moreover, Verdi has infused great emotion into this music, but without the exaggeration sometimes to be found even in his second manner(...)"[4]

I.5.2.3. The influence of *grand-opéra* in some of Verdi's works

In 1865, Verdi presented *Les vêpres siciliennes* in Paris, the first work composed specifically for the French stage. This creation was revised and adapted according to the needs of its dramaturgical context. Other subsequent operas, from *Simon Boccanegra* (1857) to *Aida* (1871), also tend to retain certain aspects of grand opera:

- greater articulation of narrative intrigues,

- the increasing number of characters,

- large collective ensembles,

- choreographic episodes,

- sumptuous scenography.

- special attention given to the orchestra, which gains prominence in this new production, without erasing the already firmly established characteristics from previous years but rather expanding their limits and possibilities.

Some Verdi operas presented in Paris enjoyed resounding success, leading to the creation of French versions[5] for them.

I.5.2.4. The second half of the 19th century and new cultural-aesthetic tendencies in Italian art

In this climate were born the prose and verses that a young rebel, Arrigo Boito, wrote in the period 1868-1877 lamenting the situation of regression and provincial closure in which the country's culture was. For his part, Verdi, who knew the international environment well, was certainly sensitive to the need to update Italian culture. He himself had fully demonstrated that he was capable of renewing and refining his music-writing techniques and theatrical conception, of asking the audience for a more subtle listening capacity.

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[4] Basevi, Abramo. *The operas of Giuseppe Verdi,* p. 196.
[5] Usually this version was an extension of the original version, comprising five acts instead of four.

I.5.3. Verdi and the consolidation of a theatrical musical style

Fairly, theatrical musical style is preferable to be perceived as the result of various elements. Above all, we notice the melody, the harmony, and the organic connection between them; later we observe the structural aspects, and after all these the intimate connection of these elements related to the dramatic conception. Verdi's **melody** unfolds in a unitary, spontaneous, fluid manner. This does not suggest a forced "search" or an artificial character. Its very nature betrays a noble character, without reaching a majestic dimension (except in moments selected willfully by the composer). At the same time, he entrusts the interpreters or the choir with the fair rendering of the libretto text. This process intensifies the impact of the song on the audience. As for the **harmonic structure**, it is not treated with less involvement, but there is a certain "isolation" of the harmony in relation to the melody; the convergence between these two elements coincides with moments of intense drama.

I.5.3.1. Observations on the stylistic synthesis in Verdi's creation

Numerous descriptions can be launched regarding Verdi's compositional style, but its most important characteristics lie in the melodic component, which undergoes metamorphosis in each stage of creation, and the vocal component, through which Verdi achieves stylistic synthesis. We find these syntheses predominantly in the writing of cabalettas, which, starting from the opera *Nabucco*, open an evolutionary path in terms of vocal discourse structure. We also notice new technical and interpretative requirements in approaching solo scores, which demand the development of a solid singing technique.

I.5.4. The specificity of dramaturgy in the mature works

Verdi, at that time, did not speculate on the "weight" of an opera that was not intended for arias and recitatives. Inevitably, the conquest of the continuity of musical discourse was configured as a problem of ennobling the recitative. In the period between the operas *I vespri siciliani* (1855) and *Aida* (1871), the enrichment and maturation of his musical dramaturgy is evident. From the elementary summary of the early melodramas, where good and evil are isolated, diametrically opposed forces, and the contrasts are presented in a harsh manner, he moves to a more nuanced and penetrating psychology, capable of deepening complex and multidimensional characters (such as those of *Don Carlos* by Friedrich Schiller).

Later, the human experience of the composer was enriched, so that the projection of the drama is carried out in the most truthful tones. The narrative thread, however dramatic it may be, is presented with a kind of "slow down", in an atmosphere of silence; of course, this does not substantially affect the intensity of the passions between the protagonists. Humor is also subtly inserted – a transition from the artistic and schematic life of melodrama to the fullness of real life. Comedy begins to make its first

appearances in Un ballo in maschera and La forza del destino, not as an end in itself, but as a sign of an expanded vision of the world and of life, in which all elements converge. Musically, increased attention to overall atmosphere coincides with increased attention to orchestral colors. Simultaneously, melodic declamation is introduced, more and more deliberate.

I.5.4.1. The last operas - Verdi facing Shakespeare

It may not be inappropriate to consider that in the last years of Giuseppe Verdi's life, the world of opera seemed permeated by heterogeneous styles originating from diverse inspirations. What is certain is that twice, at a venerable age, he allowed himself to be seduced again by that great connoisseur of human passions, William Shakespeare. Thus, in 1887, he composed *Otello*, a very vivid representation of the illusions of jealousy, and in 1893, he created *Falstaff*, his only lyrical comedy (excluding *Un giorno di regno*), in which the fantasies of an infatuated old man are described and elegantly ridiculed with wisdom.

Once again, it is in these late works that Verdi's ability to acquire some of the most significant technical peculiarities of European theater music of the late 19th century is measured. On the one hand, it demonstrates the ability of a fine listener, the proof being the harmonic subtleties and instrumental refinements of the orchestras of his time; at the same time, we notice the science of adapting them and giving them functionality in his expressive world. On the other hand, the new way in which he reorganizes his dramaturgical-musical forms is notable, which does not forget the traditions of Italian opera, but which substantially diminishes its schematism. Of course, traces of arias, duets, concertati can be seen in his last work, but the links between the episodes acquire such a consistency that the logic of the closed form is subjected to a fluid form, much more adaptable to the narrative. In relation to the vocal approach to this work, Budden makes the following observations:"The grand vocal gesture occurs only by way of parody as in Ford's monologue or where the wives read aloud the flowery conclusion of Falstaffs letter. The singers are expected to pick up the melodic thread s from each other an d quickly pass them on. Of the four women all except Meg Page could be accounted principals; yet Verdi hurls them all onto the stage at once in airy conversation . The qualities that he requires for his artists are purity of tone and that combined accuracy of verbal and musical attack known as 'accento'. If Falstaff finds little favour amongst the groundlings, it has scarcely more appeal for the star singer. It is an opera for the connoisseur."[6]

Both his creative nature and the historical-artistic circumstances in which he was engaged assigned him a substantially conservative position. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between Verdi's art (which he managed to bring to extraordinary stylistic advances with Otello and Fastaff), and Verdi's ideas, which, more often than not, are hastily reduced to the famous motto invoking the return to the past. In the view of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, the composer presents himself as follows: "Noble,

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[6] Budden, Julian. *Verdi,* p. 301.

simple, with a degree of unbroken vitality and vast power of creation and organization, Verdi is the voice of a world which is no more."[7]

I.5.5. The challenge of interpreting Verdi

What are the characteristics of a "Verdi voice" and what sets it apart, for example, from a "Mozart voice" or "Verismo voice"? We do not possess a complete answer, free from ambiguity. However, there is one certainty: a Verdi voice is ample, "colorful," flexible, and possesses the ability to translate the so-called "stage word" into musical forms. Thus, the Verdi interpreter has the capacity to "sculpt" the literary text through their vocal abilities and present the dramatic situation in much clearer terms. Performers had to possess vocal breadth and range, clear articulation, energetic expression, ability to project the voice effectively (the orchestral mass also amplifies), vigorous attack, etc. A good technical training was no longer enough; a performer had to live his role intensely, bringing the character's many passions and moods to the stage. The appearance, among tenors, of the famous "chest high C" which replaced falsetto's *belcanto* technique for sounds in the high register (above A) was an integral part of a movement towards expressive diversity.

Regarding his performers, real and ideal, Verdi had quite original and very varied ideas. In connection with Lady Macbeth he wanted a devilish character. At the same time, when he listens to Gemma Bellincioni in Rome, in 1882, he finds her the ideal interpreter of Violetta not because she possesses extraordinary vocal abilities, but because she recites the text in a realistic way.

I.5.6. Gaetano Donizetti and Giuseppe Verdi – stylistic receptions and comparisons

Verdi's stylistic evolution, starting from the opera Rigoletto, was likely favored by his departure from historical or somewhat heroic subjects and the shaping of genuine situations and characters. This aspect will be particularly prominent in the opera La Traviata, perhaps the closest creation to the characteristics of "verismo" typical of the early 20th century in terms of setting and content. Verdi from this period (1850-1860) now had his own style, with certain concessions to the bel canto tradition. Compared to Donizetti, he generally demonstrated greater inventiveness, thanks to the richness and variety of themes, elements found in vocal discourse, and the technical knowledge employed.

At times, it would seem that Verdi succumbs to the impulse of his irrepressible inventiveness without imposing an adequate formal discipline, an aspect that he would change in his late work. About certain similarities found in the music of the two composers, musicologist James Hepokoski makes the following observations: "(...) Violetta's two principal slow 'solo' pieces 'Ah! fors'è lui!' and 'Addio, del passato', are closely linked. For the moment we might notice only that they share elements of the same

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[7] Berlin, Isaiah. The Naiveté of Verdi, The Hudson Review, Spring 1968 (Volume XXI, No. 1.

topos. Considering 'Il faut partir' as a particularly apt model, it is as if Donizetti piece's melodic contours, F-minor-major tonality and general refrain effect went to 'Ah! fors'è lui', while its characteristic 'generic' timbres went to 'Addio, del passato'(...)"[8]

Fig. 2 Aria *Il faut partir* from the opera *La fille du régiment*, measures 10-14

Fig. 3 Aria *Ah fors'è lui* from the opera *La Traviata*, measures 1-12

Fig. 4 Aria *Addio, del passato* from the opera *La Traviata*, measures 3-7

I.5.7. The new generation of composers and the perpetuation of Verdi's style

A complete presentation of the darkest melodramatic effects materialized through the libretto prepared by Arrigo Boito for the opera *La Gioconda* (1876) by **Amilcare Ponchielli**; this work partially follows the features of Verdi's style but disperses the theatrical effects and beautiful melodic flourishes. In relation to the vocality found in Ponchielli's works, the conductor Cristian Sandu makes the following observations: "The quality of his lyricism is entirely tributary to Verdi. The cantability of its lines, circumscribed by broad, diatonic arches, as in the case of Laura and Gioconda, make us think of characters such as Leonora, Amelia or Violetta. No less Verdian is the character of Enzo both in his amorous outpourings and in his heroic attitude at the end of Act II."[9]

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[8] Hepokoski, James A. "Genre and Content in Mid-Century Verdi: 'Addio, Del Passato' ('La Traviata', Act III)." Cambridge Opera Journal, vol. 1, no. 3, 1989, pp. 249–76.

[9] Sandu, Cristian. *Stilemele verismului în evoluția operei moderne*, pp. 90-91.

Another representative composer was **Arrigo Boito**. The opera *Mefistofele* (1868) showed a certain degree of innovation. The musical language found here is less fluent and less easy compared to that found in conventional works, also fighting against the usual rhythmic-tonal formulas. The turning point of operatic taste in the second half of the 19th century is due to a new sensibility; this will be found in the art of **Alfredo Catalani**.

CHAPTER II – THE *BELCANTO* CONCEPT: BETWEEN PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND THE OUTLINE OF A NEW INTERPRETATIVE STYLE

II.1. Historical aspects

Numerous definitions have been issued about the term "bel canto", which include both references to the evolution of a vocal technique and the generalization of an opera style. James Stark provides an enlightening definition: "Bel canto is a concept that takes into account two separate but related matters. First, it is a highly refined method of using the singing voice in which the glottal source, the vocal tract, and the respiratory system interact in such a way as to create the qualities of chiaroscuro, appoggio, register equalization, malleability of pitch and intensity, and a pleasing vibrato. The idiomatic use of this voice includes various forms of vocal onset, legato, portamento, glottal articulation, crescendo, decrescendo, messa di voce, mezza voce, floridity and trills, and tempo rubato. Second, bel canto refers to any style of music that employs this kind of singing in a tasteful and expressive way."[10]

II.2. Constituent elements in the vocal technique associated with the bel canto concept

"The breath becomes voice through the operation of the will, and the instrumentality of the vocal organs."[11]

II.2.1. Breath

Breathing, this vital part of human existence, takes on new meanings in professional vocal singing. In essence, we could say that "the engine of the voice is the breath".[12] The problem of breathing

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[10] Stark, James. *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, pp. 311-312.
[11] Lehmann, Lili. *How to sing*, translated from din German (*Meine Gesangskunst*), p. 23
[12] Dictionary of musical terms, coord. Zeno Vancea, 1984, p. 525.

is essential in the formation of a good singer, and its study has been defined as the true basis of vocal technique.

The vocal writing found in the romantic operatic repertoire (late 18th century, first decades of the 19th century) was particularly marked by two elements: exuberant melody and interpretative virtuosity. These elements frequently served the purpose of demonstrating the performer's technical skills. Numerous types of ornamentation and construction of the vocal line were common so that the performer was expected to freely execute these passages flawlessly in a smooth manner. This required a well-developed voice, the result of solid technique. The performers were encouraged to increase their vocal range and expressive range to facilitate an interpretation that conforms to the new technical-interpretative requirements.

Costo-diaphragmatic breathing provides consistency, adequate vocal support and increases vocal longevity. This type of breathing can only be achieved by establishing a suitable body position: upright posture, with the whole body in alignment. The chest should be slightly raised and the ribs extended so that the muscles can work properly; at the same time, airway obstruction is avoided. Good breath control is clearly the foundation of healthy singing technique.

II.2.1.1. *Appoggio*

The term *appoggio* is used to refer to a support mechanism in singing, involving the inspiratory, resonating, and phonatory systems. Each emitted sound must be well supported, and there should be a sense of muscular connection from the sternum to the pelvis. The ability to effectively manage breathing has also been associated with this vocal technique. The Italian term *appoggio* can be translated as "to lean on" or "support" (this translation is indicative).

II.2.2. Exhalation Control

It is important, before working on adapting breath for professional vocal singing, to perceive the body as an inner space through which breath "flows." We can imagine that air passes through all the internal channels of the body, connecting the trunk with the extremities (through the shoulder and hip joints) and the head (the atlanto-occipital joint). In the case of using the voice for professional purposes (singers, actors, teachers, trainers, etc.), to communicate information, knowledge, or express artistically, a greater muscular activity will be involved as the following will be required:

> → adapting the expiratory flow provided by the abdominal muscles to support the voice;
> → using the chest muscles and the middle section of the trunk properly to strengthen the intensity of the voice without damaging the vocal cords;

→ to do this, the intercostal muscles will be involved, keeping it in the inspiratory position during speech and/or on the muscles of the back and lumbar area;

→ it will also be necessary for the respiratory "bellows" to be very flexible, especially in the section that separates the thorax from the abdomen;

→ it is necessary that inspiration allows great elasticity so that exhalation is in turn "efficient";

→ this muscular activity must take place in a synchronized and efficient manner;

→ on the contrary, the projected voice loses its necessary degree of consistency and the effort is attributed directly to the laryngeal muscles, causing fatigue and, in some cases, generating a chronic alteration of the voice.

II.2.3. Voice placement

In lyrical singing, proper voice placement is one of the essential conditions as it directly influences the quality of sound. Resonance is maximized when the sounds are correctly placed. A correct and balanced sound provides the performer with a sense of comfort (even in the extreme vocal registers) and is pleasing to the ear. The proper use of resonators influences the timbre and quality of the instrument.

Sound projection also implies a certain vigilant attitude. In some situations, the intention to project sound effectively may generate an involuntary forward movement of the head; in reality, however, this movement can cause imbalance in the body's axis. Mindfulness or simply being present while singing can help us gain comfort and control over our own reactions. This attitude reflects on the position of the body and shows a beneficial predisposition to activity -physical or mental- suitable for singing. The sensation of vigilance invoked previously will facilitate the just attack of the sound and the effective onset of the vocal speech, being characterized by:

→ a good alignment on the vertical axis: the body weight is supported on the legs and the upper part of the trunk is straight, with the neck relaxed;

→ activation of the cheekbones through the internal smile which will determine a correct nasal opening and sensitization of the area of the facial resonators;

→ directing the sound towards the soft palate area;

→ the perception that the sound "jumps" in the area of the hard palate, behind the incisors;

→ an elastic opening of the jaw that will sensitize the area of the palate and pharynx to have the support of the facial resonators;

→ good abdominal support.
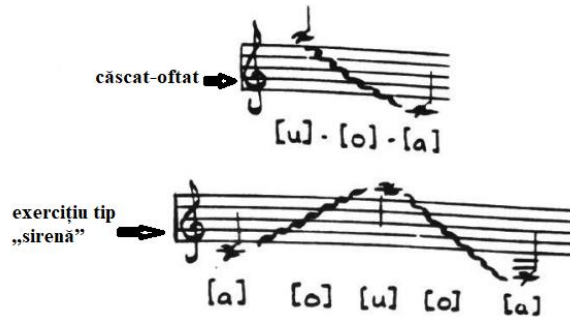
Fig. 5 Exercises for vocal attack[13]

II.2.4. Register equalization

To produce a high-quality, uniform sound, it is ideal for the voice to be equal across all registers. With the exception of interpretative purposes, there should be a seamless transition between registers, so that the listener's perception is that the performer possesses a single vocal register. We consider it appropriate to provide a definition of "vocal register": "What is a vocal register? A series of sounds sung in a certain way, produced by a specific position of the vocal organs - the larynx, tongue, and palate. Each voice includes three registers - chest, mixed, and head. But not all are engaged in every voice type."[14]

Vowel formation and modification are significant steps in the voice equalization process. When the vowels are formed correctly, the sound is more resonant and the text is intelligible throughout the voice. Vowel modification or its Italian equivalent *aggiustamento* prevents the breaking of the vocal line and diminishes the contrast between the possible color changes in the voice registers. This technique is based on a gradual modification of the vowels and a greater control of the breath in the evolution towards the acute register. Vowels should be slightly rounded as the pitch increases, thus lengthening the vocal tract and encouraging a wider opening of the throat, which tends to close in the high register.

II.2.5. Voice classification

When the voice reaches a certain level of maturity, it is primarily classified based on range, color, volume, and flexibility. Both male and female voices are divided into four different categories. In the Western system, the classification of voices is closely related to the acoustic theory of the physician and physicist Hermann von Helmholtz. The most relevant vocal categories have been highlighted.

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[13] The exercises are by Roger Alan Lindquist; taken from Barbara Mathis, *Selected vocal exercises and their relationship to specific laryngeal conditions*, p. 124.

[14] Lehmann, Lili. Op. cit. p. 134

Although we cannot strictly categorize all voices within these parameters, this classification provides educators and students with guidelines on repertoire selection and areas to be studied.

II.2.5.1. Vocal Timbre

As the vocal apparatus matures, the vibrations produced in creating sound come into contact with a more well-defined cartilaginous tissue. Clear timbre (*timbre clair*[15]), a term initially introduced by Garcia, is the result of a short and slightly curved shape of the pharynx, producing a brighter sound quality. On the other hand, dark timbre (*timbre sombre*[16]) is due to an elongated and well-curved shape of the pharynx, resulting in a fuller and more resonant vocal color. However, vocal timbre largely represents the identity of a voice.

II.2.5.2. Impostation

In the didactic approach, it is necessary for the singing master to be able to identify the faulty impostation and offer practical solutions: vocal exercises, adopting a repertoire that can contribute to obtaining a correct impostation, etc. An ideal of impostation is that which results in a clear voice ("voce chiara"). A darker voice is reserved to emphasize the "cupo" quality of the voice (dark, gloomy) which is sometimes necessary in the dramatic moments of the operas. This color change in the singing voice can appear in various postures, especially in the middle register.

II.2.6. Acquiring vocal agility

Before acquiring vocal agility, the performer must master certain elements of a physiological nature to establish a solid foundation. In vocal support, the most important element is the correct use of breathing. We believe that vocal flexibility and vitality are closely related to the quality of the attack, which must be generated only from the breath. In the same way, just agility (where all sounds are equally important) can only be achieved through proper breath management. To achieve vocal agility effectively, involuntary movements of the tongue or jaw are undesirable. Effective breath support and management will create a stable and flexible voice. At the same time, it will develop the elasticity of the lungs so that they can quickly adapt to different levels of breathing pressure.

In the same way, just agility (where all sounds are equally important) can only be achieved through proper breath management. "The practice of agility is of the greatest importance and this applies to every type of voice, male or female. Particularly, a stiff and unyielding voice will get the greatest benefit of agility exercises, which will bring out the true beauty of this voice. It is nothing more

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[15] Garcia, Manuel. *Traité complet de l'art du chant en deux parties*. p. 9.
[16] Idem. p. 10.

than a display of ignorance in matters of vocal development if teachers consider the practice of agility unnecessary. The vocal mastery thus achieved can be attained in no other way, and neither can the time of practice be abridged. Exercises on the Scales cannot be practiced too often and with too much care, they tend to form the voice, to render it flexible, to the purposes which expression and taste may suggest."[17]

II.2.7. Articulation

Proper articulation depends on its coordination with the systems of respiration, phonation, and resonance. Vowels are produced in the laryngeal cavity. Sorina Creangă presented the following relevant aspects: "(...) to avoid speaking dilettantishly, it must be clarified that only the larynx produces sounds, and vocalization occurs in the resonating cavity (...) Beyond the vital function of the larynx as an organ of respiration through which air circulates in the breathing process, and as an organ that protects the respiratory pathway, a social function of emitting sounds necessary for interhuman communication has been added."[18] In singing, vowels, unlike consonants, require a more open and unobstructed mouth position.

II.3. Pedagogical approaches

Giulio Caccini's introduction in *Le Nuove Musiche* provides a clear description and notation of the most important vocal ornaments used in monody, aesthetic guidelines, and practical instructions for recreating the ornaments. In the effort to recapture the principles of the old Italian school, many methods have been revised and reissued. One of these is the revised edition of **Nicola Vaccaj**'s vocal method (*Metodo pratico de canto*), initially published in 1832, which is still used by many vocal teachers worldwide.

Fig. 6 Exercise for obtaining the trill from *Le nuove musiche*

Similarly, the tenor and pedagogue **Marco Bordogni** (1789-1856) wrote various series of vocal exercises for both voice and brass instruments. Among those for voice, we note:

- *24 Vocalises faciles et progressives à portée de toutes le voix (Introduction aux 36 Vocalises);*

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[17] Bloem-Hubatka, Daniela. *The Old Italian School of Singing: A Theoretical and Practical Guide*, pp. 114-115.
[18] Creangă, Sorina. *Cântul și vorbirea de performanță*, p. 11.

- 36 Vocalises pour voix de Soprano ou Tenore composé selon le goût moderne (Dédiées à Madame de Coussy).

Another series of vocal exercises belongs to the pianist and composer **Balthazar Lutgen** (1835-1870). His *20 vocalises journalières pour soprano ou tenor pour développer l'agilité de la voix* aim, as specified in the title, to cultivate vocal agility.

II.4. The reverberations of *belcanto* performing art in other musical cultures

The style and technique of *belcanto* originated in Florence and quickly spread to other musical centers in Italy, such as Venice, Rome, and Milan. This style also influenced the operatic art of countries like Germany, France, and England. In Germany, for example, singers and pedagogues such as Julius Christian Stockhausen, Otto Goldschmidt, and Ferdinand Sieber quickly familiarized themselves with the Italian method of singing.

Belcanto style in Italy was assimilated in France as well. Authors, pedagogues, and singers such as Jean-Baptiste Bérard, Bernardo Mengozzi, Alexis de Garaude, and Gilbert-Louis Duprez wrote about vocal art, presenting a fusion between the French and Italian styles. The French were more concerned with diction and the proper articulation of words.

In England, the history of this singing style was similar. For example, in the treatise by singer and theoretician Anselm Bayly (*A Practical Treatise on Singing and Playing, with Just Expression and Real Elegance,* 1771), Pier Francesco Tosi's treatise is repeatedly invoked.

II.4.1. The revival of *belcanto* artistry

In the second half of the 20th century there was a renewed sense of curiosity about bel canto repertoire and technique. In the emergence of this restoration there were several factors that suggest the ever-changing musical and stylistic preferences dictated by each socio-cultural period. An important aspect is the return of the virtuosity and expression characteristic of this style. There was also a revival of the *cantabile* style, which emphasized pure *legato*, proper intonation, and dramatic intensity.

II.4.2. The new generation of performers – the need for a new lyrical prototype

Throughout the 18th century, Italian opera seria dominated Europe, except in France, where *opéra ballet* still prevailed. With the success of Rossini, the barriers between the mezzo-soprano in comic opera and the performers in opera seria became less rigid, and, more importantly, Rossini's opera

seria from the Neapolitan[19] period gave birth to a new vocal style. Vocal approach and singing styles underwent a prominent change during the Romantic era. The new realistic opera of the *Giovane Scuola*[20] generation altered the old balance between words and music, with both components gaining equal importance. In the world of opera, the need for performers who are skilled both vocally and dramatically seems to be inexhaustible.

The world of opera had changed after the Second World War. Until then, singers were familiar with the debut of new works almost every season. Perhaps insecurity about contemporary creation led opera companies to resume the abandoned repertoire, composed largely of the works of Italian romantic composers. Bringing the bel canto repertoire back to the fore had a positive influence on the vocal career of debutante singers from that period. Many performers have sought out the variety and opportunities to master various vocal styles. This is, in part, why we have enjoyed a revival of the vocal chamber genre: the *lied*, the *chanson*, the romance. A significant number of performers have opted for a career in the vocal-symphonic and concert sphere, believing that they are better suited for it from a temperamental and vocal point of view. A balance between opera and vocal chamber music reflects the tradition of *belcanto* – the fusion of words and music. This represented the paradigm in which operatic activity took place in the second half of the 20th century – a return to balance and fundamental values of singing.

II.4.3. *Belcanto* and the viability of interpretation

The viability of interpretation is closely linked to the proper assimilation of a style (in our research, this is bel canto). It is also the result of a conscious choice and a bearer of its own artistic validity. Technical correctness represents a necessary condition for any interpretation. If soloists adhere to the composer's requirements (from which, in our opinion, it is inconceivable to deviate), they can communicate the true poetry of the *belcanto* style. The dramatic rendering of the text naturally arises once the performer internalizes the taste and particular style of the work.

II.4.4. Conclusive ideas

The belcanto style is often characterized by the predominance of vocal virtuosity, associated with one of its distinctive traits: vocal agility. From personal experience, we consider this trait to be defined as follows:

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[19] *Otello* (1816), *Armida* (1817), *Mosè in Egitto* (1818), *La donna del lago* (1819), *Maometto II* (1820).

[20] The group of representative opera composers in Italy, in the second half of the 19th century; he made his debut with Giuseppe Verdi and fully asserted himself through the creation of true composers – Giacomo Puccini, Pietro Mascagni, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Umberto Giordano, etc.

- the ability to sing difficult passages rhythmically with precision and intonational accuracy in the high register;

- maintaining an appropriate sound quality in passage notes and register shifts;

- the capacity to deliver an expressive vocal discourse, covering a wide range and the entire vocal extension.

In conclusion, the viability of interpretation in belcanto is closely tied to the accurate assimilation of the style, technical correctness, and the ability to convey the dramatic essence of the text. Vocal virtuosity, particularly vocal agility, plays a significant role in this style, requiring precision, consistent sound quality, and expressive delivery across the entire vocal range.

CHAPTER III - STYLISTIC AND EXPRESSIVE PECULIARITIES IN DONIZETTI'S AND VERDI'S MATURE CREATION

III.1. The opera *Lucrezia Borgia* - structural, vocal, interpretative aspects

III.1.1. The genesis of the opera – the literary source and interpretative connotations

The dark legend of Lucrezia Borgia circulated among esteemed literary subjects in the 19th century. Indeed, in February 1833, Victor Hugo achieved great success in Paris with his three-act drama Lucrèce Borgia. The appearance of this title at Teatro alla Scala represented a natural consequence, and thus, the impresario Alessandro Lanari[21] offered Donizetti the opportunity to create an opera bearing the same name as Hugo's work.

III.1.2. Lucrezia Borgia and the *Donizetti Renaissance* phenomenon

When we think of "Donizetti Renaissance"[22], the memory flies to performances like *Anna Bolena* from Teatro alla Scala or the entire "Tudors Troligy". However, the preservation of Donizetti's titles on the posters of the Italian theaters was entrusted to other works than those that make up the trilogy (*Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Roberto Devereux*). Often these titles were closely linked to the fame of some performers, without which the performances would not have been as successful.

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[21] One of the most important opera impresarios in Italy in the period 1830-1850.

[22] The revival of some opera titles from Donizetti's creation; novelty phenomenon that appeared in Italian theaters in the late 1950s.

Fig. 7 The autograph[23] of G. Donizetti dedicated to the management of Teatro alla Scala, for the opera
Lucrezia Borgia

Reviewing certain chronological data, it should be mentioned that the opera *Lucrezia Borgia* occupied a significant position in the context of this revival phenomenon. The work was performed at the Metropolitan Opera in 1904, with stars such as tenor Enrico Caruso and baritone Antonio Scotti, with soprano Maria de Marchi. In the second half of the 20th century, the New York success of Lucrezia Borgia is linked to the names of the sopranos Beverly Sills and Renée Fleming.

III.1.3. Hugo's drama under the pen of Felice Romani

Like Hugo, Donizetti himself wrote the preface to his opera. But while *Le Roi s'amuse*, withdrawn in November 1832 after a single performance due to censorship issues, was a resounding failure, Lucrèce Borgia was, on the other hand, an indisputable success. This success is also attributed

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[23] https://www.sothebys.com/zh/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/music-sale-l18406/lot.260.html (accesed on 22.09.2022)

to Felice Romani, who took advantage of the richness of extremely interesting dramatic situations and carefully transformed them into a libretto.

III.1.3.1. Brief presentation of the libretto

The moments relevant to the musical-dramatic action were briefly presented.

III.1.4. Portrayals of the character Lucrezia Borgia in literature and visual arts[24]

The figure of Lucrezia, through various written and painted representations, was alternately outlined within the lines of femininity appropriate to her era or thrown outside these lines and subjected to inevitable judgment. Thus, outside the space of the proper and the acceptable, Lucrezia becomes a "moral monster", the embodiment of frivolity, vice and greed, and at the same time becomes a kind of warning against the temptation to step outside the boundaries of the accepted feminity.

III.1.5. Vocality of the character Lucrezia Borgia in the context of "femme fatale" roles in Italian romantic operas

In opera, controversial female characters have always held a special place. They are the ones who brought "color" to the historical subjects that composers materialized in sound. In terms of vocality, they stand out with a particular structure; the "femme fatale" characters are:

- either dramatic coloratura sopranos who "(...) must display flexibility in high-lying velocity passages yet have great sustaining power"[25]

- or dramatic sopranos, which is "The most ample of all soprano voices (...) She must have great sustaining power, exhibiting both depth and brilliance of timbre as well as an imposing physical presence."[26]

- or dramatic mezzo-sopranos who "(...) often sings as high as and no lower than the dramatic soprano, but her timbre displays depth and the darker colors associated with tragedy, intrigue, jealousy, revenge, or outright evil intention."[27]

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[24] This topic was partially covered in the article: Adetu, Edith Georgiana; Coroiu, Petruța Maria. THE CHARACTER "LUCREZIA BORGIA" OF DONIZETTI'S HOMONYMOUS OPERA. AN ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER AND VOCAL FEATURES. Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, Musica. Jun2022, Vol. 67 Issue 1, p263-276. 14p, 10.24193/subbmusica.2022.1.17.
[25] Miller, Richard. *Training Soprano Voices*, p. 8
[26] Ibid. p. 11.
[27] Ibid. p. 12.

III.1.6. The tradition of *Lucrezia* and the titular sopranos of the role

The creator of the role was **Henriette Méric-Lalande**[28], a versatile soprano according to the repertoire she performed. Another acclaimed interpreter in the role of Lucrezia at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1839 was soprano **Giulia Grisi**[29]. According to her performed repertoire, her vocal style was more lyrical, and her approach involved a lightening of the discourse. A more distant approach from the traditional bel canto style was taken by sopranos **Ester Mazzoleni**[30] (Teatro alla Scala, 1917) and **Giannina Russ**, both performers associated with the verismo repertoire; of course, this aspect influenced the interpretation of Lucrezia. Later on, soprano **Giannina Arangi Lombardi** represented a vocal standard for this role, performing it in the 1933-1934 season at the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. Subsequently, the role was approached by more lyrical sopranos, such as **Katia Ricciarelli** and **Mariella Devia**. Although both performers possess remarkable vocal and interpretative qualities and are recognized for a different repertoire (predominantly Bellini and Rossini), neither of them had the "weight" and vocal color required by the character.

III.2. The interpretative art of the characters from the opera *Lucrezia Borgia*

The complexity of the atmosphere found in the opera is the result of the contribution of all the characters. Divided into various vocal and character categories, each of them brings a distinct note to the drama – it ennobles it or deepens the emotional void through the vocal speech entrusted by the composer.

III.2.1. Technical and interpretative requirements necessary in approaching the titular role

The vocal writing is conceived in a particular manner: it requires lyricism, the ability to perform complex musical phrases in a reduced dynamic range in a legato manner in the Prologue. At the same time, it requires drama and timbral incisiveness in certain moments within the recitatives and in the final scene of the second act of the opera.

The vocal discourse consists of the following musical sections:

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[28] Robinson H. Robinson, Julian Marshall. *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, p. 318.

[29] Forbes, Elisabeth. *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, p. 202.

[30] https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ester-mazzoleni_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ (accessed on 22.11.2022).

The typology of discourse	Title	Moment of the opera
Scena e *Romanza*	*Tranquillo ei posa... Com'e bello!* *Quale incanto!*	Prolog
Duetto	*Ciel! Che vegg'io*	Prolog
Recitativo	*Gente appressa...*	Prolog
Stretta	*Maffio Orsini, signora, son io*	Prolog
Scena e *Duetto*	*Che chiedete?*	Act I
Terzetto	Della Duchessa ai prieghi	Act I
Scena	La gioia de' profani	Act II
Scena ed Aria finale	*M'odi...ah! m'odi*	Act II

Table 1. Role of Lucrezia Borgia - the structure of the vocal discourse

III.2.1.1. Structural-interpretative analysis: Scene and Aria *Tranquillo ei posa ... Com'e è bello* (Prologue)
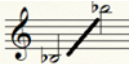
Donizetti remains faithful to the convention that imposes an introductory aria, meant to elevate the first appearance of the prima donna, but in this context, he opts for a romanza. The vocal range found in this moment is a fifteenth and the aria is structured in two parts (Section A - *Andante*, F Major; Section B - *Larghetto cantabile*, E-flat Major). Even in the orchestral introduction preceding the aria, the indication of *Larghetto tempo* and the timbral colors of the string sections, clarinet in C, and oboe emphasize the maternal aspect of the character, through a lyrical and refined character.

Fig. 8 Aria *Tranquillo ei posa... Com'e bello* (measures 145-153)

III.2.1.2. Dramaturgical aspects and interpretative landmarks: *Stretta Maffio Orsini, signora, son io* (the end of the Prologue)

   This moment of the opera is the only concerted number in the score. At a slow march tempo, Gennaro's group of friends led by Maffio Orsini present a succession of reprimands, each repeating or appropriating its melodic theme. The effect of ironic reverence existing in the text is translated musically into a descending profile, associated with firm, elegant accents. These accents are also loaded with a dose of tragedy, through the presence of the dotted rhythm.

   The musical flow is intensified with the change of measure (*Più Allegro*; 12/8), but without moving away from the main musical theme. From a dramaturgical point of view, this concert number represents an "initiation" into the world of carnival. Lucrezia, now masked, is surrounded by all the characters who previously accused her, joined by the chorus. The harmony of this moment is concentrated in a sinister unison, supported orchestrally by clarinets, bassoons, trombones and timpani (mark 57 in the full score). The accusers tear off Lucrezia's mask, pronouncing her name in the most contemptuous tone: "È la Borgia..."[31] The psychological drama of the two protagonists (Lucrezia and Gennaro) begins with this discovery.

Fig. 9 *Stretta Maffio Orsini, signora, son io* (measures 84-88)

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[31] "It's the Borgia…"

III.2.1.3. Structural-interpretative analysis: Scene and Duet Lucrezia-Alfonso – *Che chiedete?* (Act I)

Lucrezia's appearance is marked in the orchestral accompaniment by ascending and descending chromatic passages, thus fueling the tense character of the drama. The first part of the duet is a dialogue, built in the form of a recitative scene. Although the duet presents a confrontation, it unfolds in an elegant manner; Alfonso's first words are preceded by a tempered orchestral discourse (mostly wind instruments and strings), reminiscent of the initial introductory measures of Lucrezia in the *romanza Tranquillo ei posa...Com'e bello*.

Fig. 10 Duet *Che chiedete*, strings motif (measures 19-23)

III.2.1.3.2. Structural-interpretative aspects

The musical score is a complex one, the composer offering a scene before the duet, its form being bipartite, with the following architectural scheme:

scena   introducere orchestrală

introducere orchestrală (măs. 1-11)   recitativ (măs. 12-18 / 19-36 / 37-51 / 52-59 / 60-83)   (măs. 84-89)

A   tranziție

a   av   tranziție   av1   a1   a1v
(măs. 90-96 / 97-108 / 109-112 - 113-124 - 125-131 / 132-145)   (măs. 146-149 / 150-171 / 172-183 / 184-196)

B

B (măs. 197-204 / 205-213 / 214-221 / 222-236)   B1 (măs. 237-244 / 245-253 / 254-264)   tranziție (măs. 265-275)

Bv (măs. 276-283 / 284-291 / 292-299 / 300-314)   concluzia (măs. 315-332)

Fig. 11 The formal scheme of the scene

The scene consists of five melodic segments with an orchestral introduction. A good part of Lucrezia's interventions are elaborated without accompaniment, with the exception of the first two musical phrases.

III.2.1.4. Structural-interpretative analysis: Trio Lucrezia, Gennaro, Alfonso (the and of Act I)

III.2.1.4.1. Elements of musical dramaturgy

Donizetti emphasizes the psychological valences of the character Alfonso d'Este and gives him the status of a good actor. The elegance of his vocal discourse is constituted by the following elements: the *Larghetto* tempo, the ternary rhythm, a timbral sonority different from that presented in previous contexts, the delicate sonority of the orchestra (pizzicato string parts, accompanied by clarinet and bassoon in the piano); all this gives an aristocratic character.

III.2.1.4.2. Structural-interpretative aspects

The trio is organized into three broad sections, a form often found in Donizetti's operas. The formal delimitation of the score was possible due to agogic indications and harmonic changes:

- *Andante*: "Della Duchessa…"
- *Larghetto*: "Guai se ti sfugge…"
- *Cabaletta*: "Infelice il veleno bevesti…"

recitativ	A							tranziție
	intro	a	a1	av	a1v tranziție av1	a2		
(măs. 1-18)	(măs. 19-22 / 23-30 / 31-40 / 41-48 / 49-55 / 56-63 / 64-72 / 73-79)							(măs. 80-87 / 88-93 / 94-101)
	Andante La Major							

B				tranziție
b	bv	b1	bv1	
(măs. 102-105 / 106-109 / 110-114 / 115-118)				(măs. 119-133 / 134-147 / 148-164)
Larghetto Lab Major				

C		
C	C'	tranziție
(măs. 165-173 / 174-181 / 182-193 / 194-208)	(măs. 209-217 / 218-225 / 226-237 / 238-252)	(măs. 253-261)
Allegro vivace Fa Major		
		concluzie
Cv		
(măs. 262-277 / 278-289 / 260-305)		(măs. 306-316 / 317-334 / 335-353)

Fig. 12 The formal scheme of the trio

The successful Larghetto *Guai se ti sfugge un moto* is one of the most beautiful passages in the score. Alfonso's concise phrases, played in staccato sixteenth notes, reveal feelings of anger and disgust, barely contained. Lucrezia's discourse is resumed in the third measure of this section and represents a re-exposure of the musical material: she repeats the Duke's melody exactly, with different lyrics. Gennaro reappears in the fifth measure; his discourse is characterized by a wide, uninterrupted melodic line, with the character's vocal range being intensely utilized in the high register.

Fig. 13 Act I final trio *Lucrezia Borgia* (measures 102-106)

III.2.1.5. Structural-interpretative analysis: Scene and Aria Lucrezia-Gennaro *M'odi…ah! m'odi…Era desso il figlio mio* (the end of Act II)

III.2.1.5.1. Elements of musical dramaturgy

The final scene of Lucrezia, *M'odi, ah m'odi*, represents one of Donizetti's representative achievements in terms of musical drama. Comparable to this scene is the duet between Maria Stuarda and Elisabetta I, *Figlia impura di Bolena*, from the opera *Maria Stuarda*. Through the versatility of

timbral colors, through the released emotional charge, the great scene *Tu pur qui?* that precedes the final aria has the value of a duet, even if it is expressed in the form of an *arioso dialogue*. Lucrezia begins it with a structural motif (in F minor) consisting of two short, ascending lines (perfectly adapted here to an interrogative text). The orchestral discourse features a funeral melody in the string parts.

Here Donizetti alternates phrases of perfect lyricism with passionate passages of coloratura, articulated by an unexpected tempo change. Here, the presence of death and divine punishment bring together the extremes of Lucrezia's vocal *tessitura* revealing two opposing vocalities; this is one of the characteristics of the dramatic coloratura soprano.

III.2.1.6. Structural-interpretative aspects

The scene *M'odi, ah! m'odi* is structured in a bipartite form **AB**, which flanks a large transitional section in two stages, having the following scheme:
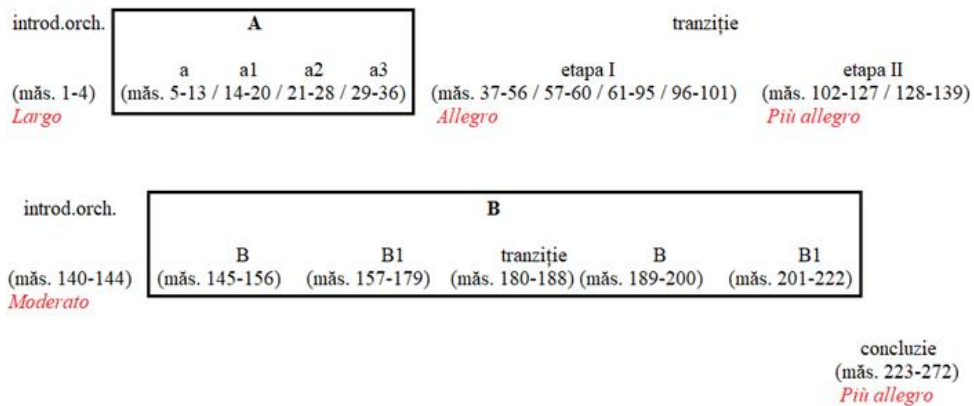
Fig. 14 The formal scheme of the scene

The aria begins with an orchestral introduction of four measures, a melodic route that will progressively evolve in the melodic development of the first part. Section A, *Largo*, consists of four musical periods (9+7+8+8) based on harmonic pillars of the E Major key, with gradual inflections towards G sharp minor. In the first phrase, we observe an undulating, fluid melody, predominantly constructed with short durations, supported by an airy accompaniment with a melodic substrate derived from the introduction.

III.2.1.7. Lucrezia - notable influence on the prototype of Verdi soprano

Donizetti roles such as *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Maria di Rohan*, and others represent demanding solo parts, as they mark a new form of vocal expression. Approaching these roles requires a series of qualities, both technical and interpretative, as well as acting abilities, suggesting the pinnacle of vocal expressiveness. With the exception of the agility in the final scene that no longer fully corresponds to Verdi's mature writing style, the range and timbral color required for the role of Lucrezia Borgia are also demanded of sopranos who undertake roles such as Elena in *I vespri siciliani*, Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera*, Aida in the eponymous opera, etc.

III.2.2. Vocal characteristics of the other three protagonist characters - specific aspects

III.2.2.1. Gennaro – the fragility of the Donizetti tenor following Hugo's pattern

In Felice Romani's conception, Gennaro takes on the features of the original literary model. And in Victor Hugo's drama, the young man seems innocent, gullible, a visible aspect in the action (for example, the confidence he shows in the face of Alfonso d'Este's alleged leniency). Without a passionate stake, this character is not gifted with a heroic temperament.

III.2.2.1.1. Structural-interpretative analysis: Duet Lucrezia-Gennaro - *Ciel! Che vegg'io?* (Prologue)

Structurally, this duet is designed in tripartite form, **ABC**. The delimitation of the constitutive sections was carried out following the composer's instructions, each of which is distinguished by a different *tempo*.

In terms of vocality, this duet especially emphasizes the tenor voice. Section **B** in our analysis corresponds to a representative moment in the vocal discourse of the character Gennaro. The moment *Di pescatore ignobile* can be extracted from the context of the duet and interpreted as an aria. This is a self-description of the character, a scene of great intimacy. It is often found in the concert repertoire of well-known tenors.[32]

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[32] We refer to performers such as Alfredo Kraus, Alain Vinzo, Salvatore Fisichella, etc.

Fig. 15 The formal scheme of the duet

The incipit of this duet is organized in the manner of a melodic recitative, the lines of the characters being complemented by the accompaniment in the form of repetitive and modulatory chords in the key of G minor.

III.2.2.2. Alfonso d'Este – the versatility of Donizetti baritone

The works of Donizetti's mature oeuvre offer the most eloquent examples and truly authentic pillars of the baritone voice. Undoubtedly, the immense popularity of the composer facilitated encounters with some of the most important baritones of his time.

The role of Alfonso d'Este, although not extensive in dimension, requires, in addition to a sculptural and noble accent, technical preparation that allows the interpreter to perform:

- elegant cantilenas,
- agility passages in the high register,
- dynamic variety both in the recitative scenes and in the lyrical moments,
- the ability to use the vocal timbre to express the suspicions of jealousy and the disdainful irony of a powerful man who, under the mask of clemency, premeditates revenge.

III.2.2.2.1. Structural-interpretative landmarks: Cavatina *Vieni la mia vendetta* (Act I)

For a more detailed presentation of the vocality of this character, we propose for analysis the only soloist moment dedicated to Alfonso, located in the incipit of Act I. The scope of this moment is duodecima and the vocal *tessitura* emphasizes both the middle register and the high

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register. Thus, over time, this role has been approached by both baritones, bass-baritones and even basses.

The form of the cavatina is bipartite **AB**, preceded by a scene organized in the manner of a recitative and a conclusion that drives the entire dramatic action. Harmonically, we note the following aspects: the recitative scene is written in the key of C Major, section A – A flat Major, section B – A flat Major/ E flat minor, A flat Major.

Alfonso d'Este is an offering role, approached throughout the history of the opera *Lucrezia Borgia* by performers belonging to various vocal categories, as I mentioned before. Among the outstanding performers of this character we mention the following: bass Ezio Flagello, bass Mario Petri, baritone Kostas Pascalis, baritone Michele Pertusi.

III.2.2.3. Maffio Orsini – the courage of Donizetti's character *en travestie*

In the cast of Lucrezia Borgia, Maffio Orsini embodies a true *primo uomo*[33]. The role is dedicated to the mezzo-soprano/contralto voice *en travestie* and requires a fiery stage temperament. In addition to Orsini, Donizetti created no less than 16 similar characters. However, Orsini is an exception: his feminine timbre is highlighted even more because they are surrounded by male voices in every appearance; Orsini and Lucrezia are the only characters represented by female voices.

His masculine character is affirmed in his solo moments. The two arias entrusted to him suggestively represent:

- a suspenseful narrative that mixes memories of the fight and a horrifying episode (*Nella fatal de Rimini*, Prologue)

- a drunken song, according to a soldier dominated by an expansive character (*Il segreto per esser felici*, Act II).

Of course, this character benefited from all the subtleties of the *belcanto* art. The mezzo-soprano/contralto's vocals exude a kind of sensuality, even when she embodies a male character.

III.2.2.3.1. Structural-interpretative landmarks: *Romanza Nella fatal de Rimini* (Prologue)

To continue the presentation of the character and their vocal characteristics, we have selected the aria "Nella fatal de Rimini" for analysis. In the complete score, this solo moment is defined as a *romanza*, due to its ternary rhythm, placid character, and sparse accompaniment. The vocal range in

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[33] Main performer in the opera, analogous to *prima donna*.

this moment is a thirteenth and the vocal *tessitura* showcases the middle register, with certain passages extending to the high register .

The form of the aria is bistrophic - **AAv**. Harmonically, we note the following aspects: section **A** is designed in the key of B minor, with modulation to the key of D Major in measure 11; the **Av** section is conceived within the same tonal plane (B minor, with modulation to the key of D Major in measure 34). The theme of the aria is organized in the manner of an accompanied monody, having a wavy melodic line and the orchestral accompaniment is presented in simple chords, in a reduced dynamic. The minor key is what gives this moment its funereal character.

Fig. 16 Romanza *Nella fatal de Rimini* (measures 1-9)

In relation to the relevance of the speech of the character Maffio Orsini within the musical dramaturgy, the following aspects are important: "In *Lucrezia Borgia*, an opera obsessed with dramatic continuity, Maffio Orsini's two ballads provide an internal connection in the largest scenic blocks, and the second ballad prepares the way (by means of contrast) for the penitents' chorus, providing an extraordinary theatrical effect in spite of the implausibility of its plot."[34] Among the great interpreters of this role, we mention the contrals: Shirley Verrett, Ewa Podles, Anna Maria Rota, Marianna Pizzolato, Cora Canne Meijer.

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[34] Zoppelli, Luca, et al. "'Stage Music' in Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera." Cambridge Opera Journal, vol. 2, no. 1, 1990, pp. 29–39.

III.3. Opera *A Masked Ball* – structural, vocal, interpretative aspects

III.3.1. The literary source and its representation in 19th century opera music

The opera *A Masked Ball* has been considered by some researchers as a kind of *Tristan and Isolde*. The subject is not highly innovative – it romanticizes Eugène Scribe's vision of the historical death at a masked ball of Gustav III, King of Sweden, in 1792. The subject had been established in both Gustav Auber's 1833 version and Salvatore Cammarano's Italian adaptation in *Il reggente* to the music of Saverio Mercadante, without much distinction.

III.3.1.1. The libretto of the opera under the pen of Antonio Somma

The moments relevant to the musical-dramatic action were briefly presented.

III.3.2. Observations on musical language

A Masked Ball marks the end of the "middle" period in Verdi's work and represents an important point in the composer's musical progress. It contains far greater musical variety and orchestral inventiveness than any of the previous operas, and more than ever the score is in tune with the dramatic structure of the work. In this work, the composer demonstrates a much greater flexibility in the use of instrumental timbres, especially with regard to wind instruments. Inner voices such as bassoons and violas are given much more active parts, resulting in an orchestral life laden with subtleties. The structure of the vocal discourse is freer in relation to the post-Rossinian tradition, being at the same time more balanced. Also, the vocality of the characters is of major interest, covering a variety of typologies.

III.3.3. *A Masked Ball* and echoes of Donizetti's drama *Maria di Rohan*

We considered it relevant to mention the opera *Maria di Rohan* because it generally presents the same family drama as the one in *A Masked Ball*, but keeping the proportions of a synthetic drama. At the same time, there are certain similarities in the vocal discourse of the characters; Maria di Rohan's aria *Havvi un Dio* resembles the *Andante* section of Amelia's cavatina, *Ma dall'arrido stelo divulsa* (both introduced by the sonority of the English horn). The choice of the first cast of the show was also interesting, the performers who created the characters for the first time being familiar with Verdi's repertoire: "(...) Ronconi (Verdi's first Nabucco in 1842) would sing the role of Duca di Chevreuse (per baritone). La Tadolini, Maria di Rohan, was a notta prima donna, the first protagonist in Linda di Chamounix in Vienna in 1842 and creator of the eponymous role of Alzira (1845) by Verdi. In 1843 and

1846 the tenor Guasco, the Count of Chalais, would take part in alle prime di alcune opere Verdiane I Lombardi alla prima Crociata, Ernani e Attila."[35]

III.4. The interpretative art of the characters from the opera *A Masked Ball*

III.4.1. Technical and interpretative requirements necessary in approaching the role of Amelia[36]

The score intended for Amelia outlines one of the most difficult vocal types in Verdi's female repertoire. With a vocality predominantly oriented towards the middle register, according to the skills of soprano Marie-Cornélie Falcon[37], Verdi followed Auber's dramaturgical structure and placed numerous orchestral moments preceding Amelia's arias. Regarding Amelia's vocals, we present the following observations: "Her vocal part is exceptionally hard, benefiting by heavier voices of dramatic sopranos, such as Zinka Milanov and Maria Callas, Martina Arroyo and even Birgit Nilsson."[38]

III.4.2. Affective portrait of the character

Amelia, in Verdi's conception, does not undergo substantial modifications compared to *Gustave III, ou Le bal masqué* by Auber or *Il reggente* by Mercadante. Verdi creates a vivid portrait dominated by entirely new shades of an unleashed passion.

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[35] Gossett, Philip, and Daniela Macchione. "UNA NUOVA FONTE PER 'MARIA DI ROHAN.'" Rivista Italiana Di Musicologia, vol. 43/45, 2008, pp. 223–46; "(…) Ronconi (il primo Nabucco di Verdi nel 1842) avrebbe gia cantato nel ruolo di Duca di Chevreuse (per baritono). La Tadolini, Maria di Rohan, era una notta *prima donna*, prima protagonista nella *Linda di Chamounix* a Vienna nel 1842 e creatrice del ruolo eponimo dell'*Alzira* (1845) di Verdi. Tra il 1843 e il 1846 il tenore Guasco, il Conte di Chalais, avrebbe partecipato alle prime di alcune opere verdiane *I Lombardi alla prima Crociata*, *Ernani* e *Attila*."

[36] This topic was partially covered in the article: **Adetu**, Edith Georgiana. The role of Amelia in Giuseppe Verdi's "Un ballo in maschera" - Vocality and Technical-interpretative Coordinates, Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Series VIII: Performing Arts, Vol. 15(64) No. 2 (2022), https://doi.org/10.31926/but.pa.2022.15.64.2.1.

[37] The first performer of the role of Amélie in the opera *Gustave III, ou Le bal masque* by Daniel Auber; the opera's libretto also belongs to Eugène Scribe.

[38] Lederer, Victor. *Verdi: the operas and choral works*. p. 179.

III.4.3. Structural-interpretative analysis: Amelia's Recitative and Cavatina *Ecco l'orrido campo… Ma dall'arido stello divulsa* (Act II)

Usually, the cavatina has a pronounced expositional character. It reveals a retrospective attitude and a lyrical disposition of the protagonist, and these aspects naturally influence both the content of the literary text and the entire structure of the discourse.

III.4.3.1. Specific structural aspects of Verdi's cavatina

Until his mature works, Verdi's "entrance" arias follow a clearly defined and stereotypical structural scheme that was already common in his earlier works. We refer to the arrangement in four parts, consisting of:

- an introductory recitative or *Scena*

- a slow movement of arias, the so-called *Primo Tempo* or *Cantabile*

- an intermediate scenic part, *Tempo di mezzo* or *Intermezzo*

- a fast movement of arias or the well-known *Cabaletta*

For example, Leonora's arias in *Il Trovatore* and Violetta's aria in Act I of *La Traviata* are presented in this standard form. However, Amelia's scene follows a construction principle that is largely independent.

III.4.3.2. Landmarks of musical dramaturgy

In this scene from the second act of the opera, a lonely field is presented, located at the foot of a hill that is about to collapse, where two gallows are vaguely perceived in the weak moonlight. The landscape is sinister and the accuracy of the description of this place in Amelia's speech brings to mind the scenes found in Verismo[39] or even in Expressionism.[40]

III.4.3.3. Structural and interpretative landmarks

Cavatina *Ma dall'arido stelo divulsa* is preceded by a large orchestral introduction in tristrophic form, having the following scheme:

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[39] We are referring here to the end of Act IV of the opera *Manon Lescaut* by Giacomo Puccini.
[40] We are referring here to the expressionist monodrama *Erwartung* by Arnold Schönberg.

A	B	tranziție	A1
(măs. 1-28)	(măs. 29-56)	(măs. 57-64)	(măs. 65-89)
re minor	*Re major*	~	*re minor*

This orchestral introduction has a dual function: it "paints" both the outer setting (the sinister torture field where the capital executions take place) and the inner turmoil that paralyzes Amelia.

The aria itself also has a tristophic form, with recitative and conclusion. The recitative, composed of three periods, is highlighted by the *Allegro agitato* tempo indication and is built in the manner of a dialogue between the solo line and the orchestral accompaniment. Of course, certain agogic and dynamic liberties are allowed, if their realization involves a close connection with Amelia's emotional fluctuations. The first phrase of the recitative betrays a feeling of nervousness, its expression in the song being imperatively necessary. Thus, the attack on the sound A in the first measure of the recitative must be precise, but not "hit" with a *coup de glotte*.[41]

Fig. 17 Recitative *Ecco l'orrido campo...* (measures 1-10)

The aria consists of a beautiful cantilena alternating with declamatory pages that edifyingly suggest the emotional conflict. Section A, Andante, consists of four musical periods. The first is entrusted to the accompaniment and can be considered the introduction, having a meditative line based on a descending undulating melody. In the Andante, Verdi multiplies the expressive indications,

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[41] Glottal attack.

an aspect that requires the performer to have greater vocal versatility, in accordance with the implications of the text and the different agogic moods that follow:

- *con espressione*,
- s*morzando,*
- *con dolore,*
- *marcato il canto,*
- *cantabile*,
- *con calore*,
- *con spavento*,
- *con voce soffocata*,
- *con passione,*
- *morendo.*

The rewarding ending found in Amelia's cavatina inspired a series of performers to "shape" this cadence according to their own vocal and interpretative qualities. In this regard, we present the version of the great soprano Eugenia Burzio.

Fig. 18 The *cadenza* at the end of the aria *Ma dall'arido stello divulsa* in Eugenia Burzio's version[42]

III.4.3.4. Conclusive ideas regarding the structure and musical dramaturgy of this cavatina

If Amelia's cavatina is compared to the other romanzas labeled as such by Verdi himself or his publishers, both the tempo and the meter coincide with most of them. Some peculiarities of Verdi's *romanzas*[43] include:

- *Andante* tempo,
- Ternary rhythm (3/4, 3/8, 6/8, etc.),
- Typically, the introduction is assigned to a woodwind instrument.

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[42] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C_uY1j65KU&ab_channel=EugeniaBurzio-Topic (accesed on 18.08.2022)

[43] Among the Verdi's romanzas studied and interpreted, we mention: *O fatidica foresta* (role Giovanna) from *Giovanna d'Arco*, *Liberamente or piangi* (role Odabella) from *Attila*, Non so le tetre immagini (role Medora) from *Il Corsaro*, *O cieli azzuri* (role Aïda) from the opera *Aida*.

Therefore, Amelia's cavatina represents a fusion of distinct elements, with different types of arias overlapping. Such a discourse requires a concise idea of the dramatic situation, and its realization depends on a suitable textual foundation in form and content.

III.4.4. Structural-interpretative analysis: Duet Amelia-Riccardo *Teco io stò. Gran Dio!* (Act II)

This duet represents the central moment of the entire opera. It is structured in the traditional movements; the first two reflect each other, while the third movement unfolds in a constant, deeply emotional crescendo. At this point in the opera, the soloists tend to be carried away by their interpretation, risking the loss of coherence. Thus, the development of this moment, both musically and emotionally, is left to the orchestra. The same theme, sung by both protagonists, is presented in the cabaletta *Oh, qual soave brivido*, completely deviating from the usual formal emphasis. The harp accompaniment sonically describes this ecstatic moment, but it does not possess an angelic character, rather a feverish one; the *tempo* is less incisive compared to the preceding *Allegro agitato*.

Regarding the timbral textures chosen by Verdi for this moment, the researcher Emanuele Senici presents the following ideas: "Verdi employs other musical parameters to set this movement apart from everything that comes before, most importantly orchestration. The harp, never heard before in the score, takes pride of place in the orchestra, performing its usual Verdian timbre role, voice of ecstasy and transcendence."[44]

III.4.5. Interpretative landmarks: Scene and Trio Amelia-Riccardo-Renato (Act II)

This scene marks a return to drama after the lyrical character found in the duet between Amelia and Riccardo. The ensemble is structured as follows:

- *Tempo d'attacco* (*Allegro mosso* in F major: "Tu qui?"); Renato enters the scene.

- Short dialogue between Riccardo and Renato in the form of a recitative (*Amico, gelosa t'affido*).

- The trio itself, in D minor (*Presto assai: Odi tu come fremono cupi*).

The trio's driving energy is due to its fast *tempo* PRESTO ASSAI ♩.=108 , short values, anapestic rhythms, and the chanting of the orchestra in repeated chords. The vocal lines translate the nervousness of the protagonists, transiting to the acute register in disordered movements generated

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[44] Senici, Emanuele. *Cambridge Opera Journal* Vol. 14, No. 1/2, Primal Scenes: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of California, Berkeley, 30 November-2 December, 2001 (Mar., 2002), pp. 79-92.

by the ascending-descending alternation; the speech of the soloists evolves from murmured recitative to melodic singing.

III.4.5.1. Interpretative landmarks: Scene and Quartet Amelia-Renato-Samuel-Tom (Final Act II)

The tense character of this moment is conveyed through the alternation of staccato and legato articulation in the musical discourse, combined with the dynamic appoggiaturas of the violins and the flute trills. These elements accompany the mocking responses of the conspirators after they understand the nature of the relationship between Amelia and Riccardo. The descending and repeated melodic progression of the conspirators' "laughter" reinforces the character of a masquerade.

Fig. 19 Sam's laughter *Ve' se di notte*

III.4.5.2. Structural-interpretative analysis: Scene and Duet Renato-Amelia *A tal colpa é nulla il pianto* (Act III)

The character found in the opening of Act III does not differ from the previous act. The scene is organized in the manner of a sung recitative, although some sections resemble a duet. This act's beginning consists of several fragments, following the following formal and harmonic plan:
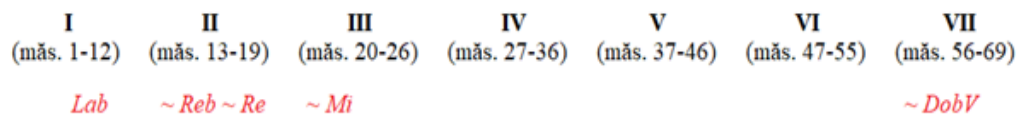
Fig. 20 Formal and harmonic scheme of the Scene and Duet

The dotted rhythm, marcato marks and unisons reduce the great orchestral mass to a stern and cold line, suggesting an emotional violence, subdued to this point. The melodic structure

reproduces the movement of rising fury: a repeated sound gives rise to a one-measure trill, then an ascending arpeggio marks the explosive character sustained by the entire orchestra.

Fig. 21 Scene *A tal colpa é nulla il pianto*, orchestral introduction (measures 1-8)

III.4.6. Structural-interpretative analysis: Amelia's aria *Morró, ma prima in grazia* (Act III)

The aria represents a pure example of the *belcanto* style, as the ample phrases and reduced dynamics constitute reference elements. Performing this aria is even more challenging because it is inserted near the end of the opera, after the singer has already tackled other dramatic moments vocally. The musical content does not present a major contrast between the constituent sections of the aria: the central part, "morrò, ma queste viscere," evolves in the same colors and tonalities found in the outer sections. In terms of vocal performance, both the middle and upper registers of the singer are showcased through a linear discourse.

The orchestral introduction illustrates an undulating melody with a tendency towards the low register. The first musical period stands out for its airy accompaniment and reduced dynamics. The vocal line is also wavy, capitalizing on the rhythmic figures present in the introduction. After pages of anger that precede this poignant moment, a cello solo stands out from within the orchestra that will accompany Amelia's vocal discourse throughout the aria. We notice it three measures before Amelia, after an overwhelming silence, utters a single word: "morrò".

Fig. 22 Aria *Morró, ma prima in grazia* (measures 1-10)

III.4.7. Vocality of male characters - particular aspects

III.4.7.1. Riccardo – the verve and elegance of the Verdi tenor

Riccardo embodies a new type of male character, rich in psychological facets. In the development of his discourse, the singing can never be monochrome or flat, as one of the "Verdi accents" lies in the following: the composer never allows the interpreter a moment of rest but accompanies them throughout the entire opera with his particular richness. We can notice expressive tempo and dynamic indications: *crescendo-decrescendo*, *fermata*, *pianissimo-fortissimo*, as well as well-known directives like *morendo*, *cupo*, etc., as found in the aria *Ma se m'è forza perderti* from Act III.

III.4.7.2. Interpretative landmarks: Aria *Ma se m'è forza perderti* (Act III)

Noteworthy interpretations of this aria have been presented. In the 20th and 21st centuries, the role has been performed by representative tenors such as Mario del Monaco, Luciano Pavarotti, Giuseppe Giacomini, Jaume Aragall, and Gianni Poggi. The role of Riccardo represents a test that each of the mentioned interpreters has surpassed, utilizing their own vocal and interpretative resources.

III.4.8. Renato – the passion and grandeur of the Verdi baritone

Renato possesses the vocal and dramatic versatility of the "Verdi baritone". To give a definition to this type of character, we will present the following descriptions: "older men weighted with an implacable authority drawn from family tradition, political power, social status, or religious prerogative."[45]

III.4.8.1. Structural-interpretative landmarks: Aria *Alzati... Eri tu che macchiavi quell'anima* (Act III)

This score is built on a bistrophic form, with recitative and conclusion. The delimitation of the constituent sections is due to the change of *tempo*, the development of solo lines or accompanying layers, and frequent modulations to parallel and homonymous keys. Additionally, we encounter sonority from Amelia's aria, *Morrò, ma prima in grazia*, which will enhance the tense character. Verdi explores the upper register of the baritone voice and dedicates a series of phrases with a *tessitura* ranging between the notes E and G.

The recitative stands out for the *Andante* tempo indication, being built from succinct lines that evolve into broad phrases. The relationship between the vocal discourse and the orchestral accompaniment outlines a fluctuating character, amplified by the punctuated rhythm and reduced dynamics.

Fig. 23 Recitative *Alzati...* (measures 1-5)

Regarding the progress of the baritone voice, for a better overview, we consider on one hand the evolution of the bass-baritones in the *belcanto* tradition, such as Antonio Tamburini, and on the other hand, the evolution of the "baritenor" voice type, like Domenico Donzelli. Overall, the tessitura of

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[45] Edwards Goeffrey, Edwards Ryan. *The Verdi Baritone: Studies in the Development of Dramatic Character*, p. 3.

the role of Renato, especially in the aria of Act III, requires a synthesis between the two aforementioned vocal types.

The challenges of this area also involve other aspects of an interpretative nature. These aim at the vocal-theatrical resources through which the double betrayal can be expressed: that of the friend and that of the wife. Similarly, the expression of betrayed masculinity is repeatedly exploited in Verdi's works. To emphasize the ingenuity of Verdi in this scene compared to the corresponding scenes in the operas of Auber and Mercadante, the following ideas are relevant: "The superiority of Verdi in the act of conspiracy is indisputable: it would be enough to establish it in the romance of the baritone "Eri tu che macchiavi quell'anima", where pain and anger are coupled in such a way that the immense popularity of the music does not prevent the full effect of hearing it. Nothing similar in the other two scores, and nothing that can be compared to the entrance of the conspirators (...)"[46] From the history of this show it is clear that a number of baritones relevant to the international lyrical scene approached the role of Renato. Among them, we mention: Ettore Bastianini, Piero Cappuccilli, Alexander Sved, Giorgio Zancanaro, Leo Nucci, Dmitri Hvorostovsky.

III.4.9. The vocality of the other two contrasting female characters

III.4.9.1. Oscar – a aparkling character *en travestie*

This character (the only character en travestie in Verdi's creation, attributed to the soprano voice) - represents a French "borrow"; Italian composers have traditionally preferred the mezzo-soprano/contralto voice for these type of roles. It is also a stereotype of the court page. Both arias entrusted to him have the structure of a French couplet. In *Volta la terrea*, in which he extols the powers of the soothsayer Ulrica, each chorus is preceded by an orchestral roar of laughter. An interesting observation about Oscar's vocals is this: "Verdi probably wanted to balance the deep voices, which support the other roles, with a childlike timbre." [47]In the final scene, Somma follows Scribe in creating a chorus number ("tra la la") for Oscar in response to pressure from Renato, who asks him to identify Riccardo in the whirl of the masquerade ball.

The 20th-century tradition of entrusting the role to great prima donnas like Selma Kurz or Frieda Hempel, rather than "modest" voices, confirms the importance of this role in terms of vocal

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[46] Pascolato, Alessandro. *Re Lear e Ballo in maschera: lettere di Giuseppe Verdi ad Antonio Somma*, p. 34; " La superiorità del Verdi nell'atto della congiura è incontestabile: basterebbe a stabilirla la romanza del baritono "Eri tu che macchiavi quell'anima" dove il dolore e l'ira s'accoppiano per modo che la immensa popolarità della musica non impedisce di sentirne ancora tutto l'effetto. Nulla di simile negli altri due spartiti, e nulla che possa paragonarsi all'entrata dei congiurati(...)"
[47] Eremia, Ramona. *Funcția expresivă a coloraturii vocale,* p. 77.

performance. Other notable interpreters of this role in the 20th and 21st centuries include Rita Streich, Eugenia Ratti, Kathleen Battle, and Diana Damrau.

III.4.9.2. Ulrica – the "dark" voice of Verdi's drama

Ulrica, the fortune-teller whose fate lies in Riccardo's hands, is represented by a deep female voice. She thus embodies a vocal profile based on a "realistic" vision of the contralto voice. In reality, Ulrica represents more than just a character; she is the embodiment of imminent fate. In the opening of the scene in Act I, aptly named *Invocazione*, Verdi conceives a formidable orchestral introduction. It is opened by ample chords reminiscent of the opening of Beethoven's Overture *Coriolan* Op. 62.

Fig. 24 Orchestral introduction aria *Re dell'abisso affrettati* (measures 1-6)

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III.5. Comparative interpretations

In this segment of the research, we made parallels between reference interpretations of the arias of the protagonist female characters from the operas *Lucrezia Borgia* and A Masked Ball. We set out to appreciate the versatility of the soprano voice - so necessary in these two creations - through this comparative approach.

III.5.1. Aria *Era desso il figlio mio - Lucrezia Borgia* (end of Act II)

For the provocative final aria, we have selected two exceptional interpreters: Leyla Gencer[48] and Mariella Devia[49]. An essential aspect resulting from this comparative approach is as follows: both propose the dissolution of artificial dramaticism, outlining Donizetti's character with its vocal purity and nobility. Gencer approaches the role in a declamatory manner, with strongly emphasized dramatic accents, while Devia approaches the role with a more restrained lyrical temperament. Devia's pure and crystalline timbre attracts a fragile Lucrezia, a victim of events rather than an antagonistic character. Gencer's portrayed character stands out in many respects: it is much more passionate, elegant, and contoured in the dark nuances demanded by the work's dramaturgy.

III.5.2. Cavatina *Ecco l'orrido campo...Ma dall'arrido stelo divulsa – A Masked Ball* (Act II)

The list of reference recordings for the opera *A Masked Ball* is extremely diverse and rewarding. However, for Amelia's cavatina in Act II, we have selected two "traditional" interpretations featuring renowned sopranos: Anita Cerquetti[50] and Leontyne Price[51]. We believe that Cerquetti's interpretation reveals a control of Verdi's pathos, resulting in an intensely expressive and emotionally measured performance. Leontyne Price possesses the qualities required by Verdi's writing: an imposing voice used with mastery and undeniable technical competence. Similarly, Price's experience in handling Händel or Mozart roles has trained her in disciplined singing without diminishing expressiveness.

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[48] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwxipxuN7X0&ab_channel=LeylaGencerBest (accesed on 12.10.2021).

[49] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R03P8pO4Tbg&ab_channel=jovi1715 (accesed on 10.08.2021).

[50] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7HuLs92uxw&ab_channel=Addiobelpassato (accesed on în 13.08.2022).

[51] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEYcqnL2f80&ab_channel=Onegin65 (accesat în 27.07.2022).

III.5.3. Lucrezia Borgia and Amelia in the interpretation of the same sopranos

From the beginning of this research, we found it interesting and challenging to delve into these two female roles. Following individual technical studies, intuition guided us towards a thorough investigation of the interpretative aspect. Can Lucrezia Borgia and Amelia be approached by the same voice? To present a truthful argument, we devised a table that provides concrete information about interpreters who have tackled both roles, their vocal type, and details about corresponding performances/recordings. It is important to note that this table does not encompass a comprehensive list; we relied on information found in performance archives, interpreters' biographies, and publicly available discography data.

Interpreter	Vocality	Performances/recordings – role Lucrezia Borgia from the eponymous opera by G. Donizetti	Performances/recordings – role Amelia from opera A Masked Ball by G. Verdi
Thérèse Tietjens	Dramatic soprano	• "Lucrezia Borgia" performance at Hamburg Opera House in 1849.	• A Masked Ball performance at London Lyceum Theatre in 1861.
Teresa Stolz	*Spinto* soprano	• Debut role at Teatro Comunale di Cesena in 1865.	• Debut role at Teatro Comunale di Cesena în 1865.
Giannina Arangi-Lombardi	*Spinto* soprano	• Excerpts from the role recorded between 1929-1933 for Columbia Records.	• Excerpts from the role recorded between 1929-1933 for Columbia Records.
Caterina Mancini	*Dramatic coloratura* soprano	• "Lucrezia Borgia" performance at the Teatro alla Scala in 1951.	• "A Masked Ball" performance at The Gaiety Theater in 1956.
Maria Callas	Soprano *sfogato*	• Stereo recordings for EMI with Lucrezia's arias: "Rossini and Donizetti Arias"; conductor Nicola Rescigno, period 1963-1964.	• Stereo recording for EMI with the complete opera "A Masked Ball"; conductor Atonino Votto, year 1956. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Teatro alla Scala; conductor Gianandrea Gavazzeni, year 1957.

Montserrat Caballé	*Lirico-spinto* soprano	• Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Philadelphia Lyric Opera; conductor Anton Guadagno, year 1969 • Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Teatro alla Scala; conductor Ettore Gracis, year 1970 • Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Gran Teatro del Liceo; conductor Reynald Giovaninetti, year 1970.	• Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", RAI Rome; conductor Bruno Bartoletti, year 1969. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Metropolitan Opera; conductor Francesco Molinari-Pradelli, year 1970. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Gran Teatro del Liceo; conductor Adolfo Camozzo, year 1973. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Teatro alla Scala; conductor Francesco Molinari-Pradelli, year 1975.
Leyla Gencer	*Dramatic coloratura* soprano	• Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli; conductor Carlo Franci, year 1966. • Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Teatro alla Scala; conductor Ettore Gracis, year 1970. • Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Teatro Donizetti di Bergamo; conductor Adolfo Camozzo, year 1971.	• Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Teatro Comunale di Bologna; conductor Oliviero De Fabritiis, year 1961. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Teatro alla Scala; conductor Nino Verchi, year 1973.
Ángeles Gulín	*Dramatic coloratura* soprano	• Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Teatro Comunale	• Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Covent Garden;

		dell'Opera di Genova; conductor Paolo Peloso, year 1972.	conductor Anton Guadagno, year 1971. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Teatro de la Zarzuela de Madrid; conductor Nino Sanzogno, year 1974.
Katia Ricciarelli	*Lyric* soprano	• Performance of "Lucrezia Borgia", Teatro Comunale di Bologna; conductor Gabriele Bellini, year 1984. • Performance of "Lucrezia Borgia", Ópera de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria; conductor Helmut Kukuchi, year 1987.	• Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Covent Garden; conductor Claudio Abbado, year 1975. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Bayerische Staatsoper; conductor Gómez Martínez, year 1977. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Metropolitan Opera; conductor Giuseppe Patanè, year 1980. • Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Opéra National de Paris; conductor Jean-Claude Casadesus, year 1981.
Daniela Dessì	*Lirico-spinto* soprano	• Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli; conductor Filippo Zigante, year 1991.	• Excerpts from the role recorded on the album "Daniela Dessì sings Verdi", Orchestra della Fondazione Arturo Toscanini; conductor Steven Mercurio, year 2008.
Inés Salazar	*Dramatic coloratura* soprano	• Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", *Orchestra*	• Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Orquesta

		Internazionale d'Italia, *Bratislava Chamber Chorus*; conductor Giuliano Carella, year 1993.	Sinfónica de Madrid, Coro de Valencia; conductor Luis Antonio García-Navarro, year 1998.
Adelaide Negri	*Dramatic coloratura* soprano	• Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia", Opera de Buenos Aires; coductor Susana Frangi, year 2000.	• Recording of the performance "A Masked Ball", Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, Washington Opera Chorus; conductor Cal Stewart Kellog, year 1985.
Dimitra Theodossiou	*Spinto* soprano	• Recording of the performance "Lucrezia Borgia" from "Bergamo Musica Festival G. Donizetti"; conductor Tiziano Severini, year 2007.	• Excerpts from the role recorded on the album "Dimitra Theodossiou in Concerto"; at the piano Elda Laro.
Sondra Radvanovsky	*Lirico-spinto* soprano	• Recording of the persormance "Lucrezia Borgia", *Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria, Coro del Festival de Ópera*; conductor Paolo Arrivabeni, year 2007.	• Performance of "A Masked Ball", Metropolitan Opera; conductor Fabio Luisi, year 2012. • Performance of "A Masked Ball", Teatro alla Scala; conductor Nicola Luisotti, year 2022.

Table 2. Partial list of performers who have tackled both roles

III.6. Personal interpretative concepts

III.6.1. Aria *Tranquillo ei posa... Com'è bello* (Prologue – *Lucrezia Borgia*) in personal interpretative vision

This broad aria[52] once again reveals Donizetti's penchant for subtle dramatic effects. The instrumental introduction (measures 1-17), elegant and insinuating, is enough to understand the quality of the music that ideally intertwines with the dramaturgical indications of the score. In the vocal performance of the first musical phrases, we had in mind the dramaturgical indication "guardandolo con affetto". Thus, we constructed ample phrases, seeking a "velvety" sound, strictly adhering to the intervallic jumps intonationally, but without treating them as "obstacles" to the fluidity of the discourse.

The final cadence of this aria (measure 150) was structured as follows:

→   direct, soft attack, maintaining the high position on the B flat 1 sound;

→   the agility passage in the first half of the measure is performed without interruption, the breath being performed before the B flat 2 sound;

→   the sound B flat 2 is attacked directly in mezzo-piano and gradually developed towards mezzo-forte;

→   the descending passage is executed in a slightly extended *tempo*, each sound having a slight expressive "weight"; this does not refer to a lower position or a modification of vocal emission;

→   the sound C 2 is discretely attacked in *piano*, retained in an expressive *fermata*;

→   a discreet *portamento* is performed between the B-flat 2 and E-flat 1;

→   T he reduced dynamics are maintained until the last notes found in the accompaniment.

Fig. 25 Aria *Tranquillo ei posa... Com'e bello* in personal interpretative vision, measures 145-151

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[52] In the score called *Scena e Romanza* through the prism of its musical-dramatic complexity.

III.6.1.1. Personal suggestions for vocal exercises in performing the aria *Tranquillo ei posa... Com'e bello*

One suggestion whose usefulness we experienced in our own study refers to a combined vocal exercise: intervallic jumps of thirds and fifths followed by a descending agility passage. This vocalization aims to achieve the "flow" of the vocal line without thinking of the notes separately; the vocalization will be performed either on the vowel /a/ or on the vowels i-o.

Fig. 26 Vocalize for flexibility and homogenization of registers

III.6.2. Aria *Morrò, ma prima in grazia* (Act III – *A Masked Ball*) in personal interpretative vision

This aria of relatively small dimensions (41 measures) broadly incorporates the vocality of the character Amelia. The dichotomy between lyricism and drama is visible in the vocal writing, and the numerous dynamic turns provide the interpreter with opportunities to showcase vocal and acting qualities. From a personal perspective, this aria has brought us great satisfaction both in concert or recital settings and in the preparation of the complete role, studied under the guidance[53] of master interpreters.

Measures 34-36 set up the grand final cadenza. There are some important aspects that we have followed here:

- we have considered that the repetition of the word "più" has a different emotional substrate each time.

- we kept the dynamics in medium tones, *mezzo-forte/ mezzo-piano*

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[53] From the list of masters who guided us in the preparation of this repertoire, we mention the great soprano of Slovak origin, Gabriela Beňačková. In the summer of 2018, I benefited from your guidance in master classes at the Lubomír Lipský theater in Pelhřimov. Although our vocal performance was still within the parameters of a lyric, with a visible spinto-dramatic potential, she encouraged us to start the study of large-scale dramatic roles such as Leonora from *Il Trovatore*, Amelia from *Un ballo in maschera*, Aida, etc. A very interesting argument was the following: these roles require years of technical and dramaturgical training and their study with just vocalism, without artifices, cannot endanger the voice. Thus, at the appropriate moment, the roles are assimilated and can be fully presented on stage. In essence, you instilled in us this strategy of "small steps to lasting results".

- we aimed to achieve a smooth vocal color and a velvety texture.

Fig. 27 Aria *Morrò, ma prima in grazia* in personal interpretative vision, measures 35–38

Thus, the musical discourse did not become monotonous and the agogic indication con forza represented a bridge to the climax of the aria.

The ideal vocal approach is one that expresses lightness, without shrillness, without pressed sounds.

We approached the solo cadenza at the end of the aria in a rubato manner, thus:

Fig. 28 Aria *Morrò, ma prima in grazia* in personal interpretative vision, measures 39–40

III.6.2.1. Personal suggestions for vocal exercises in performing the aria *Morrò, ma prima in grazia*

The following vocal exercise is very useful for acquiring vocal flexibility and malleability. We have also integrated sustained notes frequently found within the role of Amelia. In executing the vocal exercise, we will aim for the precision and softness of attack, with the dynamics being moderate, between *mezzo-forte* and *mezzo-piano*. The vocalization is expansive and needs to be performed in a single breath, on the vowel /a/.

Fig. 29 Vocal exercise for achieving flexibility

FINAL CONCLUSIONS. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The history of opera is an ongoing pendulum movement. At one extreme we find the founders of the opera, their high respect for dramaturgy, their emphasis, the clarification of the text, their demand for expression derived from the word. On the other hand, the unrestrained rule of bel canto, the vocal virtuosity, the captivating melody, which is no longer tied to the text, the neglect of dramatic and textual exigencies in the face of eccentric music. The joy of the senses, the purely aesthetic desire always drives the work towards the second mentioned pole. In Italy, operatic life was dominated by a profound diversification.

The prolific Gaetano Donizetti, overshadowed in his youth by the success of Rossini, could not prevail against the slow and meditative production of Bellini. Then the latter's untimely death and Rossini's decade-long "abdication" facilitated his rise to success. Of course, these were not the only reasons. Donizetti's style went through several stages, managing towards the end of his career to conquer cosmopolitan cities such as Paris and Vienna. In turn, illness and death will save him from being overshadowed again by the irresistible rise of Giuseppe Verdi, whose art was carried on the wave of Italian Unification. The stage inspiration of the composer is present both in the secondary scenes of important operas (such as *Lucrezia Borgia*) and in musical comedies (such as *L'elisir d'amore* and *Don Pasquale).* These creations are valuable for the consistency and naturalness of the characters, for the vivacity and richness of the music. Although it does not reach the extraordinary sound spectrum of Verdi, lavish and obvious, the beauty of Donizetti's melody reveals a naturalness, which he will also transmit to his characters. In the history of the lyrical theater, this is the sign of a great creator-poet.

Continuing on the thread of history, the following composer is perhaps the most popular musician of the 19th century, and, of all the famous exponents of Italian lyric-dramatic art, indisputably the greatest. The land of beautiful song produced many great musicians, many outstanding melodists, but none of them, not even Gioacchino Rossini, influenced the national art as much as Giuseppe Verdi. The imprint of his creation was fully known only when the Italian people came to meet the arts and supported artists who, like Verdi, campaigned for high moral ideals.

From the entire list of Verdi's creation, it is difficult to spot a work that does not show traces of constant stylistic development. The titles from *Giovanna d'Arco* to *La Battaglia di Legnano* were inscribed in the accepted Italian lines, in which the works of his predecessors also fell, but with *Luisa Miller* Verdi's creation experienced a firm and suggestive development. His later works, beginning with *Simone Boccanegra* and continuing with *A Masked Ball* (*Un ballo in maschera)*, mark an important stage in the consolidation of Verdi's lyric theatre. The psychological aspects of the characters become more subtle and the vocality becomes a tool in the truthful realization of the performances. The late work, beginning with *Aida*, illustrated new forms of operatic art that could not be surpassed or approached before in Italy. The first chapter of this research, *Italian Opera: from Gaetano Donizetti to Giuseppe*

Verdi, deals with the Italian operatic phenomenon of the first half of the 19th century and the compositional career of the two mentioned exponents.

The technical aspects outlined in this research provided an opportunity to formulate a synthesis of the most important factors involved in achieving the specific vocalism of the analyzed repertoire. The second chapter of this research, *The belcanto concept: between pedagogical approaches and the outline of a new interpretative style*, addresses a set of relevant aspects of vocal technique, correlating vocal technique *per se* with the interpretative style associated with Italian *belcanto*.

In the 19th century, musical drama represented one of the highest forms of artistic expression. The realistic tendency of melodrama, the search for historical or psychological authenticity through narrative techniques, are important aspects of musical dramaturgy. The following clarification is relevant: the veracity that composers and spectators attribute to melodramatic characters, actions, and situations is not so much about the reality of existence in its concreteness and fullness, but rather about a kind of substantial reality that manages to filter operatic conventions. Our research focused to a significant extent on the mature creations of two prolific Italian composers: Gaetano Donizetti and Giuseppe Verdi. From their vast repertoire, we selected two less explored works: *Lucrezia Borgia* and *A Masked Ball* (*Un ballo in maschera*). The main elements addressed in these analyses were **style** and **vocality**. The stylistic peculiarities found in each work were determined through structural-interpretative analyses, without neglecting the dramaturgical and semantic aspects. The vocal characteristics of Donizetti and Verdi were also highlighted through structural-interpretative analyses, but in this context, we considered the relevance of the vocal-orchestral relationship. The third chapter of our research, *Stylistic and expressive peculiarities in Donizetti's and Verdi's mature creation* represents the most extensive part of the doctoral thesis and encompasses the previously highlighted aspects. This chapter also represents the most original part of the work, offering a series of interpretative reference suggestions as well as personal interpretative concepts.

A synthetic perspective on this research journey reveals that both the soprano voice and the other vocal typologies addressed are required to participate with their entire timbral, affective, and technical capacity in creating a complete performance. The analyzed repertoire emphasizes a series of vocal challenges in various forms. Both female protagonist roles (Lucrezia and Amelia) require support strength, amplitude, penetrance, and agility at the same time. In the case of Lucrezia, the phrasing is generous, the scope is extended and the dramatic register is dominant. In Amelia's case, the soprano has to sing extremely demanding solo scores without real moments of breath, has to support melodic lines with the choral mass or has to participate in large-scale stage ensembles. All these are elements that can induce the idea that the most important skill to achieve this role consists of strength. Paradoxically, what we want to emphasize as a general conclusion on the technical profile described for both roles is that the most necessary skill consists of vocal **malleability**.

The vocal flexibility specific to the analyzed repertoire refers to the voice's ability to adapt between the lyric and dramatic registers, between the low and high registers. This quality largely depends on the inherent characteristics, specific to both lyric voices and those with spinto or spinto–dramatic potential, achieved through specific vocal exercises. It is necessary to reproduce the entire spectrum of timbral colors and essential nuances for the expressiveness of Italian romanticism. It is also relevant in the effort to integrate the voice into the interpretative ensemble in order to achieve sound unity, homogeneity, and balance. We consider that proper management of breathing is the most important component in achieving register homogeneity and sound balance. The analyzed repertoire presents a series of challenges found in the discourse of both female protagonist characters and the other characters (male and female). We mention the following:

- optimal control of the airflow column,
- the ability to successfully alternate between the widest airflow column, required for emitting a loud sound, and the narrowest airflow column, necessary to increase a sound,
- mastery of the *appoggio* technique.

Another important aspect resulting from the analyzed repertoire is the correct **articulation** of the literary text. While vowels are generally preferred by performers because they ensure the smoothness of the airflow, thus facilitating *legato*, consonants are often seen as "obstacles," even though they give life to the pronunciation. Consequently, some vocal approaches pay little attention to the articulation of consonants, and the result can only be superficial singing with poor text intelligibility. Both Gaetano Donizetti and Giuseppe Verdi show great consideration for the dramatic expressiveness of the text. One of the sources of drama in the analyzed repertoire is the use of dotted rhythm in recitatives, solo moments, or even ensemble passages. Additionally, drama is often conveyed through ascending melodic constructions, mostly sequential and sometimes chromatic. In such passages, the force of articulation is essential. Summing up the previously expressed viewpoints, we consider that the performers of the operas *Lucrezia Borgia* and *A Masked Ball* must discover in their performance the methods through which vocalism and interpretative approach serve the drama (as suggested so well at the musical level). Certainly, firm, energetic, and meaningful delivery of the literary text, discerning the subliminal messages within the orchestral discourse, acquiring emotional elements, and calibrating vocalism to the dramaturgical requirements are the evidence of a viable interpretation that corresponds to the styles of these two opera creations.