

“ON THE KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY FOR ONE WHO WISHES
TO RECITE WELL IN THE THEATRE”

THE RHETORICAL TRADITION OF DELIVERY AND THE PERFORMANCE
PRACTICE OF *RECITATIVO SEMPLICE* IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
DRAMMA PER MUSICA

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Statement of originality

I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Abstract

Recitative is so integral an element of eighteenth-century opera that without understanding it we cannot hope to understand the genre as a whole. Yet the notation of *recitativo semplice* leaves so much to the discretion of the performers that it, in turn, cannot be understood without making sense of its performance practice. The aim of this study is therefore to contribute to reconstructing a theoretical and practical basis for that performance practice, and in particular, for the unnotated aspects of recitative for which it is otherwise almost impossible to account. Following Giambattista Mancini's advice to singers in his *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (1777) to "listen to the speech of a good orator" as a model for recitative delivery, I argue that the "rules of perfect declamation" followed by orators were those dictated by the discipline of rhetoric, and that the rhetorical paradigm of delivery thus represents a model for recitative performance practice.

Chapter 1 outlines the scope of the study and its principal sources. The following chapters examine the implications of the rhetorical understanding of delivery for the performance of *recitativo semplice*. In Chapter 2, the case is made that the rhetorical principles of delivery did apply to musical recitation as much as to spoken declamation. Some consideration is also given to the ways in which this body of knowledge and its corresponding skills in vocal delivery may have been acquired by Italian singers. The nature and purpose of delivery as it was understood in the rhetorical tradition forms the subject of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 discusses its principles as they apply to musical declamation in recitative, under the headings of Quintilian's "virtues of delivery". These are shown to be consistent themes, even when they were not named as such, in early modern theatre and singing treatises as well as in writing about rhetoric. In Chapters 5 and 6, these principles, and in particular the overriding virtue of *decorum* or "appropriateness", are applied to the musical parameters of vocal delivery in recitative: rhythm, timbre, dynamic and pitch. The rhetorical paradigm of delivery is shown to cast valuable light on the vocal performance practice of *recitativo semplice*, and in particular on its unnotated aspects.

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Note on translations

Where possible I have used English translations contemporary with the original sources if they accurately convey the meaning of the original. Where necessary I have adapted a translation to clarify the meaning of a particular term or concept in its context. Where such adaptations have been made, the footnote attribution is annotated as “based on” or “adapted from” the cited source.

In other cases I have used published modern translations, again adapted where necessary. Such adaptations are acknowledged in the footnotes.

Materials for which I have not located a published translation are newly translated. I am greatly indebted to Dr Robert Forgacs for his assistance in the translation of a number of the primary Latin sources. Assistance with Latin translations was also provided by Prof. Graham Maddox, Dr. Peter Maddox and Dr. Adam Harris. Translations from Italian, German and French not otherwise attributed are my own. Where the original language source for translated passages is not readily available, the quotation is given in the original language in a footnote.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Recitative was integral to the fabric of Italian vocal music throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Across successive generations, leading singers such as Nicolo Grimaldi, *detto* Nicolini (1673- 1732), Vittoria Tesi (1700-75) and Gasparo Pacchierotti (1740-81) were renowned as much for their delivery of recitative as for their aria singing. It took up a large proportion of the total time of any opera and was the vehicle for almost all of the advancement of the dramatic plot. We therefore cannot understand opera without understanding recitative.

But the flexible, declamatory style of *recitativo semplice*, closely modelled on speech, meant that musical notation conveyed only its outlines – little more than a melodic shape, a rough prosodic outline in rhythmic notation (not to be taken too literally), and a shorthand sketch of the harmony. This represents only a relatively small proportion of the information needed to bring the drama to life in performance. All of the other elements, including the bulk of the continuo part as well as the dynamics, timbre, pacing, phrasing, articulation and word inflection that collectively represent a large proportion of what singers do, were to be supplied by the performers. Words come so naturally to us in speech that it is easy to overlook how complex and varied their delivery is in artistic singing. Every articulation of a word requires adjustment of the vocal mechanism. Each consonant modifies or interrupts the flow of sound, each vowel or diphthong alters the timbre of the voice. The delivery of text therefore requires of singers a mostly intuitive, micro-second-to-micro-second control of a wide variety of sound parameters which can be conveyed only crudely, if at all, in musical notation. Indeed, amongst all of the kinds of composed art music of the period, *recitativo semplice* is the one that relies least on the input of the composer and most on that of the performers. Recitative therefore cannot be understood without accounting for its performance practice.

Yet, despite the considerable work that has been done on the realisation of the *basso continuo*, an understanding of the use of the voice in Italian recitative, and in particular in *recitativo semplice*, remains elusive. How can this vocal performance practice be reconstructed? How did singers make the leap from the very bare sketch in ink on the page to a musical performance? How do articulation and phrasing interact with the text? How are dynamic variation and timbre to be used in delivering the vocal line and the words? How is recitative to be paced and articulated, and where exactly does it fit on the continuum between speech and song? What qualities were valued and considered expressive in recitative, and how were they put into effect in practical terms?

The scores of eighteenth-century opera are of little direct help with these questions, since it is precisely the lack of detail in recitative notation which makes reconstructing performance practice so crucial to understanding recitative. When it comes to matters such as the placement of appoggiature or, for that matter, continuo realisation, musical treatises help to bridge the gap between the shorthand conventions of notation and the reality of performance. But eighteenth-century musical treatises, even those specifically devoted to singing, are largely silent about the conventions that guided the other unnotated aspects of vocal delivery in Italian recitative. In effect, the familiar resources of musical score and musical treatises leave us with very little theoretical or practical basis for resolving a large and crucial swathe of performance practice issues in recitative. Yet if we are to understand this music as realised sound rather than only as abstract compositional process, these unnotated and intangible elements demand our attention. They are, after all, some of the basic materials that singers work with to bring music to life in performance. What has continued to be missing, is a coherent conceptual framework for understanding the way performers approached not just the score, but the whole business of performing. The primary aim of this study is to provide such a conceptual framework, and in doing so, to cast light on those aspects of the vocal performance practice of *recitativo semplice* for which we otherwise have little or no evidence.

The thirteenth chapter of Giambattista Mancini's important singing treatise, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (1777), is titled "On the knowledge necessary for one who wishes to recite well in the theatre".¹ In it, he advises aspiring singers to

Listen to the speech of a good orator, and hear how many rests, what variety of tones, how many different emphases he uses to express its meanings. Now he raises his voice, now he lowers it; now he hurries a bit, now he grows harsh and now gentle, according to the various passions that he wishes to stir in the listener.²

In the following chapter, "On recitative and action", he castigates singers who "beat and batter the recitatives because they will not take the trouble to learn the rules of perfect declamation".³ The first of these passages provides a valuable indication of the kinds of parameters which were to be varied in recitative in order to move the passions, including dynamic, timbre, articulation and pacing. But more than this, these and other passages in Mancini's treatise point to a practical model for recitative delivery: oratory. Following Mancini, I argue that the "rules of perfect declamation" which were followed by "good orators" in the eighteenth century were those dictated by the ancient discipline of rhetoric, and that the rhetorical paradigm of delivery thus represents a model for recitative performance practice.⁴

In this study I therefore seek to bring together information from a range of rhetorical and musical sources that will elucidate the general principles of rhetorical practice likely to have informed the vocal delivery of *recitativo semplice*. It is hoped that this process will facilitate

¹ "Delle cognizioni, che deve avere chi vuol recitar bene in Teatro" Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (Milano: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777; reprint, Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni, 1996), 218.

² "Attenti pure al discorso d'un buon Oratore, e sentire quante pose, quante varietà di voci, quante diverse forze adopra per esprimere i suoi sensi; ora innalza la voce, or l'abbassa, or l'affretta, or l'incrudisce, ed or la fa dolce, secondo le diverse passioni, che intende muovere nell'uditore." Ibid. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, Revised ed. (New York: Norton, 1998), 867.

³ "Sono essi, che rovinano, e malconciano i recitativi, perchè non vogliono darsi la pena di apprendere le regole della perfetta declamazione." Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 231. Transl. Allanbrook, in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 871.

⁴ Don Harrán and Reinhard Strohm have both argued the need for further research on the influence of rhetoric on early music performance practice: Don Harrán, "Toward a rhetorical code of early music performance," *The Journal of Musicology* 15 (1997); Reinhard Strohm, "The contribution of musicology to Metastasio studies," in *Pietro Metastasio: Uomo universale (1698-1782): Festgabe der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zum 300. Geburtstag von Pietro Metastasio* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 24-5; Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma per musica: Italian opera seria of the eighteenth century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 17. A rhetorical approach has already proven fruitful in relation to English song at the turn of the seventeenth century. See Robert Toft, *Tune thy musicke to thy hart: the art of eloquent singing in England, 1597-1622* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

access for other researchers to the disparate range of relevant materials which I have surveyed and sorted, and in some cases, newly translated. I also aim to clarify the connections between these sources and thus locate vocal performance practice in a rhetorical framework. This framework provides a theoretical basis for Italian musical recitation, including a paradigm for what recitation is and how it communicates, and general principles about what was considered important in learning recitation (Chapter 2). The case is made that the rhetorical principles of delivery applied to musical recitation as they did to spoken declamation.

The nature and purpose of delivery as it was understood in the rhetorical tradition forms the subject of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 discusses its principles as they apply to musical declamation in recitative, under the headings of Quintilian's "virtues of delivery" as they are expounded in classical and early modern sources. The virtues of delivery are shown to be consistent themes, even when they were not named as such, in early modern theatre and singing treatises as well as in writing about rhetoric. By juxtaposing materials dealing with singing with those on rhetoric, I also seek to identify ways in which the evidence about rhetoric, acting, and singing fits together to elucidate specific elements of vocal performance practice (Chapter 5 and 6). Rhetorical principles, and in particular the overriding virtue of *decorum*, are applied to the musical parameters of vocal delivery in recitative: rhythm, timbre, dynamic and pitch. The rhetorical paradigm of delivery is shown to cast valuable light on the unnotated aspects of recitative performance practice.

The tenets of rhetorical delivery do not amount to a detailed method or "how-to" manual, but they do facilitate understanding of the principles which guided singers in managing those "intangible" vocal parameters of recitative that are not directly specified in the score, to create both variety and expression. Certainly the ideals espoused in the sources were honoured by professional singers as much in the breach as in the observance, as many knowledgeable observers attested, but the classical dicta still provided the model for what recitative delivery should, and at its best, could be. Singers who acted and recited well continued to be praised, and at their best, were credited with achieving great affective

power.⁵ We may thus imagine our “ideal singer” on the model of Cicero’s “ideal orator” as an object of high, but by no means unattainable aspiration.

Scope

Forms of musical recitation that are identifiably “recitative” were in use from the late sixteenth century well into the nineteenth, and have also made sporadic reappearances in the twentieth century. They have extended across a range of serious and comic genres and many languages. A case can be made for the influence of rhetoric on many of these manifestations of recitative, but for the purposes of this study I have chosen to focus on one important but little-theorised part of the repertoire: the *recitativo semplice* (simple recitative) of *dramma per musica* in the period 1700-1777.⁶ These boundaries of chronology and repertoire are necessarily arbitrary to some extent, but they do serve to mark out a relatively discrete body of repertoire in which the influence of rhetoric is particularly apparent.

The choice of this particular repertoire and chronological period is informed by several factors including the limitation of the repertoire to that in the Italian language, and that for the theatre. While the principles of rhetoric were largely consistent across cultures, the way they were applied in declamation was necessarily different in different languages, and, according to Pierfrancesco Tosi, also varied between the styles of church, chamber and

⁵ See, for example, Tartini’s famous account of the effect of a line of recitative, the “cold-blooded grimness” of which “really shook one’s feelings”, so that listeners watched one another at each performance to observe the change of colour it produced. Giuseppe Tartini, *Trattato di Musica, Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (Padova: Giovanni Manfrè, 1754; reprint, facs. edn, New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), 135. The passage is translated in Edward O. D. Downes, “‘Secco’ recitative in early classical ‘Opera Seria’ (1720-80),” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 14, no. 1 (1961): 53. Mancini commented that Vittoria Tesi “by her voice alone, and her singing alone, however perfect this was, would never have acquired the celebrity which was hers, but for her sublime manner of declamation”. Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 29. Later in the century the affecting recitative delivery of Gasparo Pachierotti was particularly praised. See Franz Haböck, *Die Kastraten und ihre Gesangskunst: eine gesangsphysiologische, kultur- und musikhistorische Studie* (Berlin und Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart, 1927), 416ff; Angus Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956), 163ff.

⁶ “*Dramma per musica*” was the most usual term for serious Italian opera from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. The term “*opera seria*” was introduced in the second half of the eighteenth century to distinguish the serious *dramma* from the comic and mixed genres that were then becoming prominent. Its use in relation to the first half of the century is therefore somewhat anachronistic, however it remains a useful shorthand term for the relatively unified style of serious opera that existed during the period covered by this study. I have therefore used it as an alternative to “*dramma per musica*”, particularly where it might not otherwise be clear that the reference is specifically to the eighteenth-century genre. On the issues of terminology, see Reinhard Strohm’s introductory essay to his Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, 1-29.

theatre.⁷ It also excludes the comic and mixed (tragi-comic, or semi-serious) genres and the various manifestations of opera in the seventeenth century. Amongst the genres of Italian musical theatre, recitative in *dramma per musica* comes closest to the kind of spoken declamation in the high style associated with tragedy, which is most obviously rhetorically based. Earlier forms of *stile recitativo* or *recitar cantando* are important for understanding the concept of recitative which informs the development of *recitativo semplice*, but they were ultimately significantly different in the way they were constructed and performed. Recitative in the *buffa* and mixed genres probably shared many of the same general characteristics as that in *opera seria*, but the parameters of style appropriate for producing laughter are different from those proper to recitation in serious literary drama, and owe at least as much to the naturalistic style of improvised *commedia dell'arte* as to the formal tenets of rhetoric.⁸ *Recitativo accompagnato* is also excluded from this study since the prominence in it of purely musical imperatives, such as more metrical rhythm and the coordination of singer and orchestra, introduces issues which take it further from the model of spoken declamation.

The chronological boundaries of this study are dictated largely by the focus on the genre of serious opera which emerged from the reform agenda of the Arcadian academy in the 1690s and remained prominent until around 1780. The publication in 1777 of Mancini's *Riflessioni pratiche sul canto figurato* provides a convenient end-point which coincides closely with a number of events that signalled important changes in the conceptions of both opera and rhetoric. In music, the emergence of the mature Mozart with *Idomeneo* (1781), closely followed by *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), embodied the trend away from conventional Metastasian *opera seria* already evident in the reform operas of Gluck and Calzabigi and in the increasing popularity and literary credibility of *opera buffa*. The extinction of *opera seria* was also hastened by the rise around 1780 of what Reinhard Strohm

⁷ Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de'cantori antichi, e moderni o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna: L. dalla Volpe, 1723), 41-2. Half a century later, Mancini discounted this difference, but Tosi's firm distinction between the three genres suggests that clarity is best served by focussing only on the theatrical repertoire throughout the period. See Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 240-41.

⁸ In some respects, however, the style distinctions between serious and comic may not have been as rigid as they may appear. For instance, Andrea Perrucci placed improvised theatre in a rhetorical framework, at least with regard to the more serious roles such as that of the Lover. See Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso*, ed. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato ed. (Firenze: 1961), 159ff. Mancini also considered the acting of *comici* in the spoken theatre to be a useful model for opera singers. See Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 236.

has called “the Classical-Romantic aesthetic of music as a self-expressive art”.⁹ The suppression of the Jesuit order in 1773 also represented a significant watershed for the dominance of the rhetorical paradigm of communication in Italy. While the Jesuit schools were largely taken over by other orders and maintained a degree of continuity in the education provided to the upper classes, the demise of the order nevertheless undermined one of the cornerstones of classical education which had formed the literate classes. With the Jesuits went the rigid prescriptions of their *Ratio Studiorum* which mandated, amongst other things, the study of Cypriano Soarez’s influential rhetoric primer, *De arte rhetorica* (see below). More broadly, the late eighteenth century saw a substantial decline in the centrality of rhetoric in education throughout Europe.

At the same time, it would be artificial to treat either the chronological period or the genre selected as having rigid boundaries. Many of the sources that cast light on the performance practice of this period originated much earlier, and some continued to appear into the early years of the nineteenth century. Although the principles of rhetorical delivery can be most clearly traced in relation to *opera seria*, their influence was probably considerably wider. *Recitativo semplice* was used in serious and comic operas well before and after the chronological limits chosen here, and classicistic acting based on rhetorical principles remained standard in many places until at least the 1820s.¹⁰

Sources

The study is based throughout on primary sources. It would have been tempting in some ways to set this material out source by source, analysing each in turn, but such an approach would have obscured the broader themes that run through the study. One of these is the substantial continuity in the way the principles of delivery were understood from their classical origins through the early modern period. A thematic approach helps to clarify the way in which key points from the classical rhetorics were reproduced not only in early

⁹ Reinhard Strohm, "Opera: The Eighteenth Century," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (www.grovemusic.com, 2001).

¹⁰ See, for example, Alfred Simon Golding, *Classicistic acting: two centuries of a performance tradition at the Amsterdam Schouwburg; to which is appended an annotated translation of the "Lessons on the principles of gesticulation and mimic expression" of Johannes Jelgerhuis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

modern rhetoric treatises but also in practical books on acting and singing and in descriptions and criticism of opera performances. Between them, these varied sources build up a picture of the principles that directly and indirectly informed the theory and practice of vocal delivery in *dramma per musica* during the period.

Since the purpose of this study is to address aspects of recitative performance practice which are not directly indicated in the musical score, it draws primarily on sources which deal with the theory and practice of delivery, rather than on the scores themselves. The principal materials for this study are therefore sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which deal with Italian vocal delivery from the points of view of the opera singer, actor and orator, together with the principal classical rhetorics on which the early modern paradigm of delivery was grounded. Since the focus of the study is on delivery, the compositional aspects of rhetoric, including those theorised by analogy in relation to music, will not be addressed except in so far as they have direct implications for recitative delivery.

Sources on singing and opera

Any study dealing with singing in *dramma per musica* must begin with the treatises of Pier Francesco Tosi (1654-1732) and Giambattista Mancini (1714-1800), which stand out as the only substantial Italian treatments of style and pedagogy in singing before 1780. A castrato, Tosi had some success as a performer in his early life,¹¹ and according to his eighteenth-century English translator John Galliard, "His manner of Singing was full of Expression and Passion, chiefly in the Stile of Chamber-Musick".¹² He settled in London in 1693, giving weekly public concerts and teaching, but from 1701 to 1723 travelled extensively as a diplomatic agent for Emperor Joseph I and the Elector Palatine before returning to teaching in London for several years from 1724. Tosi's *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni* (1723),¹³ was the first substantial treatise on Italian singing and remained much the most influential

¹¹ A brief account of Tosi's life and career is given in Malcolm Boyd and John Rosselli, "Tosi, Pierfrancesco," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (www.grovemusic.com, accessed 23 August 2004).

¹² Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the florid song, or, Sentiments on the ancient and modern singers. Written in Italian by Pier Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilcox, 1743), viii. Tosi appeared only once in opera, in Giovanni Varischino's *Odoacre*, in Reggio nell'Emilia in 1687.

¹³ Tosi, *Opinioni*.

treatment of the subject until at least the publication of Mancini's volume in the 1770s.¹⁴ Tosi's discussions of aspects of ornamentation, particularly the appoggiatura, trill, and performance of divisions, are widely known and of substantial value in understanding the performance practice of aria singing.¹⁵ Of more direct relevance for this study, however, are his comments on the training of singers generally (Chapters 1, 6 and 9) and on the delivery of recitative (Chapter 5).

Mancini, too, was a castrato singer. He studied with Leonardo Leo at Naples, then took advanced lessons with Antonio Bernacchi at Bologna where he also studied counterpoint and composition with Padre Giovanni Battista Martini, leading to his acceptance for membership of the Accademia Filarmonica of Bologna. From his mid-twenties he had a moderately successful singing career in Italy and Germany and also developed a reputation as a singing teacher, leading to an invitation to Vienna in 1757 to teach the Empress Maria Theresa's daughters. He remained in Vienna for the rest of his life. Mancini's treatise on singing was initially published in 1774 as *Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato*, then reissued in 1777 in a revised and enlarged edition with the title *Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato*.¹⁶

In the absence of further Italian treatises specifically on singing, it can be instructive to consult other Italian music treatises which touch on recitative delivery in the context of broader discussions of music. Useful sources of this kind include Lorenzo Penna's *Li primi*

¹⁴ In addition to Galliard's English version (1743), Tosi's book was translated into German (with many annotations) by Johann Friedrich Agricola, as Johann Friedrich Agricola, *Anleitung zur Singkunst aus dem Italiaenischen des Herrn Peter Franz Tosi ... mit Erläuterungen und Zusätzen von Johann Friedrich Agricola* (Berlin: G. L. Winter, 1757). Agricola's version of Tosi has also been translated into English: Johann Friedrich Agricola, *Introduction to the art of singing: Translated and edited with commentary by Julianne Baird, Cambridge musical texts and monographs*. (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). To the extent that Mancini's book is based on Tosi's, it extends rather than supersedes Tosi's influence.

¹⁵ His rather vague discussion of the technical aspects of voice production has also been closely studied but should probably be treated with an element of caution: Tosi's treatise is the first to fix in writing a 'snapshot' of what was a well established oral tradition of pedagogy, and in doing so it broke the long-standing scholastic habit of hiding rather than publicising specialised knowledge. It is possible, then, that Tosi has held back some vital information by way of "trade secrets" which could only be learnt directly from a singing master. It seems less likely that the same considerations would apply to his comments on the delivery of text, which are clear and specific on many points and form a major theme throughout the book.

¹⁶ Giambattista Mancini, *Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato* (Vienna: Ghelen, 1774); Mancini, *Riflessioni*.

albori musicali (1684), Giuseppe Tartini's *Trattato di Musica* (1754), and Vincenzo Manfredini's *Regole Armoniche* (1775).¹⁷

Although the *parlando* style of recitation used in the *recitativo semplice* of eighteenth-century *dramma per musica* was significantly different from its antecedents, the fundamental principles of recitative derived ultimately from the experiments associated with the Florentine circle of Giovanni Bardi in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Writings which defined the parameters of the *stile recitativo*, first mooted as theoretical propositions by Girolamo Mei and Vincenzo Galilei, and subsequently described in their practical working out by musicians including Giulio Caccini, Jacopo Peri and Emilio de Cavalieri are therefore relevant to this study.¹⁸ My purpose is not to retrace the aesthetic and philosophical origins of the *stile recitativo* in all their complexity; however, it will be helpful to review some of the key texts on the origins and development of the genre as they bear on the communicative objectives and techniques of delivery.¹⁹ Reference will also be made to some of the treatises and practical manuals of the period which touch on questions of vocal training and delivery, including Adriano Banchieri's *Cartella musicale* (1614),²⁰ Francesco

¹⁷ Vincenzo Manfredini, *Regole Armoniche, Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1966); Lorenzo Penna, *Li primi albori musicali per il principianti della musica figurata*, 4th ed. (Bologna: 1684; reprint, facs. Bologna: Forni, 1969); Tartini, *Trattato*. Interesting light is also cast on the aesthetic debate amongst *letterati* and "professori" about the nature of recitative in Vincenzo Manfredini and Esteban de Arteaga, *Difesa della musica moderna e de' suoi celebri esecutori* (Bologna: Forni, 1972). See below.

¹⁸ Many of the key sources on the beginnings of opera are collected in Angelo Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma: testimonianze dei contemporanei raccolte da Angelo Solerti, Piccola biblioteca di scienze moderne; 70* (Hildesheim; New York: G. Olms, 1969). Many of these are translated in whole or part in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, or Piero Weiss, *Opera: a history in documents* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Other important documents include Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna, Monuments of music and music literature in facsimile. Second series, Music literature; 20* (New York: Broude, 1967). Translation in Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogue on ancient and modern music*, trans. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2003). See also Girolamo Mei, *Letters on ancient and modern music to Vincenzo Galilei and Giovanni Bardi: A Study with Annotated Texts by Claude V. Palisca*, 2nd ed., *Musicological studies and documents; 3* ([S.l.]: American Institute of Musicology, 1977); Claude V. Palisca, *The Florentine Camerata: documentary studies and translations, Music theory translation series* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

¹⁹ On the development of the *stile recitativo* see in particular John Walter Hill, "Oratory Music in Florence, I: "Recitar Cantando", 1583-1655," *Acta Musicologica* 51, no. 1 (1979); Warren Kirkendale, *Emilio de' Cavalieri "gentiluomo romano": his life and letters, his role as superintendent of all the arts at the Medici court, and his musical compositions* (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 2001); Palisca, *The Florentine Camerata: documentary studies and translations*; Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985); Claude V. Palisca, *Studies in the history of Italian music and music theory* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1994); Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, *Music and theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi, Cambridge studies in music*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²⁰ A. Banchieri, *Cartella musicale nel canto figurato fermo, et contrapunto* (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1614); Clifford A. Cranna, "Adriano Banchieri's *Cartella musicale* (1614): translation and commentary" (PhD, Stanford, 1981).

Rognoni Taeggio's *Selva di varii passaggi* (1620),²¹ and Severo Bonini's *Discorsi e regole* (c.1651).²²

Some reference will also be made to French and German sources on singing. The French sources in particular are of limited usefulness in relation to Italian music, however, because of the substantial differences in musical style between Italy and France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially as they relate to text setting and delivery style in recitative. Despite the strong influence of the Italian vocal style in Germany, German sources also cannot be assumed to reliably convey Italian practice and must be treated with due caution. A number that explicitly address the Italian style in singing are of significant value for the purposes of this study, however; by setting out to explain the Italian style to a non-Italian audience, they can cast light on Italian practices in a way different from that seen in the indigenous Italian treatises. The most important singing treatise of this kind is that of the Berlin court composer and singing master Johann Friedrich Agricola, whose annotated translation of Tosi's *Opinioni* was published in 1757 as *Anleitung zur Singkunst*.²³ To the treatises specifically on singing may be added some, such as Quantz's *Versuch Einer Anweisung die Flöte Traversière zu Spielen*,²⁴ and C.P.E Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu Spielen*,²⁵ which focus primarily on another field but nevertheless include substantial, well-informed commentary on singing in the Italian style.

Apart from the treatises of professional musicians, the extensive writings on the aesthetics of opera by *letterati* including Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Pier Jacopo Martello, Benedetto Marcello, Francesco Algarotti, Antonio Planelli and Antonio Eximeno also cast some useful light on thinking about recitative.²⁶ These must be treated with caution as evidence of

²¹ Francesco Rognoni Taeggio, *Selva di varii passaggi* (Zürich: Musikverlag zum Pelikan, 1987).

²² Severo Bonini, *Severo Bonini's Discorsi e regole: a bilingual edition* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1979).

²³ Agricola, *Anleitung zur Singkunst aus dem Italiaenischen des Herrn Peter Franz Tosi ... mit Erläuterungen und Zusätzen von Johann Friedrich Agricola*. Although Agricola never visited Italy, the fact that his wife was an Italian professional singer, together with his own role as composer and later music director for the Berlin court's Italian opera company, lends authority to his book as a significant source on the Italian style.

²⁴ Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voss, 1752; reprint, Facsimile edition, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992).

²⁵ C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen: Zweyter Theil, in welchem die Lehre von dem Accompagnement und der freyen Fantasie abgehandelt wird* (Berlin: In Verlegung des Auctoris, 1762).

²⁶ Francesco Algarotti, *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* (Livorno: 1755); Antonio Eximeno y Pujades, *Dell'origine e delle regole della musica* (Rome: 1774); Benedetto Marcello, *Il teatro alla moda o sia metodo sicuro e facile per ben*

contemporary practice, however, given their mostly polemical tone and more or less dogmatically classicising agendas, generally either dismissing opera altogether as a degenerate form of tragedy, or, at a minimum, calling for its reform along the lines of classical drama.²⁷ To take just one example, Algarotti praised the French practice of modern performers faithfully imitating the recitative delivery of the best actors of previous generations, and suggested that

It would have been an advantage to the Italian stage, if our performers had also studied Nicolini's and Tesi's manner of recitative, that is, when they kept close to the modesty of nature in expressing her sentiments; but not at all, when, in order to please too much, they indulged a ranting strain, and bordered on caricature.²⁸

Yet Nicola Grimaldi, *detto* Nicolini, and Vittoria Tesi were commonly held up by other eighteenth-century commentators as examples of great singing actors, with no suggestion of "ranting" in their delivery. Algarotti's criticism must be read in the context of his wider polemic favouring a reform of opera which would bring it closer to the ideals of classical tragedy. It tells us more about what he thinks *should* happen than what his contemporaries (or, in the cases of Nicolini and Tesi, the singers of the previous generation) actually did.

There were also many knowledgeable non-Italian men of letters who also commented on Italian opera, either as they found it in Italy when travelling there, or as performed by predominantly Italian companies abroad. Significant observers of this kind include the Frenchmen François Ragueneau, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Charles de Brosses, and the

comporre, ed eseguire l'opere italiane in musica all'uso moderno... (Venice: 1720); Pier Jacopo Martello, "Della tragedia antica e moderna," in *Scritti critici e satirici*, ed. Hannibal S. Noce (Bari: Laterza, 1963); Lodovico Muratori, *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (Modena: 1706); Planelli, *Dell'opera in musica, trattato del cavaliere Antonio Planelli dell'ordine gerosolimitano* (Napoli: Nella Stamperia di Donato Campo, 1772; reprint, ed. Francesco Degradà, Firenze: discanto edizioni, 1981). Excerpts from their writings are collected in Enrico Fubini, *Musica e cultura nel Settecento europeo* (Torino: E.D.T. Edizioni di Torino, 1986). English version published as Enrico Fubini, ed., *Music and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe: A Source Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). I have used the Italian term "letterati" rather than its near English cognate "literati" to distinguish the class of classically educated Italian men of letters who were influential in both the theory and the practice of opera, for example as librettists, *coragi* (theatrical producers), impresarios or interested academicians; many combined two or more of these roles.

²⁷ For a useful overview of the views and agendas of the main players in these debates, see Dale E. Monson, "'Recitativo semplice' in the 'opere serie' of G. B. Pergolesi and his contemporaries" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1983), 30ff.

²⁸ Francesco Algarotti, *An essay on the opera written in Italian by Count Algarotti ...* (London: printed for L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1767), 54.

Englishmen Roger North, Joseph Addison, Samuel Sharp, and above all, Charles Burney.²⁹

As with the German musicians mentioned above, their “outsider” views of Italian opera can be illuminating, particularly when couched in terms intended to explain the genre to readers not familiar with its conventions.

Sources on theatrical declamation

In the absence of detailed and direct evidence about the principles of recitative delivery, it is instructive to look outside the specifically musical literature for evidence about the ways in which verbal communication was conceptualised and practised. In accordance with Mancini’s injunction to “listen to the speech of a good orator”, the principles of delivery in spoken declamation provide a useful model which can be traced in the literature on rhetorical oratory, both generally and in its specific applications in the contexts of the pulpit, law court and theatre. The important treatise of Andrea Perrucci (see below) shows that operatic recitative was understood as a genre of theatrical recitation, making books on theatrical delivery particularly relevant.

Although the rhetorical paradigm of communication was universal amongst the educated classes across Europe for at least the first third of the eighteenth century, the ways in which the model was applied in performance varied considerably between national theatre

²⁹ Charles de Brosses, *Lettres d’Italie du président de Brosses: texte établi, présenté et annoté par Frédéric d’Agay*, Nouv. ed., *Le Temps retrouvé*, 46-47. (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986); F. Ragueneau, *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français* (Paris: 1702). Rousseau’s writings on Italian opera are spread across his many musical entries in the *Encyclopédie*, various pamphlets including the *Lettre sur la musique française* (1753) and his *Essai sur l’origine des langues*. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, 5 vols., *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*; 11, 153, 208, 416. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-95). Roger North, *Roger North’s The Musickall Grammarian*, 1728, ed. Mary Chan and Jamie Croy Kassler, *Cambridge studies in music* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Addison’s comments on opera in London appeared in *The Tatler* (1709–11) and *The Spectator* (1711–12). Sharp’s account of opera in Italy is reproduced, with biting rejoinders from Giuseppe Baretti, in Giuseppe Marco Antonio Baretti and Samuel Sharp, *An account of the manners and customs of Italy: with observations on the mistakes of some travellers, with regard to that country* (London: printed for T. Davies; and L. Davis and C. Rymors, 1768). Burney’s accounts of his European travels were first published as Charles Burney, *The present state of music in France and Italy: Or, The journal of a tour through those countries, undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music* (London: Printed for T. Becket, 1771); Charles Burney, *The present state of music in Germany, the Netherlands and United Provinces, or, The journal of a tour through those countries: undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music* (London: Printed for T. Becket and Co. ...; J. Robson ...; and G. Robinson, 1773). These provided much of the material for his Charles Burney, *A general history of music, from the earliest ages to the present period: to which is prefixed, a dissertation on the music of the ancients*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for the author and sold by T. Becket; J. Robson; and G. Robinson, 1776).

traditions.³⁰ This study therefore focuses on Italian treatises on acting and theatrical delivery. The earliest of these is Leone de' Sommi's pioneering manuscript manual for stage directors, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche* (1567).³¹ A generation later, and contemporary with the earliest operas, comes Angelo Ingegneri's *Della poesia rappresentativa e del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche* (1598).³² This is followed another generation later by the anonymous *il Corago* (c.1630),³³ perhaps by Pierfrancesco Rinuccini, son of Peri's and Monteverdi's librettist Ottavio Rinuccini, which also includes valuable commentary on sung as well as spoken delivery.³⁴ Also of interest are Pier Maria Cecchini's *Frutti delle moderne comedie* (1628),³⁵ and Niccolò Barbieri's *La supplica* (1634).³⁶ A particularly valuable source showing the links between spoken and sung delivery at the turn of the eighteenth century is Andrea Perrucci's *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso* (1699),³⁷ which will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 2.

School drama, particularly that of the Jesuit *collegi*, with its emphasis on acted, spoken and, on occasion, sung delivery, provided an explicit point of linkage between rhetoric in the theatre and rhetoric as education. In the words of the Jesuit *Ratio studiorum* of 1591, "*Friget enim poesis sine Theatro*" ("Poetry grows cold without theatre" or "Poetry is lifeless unless performed").³⁸ While singers and professional actors generally did not have access to the kind of elite education provided by the *collegi* of the Jesuits and some other religious orders

³⁰ See, for example, Luigi Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur les différens théâtres de l'Europe, avec les Pensées sur la Déclamation* (Paris: 1738).

³¹ Leone de' Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche: a cura di Ferruccio Marotti* (Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1968). Trans. Allardyce Nicoll, *The development of the theatre: a study of theatrical art from the beginnings to the present day*, 5th ed. (London: Harrap, 1966).

³² Angelo Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa e del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche; a cura di Maria Luisa Doglio* (Modena: Panini, 1989).

³³ Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche, Studi e testi per la storia della musica* (Florence: Olschki, 1983). Excerpts trans. R. Savage and M. Sansone, "Il corago and the staging of early opera: Four chapters from an anonymous treatise circa 1630," *Early Music* 17 (1989); Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*.

³⁴ Cesare Molinari, *L'attore e la recitazione* (Roma: Laterza, 1993), 30-1.

³⁵ Pier Maria Cecchini, "Frutti delle moderne comedie, et avisi a chi le recita (Padua, 1628)," in *La commedia dell'arte*, ed. Cesare Molinari, *Cento libri per mille anni* (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999).

³⁶ Niccolò Barbieri, *La supplica: discorso familiare a quelli che trattano de' comici*, ed. Ferdinando Taviani, *Archivio del teatro italiano; n. 3* (Milano: Il Polifilo, 1971).

³⁷ Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*.

³⁸ Louis J. Oldani and Victor R. Yanitelli, S.J., "Jesuit Theatre in Italy: Its Entrances and Exit," *Italica* 76, no. 1 (1999): 19.

(Chapter 2, below), many of the *coragi* (theatre producers), librettists, impresarios and academicians who were actively involved in opera production did. Their understanding of the theory and practice of delivery came both from their classroom studies in rhetoric and from its practical application in the school theatre, as described in Franciscus Lang's *Dissertatio de Actione Scenica* (1727).³⁹ Lang was German, and his treatise, although published in Latin, does not appear to have been widely used in Italian Jesuit schools; however the kind of dramaturgy it embodies probably does not diverge significantly from that taught in Italy, since, as might be expected of a pedagogue who was rhetoric master as well as *corago*, it is entirely in line with the traditional canon of Jesuit rhetorical teaching as transmitted by Cypriano Soarez (below), which was in turn based on Cicero and Quintilian. Luigi Riccoboni's *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur les différens théâtres de l'Europe, avec les Pensées sur la Déclamation* (1738)⁴⁰ is also a "non-Italian" source in that it was published in French and addressed primarily to a French audience, however its subject matter ranges well beyond the French theatre, reflecting the great actor's training and professional experience in Italy.

Sources on rhetoric

Since oratory was the practical application of rhetoric, rhetorical treatises provide some of the most useful guidance on the theory and practice of delivery. James Murphy's survey of the vast, and still largely unexplored field of early modern rhetoric treatises (perhaps numbering in the thousands), makes it clear that a comprehensive survey of sources – even those in use in Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – is well beyond the scope of this study.⁴¹ For the present purpose, then, it seems most useful to focus on a representative sample of the treatises and textbooks that were most widely disseminated, used in education

³⁹ Franciscus [Franz] Lang, *Dissertatio de Actione scenica, cum Figuris eandem explicantibus, et Observationibus quibusdam de Arte Comica, Auctore P. Francisco Lang, Societatis Jesu. Accesserunt imagines symbolicae pro exhibitione et vestitu theatri* (Monachii [Munich]: Typis Mariae Magdalenaе Riedlin, Viduae, 1727).

⁴⁰ Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur les différens théâtres de l'Europe, avec les Pensées sur la Déclamation*. Translated as Luigi Riccoboni, *A General History of the Stage, from its Origin ... Together with Two Essays; On the Art of Speaking in Public, and a Comparison between the Antient and Modern Drama, Music and theatre in France in the 17th and 18th centuries* (London: Printed for W. Owen, 1754; reprint, 1978. New York: AMS).

⁴¹ James J. Murphy, "One Thousand Neglected Authors: The scope and importance of renaissance rhetoric" in James J. Murphy, ed, *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 20ff. See also James J. Murphy, *Renaissance Rhetoric: A Short-Title Catalogue of Works on Rhetorical Theory from the Beginning of Printing to A.D. 1700, with Special Attention to the Holdings of the Bodleian Library, Oxford. With a Select Basic Bibliography of Secondary Works on Renaissance Rhetoric* (New York: 1981).

or otherwise well known in Italy up to the time of Mancini's *Riflessioni*, that is to say, those that are likely to have had the most significant and widespread influence on the intellectual climate in which Italian vocal music was created and performed. These include early modern rhetorics in Italian and Latin, as well as the classical rhetorics on which they were largely based. Between them, these sources furnish a substantially consistent picture of what was considered important in the training of orators in delivery.

Most chronologically distant from Tosi and Mancini, but by no means the least important in interpreting their ideas, are the classical treatises on rhetoric which formed the basis for all of those early modern treatises that followed. Much the most influential of these were Cicero's *de oratore*, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and the pseudo-Cicero *Rhetorica ad Herennium*; while Aristotle's *Rhetorica* was also widely studied and acknowledged as important, it has less to say about delivery. These books were readily available in early modern Italy in Latin and in Italian translation.⁴² Excerpts were also included in compendia such as Giovanni Battista Bernardi's *Thesaurus rhetoricae* (below), and their contents transmitted, reinterpreted and critiqued in many treatises and commentaries.

For most students learning rhetoric in Italy, as in other parts of Europe, the main texts used were not those of the classical authors themselves, but contemporary treatises which interpreted the rhetorical tradition in a variety of ways. In the Jesuit *collegi*, for instance, the *Ratio studiorum* (Program of Studies) required that all students be taught eloquence, "both in

⁴² Italian translations of classical Latin texts, including some of the principal treatises on rhetoric, date back to the early humanists. Dante's teacher, Brunetto Latini, for example, made an incomplete Tuscan translation of Cicero's *De inventione* as early as the late thirteenth century, and there were many other medieval and early modern "volgarizzatori" from Brunetto's colleague Fra Guidotto of Bologna to Boccaccio and beyond; see Helene Wieruszowski, "Rhetoric and the Classics in Italian Education of the Thirteenth Century," in *Collectanea Stephan Kuttner*, ed. J Forchielli and A M Stickler, *Studia Gratiana* (Bologna: Istitutum Gratianum, 1967), 199. That a demand for such translations continued into the eighteenth century is indicated, for example, by Manni's 1734 reprint of an old Tuscan translation of Cicero's *De oratore*, as *L'etica d'Aristotile e la rettorica di M. Tullio aggiuntovi il libro de' costumi di Catone: volgarizzamento antico toscano*, (Firenze: Domenico Maria Manni, 1734). Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* were widely disseminated in Latin, for example through Jacopo Brocardo's *Partitiones oratoriae* (Venice, 1558), and in the translation of Annibal Caro (1570), and were also available in Italian as well as the original Greek; see F. Edward Cranz and Charles B. Schmitt, *A Bibliography of Aristotle editions, 1501-1600*, 2nd ed., *Bibliotheca bibliographica Aureliana*, 38 (Baden-Baden: V. Koerner, 1984); see also Nicola Haym, *Biblioteca italiana ossia notizia de' libri rari italiani divisa in quattro parti cioè istoria, poesia, prose, arti e scienze, già compilata da Niccola Francesco Haym: Edizione corretta, ampliata, e di giudizj intorno alle migliori opere arricchita*, 4 vols. (Milano: Presso Giovanni Silvestri, 1803), Vol.4, 30-40. Haym also lists multiple Italian translations of Cicero, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Longinus, and one each of the rhetorics of Quintilian and George of Trebizond.

oratory and in poetry".⁴³ The Jesuit Latin curriculum was heavily weighted towards Cicero, using his letters and orations as models of style, yet when students came to study rhetoric in the senior *Retorica* class, their Cicero was mingled with Quintilian and a little Aristotle, and filtered through two manuals by Jesuit authors: Cypriano Soarez's *De arte retorica* (1565), and later, Domenico de Colonia's *De Arte Rhetorica libri quinque* (1704).⁴⁴ Both of these books were widely disseminated throughout Italy, and Soarez's, in particular, remained current as the chief rhetoric textbook in Jesuit schools throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁴⁵ This is particularly significant in the context of the present study, since Jesuit colleges taught more students than any other such schools in Europe. Even Protestant boys attended Jesuit schools as they were mostly tuition free.⁴⁶ Also important in Jesuit teaching was Emanuele Tesauro's treatise on style, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (Aristotle's Telescope, 1654).⁴⁷ Tesauro has little to say about delivery specifically, but his observations about sonority in language have significant implications for the way words should be vocalised.

Another rhetoric which Cesare Becelli identified in his *Esame della retorica antica e uso della moderna* (1739) as being "usually read in schools" was that of the French Oratorian father Bernard Lamy.⁴⁸ Lamy's *De l'art de parler* (1675) reflected the author's Port Royalist views

⁴³ Thomas M Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 152-3.

⁴⁴ Gian Paolo Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: i seminaria nobilium nell'Italia centro-settentrionale* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1976), 219ff.

⁴⁵ Soarez's *De arte rhetorica* was reproduced many times across Europe both in the author's original version and in an edition revised by Perpinian (confusingly issued under the same title and with no reference to Perpinian). Between them, the two editions totalled at least 134 printings in forty-five cities (including many Italian ones) until 1735: see Lawrence Flynn, S.J., "The 'De arte rhetorica' (1568) by Cyprian Soarez, S.J.: A Translation with Introduction and Notes" (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1955), 37. See also C. Sommervogel & P. Bliard, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*. Paris, 1890. vol. VII, coll. 1331-1337. The SBN union catalogue of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico delle Biblioteche Italiane e per le Informazioni Bibliografiche (ICCU), <http://www.iccu.sbn.it/>, shows fifty-nine printings of De Colonia's similarly titled treatise, most published in Italy and no less than twenty in the nineteenth century, the last in 1893.

⁴⁶ Conley, *Rhetoric*, 152.

⁴⁷ The SBN catalogue shows fourteen impressions, 1654-1702. I have relied on the fifth impression, the last to be fully revised by the author: Emanuele Tesauro, S.J., *Il Cannocchiale aristotelico, O sia, Idea dell'arguta et ingegniosa elocutione, Che serue à tutta l'Arte oratoria, lapidaria; et simbolica. Esaminata co'principij del divino Aristotele, dal Conte & Cavalier Gran Croce D. Emanvele Tesavro, Patritio Torinese. Quinta Impressione* (Torino: Bartolomeo Zauatta, 1670). It is reproduced in facsimile as Emanuele Tesauro, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico. Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von August Buck, Ars poetica: Texte und Studien zur Dichtungslehre und Dichtkunst, Band 5* (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1968). Brizzi lists this as one of the texts used in the *Retorica* class at the Jesuit college in Bologna; see Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: i seminaria nobilium nell'Italia centro-settentrionale*, 221.

⁴⁸ Becelli lists rhetorics in current use as including those "del Padre di Colonia, e del Padre Lamì Francesi (e queste per lo più nelle Scuole si leggono); del Padre Cipriano Suarez, il quale intese di raccogliere in brieve

and was therefore unacceptable to the Jesuits, but Becelli's comment suggests that it was used, presumably in the Italian translation which appeared in 1728, in the Oratorian schools which competed with the Jesuits in educating the children of the nobility and upper middle classes.⁴⁹

A further category of rhetoric treatises incorporates works which cannot be demonstrated to have had such a direct influence on the kind of delivery routinely taught in schools or practised in the theatre, but which were nevertheless likely to have been known and influential in Italy during the early modern period. The fact that their discussions of delivery are to a very significant extent congruent with those of the sources described above reinforces the picture of a substantially consistent model of delivery maintained over a long period of time.

It is difficult to judge with any precision the influence of the many individual treatises and compendia on rhetoric (including many translations of classical sources) in use in Italy during the period, however a sense of the range of material known and considered significant can be gained from two sources which in different ways represent surveys of the field. The earlier of these is Giovanni Battista Bernardi's *Thesaurus rhetoricae* (Venice, 1599), the first – and for two hundred years thereafter, the only – attempt at a comprehensive lexicon of rhetorical terms.⁵⁰ The second is Becelli's survey of the history and practice of rhetoric, mentioned above.

gl'insegnamenti di Aristotile, di Ciceron, e di Quintiliano": see Giulio Cesare Becelli, *Esame della retorica antica e uso della moderna: libri VII divisi in due parti* (Verona: nella stamperia d'Angelo Targa, 1739), 93.

⁴⁹ Bernard Lamy, *De l'art de parler* (Paris: A. Pralard, 1675). Italian translation as Bernard Lamy, *La Rettorica ovvero L'arte di parlare del reverendo padre Bernardo Lamy, prete dell'Oratorio. Aggiuntevi le sue nuove riflessioni sopra l'arte poetica. Tradotta dalla lingua francese nell'italiana* (Venezia: appresso Cristoforo Zane, 1728). English translation as Bernard Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal: In pursuance of a former Treatise, Intituled, The Art of Thinking. Rendered into English* (London: Printed by W. Godbid, 1676).

⁵⁰ Giovanni Battista Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae, in quo insunt omnes praeceptiones, quae ad perfectum oratorem, instituendum, ex antiquis, & recentioribus Rhetorum monumentis, accurate desumptae sunt, ordineque admirabili, ac facillimo in unum velut colum digestae, ita ut uno intuitu omnia, quae ad artem pertinent inveniri possint. Opus utilissimum non modo oratoribus & concionatoribus, sed etiam omnibus, qui Rhetoricae operam dant, per necessarium* (Venice: apud Haeredes Melchioris Sessae, 1599). A comprehensive lexicon of rhetorical terms was not attempted again until the pair of volumes published by Johann Christian Gottlieb Ernesti at the end of the eighteenth century. See *Lexicon technologiae Graecorum rhetoricae, congressit et animadversionibus illustravit Io. Christ. Theoph. Ernesti* (Lipsiae: C. Fritsch 1795; reprint, Hildesheim 1983); *Lexicon technologiae Latinorum rhetoricae...* (Lipsiae: C. Fritsch 1797; reprint, Hildesheim 1983). For a more detailed discussion of the contents and background of Bernardi's volume, see Thomas Zinsmaier, "Der Beginn der rhetorischen Lexikographie: Giovanni Battista Bernardis 'Thesaurus rhetoricae' (Venedig 1599)," *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 2 (2000).

Rather than providing his own definitions, Bernardi assembled a wide-ranging compilation of quotations from a total of thirty-nine ancient and early modern authors, presenting them alphabetically by subject. The direct influence of the *Thesaurus* does not appear to have been long-lasting, however the range of sources it includes, as well as those it excludes, provides a unique insight into the kinds of rhetorical materials considered important and useful by a prominent humanist at the beginning of the period under consideration.⁵¹ In a sense, it also points a way forward, as a number of the sources cited by Bernardi continued to be reprinted regularly in the ensuing decades, and even into the eighteenth century, long after the *Thesaurus* itself appears to have been forgotten, and were also known to Becelli in the 1730s. Prominent amongst these are the classical treatises of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, together with the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, but he also makes extensive use of early modern treatises including Soarez's *De arte rhetorica* and Luis de Granada's preaching manual, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae*.⁵² As might be expected, the influence of the counter-reformation is evident in the exclusion of the Lutheran rhetorics of Melancthon, Sturm and Susenbrotus, as well as those of the Huguenot Ramus and the "uncomfortable Catholic", Erasmus,⁵³ and in the weight given to orthodox Catholic sources such as those of Soarez and de Granada.⁵⁴ Considerable weight is also given to the rhetorics of George of Trebizond (1433/4),⁵⁵ Bartolomeo Cavalcanti (1528),⁵⁶ and Daniele Barbaro (1557).⁵⁷

⁵¹ It was reprinted only once, in 1600, however the fact that copies survive in twenty-six Italian libraries, primarily across northern Italy but also as far afield as Naples, suggests that it was distributed relatively widely. Based on listings in the SBN union catalogue, accessed January 2006.

⁵² Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae* (Olysiptone [Lisbon]: 1575). De Granada was confessor to the Queen Regent of Portugal and his treatise was originally published in Lisbon, but it had wide currency across Europe including in Italy. As its title indicates, de Granada's topic is ecclesiastical rhetoric, but with regard to the principles of delivery there is little to separate the affective, counter-reformation style of pulpit oratory from that of the theatre. Following its original publication in Lisbon, subsequent editions appeared in quick succession in Venice (1578), Milan (1585) and Cologne (1582, 1594, 1611, 1635), and it received at least two further editions in the eighteenth century: Verona (1732) and Rome (1780).

⁵³ Zinsmaier, "Beginn der rhetorischen Lexikographie," 8.

⁵⁴ Perhaps surprisingly, however, Bernardi also includes passages from the *Rhetorica* of the Ramist Audomarus Talaeus (Omer Talon) and of the *De ratione consequentis styli seu de imitatione* (1563) by the Italian reformer Augustinus Curius (Agostino Curione), suggesting that the boundaries of what was considered admissible and useful, even in the atmosphere of counter-reformation censorship, might have been a little broader than they appear at first glance.

⁵⁵ Trebizond's treatise was first published at Venice in 1433 or 1434; see J. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 261. The edition to which Bernardi refers is Georgius [George of Trebizond] Trapezuntius, *G. Trapezuntij*

These sources were also known to Becelli. Additional Italian rhetorics which he noted include those of Francesco Patrizi (1562), Francesco Sansovino (1546), and Giasone de Nores (1578).⁵⁸ Also prominent in Becelli's list of non-Italian rhetorics is the *De eloquentia sacra et humana* (Paris, 1623) by another influential Frenchman, Nicholas Caussin, S.J.⁵⁹

In the context of this study, it is interesting to note that the kind of rhetoric predominantly studied in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was affective and performance oriented—what Thomas Conley has termed “operational” rhetoric, since its purpose was to operate unilaterally on the audience, rather than to be a vehicle for debate.⁶⁰ Conley considers Soares, in particular, to have been one of the most important influences behind “a major shift in the conception of rhetoric from a dialectical/controversial model to another placing much more emphasis on the speaker's ability to work the emotions of the audience”.⁶¹ According to Vossius, this kind of rhetoric aimed at “moving the soul of the auditor as though by a sort of

Rhetoricorum libri quinque, nunc denuo diligentis cura excusi (Paris: apud Ioannem Roigny, uia ad D. Iacobum, sub Basilisco & quatuor Elementis, 1538).

⁵⁶ The edition I have used is Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, *La retorica di M. Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, gentilhuomo fiorentino. Diuisa in sette libri: doue si contiene tutto quello, che appartiene all'arte oratoria. Con la tauola de i capi principali, contenuti nella presente opera* (In Vinegia: appresso Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari, 1559). The influence of Cavalcanti's book is suggested by the more than three hundred surviving copies, representing twelve different printings, found on the SBN union catalogue, though perhaps just as telling is its pride of place beside the rhetorics of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian in a small diocesan library in the early eighteenth century; see Kathleen M Comerford, "What did early modern priests read? The library of the seminary of Fiesole, 1646-1721," *Libraries and Culture* 34, no. 3 (1999).

⁵⁷ Daniele Barbaro, *Dialogo della eloquenza* (Venice: Girolamo Ruscelli, 1557).

⁵⁸ I have used the following editions: Giasone De Nores, *Breue trattato dell'oratore di M. Iason Denores alla studiosa et valorosa gioventu de' Nobili dell'illustrissima Repubblica Vinitiana. Discorso del medesimo intorno alla distintione, deffinitione, & diuisione della rhetorica in piu tauole poi a maggior facilita ordinatamente compartito ...* (Padoua: appresso Simon Galignani, 1574); Francesco Patrizi, *Della retorica dieci dialoghi: nelli quali si favella dell'arte oratoria con ragioni repugnanti all'openione, che intorno a quella hebbero gli antichi scrittori / di M. Francesco Patritio* (Venetia: Appresso Francesco Senese, 1562); Francesco Sansovino, *La Rhetorica di Francesco Sansouino. Al magnanimo signor Pietro Aretino* (1543).

⁵⁹ For an overview of Caussin's career and influence, see Conley, *Rhetoric*, 155-7. Caussin's influence in Italy is suggested by the 228 different printings of his various books found on the SBN union catalogue of Italian libraries, including eleven printings of *De eloquentia*. An English translation of a substantial section of Caussin's discussion of delivery is given (without acknowledgement) in Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, the Late Eminent Tragedian. Wherein the Action and Utterance of the Stage, Bar and Pulpit, are distinctly consider'd. With The Judgement of the late Ingenious Monsieur de St. Evremond, upon the Italian and French Music and Opera's; in a Letter to the Duke of Buckingham. To which is added, The Amorous Widow, or the Wanton Wife. A Comedy. Written by Mr. Betterton* (London: 1710; reprint, London: Frank Cass and Co., 1970), 89-97.

⁶⁰ See Conley, *Rhetoric*, 224.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

drug" (*quibusdam medicamentis*),⁶² taking its cue from the classical Greek orator Gorgias's view that "the effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies".⁶³ The often-quoted criticism of the emotive style of oratory associated with Gorgias and the other sophists was that it was as dangerous as "putting a knife in the hands of a madman in a crowd".⁶⁴ While the intensely emotive, baroque style of delivery inspired by the sophists was undoubtedly tempered in the eighteenth-century Italian theatre by the influence of French classicism, the continued use of "operational" rhetorics like Soarez's in teaching rhetoric perhaps helps to explain why the goal of moving the passions through powerfully affective delivery persisted so long in both theoretical and practical discussions of oratory and theatrical recitation in Italy.

In conclusion, it is not my intention to suggest that individual singers, or those who coached them, would necessarily have read or be relying on any one particular book, although a case could be made that at least some categories of people would have been likely to know certain books, for example Jesuit-educated *letterati* knowing Soarez's treatise, or theatre people knowing Perrucci's. The significance of the rhetorical literature for the purposes of this study is rather that the body of knowledge represented in the various sources is actually remarkably consistent in many respects, and represents a shared patrimony of lore about delivery which can be applied with some confidence to recitative.

⁶² Gerhard Johann Gerhard Johann Vossius, *Rhetorices contractae, sive partitionum oratoriarum libri V* (Leiden: 1627), 215.

⁶³ Gorgias. *Helen* 14. Translation in Conley, *Rhetoric*, 6.

⁶⁴ Plato. *Gorgias*, 469C 8ff.

Chapter 2 – Rhetoric and musical declamation

The importance of rhetoric as a model for music before 1800 has been recognised by scholars since the early twentieth century, but research has been hampered by the requirement for a substantial body of knowledge about classical rhetoric, once common knowledge to educated people, but now little known to non-specialists.

To understand how rhetoric informed music and theatre, and their intersection in vocal music (particularly opera), it is necessary to understand the basic principles of classical rhetoric as taught and understood in Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The teaching of rhetoric will be considered in more detail below. At this point it is important to note the distinction between written rhetoric and oratory. Written rhetoric was taught as an analytical and compositional tool within the study of literature, while oratory was the putting into practice of the theoretical and literary rules of rhetoric in actual speech-making. It is oratory, the performative aspect of rhetoric, which I will argue was most directly influential on the practice of singing.

Fundamentals of rhetoric

Rhetoric originated in Classical Greece as the art and science of public speaking, specifically of persuasive oratory, and was hence associated primarily with legal and political contexts. During the Middle Ages, rhetoric was taught mainly in the context of literary uses such as drafting of letters and legal documents, but with the rise of Humanism, rhetorical oratory was again taught as a practical skill, with a strong emphasis on oral exercises. Rhetorical theories were drawn from the classical literature, particularly Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De Oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. The last of these was known in fragmentary form throughout the middle ages, but a complete copy was only rediscovered in 1408; it became the most influential rhetorical source in the Renaissance. Oratory included the technique of

delivering a speech with appropriate vocal inflections, facial expressions and gestures calculated to win the good will of the audience and convince listeners of the speaker's point of view.¹

In composing and delivering a speech, an orator had to keep in mind three encompassing considerations: the audience being addressed, the opportune occasion for speech (*kairos*), and fitting one's speech appropriately to the subject matter and circumstances (*decorum*). Initially just one of several "virtues of delivery" (see below), *decorum* became a much broader concept governing all of rhetoric.

There were three principal grounds on which the speaker could try to win over an audience: the rational appeal, based on reasoned argument, the ethical appeal, based on the character of the speaker, and the emotional appeal, based on moving the emotions or "passions" of the audience. In the context of *dramma per musica*, the rational appeal necessarily relied on the words of the libretto, the ethical appeal on the words and also the convincing action of the performer on the stage, while the emotional appeal was expressed by the words, powerfully reinforced by music.

The discipline of rhetoric consisted of five "canons" which correspond to the stages involved in developing a convincing speech. These provide a systematic structure within which the effort to persuade the audience through all three kinds of appeal may be worked out in practice. The steps are:

1. Invention of arguments (*inventio*), generally from a stock of standard *loci topici* or "topics". In *dramma per musica*, this is the task of the librettist, who devises the plot. The analogous responsibility of the composer is to devise suitable melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ideas with which to reinforce the meaning and dramatic force of the librettist's words. It should be noted, however, that while German musicians from Burmeister to Forkel theorised the

¹ The outline of the theory of classical rhetoric given here is based primarily on Giovanni Battista Andreini et al., *Comici dell'arte: corrispondenze, Storia dello spettacolo. Fonti; 1* (Firenze: Casa editrice Le Lettere, 1993); Niccolò Barbieri, *La supplica: discorso familiare a quelli che trattano de' comici*, ed. Ferdinando Taviani, *Archivio del teatro italiano; n. 3* (Milano: Il Polifilo, 1971); Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Classical rhetoric for the modern student*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For other modern surveys of classical rhetoric, see also Gideon O. Burton, *Silva Rhetoricae* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University. www.rhetoric.byu.edu, 1996-2003, accessed 27 December 2006); Thomas M Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

process of musical composition by detailed analogy with rhetorical theory, there is little evidence that Italian composers thought in this way.²

2. Arrangement of material (*dispositio*). In its simplest formulation, following Aristotle, this amounted to organising the speech into a beginning, middle and end, or introduction, presentation of evidence, and conclusion. In the more complex formulations devised by later theorists, the usual structure was: Introduction; Statement of facts; Arguments and proofs; Rebuttal of counter-arguments; Conclusion. This kind of structure, designed primarily around legal or political speeches, could not be imposed directly onto the composition of drama, but *dispositio* did usefully describe the general principle of arranging ideas in a logical and convincing sequence. Since *dispositio*, like *inventio*, is an aspect of composition, responsibility for it in the context of *dramma per musica* lay primarily with the librettist, and secondarily with the *maestro di capella*, though singers might exercise some influence on both of these stages in as far as their preferences and / or strengths and weaknesses were taken into account.

3. Style (*elocutio*) deals with the artful expression of ideas. Where invention is concerned with *what* is to be said, style concerns *how* it is to be said. To be convincing, ideas must be artfully clothed in language suitable for accomplishing the speaker's expressive, and ultimately, persuasive goals.

Cicero developed a division of three "levels" of style suited to different rhetorical purposes: the high style, the purpose of which was to move; the middle style, intended to please; and the low style, best suited to teaching. He also identified four virtues of style: purity or correctness of language, clarity, propriety or appropriateness, and ornateness. Ornateness includes a concern with the sound of language as well as its meaning. Good style was considered to encompass a generally smooth and full sonority, emphasising open vowels such as A and O, and avoiding conjunctions of hard consonants.

² See Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). Athanasius Kircher praised the rhetorical propriety of Carissimi's oratorios (see G Massenkeil, "Die oratorische Kunst in den lateinischen Historien und Oratorien Giacomo Carissimis" (diss., University of Mainz, 1952).), however this seems likely to indicate more about the Bohemian Jesuit's theoretical ideas than the compositional practice of the Italian musician. The closest I have found to any kind of rhetorical theory of composition in Italian musical treatises is Manfredini's passing mention of "il Motivo, che è come il Tema del discorso" (the motive, which is like the theme of the discourse); see Vincenzo Manfredini, *Regole Armoniche, Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), 23.

Style includes the theory of “figures of speech”, a vast technical vocabulary of variations and elaborations on the normal use of words designed to heighten their effect by using them in specific ways that go beyond their ordinary meanings. These were a key resource for poets in composing libretti, for example through the use of metaphors or other *concetti* (ideas or “conceits”) to elegantly dramatise a character’s state of mind. By analogy, the composer’s task was to find suitable musical figures with which to elaborate and enhance the verbal text, and to reinforce its persuasive power. Further embellishment could be added by the singers, especially in the elaboration of da capo arias, and to a much more limited extent in recitative in the form of appoggiature, and occasionally other embellishments or improvised variants.

4. **Memory** (*memoria*) dealt with techniques for memorising a speech, either as a complete composition or as a series of points on which to extemporise. This has an obvious practical application to performance in opera, as Mancini pointed out.³

5. **Delivery** (*pronuntiatio* or *actio*) refers to the performance of the speech, generally in public. By contrast with the first three canons, delivery is almost exclusively the performer’s responsibility. Quintilian identified four virtues of delivery, corresponding to Cicero’s virtues of style. In delivery, as much as in composition, a speech should demonstrate the qualities of purity, clarity, appropriateness, and ornateness. These qualities provide a useful framework for the analysis of delivery in rhetorical genres including *dramma per musica* (Chapter 4, below).

Delivery was consistently defined in both classical and early modern rhetorics as being made up of two parts, voice and physical action (the latter often subdivided into gesture and facial expression). The techniques of early modern gesture have been explored in considerable detail by Dene Barnett in *The Art of Gesture: The practices and principles of 18th century acting*.⁴ One of the aims of the present study is to complement Barnett’s work on physical action with an exploration of the rhetorical understanding of the use of the voice in the context of recitative.

³ Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (Milano: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777; reprint, Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni, 1996), 245-6.

⁴ Dene Barnett, with the assistance of Jeanette Massy-Westropp, *The Art of Gesture: The practices and principles of 18th century acting* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1987).

Rhetoric and music

The eighteenth-century literature on musical rhetoric has been studied in some detail in recent years in the context of research on how rhetorical concepts influenced the process of composition. The majority of such scholarship has focussed on the German theories of *musica poetica*, which set out a thoroughgoing theory of musical rhetoric in composition.⁵ Certainly, Italian vocal music of the eighteenth century shares the common vocabulary of musical "topics", *hypotyposis* figures and other rhetorical devices typical of the period, and *musica poetica* principles of invention and arrangement can be applied to these genres quite effectively, as J.D. Heinichen demonstrated.⁶ But there is no Italian theoretical literature comparable to the treatises of Heinichen or Johann Mattheson to suggest that most Italian musicians were interested in, or even particularly aware of these German theories. Instead, Italian composition had its centre of gravity in the practical world of the theatre where there was little time or inclination for theory. Rhetoric is, after all, ultimately concerned with *pronuntiatio*, the delivery of an oration, as well as with *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*, the elements of composition. As Dietrich Bartel puts it,

Italian Baroque music was modelled after the art of oratory rather than the discipline of rhetoric. Its goal was to imitate the actor rather than the playwright, the orator rather than the rhetorician ... Dramatic gesture and pathos-laden delivery was to supply the necessary inspiration for musical invention.⁷

While Italy did not develop the comprehensive compositional theory of musical rhetoric developed by German theorists during this period, the writings of Italian musicians, including Tosi and Mancini, imply that the rhetorical tradition remained an important part of the frame of reference which informed Italian thinking about how vocal music communicates. Read from this perspective, these sources offer important insights into the way Italian composers and singers conceived the relationships between words and music, particularly in recitative. The words, in their dual role as both sound medium and message,

⁵ See in particular Bartel, *Musica Poetica*. See also Brian Vickers' wide-ranging research on both verbal rhetoric and musical rhetoric, notably "Figures of Rhetoric/Figures of Music?" *Rhetorica* 2, no. 1 (1984): 1-44, and *In Defence of Rhetoric*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

⁶ George Buelow, "The *Loci Topici* and Affect in late baroque music: Heinichen's practical Demonstration," *The Music Review* 27 (1966): passim; Johann David Heinichen, *Der General-Bass in der Composition* (Dresden: 1728).

⁷ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, 20.

can guide the singer in some of the problematic areas of performance practice including the use of the more “intangible” expressive parameters such as vocal colour, phrasing and articulation.

Rhetoric and musical recitation

Giambattista Mancini’s advocacy of oratory as a model for singers’ performance of recitative provides a clear link between sung and spoken delivery, but what does this mean in practice? How clear a connection can be demonstrated between recitative performance and the rhetorical theory of delivery? The aspects of recitative delivery to which Mancini alludes in the passage quoted in the previous chapter are the main parameters that define any kind of vocal delivery – rhythm and tempo of delivery, dynamic, timbre and pitch – so it is not surprising that the same kinds of considerations were also addressed in the rhetorical literature on delivery. But this is more than just a parallel or analogy. Mancini advises singers specifically to model themselves on orators, that is, on those trained in the techniques of rhetorical oratory. This makes perfect sense when we consider that, while recitative is clearly not just speech, it was conceptualised from its inception in the late sixteenth century as a branch of declamation founded on the same theoretical premises and with the same expressive goals as rhetorical oratory. It was understood throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a form of recitation, rather than merely a species of (musically rather uninteresting) vocal music, and like other types of recitation and declamation, was to be performed according to the principles of rhetorical delivery.⁸

The main reason for the largely unchallenged primacy of the rhetorical paradigm of communication in the early modern period is the ubiquity of rhetoric in the education of men of the upper and upper-middle classes. From the mid-sixteenth century until at least the third quarter of the eighteenth, the study of rhetoric was an important part of educational curricula throughout Western Europe, including in Italy. While rhetoric was a senior secondary level subject and was certainly not taught to all students (and virtually never to women), one indication of its “mainstream” status in educational curricula in eighteenth

⁸ On the status of recitation as an intermediate category between speech and song, see Reinhard Strohm, “Rezitativ,” in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel; New York: Bärenreiter, 1994-2006).

century Italy is that it was taught not only in the schools and colleges of the established educational religious orders such as the Jesuits and Oratorians, but also in schools of more humble standing. In Bologna, for example, rhetoric was taught at the Scuole Pie, a vocationally oriented middle level school administered under civil authority which catered to the middle and lower classes.⁹

It is commonly stated that the traditional discipline of rhetoric gradually lost its prestige during the second half of the eighteenth century, giving way to revised conceptions that privileged style and delivery to the exclusion of the first two compositional canons, invention and arrangement.¹⁰ While this process is clearly traceable in the development of the English elocutionary movement of Sheridan and Walker, and in the philosophy of Kant, for example, it is less apparent in Italy. One reason for this is the pervasive influence of the Jesuits in the education of the upper classes. Until the suppression of the order in 1773, their conservative curriculum remained closely based on the *Ratio studiorum* of 1599, which gave the full rhetorical program a central place.¹¹ While the influence of Enlightenment ideas led to a gradual decline in the centrality of rhetoric to education during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it certainly did not disappear. Rhetoric was considered by Leopold Mozart to be an important part of the education of his son,¹² and as late as 1789, the year of the French Revolution, the progressive Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo of Tuscany, whose

⁹ See Sergio Durante, "Alcune considerazioni sui cantanti di teatro del primo settecento e la loro formazione," in *Antonio Vivaldi teatro musicale cultura e società: la tradizione testuale e le poetiche settecentesche nella drammaturgia vivaldiana*, ed. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giovanni Morelli (Firenze: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi, Venezia, 1982), 445-7. The Scuole Pie in Bologna was modelled on the schools of the same name run by the Piarist order, but was operated under civic control by a confraternity not controlled by the religious orders. For a more detailed discussion of public education in Bologna, see R. Fantini, *L'istruzione popolare a Bologna fino al 1860, Istituto per la storia di Bologna: Studi e ricerche* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1971), 3-22. On the Jesuit *Collegio dei nobili* in Bologna, see Gian Paolo Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: i seminaria nobilium nell'Italia centro-settentrionale* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1976). On early modern education in Italy more generally, see Donatella Balani and Marina Roggero, eds., *La Scuola in Italia dalla Controriforma al secolo dei lumi* (Torino: Loescher, 1976); Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: literacy and learning, 1300-1600, Johns Hopkins University studies in historical and political science, 107th ser., vol. 1*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Enzo Petrini and Renzo Ammannati, eds., *Venticinque secoli di educazione e scuola in Italia* (Firenze: Centro Didattico Nazionale di Studi e Documentazione, 1970); Aldo D. Scaglione, *The liberal arts and the Jesuit college system* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co, 1986).

¹⁰ See, for example, Blake McDowell Wilson, George Buelow, and Peter A. Hoyt, "Rhetoric and music," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (Macmillan, 2000).

¹¹ Brizzi reports that as late as 1772, only 10% of students left the Bologna *Collegio dei nobili* before completing the rhetoric class. Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: i seminaria nobilium nell'Italia centro-settentrionale*, 220.

¹² Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment: truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas* (London: Faber, 1992), 10.

modernising ideas on education were strongly influenced by the Rousseauian ideals of the Austrian reformer J. H. Pestalozzi, still included rhetoric in his proposed scheme for a reformed, broad-based education system for Tuscany.¹³ In fact, rhetoric continued to be taught in many places well into the nineteenth century.¹⁴

Rhetoric thus formed part of the common currency of discourse amongst educated people, and, as a body of received knowledge about how communication works, it lay in the background of discussions about the communicative arts, including music. At least until the rhetorical model came under question by the *philosophes* in the mid-eighteenth century, there was no alternative paradigm in European discourse which could seriously challenge rhetoric's place as *the* conceptual framework for understanding communication.¹⁵

In accordance with this rhetorical understanding of communication, all of the arts that collectively constituted the business of a singer in *dramma per musica* were conceived as rhetorical: poetry, declamation, music, gesture and acting, even dance.¹⁶ Despite all the

¹³ Luciana Bellatalla, *Pietro Leopoldo di Toscana granduca-educatore: teoria e pratica di un despota illuminato* (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi editore, 1984).

¹⁴ Conley, *Rhetoric*, 235ff.

¹⁵ According to Cecchini, Barbieri and Perrucci (Chapter 1), even improvised *commedia dell'arte* was subject to the rules of rhetoric, at least with regard to the more serious roles representing upper class characters. See, for example, Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso*, ed. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato ed. (Firenze: 1961), 159. Luigi Riccoboni went further, including "under the Art of Declamation, every Intercourse of Conversation which is communicable by distinct, intelligible Language". Luigi Riccoboni, *A General History of the Stage, from its Origin ... Together with Two Essays; On the Art of Speaking in Public, and a Comparison between the Antient and Modern Drama, Music and theatre in France in the 17th and 18th centuries* (London: Printed for W. Owen, 1754; reprint, 1978. New York: AMS), 7.

¹⁶ Sources on the place of rhetoric in both spoken and sung theatre are discussed in more detail below. On the role of rhetoric in the arts generally, see Gerard LeCoat, *The rhetoric of the arts, 1550-1650, European university papers: series 18, comparative literature; v. 3* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975). Analogies between oratory and musical performance were made by writers including Vicentino, Zarlino, Vincenzo Galilei, Severo Bonini, Marcello, and Quantz, as well as Mancini: see Severo Bonini, *Severo Bonini's Discorsi e regole: a bilingual edition* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1979), 126-7; Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna, Monuments of music and music literature in facsimile. Second series, Music literature; 20* (New York: Broude, 1967), 89; Nicola Vicentino, *Ancient music adapted to modern practice: Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by Maria Rika Maniates*, ed. Claude V. Palisca, *Music theory translation series*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 301; Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche* (Venice: 1558), II.7, IV.33. On Marcello's view of rhetoric and musical delivery, see Luigi Rovighi, "Prassi vocale e strumentale in Baldassare Galuppi: La retorica degli affetti e lo stile galante," in *Galuppiana 1985, Studi e ricerche: Atti del convegno internazionale (Venezia, 28-30 ottobre 1985)*, ed. Maria Teresa Muraro and Franco Rossi, *Quaderni della rivista italiana di musicologia, società italiana di musicologia 13* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1986), 197. Quantz's analogy is made in very similar terms to Mancini's: see Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voss, 1752; reprint, Facsimile edition, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), 100-1. On rhetoric and gesture, see Barnett, *The Art of Gesture: The practices and principles of 18th century acting*. On rhetoric and dance, see Ingrid Brainard, "The speaking

debates of the *letterati* about the validity of opera as a form of tragedy, the genre itself was also understood throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a category of literary drama which was governed by rhetorical principles in both composition and performance. Its popular success was such that the leading academician Marquis Scipione Maffei considered the success of opera to be responsible for the near disappearance of tragedy from the stage.¹⁷ In practice, opera was Italy's national drama, and as Reinhard Strohm has argued convincingly, *dramma per musica* was heard very much as drama set to music, rather than as an "aria concert", as it can seem to a modern audience unfamiliar with its conventions.¹⁸ On occasion, opera libretti were even given as spoken plays.¹⁹ Rhetorical principles thus applied to sung declamation as much as to spoken drama or any of the other communicative arts.

Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Italian writers who were familiar with both sung and spoken theatre maintained that delivery in both types was subject to the same principles. Writing around 1630, the anonymous author of *Il Corago*, for example, opens his chapter on "The Manner of Reciting in Music" with a reminder to singers that their special skills were supplementary, rather than alternative, to those required of all actors.

Two sorts of advice are useful to anyone who acts in singing in dramatic works. Some admonitions which are general and common to all actors and are fully part of this discussion,

body: Gaspero Angiolini's *rhétorique muette* and the *ballet d'action* in the eighteenth century," in *Critica Musica: Essays in Honor of Paul Brainard*, ed. John Knowles (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1996).

¹⁷ Introduction to *Teatro italiano* (1723), cited in Melania Bucciarelli, *Italian opera and European theatre, 1680-1720: plots, performers, dramaturgies, Speculum musicae; v. 7* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 82. Spoken dramas were read or performed almost exclusively in schools and in the meetings of literary academies until, beginning in 1710, several older Italian tragedies were revived on the public stage, along with translations of French tragedy and a few modern works by literati including Martello and Maffei himself, whose *La Merope* was successfully performed by Luigi Riccoboni's company in Verona and Venice. Despite the success of Riccoboni's company over several years, however, public performances of spoken drama remained rare enough that they must have retained a certain novelty value by comparison with the wealth of opera performances on offer.

¹⁸ "Towards an understanding of the opera seria" in Reinhard Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian opera* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 97. See also Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma per musica: Italian opera seria of the eighteenth century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 18. Here he takes issue with the "aria concert" view argued, for example, in Robert Freeman, "Opera without Drama: Currents of Change in Italian Opera, 1675 to 1725, and the Roles Played Therein by Zeno, Caldara, and Others" (Ph.D., Princeton University, 1967).

¹⁹ See, for example, Mancini's account of spoken performances of Metastasio's *Artaserse* given in Venice by Gaetano Casali's company in Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 234-35.

must be taken from what we will say further on about speaking on stage. Others, presupposing the common attributes of a good actor, are special to singers of *stil recitativo* ...²⁰

The special requirements of singers include the need to make some adjustments to the pacing of their delivery to accommodate the music, as the slower pace of musical declamation means that gestures will need to be correspondingly slowed down. Singers are not to be constrained too much by the musical structure, however; for instance, they will need to make expressive pauses in declamation whether or not these are written into the music. In other respects their delivery follows the same rhetorical principles as does that of speaking actors. As he puts it in the conclusion to the same chapter of *Il Corago*,

Above all, to be a good singing actor it would be necessary to be also a good speaking actor, as we have seen that some who have had special grace in acting have done marvels when they have also known how to sing as well.²¹

A century later, Charles de Brosse described *recitativo semplice* as “almost merely a simple recitation scanned according to the taste of the tragic actors who sing as they declaim”.²²

Andrea Perrucci on spoken and sung delivery

Andrea Perrucci's *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso* (1699)²³ is a particularly important treatise which addresses the principles of delivery in both sung and spoken Italian drama. Perrucci's status as both a respected academician and a practical man of the theatre, together with the book's use by both educated amateurs and professional actors and singers, gives *Dell'arte rappresentativa* an unusually authoritative status in relation to the theory and practice of the theatre at the turn of the eighteenth century. It is examined here at some length because the author's intimate knowledge of both spoken and sung theatrical forms as dramatist and *corago* make it an invaluable resource for understanding the influence of the

²⁰ Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche, Studi e testi per la storia della musica* (Florence: Olschki, 1983), 90. Trans. Margaret Murata in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, Revised ed. (New York: Norton, 1998), 632.

²¹ Fabbri and Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, 91. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 633.

²² Charles de Brosse, *Lettres familières écrites en Italie en 1739 et 1740*, ed. Romain Colomb, 4th ed., vol. II (Paris: 1885). Translation in Carol MacClintock, *Readings in the History of Music in Performance: Selected, translated, and edited by Carol MacClintock* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1979), 279.

²³ Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*.

rhetorical tradition of delivery on recitative performance practice. Perrucci draws explicit connections between rhetorical theory and theatrical practice, between *dramma per musica* and other dramatic genres (both sung and spoken), and between composed and improvised performance styles. Most importantly of all for the present purpose, he also spells out the connections between the performance practices of opera and of spoken plays, which he considers to be in almost all respects identical.

Perucci (1651-1704) was born in Palermo but as a child moved to Naples where he attended the Jesuit primary and secondary schools, before studying jurisprudence at the University of Naples.²⁴ With his elite education and status as a lawyer, he made a point of styling himself a *dilettante*, but in practice he was a professional theatre poet, *corago* and sometimes actor throughout a thirty year career. For some years he directed the Teatro di S. Bartolomeo in Naples, as well as directing theatrical spectacles at court.²⁵ While addressed nominally to *dilettanti*, the treatise was very much a practical manual and copies “were literally worn out by actors and *capocomici*, amateurs and professionals alike”.²⁶

Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso has been studied primarily for the insights it gives into the theory and practice of theatre *all'improvviso*, that is, the improvised *commedia dell'arte* as it was practised at the turn of the eighteenth century, which is the subject of Part II of the book. Part I has received considerably less attention, however; indeed it is excluded entirely from the excerpts published in the major anthology *La commedia dell'arte*.²⁷ Cesare Molinari, in his introduction to the published excerpts, goes so far as to say that “the first part of the treatise, despite its precise and redundant completeness, does not present ideas of

²⁴ Cesare Molinari and Renzo Guardenti, *La commedia dell'arte. Scelta e introduzione di Cesare Molinari; apparati di Renzo Guardenti*, ed. Walter Pedullà, *Cento libri per mille anni* (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999), 1203. A substantial annotated bibliography of eighteenth-century and modern literature dealing with Perrucci and his writings is given in Pietro Spezzani, “L'Arte rappresentativa di Andrea Perrucci e la lingua della Commedia dell'Arte,” in *Lingua e strutture del teatro italiano del rinascimento*, ed. Gianfranco Folena, *Quaderni del circolo filologico-linguistico padovano* (Padova: Liviana, 1970), 357-60.

²⁵ He was also a prolific poet, composing dramatic and other poetry in the Neapolitan, Calabrese and Sicilian dialects as well as in Spanish and Tuscan, and above all writing texts for musical works of all kinds – serenades, oratorios, *dialoghi*, *drammi tragici*, and *opere 'tragi-sacre'*. One of Perrucci's *opere 'tragi-sacre'* was performed in 1733 by the Conservatorio degli Orfani di S. Maria di Loreto (one of the four famous Neapolitan conservatori which specialised in the teaching of music): see Molinari and Guardenti, *La commedia dell'arte*.

²⁶ Bucciarelli, *Italian opera and European theatre*, 37.

²⁷ Molinari and Guardenti, *La commedia dell'arte*.

great interest, in contrast to the second.”²⁸ This is perhaps so as regards the study of improvised theatre, but in relation to composed drama, including *dramma per musica*, the contrary is the case, (although as Molinari points out, the text is frequently mired in classical quotations and allusions which Perrucci apparently introduces primarily to demonstrate his erudition).²⁹ Part I contains a substantial body of information about all aspects of Italian composed theatre during the period. Individual chapters, which he designates “*Regole*”, are devoted to set design, costuming, the various theatrical genres (both spoken and sung), theatrical recitation (including the differences between sung and spoken drama), the different characters and how to portray them, delivery (including faults to avoid in the various genres), memory, acting (including separate chapters on the use of the voice and gesture), tips on how to portray characters in certain situations, common errors in acting and how to remedy them, character types in the various genres, and finally the categories of elements that go to make up a theatrical production: prologues, intermezzi, choruses, instrumental music and dance.

Throughout his discussion, sung drama is considered equally with spoken drama; indeed it is apparent even from the list of topics which he addresses, that Perrucci considers sung drama (*dramma per musica*) to be simply another category of theatrical performance to be placed alongside spoken Tragedy, *Commedia* and Pastoral, rather than an intrinsically different genre.³⁰ This inclusive view is clearly indicated in the opening *Regola* of the book:

Firstly, let us say that the art of acting (as distinct from the compositions of poets to be acted) is a vivid imitation in the theatre, with the voice and with gestures, of an entire action, whether historical or fabulous, whether with singing or spoken dialogue, whether wholly

²⁸ “[L]a prima parte del trattato, nonostante la sua accurata e ridondante compiutezza, non presenta spunti di grande interesse, al contrario della seconda.” *Ibid.*, 1205.

²⁹ The profusion of Perrucci’s classical references seems to go beyond the conventional appeal to *auctoritas* and invites comparison with Marcellò’s fictional librettist: “When he sets down the outline of his work in a preface the librettist should embark on a lengthy discourse on the rules of tragedy and the art of poetry, quoting heavily from Sophocles, Euripedes, Aristotle, and Horace. He should not fail to add that any truly modern poet is constrained to abandon all the salient rules in order to please the taste of a decadent century, the licentiousness of the theater, the extravagance of the conductors, the presumption of the singers, and the whims of the trained bear and the extras.” Benedetto Marcello, “Il Teatro Alla Moda - Part I. Translated by Reinhard G. Pauly,” *Musical Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1948): 374-75.

³⁰ It should be noted that the scenari played *all'improvviso* were by no means all “comic” in the modern sense. Many were serious in whole or part.

composed by a poet or in part devised by him, in providing the subject, and in the words of the interlocutors; performed for pleasure with profit.³¹

He then briefly explicates each of the above points, concluding with his own brief formulation of a moral defence of the theatre, a preoccupation typical of early modern Italian theatrical practitioners writing about their craft:³²

I say “with the voice, and united with gestures”, to distinguish [acting] from theatrical poetry, in as much as [the latter] is a composition; “whether historical or fabulous”, to convey whether it deals with things true or fictitious; “with singing or with speaking”, to distinguish between melodrama and dramas that are recited; “whether composed entirely by the poet”, being his own invention, disposition of material, and words, or “in part by him”, the subject being by the poet, and the words improvised by the actors. I speak of “pleasure with profit” as the objective of this exercise, being the tyrant of idleness, and rectifier of bad habits.³³

Finally, Perrucci specifies the differences between spoken and sung works. It is noteworthy that the only feature which he considers to distinguish these categories from one another overall, is that one is accompanied by continuous music, while the other is not. Tragedy, *commedia* or satire can equally be performed in either spoken or sung forms:

Acting in recitation is to be distinguished from that in music; the first has no requirement for instrumental music other than between Acts; the second requires continual musical

³¹ “E per prima diremo: l’Arte Rappresentativa (distinguendola dalla Composizione fatta da’ Poeti per rappresentarsi) essere una imitazione al vivo con la voce, e con li gesti in teatro d’un azione intiera, o istorica, o favolosa, o con canto, o con discorso, o dal Poeta composta in tutto, o in parte inventata da esso nel soggetto, e nelle parole dall’interlocutori; rappresentata per dilettere con profitto.” (My emphasis). Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 66.

³² The fact that Italian writers on the theatre from Sommi to Riccoboni and beyond felt it necessary to defend the moral standing of the theatre and its practitioners is in itself an indication of the ambivalent moral status of the theatrical profession in Italian society. While Perrucci’s defence is relatively matter of fact – his introduction to the theatre was, after all, through the Jesuits for whom the theatre (properly directed to moral teaching) was a vital tool of education and mission – other writers clearly felt a more pressing need to defend their profession from moral condemnation. Such a defence constitutes the main subject matter of Niccolò Barbieri’s *La supplica: discorso familiare a quelli che trattano de’ comici*.

³³ “Si dice con voce, e con li gesti uniti, per distinguerla dalla scenica Poesia in quanto è composizione. O istorica, o favolosa per portarsi in essa, e cose vere, e finte. Con canto, o con discorso per distinguersi in Melodrami, e Drami recitativi. O dal Poeta composta in tutto per esser di esso l’invenzione, la disposizione, e le parole, o in parte da lui per esser il soggetto del Poeta, e le parole de’ Recitanti all’improvviso. Si dice per dilettere con profitto essendo il fine di questo esercizio, esser tiranno dell’ozio, & emendatore d’ costumi corrotti.” Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 66.

accompaniment, and each as much as the other is divided into Tragedy, *Commedia*, Satire, or a mixture of all three genres, in farce-tragedy or tragicomedy.³⁴

This view reflects the practical realities of the theatre profession of the time, particularly in Naples, where recent reassessments of the historical evidence show there to have been closer connections between opera and *commedia* than had long been thought. These connections are evident not only between *commedia* and comic opera, but also between *commedia* and *dramma per musica*. A common repertoire of comic *topoi* was used in *commedia* and in opera libretti during the seventeenth century, particularly in Neapolitan opera which in the early eighteenth century continued the seventeenth-century practice of including comic scenes in *dramma per musica*, even adding such scenes into *opere serie* imported from Venice and other centres.³⁵ In at least some instances, the same companies of performers staged both *commedia* and *dramma per musica*, a case in point occurring at the Teatro di Fiorentini in Naples in 1706.³⁶

³⁴ "Si distingue l'Arte in Recitativa e per Musica; la prima non bisognevole de' suoni se non per la distinzione degli Atti; la seconda, che hà necessit  dell' accompagnamento del suono continuo, e tanto l'una, quanto l'altra si distinguono in Tragedia, Comedia, Satira, o misto di tutti e tre generi, nell' Ilaro-Tragedia, o Tragi-Comedia." Ibid.

³⁵ Bucciarelli, *Italian opera and European theatre*, 33-4. See also Paolo Fabbri, *Il secolo cantante: per una storia del libretto d'opera nel Seicento*, Ricerca (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).

³⁶ Francesco Cotticelli and Paolo Giovanni Maione, *Onesto divertimento, ed allegria de' popoli: Materiali per una storia dello spettacolo a Napoli nel primo Settecento* (Milan: Ricordi, 1996), 100. Maione's research has also brought to light the cases of two notable singers, Giulia de Caro and Laura Monti, both of whom worked across both genres as singers and *commedia* actors. Monti began her career as an actor in *commedia* and continued to perform with the *comici* even after making the transition to opera, in which she made her debut at the Teatro dei Fiorentini in 1722. Cotticelli and Maione, *Onesto divertimento*, 114. De Caro's sphere of activity was even wider, encompassing the roles of actress, singer, *puttana*, and between 1669 and 1676, *capocomica* and impresario at the Teatro San Bartolomeo; see Paologiovanni Maione, "Giulia de Caro "seu Ciulla" da commediante a cantarina: Osservazioni sulla condizione degli "armonici" nella seconda meta del Seicento," *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 32, no. 1 (1997). While it was certainly exceptional for a female singer to take on the role of impresario, de Caro's case is not unique. Regina Mingotti took over as impresario at the King's Theatre in London for the 1756-7 season in partnership with the violinist Giardini, following the bankruptcy of the incumbent, Vanneschi, and they were succeeded by another singer, Colomba Mattei, who was impresario for four years in partnership with her husband: see Lynne Murray, "Power and gender: a woman as opera impresario in London in the eighteenth century," in *Loose Canons: Papers from the National Festival of Women's Music, Canberra, 2001*, ed. Graham Hair, Ruth Lee Martin, and Linda Kouvaras (Canberra: Southern Voices, 2004). Further evidence of the connections between *commedia* and opera in their choice of subject matter is presented by Melania Bucciarelli, who has identified some intriguing parallels between some of the *commedia scenari* in the *Ciro Monarca* manuscript collection and contemporary opera libretti. She cites in particular the remarkable similarities between the libretto for the opera *L'empio punito* (Rome, 1669) and the two scenari *L'ateista fulminato* and *Il convitato di pietra* (all of which have been identified as ancestors of Da Ponte and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*) as well as between the libretto *Scanderbeg* by Antonio Salvi for the opera by Vivaldi (Florence, 1718) and the scenario *Le glorie di Scanderbech con la libert  della patria sotto Amural Imper.e di Costantinopoli*, and between the libretto *Amore e maest *, also by Salvi, and the scenario *Gl'honesti amori della regina d'Inghilterra*. Bucciarelli, *Italian opera and European theatre*, 36.

Perrucci's classification of stock types of monologues for use in improvised *commedia* also closely parallels the commonplace categories of arias found in *dramma per musica*, and indeed in serious opera throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, the text of his model monologue, "*di partenza*" (of parting) reads as follows:

I depart, my love, but with such a heart as only the god Cupid knows; since if a plant is uprooted from its native soil its flowers fall, its branches grow weak and unfruitful. Even so is my heart, torn from that breast from which it receives the nourishment of love, and life: it loses the flowers of joy, the branches of hope, and becomes arid.³⁷

While the *conpetto* exemplified here is a specific simile (the heart of the separated lover is like an uprooted plant), as a broader type, this kind of monologue corresponds directly with the aria of farewell – a common operatic topos from Ottavia's "*Addio, Roma!*" in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* to Sesto's "*Parto, parto ben mio*" in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, and beyond.³⁸ Similarly, Perrucci's *conchetti* *D'Amor corrisposto* (of reciprocated love), *Di Sdegno* (of anger), *Di Gelosia* (of jealousy), *D'Amicizia* (of friendship), *Di Merito* (in praise of merit) and so on, all closely parallel familiar aria text formulas.

If spoken and sung theatrical forms can share the same subject matter and vocabulary of *topoi*, what of their modes of delivery in performance? Perrucci makes it clear that with regard to each of the principal features of the art of performance as they were conventionally defined, he considers there to be no fundamental distinction between the two forms other than the use of the sung or spoken voice:

The rules, then, for the musicians who sing and act shall be the same with regard to memory, gesture and actions as those for the actors who speak; also in moving the affections, the

³⁷ Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 66. "Parto o bella: ma con qual cuore lo sà solo il Dio Cupido: poiche se si svelle la pianta dal natio terreno cadono i fiori, illanguidiscono le frondi, ed arido rimane; così il mio cuore svelto da quel seno da cui riceve l'amoroso alimento, e la vita: perde i fiori delle gioie, le frondi della speranza, ed arido diviene."

³⁸ For a more comprehensive listing of examples of this topos in opera, see Bucciarelli, *Italian opera and European theatre*, 44-5. While arias of this type are almost universally "exit arias" following which the singer leaves the stage, this topos is not to be confused with the exit aria as a general category, examples of which are so ubiquitous in the *dramma per musica* repertoire as to represent little more than a convention signalling the end of a scene and thus acting as a cue for applause. The point of Perrucci's *conpetto* "*di partenza*", and of the arias that parallel it in textual content and dramatic function is rather that the character is directly announcing his or her intention of departing and expressing the affections that are associated with parting – chiefly sorrow and longing. This *conpetto* therefore specifically parallels arias of farewell, that is, those in which the intention to depart is a principal feature of the text, and hence of the affective burden of the aria.

costumes and the sets, leaving to the masters of music ... the art of teaching them the notes and the harmony of singing, with which we do not entangle ourselves.³⁹

To put it another way, the kind of performance expected of singers is exactly the same as that expected of actors in every respect except the music-technical aspects of vocal delivery which use a set of specifically musical skills (“the notes and the harmony of singing”), and apparently only to the extent that these are different from those required of a speaking actor. The objective of moving the affections applies equally to both, and thus calls for the same repertoire of communicative / affective skills in delivery. Perrucci is clearly reluctant to trespass on the professional territory of singing teachers, and so does not directly address the question of how a singer should regulate aspects of vocal delivery such as volume, articulation, dynamic, timbre and pacing in this context. His assumption seems to be that in as far as these parameters are not directly dictated by the musical structures specified by the composer, they would naturally be governed by the same principles which inform spoken performance (set out in Part I, Regola X), just as are all of the other parameters of stage performance which he lists.⁴⁰ The fundamental principles which dictate what is to be communicated and how it is conveyed meaningfully to the listener apply equally to each form of theatre – it is only the medium that varies.

What, then, were the underlying principles on which the *arte rappresentativa* was based? While each category of theatre has its own particular characteristics, for Perrucci the conceptual framework within which both composition and performance are to be understood for all types of theatrical works is the rhetorical tradition. The rhetorical paradigm within which the book is couched is immediately apparent in the preface *al lettore* (to the reader):

³⁹ Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 92. “Le regole dunque ai musici che cantano, e rappresentano saranno comuni nella memoria, gestire, et azioni con i Recitanti, che parlano; così del muovere gli affetti, gli abiti e le scene, lasciando ai Maestri di musica ... l'arte d'addottrinarli nelle note, e nell'Armonia del canto, del che noi non ci intrichiamo”.

⁴⁰ Perrucci's use of the term “*azioni*” in his list of aspects of performance which apply to both singers and actors perhaps requires some comment, in that he uses “*azione*” in other contexts as a synonym for “*pronuncia*” (delivery), which incorporates both voice and gesture (see *Regola IX*, quoted below). While it is tempting to assume that he is employing “*azioni*” in this sense here, thereby implying that the rules for the use of the voice are the same for singers as for actors, the use of the plural form, together with the fact that gesture and singing are mentioned separately in the same passage, suggests otherwise. Perrucci uses the plural form “*azioni*” in other contexts to refer to physical actions which fall outside of the usual definition of gesture, for example fencing, falling down and dying on stage (see his *Regola XII*).

The art of acting is very necessary in the world, for it is considered one of the most essential things to being a perfect man of letters. I do not address only those who wish to act on the stage; but [anyone who wishes] to know how to express the sentiments of the soul to the listener through delivery, gesture and actions, with style and grace, and to bring expression to life with great persuasive force. Hence we see orators, learned men of science and the liberal arts, and academicians, ambassadors, military leaders and preachers have a great need of this [skill], for persuading, expressing, exciting, describing, exhorting, animating, correcting, and knowing how to captivate the souls of the listeners.⁴¹

Acting is defined in terms of *pronuncia* (the Italian translation of the Latin rhetorical term *pronuntiatio*, or delivery), and the list of professions which Perrucci considers will find the skills described in the book useful is very much the same range as is addressed in contemporary rhetorical treatises dealing with oratory.⁴² The opening of the first *Regola*, quoted above, reinforces the identification of acting with rhetorical *pronuntiatio* in its definition of the *arte rappresentativa* as “a vivid imitation in the theatre, with the voice and with gestures, of an entire action”, (voice and gesture being the two elements into which delivery is traditionally divided in classical rhetoric). The same association is spelt out in *Regola IX, Of Pronunciation, or Action*, where he states that “delivery is divided into voice and gestures”.⁴³ Voice and gesture are then treated in detail in the following two *Regole*, “*Della Voce, come si deggia regolare, e variare nel Rappresentare*”⁴⁴ and “*Del Gestire conveniente al Rappresentante*”.⁴⁵

⁴¹ “È così necessaria nel Mondo l’Arte Rappresentativa, che per esser un’uomo perfetto letterato, la stimo una delle cose più essenziali. Non dico solo per lo diletto di Rappresentare sù le Scene; ma per sapere con la Pronuncia, gesti, ed azzioni esprimere i sentimenti dell’animo à chi ascolta, con modo, e garbo, avendo gran forza di persuadere l’espressione al vivo. Quindi vediamo ed Oratori, e Lettori di Scienze, e d’Arti liberali, ed Accademici, ed Ambasciatori, e Capi di Guerra, e Predicatori havere di questa un gran bisogno, per persuadere, esprimere, concitare, descrivere, esortare, animare, correggere, e sapersi cattivare gli animi degli ascoltanti.” Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 55.

⁴² The one significant exception is that Perrucci does not include lawyers in his list, perhaps because legal oratory was classified as being in the middle style, and requiring less gesture and action than other kinds of oratory. In other respects Perrucci’s list largely parallels that of Luigi Riccoboni, for example, who remarks that “The Pulpit, the Bar, Academies, Colleges, Clubs, Coffee-Houses, the Parliament and the Play-house have all their Votaries, who eagerly pursue this Art”. Riccoboni, *A general history of the stage*, 5.

⁴³ “Quest’azione si divide in voce, ed in gesti.” Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 112.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 113ff. “On the voice, how it must be regulated and varied in acting”. This passage is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, below.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 118ff. “On gesture suitable for an actor”.

Regola IX also places Perrucci's theory of acting directly in the rhetorical tradition by explicitly associating the processes of composition, memorisation and performance in the theatre with the corresponding canons of classical rhetoric, as follows:

It is certain that one of the roles of an orator is Delivery, just as is Memorisation. It is exactly the same with Invention, Arrangement, and Style. The first two of these relate, on any account, to the actor in a composed piece, and the other ones also to one who likes to improvise.⁴⁶

The authorities whom he quotes in support of his argument here are also those most closely associated with the teaching of rhetoric and with the practice of oratory in early modern education – Cicero and Quintilian for rhetoric generally, and Demosthenes for oratory in particular.⁴⁷ In keeping with this rhetorical scheme, just as Delivery and its component parts, Voice and Gesture, are addressed in separate *Regole*, so too Memory – the other canon of rhetoric of most practical relevance to the (non-improvising) performer – is assigned its own discrete section,⁴⁸ while the canons which involve aspects of composition (that is, Invention, Arrangement and Style) are discussed in Part II of the book in the context of improvisation.

Here too, rhetoric is clearly identified as the theoretical framework underpinning Perrucci's understanding of acting, indeed it is so fundamental that he considers a knowledge of "the rules of language, rhetorical figures, tropes and the whole rhetorical art" to be a prerequisite for acting *all'improvviso*:

This undertaking is as beautiful as it is difficult and dangerous for those who apply themselves to it, if they are not people who are qualified and expert and knowledgeable, that is, [of the] rules of language, rhetorical figures, tropes and the whole rhetorical art, having to improvise that which, in a composed piece, is made by the poet.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid. "È certo, che una delle parti dell'Oratore sia il Pronunciare, così come è il mandare a memoria; conforme sono la Invenzione, la Disposizione, e la Loquazione; le due prime delle quali appartengono in ogni conto al Rappresentante premeditato, e le sue frequenti anche a chi si diletta di recitare all'improvviso ..."

⁴⁷ Ibid., 112-3.

⁴⁸ *Regola VIII, "Della Memoria, ed uso di essa in apprendere le Parti"* (On memory, and its use in learning parts) Ibid., 109ff.

⁴⁹ "Bellissima quanto difficile, e pericolosa è l'impresa, nè vi si devono porre, se non persone idonee, ed intendenti, e che sappiano, che vuol dire regola di lingua, figure Rettoriche, tropi, e tutta l'Arte Rettorica, avendo da far all'improvviso, ciò che premeditato fa il poeta." Ibid., 159.

In case the aspiring actor is not well educated enough to fully understand what this entails (and perhaps to remind the reader of the author's own erudition), Perrucci sets out in the first *Regola* of Part II, *On Playing the Roles of Lovers*, a long list of rhetorical tropes and figures with which an actor may earn "great honour".⁵⁰ As we will see below, however, many actors and singers would not have had the opportunity to study rhetoric formally, so he also rebuts the hypothetical counter-argument that such matters are beyond someone who is not "learned" (this in itself is an example of the rhetorical technique of *confutatio*):

Some say to me 'Oh, you want everyone who acts to be so learned, which is difficult for a practitioner to achieve'. 'Thus it must be', I reply unequivocally, 'the more understanding one has of rhetoric, the better one will act; but if this cannot be done, at least approach it as much as possible, so as to come closer to perfection. Naturalness will also help, because there are some who have fluency of speech and natural eloquence, and these usually manage to compensate with Nature for the deficiencies of Art, just as in others Art makes up for the defects of Nature.'⁵¹

Like Giambattista Mancini three quarters of a century later, he advises actors to expand their Tuscan vocabulary by studying "good Tuscan books".⁵² Natural talent will cover for many deficiencies, but rhetorical artifice is so fundamental to the speech of a nobleman that it is impossible to play a noble male character effectively, especially in improvised theatre, without a repertoire of rhetorical figures and *topoi*. An actor who does not have the opportunity to study rhetoric formally needs at least to have a sufficient stock of memorised *concetti* to fake it effectively.

Rhetoric in the treatises of Tosi and Mancini

It was observed in Chapter 1 that the only substantial Italian treatises of the eighteenth century which deal specifically with recitative are those of Pierfrancesco Tosi and

⁵⁰ Ibid., 163.

⁵¹ "Mi si dirà: oh tu vuoi, che sia così dotto chi ha da recitare, che difficilmente ritrovassi chi lo faccia: così deve essere, rispondo io perfetto, quanto sarà più inteso della Rettorica, meglio rappresenterà; quando poi non ci fusse, almeno vi s'accosti quanto più può, perche si andarà avvicinando all perfezione; Gli gioverà ancora la naturalezza, imperciòche vi sono tali di lingua sciolta, e di facondia naturale, e questi sogliono ancora riuscire supplendo la Natura a i mancamenti dell'Arte, come in altri l'Arte supplisce della Natura i difetti." Ibid., 164.

⁵² Ibid., 163.

Giambattista Mancini.⁵³ Neither is unequivocally rhetorical in conception in the way that Perrucci's treatise is – indeed, neither Tosi nor Mancini mentions the word “rhetoric” – yet there are persuasive reasons for thinking that a rhetorical model of communication underlies the approach to delivery which is largely common to both. Chief among these is of course Mancini's explicit advocacy of oratory as a model for singers' delivery (Chapter 1, above), but there are also less obvious clues. Particular key words and phrases carried specific rhetorical associations for well-educated eighteenth-century readers through their allusion to the conceptual framework of rhetoric and to the principal classical authors on the subject, in particular Cicero and Quintilian, whose works were the most widely studied (either directly or via compendia such as those of Soarez or de Colonia) throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The rhetorical paradigm was thus assumed knowledge and did not need to be explained or spelt out for those who understood it. For those who did not (including many professional singers and the vast majority of women of any rank), there was no point in trying to explain the technical detail of what was a complex and comprehensive system – assuming, of course, that Tosi and Mancini (themselves professional singers of uncertain educational background) understood it in any detail in the first place. Rather, the self-evident truth of the maxims derived from classical authorities could be expected to stand on its own.

To put it another way, we need not assume that in order for the rhetorical tradition to have influenced their views of musical and verbal communication, Tosi and Mancini must themselves have had a thorough theoretical knowledge of rhetoric – in fact it seems likely from what is known of their backgrounds that neither of them had such a knowledge. Even less should we expect to find such a knowledge spelt out as a theoretical construct in the context of discussions of singing pedagogy. What is significant is rather that Tosi and Mancini were operating in an environment in which ideas deriving from classical rhetoric would be recognised by educated readers, potentially giving the books more authority with those readers, and at the same time those ideas were part of the common currency of accepted knowledge amongst performers, whether or not those performers knew the original sources from which the principles had derived.

⁵³ Mancini, *Riflessioni*; Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antichi, e moderni o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna: L. dalla Volpe, 1723).

In any case, whether or not Tosi and Mancini were versed in rhetorical theory, it seems entirely plausible that they would not have addressed either theory or classical sources explicitly in their treatises. On the one hand, as non-*letterato* professionals they could have opened themselves to ridicule through attempting to demonstrate spurious erudition. On the other, they may not have been especially conscious of the sources of a body of knowledge which was considered part of the traditional discourse of pedagogy and professional practice in singing, reinforced indirectly through contact with the many *letterati* who were involved in opera as librettists, *coragi*, impresarios, or interested academicians of the kind Mancini recommends as teachers of gesture.⁵⁴ In either case, the rhetorical allusions are pervasive enough in both treatises to indicate that the classical sources are an accepted model, whether or not explicitly identified.

Read with this conceptual framework in mind, some of Tosi's and Mancini's injunctions on matters which may appear obvious or even trivial gain an added significance. For instance, it is unsurprising that the goal of moving the affections is an important theme for both writers, since this idea was commonly associated with music. Yet the significance of the affections ultimately derives from their role as the vehicle for the emotional appeal in oratory. As we shall see in Chapter 3 (below), to an eighteenth-century eye, Tosi makes this connection explicit when he speaks of the emotive, chamber style of recitative as relying on "the sole force of a beautiful expression to *persuade*" (my emphasis).⁵⁵ To take another example, in his chapter On Recitative and Action, Mancini includes an admonition about the importance of properly memorising the words and music.⁵⁶ At one level this is an obvious and practical piece of advice for any aspiring singer, but its placement here in a chapter on delivery recalls the universal association in rhetoric treatises between memory and delivery as the final two "canons" of the art. The emphasis that both writers place on purity of language and clarity of diction in delivery, too, invokes Quintilian's concepts of *puritas* (purity) and *perspicuitas* (clarity), two of the rhetorical "virtues of delivery" (see Chapter 4, below).

⁵⁴ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 247.

⁵⁵ Tosi, *Opinioni*, 42. Translation by Galliard in Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the florid song, or, Sentiments on the ancient and modern singers. Written in Italian by Pier Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilcox, 1743), 68.

⁵⁶ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 245-46.

More generally, evidence that Tosi thought in rhetorical terms may be found in his literary style, despite the lack of overtly rhetorical jargon in his treatise. While his style is not particularly learned, and oscillates between the high style of encomium, the middle style of exposition and the low style of satire, and between the models of letter, pamphlet and dialogue,⁵⁷ certain passages nevertheless show the characteristic structures of rhetorical *dispositio* (arrangement). In his discussion of aria singing in Chapter 7, for instance, he devotes several paragraphs to the issue of singing in time. His argument on this point is structured in miniature according to the standard *dispositio* of an oration, following the pattern of setting out the subject at issue (the importance of singing in time), presenting the thesis (many singers sacrifice the regularity of the beat to accommodate excessive divisions), giving proof (some make the orchestra stop in the middle of a movement to “wait for their ill-grounded caprices”), answering hypothetical opposing arguments (“Softly, softly with your Criticism, says one; this, if you do not know it, is called Singing after the *Mode* – Singing after the *Mode*? – I say you are mistaken”), and conclusion (by neglecting this advice you may gain the applause of the ignorant, but “by observing it, you will justly merit that of the Judicious”).⁵⁸ Again, the significance of these markers of rhetorical style is not that they demonstrate that Tosi had a good knowledge of formal rhetoric. If anything, the sometimes disjointed composition of his treatise, with its inconsistency of stylistic register, suggests the opposite. Instead, the pervasiveness of these rhetorical elements in his writing style is significant precisely because it indicates the extent to which a rhetorical paradigm is intrinsic to his approach despite his apparent lack of formal grounding in the discipline.

Rhetoric and singers’ training

If singers performed according to the precepts of rhetorical delivery – what Mancini calls “the rules of perfect declamation”⁵⁹ – how and where did they learn these precepts and the

⁵⁷ Sergio Durante, “Condizioni materiali e trasmissione del sapere nelle scuole di canto a Bologna a metà Settecento,” in *Atti del XIV congresso della Società internazionale di musicologia: Trasmissione e ricezione delle forme di cultura musicale*, ed. Angelo Pompilio, et al. (Torino: E.D.T. Edizioni di Torino, 1990), 180. For a somewhat more detailed assessment of Tosi’s literary style, see Sergio Durante, “Strutture mentali e vocabolario di un cantore antico/moderno: Preliminari per una lettura delle fonti didattiche settecentesche,” in *Alessandro Scarlatti und seine Zeit*, ed. Max Lütolf (Berne: Haupt, 1995), 42.

⁵⁸ See Tosi, *Opinioni*, 63-7. Translations from Tosi, *Observations*, 99-105.

⁵⁹ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 231. See Chapter 1 (above).

practical performance skills that went with them? It would seem logical to think that if oratory was a good model for musical declamation, singers would have studied the art directly rather than merely by imitating orators, as Mancini suggests; however, as I have argued elsewhere, evidence about the education of seventeenth and eighteenth-century singers indicates that few would have had the opportunity to do so.⁶⁰ In fact, the levels and types of general and vocational education accessed by singers appear to have been variable at best.

Male professional musicians, like the other members of the lower and middle strata of society, typically gained a general education through one of the schools run by the religious orders or a civic school such as the *Scuole Pie* in Bologna, mentioned above. The *Scuole Pie*, for example, offered both rhetoric and *canto figurato*, and, interestingly, produced a number of professional opera singers, but by no means all of its students studied rhetoric. The subject was taught in the senior years, but the proportion of boys who could afford to stay at school that long was small, and those who did came mainly from the upper and upper-middle classes.⁶¹ For them, training in rhetoric was both a useful skill and a social passport to a respectable job as a court bureaucrat – very much the social stratum which formed the audience for opera, but not that from which singers were drawn.

Castrati and female singers generally studied with private singing masters whose lessons might include some literary education,⁶² but certainly not rhetoric, a discipline which required several years of specialised teaching. Certainly, some singers were known as cultured men – John Rosselli cites the examples of the castrati Antonio Maria Bernacchi, Gaetano Berenstadt and Andrea Adami, all of whom dealt in books as a sideline; Francesco Bernardi and Filippo Elisi (described as a well bred person) corresponded with Padre

⁶⁰ Alan Maddox, "Singing to the Ear and to the Heart: Performance Practice and the Rhetorical Tradition in Early and Mid Eighteenth-Century Italian Vocal Music," in *Passion, Affekt und Leidenschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit: 11. Jahrestreffen des Wolfenbütteler Arbeitskreises für Barockforschung, 2 - 5 April 2003* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005).

⁶¹ Fantini, *L'istruzione popolare*, 9.

⁶² See John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian opera: the history of a profession* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), particularly Chapters 2, 3 and 5.

Martini, and Elisi helped Martini with his library research,⁶³ but it is not clear how much, if any, of their learning came from any kind of formal schooling.

Perhaps the most instructive example in relation to the teaching of rhetoric to music students comes from the Conservatorio di S. Maria di Loreto, one of the four famous Neapolitan musical conservatories. Rhetoric was taught there, but one of the few references to rhetoric teaching to the music students is an entry in the minutes of a meeting of the Governors of the Conservatorio who, on 11 June 1707, considered "the urgent supplications made several times by the boys of the Conservatory to be excused from the humanities [i.e. introductory rhetoric] class because it is not necessary and is even a notable impediment to the study of music which is their principal object and will be their prime means of livelihood ... [the Governors] have received intelligence from Nicola Letitia, their colleague responsible for all the classes, that what has been declared and requested is reasonable."⁶⁴ Why would the boys and their teacher have agreed that rhetoric was irrelevant to musicians? The explanation lies in the way rhetoric was taught. At the lower levels, it consisted of a series of exercises in composition, learnt through tedious *progymnasmata*, written out in Latin. Delivery, as an element of the rhetorical canon, came at the other end of the process, and was taught mainly to the nobility. As the historian Paul F. Grendler points out, "few Italian schoolboys would grow up to become princes, ambassadors, or court humanists declaiming formal orations. But many boys would write letters and other prose treatises as secretaries, diplomats, civil servants of many kinds, and members of the ecclesiastical bureaucracy ... few middle- and upper-class men would orate, but all would have to write letters".⁶⁵ Lengthy exercises in letter writing represented an investment of time and effort which aspiring professional musicians could ill afford. It therefore makes good sense for Mancini to suggest that singers, as it were, "piggy-back" on the training of their betters by modelling their delivery on the style used by elite orators.

⁶³ Ibid., 48-49. On Berenstadt's life and career, see Lowell Lindgren, "An Intellectual Florentine Castrato at the End of the Medicean Era," in *Lo Stupor dell'Invenzione: Firenze e la Nascita dell'Opera. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Firenze, 5-6 ottobre 2000*, ed. Piero Gargiulo, *Quaderni della Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2001); Lowell Lindgren, "La carriera di Gaetano Berenstadt, contralto evirato (ca. 1690-1735)," *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 19, no. 1 (1984).

⁶⁴ M. F. Robinson, "The governors' minutes of the Conservatorio S. Maria di Loreto, Naples," *RMA Research Chronicle* 10 (1972): 36.

⁶⁵ Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: literacy and learning, 1300-1600*, 209.

It appears likely, then, that any singers who studied rhetoric as part of their formal education probably did so only to a basic level not including delivery (oratory) which was for the most part the preserve of students of the elite *collegi* of the Jesuits and Barnabites, destined for the pulpit, the bar, or high political office – a social stratum far above that from which most Italian professional singers were drawn. Mancini’s injunction to singers to listen to “good Italian orators” instead fits within the tradition of empirical learning by imitation which was fundamental to the practice of singing pedagogy then, as it largely remains today. This included not only the teaching of vocal technique and musicianship in the singing master’s studio, but also a considerable element of “on the job” learning. The observation of more experienced colleagues and the guidance of composers and other musicians, as well as elite-educated *letterati* who acted as *coragi*, impresarios and librettists was crucial in the formation of singers.

A further clue to the kinds of models Mancini has in mind comes from his section on acting. He says that the general principles of gesture can be learnt from books or teachers, but the specifics must be worked out by observing excellent practitioners, and coaching in specific roles may be had from gentlemen amateurs – noblemen and men of letters who recite plays for their own private entertainment – exactly the kind of people whose elite education would have included training in oratory.

All the polished cities do not lack for, indeed abound in, these directors, especially in Italy, where cavaliers, literati and civil employees recite dramas for their own pleasure. There are often great actors among them, and they will frequently volunteer to instruct one if he asks. We have as examples: Marchese Teodoli in Rome; the Marchese di Liveri, and the advocate Guiseppe Santoro in Naples, ... and our own celebrated Abate Metastasio, in our own days in Vienna, when he was still able in the art, demonstrated this clearly with Signora Teresa de Reutter and Angelo Maria Monticelli, who learned so well, and followed his instructions.⁶⁶

These are the kinds of *letterati* who Mancini surely had in mind when he advocated reciting with a varied delivery “as an educated man does when he speaks or reads”,⁶⁷ and the very kinds of men who would have been members of that minority who studied the practice of

⁶⁶ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 246-7. Translation adapted from Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing (Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato): The editions of 1774 and 1777 compared, translated and edited by Edward Foreman*, vol. VII, *Masterworks on Singing* (Champaign, Illinois: Pro Musica Press, 1967), 76.

⁶⁷ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 239.

oratory. Such men were almost without exception the products of a classical education gained through the colleges of one of the religious teaching orders. Their education included the standard elements of Latin grammar, dialectic and rhetoric, in many cases supplemented by subjects such as classical history, geography, foreign languages, music and other *Arti Cavalleresche* such as horsemanship, fencing, military architecture and so on.⁶⁸ Even those who did not study history as a formal discipline were exposed to a considerable amount of it through their reading of classical Latin literature in the context of their studies in Latin grammar and of rhetoric, and this, as well as the teaching of rhetoric itself, would have reinforced to them the central place of oratory in classical culture, and the mythical power of well crafted and well delivered words to teach, delight and move. Students who went through the Jesuit *collegi*, in particular, had plenty of opportunity to develop their skills in delivery through public exhibitions of oratory and participation in the school dramas, productions of which often approached professional standard.

In what other circumstances might singers have been able to model themselves on “good Italian orators”? The three categories of oratory most commonly referred to in the eighteenth-century literature are those of the Bar, the Pulpit and the Theatre, and to this list Riccoboni adds the Academies, Colleges, Clubs, and Coffee-Houses.⁶⁹ Singers could have found opportunities to “listen to the speech of a good orator” in most of these contexts from time to time, however not all would have been equally useful. One issue was style. The theatrical declamation called for in opera was somewhat removed from the rather more conversational middle style of the law courts, and from the sometimes vivid, but nevertheless didactic style of preaching.⁷⁰ Spoken theatrical tragedy, on the other hand, was

⁶⁸ see Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: i seminaria nobilium nell'Italia centro-settentrionale*, 235ff.

⁶⁹ Riccoboni, *A general history of the stage*, 5. A list of the *genere* of early modern oratory is also given in Giulio Cesare Beccelli, *Esame della retorica antica e uso della moderna: libri VII divisi in due parti* (Verona: nella stamperia d'Angelo Targa, 1739), Book VII.

⁷⁰ Where secular eloquence must please and gratify, the role of the preacher, according to Ludovicus Carbo, was to ascend the pulpit like “a judge, teacher, father, and ambassador of God” (*Divinus Orator*, 1595, 203). Translation in Debora K. Shuger, *Sacred rhetoric: the Christian grand style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 130. While in the hands of fiery counter-reformation preachers this style could be intense and moving, by the eighteenth century it seems to have degenerated into something much more mundane. Charles Burney’s description of a sermon he heard in Milan in 1770 could hardly be less promising: “a perpetual harangue — a monotonous declamation in a very disagreeable kind of chant or cant ... which could easily have been reduced to a few musical notes — more like the 2 or 3 used by a hen when by her cackling she declares the labour of egg-birth to be over.” Charles Burney, *Music, men, and manners in France and Italy, 1770: Being the Journal*

rarely performed publicly in Italy before the end of the eighteenth century, and performing standards in the professional theatre were in any case not high. Once again, Mancini counsels that the best models are those gentlemen *letterati* “who recite dramas for their own pleasure”.

Thus, while few singers appear to have studied rhetorical theory, and hardly any can have been trained in formal oratory, key sources on both acting and singing from the period explicitly and implicitly confirm the applicability of rhetorical delivery to musical declamation. Conversely, nothing in the sources studied suggests any other model for recitative delivery in *dramma per musica*. As the accepted paradigm for communication in any literate setting, including in the theatre, the classical principles of rhetorical delivery represented an ideal, and probably also a normative model for musical recitation, even if filtered through layers of pragmatic, informal learning. The conceptual model underpinning this approach would have been reinforced for any who did study some rhetoric as part of their secondary schooling, but its application at a practical level did not depend on a formal education in rhetoric. On the contrary, the rhetorical paradigm of communication was pervasive and well established enough that in relation to delivery, its principles were applied by musicians and actors as a matter of course.

What, then, were the principles of rhetorical delivery which informed the musical declamation of singers in *dramma per musica*? What rhetorical knowledge informed the pedagogy of singing teachers and the coaching of composers, librettists, *coragi* and other *letterati* in relation to recitative? What layers of theory and practice lay behind the other, non-musical models of oratorical delivery which singers would have encountered in the church, aristocratic court, play house, or law courts? In order to make sense of the performance practice of recitative in *dramma per musica*, it is necessary to look beyond the familiar treatises of Tosi and Mancini which deal directly with singing, and place them in the context of the classical and early modern literature on both theatre and rhetoric.

written by Charles Burney during a Tour through those Countries undertaken to collect material for A General History of Music. Transcribed from the Original Manuscript in the British Museum and Edited with an Introduction by H. Edmund Poole (London: Eulenburg Books, 1974), 51. Perrucci also advised that inexperienced actors “must be warned to avoid the preaching tone, leaving it to pulpits for the Friars” (si deve avvertire a fuggire il tuono predicatorio, lascandolo a’ Pergami per li Frati). Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 117.

Chapter 3 – Rhetoric and delivery

Neither the rhetoricians of classical antiquity nor their early modern counterparts devoted the kind of detailed attention to delivery that they did to the minutiae of invention, arrangement and style, but a number of themes nevertheless run consistently through their discussions of delivery. These are also reflected in the treatises on acting and singing which appear to reflect most closely the practice of Italian singers in *dramma per musica*. These themes concern the general principles of rhetorical delivery, the qualities which were considered to constitute “virtues” of delivery and, more specifically again, the particular characteristics of vocal declamation and physical action that were valued for their capacity to convey and express aptly the conceptual and affective content of the words. The general principles of delivery, as they relate to recitative performance, are the subject of the present chapter. These principles deal with the nature and purpose of delivery, including its definition, importance, goals and methods of appeal, and with the technique of delivery, including the way good delivery is acquired, and the technique of kindling the passions in the audience.

The nature and purpose of delivery

Delivery (*pronuntiatio* or *actio*) is consistently defined in rhetoric treatises, both classical and early modern, as being made up of a combination of gesture and voice. Cicero states that “Manner of speech falls into two sections, delivery [*agendo*] and use of language [*eloquendo*]. For delivery [*actio*] is a sort of language of the body, since it consists of movement or gesture as well as of voice or speech.”¹ In one of the formulations most often quoted in the early modern period, Quintilian clarified Cicero’s terminology somewhat, and also elucidated the

¹ *Orator*, 17.55. Translation in Marcus Tullius Cicero, “*Brutus*” and “*Orator*”, trans. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell, Rev. ed., *Loeb classical library*; 342 (London: W. Heinemann, 1962), 736.

relationship between voice and gesture by asserting the primacy of the voice. He stated that "All delivery [*actio*] ... is concerned with two different things, namely, voice and gesture, of which one appeals to the eye and the other to the ear, the two senses by which all emotion reaches the soul. But the voice has the first claim on our attention, since even our gesture is adapted to suit it."²

A further clarification of terminology was conveyed to the hundreds of thousands of schoolboys who went through the Jesuit college system in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, through the paraphrase of Quintilian's definition given in Cypriano Soarez's mandated textbook, *De arte rhetorica*. While the terms *pronuntiatio* and *actio* were often used interchangeably, early modern writers such as Soarez and his fellow Jesuit Franciscus Lang were careful to point out that the first more properly applies to the voice, and the second to bodily movement:

There are many who label delivery [*pronuntiatio*] with the term action [*actio*], but the former seems to be derived from the voice, the latter from gesture ... *Actio* is a kind of eloquence of body. Since, however, delivery has two elements, voice and gesture, one of which influences the eye and the other the ear – both senses through which all feeling enters the soul – we must first consider voice, and then gesture, the latter often being adapted to the voice.³

The actor and *corago* Andrea Perrucci also paraphrased Quintilian's definition for an Italian readership in his *Dell'arte rappresentativa*,⁴ adding a further refinement that differentiates the actor's use of gesture from that of the orator: since gesture is a "mute language", on occasion a mute gesture can express more than the word itself. Nevertheless, gesture is not to be overdone and remains subordinate to the voice. "Gesture must therefore follow the voice,

² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, XI. III. 14. Translation in Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols., *Loeb Classical Library* (London: William Heinemann, 1920-2). Another classical formulation of the same concept is set out in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, III. XI. 19.

³ Cipriano Soarez, *De arte rhetorica libri tres: ex Aristotele, Cicerone, et Quintiliano praecipue deprompti* (Hispani: Ex officina Alphonsi Escruiani. Expensis Andreae Pescioni, 1569), 74r-74v. Translation in Lawrence Flynn, S.J., "The 'De arte rhetorica' (1568) by Cyprian Soarez, S.J.: A Translation with Introduction and Notes" (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1955), 425-26. Lang in turn paraphrases this passage from Soarez at Franciscus [Franz] Lang, *Dissertatio de Actione scenica, cum Figuris eandem explicantibus, et Observationibus quibusdam de Arte Comica, Auctore P. Francisco Lang, Societatis Jesu. Accesserunt imagines symbolicae pro exhibitione et vestitu theatri* (Monachii [Munich]: Typis Mariae Magdalенаe Riedlin, Viduae, 1727), 56.

⁴ Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso*, ed. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato ed. (Firenze: 1961), 113.

but they must come forth and be so simultaneous, and gesture must obey the voice, that there is nothing superfluous".⁵

Neither of the eighteenth-century Italian writers on singing pedagogy, Tosi and Mancini, gives a formal definition of delivery – they are, after all, writing practical books on singing rather than rhetoric treatises – yet both make it clear that in the theatre in particular, vocal delivery and gesture are intimately connected in the act of recitation. Tosi notes that the theatrical style of recitative is “always accompanied with Action by the Singer”,⁶ and for Mancini, too, the two aspects go inseparably together:

An actor recites well when, entering thoroughly into the character of the person he represents, he unfolds that character naturally, using action, the voice, and the proper affects, and when he brings that character so clearly to life that the spectator says, for example, that man is *Caesar*, or this man is *Alexander*.⁷

The use of the voice in recitative, then, is not something that can be understood in the abstract, in purely musical terms. On the contrary, it is effective only when approached as an integral part of the larger act of “representing” a character in a drama. It therefore requires an understanding of the words of the libretto and of the character being portrayed, and above all, apt and convincing expression. Without these, even the best literary drama will fail on the stage.

The importance of good delivery

While delivery took up a relatively small proportion of the text of most rhetoric treatises, its importance was consistently acknowledged. As in so many aspects of early modern rhetoric, the principal model for this view was Cicero. Invention, arrangement and style, he wrote in *De optimo genere oratorum*, “are but parts of a building as it were; the foundation is memory;

⁵ “Deve dunque alla Voce susseguire il Gesto, ma devono uscire, ed essere così uniti a tempo, ed ubbidire alla Voce il Gesto, che niente di superfluo vi sia.” Ibid., 119.

⁶ Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the florid song, or, Sentiments on the ancient and modern singers. Written in Italian by Pier Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilcox, 1743), 67.

⁷ Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (Milano: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777; reprint, Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni, 1996), 218. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, Revised ed. (New York: Norton, 1998), 866.

that which gives it light is delivery.”⁸ He expanded on the importance of delivery in *De oratore*:

Delivery, I am telling you, is the one dominant factor in oratory. Without it, even the best orator cannot be of any account at all, while an average speaker equipped with this skill can often outdo the best orators. It is to delivery that they say Demosthenes, when asked what was most important in oratory, gave first, second and third place.⁹

The *Ad Herennium* author was less prepared to take Demosthenes’ dictum at face value, reading it instead in the way that it was perhaps intended, as an application of the rhetorical figure of *hyperbole*. He is no less convinced of the overall point, however:

Many have said that the faculty of greatest use to the speaker and the most valuable for persuasion is Delivery. For my part, I should not readily say that any one of the five faculties is the most important; that an exceptionally great usefulness resides in the delivery I should boldly affirm.¹⁰

While Quintilian, like the other classical rhetoricians, is concerned primarily with legal oratory, it is noteworthy that when he wishes to demonstrate the importance of delivery, the example he points to is that of the theatre.

[T]he nature of the speech that we have composed within our minds is not so important as the manner in which we produce it, since the emotion of each member of our audience will depend on the impression made upon his hearing ... All emotional appeals will inevitably fall flat, unless they are given the fire that voice, look, and the whole carriage of the body can give them ... A proof of this is given by actors in the theatre. For they add so much to the charm even of the greatest poets, that the verse moves us far more when heard than when read, while they succeed in securing a hearing even for the most worthless authors, with the result that they repeatedly win a welcome on the stage that is denied them in the library.¹¹

⁸ *De optimo genere oratorum*, II. v. Translation from Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De inventione, De optimo genere oratorum, Topica*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (London: 1960), 358.

⁹ *De oratore*, III. 213. Translation from Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero on the ideal orator (De oratore), translated, with introduction, notes, appendixes, glossary, and indexes by James M. May, Jakob Wisse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Cicero also cites Demosthenes’ dictum approvingly in the *Orator*, xvii.56, and *Brutus*, xxxviii.142.

¹⁰ III.XI.19. Translation in *Ad C. Herennium: De ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium) with an English translation by Harry Caplan*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954).

¹¹ *Institutio oratoria* XI. iii. 2-4. Translation from Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

He then recounts Demosthenes' famous dictum in similar terms to those used by Cicero, but with the addition of a few more details. Notable among these is his apparently approving reference to Demosthenes' training with an actor – an approach which Cicero regarded with some reservations.

For my own part I would not hesitate to assert that a mediocre speech supported by all the power of delivery will be more impressive than the best speech unaccompanied by such power. It was for this reason that Demosthenes, when asked what was the most important thing in oratory, gave the palm to delivery and assigned it second and third place as well, until his questioner ceased to trouble him. We are therefore almost justified in concluding that he regarded it not merely as the first, but as the only virtue of oratory. This explains why he studied under the instruction of the actor Andronicus.¹²

The principal ideas on delivery in the classical rhetorics were widely cited, quoted and paraphrased in early modern sources, both Latin and vernacular. In his Italian rhetoric Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, for instance, followed a detailed discussion of the various affections with a summary of the standard arguments for the importance of delivery, closely based on Cicero. These include references to Demosthenes' dictum, and to the idea that a mediocre orator with good delivery may overcome a better one whose delivery is poor.¹³ Soarez introduces his discussion of delivery with the same two points.¹⁴ On the stage, delivery is, if anything, even more important in relation to content than in other modes of oratory, making Cicero's observation particularly apt in that context. It is thus not surprising to find it echoed by Italian writers on theatre including Leone de Sommi and Andrea Perrucci, who both noted that a good performance of a poor play would please better than a poor performance

¹² *Institutio oratoria* XI. III. 5-7. Translation from *Ibid.*

¹³ Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, *La retorica di M Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, gentiluomo fiorentino. Diuisa in VII Libri. Dove si contiene tutto quello, che appartiene all'arte oratoria. Con le postille di M. Pio Portinaio Giureconsulto, che dimostrano, sommariamente tutto quello, che ui si tratta* (Venetia: Camillo e Francesco Franceschini, 1574), 367. Cicero, or through him, Quintilian, is surely also the source for Quantz's comments to the same effect in relation to musical performance – see Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voss, 1752; reprint, Facsimile edition, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), 101. The idea itself goes back at least to Plato's and Aristotle's critiques of the Sophists, where it is presented in an entirely negative light as the art of "making the worse case appear the better"; it was recast as an observation about the importance of delivery (rather than a challenge to the moral status of rhetoric more generally) in the rhetoric of Isocrates, the most influential of all of the Greek rhetors on the Roman world, and in particular on Cicero. See Thomas M Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8-20.

¹⁴ Soarez, *De arte rhetorica*, 74r-74v.

of a good piece.¹⁵ Vocal delivery was a particularly important consideration in this. In casting a play, Sommi was careful to see that actors were suitable to the age, gender and rank of the characters they were to portray, but “I also take great care about their voices, because I find that to be one of the greatest and most important things that there are”.¹⁶ Indeed, he specified that he put more weight on appropriate voice than on facial appearance, since even when masks were not used, the appearance could be altered with makeup and costume.¹⁷ This emphasis on the influence of the vocal instrument in convincing stage declamation also comes through eloquently in Pier Maria Cecchini’s acting treatise, *Frutti delle moderne comedie, et avisi a chi le recita* (1628).

Speech, then, (that is, the voice of the person who speaks) should be precisely like a loving and well formed squire, who, with courteous and civil manners, prepares the entrance of the majesty of the discourse.¹⁸

A well delivered discourse, accompanied with apt gesture, will thus be most effective in stirring the affections in line with the objectives of “operational” rhetoric. The author of “*Il Corago*” (c. 1630) noted that

The manner of reciting is of great importance, because something said by a person who knows how to deliver it well and accompany it with gesture will make a much greater impression on the spirits of the listeners and will more easily stir in them the affections of anger, of hatred, of passion, of happiness, and the like. This will not happen when it is simply narrated by someone without gesture or modulation of the voice.¹⁹

¹⁵ For example: “[A]ffermo per vera, che piú importi aver boni recitanti che bella comedia, et che ‘l sia il vero, abbiamo veduto molte volte riuscir meglio, al gusto de gl’ascoltanti, una comedia brutta, ma ben recitata, che una bella mal rappresentata.” Leone de’ Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche: a cura di Ferruccio Marotti* (Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1968), 39. Perrucci quotes Bernardo Tasso to similar effect, see Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 127-8.

¹⁶ “Pongo poi anco gran cura alle voci di quelli, perch’io la trovo una de le grandi et principali importanze che vi siano.” Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi*, 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁸ “Il parlar adunque (cioè la voce di chi parla) vuol esser per lo apunto come un amoroso e ben creato scudiere, il quale, con modi cortesi e civili, prepari l’entrata all Maestà del discorso ... ” Pier Maria Cecchini, “Frutti delle moderne comedie, et avisi a chi le recita (Padua, 1628),” in *La commedia dell’arte*, ed. Cesare Molinari, *Cento libri per mille anni* (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999), 1190.

¹⁹ Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche, Studi e testi per la storia della musica* (Florence: Olschki, 1983), 93. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 633.

That theatrical recitation was understood as a branch of rhetorical delivery is evident in the concern with moving the affections, and is reinforced by the coupling of vocal delivery and gesture in accordance with the standard rhetorical definition of delivery. It is also noteworthy that even so practical and modern a writer on theatre as the author of *Il Corago* chose in the paragraph immediately following that quoted above to cite the authority of both Cicero and Quintilian to emphasise the importance of “accommodation” between voice and gesture.²⁰ In sacred oratory, too, delivery was considered to be of great importance. Perrucci notes that celebrated preachers were often discredited when their sermons were published, since the impression made by their eloquence came mainly from the delivery rather than the content.²¹

When it came to operatic recitative, singers could complain, as Tosi did, that the way recitatives were composed was “unnatural” and difficult to declaim,²² but G. B. Mancini points to the examples of composers including Handel, Porpora, Pergolesi, and more recently Galuppi, Gluck, Jomelli and Hasse who write excellent recitative, and places the responsibility for delivery squarely with the singers, since “It is they who ruin and ill-use the recitatives, because they do not take the time to learn the rules of perfect declamation”²³ Experience and the example of great singing actors such as the early eighteenth-century castrato Nicola Grimaldi *detto* Nicolini should tell them that “well-declamed recitatives receive no less than well-done arias, the same applause, rewards and honours equal to those that the excellence of singing produces.”²⁴

²⁰ See Fabbri and Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, 93.

²¹ Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 19.

²² Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de'cantori antichi, e moderni o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna: L. dalla Volpe, 1723), 45-47.

²³ Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing (Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato): The editions of 1774 and 1777 compared, translated and edited by Edward Foreman*, vol. VII, *Masterworks on Singing* (Champaign, Illinois: Pro Musica Press, 1967), 70.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Burney's assessment of Handel's *Giulio Cesare* seems to bear out Mancini's view of the value of good recitative in both composition and performance: “An opera abounding with beauties of various kinds, but in which both the composer and performers seem to have acquired even more reputation from the recitatives than the airs.” Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is prefixed, A Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients ...* 4 vols. (London: 1776-89), 296.

The goals of recitation

One of the best known dicta of classical rhetoric set out three goals to which all oratory was to be directed: to instruct (*docere*), to please or delight (*delectare*), and to move (*movere*).²⁵ While *dramma per musica* was intended to instruct morally,²⁶ Metastasio argued that it did so under the guise of giving pleasure and by the agency of moving the affections. Thus all three objectives are implicit, and often explicit, in the libretto. The addition of music contributes little if anything to instruction, since this requires words, but it powerfully reinforces both delight and the moving of the affections.²⁷ In recitative, music serves to “heighten” the delivery beyond the level even of theatrically declaimed speech, but this only has its full effect in performance if the musical element is added onto an already eloquent text and dramatic delivery. In short, the mere addition of a musical “clothing” for the words is not sufficient in itself to achieve the goals of recitation in opera. What is required is an organically unified combination of word, gesture and eloquent vocal delivery.

Above all, the goal of moving the affections was restated throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the highest objective of both spoken oratory and music. It was a fundamental tenet of Mei and Galilei’s challenge to polyphonic practice which provided the ideological impetus for the development of the *stile recitativo*, and continued to be set in opposition to the primacy of “delectation” which had been defended by opponents of the *seconda prattica* such as Artusi in the first years of the seventeenth century.²⁸ In Mei’s words,

²⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, III. v. 2.

²⁶ See, for example, Manfredini’s defence of Metastasian *opera seria* as “un istruzione morale”. Vincenzo Manfredini, *Regole Armoniche, Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), 23.

²⁷ Giulio Caccini spelt out these goals at the very inception of the recitative style in a parenthetical comment in the preface to *Le nuove musiche*: “I have never been content to stay within ordinary bounds and those observed by others, but have always rather gone in search of the most original possibilities (as long as novelty helps the musician achieve his goal, that is, to delight and move the affections of the soul).” Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (Florence: Marescotti, 1601). Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 611.

²⁸ Monteverdi’s “new rules, new modes and new turns of phrase” are “deformations of the nature and propriety of true harmony, far removed from the musician’s goal, which, as Your Lordship said yesterday, is delectation”: Giovanni Maria Artusi, *L’Artusi ovvero delle imperfettioni della moderna musica, Bibliotheca musica Bononiensis. Sezione II ; n. 36.* ([Bologna]: A. Forni, 2000), fol. 39. Trans. Oliver Strunk, revised by Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 527.

When a musician ... does not have the ability to bend the souls of listeners to where he wishes, his skill and knowledge may be considered null and vain, because the discipline of music was instituted and counted among the liberal arts for no other end.²⁹

As late as 1774, the year of the publication of Mancini's *Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato*, it is affirmed as vigorously as ever by Antonio Eximeno:

With Metastasio's dramas, Vinci, Pergolesi, Leo, Perez, Hasse, Galuppi, Jommelli, Piccinni, Sacchini, Anfossi, and others have fulfilled music's purpose in this century: the expression of the tenderest emotions and the most violent passions of the human heart.³⁰

How was this objective of moving the passions put into practice on the stage? Since the passions were understood as distinct mental states which are recognised and can be controlled by the mind – this ability to control and master the passions is a distinct marker of the morally elevated man, and hence of true nobility – actors sought to “recreate the passions rationally, through the exercise of the intellect, and by the scientific observation of those outward symptoms of a passion, the gestures and the tones of voice”.³¹ They thus sought primarily to convey a specific passion in a particular line or gesture rather than by building character development through a whole drama. The skill of acting was thus in keeping the passions distinct and clear while making smooth (but often strikingly quick) transitions between different passions in response to events. This kind of dramaturgy works well in music, where individual passions can be powerfully sustained in arias, while in response to the action, recitative can flexibly accommodate quick transitions between passions, reinforced by harmonic change and the pitch contour of the cantilena. The most agitated states, in which very intense but unstable passions undergo quick transitions, are powerfully expressed in *recitativo accompagnato*. Part of an opera singer's skill in interpreting the score thus lay in identifying those passions and the transitions between them in the libretto and the musical setting, and applying the techniques (artifice) of delivery in the rhetorical

²⁹ Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogue on ancient and modern music*, trans. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2003), 225.

³⁰ Antonio Eximeno y Pujades, *Dell'origine e delle regole della musica* (Rome: 1774), 442. Translation by Daniel Hertz in Daniel Hertz, *From Garrick to Gluck: essays on opera in the age of Enlightenment* (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 2004), 71.

³¹ George Taylor, "'The Just Delineation of the Passions': Theories of Acting in the Age of Garrick," in *The Eighteenth-Century English Stage: The Proceedings of a Symposium sponsored by the Manchester University Department of Drama*, ed. Kenneth and Peter Thomson Richards (London: Methuen, 1972), 60.

tradition to clearly delineate and powerfully convey each passion with all the resources of voice and action.

The three persuasive appeals: Reason, Emotion and Ethos

If persuasion is a goal of vocal music, it follows that the creators of a *dramma per musica* in their respective roles of *inventio* and *dispositio* (the librettist and composer), *elocutio* (shared between librettist, composer and performer), and *pronunciatio* (performer), will try to persuade using all of the traditional methods of rhetorical appeal. This includes not only the affective appeal which was understood to be the primary realm of music, but also the appeal to reason and the ethical appeal, conveyed through the delivery of the singer-as-orator in both words and gesture.³²

Since the words not only provide delight to listeners but also convey truth, the affective power of the singer's address to the audience gains added force when allied with the concept of the appeal to reason. The raw material for this is provided by the librettist, but it is the singer's task to deliver the text clearly and convincingly. This is one reason for the emphasis on clarity of delivery in both rhetorics and treatises on theatre and on singing: The words carry the poet's argument which cannot be persuasive if they cannot be understood.

The goal of moving the affections in oratory and drama is of course closely associated with the emotional appeal in rhetoric. While the appeal to emotion was rejected by Plato, Aristotle accepted it as an unavoidable part of persuasive speech, and in the Isocratic tradition represented by Cicero and Quintilian it was embraced as a powerful and therefore essential part of the persuasive armoury of an orator. Early modern writers on the spoken and sung

³² The three appeals were defined by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* 1.2. Along with the rhetorics of Cicero and Quintilian, this was one of the principal sources for early modern rhetorics, and was transmitted to Italian readers through both commentaries and Italian translations. See, for example, Aristotele and Daniele Barbaro, *Rhetoricorum Aristotelis libri tres, interprete Hermolao Barbaro P.V. Commentaria in eosdem Danielis Barbari* ([Venezia]: Paolo Gherardo, 1544); Aristotle, *I tre libri della retorica d'Aristotele a Theodette; tradotti in lingua volgare, da M. Alessandro Piccolomini. Nuouamente dati in luce. Con la tauola de' sommarij* (In Venetia: appresso Francesco de' Franceschi Sanese, 1571); Aristotle, *Rettorica d'Aristotile fatta in lingua toscana dal commendatore Annibal Caro* (In Venetia: 1570); Aristotle, *Rettorica et poetica d'Aristotile trad. di greci in lingua volgare fiorentina da Bernardo Segni,...* trans. Bernardo Segni (Venice: Bartholomeo detto l'Imperador, 1551).

theatre, including Tosi and Perrucci, also make it clear that actors (whether singing or speaking) share the orator's goal of persuasion through the emotional appeal.³³

In his discussion of recitative, Tosi makes a particular point of the goal of moving the passions when he is discussing recitative in the chamber style, which " ... according to the opinion of the most judicious, touches the heart more than the others" and is "adapted to move the most violent passions of the soul".³⁴

Just as the words are calculated to move the passions, so the delivery must skilfully match the passions expressed in order to reinforce their effect on the listener. Another telling use of language follows in the same paragraph: "Where passion speaks all shakes, all divisions and graces ought to be silent, leaving it to the sole force of a beautiful expression to persuade."³⁵

In addition to the reference to moving the affections implicit in the expression "where passion speaks" (*dove parla la passione*), the use of the verb to persuade (*persuadere*) is particularly striking here, evoking Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion".³⁶ It suggests a model of performance in which the singer explicitly takes the role of a musical orator, seeking to convince the audience by all possible means of the affective and moral message of the text. Just as the orator's goal is to persuade his audience of the truth of his case, whether in a forensic or epideictic context, so the singer's goal is to persuade the listener of the "truth" of the sentiments being expressed, in the most direct and convincing way possible.

The idea of moving the affections thus needs to be understood in its rhetorical context as a tool of persuasion, rather than seen as an end in itself. The idea of musical drama as persuasive, rather than merely entertaining or even edifying, in turn has significant ramifications for its performance. If we take seriously the idea of persuasion as a fundamental objective of performance, then recitative is not just narrative, an aria is not just lyrical expression, or an opportunity for display. Each is intended to convince the audience of the moral force of the drama, with all its very conscious reflection of the social and

³³ Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 55.; Tosi, *Opinioni*, 42.

³⁴ "[A] giudizio di chi più intende, si accosta più degli altri al cuore ... dirette ... allo sfogo delle passioni più violenti dell' animo". Tosi, *Opinioni*, 41. Translation by Galliard in Tosi, *Observations*, 68.

³⁵ Tosi, *Opinioni*, 42. Translation by Galliard from Tosi, *Observations*, 68.

religious order and the patronage systems within which the art music of the period was created.

The third persuasive appeal is that of ethos, the concept in classical rhetoric of an appeal to the audience to accept the argument presented on the basis of the speaker's good character. According to Quintilian, delivery should have a "conciliatory" quality, which he says may be secured by producing "an impression of excellence of character, which is in some mysterious way clearly revealed both by voice and gesture."³⁷ The importance of the ethical appeal is implicit in Tosi's discussion of the special qualities of theatrical recitative. Because of its intimate connection with acting, "the Master is obliged to teach the Scholar a certain natural Imitation, which cannot be beautiful if not expressed with that Decorum with which Princes speak, or those who know how to speak to Princes".³⁸ The implications of this passage with respect to the concept of decorum will be addressed below. At this point, its significance is its implication of the use of the ethical appeal when representing a noble character on the stage. In theatrical terms, the singer must be able to speak and move like a prince if he is to persuade the audience to take him at face value in the noble roles he plays on stage. Mancini reinforces this idea when he advises the singer to study history so as to be convincing in representing well known characters on stage.³⁹ At the same time, however, the "ethical" status of the singer always remained ambivalent. On the one hand, the singer's task was to present him- or herself as a noble character from ancient history or mythology, and in doing so to convey convincingly that character's high ethical status. On the other, the performer always remained visible beneath the veneer of the character he or she represented, and to this extent could not escape the much lower ethical status of the theatrical profession; one

³⁶ *Rhetoric*, I.II.

³⁷ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.III.154

³⁸ Tosi, *Opinioni*, 41. " ... obbliga il Maestro d'istruir lo Scolaro d'una certa imitazione naturale, che non può esser bella se non è rappresentata con quel decoro col quale parlano i Principi, e quegli che a Principi sanno parlare." Translation by Galliard from Tosi, *Observations*, 67.

³⁹ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 220-22.. The ethical appeal also suggests a perspective on the vexed question of vocal display, one of the areas of significant difference between Tosi's views and those of Mancini half a century later. A central theme of Tosi's *osservazioni* is the poverty of the then newly fashionable virtuosic *allegro* style, particularly when it is cultivated at the expense of expression and the "pathetic" style. Read in the context of this broader argument, the passage quoted above suggests that within the bounds of "the decorum with which princes speak", vocal display may heighten a noble character's status and prestige and therefore enhance the effectiveness of the ethical appeal, but if done badly or in poor taste, will reduce it.

reason, perhaps, for Tosi's firm advice about the need for singers to lead a morally blameless life, even if this injunction was honoured by professional singers as much in the breach as in the observance.⁴⁰

Technique: how good delivery is acquired

The contributing factors that determine rhetorical ability have been a subject of discussion since ancient times. Cicero, the *Ad Herennium* author, and Quintilian each gave their own slightly different division of the elements, but the summary of their views transmitted by Cypriano Soarez to the early modern student in his influential compendium *De arte rhetorica* captures the main points: "Eloquence ... is achieved by means of natural ability [*natura*], art [*ars*], practice [*exercitatio*] and imitation [*imitatio*]."⁴¹ Soarez's concern here, like that of his classical models, is primarily with composition rather than delivery, but the same model is apparent in early modern discussions of performance.

While rhetoric was generally conceived as a set of skills, even a scheme of rules that could be learnt, the final two parts of rhetoric, Memory and Delivery, were considered to rely more heavily than the other, more compositionally oriented parts, on natural aptitude, or *natura*.⁴² Indeed, Aristotle had little directly to say about delivery since "dramatic ability is a natural gift, and can hardly be systematically taught."⁴³ As we shall see below, later rhetoricians considered delivery more capable of being theorised and taught, yet in performance there is ultimately no substitute for talent. As the actor Nicolò Barbieri put it in 1634, "In this art it is necessary to have a natural talent, bestowed on few, and of a hundred who undertake to act,

⁴⁰ See Tosi, *Opinioni*, 50, 91. The tension between the ethical status of the performer and the character portrayed perhaps goes some way to explaining the firm action taken against the castrato Gaetano Majorano, detto Caffarelli, for stepping out of character during performances. In 1741 he was put under house arrest for abusing the audience and ignoring the action on stage, to the point of not participating in ensembles and chatting to his friends in the stage boxes during a colleague's aria. John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian opera: the history of a profession* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 50. Singers could also take their status too seriously because of the noble roles they played, as Gaspare Gozzi suggested in a satirical article in *La gazzetta veneta*, 5 July 1760; see translation in Piero Weiss, *Opera: a history in documents* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113-14.

⁴¹ Soarez, *De arte rhetorica*, 3v. Translation in Flynn, "The 'De arte'", 128.

⁴² See, for example, Cicero, *De oratore*, I. 145.

⁴³ *Rhetoric*, III.i.15. Translation in Aristotle, *The basic works of Aristotle edited and with an introduction by Richard McKeon* (New York: Random House, 1968, 1941), 1436.

ten will not prove to be good, even if they are Aristotles of knowledge, because they lack style, delivery and grace".⁴⁴ In comparison with Aristotle, delivery, and especially emotional engagement, was more highly valued and treated more as a teachable skill in the Isocratic tradition which informed the Latin rhetorics of Cicero, the *Ad Herennium* author, and Quintilian. There were principles and techniques that could be learnt, even if they were difficult to describe accurately in words and had to be studied primarily through the imitation of skilled practitioners and the *viva voce* correction of an experienced master. The treatment of delivery by these Roman authors thus did not enter into the kind of minute theoretical analysis that was devoted to Invention, Arrangement, and particularly Style,⁴⁵ yet their treatment of the subject was largely consistent, apparently reflecting an established pedagogical tradition. Taken collectively, it provided a systematic theoretical model for delivery which was taken up by their many early modern disciples. The general principles of theory could not take the place of practical instruction when it came to specific performance applications, but theory nevertheless had a meaningful place in the pedagogy of delivery. As Mancini said of gesture,

the study of delivery [*azione*] does not have sure and precise rules from which a diligent student can learn exactly what posture he ought to assume on any particular occasion. But it does have general rules that will suffice to mold a good actor. The particular rules that teach one what gestures to make in a given situation are all practical, and should be either spelled out by someone with mature judgment, or learned from attentive observation of the movements of fine actors in those situations. The general rules are also theoretical, and can thus be learned both from teachers and from books.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ "In quest'arte è di mestiere un talento naturale, a pochi concesso, e di cento che si pongono a recitare, dieci non riescono buoni, ancor che siano Aristotili di sapere, poichè vi vuol elocuzione, pronunzia e grazia." Niccolò Barbieri, *La supplica: discorso famigliare a quelli che trattano de' comici*, ed. Ferdinando Taviani, *Archivio del teatro italiano*; n. 3 (Milano: Il Polifilo, 1971), 34.

⁴⁵ The *Ad Herennium* author, writing in the early first century B.C.E. (contemporaneously with Cicero), considered the topic of delivery to be all but virgin territory as a subject for written analysis when he tackled it. (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, III.XI.19). The authorship and precise date of this treatise remain uncertain, but the work is ascribed to the second decade of the century by Harry Caplan in the introduction to his translation of the work. While Diogenes Laertius listed an earlier work on delivery by Theophrastus, Aristotle did not fully develop a theory on the subject. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 7, 190 n. a.

⁴⁶ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 243. Transl. Wye. J. Allanbrook in Treidler, ed., *Source Readings*, 873-4.

The theoretical discussions of delivery in the classical and early modern rhetorical treatises form a substantial written record of the art – one which provides much of the material for this study – yet it is important to remember that the main way of learning delivery, like the other canons of rhetoric, was through imitation rather than pure theoretical study. *Imitatio*, as a pedagogical tool, worked through exercises in taking a model *form* and putting in new content, or taking model *content* and arranging it into a new form. Delivery is particularly reliant on *imitatio* since it does not deal with the words themselves (which can more readily be described in words), but the nuances of the way they are vocalised and acted out. Whereas invention, arrangement and style could be learnt through written *progymnasmata* exercises in which literary models were imitated, delivery required the “live” imitation of a model or teacher who could demonstrate both form (the arrangement of the body and vocal resources in response to the text), and content (the specific gestures and vocal inflexions to express it). This applies, if anything, even more strongly in the case of sung delivery, where music adds a further layer of complexity to the process. Given the difficulty of articulating the concepts involved in delivery generally, and in the production of the voice in particular, writers on singing like Tosi and Mancini might have found themselves in sympathy with the aphorism that writing about music is like dancing about architecture.⁴⁷ Mancini pointed out that “in the liberal arts the results achieved by scholars depend in part upon the knowledge [*scienza*] of the masters, and their ability to teach; but in singing, almost all success depends on the teachers.”⁴⁸ If a painter, sculptor, architect or even a *maestro di cappella* is a not competent teacher of his art, a scholar can at least study examples of painting, sculpture, architecture or counterpoint, but since musical notation is only approximate, vocal delivery “cannot be explained by notation, but only with the voice, and through the teaching of a master”.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Attributed by Nicholas Cook to Elvis Costello; see Nicholas Cook, *Music: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), vii.

⁴⁸ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 49. My translation.

⁴⁹ Giambattista Mancini, *Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato* (Vienna: Ghelen, 1774), 32. This passage was not included in the 1777 edition, cited above.

This suggests at least part of the reason for Mancini's suggestion that singers listen to orators as models, rather than studying rhetoric formally: a certain amount can be gleaned from texts about how to deliver, but the most effective method is to imitate the best practitioners.

It is little wonder, then, that many commentators considered that the nature of delivery makes it something which should, and perhaps can only be taught by practical exercise in *imitatio*, as Quintilian advocated for boys learning to declaim through reading aloud.

In this connexion there is much that can only be taught in actual practice, as for instance when the boy should take breath, at what point he should introduce a pause into a line, where the sense ends or begins, when the voice should be raised or lowered, what modulation should be given to each phrase, and when he should increase or slacken speed, or speak with greater or less energy.⁵⁰

The seventeenth-century rhetorician Bernard Lamy, too, considered that "Rules for Pronunciation cannot be well taught, but by experience and practice".⁵¹ Physical gestures could at least be illustrated in books, a practice that became increasingly prevalent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and continued into the nineteenth,⁵² but the subtleties of vocal inflexion were much more difficult to convey, as the Jesuit pedagogue Franciscus Lang lamented:

But in fact, [how] these expressions of the voice are to be taught and formed cannot be conveyed by the written word [lit: dead letter], or expressed in the shapes of diagrams, even though it has now been permitted to display the postures of the body a little more openly.⁵³

When it came to giving instructions on the delivery of recitative, Tosi advised that the sacred style "is not to be learned but from the affecting manner of those who devoutly dedicate

⁵⁰ *Institutio oratoria*, I.VII.1-2.

⁵¹ Bernard Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal, in pursuance of a former treatise, intituled, The art of thinking. Rendred into English*, Second, corr. ed. (London: Printed for W. Taylor ... and H. Clements, 1708), 324-5.

⁵² See Dene Barnett, with the assistance of Jeanette Massy-Westropp, *The Art of Gesture: The practices and principles of 18th century acting* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1987), passim.

⁵³ "Qua ratione verò hæ vocum expressiones discendæ, ac efformandæ sint, mortuâ litterâ tradi non potest, nec figurarum schematibus exprimi, prout corporis positiones aliquantulùm apertiùs licuit exponere." Lang, *Dissertatio*, 56.

their voices to the service of God.”⁵⁴ To improve as a singer more generally, he advises the student to “hear as much as he can the most celebrated singers and likewise the most excellent instrumental performers, because, from the attention in hearing them, one reaps more advantage than from any instruction whatsoever”. He adds a crucial rider to this advice, however, adding that imitating even the most excellent models is “infinitely prejudicial to a singer” if it descends to mere copying.⁵⁵ The principle of *imitatio* allows that one may, for example, sing the same music that another singer has previously performed, but with new ornamentation, or alternatively model one’s ornaments on those that have been successful for someone else, but only when they are applied in an unrelated context.

He that rightly knows how to copy [*copiare*] in Musick, takes nothing but the Design; because that Ornament, which we admire when *natural*, immediately loses its Beauty when *artificial*. The most admired Graces of a Professor ought only to be imitated [*imitarsi*], and not copied [*copiarsi*]; on Condition also, that it does not bear not even so much as a Shadow of a Resemblance of the Original; otherwise, instead of a beautiful Imitation, it will become a despicable Copy.⁵⁶

In his chapter on recitative Tosi is not so explicit about *imitatio* as a method of learning, yet his comments about recitative in the sacred style (above) suggest that the same principle applies in that context too: a singer should observe the best models and learn from the best masters, but once beyond the student stage, put his or her own stamp on each performance.

The importance of *imitatio* in the pedagogy of delivery for oratory, acting and singing is one reason why writers on all of these subjects devoted relatively little space to its mechanics. The fact that the authors of the only significant Italian treatises on singing before 1800, Tosi and Mancini, each give a full chapter to recitative, yet do not spell out exactly how to perform it, is not a measure of its importance but a reflection of the accepted model of teaching for a temporal, performed art. Clearly, this model of empirical training represents a significant barrier to the modern reconstruction of rhetorical delivery, whether in speech or music, since learning empirically by listening to practitioners trained in that tradition is now

⁵⁴ Tosi, *Observations*, 66.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 82-3.

⁵⁶ Italian text in Tosi, *Opinioni*, 98-9. Translation in Tosi, *Observations*, 154-5.

impossible. Yet as this thesis aims to show, a careful reading of the theory preserved in classical and early modern sources does provide a significant body of information which allows a picture of the principles and practices of rhetorical delivery, as they were understood in early modern Italy, to be built up.

Expressing the passions

One idea about the technique of delivery which early modern writers often took from the classical literature, was that the orator or performer must arouse the passions in himself in order to kindle them in the audience. In Horace's often quoted words, "If you wish me to weep, you must first grieve yourself."⁵⁷ Exactly how this was to be done remained a contested question, however, at least in part reflecting the tension between the Platonic idea of the *furor poeticus*, in which the poet is directly inspired by the gods, and theories which favoured a process of entering into the affection by concentrated imagination, that is, by drawing on personal resources within the poet or performer him- or herself.⁵⁸

There is a tension already in Cicero's exposition of this idea which continued to be worked out in generations of subsequent writing on the subject: rhetoric is a *techne*, an art which can be learnt and applied, yet in the act of delivery it is at its most effective when the oration is declaimed with genuine, heartfelt emotion. Somehow, a mechanism is to be discovered which will link the external stimulus of the text and subject matter, the internal affective experience of the orator, and its re-externalisation in delivery so that art can be brought powerfully to bear without detracting from the genuineness of the emotional appeal that reaches the audience. In the words of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, "good delivery ensures that what the orator is saying seems to come from his heart".⁵⁹

⁵⁷ "Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi". Horace, *Ars poetica*, 102-3. Translation in O. B. Hardison, Jr. and Leon Golden, *Horace for Students of Literature: The Ars Poetica and Its Tradition* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1995), 41.

⁵⁸ On debates on this subject around the time of the creation of the recitative style, see "The Poetics of Music" in Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985). On the eighteenth century, see Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the idea of musical genius, Yale series in the philosophy and theory of art* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁵⁹ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 205.

Cicero opens the argument by stating the case for the necessity of experiencing personal emotions on the part of the orator as a necessary step to engaging those of the listeners. In Book 2 of his *De oratore*, he has Antonius argue that in order for an orator to move the audience, he must himself be “ablaze”.

In fact, it is impossible for the hearer to grieve, to hate, to envy, to become frightened at anything, to be driven to tears and pity, unless the self-same emotions the orator wants to apply to the juror seem to be imprinted and branded onto the orator himself ... I swear to you that every time I have ever wanted to arouse grief or pity or envy or hate in the hearts of jurors through my oratory, I was invariably, while working to stir the jurors, thoroughly stirred myself by the same feelings to which I was trying to lead them ... [N]o mind is so susceptible to an orator’s power, that it can be set on fire unless the orator who approaches it is burning and all ablaze himself ... For oratory that aims at stirring the hearts of others, will, by its very nature, stir the orator himself even more strongly than it will any member of his audience ... Yet, in such performances, I have often seen myself how the eyes of an actor seemed to blaze forth from his mask.⁶⁰

Yet art is also required if the passions are to be conveyed as powerfully as possible in delivery. In Book 3 of *De oratore*, in the context of his main discussion of delivery, Cicero has Crassus respond with a touch of irony to the position taken by Antonius:

[N]o doubt, reality always has the advantage over imitation. Yet if reality [veritas] by itself were sufficiently effective in delivery, we would have no need for any art at all. But emotions, which must especially be expressed or imitated through delivery, are often so confused that they are obscured and almost smothered. So we must get rid of what obscures them and embrace their most prominent and most clearly visible features.⁶¹

This, then, is the other side of the coin: art as *techne*, a skill which allows the orator to harness reality in its raw or “natural” state and clarify it, presenting it to the listener in a way which appears no less natural but will be even more effective than unvarnished reality in engaging and communicating with the audience because of the purity and concentration of its emotional cues. In his later *Orator* Cicero again seems to imply that it is the appearance rather than the actuality of emotion that an orator must cultivate. “The perfect orator”, he

⁶⁰ *De oratore*, II. 189-93. Translation from Cicero, *On the ideal orator*, 173-4.

⁶¹ *De oratore*, III. 15. Translation from *Ibid.*, 291-2.

says, "will use certain tones according as he wishes to seem himself to be moved and to sway the minds of his audience."⁶²

The tension between these two positions is neatly encapsulated by Quintilian in his discussion of "appropriate" (*apta*) delivery which, he says, lies in adapting the delivery to the subject matter, allowing the voice to reflect the relevant emotions. But how is this to be done? Quintilian's answer is to bridge the gap between composition and delivery through imaginative identification with the subject matter. This will stimulate the appropriate affective response in the orator himself, which will in turn be reflected in his delivery, particularly through the voice.

[T]here is a difference between true emotion on the one hand, and false and fictitious emotion on the other. The former breaks out naturally, as in the case of grief, anger or indignation, but lacks art, and therefore requires to be formed by methodical training. The latter, on the other hand, does imply art, but lacks the sincerity of nature: consequently in such cases the main thing is to excite the appropriate feelings in oneself, to form a mental picture of the facts, and to exhibit an emotion that cannot be distinguished from the truth. The voice, which is the intermediary between ourselves and our hearers, will then produce precisely the same emotion in the judge that we have put into it.⁶³

Quintilian's discussion of the training of young orators in gesture and movement is also suggestive of a view on the artful use of the voice. Delivery may be learnt from an actor, however the student "must rigorously avoid staginess and all extravagance ... For if an orator does command a certain art in such matters, its highest expression will be in the concealment of its existence".⁶⁴

Amongst Renaissance rhetoricians, the earliest to attempt a full scale rhetoric was George of Trebizond. The idea of the orator using imagination to induce the affection in himself that he wishes to arouse in the audience is evident in his *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (1433-4):

Delivery is adapted to moving the affections as much as possible, therefore it proceeds from [the orator himself] being moved as much as possible; that is why results are achieved by one

⁶² *Orator*, xvii. 55. Translation from Cicero, *Brutus and Orator*.

⁶³ *Institutio oratoria*, XI. III. 61-2. Translation from Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

⁶⁴ *Institutio oratoria*, I. XI. 3. Translation from Ibid.

who speaks in such a way that he induces the mind to see, to touch, and to meditate upon those things which he has decided to set out clearly in his speech; and therefore he who is not moved does not move others, but he who in speaking is accustomed to conceive the image of things in his mind, if he has made use of any experience, makes himself a wonderful orator in his delivery.⁶⁵

The objective of inducing the listener to feel the same affections the performer is experiencing is one of the criteria which Girolamo Mei used to distinguish the music of the ancients from that of the moderns, as he told Vincenzo Galilei in a letter in 1572.

As to the marvellous effects of the music of the ancients in moving the affections and not finding any trace of this in the modern, if we wish to look with a straight eye at the matters discussed above, it may happen that we shall marvel no more at the [effects], because our [music] does not have the same goal. This may be because ours does not have the means of accomplishing this as the ancient did, since it has as its object the delectation of the sense of hearing, whereas the ancient had the object of leading someone else to the same affections as one's own.⁶⁶

Galilei transmitted Mei's further into the public arena in his *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna*, published some ten years later.

⁶⁵ "Pronuntiatio ad movendum animos potissimum accommodator, ideo a motione potissimum proficiscitur, ideo illum consequitur ille, qui ita dicit, ut animum inducat: ea videre, eaque tangere, istisque in rebus versari, quas oratione explanare constituit, & ideo, qui non est commotus, alios non commover, sed qui dicendo rerum imaginem animo concipere consuevit, is si quid exercitationis adhibuerit, mirabilem se in pronuntiando oratorem reddit." Georgius Trapezuntius [George of Trebizond], *G. Trapezuntij Rhetoricorum libri quinque, nunc denuo diligenti cura excusi* (Parisiis: apud Ioannem Roigny, uia ad D. Iacobum, sub Basilisco & quatuor Elementis, 1538). While his treatise was published only in Paris, George spent most of his career in Venice and his influence in Italy is suggested by the preservation of several copies of the book in Italian libraries, including those of both the Biblioteca universitaria di Bologna and the Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna (which incorporates that of the former Jesuit college). The passage is also quoted by Bernardi, suggesting that it had a life beyond Trebizond's then one hundred and sixty year-old treatise; see Giovanni Battista Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae, in quo insunt omnes praeceptiones, quae ad perfectum oratorem, instituendum, ex antiquis, & recentioribus Rhetorum monumentis, accurate desumptae sunt, ordineque admirabili, ac facillimo in unum velut colum digestae, ita ut uno intuitu omnia, quae ad artem pertinent inveniri possint. Opus utilissimum non modo oratoribus & concionatoribus, sed etiam omnibus, qui Rhetoricae operam dant, per necessarium* (Venice: apud Haeredes Melchioris Sessae, 1599), 134r. On Trebizond more generally, see J. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976).

⁶⁶ Girolamo Mei, "Letter to Vincenzo Galilei, 8 May 1572," in *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 66.

[I]t is unthinkable that modern music could aspire to or succeed in [producing any of the notable effects that the ancients did], since its goal is only to delight the hearing, while that of the ancient was to lead others by its means into the same affection as one felt oneself.⁶⁷

More than a century later, the Jesuit rhetorician De Colonia seems to represent the more pragmatic view. For him it is enough for the orator to give the appearance of being moved. He simply advises that “whenever the orator wishes to seem to be affected, and the minds of the listeners moved, so let him also employ a certain tone of voice”.⁶⁸ This approach is very much in tune with that of the great Italian actor Luigi Riccoboni, who is concerned with creating the illusion, rather than the reality of emotional experience in the orator or actor. Indeed, for him, the whole art of the orator is in convincing the audience that he is sincere and speaks from the heart.

It is certain that an Orator, when upon an important Point, ought to endeavour to work his Audience into a Perswasion that he believes what he advances. This is the *whole* of his Art ... [H]e must speak so naturally as to force, as it were, the Spectators to believe every thing he is then saying, and that he speaks from the Heart ... [T]hat which seems to be as it were poured forth Extempore, carries with it an Air of Truth and Sincerity, which prepossesses the Audience in favour of every thing that is said. If therefore a Speech is thus far just to Nature, the Illusion is then complete.⁶⁹

By contrast, Franciscus Lang, a contemporary of de Colonia's and another Jesuit schoolmaster, but also a very practical man of the theatre, agrees with the view transmitted by Trebizond, that an actor must feel, or at least mentally focus on, the affection which is to be conveyed to the audience.

Another virtue of delivery is that it be in harmony with the words, and impress the understanding of those hearers with emotion. To achieve this, and have speech adapted to the

⁶⁷ Galilei, *Dialogue on ancient and modern music*, 224.

⁶⁸ “... utcumque se affectum videri volet Orator, & audientium animos moveri, ita etiam certum vocis sonum adhibeat”. Dominique de Colonia, *De arte rhetorica libri quinque: lectissimis veterum auctorum aetatis aureae, perpetuisque exemplis illustrati* (Venetiis: Apud P. Balleonium, 1715), 298.

⁶⁹ Luigi Riccoboni, *A General History of the Stage, from its Origin ... Together with Two Essays; On the Art of Speaking in Public, and a Comparison between the Antient and Modern Drama, Music and theatre in France in the 17th and 18th centuries* (London: Printed for W. Owen, 1754; reprint, 1978. New York: AMS), 26.

passions, these themselves must first be aroused in the mind of the actor, so that they may be more strongly kindled in the audience. How will he, who is cold inside, excite others?⁷⁰

To this point, Lang is doing no more than reiterating the well established principle set out by Quintilian. He then takes this idea one step further; since he is writing about acting, his concern in the first instance is with the actor himself and his inner process rather than directly with what is conveyed to the audience.

To this end care must be taken with varying the voice, so that from time to time it is intense, from time to time mild, now a strong [voice], now a gentle one, now a hasty one, now a slow one is introduced, just as reason and nature seem to require. Each of these inspires a man to a certain manner of speaking attuned to passion; who if he would properly be perfected by mastery of the art, must hope that the effect can be obtained which the actor intends.⁷¹

Varying the voice is thus not merely a technique to be used mechanically to try to stir the corresponding passion in the listener. Instead, concentrating on expressive variation of the voice according to the affective content of the text (guided, of course, by reason and nature) can help the actor get into character and thus rouse the appropriate passions in his own mind. If he can do this, the appropriate passion should naturally be kindled in the audience. This reversal of the conventional direction of the mental processes involved (variation of voice is first to work internally, to influence the affections of the actor himself, and only then to work on the audience) suggests a deepening of the psychological engagement of the actor with the physical act of vocalising. It seems unlikely that a Jesuit like Lang, steeped in the ethos of *auctoritas* and constrained by the philosophical strictures of the order would be much influenced by incipient Enlightenment ideas of individual emotional experience, yet in this instance, his approach at least suggests the injection of a more personal, subjective element into the process of performance.

⁷⁰ "Altera Pronuntiationis virtus est, ut verbis concordet, & horú sensum Auditoribus imprimat cum motu. Quod ut obtineatur, & pronuntiatio conformetur affectibus, hi ipsi in animo Agentis priùs debent excitari, ut & in Auditoribus fortiter accendantur. Intus ipse, qui friget, alios quomodo calefaciet?" Lang, *Dissertatio*, 57-8.

⁷¹ "Hunc in finem curanda est vocis immutatio, ut hæc subinde intensa, subinde remissa, jam fortis, jam lenis, jam præceps, jam lenta instituatur, prout ipsa ratio & natura videntur requirere. Utraque harum inspirat homini aliquem dicendi modum affectui conformem; qui si artis magisterio ritè perficiatur, sperandum, obtineri effectum posse, quem Actor intendit." *Ibid.*, 58.

It is perhaps a similar process of internalisation and expression that Tosi has in mind in his discussion of recitative in the highly charged chamber style, used also in the theatre for “soliloquies”, with the possible difference that he makes it the singing teacher’s responsibility to fire up the student with an intense emotional engagement with the words.

The last [kind of recitative], according to the opinion of the most judicious, touches the heart more than the others, and is called *recitativo di camera*. This requires a more peculiar skill, by reason of the words which, being for the most part adapted to move the most violent passions of the soul, oblige the master to give the scholar such a lively impression of them that he may seem to be affected with them himself.⁷²

Ultimately, however, Tosi seems to conclude that the most effective delivery will be when the singer really feels the meaning of the text and internalises its affective message, since

when the heart sings you cannot dissemble nor has truth a greater power of persuading. Lastly, do you convince the world (what is not in my power to do) that from the heart alone you have learn’d that *Je ne sai quoy*, that pleasing charm, that so subtly passes from vein to vein and makes its way to the very soul.⁷³

Tartini takes a similar view of the need for personal feeling on the part of the performer and, interestingly, points to the consequences of this for rhythmic freedom in performance practice – a subject that will be taken up below (Chapter 5). After arguing that the expression of the passions will spontaneously disrupt a strictly metrical declamation of text, he continues,

In simple narration the equality of motions can have a place, and in consequence the beat has strictness. But if the proposition is true, that to move others one must be moved in oneself, (and I hold this to be true) there are few narrations which according to nature can be regulated by equal motions, because few of them are entirely free of any passion.⁷⁴

⁷² Tosi, *Observations*, 67-8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 157-8.

⁷⁴ “Nella semplice narrazione può aver luogo la eguaglianza de’ moti, e in conseguenza la battuta a rigore. Ma s’è vera la proposizione, che per muover altrui bisogna esser mosso in se stesso, (ed io la tengo per vera) poche saranno le narrazioni, che secondo natura possano esser regolate da moto eguale, perchè poche sono le affatto esenti da qualunque passione.” Giuseppe Tartini, *Trattato di Musica, Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (Padova: Giovanni Manfrè, 1754; reprint, facs. edn, New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), 139-40.

That a good singer could succeed in moving the audience through giving at least the appearance of genuine emotion in his performance is attested by Patrick Brydone's account of the singing of Gasparo Pacchierotti. The singer excels, he reports, "in the pathetic, at present too much neglected on most theatres; and indeed, I think, he gives more expression to his cantabile airs, and makes his hearers feel more, because he feels more himself, than any that I have seen in Italy."⁷⁵

To sum up, the rhetorical tradition provided a set of general principles governing delivery which were reflected in writing about acting in both the spoken and sung theatre, as much as in that concerned with formal oratory. These included the virtually universal acceptance of the importance of good delivery, encapsulated in Demosthenes' famous dictum, and the well established definition of delivery as being made up of two parts, the use of the voice and physical action. The goals of recitation – to instruct, delight and move – applied as much to recitative as to other forms of declamation, and the singing actor also called on all three of the persuasive "appeals" recognised by rhetorical theory, those of reason, emotion and ethos. Skill in delivery was considered to derive from the combination of natural talent, theory, and imitation of good models, reinforced by practice. One of the most crucial of these skills was that of moving the passions of the audience, which was required for the effective use of the emotional appeal. This was to be achieved by the singer-actor feeling – or at least convincingly appearing to feel – the same passion that was to be moved in the listener.

⁷⁵ Patrick Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta. In a Series of Letters to William Beckford, Esq. of Somerly in Suffolk; from P. Brydone, F.R.S.*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1773), 224-5.

Chapter 4 – The Virtues of delivery

The previous chapter explored some of the general principles that governed delivery in the rhetorical tradition as it was understood in early modern Italy, including the nature and purpose of delivery in the rhetorical tradition, and the mechanisms through which its skills were understood to be acquired and transmitted. But what were those skills, and what characteristics of delivery were most valued in performance?

There can be no avoiding the fact that the particular, and no doubt varied, delivery styles in use in both spoken oratory and musical recitation in the early modern period cannot be recovered in all of their specific and complex detail. Even an author as knowledgeable as the Veronese humanist and critic Giulio Cesare Becelli (1686-1750), writing much closer than we are to the time he was describing, and working within a living rhetorical tradition of which he had a remarkably wide-ranging knowledge, was forced to acknowledge that in relation to the Italian secular oratory of the previous two centuries, “we know nothing of the action and modulation of the voice of our orators”.¹ He seems to have had a little more information about sacred orators, describing the Franciscan Preacher Francesco Panigarola (1548-94) as having “lively wit [*ingegno*], varied and easy, of sweet speech, with an affable and charming manner in speaking.”² “Of sweet speech” [*di dolce parlare*] may imply a quality of vocal timbre, but otherwise even this description provides no information on his management of specific vocal parameters. It does, however, provide a number of cues to the virtues that Becelli considered to characterise good delivery more generally. His “lively *ingegno*, varied and easy” suggests the qualities of imaginative wit, or *argutia*, so valued as an expression of

¹ Giulio Cesare Becelli, *Esame della retorica antica e uso della moderna: libri VII divisi in due parti* (Verona: nella stamperia d'Angelo Targa, 1739), 84.

² *Ibid.*, 87.

rhetorical ornateness by the rhetorician Emanuele Tesauro,³ and his “affable and charming manner” indicates a mastery of apt and engaging delivery.

Both ornateness and aptness were amongst the qualities of delivery that were highly valued in classical rhetoric, indeed they were elements in a thoroughgoing framework for analysing the characteristics considered important in good delivery: the “Virtues of Delivery”. These were based on the model of the four virtues of rhetorical style. They were defined by Quintilian and transmitted in early modern rhetorics, and are also reflected in writing both about theatre generally and about recitative delivery in particular. The virtues of delivery thus provide a way into making sense of the qualities of good recitative delivery – including the management of its unnotated elements – as they were understood in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The concept of virtues or qualities of style was important in classical rhetoric, and while their specific definitions varied between authors,⁴ one of the most influential formulations for early modern rhetoricians was that of Cicero. In his *De oratore*, Cicero takes Theophrastus as his model in identifying four virtues of style: *puritas* (correctness), *perspicuitas* (clarity or lucidity), *habilitas* or *decorum* (appropriateness) and *ornatus* (speaking with distinction).⁵ The same four qualities are stressed by Quintilian, the other classical author most influential on early modern rhetoric, in his discussion of style in the eighth book of his *Institutio oratoria*,⁶

³ Emanuele Tesauro, S.J., *Il Cannocchiale aristotelico, O sia, Idea dell'arguta et ingegniosa elocotione, Che serve à tutta l'Arte oratoria, lapidaria; et simbolica. Esaminata co'principij del divino Aristotele, dal Conte & Cavalier Gran Croce D. Emanvele Tesavro, Patritio Torinese. Quinta Impressione* (Torino: Bartolomeo Zauatta, 1670), 17.

⁴ See, for example, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, IV.17-69.

⁵ Cicero's formulation is mentioned first in passing in *De oratore* at I. 144., and set out in detail at III. 37b-55. I have here used the English equivalents for Cicero's Latin terms suggested by James May and Jakob Wisse in their annotated translation of *De oratore*, as more accurately conveying the sense of Cicero's Latin in modern English than do terms such as purity, perspicuity, ornateness and aptness which are used in many older translations. Some of these more traditional renderings will be encountered below in the context of quotations from published English translations of other Latin authors who discuss the same concepts. Where there may be confusion about the intended meaning in translated passages, I have therefore included the Latin term in square brackets. In the main text of this and the following chapters I have generally used the Latin terms to distinguish the technical use of these concepts in rhetoric from the common meaning of the English equivalents, where this might not be clear from the context. On Cicero's debt to Theophrastus, see Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero on the ideal orator (De oratore)*, translated, with introduction, notes, appendixes, glossary, and indexes by James M. May, Jakob Wisse (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35-6.

⁶ XIII.I-III. Some theorists included a fifth virtue of style called *enargia* (Greek) or *evidentia* (Latin) meaning “vividness”, or the quality of “bringing before the eyes”, especially emotionally. Quintilian includes this quality under *ornatus*: see VIII. III. 61.

and these categories, or variants of them, were also adopted by early modern rhetoricians such as the influential Jesuit Cypriano Soarez,⁷ as a framework for discussing style.

While Cicero did not explicitly associate his qualities of style with virtues of delivery, the connection was clearly drawn by Quintilian, who begins his discussion of the qualities of delivery by setting out their basis in style.

The rules for delivery are identical with those for the language of oratory itself. For, as our language must be correct [*emendata*], clear [*dilucida*], ornate [*ornata*] and appropriate [*apta*], so with our delivery.⁸

This four-part scheme was less widely adopted by early modern rhetoricians in relation to delivery than it was in relation to style, but even amongst those who did not apply it as a fully-formed model to delivery, it is apparent from the terms of their discussions that the kinds of characteristics identified by Quintilian also informed their thinking on the subject. The same virtues of delivery are also clearly traceable in the qualities of performance praised by writers on theatre and on singing throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

One early modern rhetorician who did explicitly adopt Quintilian's scheme was the influential Jesuit Nicolas Caussin. Amongst the early modern rhetoricians under consideration he gives the clearest and most thorough exposition of the concepts involved, and I will therefore use his concise and clearly structured formulation as a convenient framework for the examination of the characteristics of good delivery below.⁹ Caussin names the four virtues of delivery as *puritas* (purity, correctness), *perspicuitas* (clarity, lucidity), *cultus* or *ornatus* (speaking with distinction, ornateness) and *habilitas* or *decorum* (appropriateness, aptness).

⁷ Cypriano Soarez, *De arte rhetorica libri tres: ex Aristotele, Cicerone, et Quintiliano praecipue deprompti* (Hispani: Ex officina Alphonsi Escruiani. Expensis Andreae Pescioni, 1569), 40r.

⁸ XI. III. 30. Translation in Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols., *Loeb Classical Library* (London: William Heinemann, 1920-2), 259.

⁹ See Nicolas Caussin, *De eloquentia sacra et humana, libri XVI. Editio Ultima, non ignobili accessione locupletata: Cum accuratis indicibus, tam eorum quae unoquoque Capite continentur, quam Rerum & Verborum* (Paris: Ioannes Libert, 1643). The sub-headings below are largely derived from Charles Gildon's English translation of Caussin (or rather, his plagiarisation, since he never acknowledges Caussin as his source). See Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, the Late Eminent Tragedian. Wherein the Action and Utterance of the Stage, Bar and Pulpit, are distinctly consider'd. With The Judgement of the late Ingenious Monsieur de St. Evremond, upon the Italian and French Music and Opera's; in a Letter to the Duke of Buckingham. To which is added, The Amorous Widow, or the Wanton Wife. A Comedy. Written by Mr. Betterton* (London: 1710; reprint, London: Frank Cass and Co., 1970), 89-97.

Purity, or Correctness (*Puritas*)

Purity of diction or “Latinity” was highly prized by both classical and early modern authors on rhetoric. It demanded good style and correct grammar in composition, but also an accurate and urbane pronunciation of the text in delivery.

Quintilian recommended employing an actor to train students in delivery. Part of his task would be to “correct all faults of pronunciation and see that the utterance is distinct, and that each letter has its proper sound,” for example by ensuring that voiced and unvoiced consonants are clearly distinguished.¹⁰ An affected or overblown pronunciation was also not to be tolerated by the teacher who must not “suffer words to be uttered from the depths of the throat or rolled out hollow-mouthed, or permit the natural sound of the voice to be overlaid with a fuller sound, a fault fatal to purity of speech.”¹¹

A certain healthfulness of voice

Purity also incorporated good management of the voice and the avoidance of distasteful mannerisms in delivery. Cicero has Crassus tell his young admirers

Now as to the voice, the breath, and the movement of the entire body and of the tongue itself, the exercise of these requires hard work rather than art. Here we must carefully consider who are to be our models, and whom we want to resemble. We must observe actors as well as orators to make sure that we do not, through bad practice, develop any tasteless or ugly habits.¹²

Quintilian also advocates good vocal management. While variety is important in delivery, the orator should also make sure not to strain his voice in the effort to be expressive.

[The voice] must not be pressed beyond its powers, for it is liable to be choked and to become less and less clear in proportion to the increase of effort, while at times it will break altogether and produce the sound to which the Greeks have given a name derived from the crowing of cocks before the voice is developed.¹³

¹⁰ I. xi. 4-6. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

¹¹ I. xi. 6. Translation in *Ibid.*

¹² *De oratore* I. 156. Translation in Cicero, *On the ideal orator*, 92.

¹³ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.iii.51. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

The consequences of not taking care of the voice are embarrassing, but they will also have a material effect on the achievement of expressive goals. This applies as much in musical recitation as it does in spoken oratory. In his preface to the score of Cavaliere's *Rappresentazione di Anima, e di Corpo* (1600), Alessandro Guidotti warns that

[I]f the performances take place in very large halls, it is not possible for everyone to hear the words, so that the singer will need to force the voice, causing the affection to be lessened.¹⁴

The consequence of vocal strain is thus not just aesthetic; what matters to Guidotti is the reduction in affective expression, presumably because the voice extended to its limits loses the range of dynamic and timbre variation necessary for affective expression.

Even if the voice is not over-strained in the effort to be loud or expressive, its sound may be constrained by technical faults in vocal production. Writers on singing, not surprisingly, make a particular point of this. Lorenzo Penna, for example, cautions "Do not sing in your nose, or through your teeth, or in your throat,"¹⁵ and Tosi similarly advises that the voice "should always come forth neat and clear, without passing thro' the Nose, or being choaked in the Throat; which are the two most horrible Defects in a Singer, and past all Remedy if once grown into a Habit."¹⁶ Mancini associates these problems especially with poor mouth position, such as over-opening the mouth, which results in "a voice that is suffocated, crude and heavy".¹⁷ Not opening the mouth enough, together with over-rounding of the lips and forward placement of the tongue, on the other hand,

produces three grave defects. First, the voice has, so to speak, a [quality] I cannot describe other than as sepulchral and lifeless: second, arising from this, is that these youths often sing in the nose: and thirdly their pronunciation is lisping and stammering ... There are also many who sing with their teeth closed and clenched. Singing in this way between the teeth is the

¹⁴ Alessandro Guidotti, "La rappresentazione di *Anima e Corpo* musicata da Emilio de' Cavalieri," in *Le origini del melodramma*, ed. Angelo Solerti (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1903; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969). Translation in Piero Weiss, *Opera: a history in documents* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20.

¹⁵ Lorenzo Penna, *Li primi albori musicali per il principianti della musica figurata*, 4th ed. (Bologna: 1684; reprint, facs. Bologna: Forni, 1969), 49. Trans. Margaret Murata in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, Revised ed. (New York: Norton, 1998), 639.

¹⁶ Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the florid song, or, Sentiments on the ancient and modern singers. Written in Italian by Pier Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilcox, 1743), 22.

¹⁷ "Affogata, cruda e pesante". Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (Milano: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777; reprint, Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni, 1996), 109.

greatest of defects; a defect which entirely betrays the voice, because it does not allow its full compass to be heard, and does not allow the words to be articulated cleanly, nor with clarity. Now these defects of the mouth once introduced in a youth, become virtually inemendable.¹⁸

Nothing clownish or foreign

Eliminating vocal strain and bad habits or technical faults in voice production is the first step to purity of diction, but the aspect of *puritas* that exercised both classical and early modern authors most was correct pronunciation. An urbane and correct pronunciation devoid of “barbarisms” was highly valued in both classical and early modern times as a marker of good education and breeding, and was therefore essential to singers, whose job was to represent noble characters on the stage or to perform before the nobility in the chamber or church. The weight given to pronunciation in the principal treatises of classical rhetoric must have constantly reinforced this view in early modern Italy.

Cicero, for example, devotes a substantial section of Book 3 of *De oratore* to correct pronunciation. He advocates cultivating the kind of accent typical of Romans from the city of Rome itself, and learning “to avoid not only countrified roughness, but also peculiar foreign pronunciation”.¹⁹ In the *Brutus* he describes faultless and pure Latin diction as “the ground, or so to speak the foundation, on which oratory rests”; indeed, he appears to consider it a minimum qualification for acceptable oratory:

As for purity of diction, it is (as I have said before) a quality deserving of high praise, and yet not so much for its own sake as because it is commonly neglected. It isn't so admirable a thing to know good Latin as it is disgraceful not to know it, and it is not, I think, so much the mark of a good orator as it is of a true Roman.²⁰

To take this a step further, for Cicero good pronunciation appears to be an important foundation which should underpin the “ethical” appeal – the orator’s capacity to gain the listeners’ good will and convince them of his case through the qualities of his own character.

¹⁸ Ibid., 109-10. My translation.

¹⁹ III.44. Translation in Cicero, *On the ideal orator*.

²⁰ *Brutus*, xxxvii. 140. Translation in Marcus Tullius Cicero, “*Brutus*” and “*Orator*”, trans. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell, Rev. ed., *Loeb classical library*; 342 (London: W. Heinemann, 1962).

Who, after all, would be convinced by a speaker in the Forum who was a good orator but not a “true Roman”?

For Quintilian, as was noted above, purity of diction consisted not only in avoiding foreign words and pronunciation, but in simple accuracy. A very common kind of “barbarism”, he says, “consists in the addition or omission of a letter or syllable, or in the substitution of one for another or in placing one where it has not right to be.”²¹

Latinity remained a priority also for early modern rhetoricians, despite Latin’s status as a “dead” language. Good Latin remained an important index of social class and education and to acquire fluency, students at the Jesuit colleges were required to use Latin even in informal conversation outside the classroom. The 1722 edition of Soarez’s Jesuit primer *De arte rhetorica* set out the rules for purity of pronunciation as follows:

Rule 5: The accents of Latin are expressed smoothly, with the proper sound of Latin letters; without a pronunciation of the letters that is foreign, or rustic, or effeminate, or harsh; without hissing, hiatus, stammering, and other such deformities. That pronunciation is foreign which is proper to French, German and other barbarian tongues.²²

Another Jesuit rhetorician, Ludovicus Cresollius, (Louis de Cressolles) was particularly scathing about those whose negligent pronunciation results in obscuring or even changing the meaning of words, for example,

Some people with horrible negligence mix letters up among themselves: it is customary to replace E with A and the opposite, and if ‘quidam’ occurs they pronounce it ‘quidem.’ I believe ‘urbem’ is too feeble for them, they prefer ‘urbam’.²³

²¹ I.v.10. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

²² “Latini accentus exprimantur suaviter, sono Latinarum litterarum proprio; sine peregrinâ, vel rusticâ, vel effeminatâ, vel durâ litterarum appellatione; sine sibilo, hiatu, balbutie, & id genus aliis deformatibus. Pronuntiatio peregrina est, quæ Gallicæ, Germanicæ, ceterisque linguis barbaris est propria.” Cipriano Soárez, S.J., *De arte rhetorica libri tres ex Aristotele, Cicerone et Quintiliano præcipue deprompti* (Antverpiae [Antwerp]: Viduam Henrici Thieullier, 1722), 188.

²³ “Nonnulli foeda negligentia literas inter se committant: E pro A & contrâ, solenne est reponere, quidam si occurrerit, quidem pronunciant: Urbem opinor illis est tenuius, Urbam malunt.” Ludovicus Cresollius, S.J., *Vacationes Autumnales sive de perfecta oratoris actione et pronuntiatione Libri III. In quibus è scriptorum elegantium monumentis, gestuum & vocum rationes non indocta copia & varietate explicantur, & vitia in agendo notantur. Opus omnibus eloquentiae studiosis, & qui vel sacro, vel profano in loco publicè dicunt, utilissimum* (Paris: Sebastiani Cramoisy, 1620), 529.

There is also a danger in trying too hard in declamation, perhaps in the attempt to sound impressive:

Some double the letters in a disorderly way and ungracefully, and indeed they express that [letter] which is most odious, which excited puppies express. And so among them 'amorr' is often heard and 'amarre', and as if to terrify their listeners, 'terretes' sounds through the ears, not 'teretes'.²⁴

The idea of correct, pure language was enthusiastically extended from Latin to the vernacular in Italy, where the anointed "correct" dialect was literary Tuscan, the iconic status of which was vigorously defended by the Accademia della Crusca.²⁵ At the turn of the eighteenth century, Andrea Perrucci took up this question in relation to theatrical declamation with his customary vigour, devoting a chapter of his treatise on acting to the faults of various regional pronunciations. The Lombards, he says, fail to sound the doubled consonants, saying "Fero" for "Ferro" and "Pena" for "Penna", while the Neapolitans mix up the open and closed vowels and the Sicilians, in trying to make their open vowels closed, substitute I for E and U for O. Even the Florentines, who "glorify themselves as fathers of the perfect language" speak in the throat, saying "Xhavallo" in place of "Cavallo" and mispronouncing many other words. The Sieneese come closest to correct pronunciation, although they too, tend to speak in the throat, so theatrical pronunciation should be "Sieneese for the words, refined in the court of Rome to remove the defect of the throat".²⁶ While non-Tuscan actors can and should learn this approved pronunciation, those whose speech cannot

²⁴ "Nonnulli geminant incompositè literas & invenustè, & quidem eam quae odiosissima est, quàmque irritatae caniculae exprimunt. Itaque apud illos saepe auditur, amorr, & amarre, & velut terrere auditores velle videantur, terretes aures personant non teretes." Ibid. The latter example is a play on words - the first looks like part of the verb to terrify, while 'teretes' is a plural adjective meaning refined, elegant or polished. I am grateful to Robert Forgas for pointing this out.

²⁵ On the role of the Crusca and the "questione della lingua", see Bruno Migliorini, *Storia della lingua italiana*, 1a ed., *Universale Sansoni*; 4-5. (Firenze: Sansoni, 1988).

²⁶ "Senese per li vocaboli, affinata nella Corte di Roma per toglierli il difetto della gola." Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso*, ed. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato ed. (Firenze: 1961), 106-9. Galliard quotes the proverb "*Lingua Toscana in bocca Romana*" in a footnote to his translation of Tosi; Tosi, *Observations*, 80. Similar views to Perrucci's about the pronunciation of the Florentines and Sieneese seem to have been shared by De Brosse, who recorded in 1739 that "In Siena the purest Italian is spoken, both in form and pronunciation; for although the Florentines speak a very pure Italian, they have such a disagreeable pronunciation, not from the throat, but from the stomach, that I found it much more difficult to understand it than even the Venetian patois." Charles de Brosse, *Selections from the letters of de Brosse*, trans. Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower (London: K. Paul Trench Trübner & co. ltd., 1897), 98.

be made correct because of an incurable speech impediment “must be rejected from the ranks [of actors], although from time to time in comic parts they develop a certain charm, and appear more agreeable than not”.²⁷

These appear to have been well accepted precepts in the theatre, as the eminent actor Luigi Riccoboni made very much the same points a generation later in his *Pensées sur la Déclamation* (1738):

I shall not take notice of the indispensable Necessity of a proper Pronunciation, because all the World is convinced of it; only I must observe, that the Man who cannot correct the Viciousness of habitual Dialect, or defective Nature, ought never to act in Public, because he runs the risqué of exciting Laughter when he ought to draw Tears.²⁸

The rules that applied to theatrical declamation were equally valid for musical declamation. Since singing involved the recitation of poetry, correct pronunciation of Tuscan, as well as of ecclesiastical or literary Latin, was already considered by the sixteenth century to be an essential attribute of good singing, and writers on music faithfully reproduced the classical requirement for *puritas*, often giving specific examples of common errors. Zarlino, for instance, advises

In order for the words of the music to be understood they [the singers] should, above all, beware of the error that many commit of changing the vowel sounds of words, delivering, as it were, *a* for *e*, *i* for *o* or *u* for one of the same. Rather they should deliver them according to their true pronunciation. It is truly shameful and deserving of severe criticism to hear certain dullards in our choirs and public chapels as well as in private chambers deliver the words corruptly when they should be delivering them clearly, easily and without any error.²⁹

²⁷ “Bisogna scartarli dal cetò, benchè alle volte nelle parti ridicole v’accrecano un non sò che di grazia, e riescono più tosto dilettevoli, che nò.” Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*.

²⁸ Translation in Luigi Riccoboni, *A General History of the Stage, from its Origin ... Together with Two Essays; On the Art of Speaking in Public, and a Comparison between the Antient and Modern Drama, Music and theatre in France in the 17th and 18th centuries* (London: Printed for W. Owen, 1754; reprint, 1978. New York: AMS), 25.

²⁹ Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche* (Venice: 1558), 204. Translation in Don. Harrán, *Word-tone relations in musical thought: from antiquity to the seventeenth century, Musicological Studies and Documents No. 40* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, W. Germany: American Institute of Musicology, Hanssler-Verlag, 1986), 410

Similarly, he counsels singers that when working out the text underlay in a piece to be performed, "A suitable figure is to be placed below each long or short syllable so that nothing barbarous will be heard."³⁰

The social value given to good pronunciation as a mark of one's status, either by birth or by association with those of noble birth, is evident in Giovanni Bardi's advice to Caccini. It seems to have particular force for someone attached to a noble household in Florence, the home of the Crusca and principle city of Tuscany; it also clearly applies to sung as much as to spoken declamation:

[I]t would behoove you, if you want to garner supreme praise with your singing, to let the words be heard clearly, which is of sovereign importance for your purpose. For to do the contrary would be unbecoming to someone raised in Florence among noble and accomplished persons, where one learns good speech and excellent [Tuscan] diction, unlike the many who do not understand how to pronounce 'o' or the other vowels, unaware of which are open and which closed, for in this resides the sweetness, clarity and effectiveness of your speech. God gave us this special gift to employ to the end that our ideas may be understood.³¹

In the light of the foregoing, it is no surprise to find that the classicist *letterati* of the eighteenth century also brought pronunciation into their critiques of opera. Ludovico Antonio Muratori, for example, complained that

Because of the singers' ignorance one can hardly ever understand the sense (to say nothing of the words) of their parts, for they alter and distort all the vowels ... If one does not keep the libretto handy where all they sing has been printed I am sure that no one in the audience would understand the action or even the general subject of what is being represented on the stage.³²

³⁰ Gioseffo Zarlino, "From *Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558)," in *Source Readings in Music History*, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: Norton, 1998), 461.

³¹ Giovanni de Bardi, "The 'Discourse Addressed to Giulio Caccini, Called the Roman, on Ancient Music and Good Singing,'" in *The Florentine Camerata: documentary studies and translations*, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 123.

³² Lodovico Muratori, *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (Modena: 1706), 59.

In his *Teatro alla moda*, Benedetto Marcello, too, satirised the failings of singers in this regard:

To become a virtuoso a singer need not be able to read or write, or to pronounce correctly vowels and diphthongs, nor does he have to understand the text. He must be an expert, however, at disregarding sense and at mixing up letters and syllables.³³

Yet this was clearly not a merely academic concern. Good Tuscan was also an unquestioned requirement for Tosi, who is just as firm about it in relation to musical theatre as Perrucci and Riccoboni were for the spoken variety. Immediately following his chapter on recitative delivery Tosi provides a list of "Observations for a Student", including

In case the master knows not how to correct the faults in pronunciation, let the scholar endeavour to learn the best by some other means; because the not being born a Tuscan will not excuse a singer's imperfection.³⁴

Quantz allows himself a small joke in reinforcing the point for his German readership that accurate Italian pronunciation is important:

In pronouncing the words [the singer] must also avoid changing one vowel into another, perhaps substituting *e* for *a* and *o* for *u*; for example, in Italian pronouncing *genitura* instead of *genitore*, and as a result evoking laughter among those who understand the language.³⁵

Nor was the requirement for *puritas* any less at the end of the period under consideration. Mancini gives considerable space in his singing treatise to the importance of Tuscan pronunciation. He states that an actor cannot effectively carry off a role "if he does not understand the strength of words; if he does not know the true character of the person that he represents; and if he does not have a good Tuscan pronunciation." This is reminiscent of Cicero's view that purity of language is important to establishing the speaker's credibility, and hence making possible the ethical appeal. Tuscan is the long-established literary language of tragedy and serious poetry and is essential for an aspiring singer to master if he wishes to be successful. In Mancini's view,

³³ Benedetto Marcello, "Il Teatro Alla Moda - Part I. Translated by Reinhard G. Pauly," *Musical Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1948): 388.

³⁴ Tosi, *Observations*, 80-1.

³⁵ Johann Joachim Quantz, *On playing the flute: A complete translation with an introduction and notes by Edward R. Reilly* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 300. The example is of substituting "semen" for "parent".

How much a perfect pronunciation, a perfect accent, and a perfect sense of the words are necessary to a singer, has been demonstrated for us by the example of all those worthy professors listed by me ... These were for the most part Neapolitans, Bolognese and Lombards, and I know that there was no theatre in any nation, or country, where they were taken for anything but Tuscans.³⁶

Mancini justifies the requirement for literary Tuscan in singing on practical grounds as well, arguing that the other Italian dialects “lack that melody and sweetness which the pure language [*la lingua purgata*] has by grace of its accents: they are thus incompatible with good music, for their vowels are cut short of having a neat, well-bred and decisive sound, being instead a species of diphthongs, a coming together of two diverse sounds, which is after all the great reason why the French language is so little appropriate to music.”³⁷

Close, equal and smooth

In a passage from Soares quoted above, he included amongst the qualities of good Latin diction that it be pronounced smoothly [*suaviter*]. This is a quality which he highlighted in relation to the connections between words as well as in the pronunciation of individual words. Taking his cue from the third book of Cicero’s *De oratore*, Soares provides a detailed exposition of the principle of Connection, which he defines as follows: “In composition, we shall achieve a smooth and pleasing connection, if we join final syllables with initial ones in such a way that they do not clash, and are not too widely separated.”³⁸ As an instruction about style in composition, the immediate application of this idea concerns the author rather than the orator, the poet rather than the singer-actor. Yet it is the performer who must deliver the words in a way that exploits this smoothness, and in doing so, seduces the audience into pleasurable listening, opening them to the moral message of the drama. As Bernard Lamy put it,

³⁶ Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing (Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato): The editions of 1774 and 1777 compared, translated and edited by Edward Foreman*, vol. VII, *Masterworks on Singing* (Champaign, Illinois: Pro Musica Press, 1967), 67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Translation in Lawrence Flynn, S.J., “The ‘De arte rhetorica’ (1568) by Cyprian Soares, S.J.: A Translation with Introduction and Notes” (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1955), 367.

We feed with more appetite upon wholsom and relishable Meats: We listen more easily to a Discourse, whose smoothness lessens the trouble of attending.³⁹

In opera, this fluency of euphonious language should be one of the qualities of a good libretto; conversely, singers might enhance the purity of their own diction by identifying any clumsy disjunctions or rough edges in the poetry and consciously smoothing these out in delivery.

Clarity or lucidity (*Perspicuitas*)

A certain articulate Expression of all the Syllables

For an orator to achieve any of his principal objectives – for the listeners’ goodwill to be engaged through his appeals to reason, character or emotion, and for them then to be instructed, delighted or moved – the audience must be able to clearly understand the words. Clear diction is thus not so much a virtue in itself as a necessary (though not sufficient) minimum condition for effective oratory. It consists in good articulation, but also in managing both the dynamic and speed of delivery so that they help rather than hinder comprehensibility. At the same time, clear articulation should not be overdone to the extent of becoming mannered or affected. Quintilian spelt out some of the basic rules for clear enunciation:

The delivery will be clear if, in the first place, the words are uttered in their entirety, instead of being swallowed or clipped ... But although words must be given their full phonetic value, it is a tiresome and offensive trick to pronounce every letter as if we were entering them in an inventory.⁴⁰

Domenico de Colonia paraphrased this passage as follows for the benefit of eighteenth-century school boys:

³⁹ Bernard Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal, in pursuance of a former treatise, intituled, The art of thinking. Rendred into English*, Second, corr. ed. (London: Printed for W. Taylor ... and H. Clements, 1708), 124.

⁴⁰ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.iii.33. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

The first rule is that you declaim clearly, distinctly and sincerely, so that whole words and all the syllables are produced. However I do not want you to pronounce them in such a way, syllable by syllable, as if you were counting out the letters by computation, which would be tiresome and affected.⁴¹

One particular bugbear of teachers of oratory was the tendency to drop the unstressed final syllables of both Latin and Italian words. Colonia's contemporary, Franciscus Lang, specifies the common sense injunction, again following Quintilian, that in theatrical delivery the voice not be allowed to drop away so much that it becomes inaudible. "Care especially must be shown," he writes, "that the beginnings and endings of words are delivered distinctly, for they are commonly lost with serious detriment to the meaning".⁴² Perrucci, too, reproduced Quintilian's advice about syllable endings, as well as keeping the speed of delivery neither too fast nor too slow and not truncating or breaking up words, nor allowing them to elide inappropriately.⁴³

It was observed above that the correct pronunciation of the words was considered to be as important in music as it was in other forms of declamation. In the views of theorists, at least, the same applied with at least equal force to the clarity of text delivery. Until the late eighteenth century, rationalist systems of classifying the arts consistently placed music at the bottom of a hierarchy on which poetry was at the top, since music without words merely tickled the ear with pleasurable sounds. It could not convey meaning and therefore had no moral or ethical value.⁴⁴ Vocal music's status as a legitimate art form thus relied directly on the clear and comprehensible delivery of the words, since without this the voice was just another instrument. The requirement for text clarity was thus consistently reiterated in

⁴¹ "Prima lex haec est ut dilucidè, articulativè & sincerè pronuntietur, ita uti integra verba, syllabaeque omnes proferantur. Nolim tamen syllabatim sic pronunties, quasi si litteras computando annumerares; quod esset molestum ac putidum." Dominique de Colonia, *De arte rhetorica libri quinque: lectissimis veterum auctorum aetatis aureae, perpetuisque exemplis illustrati* (Venetiis: Apud P. Balleonium, 1715), 298.

⁴² "cautio inprimis adhibenda & sollicitudo, ut extremæ vocum particulæ distinctè efferantur; solent enim interciderè cum gravi sententiæ detrimento". Franciscus [Franz] Lang, *Dissertatio de Actione scenica, cum Figuris eandem explicantibus, et Observationibus quibusdam de Arte Comica, Auctore P. Francisco Lang, Societatis Jesu. Accesserunt imagines symbolicae pro exhibitione et vestitu theatroali* (Monachii [Munich]: Typis Mariae Magdalene Riedlin, Viduae, 1727), 57.

⁴³ Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 115.

⁴⁴ See Enrico Fubini, *The History of Music Aesthetics*, trans. Michael Hatwell (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 174-76.

writing about vocal music, both polyphonic and monophonic. The sixteenth-century theorist Lodovico Zacconi, for instance, stated that

[The singer] should first be advised to pronounce the words plainly, intelligibly and clearly so that everyone can easily understand them. He should not filter half of them through his teeth, for hearing music is not as beautiful as listening to the words it contains.⁴⁵

Clear projection of the words is intrinsically difficult in polyphony, however, if imitation or free counterpoint means that each part articulates the words independently, thereby obscuring the others. The requirement for clarity thus formed one of the ongoing bases for the critique of polyphony that simmered throughout much of the sixteenth century, particularly in relation to sacred music of both the Reformation and Counter-reformation. In this sense, at least, the invention of the *stile recitativo* was more the working out of an innovative solution to a problem that had been under consideration for some time, than a radical departure. Mei's critique, however, homes in on his central theme: the true goal of music is not merely to delight, or even to teach, but to move. A pre-requisite for this is that the words be clearly audible. In addition to the faults he had already identified in polyphonic music such as the mixing of high and low pitches, and the use of imperfect consonances and rhythms not matched to the words,

nearly chief must be counted the disordered perturbation, mix-up and mangling of the words. Thereby the power of the idea that may perchance be efficaciously expressed by them is not allowed to penetrate the intellect of the listener, as even the singers themselves can often recognize. The text, were it well understood, could by itself move and generate an affection in someone.⁴⁶

For Mei, then, the requirement for clarity is not just a general objective of delivery, but a fundamental principle of musical declamation that would prove to be a key impetus behind the move away from polyphony that resulted in the creation of the *stile recitativo*.

⁴⁵ Lodovico Zacconi, *Prattica di musica utile et necessaria si al compositore per comporre i canti suoi regolatamente, si anco al cantore* (Venice: Girolamo Polo, Alessandro Vincenti, 1592; reprint, facs. ed., Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1967), I. 65, fol. 55V. Translation in Harrán, *Word-tone relations in musical thought: from antiquity to the seventeenth century*, 403-4.

⁴⁶ Girolamo Mei, "Letter to Vincenzo Galilei, 8 May 1572," in *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 63.

Interestingly, a similar point of view to Mei's comes almost thirty years later in the more pragmatic little treatise of the peripatetic theatre poet Angelo Ingegneri, who appears to have had no theoretical axe to grind, but is simply concerned from a practical point of view to make the text audible in the context of vocal polyphony. Having spent time at the court of Ferrara in 1579-80,⁴⁷ Ingegneri would have been well aware of the reputation for both declamatory clarity and virtuosic embellishment which characterised the singing of Alfonso II's chamber singers, and of the potential tensions between these two imperatives, especially if executed by singers less expert than the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*.

And if [the music] were to consist at times solely of human voices, that would seem by chance the sweetest of all the others, because the words become easily understood, no syllable of them being lost in fugues and in such diminutions as are used nowadays.⁴⁸

The *stile recitativo* overcame the problem of the confusion of voices to which Mei had so much objected in polyphony, however even a single voice would not be clearly understood in a musical context if the syllables were not all clearly articulated. Musical theatre professionals therefore emphasised clarity of diction as much as did those like Lang and Ferrucci who were primarily concerned with spoken delivery. Some fifty years after Mei, the author of *Il Corago*, for example, advised singers that "words have to be uttered distinctly, the last syllables in particular, because hearing only the voice and the change of vowels, not the distinct articulation of the syllables, much offends the ears of the listeners, or at least the most expert of them."⁴⁹ A century later, Tosi was just as firm on the same topic:

⁴⁷ Angelo Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa e del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche; a cura di Maria Luisa Doglio* (Modena: Panini, 1989), XXV.

⁴⁸ "E s'egli conterà talora di voci umane solamente, questo per avventura sembrerà il più soave di tutti gli altri, purchè le parole vengano bene intese, né se ne perda sillaba nelle fughe e nelle tante diminuzioni che s'usano al giorno d'oggi." Ibid., 31. Giustiniani also attested to the skilled declamation of the ladies of Ferrara, who "made the words clear in such a way that one could hear even the last syllable of every word, which was never interrupted or suppressed by passages and other embellishments". Vincenzo Giustiniani, "Discorso sopra la musica [1628]," in *Le origini del melodramma*, ed. Angelo Solerti (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), 108. Translation in Carol MacClintock, *Readings in the History of Music in Performance: Selected, translated, and edited by Carol MacClintock* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1979), 29.

⁴⁹ Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche, Studi e testi per la storia della musica* (Florence: Olschki, 1983). Translation in R. Savage and M. Sansone, "Il corago and the staging of early opera: Four chapters from an anonymous treatise circa 1630," *Early Music* 17 (1989): 502.

After having corrected the pronunciation let him take care that the words be uttered in such a manner, without any affectation, that they be distinctly understood, and no one syllable be lost; for if they are not distinguished, the singer deprives the hearer of the greatest part of that delight which vocal music conveys by means of the words. For, if the words are not heard so as to be understood, [that singer excludes truth from his display of artifice: And finally, if they are not heard] there will be no great difference between a human voice and [a cornetto or] a hautboy⁵⁰

Tosi also notes in his catalogue of faults in recitative delivery that some singers “force out the last Syllable, and some sink it”.⁵¹ The reference to dropped final syllables evokes the similar complaint about Latin diction made by Lang and a host of other rhetoricians going back to Quintilian. Dropped final syllables are of course a perennial problem in any language in which most words end in unaccented syllables, but Tosi also extends his criticism to singers who overcompensate by heavily stressing the final (unaccented) syllable, producing at best what Quintilian calls “the tiresome and offensive trick” of pronouncing “every letter as if we were entering them in an inventory”;⁵² this is something that is perhaps more likely to be a problem in musical declamation than ordinary speech, as cadences may create a temptation to hold the last note even when unstressed. By implication, this is a manifestation of the principal challenge of recitative delivery: to combine the “diastematic” pitch of song and the rhythm of natural speech (below, Chapter 5) in a convincing musical declamation that sounds neither too speech-like, nor too “sung”.

By the same token, clear articulation of the words was a criterion against which knowledgeable commentators throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries judged singers in performance. For instance, one observer noted approvingly of a performance of Landi’s *Sant’Alessio* (1632), that “the entire spectacle was recited in music with those *stili recitativi* they use in Italy, and one understood all the words as distinctly as if they had been

⁵⁰ Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de’ cantori antichi, e moderni o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna: L. dalla Volpe, 1723), 35. “Corretta la pronunzia procuri, che profferisca la medesime parole in maniera, che senza affettuazione alcuna sieno così distintamente intese, che non se ne perda sillaba, poichè se non si sentono, chi canta priva gli ascoltanti d’una gran parte di quel diletto, che il Canto riceve dalla loro forza: Se non si sentono, quel Cantore esclude la verità dall’artificio: E se finalmente non si sentono non si distingue la voce umana da quella d’un Cornetto, o d’un Haut-bois.” Translation in Tosi, *Observations*, 58-9. Passages which appear in the original Italian but were omitted in Galliard’s translation have been added in square brackets.

⁵¹ Tosi, *Observations*, 69.

⁵² *Institutio oratoria*, XI. III. 33. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

merely spoken."⁵³ Half a century later, Francesco Coli similarly highlighted clarity of diction in praising the inmates of the Pio ospedale dalla Pietà in Venice, whose singing "was so pleasing, so clean in enunciation, that there was nothing to do but ask for more".⁵⁴

On the other hand, the classicist *letterato* Benedetto Marcello, as might be expected, made the failings of singers (and the dereliction of duty of their teachers) with regard to word clarity a recurring theme of his satire. The modern virtuoso "should sing with his mouth half closed and with his teeth firmly pressed together – in short, he should do everything to prevent the understanding of a single word."⁵⁵ A fashionable singing teacher, he suggests, "will not pay any attention to rhythm, pronunciation, or intonation, and he will see to it that no one in the audience will be able to understand a single word of what the virtuosa is singing."⁵⁶ Nor does he let off the librettist. If the singing teacher has failed to teach the singer clear diction, it falls to the poet in his accessory role as stage director to identify these faults during the rehearsal process.

The librettist might notice that the singers pronounce their words indistinctly, in which case he must not correct them. If the virtuosos should see their mistake and enunciate clearly the sale of the libretto might be seriously impaired.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the best singers continued to be praised for their clarity. Among the qualities which Mancini considered to place Vittoria Tesi Tramontini (1700-75) first among contemporary female singers was her "clear and exquisite pronunciation" and "sounding of the words according to their true sense".⁵⁸ He also praised "the diligence and serious study which the famous *Pistocchi* put into teaching his students in order to make their pronunciation perfect. As a result the audience would be able to hear all the words, to the point of distinguishing, when they were uttered, certain doubled letters like *tt*, *rr*, *ss*, and so

⁵³ Jean-Jacques Bouchard 1632. Translation in Weiss, *Opera: a history in documents*, 33.

⁵⁴ Francesco Coli, "Pallade Veneta," in *Pallade Veneta: Writings on Music in Venetian Society. 1650-1750*, ed. Eleanor Selfridge-Field (Venice: Edizione Fondazione Levi, 1985), 185. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 564.

⁵⁵ Marcello, "Teatro Alla Moda - Part I," 389.

⁵⁶ Benedetto Marcello, "Il Teatro alla Moda - Part II. Translated by Reinhard G. Pauly," *Musical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1949): 102.

⁵⁷ Marcello, "Teatro Alla Moda - Part I," 379. The joke is that librettists were generally paid indifferently for the initial commission to write an opera, and made the bulk of their income from the sale of printed libretti.

⁵⁸ Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 9.

on."⁵⁹ Conversely, he considered the greatest defect in delivery to be singing with the mouth too closed so that "it does not retain the neatness nor the clear articulation of the words."⁶⁰

I suggested at the beginning of this section that clarity was not so much a virtue in itself as a necessary condition for all of the other virtues of delivery to be appreciated. With that in mind, perhaps the highest praise a singer could receive in this regard was that given by Charles Burney to Giovanni Maria Rubinelli (1753-1829).

His articulation is so pure and well accented in his recitatives, that no one who understands the Italian language can ever want to look at the book of the words while he is singing.⁶¹

... and their proper Points and Stops

In declamation, punctuation is not a matter of mere grammatical correctness, it directly influences the comprehensibility and therefore the logical and emotional power of delivery. Both classical and early modern rhetoricians were therefore scrupulous about requiring the use of punctuation in delivery in a way that is accurate and helps to convey meaning. This avoids the corresponding vice of style, *amphibologia*, or "ambiguity of grammatical structure, often occasioned by mispunctuation."⁶²

Having set out the requirement for clear diction (above), Quintilian turns to punctuation. Pauses are required both to replenish the breath and to enhance clarity.

The second essential for clearness of delivery is that our language should be properly punctuated, that is to say, the speaker must begin and end at the proper place. It is also necessary to note at what point our speech should pause and be momentarily suspended ... and when it should come to a full stop ... There are also occasionally, even in periods, pauses which do not require a fresh breath ... On the other hand it is sometimes necessary to take breath without any perceptible pause: in such cases we must do so surreptitiously, since if we take breath unskilfully, it will cause as much obscurity as would have resulted from faulty

⁵⁹ Ibid., 219. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 866.

⁶⁰ Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 29.

⁶¹ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is prefixed, A Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients* ... 4 vols. (London: 1776-89), 525.

⁶² Gideon O. Burton, *Silva Rhetoricae* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University. www.rhetoric.byu.edu, 1996-2003, accessed 27 December 2006).

punctuation. Correctness of punctuation may seem to be but a trivial merit, but without it all the other merits of oratory are nothing worth.⁶³

If clarity is a quality of delivery which from the perspective of the orator resides primarily in good diction and articulation, it must also be conceived from the point of view of the listener, who in addition to being able to hear clearly must be given time to digest the meaning of what is being delivered. In the words of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, “pauses strengthen the voice. They also render the thoughts more clear-cut by separating them, and leave the hearer time to think.”⁶⁴

Bernard Lamy’s concern with clarity of delivery was noted above. Indeed, consistent with this emphasis and with his sympathy for the Port-Royalist view that languages are subject to universal rules, he highlights the mechanics of articulation at the very opening of his *The Art of Speaking*, including the way sound is generated by the passage of air from the lungs through the larynx, and the subsequent modifications of these sounds in the mouth through the actions of the tongue, palate and teeth.⁶⁵ He returns to the subject at the beginning of Book III by way of introduction to an exposition of the various vowels and consonants and the ways in which they are formed and articulated in several languages.⁶⁶ He then passes to a discussion of the faults that may be committed in the articulation of thoughts and sentences through “ill-placing the repose of the voice”. While his advice is directed as much to style as to delivery (the orator should “compose in” suitable breaks when writing a speech), it is clear from Lamy’s emphasis on the breath and the sound of the voice that he is constantly thinking in terms of the aural impact of articulation in the oration when delivered.

The necessity of taking breath, obliges us to interrupt the course of our pronunciation, and the desire of explaining our selves distinctly, is the cause that we chuse for the repose of our Voice the end of every Sentence, to distinguish by these intervals the different things of which we speak. Two faults may be committed by ill-distribution of these intervals. If the Expressions of each Sentence be too short, and by consequence the pronunciation often interrupted, this

⁶³ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.III.35-9. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

⁶⁴ III.VI.22. Translation in *Ad C. Herennium: De ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium) with an English translation by Harry Caplan*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), 195.

⁶⁵ Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal, in pursuance of a former treatise, intituled, The art of thinking. Rendred into English*, 1-3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-23.

interruption lessening the force of the Voice, and causing it to fall, the Mind of the Reader (that ought to be kept in breath) relaxes, and his intention abates. There is nothing that more cools the heat of an Action, than to discontinue it with too many Interruptions ...

When a thought is expressed by too great a number of words, we fall into another extrem, ... so the voice not reposing till it comes to the end of the sense of which it has begun to pronounce the expression, if the sense comprehends many things, the long succession of words to which it is link'd, heats the lungs, and spends the spirits; the pronunciation is incommodious and unpleasant both to speaker and hearer.⁶⁷

If articulating sentences too often or not often enough are faults, the corresponding virtue is a balanced fluency. In the context of his discussion of the tension between “equality” and “diversity” of sound, that is, consistency and variety in vocal delivery (Chapter 3, above), Lamy demands sufficient fluency that the various sounds can be taken in by the listener in a coherent way. Again his analogy for this is a musical one, underlining the close affinity he perceives between oratory and music:

This agreement of equality and variety ought to be sensible, so as the temperament may be perceivable to the Ear. Wherefore all Sounds in which that Agreement is to be found, ought to be joyn'd, and the ear ought in like manner to hear them without any considerable interruption ... That the Ear may discern the order and proportion of several Sounds, it is necessary that they be compar'd: In all comparisons 'tis suppos'd the terms of the Comparison are present, and joyn'd one with the other, and it is this union that makes the Beauty and Pleasure of Harmony.⁶⁸

Punctuation and articulation are also taken seriously by Perrucci, who spells out their role in the pacing of theatrical declamation for both clarity and breath management.

The actor must be attentive neither to hurry nor to hold back the words too much; make the sound of the final accents clearly heard, neither swallowed, or truncated through lack of breath; and if the sentence is long, one may put a pause in the middle, and rest for a moment.

He then explains the differences between the comma, colon and full stop, as well as the question mark and exclamation mark, each of which requires a pause as well as its

⁶⁷ Ibid., 129-30.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 143. On Lamy's concept of verbal Harmony and his use of musical metaphor in discussing delivery, see Christine Noille, "Bernard Lamy et la musique. Fonction des références musicales dans 'La Rhétorique ou l'Art de parler,'" *Revue de Musicologie*, no. 5 (1990)..

appropriate expressive inflection. The voice is also suspended by parentheses which interrupt the sentence, “in which case the voice is varied until it ends with a clear, sonorous, and intelligible sound”.⁶⁹

Like Lamy, Lang has a schoolmaster’s practical concern with the basics of articulation, but where the Oratorian rhetorician’s comments are directed primarily to the author of a speech, the Jesuit *choragus* focuses squarely on the performer in the act of theatrical delivery.

Care must be taken that boys do not break off speaking where it is not appropriate; nor with unbroken breath are they to prattle on and on; but they are to observe the phrases and divisions of a speech accurately; nor should they rashly pass over accent marks or commas, which are placed in a speech like barriers to restrain its course for a short while. Larger interjections, in fact, which are called full stops, are like boundaries. There one must stop for a longer time and a breath must be taken. With some, it occurs erroneously, that while they are reciting hexameters, they limit in length the delivery of the voice and the rhythm to just so many lines, or in pentameters they adhere to the caesura, or to the two-syllable utterance before, by which little lines of this type are generally concluded. This law must be grasped, that the voice runs forward up to the point where the sentence is completed: unless by chance the combination of the words is dragged forward for so long that it is not possible for them to be formed in one breath: for then, to a limited extent, it will be permitted to stop in the middle.⁷⁰

Even in reciting verse, the principle that determines where pauses and articulations fall is thus not the scansion and prosodic rhythm of the poetry, with its caesuras and line endings, but the punctuation, which divides the words into meaningful units. The implications of this important principle for rhythm in the recitation of recitative will be considered in Chapter 5 (below).

⁶⁹ Ferrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 115.

⁷⁰ “Cavendum, ne pueri vocem abrumpant ibi, ubi non decet; ne continenti spiritu pronuntient nimis multa; sed clausulas & interpuncta sermonis accuratè servant: nec virgulas, seu commata temerè transilient, quæ tanquam repagula Orationi objiciuntur, ut cursum paulisper inhibeat. Majores verò interjectiones, quæ puncta nominantur, sunt metarum instar. Ibi hærendum diutiùs, & anima ducenda. Mendosè illud fit à nonnullis, dum carmina hexametra recitant, ut totidem versibus impetum vocis modúmque definiant, aut in pentametris hæreant ad cæsuram, vel ante dissyllabam dictionem, qua vulgò ejusmodi versiculi clauduntur. Lex ea teneri debet, ut eo usque vox procurrat, dum sententia sit absoluta: nisi fortè protrahatur verborum complexio tam longa, ut uno spiritu volvi non possit: tum enim modicè licebit in medio consistere.” Lang, *Dissertatio*, 59-60.

Turning now to the musical sources, it is striking that none of the Florentine musicians associated with the early development of the *stile recitativo* directly addressed the question of punctuation. Their more immediate concern was with prosody and accentuation (see Chapter 5, below); however the periodic structure of their music composed in the new style clearly shows that punctuation is considered a “given” in the way the music is organised. If musical declamation is to be a kind of “speaking in song”, it naturally demands the same attention to punctuation that is given in spoken declamation. The subject does receive more explicit attention by later musical commentators, however, particularly in the context of remarks about the attention – or the lack of it – given to punctuation by composers in setting recitative. Quantz advises that “in judging an opera you must ... note whether the composer has carefully observed the caesuras of the discourse in the arias, and particularly in the recitatives,”⁷¹ while Marcello, true to form, assumes that the composer will do no such thing. He advises that the modern composer “must disregard such things as periods, commas, or question marks”,⁷² and then tells the singer that “in the recitatives he should be sure to disregard periods and commas”.⁷³

Tosi is particularly scathing about “theatrical recitatives [which] would be excellent if ... the Periods were not crippled by them who know neither point nor comma”,⁷⁴ and complains of “that tedious chanting that offends the ear with a thousand broken cadences in every opera, which custom has established though they are without taste or art.”⁷⁵ He accepts that some composers “of Merit” do set recitative well, however, a sentiment with which Mancini, writing fifty years later, agrees. While Mancini gives no less weight than Tosi to the importance of properly observing the punctuation, he is more inclined to lay the blame for failings in this area with those singers who prefer to make excuses and blame the composer than to “take the trouble to learn the rules of perfect declamation”.⁷⁶ In well-written

⁷¹ German text in Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voss, 1752; reprint, Facsimile edition, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), 291. Translation in Quantz, *On playing the flute*, 307-8.

⁷² Marcello, “Teatro Alla Moda - Part I,” 382.

⁷³ *Ibid.*: 389.

⁷⁴ Tosi, *Observations*, 73.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁶ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 231.

recitative, the notes “are articulated and shaped in such a way that they perfectly imitate a natural discourse. Hence all the periods can be distinguished throughout, and question marks, exclamation marks, and full stops can be apprehended.”⁷⁷ He cites a long list of excellent composers including Porpora, Vinci, Leo, Feo and Pergolesi of the older generation, and Hasse, Galuppi, Jommelli, Perez, Piccinni, J.C. Bach, Paisiello and Gluck of the younger,⁷⁸ all of whom provide excellent examples of recitative setting – a point confirmed by modern analyses of the sensitive musical prosody composed into the recitative of composers on Mancini’s list including Handel, Pergolesi, Perez and Hasse.⁷⁹

According to Mancini, an important step in learning “the rules of perfect declamation” is the study of grammar.

The force and power of a word do not always emerge from its nature alone; very often the manner with which it is uttered diminishes or increases its power. One learns this style of utterance from the study of grammar. In fact one should speak as one writes. For without commas and periods a person reading would not be able to understand the true sense of a text, or at least would easily be deceived in making it out. In the same way a person who is listening to someone speak at length and never hears him pause or change the tone of his voice will never be able to understand him well.⁸⁰

No doubt composers varied in how carefully they set the poet’s prosody, but ultimately it is the singer’s responsibility to articulate the words of the libretto in performance, whether this was supported by, or in spite of the composer’s text setting. By understanding the structure of language and its articulation through punctuation, the singer-actor is empowered to create variety of expression – a crucial component of decorum (below) – and to project the meaning of the poet’s words with clarity and power.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 237. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 871-2.

⁷⁸ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 228-31.

⁷⁹ On Handel, see, for example, “Antonio Vivaldi’s setting of Teuzzone: dramatic speech and musical image,” in Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma per musica: Italian opera seria of the eighteenth century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). Pergolesi’s recitative is analysed in Dale E. Monson, “‘Recitativo semplice’ in the ‘opere serie’ of G. B. Pergolesi and his contemporaries” (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1983). See also Hubert Beckwith, “Text and harmony in Pergolesi’s recitatives for stage and chamber,” in *Studi Pergolesiani* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1986). The major study of Perez is Paul Jackson, “The operas of David Perez” (Thesis (Ph. D.), Stanford University, 1967). On Hasse, see Raymond Monelle, “Recitative and Dramaturgy in the *Dramma per Musica*,” *Music & Letters* 59 (1978).

⁸⁰ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 219-20. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 867.

Ornateness (*ornatus, cultus*)

Quintilian's third virtue of delivery is ornateness, or in May and Wisse's translation, "speaking with distinction". Where the corresponding virtue of style deals with the aesthetic qualities of language, particularly those embodied in the figures of speech, ornateness of delivery consists in the intrinsic qualities of the voice, including its tone colour, pitch range and volume, and also vocal stamina. These intrinsic qualities are to be distinguished from the artistic or expressive manipulation of vocal parameters which comes under the heading of decorum, since expression is the principal way in which the delivery is made "apt" or "appropriate" to the subject matter and circumstances of performance.

The cultivating and Cleanness of the Voice

Quintilian defines the desirable qualities of the sound of a voice in the following terms.

Delivery will be ornate when it is supported by a voice that is easy, strong, rich, flexible, firm, sweet, enduring, resonant, pure, carrying far and penetrating the ear (for there is a type of voice which impresses the hearing not by its volume, but by its peculiar quality): in addition, the voice must be easily managed and must possess all the necessary inflexions and modulations, in fact it must, as the saying is, be a perfect instrument, equipped with every stop.⁸¹

These intrinsic qualities of voice were particularly prized in the baroque oratory of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cresollius, for example, invokes classical authority to justify the contemporary preoccupation with polished delivery as a component of the florid, emotive style which the historian of rhetoric Thomas Conley calls "operational" rhetoric.

And so it is not to be wondered at if, then, the Greeks and the Latins, drawn by enthusiasm for praise and commendation, have dwelt so much on the polishing of the voice. For on that subject they employed teachers of singing, and musicians, learned and skilled artisans of

⁸¹ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.III.40. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

sweetness, from whom they learned thoroughly varied modulations and alterations of voices and sounds.⁸²

While art can achieve a great deal to improve on natural talent, there is no substitute for the intrinsic gift of a good voice, a consideration that applies even more in singing than in spoken oratory, however much theorists might emphasise the priority of the words over purely musical considerations. As Galliard put it in a footnote to his translation of Tosi's treatise, "There is an Italian Saying, that an hundred Perfections are required in an excellent Singer, and he that hath a fine Voice has ninety-nine of them".⁸³ Hence Tosi advises the singing master to

Hear with a disinterested ear whether the person desirous to learn has a voice and a disposition, that he may not be obliged to give a strict account to God of the parent's money ill spent, and the injury done to the child by the irreparable loss of time, which might have been more profitably employed in some other profession.⁸⁴

The consequences of choosing a singing career without the requisite natural gifts were of course particularly acute for castrati who had few options for alternative employment, something of which Tosi and Mancini, as castrati themselves, were well aware. Mancini therefore devotes a chapter of his treatise to "the strict obligations of parents, and ... the Christian precautions which they ought to take before destining a son for the art of singing". He enjoins parents considering such a move to have the boy thoroughly checked by a "professor" and destine for singing only "those who have good and beautiful voices, by which I mean those that are sonorous, strong [*valide*], flexible, agile, mellow, and rich in range".⁸⁵

⁸² "Itaque non mirum si deinde Graeci Latinique studio laudis & commendationis eveci, in polienda voce tantum incubuerint. Nam in eam rem Phonascos adhibebant, & musicos, suavitatis opifices doctos & peritos, à quibus varios flexus, commutationésque vocum & sonorum ediscerent." Cresollius, *Vacationes Autumnales*, 504.

⁸³ Tosi, *Observations*, 102.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁸⁵ "Che hanno buona, e bella voce, intendo dire quella, che sia d'un corpo sonoro, valido, flessibile, agile, pastoso, ed di distesa ricco." Giambattista Mancini, *Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato* (Vienna: Ghelen, 1774), 41. The passage does not appear in this form in the 1777 edition, in which a number of passages in this chapter were substantially re-written, though without altering the overall tenor of the chapter.

Not easily giving way to Labour and Fatigue

The second aspect of Quintilian's definition of ornateness in delivery concerns vocal stamina. The voice, he says, "must have strong lungs to sustain it, and ample breathing power that will be equal to all demands upon it, however fatiguing."⁸⁶ Again, this is a quality as important in sung as in spoken delivery, though Mancini cautions that the voice must not be stretched beyond its intrinsic capacity:

I do not deny that a voice gifted with a strong register is estimable, and I admire it myself, but only when this extension accords with nature; not when either the master or the student presumes to make it with brute force; Eh! let nature never be subjected to Man, when Man wishes to lead her beyond the limits she has herself prescribed; thus it is with the voice of the student, which the wise master must lead in that way, and with that method adapted to the natural disposition of the same [i.e. the voice], and to the capacity with which it is furnished, without pretending miracles.⁸⁷

Adorned with all those Virtues out of Julius Pollux

In his discussion of ornateness in delivery in his *De eloquentia sacra et humana* (1643), the Jesuit rhetorician Nicolas Caussin quotes the above passage from Quintilian, but also refers back to an extensive catalogue of virtues and vices of vocal quality which he had earlier quoted from the *Onomasticon* of the second century Greek rhetorician Julius Pollux.⁸⁸ Pollux's catalogue will be discussed below in the context of vocal timbre, but it is worth noting here that for Caussin, beauty, clarity, flexibility and power were vocal qualities that contributed to excellence of delivery.

The 'quantity' or loudness of a voice was considered by both classical and early modern writers to be essentially a "given", an intrinsic quality not susceptible to development through training. Quintilian begins his consideration of the voice by stating that "The nature

⁸⁶ *Institutio oratoria*, XI. iii. 40. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

⁸⁷ Mancini, *Pensieri*, 41-42. The passage does not appear in the 1777 edition.

⁸⁸ see Caussin, *De eloquentia sacra et humana*, 564. Caussin substitutes "Ornatus est cultus vocis, & nitor, cui plurimum suffragatur à natura vox facilis ..." (a voice is cultivated and elegant) for Quintilian's "Ornata est pronuntiatio, cui suffragatur vox facilis ..." (delivery will be ornate). If this is intended to indicate a different shade of meaning, it would tend to emphasise even more than Quintilian already does, the importance of vocal quality as a virtue of delivery.

of the voice depends on its quantity and quality. The question of quantity is the simpler of the two, since as a rule it is either strong or weak, although there are certain kinds of voice which fall between these extremes.”⁸⁹ Cicero makes the point that the intrinsic limitations of volume achievable by any individual mean that the orator must accommodate himself to these and play to his strengths, taking as an example his older contemporary Cotta:

[L]acking vigour of lungs and voice, he had very wisely learned to sacrifice vehemence, and to accommodate his style of speaking to his physical weakness. In his language everything was genuine, everything sane and healthy, and chiefest of all, since he could scarcely hope to move the judges by vehemence (and indeed never used that resource at all), he swayed them by artful management, and by leading accomplished the same result as Sulpicius by driving.⁹⁰

The physical process through which the voice is generated was of interest to several early modern writers on delivery, including Lamy (above) and also Mancini.⁹¹ One who addressed the intrinsic volume of the voice in a musical context was Giovanni Camillo Maffei, a Neapolitan courtier who in addition to being a philosopher and man of letters, was both a medical doctor and a fine musician. In a letter to his patron, the Conte d’Altavilla, he first set out Galen’s and Aristotle’s classification of voices into great and small, harsh and smooth, high and low, rigid and flexible. Maffei then addressed the size of voice in more detail:

Beginning with the small and the large, it is right that I return to what was said in the beginning of this discourse; that three things join in producing voice, as in every other human activity – the material, the master, and the instrument; meaning by the master the potentiality of the mind, the imaginative faculty; the motive is the chest, and the material is the air; for the instrument, the throat and lungs. So when the instrument is large, and there is much air, the powers of the mind are sturdy; as a result the voice becomes great. Great expirations cause great repercussions in the throat, from which comes the largeness of the voice, as is seen in the great horns, where much breath and power is necessary. And if the rule is true that a thing is known by its opposite, this can be the cause of the small voice, since when the throat is narrow and small, the air only a little, the voice is made necessarily small.⁹²

⁸⁹ XI.III.14-15. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

⁹⁰ *Brutus*, LV. 202. Translation in Cicero, *Brutus and Orator*.

⁹¹ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 55ff.

⁹² Giovanni Camillo Maffei, *Delle lettere del Signor Gio. Camillo Maffei da Solofra, Libre Due* (Napoli: 1562). Translation in MacClintock, *Readings*, 41.

More than a century later, Perrucci commented that a very weak voice is intrinsically unsuitable for acting,⁹³ however, interestingly, neither Tosi nor Mancini directly addressed the intrinsic size of the voice as a qualification for a singing career. The closest either of them comes to the topic is the passage quoted above in which Mancini expressed a guarded approval for a large voice, but counselled parents that the ability to sing loud and high should not be taken in itself as a sufficient qualification for a singing career. At the same time, a naturally powerful voice must have been a distinct advantage in the professional theatre, where singers often had to contend with very substantial background noise, a subject which will be discussed in more detail in the context of dynamic control (below, Chapter 6).

As with dynamic range, the timbral qualities which contribute to the *ornatus* of a voice were considered by classical and early modern authors to be principally intrinsic. In comparison with “quantity” of voice, Quintilian considered “quality” to present more variations, “for the voice may be clear or husky, full or thin, smooth or harsh, of wide or narrow compass, rigid or flexible, and bright or dull”.⁹⁴ The qualities of the voice were also susceptible to conscious manipulation, however, and in Quintilian’s words, “are improved by training or impaired by neglect”. For instance

the throat must be sound, that is to say, soft and smooth; for if the throat be unsound, the voice is broken or dulled or becomes harsh or squeaky. For just as the sound produced in the *tibia* by the same volume of breath varies according as the holes are closed or open, or the instrument is clogged or cracked, so the voice is strangled if the throat be swollen, and muffled if it is obstructed, while it becomes rasping if the throat is inflamed, and may be compared with broken pipes in cases where the throat is subject to spasms.⁹⁵

One of the most comprehensive catalogues of vocal timbre in an early modern rhetoric appears in Nicolas Caussin’s *De eloquentia sacra et humana* (1643). This section of Caussin’s work is derived from the *Onomasticon* of the second century Greek rhetorician Julius Pollux,

⁹³ Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 115.

⁹⁴ XI.III.15. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler. In this passage I have rendered Quintilian’s “*clara et obtuse*” as “bright or dull” in preference to Butler’s translation “sharp or flat”, which seems to me not to capture the sense of the passage.

⁹⁵ XI.III.19. Translation in *Ibid.*

a wide ranging encyclopaedic dictionary which became well known after its publication in 1502, with regular reprintings throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including a translation from the original Greek into Latin in 1541.⁹⁶ Pollux's work also appears to have been particularly well known in theatrical circles, where his entries on matters such as costuming and stage machinery in ancient theatre were discussed.⁹⁷ It was quoted at length by Caussin to illustrate the "natural defects and vices of a voice" and their corresponding virtues, which he associated a few pages later with ornateness or elegance in delivery (above). A flavour of Pollux's catalogue of vocal qualities can be gained from some representative passages cited by Caussin:

The first [Pollux] calls *Black*, drawing the Metaphor from the Eyes to the Ears. For as Black strikes the Eyes more dully, so does this sort of Voice penetrate the Ears with greater Difficulty, and carries with it less of the Pleasant, but something on the contrary of the *dismal* and *horrid*.

Next the *dusky* or *brown*, differs from the Black only, by being something less obscure, but is yet very far from that Brightness of a pure Tone of Voice.

Rough or *unpleasant*, such as your very strong Voices generally are, with which the pleasing Sweetness is seldom mingled ...

The opposite to this he calls *small* or *weak*, such is their voice, who seem rather to pip like a young Chicken, than to speak like human kind ...

Rigid, that which with Difficulty admits any Variation.

Hard or *harsh*, which offends the Ears with a sort of bouncing and cracking Noise.⁹⁸

The opposite virtues, by comparison, include:

The *grave*, *bass*, or *full*, such as generally is the Voice of the most manly and robust Singers, which if mingled with Sweetness is the most valuable Voice, that is; but when it wants this Sweetness, it scatters and spreads out into wild and desolate Enormity.

⁹⁶ The SBN union catalogue of Italian libraries shows holdings of several sixteenth-century editions of Pollux in Greek, as well as further editions in parallel Greek and Latin dated 1608, 1779 and 1795.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa*. and Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*. Pollux is also cited by Cresollius to illustrate the range of timbres of the voice. See Cresollius, *Vacationes Autumnales*, 501-3.

⁹⁸ Caussin, *De eloquentia sacra et humana*, 562-3. The whole of chapters 6 and 7 from Book III of Caussin's treatise, including the passage discussed here, were translated (without acknowledgement) in Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton*, 89-97. The translation quoted here is that published by Gildon.

The *round* and *simple*, and most adapted to Persuasion.

The *tractable*, or *Voice at Command*, which easily rises from the lowest note to the Highest, and with as much Ease falls from the highest to the lowest ...

The *voluble* or *swift*, such as that of the best Orators, in the closest and hottest of the Argument.⁹⁹

Here again, it is notable that both Pollux and, following him, Caussin, treat all of these characteristics of voice as “given”, intrinsic abilities, rather than learnt skills. The same impression is given by Maffei, who also appears to have been aware of Pollux’s colour coded classification of voices. After listing some subcategories of his own including “the hoarse, the graceful, the thick, and others,” he adds, “I don’t want to speak of the voice called ‘black’ by metaphor”.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, he finds it necessary to characterise vocal tone by his own metaphors:

[B]y the “flexible” voice you must understand (as it were) a pliable voice, that is, one that is varied sweetly, so that the ear is satisfied. By the “rigid” voice should be understood a hard one that varies in no way, so the ear is disturbed when it hears it ... if the throat is soft, it will produce a flexible, pleasing, and variable voice, but if it chances to be hard, it will produce a rigid and harsh voice.¹⁰¹

For a *letterato* like Andrea Perrucci, at the turn of the eighteenth century, classical sources retained their authority, but the kind of scholastic classification which engaged Caussin and Maffei was out of keeping with the sensibility of the time. Perrucci instead quotes Quintilian’s list of vocal qualities (surprisingly, for him, without acknowledgement of his authoritative source), then adds his own interesting metaphor, one which suggests the kind of brightness of timbre associated with the “singer’s formant”,¹⁰² the “*chiaro*” quality within the “*chiaroscuro*” sound typical of Italian singing:

⁹⁹ Caussin, *De eloquentia sacra et humana*, 563-4. Translation in Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton*, 91-3.

¹⁰⁰ Maffei, *Lettere*. Translation in MacClintock, *Readings*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Maffei, *Lettere*. Translation in MacClintock, *Readings*, 43.

¹⁰² A peak in the spectrum envelope typically in the range of 2500-3500 Hz in the sound of trained singers except sopranos, who sing at fundamental frequencies too high to allow the clustering of formants 3, 4, and 5 in this band. See Johan Sundberg, “Acoustics: The singing voice,” in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (www.grovemusic.com, 2001).

A good voice is that which is sweet, free, and sonorous, like the tinkling of money, or of [flint on] steel, but which does not make a noisy clamour. But if it is vitreous, like cracked bells, and out of tune, such that it cannot in any way accommodate itself to the ear, then, on the contrary, it offends.¹⁰³

This is the kind of language one might expect to hear from a singing teacher, so it is once again interesting to note that neither Tosi nor Mancini uses any terminology of this kind. Mancini reminds parents that “no child should be destined to vocal music unless he has benefited by nature’s gift of a beautiful voice”,¹⁰⁴ but neither makes any systematic attempt to describe or comment on the intrinsic timbre of voices. While the gift of a good voice is a necessary minimum qualification for a student who wishes to train as a professional singer, for Tosi and Mancini as teachers, timbre is on the one hand a function of good vocal technique (for example avoiding singing in the nose or throat), and on the other, an expressive device which a competent singer will manipulate at will to express the words. This goal of expression is a manifestation of decorum, the apt matching of delivery to the subject matter, and represents the highest objective of musical declamation.

Sheer vocal beauty had its place, nevertheless, and other observers continued to seek out new metaphorical language with which to capture it in words. A particularly evocative example is Charles Burney’s description of the voice of the castrato Gasparo Pacchierotti.

If the different degrees of sweetness in musical tones to the ear might be compared to the effects of different flavours on the palate, it would perhaps convey my idea of its perfection by saying that it is as superior to the generality of vocal sweetness as that of the pine apple is, not only to other fruits, but to sugar or treacle. Many voices, though clear and well in tune, are yet insipid and uninteresting, for want of piquancy and flavour.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ “La buona Voce è quella, ch’ è dolce, libera, e sonora, uguale al tintinno dell’argento, o dell’acciario, ma che non faccia un istrepitoso suono, ma sia vitrea a guisa delle campane rotte, e stuonate, che non può in alcun modo accomodarsi all’orecchio, anzi l’offende.” Ferrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 114.

¹⁰⁴ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 54.

¹⁰⁵ Burney, *General History*, 510-11.

Appropriateness or Decorum (*aptus, decorum, habilitas*)

The virtues of purity, clarity and ornateness are fundamental for good declamation; they are the necessary foundations on which to build, but are not in themselves sufficient. The vital addition is the most important virtue of all: decorum (also known as aptness, or appropriateness). The quality of appropriateness is a key consideration in delivery as it is in rhetoric as a whole. Broadly, it deals with the orator's adaptation of all aspects of the speech to take into account the context in which it is given, including the subject and purpose of the speech, as well as the character of the speaker and of the audience. In Cicero's words,

In an oration, as in life, nothing is harder than to determine what is appropriate. The Greeks call it *πρεπον*; let us call it *decorum* or "propriety"... The universal rule, in oratory as in life, is to consider propriety. This depends on the subject under discussion, and on the character of both the speaker and the audience.¹⁰⁶

Decorum is therefore closely related to the concept of *kairos*, which is concerned with aptness to the circumstances and occasion; it is also subject to the constraints of good taste.

As a virtue of delivery, decorum is expressed primarily through the principle of variety of expression. It is no coincidence that Mancini praises the great singers of the previous generation by saying that they were distinguished by "their varied [*variato*], tasteful [*scelto*] and appropriate [*appropriato*] styles".¹⁰⁷ In the theatre, it is thus decorum which determines the way the parameters of vocal delivery – rhythm, dynamic, timbre and pitch – are to be varied in order to convey the drama tastefully, expressively and movingly; the specific application of these parameters in performance is the subject of chapters 5 and 6.

An important aspect of decorum in music, as in spoken oratory, is appropriateness to the context of performance. In classical oratory different ways of speaking were appropriate to political speeches, legal pleadings, epideictic oratory (speeches of praise or blame), diplomatic missions, the recitation of tragedy in the theatre, addressing troops on the battlefield, and so on. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, situations analogous to all of these arose from time to time; however, the most commonly identified contexts for public oratory were the church, law courts and theatre. Private oratory also had its place in the

¹⁰⁶ *Orator*, XXI.70-1. Translation in Cicero, *Brutus and Orator*.

¹⁰⁷ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 22.

academies, where addresses on philosophical, scientific or artistic subjects took place, as well as readings of lyrical and dramatic poetry. Music, and in particular, vocal music, played a central role in the church and theatre, and was also common in the academies and the chambers of the nobility. Each of these contexts demanded a particular style of musical composition and, according to Tosi, a distinct mode of delivery for recitative, appropriate to the subject matter and stylistic register – whether sacred motet, impassioned chamber cantata, or theatrical tragedy.¹⁰⁸ Since the focus of this study is the theatrical style in particular, Tosi and his contemporaries must be read with these genre distinctions in mind. At the same time, it was the considered opinion of the author of the other major Italian singing treatise of the eighteenth century, Giambattista Mancini, that this distinction no longer applied by his time of writing in the 1770s.

A different kind of genre distinction did become more significant during the eighteenth century, however. The distinction in spoken theatre between the tragic, pastoral and comic genres was well established, and with the rise of *opera buffa*, similar distinctions had to be taken into account in the sung theatre. This was initially a matter mainly of distinguishing between different and largely separate genres of opera, but with the increasing convergence of genres in the variously labelled *semiseria* forms, it became also a matter of differentiating the stylistic register of different scenes within the same work, or even of different kinds of characters within the same scene. All of this is governed by decorum, in accordance with Aristotle's dictum:

Your language will be appropriate if it expresses emotion and character, and if it corresponds to its subject. 'Correspondence to subject' means that we must neither speak casually about weighty matters, nor solemnly about trivial ones.¹⁰⁹

Even within a work that is homogenous in genre, such as an *opera seria*, there may be different levels of style within a scene, for example where emotionally neutral dialogue is interrupted by news of a shocking event. Such changed circumstances often signal a change in the affective intensity of the poetry, moving it from the plain to the "high" style. A

¹⁰⁸ Tosi, *Opinioni*, 41-2.

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 7. Translation in Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Adelaide: eBooks@Adelaide. <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/a8rh/>, 2004, accessed 5 February 2007).

sensitive composer will match this intensity with increased harmonic, rhythmic and pitch variation,¹¹⁰ and both the poetic and musical imperatives then need to be matched by an appropriately intensified vocal delivery.

Appropriateness in delivery also demands that the performer adapt his or her delivery to the role being played, and convey both the nature of the character and their responses to the circumstances of the plot. The audience being addressed is also an important consideration in any kind of oratory, but in the theatre it must be taken into account at two levels: there are the other characters to whom the performer's speeches are addressed on the stage, but also the "real" audience in the auditorium observing the performance. The expectations of the "real" audience will depend on a whole range of factors, each of which may affect aspects of delivery. For example, what are the political and social circumstances of the performance? Is the performance to honour a royal wedding and respectfully show allegorical representations of the monarch, or commercial theatre played more for spectacle and entertainment? Is the King present? Should one play to the royal box, where the sight lines of theatre designs and sets were typically focussed? How large or small is the theatre, the orchestra, the audience? What is the theatre etiquette in this city? Is the audience attentive, noisy, quiet during the performance? Is it quieter if the monarch is present? Then there is the "audience" addressed by the character on the stage, with whom may come much of the same subtext as for the "real" audience, but within the action of the play: Who is the character being addressed? In what time & place? And what way of speaking will be most convincing to them?

A constant equality

A corollary of adapting delivery appropriately to the circumstances and subject matter is that there should be a degree of consistency in the speed, volume and tone of delivery within a given passage unless a change is called for by the meaning of the words. Quintilian thus begins his discussion of the virtues of delivery by setting out the requirement for "evenness" (*aequalitas*).

¹¹⁰ See, for example, the analysis of a scene in Pergolesi's *Olimpiade* in Beckwith, "Text and harmony in Pergolesi's recitatives for stage and chamber," 116-7. The scene is in four sections with rising, and then falling dramatic intensity reflected in the harmonic structure.

The first essential of good delivery is evenness. The voice must not run joltingly, with irregularity of rhythm and sound, mixing long and short syllables, grave accents and acute, tones loud and low, without discrimination, the result being that this universal unevenness produces the impression of a limping gait.¹¹¹

While Tosi and Mancini do not address this issue specifically, the general principle would appear to be as valid for recitative as it is for spoken oratory. Within any one passage which maintains a similar mood and dramatic function, whether it be simple dialogue, or a more emotionally intense outpouring, there should not be sudden changes of pace, volume or vocal tone unless for a specific expressive purpose which clearly arises from the words.

Conversely, the requirement for evenness might appear to be in conflict with the equally essential principle of variety. To dispel this seeming contradiction, Quintilian immediately follows his comments about evenness with a discussion of its complement, *varietas*.

The second essential is variety of tone [*varietas*], and it is in this alone that delivery really consists. I must warn my readers not to fall into the error of supposing that evenness and variety are incompatible with one another, since the fault opposed to evenness is unevenness, while the opposite of variety is that which the Greeks term *μονοειδεια*, or uniformity of aspect. The art of producing variety not merely charms and refreshes the ear, but, by the very fact that it involves effort, revives the speaker's flagging energies. It is like the relief caused by changes in position, such as are involved by standing, walking, sitting and lying, none of which can be endured for a long time together.¹¹²

The tension between variety and evenness in theatrical delivery was nicely summed up by Franciscus Lang:

The voice must be flexible and somewhat more moderate, at one time raised, at another lowered, at one time faster, at another more sedate. Let him take care, however, who tries to inflect his voice, lest he turn it into song, and show too frequent a variation in tone, or rush too much from one extreme to the other, from a higher tone into the depths, without having passed through a middle one; then soon again from the depths to the heights, which is the opposite fault to monotony. They also offend who, by not attending to the sense of the words,

¹¹¹ *Institutio oratoria*, XI. III. 43. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

¹¹² *Institutio oratoria*, XI. III. 43-4. Translation in Ibid.

vary unduly; they shout quite shrilly when moderate speaking is required; they speak moderately, when reason demands invective be introduced quite fiercely.¹¹³

Thus, variety is highly valued both for its role in expression and for its capacity to maintain the interest and energy levels of both speaker and audience, but incongruous or excessive variation is a distraction which detracts from expression rather than enhancing it.

Delivery adapted to the circumstances

Cicero's discussion of appropriateness begins in the context of his exposition of the virtues of style, but leads directly to a reminder that however well judged and appropriate the style and content of a speech may be in terms of composition, it is delivery which must ultimately convey this to the audience. He has Crassus say

It is, of course, obvious that no single style is fitting for every case or every audience or every person involved or every occasion. Cases in which someone's civic status is at issue require one specific tone, while private and insignificant cases require another. Deliberative speeches, laudatory speeches, lawsuits, conversations, consolations, rebukes, discussions, and the writing of history all demand different styles. It also makes a difference who our audience is – whether it is the Senate, the people, or a jury, whether it is large, small, or an individual, and what sort of people they are. The speakers themselves must also be considered: their age, their prestige, and how much authority they possess. As to the occasion, is it peace or war, is there some urgency or is there room for a leisurely approach? So it seems that there is really no rule that I could give you at this point, except that when choosing a type of speech – a fuller or a more slender one, or indeed the middle type –, we should see to it that it is adapted to the problem at hand; and we may in each case employ approximately the same elements for imparting distinction, sometimes more energetically, at other times in a lower key. In every area, the capacity to do what is appropriate is a matter of art and natural ability, but to know

¹¹³ "Vox esse flexibilis debet, & modò attolli, modò deprimi, modò concitator, modò sediator. Curet autem, qui vocem inflectere conatur, ne in cantum deflectat, ne nimis crebram toni variationem adhibeat, aut nimis præcipitem ab extremo ad extremum, non transito medio, à tono altiore in profundum; mox iterum è profundo ad sumum, quod monotonix oppositum est vitium. Peccant etiam, qui non attendentes ad sensum verborum indebitè variant; vociferantur acriùs, cùm moderatè loqui oporteret; moderatè loquuntur, quando acriùs inveni ratio posceret." Lang, *Dissertatio*, 59.

what is appropriate at each time is a matter of intelligence. All of these things, however, are as effective as their delivery makes them.¹¹⁴

Quintilian also points to the importance of the circumstances in which the orator is speaking, including the character of the speaker, the judges (in the case of legal proceedings), and the audience.

For just as the methods of speaking may justifiably be varied to suit the characteristics of different orators and different judges, so it is with delivery. The same characteristics of voice, gesture and gait are not equally becoming in the presence of the emperor, the senate, the people, and magistrates, or in private and public trials ...

When we speak in the senate, it will be authoritative, when we address the people, dignified, and when we are pleading in private cases, restrained.¹¹⁵

The Jesuit Louis Cresol certainly knew his Cicero and Quintilian, and seems in the following passage to have taken his cue from the Roman writers while providing more modern examples to illustrate how *kairos* and audience will affect delivery.

[E]ven the character of the listeners moderates the performance, for there must be a different delivery among different listeners. In Italy, fierce, spirited and deeply tragic orators are tolerated, who run to and fro on the orators' platform itself, and are moved by fiery excitement. Those [orators] who by chance go into Germany, I fear that they will be listened to with even-tempered ears and minds, for they [the Germans] are almost all serious men, who slowly and at the right time weigh all things, and repudiate those who are fervent and who leap about frequently. If anyone were to speak before the king, if he were to speak in the light of the writings of the Fathers, in assembly to the people, before country folk, in a learned gathering of young men, or before a circle of religious men, it is certain from the variety of the listeners that it would be appropriate to use varied gestures and delivery, since among some of them bashfulness and modesty, a reverential majesty, a certain honest solicitude are fitting, but among others a freer and more relaxed delivery is fitting.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *De oratore*, III. 210-213. Translation in Cicero, *On the ideal orator*, 290.

¹¹⁵ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.III.149-150, 153. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

¹¹⁶ "Tertiò, auditorium etiam persona moderator actioni, alia enim apud alios auditores debet esse pronuntiatio. In Italia acres feruntur, animosi, & tragici penitus Oratores, qui etiam in pulpito ipso discurrant, & ignea incitatione moveantur. Ii si fortè irent in Germaniam, vereor ut aequis auribus animisque audirentur, sunt enim ferè omnes viri graves, qui lentè & mature ponderant omnia, & fervidos illos exultantéque repudiant. Si quis apud Regem dicat, si in lumine Patrum conscriptorum, si in concione ad populum, si apud agrestes, si in

What, then, constitutes “appropriate” delivery? Cicero’s definition of delivery in his youthful *De inventione* is suggestive: “Delivery is the control of voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subject matter and the style”.¹¹⁷ In *De oratore*, on the other hand, his explanation of appropriateness is primarily in terms of the expression of emotion, a subject which will be explored in more detail below. It is Quintilian, in his more extended treatment of the virtues of delivery, who spells out a more comprehensive scheme for the qualities of appropriateness in delivery. For him, the expression of emotion appropriate to the subject matter is a vital component of appropriate delivery, but it comes under the broader heading of variety, which additionally serves to delight, to maintain interest and to avoid monotony. To be “appropriate”, however, this variety must operate within certain constraints imposed by the context, and is held in tension with the requirements of the other Virtues, particularly those of purity and clarity, each of which demands a degree of regularity and control in delivery. These principles were consistently espoused by early modern writers, whether their principal focus was on rhetorical theory, theatre or singing.

In the theatre, an actor playing a particular role would be required to project in a consistent way the characteristics of the character being portrayed, but the sixteenth-century playwright and writer on *intermedi* Leone de’ Sommi reminds actors that they must still vary their action “according to the variety of situations, and imitate not only the personage they represent, but also the state in which that person finds himself at that particular time.”¹¹⁸ The dramatic situation will be expressed above all in the voice. According to Andrea Perrucci, “the voice must, as we said, change itself opportunely according to the time and the circumstances, varying the form of speech, having regard to who is speaking and to

conventu erudito adolescentium, aut religiosorum hominum corona, certum est ex audientum varietate, varium quoque gestum & prononciationem adhiberi oportere, cum apud quosdam pudor & modestia, & reverentia maiestatis, & honesta quaedam sollicitudo, apud alios autem liberior actio solutiôrque deceat.” Cresollius, *Vacationes Autumnales*, 413-4.

¹¹⁷ *De inventione*, I.vii.9. Translation in Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De inventione, De optimo genere oratorum, Topica*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (London: 1960), 21.

¹¹⁸ “secondo la varietà delle occasioni, et imitare non solamente il personaggio che egli rappresenta, ma anco lo stato in che quel tale si mostra di essere in quell’ora.” Leone de’ Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche: a cura di Ferruccio Marotti* (Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1968), 41. Sommi is generally considered to be the first theorist of Italian recitation. See Cesare Molinari, *L’attore e la recitazione* (Roma: Laterza, 1993), 14.

whom”.¹¹⁹ He concludes by reminding actors that “in this manner observing custom, one is transformed into the character being represented, exactly as if transmuted into that person, forgetting one’s own station. The more naturally this is expressed, the more it will strike the desired target and receive applause”.¹²⁰

Similar issues of dramatic verisimilitude in musical declamation were also significant in the conception of the *stile recitativo*. As a scholar, as well as a practicing musician, Vincenzo Galilei was well aware of the rhetorical tradition, and also of the researches into classical Greek music undertaken by his mentor, Girolamo Mei. Both are evident in the following passage from his *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music*, in which he addresses the considerations of *kairos* and audience.

Before singing a poem, an ancient musician first examined diligently the quality of the person speaking, the age, sex, with whom, and the object of the speech. After the poet clothed these ideas in words suited to their needs, the musician expressed them in that tonos, with those accents, gestures, quantities and qualities of sound, and with a rhythm that suited the action of the personage.¹²¹

Such careful consideration of the circumstances of performance contributed much to the legendary power of ancient music to move the affections, and should, he argues, be taken just as seriously in modern music if it hopes to achieve the same effects. And if in doing this the audience must be taken into account at two levels – both on the stage and in the auditorium – the same applies to the singer-actor, who must exhibit decorum in delivery at two levels, in their own person as the actor playing a role, and also as the character portrayed. Since the characters in *dramma per musica* are almost exclusively of the nobility – people who, in the idealised world of artistic *imitatio*, always behave appropriately to their station – the “appropriate” and thus verisimilar way to impersonate them is to demonstrate princely decorum in one’s stage delivery. Decorum is thus central to Tosi’s definition of the theatrical style.

¹¹⁹ Ferrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 116. The passage is quoted at length below (Chapter 6) in the context of variation of vocal timbre.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogue on ancient and modern music*, trans. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2003), 225.

The second [kind of recitative] is Theatrical, which being always accompanied with Action by the Singer, the Master is obliged to teach the Scholar a certain natural Imitation, which cannot be beautiful, if not expressed with that Decorum with which princes speak, or those who know how to speak to princes.¹²²

It is this kind of princely decorum for which Nicola Grimaldi, *detto* Nicolini, was so praised by Sir Richard Steele on his first appearances in London in the anglicised Scarlatti opera *Pyrrhus and Demetrius*, in 1708:

For my own part I was fully satisfied with the sight of an actor, who, by the grace and propriety of his action and gesture, does honour to the human figure. Every one will imagine I mean Signor Nicolini, who sets off the character he bears in an opera by his action, as much as he does the words of it by his voice ... He performs the most ordinary action in a manner suitable to the greatness of his character, and shews the prince even in the giving of a letter, or dispatching of a messenger ... I have seen the person of whom I am now speaking, enter alone at the most remote part of [the stage], and advance from it with such greatness of air and mien, as seemed to fill the stage, and at the same time commanded the attention of the audience with the majesty of his appearance.¹²³

Mancini reminds aspiring opera singers that this kind of decorous delivery consists in convincingly uniting voice and stage action, which in turn depends on understanding the character being portrayed and the poetry. Demonstrating the Virtue of *puritas*, or correct literary Tuscan pronunciation, is also an essential part of decorum for the performer, since it is fundamental to the stylistic register of dramatic poetry, and also to the speech of the idealised aristocratic characters being portrayed. And none of this can be conveyed without the Virtue of *perspicuitas*, or clarity in delivery.

[I]t is not only beauty and agility of voice which distinguishes with singularity the virtuoso, but also an excellent method of reciting which he should be able to produce, and which will win approbation and great reward. When an actor [that is, an opera singer] recites well, investing strongly the character of the personage he is representing, and sets him forth naturally and with actions, and the voice, and the proper gestures, and brings him to life with clarity, the listener will say that he is truly, for example, Caesar; or that one is Alexander. Now

¹²² Tosi, *Observations*, 66-7.

¹²³ *Tatler*, no. 115, quoted in Charles Burney, *A General History of Music From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (1789), ed. Frank Mercer, vol. 2 (London: G.T. Foulis & Co., Ltd., 1935), 661-2.

an actor cannot express naturally these gestures, nor make the effects clearly understood to the audience, if he does not understand the strength of words; if he does not know the true character of the person that he represents; and if he does not have a good Tuscan pronunciation, and above all an exact, clear and perfect pronunciation of the words, not in the least exaggerated.¹²⁴

In the following chapter, Mancini reinforces the message. It is not enough to learn the words; the text and characterisation must be thoroughly understood:

[S]o that the action be well adapted to the words and person, the actor ought to understand to the bottom [*a fondo*] everything he says, and should understand the very particular character of the personage he represents, otherwise he may make errors which will be embarrassing.¹²⁵

What these embarrassing errors might look like is sharply captured by Marcello's satirical pen:

If the part of the *cantatrice* requires her to have some other character put in chains while she is singing an aria addressed to him expressing disdain or fury, she should use the preceding *ritornello* to chat with her victim, to giggle, and to point out to him some friends in one of the boxes. Whenever in an aria the words "cruel", "traitor", "tyrant", etc., occur she will smile at her protector who sits in one of the boxes or stands in the wings. For the words "dearest", "my own", or "my life", she will turn towards the prompter, the bear, or some extra.¹²⁶

A pleasing variety of Pronunciation, according to the Diversity of the Subject

Having taken into account the intrinsic and extrinsic circumstances of the performance, the character being portrayed and the dramatic situation, decorum next requires the singer-actor to adapt his or her delivery aptly to the specific subject matter of the poetry. According to Quintilian, there are four considerations with regard to the subject. The first is its overall cast – gloomy or cheerful, intense or calm, weighty or trivial. The next, relevant mainly to formal oratory such as legal pleadings, is the division of the speech into exordium, statement of facts, arguments and peroration, each of which deals with distinct subject matter. The third

¹²⁴ Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 65.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-6.

¹²⁶ Marcello, "Teatro Alla Moda - Part I," 402.

“concerns the thoughts, which will vary according to the subject matter and the emotions which we require to awaken,” while

The fourth has reference to the words, which must be given appropriate expression, unless their force is to be entirely wasted, although it is an error to attempt to make our delivery reproduce the sense of every single word. Consequently, in panegyric, funeral orations excepted, in returning thanks, exhortations and the like, the delivery must be luxuriant, magnificent, and grand. On the other hand, in funeral or consolatory speeches, together with most of those in defence of accused persons, the delivery will be melancholy and subdued.¹²⁷

The question of “thoughts” (*sententiis*) and the emotions they are designed to stir will be addressed in more detail below. At this point it will suffice to observe that Quintilian specifies the need to match the kind of delivery to the subject matter, both generally and specifically. While trying to express the meaning of every individual word would distract from the overall sense of the passage (a fault often identified with the madrigal style in music), variety is still required at the level of detail to bring out the most important words:

There is a certain variety, not merely in the delivery of *cola*, but even in that of phrases consisting of one word, a variety the lack of which would make every word seem of equal importance.¹²⁸

The idea of varying delivery appropriately in accordance with the subject matter was also a well accepted basic principle in early modern rhetoric, whether for the pulpit or theatre. The rhetorician Luis de Granada, for example, summed it up in a very straightforward dictum: “He who is delivering a speech must most appropriately [*aptissime*] adapt his voice, his cultivated gesture to the things he is talking about.”¹²⁹ In the context of theatre, Angelo Ingegneri spelt out the crucial role of decorum in managing the way difficult or unpleasant subjects are treated. Even things that would otherwise be distasteful can be desirable when they are apt to the subject matter and dramatic situation:

¹²⁷ XI.III.151-153. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

¹²⁸ XI.III.51. Translation in *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ “Pronuntians debet vocem, gestum cultum his rebus quas dicit aptissime accommodare.” Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae* (Olysiptone [Lisbon]: 1575). Quoted in Giovanni Battista Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae, in quo insunt omnes praeceptiones, quae ad perfectum oratorem, instituendum, ex antiquis, & recentioribus Rhetorum monumentis, accurate desumptae sunt, ordineque admirabili, ac facillimo in unum velut colum digestae, ita ut uno intuitu omnia, quae ad artem pertinent inveniri possint. Opus utilissimum non modo Oratoribus & Concionatoribus, sed etiam omnibus his, qui Rhetorica operam dant, per necessarium* (Venice: apud Haeredes Melchioris Sessae, 1599), 134r.

From the well-regulated voice and good gesture, decorum necessarily arises, which is the perfection of every well performed fable ... Decorum has such power that, where it exists, it most marvellously makes other things pleasant, even those that are of their nature ugly and repugnant; and where it is lacking, it is the reason why the most beautiful and honoured [things] appear displeasing and unrewarding.¹³⁰

A century and a half later, the Jesuit *corago* Domenico de Colonia emphasised the same basic consideration, writing that “for the sake of the subject matter, and especially for the variety of the emotions, the voice also should be varied appropriately.”¹³¹ In a theatrical performance a degree of variety is of course built into the action through the changing of scenes, entry of different characters and so on, though this does not absolve the performers of the responsibility to make their delivery varied and interesting. The same applies in musical as much as spoken declamation; as Caccini put it in *Le nuove musiche*, “variety is most necessary in this art”.¹³² He expanded on this idea a little further in the preface to *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle*:

Variety of affect is that transition from one affect to another, ... the singer being guided by the [changes in] the words and meaning from one moment to another. These must be carefully observed so that, so to speak, the bridegroom and the widower are not clothed alike.¹³³

The idea that the singing voice should be adapted to express the words was of course not a new invention of the monodists. Giovanni Maria Lanfranco who, in the second book of his *Scintille di musica* (1533), wrote the first substantial statement on fitting words to music, also extended his discussion to the question of the affective use of the voice in performance.

¹³⁰ “Dalla voce regolata e dal buon gesto nasce necessariamente il decoro, il quale è la perfezione d’ogni ben rappresentata favola ... [I]l decoro ha tanta forza che, dove egli è, fa piacere altrui mirabilmente le cose, sino a quelle che sono di lor natura brutte e schifevoli; e dov’ei manca, è cagione che le più belle e onorate riescano dispiacevoli e ingrato.” Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa*, 31.

¹³¹ “ut pro argumenti, motuumque praesertim varietate, vox etiam opportunè varietur.” Colonia, *De arte rhetorica*, 298.

¹³² Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (Florence: Marescotti, 1601). Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 611.

¹³³ Giulio Caccini, *Nuove Musiche e Nuova Maniera di Scriverle, Con due Arie Particolari per Tenore, che ricerchi le corde del Basso* (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni e Compagni, 1614). Translation in Giulio Caccini, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614), trans. H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Recent researches in the music of the Baroque Era*, v. 28. (Madison, [Wis.]: A-R Editions, 1978).

The third [rule] is that one should strive to adapt one's voice to the meaning of the words lest happy things be sung in a mournful voice or the other way around.¹³⁴

Zarlino, too, advised

singing according to the nature of the words contained in the composition, for when the words contain happy subjects, they [the singers] ought to sing happily and with vigorous strides, and when they contain sad subjects, to do the opposite.¹³⁵

When it comes to musical recitation in *recitativo semplice*, matching delivery to the words is a central concern, and one which in one way or another occupies almost all of Tosi's chapter on recitative. Just as Quintilian specified in relation to oratory, the most basic step in performing recitative is to understand what the words are about, and to identify the overall mood of the passage correctly. He advises singing masters,

If you know not that the *Recitatives*, especially in the vulgar or known Language, require those instructions relative to the Force of the Words, I would advise you to renounce the Name and Office of Masters to those who can maintain them; your Scholars will otherwise be made a Sacrifice to Ignorance and, not knowing how to distinguish the Lively from the Pathetick, or the Vehement from the Tender, it will be no wonder if you see them stupid on the Stage, and senseless in a Chamber.¹³⁶

Many of the specific faults in recitative delivery which he catalogues in the same chapter also suggest a delivery not aptly matched to the subject matter; one that stands out particularly in this context is committed by those who deliver recitative "as if they were thinking of something else". In order to match delivery to the subject, the minimum requirement is to focus seriously on the words and their meaning.

Mancini also takes understanding the subject matter seriously. Just as he recommended the study of grammar to enhance clarity in delivery, so the study of history is "an indispensable necessity to an actor". It consists of three types, the sacred, secular and mythological.

¹³⁴ Giovanni Maria Lanfranco, *Scintille di musica* (Brescia: 1533), 112. Translation in Harrán, *Word-tone relations in musical thought: from antiquity to the seventeenth century*, 375.

¹³⁵ Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche*, 204. Translation in Harrán, *Word-tone relations in musical thought: from antiquity to the seventeenth century*, 375.

¹³⁶ Tosi, *Observations*, 71-72.

For example, suppose you want an actor to play Julius Caesar in the scene when he is betrayed and assaulted in the Senate by the conspirators. Would it not be ridiculous if he did not know how to vest himself with the powerful spirit of such a hero; if instead of having Caesar suffer an unexpected attack with a firm brow and brave spirit, he represented the man with acts of fear, retreat, and cowardice?¹³⁷

In the same way, Mercury must not be represented with the demeanour of an old man, or Neptune that of a young one. Nor, in accordance with counter-reformation religious certainties, should Abraham and Isaac be shown as anything other than respectively resolute and resigned, as the patriarch prepares to sacrifice his son.¹³⁸ Like the other skills of delivery, variety of expression came from a combination of natural talent, learning (principally by the imitation of good models, including one's singing teacher, colleagues, actors, *letterati* and other orators) and practice. According to Mancini, a useful way to practice was by reading poetry aloud.

It would be useful, when one is alone in one's room, to read aloud some good book, particularly of poetry; this is the most useful exercise, and is an easy way of coming to speak with the required pauses and tonal inflections [*cangiamenti di voce*]: in consequence also, to recite well in public.¹³⁹

The result of study, understanding, talent and practice will be evident in excellence of delivery, including versatility of characterisation across a variety of roles, as demonstrated by the celebrated soprano Faustina Bordoni, who had

a clear and quick judgement in giving to words their full power and expression. In her action she was very happy; and as she perfectly possessed that flexibility of muscles and features, which constitutes face-playing, she succeeded equally well in furious, amorous, and tender parts: in short, she was born for singing and acting.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 221-22. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 867.

¹³⁸ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 222.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 220. My translation. Allanbrook's less direct but more idiomatic one may be found in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 867.

¹⁴⁰ Johann Joachim Quantz, "Herrn Johann Joachim Quantzens Lebenslauf, von ihm selbst entworfen," in *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik*, i, ed. F. W. Marpurg (Amsterdam: Knuf, 1972), 239. Translation in Burney, *General History*, 746.

The voice will ring as passion strikes its chords

Variety is valued in a general sense for its ability to engage the flagging spirits of both audience and performer and avoid monotony (below), and for its value in delineating the circumstances and subject matter of the recitation, but its ultimate value is expressive. Variation of the voice is integral to expression, and in particular to passionate delivery, which is required for moving the affections and hence necessary for the effective use of the emotional appeal. This, in turn, is essential to conveying the moral message of the drama. It is the highest goal of expression, and one for which the other steps are pre-conditions.

The intimate connection between vocal variation and apt expression of the words and the thoughts and emotions (*concetti* and *affetti*) they contain is evident throughout the rhetorical, theatrical and musical literature of classical antiquity and of the early modern period. Cicero sets out the principle in the following terms:

For by nature, every emotion has its own facial expression, tone of voice, and gesture. The entire body of a human being, all the facial expressions and all the utterances of the voice, like the strings on a lyre, 'sound' exactly in the way they are struck by each emotion.¹⁴¹

It is also a recurring theme for Quintilian, each time he addresses the issue of expressive delivery. For him, decorum, conceived as a virtue of delivery, is manifested primarily through the apt projection of the emotions arising from the subject matter.

But it is now high time for me to explain what I mean by appropriate delivery [*apta pronuntiatio*]. Such appropriateness obviously lies in the adaptation of the delivery to the subjects on which we are speaking. This quality is, in the main, supplied by the emotions themselves, and the voice will ring as passion strikes its chords.¹⁴²

The ability of the speaker to stir up the emotions of the audience thus depends on his ability to conjure them up in his own voice. As Quintilian puts it, "the method of arousing the emotions depends on our power to represent or imitate the passions".¹⁴³ Doing this requires the orator to cultivate a wide expressive range.

¹⁴¹ *De oratore*, III.215-16. Translation in Cicero, *On the ideal orator*, 292.

¹⁴² *Institutio oratoria*, XI.III.61. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

¹⁴³ XI.III.156. Translation in *Ibid.*

[The orator] will speak gravely, severely, sharply, with vehemence, energy, fullness, bitterness, or geniality, quietly, simply, flatteringly, gently, sweetly, briefly or wittily ... Thus the purpose for which oratory was above all designed will be secured, that is to say, he will speak with profit and with power to effect his aim.¹⁴⁴

The indebtedness of early modern rhetoric to its classical models is clearly reflected in the treatment of affective delivery, particularly with the rise of the emotive, “operational” style of baroque rhetoric. The Jesuit rhetorician de Granada, for example, emphasises the capacity of the orator to reach the mind of the listener through pleasing and apt expression. The variety of sounds this produces is limited only by the orator’s imaginative range in conjuring up a range of affections.

The special strength of delivery for the subjects themselves which we are discussing is to accommodate the manner of speaking to the nature of the subjects themselves; the subjects must excite the attention of the listener, and distaste must be avoided, and they must please in a wonderful way. Indeed, in relation to individual changes and modulations of the voice, the mind of the listener depends on the mouth of the speaker. As many affections as he conceives within himself, so many sounds he makes.¹⁴⁵

Musicians, too, were increasingly concerned with matching delivery to the affective content of the words as well as with their clear and correct enunciation, even before the advent of the monodic style. Nicola Vicentino made the same general point as Lanfranco and Zarlino (above) about not confusing happy and sad words in performance, but added the further detail that the singer “should express the melodic lines, matching the words to their passions – now joyful, now sad, now gentle, and now cruel – and adhere to the accents and pronunciation of the words and the notes.”¹⁴⁶ This idea that the content of the words is to drive affective delivery was promoted to the status of a primary principle amongst the humanist scholars and musicians associated with the neo-Platonic *camerata* of Giovanni Bardi

¹⁴⁴ XII.x.71–2. Translation in *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ “Pronunciationis praecipua virtus est rebus ipsis quas dicimus pro ipsarum natura vocis figuram accomodare, quae res ad attentionem auditorium excitandam, fastidiumque vitandum, miro modo iuvat. Ad singulas quippe mutationes, & flexus vocis, auditoris animus, qui ex loquentis ore pendet. Tot intra se concipit motus, quot ille sonos mutat.” de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae*. VI, 5. Quoted in Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae*, 134v.

¹⁴⁶ Nicola Vicentino, *Ancient music adapted to modern practice: Translated, with Introduction and Notes*, by Maria Rika Maniates, ed. Claude V. Palisca, *Music theory translation series*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 301. For comparable statements by other sixteenth-century theorists, see Harrán, *Word-tone relations in musical thought: from antiquity to the seventeenth century*, 374–5.

and subsequently Jacopo Corsi at Florence. Their critique of polyphony centred on its (in their view) intrinsic tendency to place musical, and in particular harmonic imperatives ahead of those of text expression. Girolamo Mei expressed this view forcefully in a letter to Vincenzo Galilei in 1572:

[T]his excessive and not at all natural concern [with harmony], which leads souls astray and occupies them with other considerations, so that they lose themselves in incidental and accessory vanities, does not permit the instrument of the voice, whose many diverse qualities were granted to man especially for the perfect expression of his thoughts and affections, to fulfill its office, either suitably or without hindrance.¹⁴⁷

In making the step from speech on the one hand and song on the other to “speaking in song”, adherents of the Bardi circle thus made text expression a key objective of their new music. Caccini’s version of the monodic response to this imperative is set out in the preface to *Le nuove musiche*:

In madrigals as in arias I have always achieved the imitation of the ideas of the words, seeking out those notes that are more or less expressive, according to the sentiments of the words. So that they would have especial grace, I concealed as much of the art of counterpoint as I could.¹⁴⁸

That this style of singing was identified at the time as being both novel, and more expressive of the affections than the pre-existing style is suggested by della Valle’s retrospective assessment of the style change over the first two decades of the seventeenth century:

All these men [of the older generation], however, from their trills and on to their *passaggi*, and with their good vocal placement, hardly had other skills: of singing soft and loud, of increasing the voice little by little, of diminishing it with grace, of expressing the affections, of following the words and their meanings with judgement; of making the voice joyful or melancholy, of making it plaintive or ardent when necessary, and similar other elegances that

¹⁴⁷ Mei, "Letter to Vincenzo Galilei, 8 May 1572," 74.

¹⁴⁸ Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 609.

singers of today do excellently well ... This aspect is the most important of all in our day: using judgment in an art that has become as perfected as I have described.¹⁴⁹

Perrucci, too, requires that in acting, “the voice must not always be the same, but must change according to the movements and passions of the soul ... [W]ith various sounds one seeks to move the affections of the audience.”¹⁵⁰ This is clearly also Tosi’s position in relation to recitative. As we have seen already, he has much to say about decorum in delivery, including distinguishing the appropriate styles of delivery for church, theatre and chamber, and above all emphasising the importance of understanding and expressing the “force of the words”.

A Master, that disregards the *Recitative* probably does not understand the Words, and then, how can he ever instruct a Scholar in Expression, which is the soul of vocal performance, and without which it is impossible to sing well? ... If you know not that the *Recitatives*, especially in the vulgar or known Language, require those Instructions relative to the Force of the Words, I would advise you to renounce the Name, and Office of *Masters*, to those who can maintain them; your Scholars will otherwise be made a Sacrifice to Ignorance, and not knowing how to distinguish the Lively from the Pathetick, or the Vehement from the Tender, it will be no wonder if you see them stupid on the Stage, and senseless in a Chamber.¹⁵¹

Unfortunately for posterity, Tosi set out no detailed instructions about how good text expression is to be done. Perhaps he regarded this as something that can only be taught *viva voce*, by example. Alternatively he might have regarded it as a kind of ‘trade secret’, not to be published outside the profession, or perhaps the explanation is simply that he considers the principles of good declamation to be well enough known that he does not need to enumerate them again here, focussing instead on the transgressions against those principles that are to be heard in the theatre. Some singers, he says,

through trying too hard make a barking sound; some [sing it] as if telling a secret ... some do not understand it, and some do not make it understood: some as if begging, some disdainful;

¹⁴⁹ Pietro della Valle ‘*Della musica dell’età nostra, che non è punto inferiore, anzi è migliore di quella dell’età passata*’ (1640) in Angelo Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma: testimonianze dei contemporanei raccolte da Angelo Solerti, Piccola biblioteca di scienze moderne; 70* (Hildesheim; New York: G. Olms, 1969). Translation in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*.

¹⁵⁰ “Non deve la Voce esser sempre la stessa, ma bisogna mutarla, secondo i moti, e passioni dell’animo.” Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 115-16.

¹⁵¹ Tosi, *Opinioni*, 44-5. Translation in Tosi, *Observations*, 69-71.

some speak it dopily, and some devour it: Some sing it through the teeth, and others with affectation; some do not pronounce it, and some do not express it; some laugh it, and some cry it; some speak it, and some hiss it; some shriek, some shout ...¹⁵²

Some of these faults clearly imply uses of timbre (a begging, perhaps whining tone; hissing, shrieking) or dynamics (whispering as if telling a secret, shrieking, shouting), and these aspects are discussed below (Chapter 6) under their particular headings. The overriding issue which connects all of these faulty ways of performing recitative, however, is their inappropriateness – their undermining of decorum in theatrical delivery through inept expression of the words, or through the use of sounds that go outside the norms of artistic declamation. What Tosi considers those norms to be may be inferred from their opposite faults: Declaim neither so loudly that the voice is strained nor too softly to be heard; enunciate clearly and express the meaning and affective content of the words with a range of sounds varied enough to maintain interest but not extending to ugliness of tone.

In the end, for Tosi, the judgement required to know what is appropriate in expression comes from the heart, and a delivery that is in line with the affective content of the text will overcome most faults:

Oh, how great a master is the heart! Confess it, my beloved singers, and gratefully own that you would not have arrived at the highest rank of the profession if you had not been its scholars. Own that in a few lessons from it you learned the most beautiful expressions, the most refined taste, the most noble action, and the most exquisite graces. Own (though it be hardly credible) that the heart corrects the defects of nature, since it softens a voice that's harsh, betters an indifferent one, and perfects a good one.¹⁵³

The influence of the affections is also fundamental to Mancini's concept of recitative. Recitative, he says, should be composed in such a way as to "perfectly imitate a natural discourse" with all of its punctuation and expression. All of this should be written into the vocal line, which "varies with the motion and diversity of tones. And the tones vary precisely as the sentiments of the words are diverse, and according to the various emotions

¹⁵² Tosi, *Opinioni*, 43. Translation based on Tosi, *Observations*, 69-70.

¹⁵³ Tosi, *Observations*, 157.

that the words are intended to arouse in the souls of the audience."¹⁵⁴ Delivery reinforces the affective expression written in by the poet and composer on the model of the orator, who varies his voice "according to the various passions that he wishes to stir in the listener."¹⁵⁵

Decorum thus had a pervasive influence on the way *recitativo semplice* was conceived as both composition and performance. In particular, it is ultimately this rhetorical principle – of apt expression of the subject matter and its conceptual and affective content – which underlies the preoccupation in seventeenth and eighteenth-century music with the expression of the affections as both a defining element of style in composition and as a virtue of delivery. The detailed translation of this expressive variety into the specific sound parameters of recitative vocalisation – rhythm, dynamic, timbre and pitch (the subject of Chapters 5 and 6) – represents the practical application of the general principles set out here.

¹⁵⁴ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 237-38. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 872.

¹⁵⁵ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 220. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 867.

Chapter 5 – Parameters of vocal delivery I: Rhythm

The principles of classical rhetoric provided a model for delivery in all kinds of public declamation in the eighteenth century. But how were these principles applied in the specifically musical context of recitative? In particular, how can rhetorical principles elucidate the unnotated aspects of recitative performance practice? Where the previous chapters examined the general principles and characteristics of good delivery in the rhetorical tradition, this chapter and the following one turn the focus more specifically to the musical application of those principles of delivery in recitative. They are therefore organised according to musical categories – rhythm, dynamic, timbre and pitch – rather than oratorical ones.

Rhythm, dynamic, timbre and pitch each play out in recitative in different ways. Pitch is largely the composer's responsibility. It is the one parameter which most unequivocally sets recitative apart as a specifically musical genre, distinct from other forms of recitation, and may be easily, and for the most part accurately notated. Dynamic and timbre, on the other hand, were virtually never notated in *recitativo semplice*, and therefore remained the responsibility of the singer. Rhythm occupies a kind of middle ground, notated and yet not to be read literally; flexible, but within prosodic constraints that are difficult to define. It thus represents the primary contested area between words and music, where first the composer, in setting the poetry, then the singer, in interpreting the score, had to negotiate the tension between the rhythmic imperatives of poetic speech and the independent structural imperatives of music.

The detailed investigation of the individual parameters of vocal delivery, and in particular of rhythm, will therefore only make sense in the context of an overall model of how rhythm recitative was conceived as working. If recitative was understood as a form of recitation, what kind was it? It is not song, yet it is clearly different from ordinary speech. To make sense of how recitative works, it will thus be helpful to review its basic structural principles.

Recitativo semplice as declamation

One of the principal aspects of recitative which gives it great flexibility and expressive potential, and which concomitantly poses its principal challenge in both composition and delivery, is its lack of metrical rhythm or regular beat. In the absence of regular metre, the performers must negotiate a complex interaction between the flexible rhythms and pacing of the verbal text, and the sometimes contradictory accentual and durational implications of the musical text, conveyed through rhythmic notation (however loosely this is to be interpreted), melodic shape and harmonic direction, and articulation (particularly at cadences). In Justin London's words, "the relation between speech rhythm and musical rhythm is not a simple opposition, but a complex and multivalent interchange".¹

As a result of the work of scholars such as Alfred Neumann and Robert Donington, a variety of sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which confirm the association between recitative and declamation are now well known.² In what follows I have not attempted a comprehensive survey of these sources. Rather, selected passages will be discussed which are particularly pertinent to the conceptual basis of recitative as recitation (rather than "song") and to the development of the concept of its intermediate status between speech and song with the advent of *recitativo semplice*.

That recitative was from its inception never conceptualised as "sung" in the conventional sense, despite its use of diastematic pitch and harmonic accompaniment, is already apparent from the formulations of Peri and Caccini, who made a point of coining new terms to distinguish their declamation in music from singing. The distinction is even clearer in relation to *recitativo semplice* to which the verb *recitare* (to recite – the same word used for spoken declamation in the theatre) rather than *cantare* (to sing) was usually applied. At the same time, the model for recitative, even in relation to its rhythm, was not ordinary speech, but rather the declamation of poetry. William Davenant's description, although referring to English rather than Italian recitative, encapsulates the difference:

¹ Justin London, "Rhythm," ed. L. Macy (www.grovemusic.com, accessed 31 March 2005).

² See Frederick Neumann, "Die Theorie des Rezitativs im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des deutschen Musikschritums des 18. Jahrhundert" (Ph.D., University of Göttingen, 1955). Robert Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music: New Version* (London: Faber, 1977).

Recitative music is not composed of matter so familiar as may serve for every low occasion of discourse. In tragedy the language of the stage is raised above the common dialect – our passions rising with the height of verse – and vocal music adds new wings to all the flights of poetry.³

In the more rarified atmosphere of poetic declamation, all of the main parameters of speech – timbre, dynamic, rhythm and pitch – could be exaggerated to increase clarity and for expressive effect.⁴

Giulio Caccini's description of the *stile recitativo* as "a kind of music by which anyone could almost speak in music, using ... a certain noble *sprezzatura* in the melody"⁵ introduces two key concepts important to understanding the intellectual and aesthetic paradigm of recitative at its conception. The first is the emphasis on speech. A primary principle underpinning the thinking of the humanist scholars and practicing musicians associated with the *camerata* which met at Giovanni Bardi's home, including Bardi himself, Girolamo Mei, Vincenzo Galilei and Caccini, was to make their music follow "that style so praised by Plato and the other philosophers who maintained music to be nothing other than rhythmic speech with pitch added (and not the reverse!)"⁶ Their conception of the *stile recitativo* was thus powerfully tied to the primacy of speech. It was conceived as speech heightened a step

³ From his burlesque *The Playhouse to be Let* (1663), quoted in Dennis Drew Arundell, *The critic at the opera: contemporary comments on opera in London over three centuries, Da Capo Press reprint series* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 89.

⁴ While the texts for almost all secular Italian vocal works were conceived as poetry rather than prose, even in prose passages (such as biblical texts or other quotations) a degree of rhythm was appropriate if one followed the advice of Cicero, who credited Isocrates with the discovery that "even in prose, while strict verse should be avoided, a certain rhythm and measure should be observed." Cicero, *Brutus*, viii. 32. Translation from Marcus Tullius Cicero, "*Brutus*" and "*Orator*", trans. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell, Rev. ed., *Loeb classical library*; 342 (London: W. Heinemann, 1962). Soarez gives an extended treatment of the role of rhythm in prose in Chapters 34-50 of his treatise, including an explanation of the poetic feet and their uses (and misuses) in prose. See Lawrence Flynn, S.J., "The 'De arte rhetorica' (1568) by Cyprian Soarez, S.J.: A Translation with Introduction and Notes" (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1955), 372-412.

⁵ "una sorte di musica, per cui altri potesse quasi che in armonia favellare, usando in essa ... una certa nobile sprezzatura di canto". Italian text in Angelo Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma: testimonianze dei contemporanei raccolte da Angelo Solerti, Piccola biblioteca di scienze moderne*; 70 (Hildesheim; New York: G. Olms, 1969), 57. Trans. Margaret Murata in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, Revised ed. (New York: Norton, 1998), 608.

⁶ "quella maniera cotanto lodata da Platone et altri filosofi, che affermarono la musica altro non essere che la favella e il ritmo et il suono per ultimo, e non per lo contrario". Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (Florence: Marescotti, 1601). Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 608.

beyond the level of ordinary declamation by the addition of diastematic pitch and accompanying harmony, rather than as a reduced or denatured species of melody.

The second key concept introduced in Caccini's description of the new style is that of *sprezzatura*. Wiley Hitchcock argues in the notes to his edition of *Le nuove musiche* that Caccini may have had in mind the use of the term as it appears in Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (The book of the Courtier, 1528), where Castiglione has Signor Magnifico draw an approving analogy between the "negligence" of rules of comportment and those of music; occasional dissonances are introduced in music since "to go on using the perfect species [i.e. perfect consonances] unrelievedly is satiating and is too affected harmonically".⁷ Caccini's meaning seems to go beyond this harmonic idea, however, in the dedication to his *Euridice* (1600), where he draws a direct connection between *sprezzatura* and speech: "In this manner of singing, I have used a certain *sprezzatura* which I deem to have an element of nobility, believing that with it I have approached that much nearer to ordinary speech."⁸ That the speech-like quality of *sprezzatura* also implies rhythmic freedom was made clear by Caccini in a letter of 1614, in which he described the essence of the *stile recitativo* as being "singing with nonchalance [*sprezzatura*] like a new speaking in music without observing measured time."⁹ An even more specific definition which makes explicit both the implications of *sprezzatura* for rhythm and its connection with rhetorical theory is found in the preface to his *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle*, also published in 1614:

Sprezzatura is that charm let to a song by a few "faulty" eights or sixteenths on various tones, together with those [similar "faults"] made in the tempo. These relieve the song of a certain

⁷ "Quel continuare nelle perfette genera sazieta e dimostra una troppo affettata armonia". Translation and commentary in Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*. Edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Recent researches in the music of the Baroque Era*, vol. 9 (Madison: A-R Editions, 1970), 44.

⁸ "Nella qual maniera di canto ho io usata una certa sprezzatura, che io ho stimato che abbia del nobile, parendomi con essa di essermi appressato quel più alla natural favella." From the dedication to *Euridice* (1600). Italian text in Solerti, *Le origini*, 606. Trans. Strunk in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 606.

⁹ Giulio Caccini, letter of September 6, 1614, to Virginio Orsini, " ... canto in sprezzatura quasi che una nuova favella in armonia senza osservanza di misura ... " The letter is transcribed in Warren Kirkendale, *The court musicians in Florence during the principate of the Medici: with a reconstruction of the artistic establishment* (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1993), 157. Translation in John Walter Hill, "Beyond Isomorphism toward a Better Theory of Recitative," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 9, no. 1 (2003).

restricted narrowness and dryness and make it pleasant, free, and airy, just as in common speech eloquence and variety make pleasant and sweet the matters being spoken of.¹⁰

Another realisation of the “speaking in music” ideal is to be found in the theatrical music of Caccini’s rival Jacopo Peri.¹¹ Like Caccini, Peri placed central importance on the objective of imitating in music a form of heightened speech which was clearly to be distinguished from song and, in accordance with Mei’s theories, would approach the kind of recitation used in ancient tragedies. In the preface to the published score of his *Euridice*, Peri set out his formulation of the basic concept as follows.

Seeing that dramatic poetry was concerned and that therefore one ought to imitate with song someone speaking (and without doubt people never spoke singing), I decided that the ancient Greeks and Romans (who according to the opinion of many sang entire tragedies on the stage) employed a melody that, elevated beyond ordinary speech, descended so much from the melody of song that it assumed an intermediate form.¹²

A little further on he continued

I reflected that the sort of voice assigned by the ancients to song, which they called diastematic (as if to say sustained and suspended) could at times be hurried, and take a moderate course between the slow, sustained movements of song and the fluent and rapid ones of speech, and thus suit my purpose (just as the ancients, too, adapted the voice to

¹⁰ Giulio Caccini, *Nuove Musiche e Nuova Maniera di Scriverle, Con due Arie Particolari per Tenore, che ricerchi le corde del Basso* (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni e Compagni, 1614).. Translation in Giulio Caccini, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle (1614)*, trans. H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Recent researches in the music of the Baroque Era*, v. 28. (Madison, [Wis.]: A-R Editions, 1978).

¹¹ Peri’s *recitar cantando* has been the subject of considerable scholarship, a detailed consideration of which goes beyond the scope of this study. Peri’s theory of recitative is dealt with in detail in Palisca’s essays “Theory of Dramatic Music” in Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985), 427-33., and “Peri and the Theory of Recitative” in Claude V. Palisca, *Studies in the history of Italian music and music theory* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1994), 452-66. The precursors of the monodic style in the performance of *strambotti* and other Italian traditions of recitation of poetry to music are addressed by Palisca in “The Poetics of Music”, in Palisca, *Humanism*, 369-407. John Walter Hill has shown how closely Peri’s style matches modern analysis of the prosodic projection of emotion in speech, see Hill, “Beyond Isomorphism.” On the comparison between Peri’s and Caccini’s styles, see Nino Pirrotta and Elena Povoledo, *Music and theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi, Cambridge studies in music*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 241ff..

¹² Italian text and English translation given in Palisca, *Humanism*, 427.

reading poetry and heroic verses), approaching that other [voice] of conversation, which they called continuous.¹³

As Claude Palisca has shown, Peri was here presenting an idea that he or his mentors Mei and Galilei had derived from Boethius. After reporting Aristoxenus' distinction between the "diastematic" (sung) and "continuous" (spoken) forms of delivery, Boethius adds the third, intermediate, form to which Peri is clearly alluding in the passage above: "We read a heroic poem neither in a continuous flow as in prose nor in the sustained and more sluggish manner of voice as in song".¹⁴ It is this third form of declamation, suitable for the recitation of heroic verse, which provided Peri with the theoretical underpinning for his *recitar cantando* with its combination of diastematic (or intervallic) pitch and speech-based rhythm.

It is interesting to note that despite the views of these earliest composers of the *stile recitativo* about the need for speech-based rhythmic flexibility in the new style, a generation or so later the argument about how this imitation of speech should be realised in performance had apparently not been entirely settled. After canvassing the arguments in favour of singing in the recitative style with a beat, the anonymous author of *Il Corago* found it necessary to give the counter arguments:

The common feeling and practice among those that sing on stage is not to use a beat. First, since the perfection of the recitative style taken to the stage lies in showing and imitating the natural manner of discourse [*il modo naturale di ragionare*], one must remove everything that demonstrates patent artifice as much as possible, if it is not absolutely necessary. The beat is not necessary; one knows often enough through experience.¹⁵

A conductor giving the beat, he adds, will also be distracting to the audience over the two or three hours of a performance, and

¹³ Italian text and English translation given in *Ibid.*, 428.

¹⁴ Boethius, *De institutione musica* 1.12, quoted in *Ibid.* This also coincides with Aristides Quintilianus' definition: "The continuous is sound that imperceptibly and with some speed descends and ascends, the intervallic is that which has apparent pitches ... and the medial is that which is compounded from both. It is the continuous in which we discourse, the medial in which we execute readings of poems, and the intervallic that produces between simple sounds certain intervals and hesitations, which kind is also called melodic". *On Music*, 1.4. Translation in Aristides Quintilianus, *Aristides Quintilianus On Music in Three Books*, trans. Thomas J. Mathiesen, Music Theory Translation Series ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 76.

¹⁵ Italian text in Paolo Fabbri and Angelo Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche, Studi e testi per la storia della musica* (Florence: Olschki, 1983), 89-90. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 631.

Third, since the actor must stop to sigh at length as nature tells him and hold on to the same note more or less according to the affect, he should not be tied to any one else's measure, but should freely follow the impulse of feeling, which is of great importance in reciting well.¹⁶

The increasing differentiation between recitative and aria through the middle years of the seventeenth century appears at least in part to have been a response to the popular demand for more variety and vocal display in public opera, in line with the growing taste for the fantastic encapsulated by the poem *Adone* (1623) by Giambattista Marino.¹⁷ This gradual shift resulted in what would ultimately be a decisive move away from the fluid mixture of recitative, arioso and aria styles typical of early opera, in the direction of distinct, set-piece arias linked by *recitativo semplice* with occasional excursions into accompanied recitative for the most impassioned moments. The development of the new style is most clearly to be seen in Cavalli's style over the middle decades of the century. His *Giasone* (1649) was the most successful opera of the seventeenth century and, from the vantage point of the Arcadians, defined both the best and worst aspects of the *dramma per musica* as it had developed during the second half of the century. In *Giasone*, the separation of recitative and aria was distinct and clear, and this quickly became the predominant, and ultimately the almost exclusive pattern for opera composition.¹⁸

Looking back from a vantage point almost exactly contemporary with Mancini's treatise, Burney identified the significance of this development very clearly, though he attributes the newer recitative style to Carissimi and Stradella rather than to Cavalli:

Such languid and whining recitative as that of Emilio del Cavaliere, Jacopo Peri, and Caccini, is now only fit for the serious French opera, where it has been continued, from the time it was first brought to Paris by Lulli [sic], to the death of Rameau, and by his disciples and admirers, to the present time. At first it was not sufficiently distinguished from air in Italy, if any thing

¹⁶ Fabbri and Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, 89-90. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 631.

¹⁷ See Rodolfo Celletti and Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, "'The poetics of the marvelous,'" *Opera News* 59, no. 1 (1994).

¹⁸ On the significance of *Giasone*, see Ellen Rosand, *Opera in seventeenth-century Venice: the creation of a genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 275-6. The development of Cavalli's style during this period is a principal subject of Rosand's book more generally. For a detailed analysis of the recitative of Cavalli and his contemporaries, see also Beth L. Glixon, "Recitative in Seventeenth-Century Venetian Opera: Its Dramatic Function and Musical Language (Cavalli, Francesco, Aureli Aurelio, Italian Opera, Libretto)" (PhD, Rutgers, 1985).

then might be called *air*; but it would perhaps be more accurate to say, that it then admitted too much of *singing*, too many long notes and formal closes, for dialogue and narration. Montiverde [sic] accelerated its march a little; but it was not till after the middle of the seventeenth century, that recitative received its last laws and true character from the productions of the admirable Carissimi and Stradella.¹⁹

He credits Carissimi with “greatly improving recitative in general, rendering it a more expressive, articulate, and intelligible language, by its approximation to speech and declamation”.²⁰

By the time of the Arcadian reforms of the 1690s, this transition from the *stile recitativo* to *recitativo semplice* was complete, at least as far as theatrical recitative was concerned. Tosi’s taxonomy of recitative reflects the continuation of an intense, mannered style of delivery in the chamber until the early part of the eighteenth-century, but “the theatrical leaves it not in our Election to make Use of this Art, lest we offend in the Narrative, which ought to be natural, unless in a *Soliloquy*, where it may be in the *Stile* of Chamber-Musick.”²¹ The idea of “naturalness” was a contested and ambiguous one throughout the period in question, but here Tosi appears to mean a less “heightened”, more conversational style in contrast to the chamber variety which is “adapted to move the most violent Passions of the Soul”.²²

Its ubiquity in the theatre in particular meant that the style of *recitativo semplice* had become one of the defining characteristics of Italian vocal music. In this context, the comments of non-Italians can be illuminating in highlighting for a foreign readership aspects of the style which were so well established as to go largely unremarked in Italy. For example, François Ragueneau, a chief partisan on the Italian side in the *Querelle* of the early eighteenth century, was clearly struck enough by the “spokenness” of Italian recitative to make it a chief point of contrast with the opera of his native France.

¹⁹ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is prefixed, A Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients ...* 4 vols. (London: 1776-89), vol.4, p.141.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.4, p.142.

²¹ Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the florid song, or, Sentiments on the ancient and modern singers. Written in Italian by Pier Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilcox, 1743), 68.

²² *Ibid.*, 67.

It must be confess'd that our Recitative is much better than that of the Italians, which is too close and simple; it's the same throughout, and can't properly be call'd Singing. Their Recitative is little better than downright speaking [*ils ne sont, pour ainsi dire, que parler dans leur Recitatif*], without any Inflexion, or Modulation of the Voice; and yet there is this to be admired in it, the Parts that accompany this Psalmody are incomparable, for they have such an extraordinary Genius for Composition, that they know how to adapt charming Concords, even to a Voice that do's little more than Speak [*même au son de la voix d'une personne qui parle simplement sans chanter*] ...²³

Raguenet's English translator adds the following footnote to the author's discussion of recitative, as at the time of publication many English readers would have had no opportunity to hear Italian recitative, which had been heard on the London stage for the first time in Bononcini's *Il trionfo di Camilla* (30 March 1706) only three years before.

The Italian Recitative is a Piece of Composition hardly ever to be comprehended by Strangers, and yet they that understand it reckon it the greatest Beauty in Musick, and I believe they are right, considering how much Art and Knowledge is necessary for the Composing, Playing, and Singing it. This Composition admits of the boldest Flights. Were it not for the Recitative, the great number of Airs hudled together wou'd soon cloy the Audience, and the Beauty of one wou'd be lost in that of the other immediately following. 'Tis a Fault insufferable in the French Opera's, that there is so little difference between their Recitative (if it may be call'd by that Name) and their Aria's, which can hardly be distinguish'd one from the other. Signor Nicolino is most remarkable for the Recitative.²⁴

The reference in the last sentence is to the castrato Nicolo Grimaldi, *detto* Nicolini (1673-1732), a performer widely lauded for his acting as well as for his singing.²⁵ The anonymous translator, writing in the aftermath of the singer's triumphant London debut in 1708, seems more impressed with the musical and dramatic effectiveness of Italian recitative than was

²³ French text in F. Raguenet, *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français* (Paris: 1702). Anonymous translation (attrib. John Galliard) in Francois Raguenet, *Comparison between the French and Italian musick and opera's. Translated from the French; With some Remarks. To which is added A Critical Discourse upon Opera's in England, and a Means proposed for their Improvement* (London: 1709; reprint, Facs., Farnborough: Gregg International, 1968), 35-6.

²⁴ Raguenet, *Comparison between the French and Italian musick and opera's. Translated from the French; With some Remarks. To which is added A Critical Discourse upon Opera's in England, and a Means proposed for their Improvement*, 35, fn 22.

²⁵ See Joseph R Roach, "Cavaliere Nicolini: London's First Opera Star," *Educational Theatre Journal* 28 (1976).

Raguenet himself. For English audiences, most of whose members were hearing Italian recitative for the first time, the harmonic flexibility and freedom of melodic gesture in *recitativo semplice* must have been particularly striking. Raguenet's idea that Italian recitative is "without any Inflexion, or Modulation of the voice" [*il n'y a Presque point d'inflexion ni de modulation dans ce pretendu chant*] seems odd in this context, but perhaps highlights the very point of difference identified by his translator: the much more melodic, song-like style of French recitative, and its more mannered mode of delivery.

Raguenet returns to the virtues of the rhythmic flexibility of the Italian style a few pages later, noting that the freedom from needing to follow the *batteur de mesure*, as in French opera, allowed for more freedom to act effectively.

[T]he Italian Opera's have a double Advantage over the French; since that which makes 'em better singers makes 'em also better Actors: For playing, as it were with the Musick, and singing exactly true, without obliging themselves to attend either the Person that beats the Time, or anything else, they have full leisure to adjust themselves to the Action; and having nothing else to do but to express the Passions and compose their Carriage, they must certainly act much better than the French.²⁶

Another astute and knowledgeable foreign commentator on Italian opera was the Berlin court flautist and composer J. J. Quantz who was familiar with Italian opera both from his studies in Italy as a young man and from his experience of Frederick II's Italian court opera company. The idea of recitative as "spoken" is also clear in the criteria for assessing opera composition set out in his *Versuch einer Anweisung di Flöte Traversière zu Spielen* (1752): "To judge an opera soundly you ... should observe whether the recitative is set in a natural, speaking [*sprechend*], and expressive manner."²⁷

Writing two years later, Giuseppe Tartini did not directly address the "spokenness" of recitative, but he did set out an affirmation and a theoretical justification of its non-metrical

²⁶ Raguenet, *Comparison between the French and Italian musick and opera's. Translated from the French; With some Remarks. To which is added A Critical Discourse upon Opera's in England, and a Means proposed for their Improvement*, 44.

²⁷ Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voss, 1752; reprint, Facsimile edition, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992), 290. Translation in Johann Joachim Quantz, *On playing the flute: A complete translation with an introduction and notes by Edward R. Reilly* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 307.

nature. Like Mei, he placed recitative in the context of a detailed discussion of prosody, informed by, or at least justified in terms of his interpretation of ancient Greek practice. His views on prosody will be considered below. For the present purpose it is his clear affirmation of rhythmic flexibility of current Italian recitative performance practice, and the justification of this in terms of expression of the passions, that is most significant.

My opinion is that metre amongst the Greeks was taken flexibly, and not strictly. If they were true imitators of nature, and if with poetry joined with music they aroused and stilled the passions, it is because of what they had observed to happen in human discourse. When this discourse is joined to passion, the natural effect is (in accordance with the passion) greater and lesser inflection of the voice, greater and lesser sharpness and force of tone, greater and lesser prolongation of words and syllables, etc. When, in expressing a passion, one encounters a more significant word, this is spontaneously [*senza studio*] brought out more prominently than the others; hurriedly, if it expresses anger, prolonged, if of sadness etc., and so on in relation to all. Since the poet-musician (if a true philosopher) had to conform to nature, he had to encounter infinite cases in which the long syllables had to be prolonged and the short ones abbreviated far more than their strict natural value, in order to express the passion well ... Therefore a flexible beat was necessary, and not a strict one. **In that case their music resembled the recitative of our Italian dramas, in which the beat is flexible, in fact it is hardly perceptible that there is a beat.** [my emphasis].²⁸

Quantz's Berlin colleague, the composer and singing teacher Johann Friedrich Agricola, never visited Italy but was nevertheless also thoroughly immersed in the Italian style. His

²⁸ "[L]a mia opinione è, che la misura appresso i Greci fosse presa discretivamente, e non a rigore. Se sono stati veri imitatori della natura, e se con la Poesia congiunta all musica eccitavano, e sedavano le passioni, è forza, che abbiano avvertito a ciò, che succede nell' umano discorso. Quando questo sia congiunto a passione, l'effetto naturale è (a ragguaglio della passione) maggior, e minore inflessione di voce; maggior, e minor acume, e forza di tuono; maggior, e minor prolungamento di parole, e sillabe ec. Nella espressione della passione s'incontra quella parola, che più significa: questa (e senza studio) si pone in maggior vista delle altre, affrettandola, se d'ira, prolungandola, se di mestizia ec., e così tutto a ragguaglio. Il musico Poeta (se vero Filosofo) dovendosi conformare alla natura, doveva incontrare casi infiniti, ne' quali le sillabe lunghe si dovevano prolungare, le brevi accorciare molto più del rigoroso valore naturale per ben esprimere la passione ... Dunque era necessaria una discretiva, e non una rigorosa battuta. In tal caso la loro musica si rassomigliava al Recitativo de' nostri Drammi Italiani, in cui la battuta è a discrezione, anzi appena si accorge, che vi sia battuta ... Nella semplice narrazione può aver luogo la eguaglianza de' moti, e in conseguenza la battuta a rigore. Ma s'è vera la proposizione, che per muover altrui bisogna esser mosso in se stesso, (ed io la tengo per vera) poche saranno le narrazioni, che secondo natura possano esser regolate da moto eguale, perchè poche sono le affatto esenti da qualunque passione." Giuseppe Tartini, *Trattato di Musica, Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (Padova: Giovanni Manfrè, 1754; reprint, facs. edn, New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), 139-40. My translation, adapted from Fredric Bolan Johnson, "Tartini's 'Trattato di Musica Seconda la Vera Scienza dell' Armonia': An Annotated Translation with Commentary" (PhD, Indiana University, 1985), 357-8.

wife, Benedetta Emilia Molteni, was a singer in the court opera and he composed for, and later became musical director of the opera company. In a note to his 1754 translation of Tosi's *Opinioni*, Agricola also spells out for his German readership what Tosi apparently did not think necessary to make explicit for his Italian readers about the rhythm of recitative:

All three types of recitative [i.e. those for the church, theatre and chamber] share in common that which the author has specified above for the church recitative: that it is not sung in strict time. One must be guided more by the length and shortness of syllables in common speech than by the written value of the notes in the recitative. To be sure, these notes must be adapted by the composer to the duration of the syllables, but there are instances in which one holds the notes for a longer or shorter time than their prescribed value requires.²⁹

It is noteworthy here that Agricola connects the idea of being "not sung in strict time" with the prosody of long and short syllables and with the composer's responsibility to set these according to their duration. The questions of syllable quantity and of the singer's responsibility in relation to the composer's are both important ones which will be considered below in the context of accent.

As we have seen, Giambattista Mancini, too, affirmed the continued relevance of spoken declamation as the model for the performance of recitative, which is to be delivered with all of the rhythmic flexibility and variety of inflexion typical of good speech. He advises the singer that recitative, whether in its accompanied or *semplice* form should be

loosened [*sciolta*] in such a manner that it resembles a perfect and simple spoken declamation. Thus it would be a defect if the actor, instead of speaking the recitative [*dire il recitativo*] with a free voice, should wish to sing as if tying the voice continuously, and not thinking of ever distinguishing the periods and the diverse sense of the words by holding back, reinforcing, detaching and sweetening the voice, as a gifted man will do when he speaks or reads.³⁰

²⁹ Translation in Johann Friedrich Agricola, *Introduction to the art of singing: Translated and edited with commentary by Julianne Baird*, *Cambridge musical texts and monographs*. (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 173.

³⁰ Translation in Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing (Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato): The editions of 1774 and 1777 compared, translated and edited by Edward Foreman*, vol. VII, *Masterworks on Singing* (Champaign, Illinois: Pro Musica Press, 1967), 73. Italian text in Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (Milano: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777; reprint, Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni, 1996), 239. A letter written a decade before Mancini's book provides an interesting example of an English perspective on the "spoken" character of Italian recitative. In a passing comment on the delivery of the castrato Filippo Elisi,

Thus, despite the significant changes in the compositional and notational conventions of recitative between its inception and the late eighteenth century, the fundamental characteristics of pitch and rhythm which defined its status as an intermediate mode of vocalisation between speech and song remained intact throughout the period. These may be summarised as follows. Song is understood as having “diastematic”, or intervallic pitch, and metrical rhythm. Speech, on the other hand is characterised by irregular prosodic rhythm and “continuous” pitch (that is, the voice slides fluidly over various pitches without stopping on them)³¹. Poetic recitation, according to Mei’s and Peri’s interpretation of the classical authorities, lies between the two. It has metrical prosodic rhythm (though this can still be flexible and irregular, especially in *versi sciolti*), and pitch which is continuous but “heightened”, perhaps through the use of a wider tessitura and by approaching diastematic structure when certain vowels in a sentence may be sustained.³² In recitative, declamation is heightened one step beyond poetic recitation in the direction of song through the imposition of entirely diastematic pitch supported by harmonic accompaniment, but it preserves the organised, but still flexible and irregular rhythm of poetic speech. Just as speech rhythm may be exaggerated in declamation or poetic recitation, so melodic shape in recitative may be seen as an exaggerated pitch inflexion based on speech. But the imposition of distinct, “diastematic” pitch means that the pitch structure of recitative is stylised to a greater extent compared with the inflexion of ordinary speech than is declamatory rhythm in comparison with ordinary speech rhythm. It is this sense of more rigorously stylised pitch treatment that heightens or abstracts recitative out of the domain of ordinary speech and creates the sense of it being “music”, as opposed to heightened declamation alone, and allows it to link smoothly into the set-piece arias and ritornelli around it, while still retaining the flexibility to function as dramatic declamation of the text.

Elizabeth Harris noted that he “had courage enough last Saturday to undertake Manzoli’s part in *Demofontes*. He acted & spoke the recitatives finely, but for singing moderate [my emphasis].” Elizabeth Harris to James Harris jr, London, 13 March 1766, in Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, *Music and theatre in Handel’s world: the family papers of James Harris, 1732-1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 468. From the 1730s to the 1770s members of the opera-loving Harris family often passed gossip about the current Italian singers and performances in their private correspondence. The performance in this case was of Mattia Vento’s *Demofonte*, the premiere of which had featured the soprano Giovanni Manzuoli (known in England as ‘Manzoli’) in March of the previous year; see Burney, *General History*, 487.

³¹ Palisca, *Humanism*, 429.

³² See *Ibid.*

Rhythm in *recitativo semplice*

So, if recitative is “declaimed” or “recited”, what principles guided the composer and singer in determining the rhythm both as composed and as actually performed? The notated rhythm was not to be strictly adhered to, but it was nevertheless written out with shorter and longer notes and rests which are clearly intentionally placed.

It is first important to reiterate that while *recitativo semplice* was not performed with a regular beat, its basis in speech means that it was equally not conceived as being in “free rhythm”, but was constrained by the rhythms of language. That is to say, it uses speech rhythm; yet neither is it the rhythm of ordinary conversational speech. Some exaggeration of rhythm, just as of other vocal parameters, expands the scope of declamation from the intimacy of ordinary conversation to a mode suitable for communication in the public domain, often including a demand for intensified expression.³³ In addition, the fact that recitative texts were typically in verse rather than prose needs to be taken into account.

To come to a coherent view of the role of rhythm in the delivery of *recitativo semplice* it will be necessary to examine its rhythmic processes more closely, at some points stepping outside the terms of early modern theory to take into account later forms of analysis. These rhythmic processes may be summarised under the headings of metre, accent and pacing. These elements will be considered in turn below.

Metre

A detailed examination of metrical theory in Italian poetry lies outside the scope of this study since, as will be apparent below, its application to recitative was primarily the responsibility of the composer rather than of the singer. Indeed, from the performer’s point of view, beyond the basic requirements of *puritas* in making sure that accented and unaccented syllables are not confused, the art of making blank verse sound natural in delivery is principally in concealing rather than in drawing attention to the metre of the

³³ An interesting cross-cultural view of this exaggerated speech rhythm in musical declamation is given in K. Agawu, “The Rhythmic Structure of West African Music,” *Journal of Musicology* V (1987): 408-9.

poetry. It may nevertheless not be amiss here to briefly outline the metres most commonly used in recitative texts, since these form the typical framework within which accent and pacing are played out.

Poetic texts in any metre or rhyme scheme could be set in recitative, however the majority of *recitativo semplice*, particularly after 1700, was composed on unrhymed *versi sciolti* of mixed hendecasyllabic and septenary lines, with syllables enumerated on the assumption of a paroxytone (“feminine”) line ending. Like all Italian metres, both the *settenario* and *endecasillabo* are primarily defined by the position of the final accent which falls on the penultimate syllable of the line,³⁴ but both differ from the other possible metres in offering a range of alternatives for the location of the remaining stresses in the line. In the *settenario*, the secondary accent may fall on any of the first four syllables (in addition to the main accent on the sixth syllable), while in the *endecasillabo*, the accents may fall on syllables six and ten; four, eight and ten; or four, seven and ten.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 or

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 or

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11³⁵

The irregularity of the rhythms to which composers set *recitativo semplice*, avoiding obvious symmetry of accent, is in itself a powerful indicator of the importance placed on variety and naturalness in delivery. The purpose of *versi sciolti*, like that of the hexameters of Latin heroic verse or Shakespearean iambic pentameter, the analogous poetic metre in English, is to provide an underlying pattern that gives a sense of rhythmic coherence and gravity suitable to the stylistic register of tragedy, without being heard as overtly metrical. This is clear in the Jesuit Franciscus Lang’s comments on theatrical recitation in his *Dissertatio de Actione scenica* (1727):

With some, it occurs erroneously, that while they are reciting hexameters, they limit in length the delivery of the voice and the rhythm to just so many lines, or in pentameters they adhere

³⁴ Pasquale Guaragnella, *Elementi di retorica de poetica: Figure, metrica, generi letterari* (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1988), 31-3.

³⁵ After Hitchcock, in Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*. Edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock, 12.

to the caesura, or to the two-syllable utterance before, by which little lines of this type are generally concluded. This law must be grasped, that the voice runs forward up to the point where the sentence is completed: unless by chance the combination of the words is dragged forward for so long that it is not possible for them to be formed in one breath: for then, to a limited extent, it will be permitted to stop in the middle.³⁶

If the effect of *recitativo semplice* is to be like that of Mancini's "perfect and simple spoken discourse", the same principle must apply.

Accent

Performers cannot avoid confronting the same problem in delivery that composers face in composing and notating recitative: the dynamic tension between the accent patterns of language and of music. The way this tension is resolved – or at least held in some kind of flexible equilibrium – has profound consequences for the dramatic effect of recitative in performance.³⁷ Speech and music are alike in that both are constructed of a series of time-dependent units in which dynamic, duration and pitch play a crucial role, however there are also crucial differences between them. In particular, as Justin London puts it, "normal speech is ... only 'locally rhythmic,' in that it is only within the context of a breath group or subgroup that one finds patterns of stress or accent. By contrast, in music one normally fits successive motifs and phrases into a common, continuous metric framework."³⁸ In speech,

³⁶ "Mendosè illud fit à nonnullis, dum carmina hexametra recitant, ut totidem versibus impetum vocis modúmque definiant, aut in pentametris hæreant ad cæsuram, vel ante dissyllabam dictionem, qua vulgò ejusmodi versiculi clauduntur. Lex ea teneri debet, ut eo usque vox procurrat, dum sententia sit absoluta: nisi fortè protrahatur verborum complexio tam longa, ut uno spiritu volvi non possit: tum enim modicè licebit in medio consistere." Franciscus [Franz] Lang, *Dissertatio de Actione scenica, cum Figuris eandem explicantibus, et Observationibus quibusdam de Arte Comica, Auctore P. Francisco Lang, Societatis Jesu. Accesserunt imagines symbolicae pro exhibitione et vestitu theatri* (Monachii [Munich]: Typis Mariae Magdaleneae Riedlin, Viduae, 1727), 60.

³⁷ Some of the basic compositional procedures typical of much *recitativo semplice* are described in Edward O. D. Downes, "'Secco' recitative in early classical 'Opera Seria' (1720-80)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 14, no. 1 (1961). A more detailed analysis of the compositional techniques of recitative used in sacred opera of the mid-seventeenth century is found in Margaret Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court 1631-1668* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), 99-176. For the first similarly close analysis of early eighteenth-century theatrical recitative, see Dale E. Monson, "'Recitativo semplice' in the 'opere serie' of G. B. Pergolesi and his contemporaries" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1983). On recitative in Viennese opera during the period of the development of *recitativo semplice* see Glixon, "Recitative in 17th-century Venetian opera". A useful summary of typical harmonic procedures (expanding on Downes' earlier observations) is given in Dale E. Monson and Jack Westrup, "Recitative: before 1800," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L Macy (www.grovemusic.com, accessed 31 March 2006).

³⁸ London, "Rhythm."

the stress and timing rules of each language create irregular rhythms which are organised around verbal accents created by variations of dynamic, duration or pitch intonation, or combinations of these, which give prominence to particular syllables.³⁹ In declamation, these variations will often be more exaggerated, and in poetic recitation the accents will generally be metrically organised, but the principal parameters of accentuation – dynamic, duration and pitch – remain those found in ordinary speech. In music, accent is also marked primarily by dynamic and duration, often reinforced by pitch features including harmonic goals, melodic shape, and inflexions such as ornaments which highlight significant points of arrival. In metrical music these accents may be temporarily displaced but it is a defining feature of metre that the underlying accent pattern remains perceptible.

Accent in *recitativo semplice* thus necessarily holds in tension a combination of verbal prosodic accent and musical accent, incorporating some markers from one domain and some from the other, in combinations which may vary at different times and in different expressive contexts. While the parameters for marking accents overlap to a significant degree between speech and music, the extra markers added by music, including harmony and rhythmic notation, will tend to reinforce (or alternatively to contradict) verbal accent. These markers therefore have to be handled carefully and flexibly if they are not to compromise the natural accent patterns of speech, for example through the imposition of regular metre on recitative, or through placing stress on an unstressed syllable in metrical music.

This is a point addressed with commendable clarity by Giuseppe Tartini in his otherwise largely impenetrable *Trattato di Musica* (1754). Tartini (who, incidentally, was educated in rhetoric at the Scuole Pie in Capodistria)⁴⁰, considers the question of prosody in relation to his harmonic theory of cadences, applied to the solo vocal music of his own day.⁴¹ He points

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Now Koper, Slovenia. See Pierluigi Petrobelli, "Tartini, Giuseppe,," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L Macy (www.grovemusic.com, accessed 6 January 2007).

⁴¹ Tartini evidently had little time for the literary debates about metrical theories of long and short syllables in classical Greek and Latin poetry and the applicability of these to Italian poetry which had so exercised Mei, and would later continue to fire debate between Manfredini and Arteaga (below). As he notes brusquely, "From the cadences reduced to bars there come the musical accents – that is, long and short accents, in the same sense as long and short syllables. Whether the rhythm of the Greeks means this or something else matters nothing to me. I mean short and long accent." (Dalle cadenze ridotte a battuta nascono gli accenti musicali, cioè accenti lunghi, e brevi nello stesso senso, che sillabe lunghe, e brevi. Se il ritmo de' Greci voglia dir questo, o altro, nulla a me. Io

out that the wrong musical stress will alter the perceived length of syllables, for example a dactyl (“bar-ba-ra”)⁴² loses its distinctive rhythm if the last syllable falls on a stressed beat. When displaced in this way, even if the last note is written short it is still heard as long, and “neither the diligence of the singer in delivering it, nor the art of the composer in shortening the last note as much as he can, can remedy the fact, which thus inevitably follows.”⁴³ Correct musical scansion is therefore vital, particularly at cadences where the harmonic rhythm reinforces (or potentially contradicts) the scansion of the text. Tartini’s comments are directed to the composer’s responsibility in text setting, but they also have important implications for performers. First, the correct and natural accentuation of the text is vital in delivery. If, however, the composition is faulty, creating an incorrect word stress, no amount of effort on the part of the performer in trying to deliver it naturally will be effective.

One of the challenges in any kind of vocal music in relation to rhythm is therefore to negotiate the interface between the related but not entirely compatible sets of accent characteristics deriving from words and music. In metrical music the balance is firmly on the side of musical accent, but in recitative the balance is tipped markedly in the direction of natural speech accent. One of the defining characteristics and at the same time a fundamental problem of *recitativo semplice* both in composition and performance is consequently to settle on a convincing solution which finds a point (or perhaps a range) on the spectrum between speech and song which retains the rhetorical flexibility of what Mancini calls a “perfect and simple spoken declamation” without losing its sense of musical coherence.

Prosodic accent: ‘quantity’, ‘quality’ and intonation

If the principal markers of accent in speech are dynamic, duration and pitch, the relative contribution of each element to accentuation varies in different languages, a cause of contention in debates about how to set words to music in a way that will most effectively convey the natural rhythms of speech. The issue of prosody, and in particular the musical

intendo accento lungo, e breve). Italian text in Tartini, *Trattato*, 115. Translation in Johnson, “Tartini’s ‘Trattato di Musica Seconda la Vera Scienza dell’ Armonia’: An Annotated Translation with Commentary”, 294.

⁴² Tartini’s choice of the name “Barbara” for his example is striking, suggesting a pun on the linguistic “*barbarismo*” that would occur if the accented syllable is misplaced on an unaccented beat.

⁴³ “... nè la diligenza del musico nel pronunciarla, nè l’arte del compositore nell’abbreviar la ultima nota quanto si può rimedia al fatto, che così inevitabilmente succede.” Tartini, *Trattato*, 116.

scansion of long and short syllables, had occupied Italian musicians since well before the advent of the *stile recitativo*. With the increasing humanist emphasis on text expression in the late fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries, musicians gave serious consideration to the correct matching of musical and verbal accents and syllable length, or “quantity” as well as sensitivity to punctuation and the coherent projection of ideas – even if, as many complained, these principles remained far from universally applied in polyphonic composition.⁴⁴ For example, Giovanni de’ Bardi instructed his protégé Caccini in 1578 that “above all else your principal objective should be not to spoil the verse in singing by making a long [syllable] short, or a short one long.”⁴⁵ Bardi is here not speaking about recitative, a style which appears not yet to have been in use by Caccini, but he is nevertheless addressing the reform of solo song, and in this his views were clearly influenced by the researches of Girolamo Mei. Six years earlier Mei had written to Galilei, a member of Bardi’s circle,

Since you wish to know if I hold the music and the singing of the ancients to have been more beautiful or uglier than ours, I do not know how to answer this more clearly than to say that pleasures delight me a lot more when they are less artful and more natural and more in keeping with the capacities with which they are reasonably equipped and to which they are consequently most appropriate. Since the accents of the voice and their timing, and finally speech itself, are ordered in such a way that through their means what is signified by the person using them is understood by the listener, whenever this effect can be brought about with the help of these aids most efficaciously, this will always receive my approval.⁴⁶

For Mei, clarity is a matter not just of good diction but of conveying meaning clearly through “natural” declamation which accurately preserves the speech-like rhythms and accent patterns of the spoken language. The challenge in putting this into practice, then, both for the composers influenced by Mei’s ideas and for performers of their works, was to convey the

⁴⁴ Harrán cites a range of sources before 1600; see Don. Harrán, *Word-tone relations in musical thought: from antiquity to the seventeenth century*, *Musicological Studies and Documents No. 40* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, W. Germany: American Institute of Musicology, Hanssler-Verlag, 1986), 375ff. See also Palisca’s discussion of Giovanni del Lago’s views in an unpublished letter of the 1540s, in Palisca, *Humanism*, 339-40.

⁴⁵ Giovanni de Bardi, “The ‘Discourse Addressed to Giulio Caccini, Called the Roman, on Ancient Music and Good Singing,’” in *The Florentine Camerata: documentary studies and translations*, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 119-21.

⁴⁶ Girolamo Mei, “Letter to Vincenzo Galilei, 8 May 1572,” in *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 74-5. Note the reference to appropriateness as a criterion for creating pleasure, evoking the virtue of decorum.

rhythm of the words in a way that reflected as naturally as possible the accentuation structure of the language.

While the terminology of “long” and “short” syllables continued to be used to describe accented and unaccented syllables throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,⁴⁷ already in the early 1540s Mei had questioned the validity of quantity as a determinant of accent in Italian. In his unpublished treatise *Della compositura delle parole*, he compared the quantitative rhythmic and metrics of Greek, as set out by the classical authorities, with the structure of contemporary spoken Tuscan, concluding that the timing and pitch characteristics of the two languages were entirely different. Unlike Greek and Latin poetry, in which syllables are long or short, spoken Tuscan was made up of syllables of approximately equal length, organised in groups marked by acute accents (pitch inflexions); it was the collective length of the accented groups rather than the length of individual syllables that was most significant in defining the characteristic rhythm of the language. One could impose a quantitative structure on Tuscan poetry, but the fundamental difference in language structures meant that this would never fully correspond to the effect achieved in Greek or Latin.⁴⁸

The definition of accent thus became a very practical issue when attempting to set words to music in a way that faithfully reflected speech rhythm, since rhythmic notation inevitably imposed a quantitative structure on the text. As Peri’s preface to *Euridice* makes clear, his attempt to create a new intermediate form of recitation between speech and song was explicitly modelled on the classical Greek practice of recitation as Mei had described it, however this presented a problem in relation to rhythm if Greek and Tuscan were organised rhythmically on fundamentally incompatible principles. Peri’s solution to this dilemma was predicated on his observation that Italian speakers do pause on certain vowels while rushing through others, with the result that the spoken language contains a mixture of sustained,

⁴⁷ See, for example, Marcello’s ironic guidance for opera composers: “As to the theatre, the modern composer should know nothing about it; he should have no understanding of poetry, or diction, of long and short syllables ...” Benedetto Marcello, “Il Teatro Alla Moda - Part I. Translated by Reinhard G. Pauly,” *Musical Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1948): 381.

⁴⁸ This paragraph summarises Palisca’s account of Mei’s treatise in Palisca, *Humanism*, 348-9.

diastematic motion and continuous, gliding movement. Further, the proportions of these two kinds of delivery vary according to the affections:

I recognized likewise that in our speech certain sounds are intoned in such a way that a harmony can be built upon them, and in the course of speaking we pass through many that are not so intoned, until we reach another that permits a movement to a new consonance. Keeping in mind those manners and accents that serve us in our grief and joy and similar states, I made the bass move in time with these, faster or slower according to the affections.⁴⁹

Thus, Peri's melodic shape attempts to imitate the pitch contour of speech, accompanying the sustained, diastematic pitches with consonant harmonies while allowing the faster syllables which in speech would be non-diastematic or "continuous" to pass through free dissonances in between. This insight represented a significant advance in accurately reflecting speech rhythm in music, even if Peri's experimental style did not succeed in striking an entirely satisfactory balance between the demands of music and speech.⁵⁰

The conceptual basis of recitative may thus be summed up as deriving from Mei's understanding of classical Greek recitation of heroic poetry, which used a combination of diastematic and continuous pitch, and was thus half way between speech and song. This concept was modernised by Peri and his contemporaries, including Caccini and Emilio de' Cavalieri, by adapting it to the significantly different prosody of Tuscan poetry, which they set to diastematic pitch and harmonic accompaniment.

In *recitativo semplice*, like Peri's *stile recitativo*, melodic formulas broadly mimic the inflections of speech but are structured around functional (though still highly flexible) harmony. Rhythmically, it more directly reflects normal Tuscan speech (and is therefore more "natural") by reverting to mainly equal note values, in line with Mei's contention that the

⁴⁹ Italian text and translation in *Ibid.*, 429. Palisca gives a more detailed analysis of this passage in the same article, and also in his "Peri and the theory of Recitative", in Palisca, *Studies in the history of Italian music and music theory*, 452-66.

⁵⁰ Nor did this situation immediately change with composers of the younger generation born around the turn of the century. See, for example, on the operas of Landi and Virgilio Mazzocchi, Murata, *Operas*, 100. Algarotti's approving references to Peri as a model for renewed opera reform more than a century later suggest that the elegant clarity and simplicity of his concept remained influential, none the less. See Francesco Algarotti, *An essay on the opera written in Italian by Count Algarotti ...* (London: printed for L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1767), 31-4. For an analysis of the differences between Peri's and Monteverdi's recitative styles, see Gary Tomlinson, "Madrigal, Monody, and Monteverdi's 'Via Naturale Alla Immitatione'," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 1 (1981).

language uses primarily qualitative rather than quantitative accent. Longer durations may be used to emphasise particularly stressed or important syllables, eg at cadences, or as broad indications of pacing, and sometimes to fit the conventions of writing in 4/4 what is actually in much more irregular, flexible rhythm. The lack of metre and mostly slow harmonic movement in *recitativo semplice* frees the singer from too restrictive a framework of musical accents needing to be coordinated precisely with the basso continuo, other than at cadences.

I have dwelt on the origins of recitative at some length because, for the purposes of the present study, the great significance of Peri's innovation was that it represented a plausible prototype for the organisation of rhythm, pitch and harmony to put this concept into practice for modern theatrical music, and in doing so, provided the conceptual model for what would later become *recitativo semplice*. The writings associated with Bardi's circle are also the only Italian sources before the appearance of Tosi's *Opinioni* in 1723 to deal with recitative performance in any detail, and the only substantial Italian treatments of opera composition before the nineteenth century.⁵¹ While Alessandro Manfredi's 1761 translation of Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* was used at the *conservatori* in Naples, even that addressed recitative only in its five-page final chapter.⁵² Instead, composition training continued to focus on counterpoint, not coincidentally the subject of almost all of the previous 231 pages of Manfredi's edition. Recitative composition, like recitative performance, remained largely in the domain of the practical world of the professional theatre rather than that of theoretical speculation or technical analysis.

While Tosi, and later, Mancini each devoted a chapter of their singing treatises to recitative, even they gave no serious attention to questions of verbal metre and accent. This seems surprising at first sight, but is less so when one considers that in metrical music the accent is

⁵¹ See Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, eds., *Opera production and its resources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 310.

⁵² Johann Joseph Fux, *Salita al Parnasso, o sia guida alla regolare composizione della musica. Con nuovo, e certo Metodo non per anche in ordine si esatto data alla luce, e composta da Giovanni Giuseppe Fux principale maestro di cappella Della S. C. e R. C. Maestà di Carlo VI. Imperatore de' Romani fedelmente trasportata dal Latino nell'idioma Italiano dal Sacerdote Alessandro Manfredi cittadino reggiano, e professore di musica* (Carpi: Nella Stamperia del Pubblico per il Carmignani, 1761; reprint, facs. edn. Bologna: Forni, 2002). The chapter on recitative is at pp.232-237. For an analysis of its significance within Fux's teaching and thought, see Susan Wollenberg, "The Unknown 'Gradus'," *Music & Letters* 51, no. 4 (1970). An English translation of Fux's final chapters not concerned with counterpoint is given in Johann Joseph Fux and Susan Wollenberg, "'Gradus ad Parnassum' (1725): Concluding Chapters," *Music Analysis* 11, no. 2/3 (1992).

generally unequivocal, while in recitative it was modelled on speech and thus required no particular explanation in musical terms. While correct accentuation was affirmed as being of great importance in delivery, it was expected to arise from the natural, speech-like delivery of the text rather than from music-theoretical considerations. Any problem in accentuation would thus be a verbal rather than a musical one, and its solution would correspondingly be based on remedial work on good Tuscan language and declamation, perhaps along the lines suggested by Perrucci. Apparently not distinguishing between spoken and sung declamation, he classed faults in word-stress along with mistakes in the pronunciation of open and closed vowels (both offences against *puritas*), as defects caused by ignorance which were to be remedied by studying a book such as the *Prosodia Italiana* of his fellow Palermitan, Placido Spadafora.⁵³

The concept of recitative as a form of recitation or poetic declamation (as opposed to singing) thus remained fundamental throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The idea of Tuscan spoken recitation as the model for delivery was, if anything, strengthened during this period with the entrenchment of the taxonomy of *recitativo semplice*, *recitativo obbligato*, *arioso* and *aria* in the eighteenth century, reinforced by the influence of *parlando* delivery deriving from the more realistic style of opera buffa. Arguments about recitative's "authenticity" as a recreation of ancient practice receded into the background as it became an established modern genre in its own right. Theoretical debates instead focussed on matters of aesthetics (is it a valid form of *imitatio*? does it appropriately or "naturally" express the text) and practical questions about how to make it work best (is it too boring, or conversely too harmonically adventurous?). In all of this writing, however, the assumption is always that recitative is modelled on declamation and that its purpose is to convey and express the text. This fundamental point is essential to understanding both the musical literature about

⁵³ "Difetti dell'incuria degli Attori saranno, o l' Ignoranza, o la Negligenza: l' Ignoranza, è il non sapere come si dicano le parole se brevei, o se lunghe ... Imparino costoro la *Prosodia Italiana* del Padre Spadafuora mio Concittadino, dove ritroveranno, come si devono le parole proferire se brevi, o se lunghe, ed un trattato delle lettere da pronunciarsi aperte, o chiuse sul fine, la quale mi rimetto." Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso*, ed. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato ed. (Firenze: 1961), 137-8. The volume to which he refers is Placido Spadafora, *Prosodia italiana, ouero l'Arte con l'uso degli accenti nella volgar fauella d'Italia, accordati dal padre Placido Spadafora palermitano, della compagnia di Giesu. Con la giunta nel fine di tre brieui trattati: l'vno della Zeta, e sua varieta; l'altro dell'E, ed O, chiusi ed aperti. Il terzo della buona, e rea pronuntia nelle due lingue, italiana, e latina*, Seconda impressione corretta, e migliorata ed. (In Venetia: appresso Pietro d'Orlandi, 1684).

delivery and the way rhetoric and theatre literature illuminates recitative performance practice.

Pacing

Metre and accent govern the organisation of rhythmic events in recitative at the level of detail, but larger scale rhythm is equally important in influencing the rhetorical and dramatic effectiveness of delivery. In metrical music, one of the main determinants of rhythmic motion at this broader level is tempo; to avoid the implication of regular metre, however, I will here avoid the term 'tempo' and instead refer to pacing. Pacing may be conceived as being made up of the overall rate of delivery, variations of speed within individual phrases and larger units, and the length of pauses between phonological segments and phrases (phrase articulation).

It is the composer's rhythmic setting of the text which of course provides the primary outline of recitative pacing through the specification of longer and shorter note values, faster or slower harmonic rhythm, and the placement of rests within and between phrases. These materials may be manipulated to highlight particular syllables, words or phrases, to accelerate or retard the general motion, or simply to fill out what is really a freely structured and flexible rhythm into the nominal 4/4 used by convention for notating *recitativo semplice*. It is correspondingly the composer who takes the first responsibility for creating variety, avoiding tedium and providing the raw material for expression.⁵⁴

It is clear from the sources cited above, however, that the notated rhythm was not to be read literally or metrically, but instead declaimed flexibly in accordance with the sentiments of the words. How was this to be done? What principles may have moulded the moment to moment decisions required of singers in pacing the recitative convincingly, bearing in mind the range of contingencies to be taken into account such as the dramatic situation, the affect and the character being portrayed, not to mention those practical factors external to the drama itself, such as the size and acoustic of the theatre? In the absence of tempo indications (virtually never provided for *recitativo semplice*), how did performers make decisions about

⁵⁴ On the composer's role in setting out articulation and expression, see Reinhard Strohm, "Rezitativ," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel; New York: Bärenreiter, 1994-2006).

the overall speed of delivery? Sources grounded in the rhetorical tradition provide some guidance on each of these matters.

It was observed in the previous chapter that variety is a principle fundamental to rhetorical delivery, both from the point of view of using all possible resources to powerfully express the *concetti* and *affetti* in the words, and more generally in order to maintain the interest of the audience by avoiding a boring “sameness”. From both of these perspectives, variation of rhythm and pacing are important in declamation and consequently also in its musical manifestation as recitative.

A number of authors dealt with pacing as one amongst a list of the parameters of declamation which should be varied for the sake of expressiveness. At its most basic level, this is a matter of reflecting the pace of events as they are narrated or, in a drama, as they are acted out. The *Ad Herennium* author, for instance, observed that “our delivery will be somewhat rapid when we narrate what we wish to show was done vigorously, and it will be slower when we narrate something else done in leisurely fashion.”⁵⁵

When it came to the musical setting of words, the pacing of text delivery was also a central issue for Girolamo Mei in his critique of polyphony, so seminal to the advent of monody. In polyphonic music “the use of many [melismatic] notes without any natural fittingness”⁵⁶ together with the combining of voices moving at different speeds such that “the soprano hardly moves, while the tenor flies, and the bass goes strolling in slipper-socks”⁵⁷ confuses the listener and detracts from the expression of the affections, since “a tempo [numero] intermediate between rapid and slow reveals a poised spirit, while a rapid one manifests an excited spirit, and a slow tempo a sluggish and lazy one”.⁵⁸ To achieve clarity and power of text expression, the scansion of words and music must be well matched and appropriate to the meaning being expressed.

⁵⁵ III.XIV.24. Translation in *Ad C. Herennium: De ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium) with an English translation by Harry Caplan*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954).

⁵⁶ Mei, “Letter to Vincenzo Galilei, 8 May 1572,” 62.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-9.

Nor should we overlook the inestimable negligence of our musicians [ie polyphonic composers] with respect to note values [*numero*] and rhythm in the various parts, whether each part is considered by itself or the entire corpus of them together. Extremely frequently, if not always, this is contrary to the nature of what would express the idea that the words signify, which arguably ought to be pursued beyond any other consideration ... For who is so dense as not easily to understand, if he looks around himself, that an infuriated person speaks hurriedly, and that the slowness of a suppliant's speech is different from the slowness of one who is calm?⁵⁹

This last point is of course an important one: pacing is important for signifying affect. For more subtle differentiation of emotional states, pacing must be sensitively combined with the manipulation of other parameters such as articulation, timbre and dynamic.

This was a position entirely consonant with that of Caccini's patron Giovanni de' Bardi, who went a step further than Mei by not only advocating the superiority of solo singing over polyphony, but setting out a specific program for the reform of solo singing in his discourse addressed to Caccini in 1578. It was observed above that there is nothing in this letter to suggest that Bardi had specifically in mind at that time what would come over the next twenty years to be established as the *stile recitativo*, but his guidelines for both composition and performance clearly indicate that in relation to tempo he envisages a style that is flexible – very much the manner adopted by Caccini in *Le nuove musiche*.

When singing alone or to the lute, harpsichord, or other instrument, one may contract or stretch the measure at will, granted that it is up to the singer to lead the measure according to his judgment.⁶⁰

On the local level, this approach suggests an idea of *rubato*, but in combination with the Florentine concern with text expression, it may also indicate a larger scale variation of pace at the level of the phrase or larger section, in response to the affect of the words.

Pacing also consists in the pauses between phrases. According to the author of *Il Corago*, the singer is advised that he "should not sing continuously, even if there is no pause in the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 62-3.

⁶⁰ Bardi, "The 'Discourse Addressed to Giulio Caccini, Called the Roman, on Ancient Music and Good Singing,'" 125.

musical part; but at the end of each thought, the singer should stop a bit".⁶¹ The *perspicuitas* provided by the proper observation of punctuation is thus to be reinforced by the singer even if this contradicts the 'musical part'. More than a century later, Algarotti made a similar observation:

with the recitative ... there are certain suspensions of the voice, certain short pauses, and a certain insisting on one place more than on another, that cannot be communicated, and are therefore resigned over to [the singer's] sagacity and discretion. For it is in such minute requirements, that chiefly consists the delicacy of expression, which impresseth the sense of words, not only on the mind, but on the hearts of all who hear them.⁶²

The singer's subtle control of pacing was also axiomatic for Quantz, who noted that "in an Italian recitative the singer does not always adhere to the tempo, and has the freedom to express what he is to execute quickly or slowly, as he considers best, and as the words require."⁶³

Mancini held the composer responsible for setting a libretto to music in a way that reflects both the punctuation and the affective content of the text:

When spoken [i.e. semplice] recitative has been written by a learned and knowledgeable master, it is extremely natural. For not only are the simple notes that constitute it placed in the natural range of each voice, but they are articulated and shaped in such a way that they perfectly imitate a natural discourse. Hence all the periods can be distinguished throughout, and question marks, exclamation marks, and full stops can be apprehended.⁶⁴

Vivaldi's recitative demonstrates this kind of "natural discourse" not only in reflecting the punctuation, but by manipulating the pace through more or less active harmonic and melodic motion.⁶⁵ It is ultimately the singer, however, who must bring the recitative to life through clear, carefully paced and expressive declamation. Thus, in addition to variations of

⁶¹ Fabbri and Pompilio, eds., *Il corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche*, 90. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 632.

⁶² Algarotti, *An essay on the opera written in Italian by Count Algarotti ...* 52-3.

⁶³ Quantz, *On playing the flute*, 292.

⁶⁴ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 237. Trans. Wye Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 871-2.

⁶⁵ Reinhard Strohm, *Giustino by Antonio Vivaldi: Introduction, Critical Notes and Critical Commentary* (Milano: Ricordi, 1991), 20.

dynamic and timbre, careful control of pacing is required, both in the relative speed of particular words and phrases, and in the way silence is used not just for the clear articulation of the punctuation (a function of *perspicuitas*) but as an expressive device.

Overall speed of delivery

While expression and variety demand that the pacing of delivery fluctuate in accordance with the meaning of the words, there is likely to be an overall normative pace of delivery, a median point from which these fluctuations are experienced by the listener as deviating. This general or normative speed of delivery will be an important factor in defining a stylistic "feel" that characterises the kind of declamation to be used in recitative, whether conversational and parlando, or more deliberate and stylised. As with so many aspects of *recitativo semplice*, the scores lack indications of the overall speed of delivery. Without tempo markings, which in any case would be of limited help in non-metrical music, even the limited inferences which have been drawn by scholars in relation to metrical music from comparative lists of tempi, later metronome markings and so on are of no help in relation to *recitativo semplice*. Similarly, where in metrical music time signature, predominant note denominations, ornamentation and so on can provide clues to tempo,⁶⁶ these are of limited help for recitative, given its relatively undifferentiated, conventional notation.

Comparative studies have suggested some clues. Edward Downes compared the predominant note values in recitative of the late seventeenth and early- to mid-eighteenth centuries and concluded that between 1680 and 1700 there was a progressive diminution of note values which he took to indicate a generalised increase in performance speed.⁶⁷ As Mary Cyr has pointed out, however, a similar trend in eighteenth-century French recitative was actually associated with the opposite effect, a generalised slowing of delivery. On the other hand, as Rousseau noted in his *Lettre sur la musique française* (Paris, 1753), this slowing down of French recitative was accompanied and probably reinforced by a concurrent increase in

⁶⁶ A useful summary of the evidence is given in Frederick Neumann and Jane Stevens, *Performance practices of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), Part I.

⁶⁷ Downes, "'Secco' recitative," 57.

ornamentation,⁶⁸ a development not seen in Italian recitative which became, if anything, more formulaic and straightforward, and which Rameau confirmed was performed considerably more quickly.⁶⁹

If the diminution of note values in Italian recitative cannot be considered in itself to demonstrate an increase in speed, Downes' observation about the simplification of harmonic structures in what he calls "early Classical" opera from around 1700 may lend more weight to his proposition.⁷⁰ The straightforward, often *parlando* recitative that became increasingly characteristic of eighteenth-century opera lends itself to rapid delivery in part because it requires little harmonic underpinning, whereas the ear needs time to take in and make sense of more complex harmonies and melodic shapes, particularly where they are changing quickly. As Strohm has observed in relation to Vivaldi's *Giustino*, for example, "Vivaldi does not overload his recitatives with cadences or expressive devices, so that the *general* pace is ... rather fast".⁷¹ This is not to suggest that eighteenth-century recitatives are devoid of fast moving and complex harmony – virtually every *dramma per musica* (including *Giustino*) contains impassioned passages with those characteristics – however the increasing predominance of *parlando* style accompanied by predominantly straightforward galant harmonies nevertheless lends itself to an overall tendency to quick delivery.

While these musical considerations are suggestive, the predominant consideration in recitative delivery was always the clear and engaging declamation of the text. This in itself implies some upper and lower limits on speed for the sake of comprehensibility, especially in the acoustic environment of a theatre or church. But clarity is only a necessary-but-not-sufficient condition, a means to the more important goal of expression. From this point of view some guidance was to be had from the rhetorical tradition. Quintilian, for instance, counsels moderation in speed. He warns against

⁶⁸ The slowing of French recitative since Lully's time and the attendant increase in ornamentation, as well as a tendency for it to be more sung and less declaimed are all described by Mary Cyr, "Declamation and expressive singing in recitative," in *Opera and Vivaldi*, ed. Michael Collins and Elise K. Kirk (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 236.

⁶⁹ *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris, 1768), article « *Débit* », pp. 139-140. Cited in *Ibid.* Rameau criticised a too rapid delivery in French recitative as "*débit* à l'*italienne*".

⁷⁰ Downes, "'Secco' recitative," 57.

⁷¹ Strohm, *Giustino*, 20.

confusing our utterance by excessive volubility, which results in disregard of punctuation, loss of emotional power, and sometimes in the clipping of words. The opposite fault is excessive slowness of speech, which is a sign of lack of readiness in invention, [and] tends by its sluggishness to render our hearers inattentive ... Our speech must be ready, but not precipitate, under control, but not slow.⁷²

This advice is concerned in part, of course, with practical considerations of *puritas* (not clipping the words) and *perspicuitas* (projecting the punctuation), however the potential loss of emotional power is squarely in the expressive domain of *decorum*: delivery cannot be appropriately matched to the subject matter if the text is rushed through so that its affective weight is not taken in. The opposite fault of slowness would tend to make a classical orator look dull, since his speeches were supposed to be (or at least to appear to be) extemporaneous, and slowness suggested that he was running out of ideas. This is ostensibly not a consideration for a stage performer delivering another author's words, however there is perhaps an analogous issue in acting: too slow a delivery may leave the impression that the performer is struggling to remember his or her lines. In any case, the potential for slow delivery to become boring (thereby introducing the vice of *monotonia*) is present in almost any context.

A similar concern with moderation in pacing is evident in the injunctions of early modern rhetoricians such as Francesco Sansovino (1521-1586), whose advice on Tuscan *pronunzia* includes what is essentially a condensed version of Quintilian's view: one "should speak neither hurriedly nor tediously because the one manner does not impress on the intellect of the listeners the things that are said, and the other creates boredom".⁷³ Again, *perspicuitas* and *decorum* must be maintained, and *monotonia* avoided.

Another rhetoric which shows the continuity between classical and early modern views on delivery is the *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae* of the Dominican priest Luis de Granada.⁷⁴ De Granada

⁷² XI. iii. 52. Translation from Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols., *Loeb Classical Library* (London: William Heinemann, 1920-2).

⁷³ " ... non si deve favellar correndo, né tediosamente farsi sentire, perché l'una maniera non imprime nell'intelletto degl'ascoltanti le cose dette e l'altra fa noia oltra modo". Francesco Sansovino, *La Rhetorica di Francesco Sansouino. Al magnanimo signor Pietro Aretino* (1543).

⁷⁴ Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae* (Olysippone [Lisbon]: 1575). See Ch1, fn. 52.

takes up Quintilian's point about moderation in speed, but carries it a step further: good delivery is not merely a matter of finding a moderate speed which is neither too fast nor too slow, as Quintilian's comments might be taken to imply, but rather it consists in varying the pacing within appropriately limits throughout (while, like de Sommi, below, erring on the side of slowness).

And there is another fault which is too much slowness in speaking, in which by a slow delivery they employ rather long intervals throughout almost the whole speech, whose opposite is the fault of too much speed; therefore in the manner of speaking, in its speed, and its slowness, variety must be preserved. But speed is a greater error than slowness.⁷⁵

While de Granada does not spell out principles to guide this variation, it would presumably respond to the subject matter and the requirements of the different sections of a speech along the lines suggested in the *Ad Herrenium* (above) and by Cicero.⁷⁶

Moving to the practical world of the theatre, Leone de Sommi's advice about speed of delivery was particularly forceful and, by contrast with Quintilian, quite one-sided. He has one of his interlocutors, Veridico, say that "I prohibit, like a vicious pestilence, [actors] hurrying, in fact I oblige them, as far as possible, to recite very slowly."⁷⁷ As one might expect in the theatre, his first reason for this is clarity (*perspicuitas*); the actors are "to express slowly all of the words right to the last syllable, without allowing their voices to drop, as many do, so that often the spectator, to his great displeasure, loses the conclusion of the sentence".⁷⁸ In response to the query that such a slow delivery must seem unnatural, however, Veridico adds a new reason: part of its purpose is to allow listeners time to take in

⁷⁵ "est & aliud vitium, quod nimie tarditatis est, quo lenta pronuntiatione, ne longioribus intervallis tota fere concione utuntur, cui contrarium est vitium nimie celeritatis, ideo, & in vocis figura, & in celeritate, & tarditate varietas servanda; sed maior error est velocitas, quam tarditas." Ibid., VI, 6., quoted in Giovanni Battista Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae, in quo insunt omnes praeceptiones, quae ad perfectum oratorem, instituendum, ex antiquis, & recentioribus Rhetorum monumentis, accurate desumptae sunt, ordineque admirabili, ac facillimo in unum velut colum digestae, ita ut uno intuitu omnia, quae ad artem pertinent inveniri possint. Opus utilissimum non modo Oratoribus & Concionatoribus, sed etiam omnibus his, qui Rhetorica operam dant, per necessarium* (Venice: apud Haeredes Melchioris Sessae, 1599), 134v.

⁷⁶ see, for example, *De oratore*, III. 216

⁷⁷ "Come vizio pestilente, poi, li proibisco lo affrettarsi, anzi li costringo, potendo, a recitar molto adagio." Leone de' Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche: a cura di Ferruccio Marotti* (Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1968), 40.

⁷⁸ "facendoli esprimere con tardità ben tutte le parole fin all'ultime sillabe, senza lasciarsi mancar la voce, come molti fanno, onde spesso lo spettatore perde con gran dispiacere la conclusione della sentenza." Ibid.

the poetry without constant pausing that would break up the delivery in a way that would seem affected and boring (*induca affectationem et noiam*).⁷⁹ This comment is perhaps intended as an antidote to those who too zealously follow the advice of the *Ad Herennium* author that pauses “leave the hearer time to think” (below).⁸⁰

At the turn of the eighteenth century, another man of the theatre, Andrea Perrucci, was as concerned about rushed delivery and comprehensibility as Sommi, however his view of the ideal performance speed at which actors should aim seems to be different from that of the pioneering cinquecento author. Where Sommi implies that theatrical delivery should be slower than normal speech to allow the audience to savour the poetry, Perrucci’s ideal is a more naturalistic, urbanely conversational delivery, devoid of the affectations of courtly speech.⁸¹ Actors who hurry must be corrected

because in acting one speaks exactly as is done in cities with friends, with princes or with members of the household; Andronicus taught that the theatre is ‘*Speculum quotidianae Vitae*’ [a mirror of everyday life]; rushing is thus a defect and confuses the senses ... The remedy is to make them speak slowly, and in time, which makes them listen in particular to the last words which, in those who rush, are swallowed and imperfectly convey the sense [of the words] to the ear of the listener, because of a lack of breath.⁸²

While Perrucci’s antidote to rushing sounds is not dissimilar to Sommi’s deliberately-slow delivery, it is apparent that for Perrucci this is a corrective exercise designed to make the actor focus on the unstressed syllables and words which are most prone to be lost in hurried delivery, so that these will be properly projected in reciting “up to speed”.⁸³ Whether the apparent increase in spoken delivery speed between Sommi and Perrucci represents a

⁷⁹ Ibid., 41. “Noia” (boredom) may also be translated as “annoyance”; perhaps Sommi intends some shading of both meanings.

⁸⁰ III. vi. 22. Translation in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 195.

⁸¹ Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 117.

⁸² “Perche nel Rappresentare si parla appunto come per le Città si fa con gli Amici, co’ Principi, e con i Familiari; insegnando Andronico, che la Comedia sia: *Speculum quotidianae Vitae*; Difetto ancor è il precipitare, e confondere i sensi ... Il Rimedio sarà farli dire largo, ed a tempo, che facciano sentire particolarmente l’ultime parole, che in costoro, che precipitano necessariamente s’ingoiano, e lasciano imperfetto il sens nell’orecchio di chi ascolta, per mancanza di fiato.” Ibid., 137.

⁸³ This idea is reminiscent of the technique in modern singing pedagogy of concentrating on the “little notes” in order to maintain a coherent (though not necessarily legato) vocal line.

general change during this period is difficult to say, and to equate this with a corresponding trend in musical declamation would be even more problematic; however it is interesting to note that such a trend would at least not be inconsistent with the musical evidence discussed above.

We have no treatise specifically devoted to Italian singing until the appearance of Tosi's *Opinioni* in 1723, a quarter of a century after Perrucci's volume, and Tosi has frustratingly little to say specifically about the overall speed of delivery.⁸⁴ In a sense this is not surprising, however, since, as we have seen above, for him virtually all matters of recitative delivery derive organically from the words and hence do not need to be addressed separately as musical issues. His disparaging account of the many faults to be heard in theatrical recitative is almost entirely taken up with matters of declamation and text expression rather than of musicianship per se, the single exception being singing out of tune, an issue of basic, almost mechanical competency. The key to good recitative delivery is conveying "the force of the words" and this is something to be taught by a competent singing master, not learnt from a book.⁸⁵

Having established that it is the singer's responsibility to express the words, Tosi does not let composers off the hook either. He complains that contemporary composers write recitatives that are difficult to memorise, and which "frighten those who sing them, and hear them, with unnatural Skips", "offend the Ear and Rules with the worst Modulations" and "pierce one to the Heart" with their "cruel Turns and Changes of Keys". Instead, they should "imitate the Recitatives of those Authors, who represent in them a lively Image of Nature, by Sounds which of themselves express the Sense as much as the very Words."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ In his 1743 English translation of the *Opinioni*, Galliard includes in Tosi's long list of faults in recitative performance, "There are some who sing *Recitative* ... in a languishing manner; others in a hurry ... " Tosi, *Observations*, 69. This is not a direct translation of Tosi's Italian, however, which at this point has several interesting but only tangentially related points: " ... some do not understand it, some do not make it understandable; some [sing it] beseechingly, and some disdain it; some speak it inanely and some devour it." (Chi non l'intende, e chi nol fà intendere: Chi lo mendica, e chi lo sprezza. Chi lo dice melenso, e chi lo divora). Pierfrancesco Tosi, *Opinioni de' Cantori Antichi, e Moderni o sieno osservazioni sopra il canto figurato, Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1968), 43.

⁸⁵ Tosi, *Observations*, 71.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 73-4.

While none of this relates directly to overall speed, it does suggest a view that, in the theatre at least, decorum is best served (that is, delivery is most effectively matched to the subject matter) if recitative is able to be delivered fluently and with an air of naturalness and ease – something also perhaps implied in his comment earlier in the same chapter that the theatrical style takes away all discretion to introduce artifice, so as not to “offend against the laws of natural narrative”.⁸⁷ This is not necessarily equivalent to Mancini’s more unequivocal statement fifty years later that recitative should be “loosened in such a manner that it resembles a perfect and simple spoken declamation”, but it does point in the direction of a relatively naturalistic and conversational theatrical declamation of the kind that Perrucci had described.

Thus, while the notated rhythm in *recitativo semplice* is by no means to be disregarded, it remains secondary to speech-like naturalness. Clarity and expression of the words is more important than the composer’s written rhythm. The distinctive speech rhythm of Italian comes mainly from the patterns of dynamic accent and from the pauses between phonological segments and phrases. In recitative, using declamatory “speech rhythm” rather than metrical structuring (in the musical sense) allows performers the freedom to vary the detail of individual durations and thus the exact placement of accents within the (slightly exaggerated) norms of declamatory speech. This allows the performer to manipulate the rhythmic and harmonic structure created by the composer in order to more closely approximate ordinary speech and also to use variation of rhythm and of pauses to intensify expression in a spontaneous way.

⁸⁷ “Per non offendere ne’ suoi diritti la narrativa naturale.” Pierfrancesco Tosi, *Observations on the Florid Song; or, Sentiments on the Ancient and Modern Singers. Written in Italian By Pier. Francesco Tosi, Of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard. Facsimile with a New Preface by Paul Henry Lang* (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 42.

Chapter 6 – Parameters of vocal delivery II:

Dynamic, Timbre, Pitch

“The voice is stretched taut like the strings of an instrument, to respond to each and every touch, to sound high, low, fast, slow, loud, and soft.”¹

In the performance of recitative, the different imperatives of music and speech are most contested in the domains of rhythm and pitch. There the conflicting demands of metrical rhythm and speech rhythm on the one hand and of diastematic pitch and “continuous” pitch on the other can be resolved only by a compromise which holds these conflicting imperatives in tension. In *recitativo semplice* the rhythm conflict is resolved primarily in favour of speech (see the previous chapter), the pitch conflict almost entirely in favour of music – a topic which forms the final section of this chapter.

The domains of dynamic and timbre, on the other hand, are substantially less contested in *recitativo semplice*. Both play vital roles in the demarcation of rhythm at the localised level of individual notes and syllables: in an almost entirely syllabic idiom which is characterised by many repeated pitches, changes of syllable or vowel are fundamental to the perception of rhythm, while dynamic stress plays a primary role in marking the accents which organise that rhythm into meaningful units. But this is a function that arises from the roles of dynamic and timbre in language and is not in any fundamental conflict with the demands of music. The aspect in the rhythm of recitative that is contested between speech and music is that of duration, that is, the length of rhythmic units and their organisation into larger patterns.

¹ De Oratore, III.216. Translation in Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero on the ideal orator (De oratore)*, translated, with introduction, notes, appendixes, glossary, and indexes by James M. May, Jakob Wisse (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 292.

Dynamic and timbre are important markers that delineate those durational units and patterns but they can do so equally in either metrical or non-metrical contexts, and so are not in themselves signifiers of one sphere or the other. They are important means by which rhythm is marked out, but in themselves do not determine whether that rhythm is speech based or metrical.

These localised linguistic functions of dynamic and timbre are essentially concerned with *puritas* (correct speech) and *perspicuitas* (clarity). It is the wider role of dynamic and timbre as devices for variety and expression appropriate to the subject matter (*decorum*) that are the topics of the next two sections of this chapter.

In any genre of vocal music there will be limits on the range of variation in volume and vocal tone used, but these are dictated by a combination of practicalities (for example being loud enough to be audible or not so raucous as to injure the performer's voice) and aesthetic judgement, or taste; in the domains of dynamic and timbre, the intrinsic characteristics of music are not inherently in conflict with those of speech. The precepts of the rhetorical tradition can therefore be applied in recitative considerably more simply and directly in the case of dynamic and timbre than in those of rhythm or pitch. This is particularly helpful in recovering recitative performance practice since dynamic and timbre are the parameters most conspicuously absent from recitative scores.

Why did composers not write in any indications of dynamic or timbre in recitative? Terminology was available to do this if it had been considered desirable. Markings for loud and soft, as well as for more sophisticated manipulations of crescendo and decrescendo such as the *esclamazione* and *messa di voce* had been in use since the early seventeenth century,² yet these kinds of indications were rarely if ever used in *recitativo semplice*. Equally, there was a wide vocabulary of terms to describe different tones of voice in the rhetorical literature which could readily have been added to musical scores. David Perez's occasional written instructions such as "*con molta espressione*" and "*risoluta*" in the recitatives of his *Solimano*

² Caccini's use of these terms in *Le nuove musiche*, and Mazzocchi's 'C' sign for the *messa di voce* stand out as the obvious early examples in vocal music.

(1757) stand out as exceptional because of their rarity,³ and even these concern affect rather than specific vocal timbres.

The question which began the previous paragraph is, of course, the wrong way around; clearly composers felt no need to indicate dynamic or timbre explicitly in their scores, and why would they? Recitatives were usually composed quickly and followed largely predictable patterns. In any case the composer was generally present at rehearsals and could give verbal instructions if they were required, and the librettist or *corago* could also advise from the point of view of declamation. Above all, both Tosi and Mancini make clear that the expressive and varied declamation of recitative was a fundamental part of the training of a professional singer. Indeed, the central theme of Tosi's chapter on recitative is the need for proper training in declamation, which he considers to be receiving insufficient attention from contemporary teachers:

The *modern* Masters run over with Negligence their Instructions in all Sorts of *Recitatives*, because in these Days the study of Expression is looked upon as unnecessary, or despised as *ancient*: And yet they must needs see every Day, that besides the indispensable Necessity of knowing how to sing them, These even teach how to act [*recitare*].⁴

As Mancini puts it, "in order to be a perfect actor [*attore*, here meaning an opera singer], it is not enough to sing well, but to know how to recite well, and to comport oneself".⁵ If singers deliver recitative poorly they should not make excuses and blame the composer; rather, it is incumbent on them to master "the rules of perfect declamation".⁶

Expression of the recitative, including the proper use of variation in dynamic and timbre, is thus the responsibility of the singer. It would be redundant and probably counter-productive

³ Paul Jackson, "The operas of David Perez" (Thesis (Ph. D.), Stanford University, 1967), 276.

⁴ Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de' cantori antichi, e moderni o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna: L. dalla Volpe, 1723), 44-5. Translation in Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the florid song, or, Sentiments on the ancient and modern singers. Written in Italian by Pier Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilcox, 1743), 69-71.

⁵ "Per essere perfetto attore, non basta il solo cantar bene, ma si richiede ancora il saper ben recitare ed agire." Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (Milano: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777; reprint, Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni, 1996), 236. Translation based on Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing (Pensieri, e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato): The editions of 1774 and 1777 compared, translated and edited by Edward Foreman*, vol. VII, *Masterworks on Singing* (Champaign, Illinois: Pro Musica Press, 1967), 72.

⁶ "le regole della perfetta declamazione". Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 231. Translation in Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 70.

to try to specify too closely such details which, like the realisation of the continuo, can and probably should vary from performance to performance. It is the very sparseness of recitative notation that gives it its exceptional flexibility. These expressive features should instead arise spontaneously from the interaction of the singer's natural talent, training and personal response to the verbal and musical text. Melodic shape, dissonance and harmonic direction provide cues to the composer's interpretation of the words; the singer's role is to bring this still bare framework to life, taking into account all of the conditions prevailing in a particular performance, including variables such as the size and acoustic of the venue, the responsiveness of the audience and even the degree of background noise, which could be considerable.

Dynamic

Dynamic as an intrinsic quality of voice was treated by rhetoricians following Quintilian as an aspect of *ornatus*, that virtue of delivery that has to do with the inherent characteristics of individual voices which was discussed in Chapter 3. Within the limitations imposed by these inherent characteristics, orators were expected to use all of the vocal resources at their disposal to create variety and enhance expression. At the same time, dynamic variation is such an integral part of expressive delivery that many writers on rhetoric merely mentioned it amongst the other parameters of speech that they listed collectively. It is treated as an example of the ways in which delivery should be varied, but not separated out from the other elements of expressive speech for more specific comment. This is true as much for Cicero in the quotation which heads this chapter, as for Cavalcanti who paraphrases the same passage in his late sixteenth-century vernacular rhetoric,⁷ and for his near contemporary Nicola Vicentino who, in drawing the analogy between spoken and sung delivery, comments that

Sometimes a composition is performed according to a certain method that cannot be written down, such as uttering softly and loudly or fast and slow, or changing the measure in keeping

⁷ Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, *La retorica di M Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, gentilhuomo fiorentino. Diuisa in VII Libri. Dove si contiene tutto quello, che appartiene all'arte oratoria. Con le postille di M. Pio Portinaio Giureconsulto, che dimostrano, sommariamente tutto quello, che ui si tratta* (Venetia: Camillo e Francesco Franceschini, 1574), 368.

with the words, so as to show the effects of the passions and the harmony ... What effect would an orator have if he were to recite a fine oration without organizing accents, pronunciations, fast and slow rates of motion, and soft or loud levels of speaking? He would not move the audience. The same is true of music.⁸

Two centuries later, Mancini touched upon dynamic in his similar advice to singers that they “listen to the speech of a good orator ... now he raises his voice, now he lowers it ...”⁹ but again did not give further specific attention to volume as a separate topic. Nevertheless, there are a number of treatments of the subject in the rhetorical and musical literature that go into a little more detail, and these go some way to providing useful guidelines for the management of dynamic in delivery. These discussions are grouped around three main themes: the general level of volume that is appropriate for declaiming in various contexts and venues, the variation of dynamic as an element in creating variety and maintaining the audience’s interest, and, most importantly for the purposes of this study, dynamic as an expressive device.

The general level of volume should be proportional to the venue

A consistent theme through the rhetorical, theatrical and musical literature is that the main consideration governing the general level of volume for all kinds of declamation is that of matching the sound to the size of the venue and audience. At one level this is a practical matter of making the words audible, an aspect of *perspicuitas*, but there is also the requirement of maintaining a dynamic level which is easy and pleasant to listen to. This ensures that good taste is not overstepped and creates a sense of “naturalness” which matches the delivery aptly to the subject matter, thus meeting the requirements of decorum. De Granada, for instance, takes the view that in being well adapted to the subject matter, good sacred oratory will appear natural and unaffected, and should resemble conversational speech, though volume will still need to be adjusted to the size and acoustic of the venue:

⁸ Nicola Vicentino, *Ancient music adapted to modern practice: Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by Maria Rika Maniates*, ed. Claude V. Palisca, *Music theory translation series*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 301.

⁹ “Attenti pure al discorso d’ un buon Oratore ... ora innalza la voce, or l’abbassa ...” Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 220. It is conceivable that Mancini means here the raising and lowering of pitch rather than of volume; however there seems no reason to doubt that he intends the usual Italian usage of “innalzare / abbassare la voce”, referring to loudness, similar to the English “to raise / lower) one’s voice”.

The manner of speaking must be the same in both public speaking and [ordinary] talking, except that in an assembly, because of the amplitude of the place and the listeners, the voice is frequently raised.¹⁰

In the schoolmaster de Colonia's concise exposition, this idea of proportionality to the space is raised to the status of a law: "The third law about the voice is this, that according to the size of the place and the number of listeners, it should either be exerted or relaxed."¹¹

On the other hand, as Lamy points out, a balance needs to be struck between raising the voice for audibility and moderating it to avoid giving offence; while a speaker needs to be loud enough to be heard distinctly, in order to be agreeable, the sound should be moderate rather than "violent":

All things that are moderate are pleasing; those Meats which move the Nerves of the Tongue softly, affect the Soul with the pleasure of Sweetness: Those Meats which prick the Nerves, or act upon them with violence, are sharp, *piquant*, or bitter ... The sense of a sound must then be pleasing to the Ear, when it strikes it with moderation. Soft Sounds strike with moderation upon the Organs of Hearing. Those Sounds which offend them are irksome and disagreeable.

But a Sound ought likewise to be strong enough to be heard: Meats that are insipid, do rather spoil the Appetite, than provoke it: We are forc'd to season and make them relishable with Vinegar and Salt. It is with matters belonging to Sensation, as with matters belonging to knowledge that depend not upon the body. An imperfect knowledge of a thing does but trouble and perplex the curiosity; and makes us but understand that we are ignorant. We resent with some pain what we perceive but obscurely. In a Sunshiny day the prospect of a Field is pleasant; whatever we discern clearly, whether by the sense or the mind, is pleasant; and thus you have had two necessary conditions to make Sounds grateful. The first, that they be not so violent to disturb the Ear; The second, that they be clear, and distinctly to be heard.¹²

¹⁰ "Vocis figura eadem esse debet, & cum concionatur, & cum loquitur, nisi quod in concione vox propter amplitudinem loci, & auditorium frequentiam attollenda est." Luis de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae* (Olysiptone [Lisbon]: 1575).

¹¹ "Tertia circa vocem lex haec est, ut ea, pro amplitudine loci, & auditorum multitudine, vel intendatur, vel remittatur." Dominique de Colonia, *De arte rhetorica libri quinque: lectissimis veterum auctorum aetatis aureae, perpetuisque exemplis illustrati* (Venetiis: Apud P. Balleonium, 1715), 301.

¹² Bernard Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal, in pursuance of a former treatise, intituled, The art of thinking. Rendred into English*, Second, corr. ed. (London: Printed for W. Taylor ... and H. Clements, 1708), 137-9.

The need to raise the voice for audibility is a potential trap as much in the theatre as in any other sphere of rhetorical delivery. Like Lamy, Cecchini notes that there is an upper limit of volume for comfortable listening as well as a lower one. He complains in particular of the fault of trying too hard to be forceful:

There are many who with a raised and noisy voice deliver identically in a place of paltry size as in another of extraordinary grandeur. The voice should therefore, when it is excessively forceful, be gently sweetened and proportionately adjusted to the spaciousness or narrowness of the room where one is to speak, and not do as some who with deafening noise change applause into abuse.¹³

Sommi also highlights the need to find a mid-point between being inaudible and overdoing it, either of which can give offence. With regard to volume, he says he would advise actors

firstly, generally to speak loudly, but without raising the voice in the manner of a shout, but raising it moderately, enough to make themselves conveniently heard by the whole audience, so that they do not cause those disturbances which are often made by those who, through being too far away, cannot hear, resulting in a disturbance to the whole performance.¹⁴

Perrucci considers that too soft a voice makes an actor useless, but on the other hand, is concerned about the naturally big voice which "is charged with measuring itself against the audience and the venue so as not to be too strident, which disgusts, nor too soft, which cannot be heard".¹⁵ The kind of acting training Perrucci had received as a student at the Jesuit *collegio* in Naples is likely to have reflected the rhetorical principles that run through the treatise of his close contemporary, the Bavarian Jesuit *corago* Franciscus Lang. It is

¹³ "Ci sono molti che di una voce alta e strepitosa si servono egualmente in un luogo di miserabil circuito, come in un altro di straordinaria grandezza. Vuol adunque la voce, quando di soverchio è gagliarda, esser suavemente addolcita e proporzionalmente regolata sotto l'ampiezza, o angustia, della stanza ove si dee discorrere, e non far come alcuni che con lo stordimento cangiano l'applauso in ingiurie." Pier Maria Cecchini, Cesare Molinari and Renzo Guardenti, *La commedia dell'arte. Scelta e introduzione di Cesare Molinari; apparati di Renzo Guardenti*, ed. Walter Pedullà, *Cento libri per mille anni* (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999), 1190.

¹⁴ "prima generalmente a dir forte, senza però alzar la voce in modo de gridare, ma alzarla tanto temperatamente, quanto basti a farsi udire comodamente a tutti gli spettatori, acciò che non cagionino di quei tu multi che fanno sovente coloro li quali, per esser piu lontani, non ponno udire, onde ha poi disturbo tutto lo spettacolo." Leone de' Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi in materia di rappresentazioni sceniche: a cura di Ferruccio Marotti* (Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1968), 40.

¹⁵ "La Voce grande è tacciata, e deve misurarsi, con l'Udienza, e col luogo per non esser troppo stridente, che stordisca, nè troppo piana, che non s'intenda". Andrea Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa premeditata e all'improvviso*, ed. Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato ed. (Firenze: 1961), 115.

noteworthy that Lang's treatise, which is devoted specifically to the theatre, on this topic closely echoes the advice of de Granada about sacred oratory, cited above:

The first virtue in delivery is that it be natural, that is, the man who acts in the theatre does not deliver his sentences in any other way than he would pronounce them in intimate conversation among men of the better sort, except when it is necessary to raise the voice somewhat higher and more fervently on account of the size and distance of the audience.¹⁶

It is striking that so many writers take the trouble to point out something that seems self-evident – that delivery needs to be clearly audible, but not offensively loud. The fact that they do so may indicate no more than a routine reiteration of an oft-repeated maxim, but it may also reflect an underlying concern with the tendency to over-exert the voice. Boys trained to “speak up” in classroom exercises in public speaking could easily fall into the trap of declaiming with a uniformly loud and monotonous delivery regardless of the subject matter. Similarly, singers trained to project their voices sufficiently for large theatres may be in danger of adopting a habitual, “one-size-fits-all” level of delivery. Tosi considered this a danger worth pointing out:

[A singer] should regulate his voice according to the place where he sings; for it would be the greatest absurdity not to make a difference between a small cabinet and a vast theatre.¹⁷

Mancini acknowledges much the same point, if only in passing. As far as he is concerned, the distinction drawn by Tosi between the performance styles of church, chamber and theatre recitative no long holds true, except in so far as they may be performed in different sized venues:

I conclude, then, that if there is any difference among these recitatives ... it is a difference relative to their location; this can consist only in the quantity of voice which the singer, understanding his own strength, ought always to adapt to the place in which he sings.¹⁸

¹⁶ “Prima Pronuntiationis virtus est, ut sit naturalis, id est, ut qui in theatro agit, non aliter efferat periodos, & verba pronuntiet, quàm pronuntiet in colloquio familiari apud viros melioris notæ, nisi quòd altiùs aliquantò & ferventiùs vox sit extollenda ob Auditorium multitudinem & distantiam.” Franciscus [Franz] Lang, *Dissertatio de Actione scenica, cum Figuris eandem explicantibus, et Observationibus quibusdam de Arte Comica, Auctore P. Francisco Lang, Societatis Jesu. Accesserunt imagines symbolicae pro exhibitione et vestitu theatri* (Monachii [Munich]: Typis Mariae Magdaleneae Riedlin, Viduae, 1727), 56.

¹⁷ Tosi, *Observations*, 150.

¹⁸ Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 73-4.

It should finally be noted that for singers, the issue of adapting the “quantity of voice” to the venue often involved not only filling the space of a large theatre, but competing with significant background noise as well as. According to Algarotti, in Italian theatres “so great a confusion and uproar is heard as to resemble the bellowing of a wood in a storm, or the roaring of the sea to a tempestuous wind.”¹⁹ While theatre-going etiquette varied in different cities, Sharp’s account of the noise level in the San Carlo theatre in Naples in 1765 gives an indication of how difficult the circumstances could be for singers:

The voices are drowned in this immensity of space, and even the orchestra itself, though a numerous band, lies under a disadvantage: It is true, some of the first singers may be heard, yet, upon the whole, it must be admitted, that the house is better contrived to see, than to hear an Opera.

There are some who contend, that the singers might be very well heard, if the audience were more silent; but it is so much the fashion at Naples, and, indeed, through all Italy, to consider the Opera as a place of rendezvous and visiting, that they do not seem in the least to attend to the musick, but laugh and talk through the whole performance, without any restraint; and, it may be imagined, that an assembly of so many hundreds conversing together so loudly, must entirely cover the voices of the singers.²⁰

Such an account is a salutary reminder that, at least in some theatres, finding an adequate volume to make oneself heard without on the other hand shouting would have been a difficult task, particularly in delivering recitative. In such circumstances adding dynamic variation to create interest and to express the thoughts and affections of the libretto would have been challenging indeed, yet this was an aspect of delivery clearly mandated by rhetorical and musical sources.

¹⁹ Francesco Algarotti, *An essay on the opera written in Italian by Count Algarotti ...* (London: printed for L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1767), 63.

²⁰ Samuel Sharp, *Letters from Italy* (1767), in Enrico Fubini, ed., *Music and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe: A Source Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 209-10.

It was noted above that the *Ad Herennium* author regarded volume as “primarily the gift of nature”,²¹ however he considered its careful management to be important for the conservation of the stability of the voice. His guidelines (available in the eighteenth century in Italian translation, as well as in the original Latin)²² include beginning with a calm, composed delivery to allow the voice to warm up, and the avoidance of sudden loud exclamations,

for the windpipe is injured if filled with a violent outburst of sound before it has been soothed by soft intonations ... Again, we ought to avoid piercing exclamations, for a shock that wounds the windpipe is produced by shouting which is excessively sharp and shrill, and the brilliance of the voice is altogether used up by one outburst.²³

But well-managed variation of volume (and probably at the same time of timbre) also contributes to the listener’s enjoyment, since “what we declare to be beneficial for conserving the voice applies also to agreeableness of delivery, and, as a result, what benefits our voice likewise finds favour in the hearer’s taste”.²⁴ The orator should therefore

²¹ *Ad C. Herennium: De ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium) with an English translation by Harry Caplan*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), 191.

²² See, for example, *L’etica d’Aristotile e la retorica di M. Tullio aggiuntovi il libro de’ costumi di Catone: volgarizzamento antico toscano*, (Firenze: Domenico Maria Manni, 1734), 125-6. The “*Rettorica di M. Tullio*” of the title is a reference not to Cicero’s *De oratore* but to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, although the traditional attribution of this work to Cicero was beginning to be seriously questioned at this time. Corticelli, for example, attributes it to “*Cornificio, o qualunque altro siasi l’Autore della Rettorica ad Erennio ...*” See Salvatore Corticelli, *Della toscana eloquenza discorsi cento, detti in dieci giornate da dieci nobili giovani, in una villereccia adunanza, descritti dal M.R. padre Don Salvatore Corticelli ...* (Venezia: A. de Castro, 1753), 90. Like the other principal classical rhetorics, the *Rhetorica* was republished regularly; Haym cites several other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian translations: see Nicola Haym, *Biblioteca italiana ossia notizia de’ libri rari italiani divisa in quattro parti cioè istoria, poesia, prose, arti e scienze, già compilata da Niccola Francesco Haym: Edizione corretta, ampliata, e di giudizj intorno alle migliori opere arricchita*, 4 vols. (Milano: Presso Giovanni Silvestri, 1803), Vol 4, pp.30-40. It was also transmitted to early modern readers through other rhetorics, for example the passage quoted here is paraphrased by George of Trebizond (1395-1484), in Georgius [George of Trebizond] Trapezuntius, *G. Trapezuntij Rhetoricorum libri quinque, nunc denuo diligentibus cura excusi* (Parisiis: apud Ioannem Roigny, uia ad D. Iacobum, sub Basilisco & quatuor Elementis, 1538), IV.444. Trebizond’s version was then further reproduced in Bernardi’s compendium: see Giovanni Battista Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae, in quo insunt omnes praeceptiones, quae ad perfectum oratorem, instituendum, ex antiquis, & recentioribus Rhetorum monumentis, accurate desumptae sunt, ordineque admirabili, ac facillimo in unum velut colum digestae, ita ut uno intuitu omnia, quae ad artem pertinent inveniri possint. Opus utilissimum non modo Oratoribus & Concionatoribus, sed etiam omnibus his, qui Rhetorica operam dant, per necessarium* (Venice: apud Haeredes Melchioris Sessae, 1599), 134r.

²³ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 191.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

relax from continual use of the full voice and pass to the tone of conversation; for, as the result of changes, no one kind of tone is spent, and we are complete in the entire range ... Relaxation from a continuous full tone conserves the voice, and the variety gives extreme pleasure to the hearer too, since now the conversational tone holds the attention and now the full voice rouses it.²⁵

The issue here is thus not just the practical one of managing vocal resources to avoid fatigue or injury, but rather the requirement for variety. This is important in maintaining the interest and involvement of the audience in what is being recounted. The same concern with variety is apparent in de Granada's account of faults in delivery. Affective expression is important but if it leads to a habit of maintaining any one affective disposition, and with it, a single dynamic level too consistently, this becomes a fault.

The faults of delivery are not only in slowness and speed but also in tension, and in relaxation and languor. Some are so tense and vehement in their disposition that they say almost the whole speech as if aroused by a certain anger, which is a fault.²⁶

Vehemence no doubt incorporates elements of timbre too, but volume (in particular an excess of it) certainly appears to be an element that de Granada has in mind here. The fault thus lies not only in lack of variety, but in delivering in such a way that an inappropriate affection is projected, one that is not apt for the content of the text; *decorum* has been compromised.

Caussin seems to be thinking along similar lines to de Granada about the fault of unvaryingly vehement or loud delivery in the following passage, describing student orators who use the sing-song style of delivery which he had roundly condemned in an earlier passage.

[T]hey call out loudly, they sing, nor do they say in a different tone of voice "bring wine, bring water, boy," or "for after he came to the baths, he began to be rubbed down," to that used for "O ruinous Chaeronean field! O Boeotian deserter to the Barbarians! Sigh, souls of heroes, we have been defeated at Platea!" Then, whatever they say they pronounce in such a voice and

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Pronuntiationis vitia non solum sunt in tarditate, & celeritate, sed etiam in acrimonia, & remissione, atque languore. Quidam adeo acri sunt, & vehementi ingenio, qui tota fere concione, velut quodam perciti furore dicunt, quod vitium est." de Granada, *Ecclesiasticae rhetoricae.*, VI, 6, quoted in Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae.*

with such an effort of the spirit, that afterwards they are scarcely able to lower the voice and deflect it into a slender sound, but the voice once roused, rushes as if an unbridled horse of the Numidians and is tempered by no moderation.²⁷

For Lamy, variety of dynamic goes together with variety of pacing, both of which are required to maintain interest and avoid the “disgust” that arises when any one activity, however intrinsically pleasurable, is continued too long in the same way.

Unequal Sounds that strike the Organs strongly or weakly, swiftly or slowly without proportion, trouble the Mind ... Equality is necessary, and without it our sense is not distinct; we perceive things but confusedly, and with trouble when we enjoy things imperfectly that we love and desire: and yet this equality grows tedious and insupportable when continued too long. The Ear is as inconstant as the rest of the Senses. *Omnis voluptas habet finitimum fastidium.*²⁸ The greatest pleasures are attended with disgust. Those who understand the Art of pleasing, prevent these disgusts, and cause a successive sensation of different pleasures, overcoming by variety the difficult humour of Men who are disturb'd at all these things. 'Tis not only Fancy, and *Caprichio*, that makes variety necessary; Nature it self requires it. A Sound tires the Ear by striking upon it too long. In all actions diversity is necessary, because the pain being divided, each part of the Organ is the less oppress'd.²⁹

Here, the appeal to Nature is significant, providing a physiological explanation for the annoyance that arises from too undifferentiated a delivery.

Dynamic variation for expression

Dynamic contrast is thus one of the techniques in the repertoire of the orator or performer who wishes to create variety in order to maintain the audience's interest and avoid boredom,

²⁷ “inclamant, cantant, nec alio tenore dicunt *fer vinum, fer aquam, ô puer, vel nam postquam venit hic ad balneas, coepit defricari, quam, O Chaeronea perniciosus ager! ô transfuga ad Barbaros Boeotia! ingemiscite Heroum animae, ad Plateas victi sumus.* Deinde quicquid dicunt tanta voce tantâque contentione spiritus pronunciant, ut aegrò postea submittere, & in exilem sonum deflectere possint, sed vox semel incitata, quasi effraenis Numidarum equus ruit, & nulla moderatione temperatur.” Nicolas Caussin, *De eloquentia sacra et humana, libri XVI. Editio Ultima, non ignobili accessione locupletata: Cum accuratis indicibus, tam eorum quae unoquôque Capite continentur, quam Rerum & Verborum* (Paris: Ioannes Libert, 1643), 560.

²⁸ “Every pleasure has disgust linked closely to it.” Perhaps a reference to Cicero's similar comment in *De Oratore*, III.c.1.

²⁹ Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal, in pursuance of a former treatise, intituled, The art of thinking. Rendred into English*, 139-41.

but this is not to say that variety is an end in itself. Even the immediate goal of keeping the audience's attention is only a necessary first step to the larger objectives of instructing, delighting, and above all, moving. It is these ultimate goals that determine the way variety should be created and managed – always in informed and sensitive response to the words. This begins at the broad level of the type of speech and subject matter, including its characteristic stylistic register, the character of the speaker and the audience, and the affective qualities of the passage generally. At a more localised level it focuses down to the particular *concelli* and *affetti* (not always clearly to be distinguished from one another) that are being expressed in particular sections or phrases, and even in individual words.³⁰

Not surprisingly, these broad principles for the application of variety had their origins in the classical treatises. In the *Orator* Cicero makes an integral connection between the expression of feelings and variety of dynamic, pitch and timbre. While he does not separate out dynamic as an individual parameter, it is clearly part of the orator's expressive armoury:

There are as many variations in the tones of the voice as there are in feelings [*animorum*], which are especially aroused by the voice ... Therefore the one who seeks supremacy in eloquence will strive to speak intensely with a vehement tone, and gently with lowered voice, and to show dignity in a deep voice, and wretchedness by a plaintive tone.³¹

Quintilian specifies that delivery should be different in the various parts of a speech (exordium, statement of facts, proofs, digressions, peroration), each of which has its distinct purpose and characteristic tone. Within each of these sections, delivery, will further respond to the subject matter, and to the specific verbal images and individual words used. This includes appropriate manipulation of volume:

[O]ur delivery must be adapted to our matter ... and sometimes also, though not always conform to our actual words ... For instance, must not the words, "This poor wretched, poverty-stricken man," be uttered in a low, subdued tone, whereas, "A bold and violent

³⁰ *Affetti* (feelings) and *concelli* (figures of thought and speech) are central to the libretti of *drammi per musica*, and above all those of Metastasio. Strohm points out that they are not necessarily possible to tell apart in a musical setting, however, since composers set words rather than abstract feelings to music; an *affetto* will generally be represented by imagery in the text and it is this rather than the feeling itself that is usually conveyed musically. For an analysis of the expression of *affetti* and *concelli* in the arias of a Vivaldi opera, see Reinhard Strohm, *Giustino by Antonio Vivaldi: Introduction, Critical Notes and Critical Commentary* (Milano: Ricordi, 1991), 56-8.

³¹ *Orator*, xvii.55-6. Translation in Marcus Tullius Cicero, "*Brutus*" and "*Orator*", trans. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell, Rev. ed., *Loeb classical library*; 342 (London: W. Heinemann, 1962), 347.

fellow and a robber," is a phrase requiring a strong and energetic utterance? For such conformity gives a force and appropriateness to our matter, and without it the expression of the voice will be out of harmony with our thought.³²

The highest objective of this vocal control, however, is that of moving the audience. Quintilian argued earlier in the same chapter that if an orator could use his imagination to "form a mental picture of the facts" and "excite the appropriate feeling" in himself (see Chapter 3), "the voice, which is the intermediary between ourselves and our hearers will then produce precisely the same emotion in the judge [i.e. the audience] that we have put into it. For it is the index of the mind, and is capable of expressing all its varieties of feeling."³³

A series of examples follows, characterising delivery in the mixture of ways typical of much rhetorical writing. The terms used vary between descriptions of the orator's demeanour (bold, fierce, gentle, grave, dignified, modest, suggestive of tears), abstract qualities of speech (fullness, simplicity, precision), and occasionally descriptions of vocal quality in somewhat more objective terms (strong, intense, subdued, muffled, slow, full of modulations, pitched between high and low), as well as descriptions of physical processes of vocalising (for example, anger "calls for frequent filling of the lungs, since the breath cannot be sustained for long when it is poured forth without restraint").³⁴ Amongst this range of descriptions are several examples with apparent implications for dynamic:

Therefore when we deal with a lively theme, the flow of the voice is characterised by fullness ... but when it is roused to battle, it puts forth all its strength and strains every nerve. In anger it is fierce, harsh and intense ... in flattery, admission, apology or question it will be gentle and subdued.³⁵

As the treatises of de Granada, Caussin and Lamy (above) show, early modern rhetorics, like the classical sources on which they were largely modelled, tended not to clearly differentiate

³² *Institutio oratoria*, XI.iii.175. Translation in Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols., *Loeb Classical Library* (London: William Heinemann, 1920-2), 341-2.

³³ XI.iii.62. Translation in *Ibid.*

³⁴ XI.iii.63-5. Translation in *Ibid.*

³⁵ XI.iii.62-5. Translation in *Ibid.*

between vocal parameters, in particular dynamic and timbre. There was, perhaps, reason to be more precise when dealing specifically with theatrical declamation, however, since it has its own characteristics. There is some evidence of such an approach in the *Dissertatio de Actione scenica* (1727) by the Jesuit Franciscus Lang. Lang gives a list of emotions and their attributes, described in rather general terms similar to those used by Quintilian, but he also describes variation of voice in terms of pairs of opposites which suggest that he is thinking about timbre, dynamic and pacing as discrete parameters. In order to express the passions, “care must be taken to vary the voice so that it is used intensely, then immediately mildly, now strongly, now softly, now rapidly, now slowly, according to what reason and nature seem to require”³⁶. He reminds his readers that this variety is not to be applied indiscriminately, however;

They also offend who, by not attending to the sense of the words, change without reason; they screech when moderate speaking is required; they speak moderately, where there is a need for fierce invective.³⁷

Control of dynamic can also be expressive at a more general level, according to Perrucci. He points out that in the theatre it will be influenced by the circumstances in which the character is speaking – in rhetorical terms, the doctrine of *kairos* – and the status of the person being addressed. For example, “Before kings one speaks with respect, nor does one raise one’s voice; one also speaks with respect to ladies, to one’s elders, to fathers, to the old, to nobles, and to superiors”³⁸. By appropriately matching delivery to the circumstances as well as subject matter of the speech, this kind of respectful moderation of the voice enhances the verisimilitude of the action, that is, it makes the action appear more “natural”, more life-like and therefore more convincing.

Given the emphasis on text declamation that pervades the musical literature associated with the monodic style, it comes as no surprise to find there, too, a high value placed on the virtues of delivery, including apt variation of dynamic. As might be expected, references to

³⁶ “Hunc in finem curanda est vocis immutatio, ut hæc subinde intensa, subinde remissa, jam fortis, jam lenis, jam præceps, jam lenta instituat, prout ipsa ratio & natura videntur requirere.” Lang, *Dissertatio*, 58.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Avanti a i Re si parli con rispetto, nè s’inalzi la voce; con rispetto ancora si parli a Dame, a’ Maggiori, a’ Padri, a’ Vecchi, a’ Nobili, ed a’ Padroni.” Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 116.

specific vocal parameters such as dynamic tend to be more specific in the musical literature than in that on spoken oratory. Reminiscing in 1640 about the skills developed by the first generation of singers of monody, Della Valle picked out skilful control of volume as one of the particular characteristics of their new style that distinguished it from that of earlier singers, whose lack of dynamic control stood out by comparison:

All these men [of the older generation], however, from their trills and on to their *passaggi*, and with their good vocal placement, hardly had other skills: of singing soft and loud, of increasing the voice little by little, of diminishing it with grace ...³⁹

Caccini made clear in the preface to his *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* that this dynamic control cultivated by singers in the new style was not merely intended to create variety for its own sake, but was specifically used as a tool of expression.

Affect, in a singer, is simply [this], that by the power of certain notes and varied stresses, together with modifications of the dynamics [*temperamento del piano, e del forte*], an expression of the words and the [poet's] meaning, projected through song, acts to move the affect of him who is listening.⁴⁰

The most detailed account of the way this skill of dynamic variation was applied in practice in solo singing was given by Caccini in the preface to *Le nuove musiche*. Dynamic effects include a crescendo through the first note, which Caccini considers to have “become such a common device, that instead of adding grace, I would say that it is rather unpleasant to the ear”, and its opposite, which he claims as an innovation, “to sing the first note diminishing it, rather than as an exclamation [*esclamazione*]”. (The exclamation itself, he explains, is “nothing other than reinforcing the tone somewhat as you sustain it”).⁴¹ Variety can be created by mixing up these dynamic effects, though Caccini is careful to point out that this is not an end in itself: By “using sometimes now one, now the other variety can be achieved, since variety

³⁹ Pietro della Valle, *Della musica dell'età nostra, che non è punto inferiore, anzi è migliore di quella dell'età passata* (1640). Translation in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, Revised ed. (New York: Norton, 1998), 548. Italian text in Angelo Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma: testimonianze dei contemporanei raccolte da Angelo Solerti, Piccola biblioteca di scienze moderne; 70* (Hildesheim; New York: G. Olms, 1969).

⁴⁰ Giulio Caccini, *Nuove Musiche e Nuova Maniera di Scriverle, Con due Arie Particolari per Tenore, che ricerchi le corde del Basso* (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni e Compagni, 1614). Translation in Giulio Caccini, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle (1614)*, trans. H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Recent researches in the music of the Baroque Era, v. 28*. (Madison, [Wis.]: A-R Editions, 1978).

⁴¹ Italian text in Solerti, *Le origini*, 63-4. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 611.

is most necessary in this art, as long as it is directed to the abovesaid goal [of delighting and moving the affections of the soul]".⁴²

It follows that such effects are not to be added indiscriminately since, as was observed above, the same principles of text expression expounded for oratory in the classical rhetorics had long been applied to music by humanists like Zarlino and Vicentino, and were reinforced by Mei and Bardi in relation to the monodic style: the purpose of vocal devices including dynamic variation is to aptly express the thoughts and sentiments (*i concetti e i sentimenti*) of the words. To apply effects such as the *esclamazione* otherwise than this would be to confuse the means with the end to which it is directed. For Caccini, this is a mistake made by "those who have been trained in a completely affective style (so to speak) – one that follows the general rule that the foundation of expression lies in the application of crescendos, decrescendos, and exclamations – and who then always make use of them in every kind of music without figuring out whether the words require it."⁴³

Thus, variety is important but more variety for its own sake is not necessarily better. Since its purpose is expression, devices which are intended to move become meaningless when used indiscriminately. Indeed, they are likely to hinder the engagement of the affections because they attenuate the affective power of delivery by dissociating the means of expression from the subject matter they should be expressing. Disconnected from a verbal context that gives them meaning, they offend against decorum – the virtue of aptly matching delivery to subject matter – and in doing so, only serve to show the singer's ignorance.

That this strong link between dynamic and expression was not merely an isolated idea of Caccini's is apparent from sources of the following generation. For instance, the role of variation in dynamic and timbre and the apt expression of the most powerful *affetti* in the text is spelt out by Francesco Rognoni Taeggio in his *Selva di varii passaggi* (1620). Rognoni's subject is diminution rather than recitative, yet he makes it clear that *passaggi* are not appropriate everywhere. As Vicentino and Zarlino had argued in the previous century, diminutions may aptly express happiness and other pleasant affections, but words that express grief, anxiety, pain, torments, or similar emotions are not to be ornamented in this

⁴² Italian text in Solerti, *Le origini*, 64. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 611.

⁴³ Italian text in Solerti, *Le origini*, 61. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 610.

way. Instead, Rognoni says, they should be expressed with appropriate dynamics “by diminishing the voice here, letting it grow there, with sweet and suave gestures, sometimes with sadness and grief in the voice, conforming to the meaning of the speech”.⁴⁴

André Maugars identified these same attributes of apt text expression and dynamic control amongst the qualities that he praised in the singer Leonora Baroni. He says that she “is in complete possession of what she sings and she pronounces and expresses perfectly well the sense of the words ... Her voice has a wide range, is true, sonorous, harmonious; she softens it and makes it louder without any grimaces.”⁴⁵

Dynamic variation also has its place among the praiseworthy attributes which Vincenzo Giustiniani, writing in 1628, considered the singers of his day brought to contemporary music. They had raised it to “an extraordinary and novel perfection”:

Having left behind the older style, which was rather rough, and also the excessive runs with which it was ornamented, they now mostly adhere to a recitative style adorned with grace and ornaments appropriate to the thought [*conpetto*], with every now and then a running passage [sung] with judgement and clarity, and with appropriate and varied consonances marking the end of each period, in which the composers of today bring such frequent cadences as to verge on being distasteful; and above all making the words clearly understood, applying to each syllable one note, *now soft, now loud, now slow, now fast*, and displaying in the face and gestures signs of the thought [*conpetto*] that is sung, but with moderation and not to excess. [my emphasis]⁴⁶

Here, neatly summed up, are many of the elements identified in the rhetorical sources as characteristic of good delivery, including that it be clearly articulated (*perspicuitas*) graciously

⁴⁴ “Scemando hor la voce, hor accrescendola, con mouimenti dolci, e soavi, & tal’hora con voce mesta, e dogliosa, conforme il senso dell’oratione.” Francesco Rognoni Taeggio, *Selva di varii passaggi* (Zürich: Musikverlag zum Pelikan, 1987), XI. Translation in Frederick Neumann and Jane Stevens, *Performance practices of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 163.

⁴⁵ André Maugars, *Response faite à un curieux sur le Sentiment de la Musique d’Italie, Ecrite à Rome le premier Octobre 1639*, ed. Ernest Thoinan (1640). Translation in Carol MacClintock, *Readings in the History of Music in Performance: Selected, translated, and edited by Carol MacClintock* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1979), 122.

⁴⁶ My translation, taking into account the more idiomatic but less literal one by Gary Tomlinson in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 352-57. Italian text in Vincenzo Giustiniani, “Discorso sopra la musica [1628],” in *Le origini del melodramma*, ed. Angelo Solerti (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), 121.

ornate (*ornatus*), appropriate to the thoughts contained in the text, and varied in gesture, speed and also dynamic (*decorum*).

The one problem with the current style that Giustiniani identifies in this passage is the overabundance of cadences marking the phrase endings, a device which imposes a degree of regularity on recitation that gives it gravity and formality, but undermines its capacity to imitate natural speech.⁴⁷ With the progressive breakdown of this more formal prosody in favour of a more flexibly speech-like style in the mid-seventeenth century, there is no reason to doubt that the rhetorical principles implicit in Giustiniani's description continued to be valid. On the contrary, the more closely the rhythm and pacing of recitative approached those of speech, the further it moved away from the competing imperatives of conventional music, and the more directly the rhetorical principles of spoken delivery – including those dealing with dynamic variation – could be applied. The rhetorical-expressive model developed by Caccini and his contemporaries in relation to musical recitation would then apply more, rather than less strongly, in *recitativo semplice*.

A corollary of this, however, is that dynamic plays a slightly different role in *recitativo semplice* from the one it had developed in the *stile recitativo*: in monody there were longer individual notes which allowed the singer time for an *esclamazione* or *messa di voce*, and which conversely called for some kind of variation to create interest. In the more *parlando* style of *recitativo semplice*, on the other hand, sustained notes were much rarer. At intense moments an exclaimed 'Ah!' could lend itself to a localised dynamic effect of this kind, but in the normal run of syllabic dialogue there was neither the opportunity nor the need for the dynamic shaping of individual notes in the thoroughgoing way implied by Caccini; this kind of effect was more appropriate in the sustained lines of *arioso* or *aria*. Instead, in *recitativo semplice* one would expect to find a use of dynamic variation more in line with that used in spoken oratory in which, as we have observed in the rhetorical sources discussed above, dynamic plays its part with the other vocal parameters – pacing, pitch, and in particular, timbre – in an integrated vocalisation which responds organically to the libretto. A word

⁴⁷ Margaret Murata's analysis of recitative of this kind in the mid-seventeenth century operas for the Papal court was cited above. See Margaret Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court 1631-1668* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), 100-04.

might be highlighted here or there, but the expressive focus is on the *affetti* and *conceitti* embodied in the words, rather than on individual words.

What, then, is the evidence for such an understanding of delivery in treatises and musical literature dealing with *recitativo semplice*, and in particular for the way it might have applied to dynamic? Immediately we encounter a problem: while dynamic control was undoubtedly valued in eighteenth-century aria singing,⁴⁸ there is little direct evidence about its use in recitative, and in particular in *recitativo semplice*. Despite devoting an entire chapter to recitative, Tosi does not address dynamic directly, however he refers to the topic obliquely in two places. The more general of these references comes in the context of a suggested training program for an advanced singing student. This program should include the study of sacred motets, for which the student must “lay aside all the theatrical effeminate Manner and sing in a manly stile: for which Purpose [the teacher] will provide him with different natural and easy Motets, grand and genteel, mix’d with the Lively and the Pathetick ... At the same time he must be careful that the Words be well pronounced, and perfectly understood; that the Recitatives be expressed with Strength, and supported without Affectation.”⁴⁹ It is not entirely clear from the context whether the expression of the recitatives “with Strength” (*con forza*) that Tosi has in mind here is particular to the church style, and perhaps in contrast with the “effeminate manner” of the theatre, or if this is a characteristic to be favoured in recitative more generally.

⁴⁸ According to Heriot, quoting an unnamed source, the castrato Felice Salimbeni, (1712-51) “earned particular admiration by his ‘rendering of adagios, with discreet but effective ornamentation, and for his amazing swell from pianissimo to an almost unbelievable degree of sonority’ ” (Angus Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956), 182.) Quantz comments that in singing and playing “No listener will be particularly moved by someone who always produces the notes with the same force or weakness ... Thus a continual alternation of the Forte and Piano must be observed”. (Johann Joachim Quantz, *On playing the flute: A complete translation with an introduction and notes by Edward R. Reilly* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 124.) He also criticises German singers for lacking a “feeling for Italian flattery, which is effected by slurred notes and by diminishing and strengthening the tone”. (Quantz, *On playing the flute*, 336.) It is perhaps something like this that Burney observed in Gaetano Guadagni’s (1729-92) performances of very simple music which nevertheless had a surprising “inherent power”. The effect seems not unlike the *esclamazione* which Caccini had described nearly two centuries earlier. Burney comments: “I frequently tried to analyse the pleasure he communicated to the audience, and found that it chiefly arose from his artful manner of diminishing the tones of his voice like the dying notes of an Aeolian harp. Most other singers captivate by a swell or *messa di voce*; but Guadagni, after beginning a note or passage with all the force he could safely exert, fined it off to a thread, and gave it all the effect of extreme distance.” (Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is prefixed, A Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients ... 4 vols.* (London: 1776-89), vol.4, pp.495-6.)

⁴⁹ Tosi, *Observations*, 76. Italian text in Tosi, *Opinioni*, 48.

The other point at which Tosi touches on dynamic comes earlier in the same chapter. Like the rhetoricians discussed above, he appears to proceed on the basis that because expression arises directly from the words,⁵⁰ its mechanics do not need to be spelt out in individual detail. His purpose is polemical rather than analytical – to urge singers to base their delivery on the words and the affections they convey, rather than to provide a step-by-step guide on how to do this. Thus, when it comes to specifics, his views are expressed entirely in the negative, as a list of faults, and while these touch on some individual vocal parameters, it is anything but a systematic treatment. The phrases that come closest to addressing dynamic specifically are the following. In performing recitative, Tosi says,

some over-do it and make it a Barking; some whisper it ... some force out the last Syllable and some sink it; some sing it blust'ring and some as if they were thinking of something else ... some hallow, bellow ... ”⁵¹

The reference to forcing out the last syllable or sinking it comes from Quintilian, perhaps transmitted through one of the early modern rhetorics,⁵² and relates to clarity (*perspicuitas*) rather than expression. Those who “over-do it and make it a Barking” (per troppo interessarsi abbaja) and who “sing it blust'ring” (svogliato) or “thinking of something else” (astratto) suggest trying either too hard or not hard enough to be expressive (reminiscent of de Granada's and Caussin's cautions about excessive vehemence, above). “Some whisper it” (lo dice in segreto) and “some hallow [or] bellow” (chi strida, chi urla) outline the boundaries of minimum and maximum volume beyond which the singer should not go, for reasons of both audibility (*perspicuitas* again) and decorum. None of these references constitutes clear instruction on what to do (as opposed to what *not* to do), however collectively, they suggest some broad guidelines which are very much in line with those of the rhetorics discussed above: the dynamic level should be neither too soft to be heard clearly nor so loud as to be unpleasant; it should be even enough that no syllable is lost; it should be varied for the sake

⁵⁰ Tosi, *Observations*, 70-1.

⁵¹ “V'è chi per troppo interessarsi abbaja. V'è chi lo dice in segreto ... V'è chi sforza l'ultime Sillabe, e chi le tace: Chi lo canta svogliato, e chi astratto ... V'è chi strida, chi urla ... ” Tosi, *Opinioni*, 43. Translation in Tosi, *Observations*, 69.

⁵² *Institutio oratoria* I.x.vii and X.iii.33. This point is transmitted by both de Colonia and Lang, although Soarez, interestingly, does not mention it.

of expression, without going beyond the bounds of good taste. Tosi's examples of poor delivery colourfully illustrate where some of those bounds lie.

Perhaps the most important point, however, is that these are isolated phrases amongst a larger litany of faults which Tosi sums up collectively as "offences against nature".⁵³ These consist primarily in two aspects: on the one hand failing to make the words clear, and so concealing their meaning; on the other, in delivering the words with either too much artifice or not enough, thereby negating the ideal of theatrical delivery that he had set out earlier in the same chapter: "a certain natural Imitation, which cannot be beautiful, if not expressed with that Decorum with which Princes speak, or those who know how to speak to Princes."⁵⁴ Just as too obvious word-painting in the melodic shape would represent an excess of artifice and thus demonstrate poor taste on the part of the composer, so an obvious labouring of dynamic contrast undermines the "naturalness" of delivery and indicates poor taste on the part of the singer. More broadly, by not appropriately matching the delivery to the words, and thereby failing to project, or even contradicting the *concetti* and *affetti* that they contain, a singer offends against decorum. As a result the performance appears "unnatural" and therefore unconvincing.

The fact that half a century later Mancini approvingly quotes Tosi's list of faults in full⁵⁵ suggests that he shares the earlier pedagogue's misgivings about the quality of at least some performers' recitative delivery, and that a lack of attention to sensitive text declamation is at the heart of his concern. He is a little more specific than Tosi, however, in setting out what good recitative declamation should be like, including with respect to dynamic. The passage in which he advises singers to "listen to the speech of a good orator" has been quoted above; it will suffice here to point out that dynamic is one of the parameters that Mancini's model orator varies, and that he does so in accordance with the passions to be expressed: "Now he

⁵³ Tosi, *Observations*, 70.

⁵⁴ "una certa imitazione naturale, che non può esser bella se non è rappresentata con quel decoro col quale parlano i Principi, e quegli che a Principi sanno parlare." Tosi, *Opinioni*, 41. Translation in Tosi, *Observations*, 67.

⁵⁵ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 231-2.

raises his voice, now he lowers it... according to the various passions that he wishes to stir in the listener"⁵⁶.

While it would be perilous to draw firm conclusions on the relatively meagre evidence of the singing treatises alone, the status of oratory as a model for recitative delivery throughout the relevant period provides an alternative way into this topic. Read in the context of the wider rhetorical literature, Tosi's polemic makes good sense as a reflection of the classical values of rhetorical delivery. It gives practical form to those values in relation to recitative by suggesting that dynamic variation was consciously used by performers to a significant extent (if not always in good taste), and that they employed a considerable (sometimes excessive) range of variation. Mancini's explicit endorsement of both Tosi's list of faults and of the oratorical model of delivery similarly reinforces the point that the injunctions of both classical and early modern rhetoricians may appropriately be applied to *recitativo semplice*.

Timbre

It was observed above that the organic relationship between dynamic and timbre in speech makes them difficult to separate in the rhetorical literature, and often also in the musical literature relating to this repertoire. To the extent that recitative is modelled on speech, and delivery is supposed to respond "naturally" to the words, perhaps this is as it should be. Nevertheless it is useful to try to tease out timbre separately as far as possible, since it is in fact a different vocal parameter, one of those most valuable for expression, and one on which, like dynamic, the musical score gives no direct information at all.

Discussions of timbre in the rhetorical and the musical literature deal mainly with several broad topics: intrinsic limitations on timbre due to the physical or technical limitations of the speaker/singer; the use of timbre for expression; and the range of acceptable or desirable timbres.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 220. Trans. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 871.

Intrinsic limitations on timbre

In the case of timbre, as with dynamic, the physical limitations of any individual performer necessarily constrain the range of possibilities for delivery. In rhetorical terms, these intrinsic characteristics of voice are properly the domain of *ornatus* rather than *decorum*; yet art may be applied where nature fails, finding a different path from the obvious one to appropriate (that is, decorous) expression. Limitations can be turned to advantage by playing to one's strengths, following Cicero's and Quintilian's dictum that "the main secret of artistic success is that whatever we do should become us well".⁵⁷

In his catalogue of great orators in *Brutus*, for example, Cicero comments approvingly on the skill of Antonius, whose voice was "sustained, but with a touch of huskiness. This defect however, he had the unique skill to turn into a merit. For in passages of pathos it had a touching quality well-suited to winning confidence and to stirring compassion".⁵⁸ In the theatrical domain, Quintilian cites the example of two comic actors, Demetrius and Stratocles, whose characteristics, including vocal timbre, suited them to different roles, "for Demetrius' voice, like his other qualities, had greater charm, while that of Stratocles was the more powerful".⁵⁹

Sommi similarly suggests that in the theatre, different types of voices and their strengths and weaknesses should be taken into account in casting. Ideally, the intrinsic quality of the actor's voice would be suited to the role being performed, and in certain cases this may include intrinsically unattractive sounds, as Leone de' Sommi specified: "If I, to take an example, had to cast a spirit in a tragedy, I would seek a naturally shrill voice, or at least an apt one, with a trembling falsetto, to create the effect called for in such a play."⁶⁰ Perrucci also considered voice type to be a crucial consideration in casting.

⁵⁷ *De oratore*, I.xxix.132, quoted with approval by Quintilian in *Institutio oratoria*, XI.iii.177. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

⁵⁸ Cicero, *Brutus*, xxxvii. 141-2. Translation in Cicero, *Brutus and Orator*.

⁵⁹ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.iii.178. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

⁶⁰ "[S]e io, poniam caso, avessi a far recitare un'ombra in una tragedia, cercarei una voce squillante per natura, o almeno atta, con un falsetto, far quello effetto che si richiede in tale rappresentazione". Sommi, *Quattro dialoghi*, 39-40.

One must ... distribute the parts having regard to the voices; it not being suitable to give [an actor] who has a stentorian voice ... a plaintive, pathetic or amorous part; one who plays the king, or a serious character, should also have a serious voice; he who plays the lover, a sweet and light one; one who plays the Lady, a fine and sonorous one; he who plays the old man, a tremulous one; he who plays the Bravo, a high and booming one; the servant [*Servo*] a wavering one; the manservant (or soldier?) [*Fante*], a grating one; the pedant, a grandiloquent one, and so on.⁶¹

Similarly, G. B. Doni, in his *Trattato della musica scenica*, considered the kinds of vocal timbres that would be appropriate for certain kinds of characters in musical declamation. In sacred music, the part of Jesus should go to a tenor "because this voice is more suitable than any other to a well-adjusted and perfectly organized body".⁶² God should have a baritone voice, while the Angels "who always appear in the shape of youths" should be sung by soprano or alto voices. On the other hand, "To the Prince of Demons, because ordinarily he appears in gross and bearded form, it is best to assign a basso profundo, which will suit him better when it is lower than the tuning note, when he sings to the accompaniment of some low instruments with an extravagant sound."⁶³ In the same way, "the clearest, most beautiful, and neatest [voices should] be assigned to the good spirits and the Celestial Deities, and the gloomy, harsh, cracked, and rough ones to the evil spirits and the infernal gods ... It would also be fitting for the Tritons, Nereids, and such gods and monsters of the sea to sing with strange and unusual voices; the Harpies also with shrill voices, and in like manner the other chimerical and fantastic figures of the Ancients".⁶⁴ The spirits of the dead also require special treatment; for instance "by means of some trick their natural voice might be altered so as not

⁶¹ "Si devono ... distribuire le parti, con aver riguardo all Voci; non essendo conveniente a chi ha voce di Stentore ... darli la parte flebile, patetica, ed amorosa; Habbia chi fà il Re, o il Personaggio grave, anche grave la voce; chi fà l'Amante la dolce, e tenue; chi fà la Donna la sottile, e sonora; chi fà il Vecchio la tremula; chi fà il Bravo l'alta, e ribombante; chi il Servo la varia; chi la Fante la stridula; chi il Pedante l'altisona, e così di mano in mano." Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 117.

⁶² Doni's treatise was probably written between 1632 and 1635, but was not published until it appeared in A.F. Gori and G.B. Passeri, eds., *Lyra Barberina amphichordos*, vol. II (Florence: 1763; reprint, facsimile edition, Bolgna: Forni, 1974), 1-144. Translations of the passages quoted here are from MacClintock, *Readings*, 202-4.

⁶³ MacClintock, *Readings*, 203. The characterisations of Charon and Pluto in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* spring immediately to mind as examples of portrayals of infernal figures of this kind.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 203-4.

to appear to be the voice of a living man; and with this difference, that the Blessed Souls should have (for example) a contralto and the Damned Souls a forced tenor ... ”⁶⁵

Matching voices to roles was also a consideration in *dramma per musica*, though the process of doing this was to some extent reversed – that is, it became as much matching roles to voices as the contrary – particularly as opera became established as an industry in the early eighteenth century. The first stage of the process was implicit in the initial hiring of singers, as it was common to choose them generically to cover the standard *primo* and *secondo uomo*, *prima* and *seconda donna* parts, and ancillary parts, rather than necessarily to sing specific roles. Singers would thus be retained who had appropriate vocal qualities to represent the typical aristocratic characters of the genre, with the detail of selecting the libretto and setting it to music worked out later. Roles could be selected (and if necessary, adapted) to suit the predominant characteristics of individual singers and their places in the hierarchy, and music composed to play to their strengths and show them to best advantage.⁶⁶ This tailoring played a significant role in maintaining and enhancing the success of the leading artists but was equally important in disguising the limitations of young or less talented singers, as Vivaldi appears to have done in his *Giustino* (1724).⁶⁷

Timbre for expression

It is in the use of timbre for expression that the principles of decorum come most significantly into play, providing guidance on the kinds of variations of timbre that are appropriate to use in various circumstances in declamation, as the orator or singer seeks to instruct, delight and especially, to move. Many of the considerations discussed above in relation to dynamic are also relevant here. In particular, discussions of vocal delivery by the rhetorical authors often do not clearly distinguish between timbre, dynamic and pitch, but

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶⁶ See, for example, C. Steven LaRue, *Handel and his singers: the creation of the Royal Academy operas, 1720-1728*, *Oxford monographs on music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), especially Chapter 1. While most singers aspired to the “primo/prima” parts of heroes, lovers and queens, some specialised in the secondary roles, for example Gaetano Berenstadt regularly sang the parts of tyrants. Metastasio wrote roles of this kind for him in *Ezio* and *Semiramide riconosciuta*; see Lowell Lindgren, “La carriera di Gaetano Berenstadt, contralto evirato (ca. 1690-1735),” *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 19, no. 1 (1984): 81.

⁶⁷ Strohm, *Giustino*, 10.

treat them as an organic whole; the examples they give of affective states and their associated tones of voice correspondingly mix together descriptions of the orator's demeanour, abstract qualities of speech, and some more specific attempts to describe sound quality. It is nevertheless possible to identify in these discussions a very consistent thread of argument connecting variation of timbre with expression of affect. Much of this tradition is descended directly from Cicero.

For Cicero, tone (or timbre) of voice, like dynamic and pitch, is intimately connected with emotional content. He observes in the *Orator*:

There are as many variations in the tones of the voice as there are in feelings, which are especially aroused by the voice. Accordingly the perfect orator ... will use certain tones according as he wishes to seem himself to be moved and to sway the minds of his audience ... [O]ne who seeks supremacy in eloquence will strive to speak intensely with a vehement tone, and gently with a lowered voice, and to show dignity in a deep voice, and wretchedness by a plaintive tone.⁶⁸

In *De Oratore*, too, he provided a list of emotional states with their corresponding tones of voice:

Anger requires the use of one kind of voice, high and sharp, excited, breaking off repeatedly ... Lamentation and grief require another kind of voice, wavering in pitch, sonorous, halting, and tearful ... Fear again has another kind of voice, subdued, hesitating, and downcast ... Energy has yet another kind, intense, vehement, threatening, and with an earnest sort of excitement ... Happiness needs another tone, unrestrained and tender, cheerful and relaxed ... Distress needs yet another, earnest but without appeal to pity, muffled, and in one tone of voice⁶⁹.

This list was to prove influential on a number of early modern writers when they addressed the question of tone of voice as a means of expression, as will be seen below.

Quintilian also emphasises "the necessity of adapting the voice to suit the nature of the various subjects on which we are speaking and the moods that they demand : otherwise our

⁶⁸ Cicero, *Orator*, XVII. 55-7. Translation in Cicero, *Brutus and Orator*. The first two sentences quoted here are reproduced by Soares in Chapter 57 of his *De arte rhetorica*.

⁶⁹ *De Oratore*, III.216-219. Translation in Cicero, *On the ideal orator*, 292-3.

voice will be at variance with our language.”⁷⁰ This is a skill to be learnt – a field in which to apply Art rather than to rely solely on Nature – and so when a young student of oratory is studying delivery, an actor should be brought in to teach him.

Our actor will also be required to show how a narrative should be delivered, and to indicate the authoritative tone that should be given to advice, the excitement which should mark the rise of anger, and the change of tone that is characteristic of *pathos*⁷¹.

In addition, he advises that a speaker must adapt his vocal delivery for the different parts of a speech. The terms Quintilian uses to describe these different modes of delivery have probable implications for parameters such as dynamic, pitch and articulation as well as vocal tone, but they nevertheless indicate clearly that he envisages a wide range of timbres coming into play throughout the speech:

[An orator] will not maintain the same tone throughout his *exordium*, *statement of facts*, *arguments*, *digression* and *peroration*. He will speak gravely, severely, sharply, with vehemence, energy, fullness, bitterness, or geniality, quietly, simply, flatteringly, gently, sweetly, briefly or wittily.⁷²

In a “digression”, for example, there is scope for particularly intense expression using a wide range of tones of voice, as illustrated in detail by a variety of short passages from Cicero’s speeches (many of which would also have been well known to eighteenth-century schoolboys).

There are a number of gradations of tone which may be employed to kindle the feeling of the judges. The most vehement tones that an orator is ever called upon to use will be employed in passages such as the following: “When the war was begun, Caesar, and was, in fact, well on its way to a conclusion”. For he has just said: “I will use my voice to its fullest power, that all the Roman people may hear me.” On the other hand, a lower tone, not devoid of a certain charm, should be employed in passages such as: “What was that sword of yours doing, Tubero, that sword that was drawn on the field of Pharsalus?” But the utterance must be fuller, slower, and consequently sweeter, when the orator says, “But in an assembly of the

⁷⁰ XI. III. 45. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler, 491.

⁷¹ I. IX. 12. Translation in Ibid.

⁷² XII. x. 71. Translation in Ibid.

Roman people, and when he was performing his official functions.” In this passage every sound should be drawn out, we should dwell upon the vowel-sounds and speak full-throated. Still fuller should be the stream of our voice in the invocation, “You, hills and groves of Alba”; while a tone not far removed from chanting, and dying away to a cadence, should be employed in delivering the phrase, “Rocks and solitudes answer to the voice”... There is also an entirely different tone, which might be described as lying almost outside the range of the instrument. The Greeks call it bitterness, and it consists in an extravagant acerbity almost beyond the compass of the human voice.⁷³

Timbre not only responds to the emotional implications of the words, it also defines them, since a different tone of voice can give the same words a completely different, even opposite meaning.

A change of delivery may make precisely the same words either demonstrate or affirm, express reproach, denial, wonder or indignation, interrogation, mockery or depreciation.⁷⁴

In his commentary on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, the late sixteenth-century rhetorician Marco Antonio Majoragio echoes the classical authors in requiring a wide range of vocal tone to match the diversity of affections. While there is nothing particularly novel in his formulation on this topic – it is in fact a close paraphrase of Cicero⁷⁵ – Majoragio’s volume received at least four editions, one as late as 1689, suggesting that it was well known and carried some authority.⁷⁶

The various affections of the mind require a varied voice, anger a high, sharp voice and breaking off repeatedly; Lamentation and grief require a wavering, sonorous, reiterated and tearful voice, fear demands a subdued, hesitating, downcast voice, energy seeks an intense, vehement, with an earnest sort of excitement; Distress must have a kind of voice which is earnest but without appeal to pity, muffled, and in one tone of voice.⁷⁷

⁷³ XI.III.166-7. Translation in *Ibid.*, 337. The phrases quoted within the passage are from various of Cicero’s speeches which were clearly well known to Quintilian’s audience.

⁷⁴ XI.III.176. Translation in *Ibid.*, 343.

⁷⁵ *De oratore*, III.217-219. Translation quoted above.

⁷⁶ The SBN union catalogue indicates that at least twenty copies of Majoragio’s book, representing four different editions, are currently held in Italian libraries.

⁷⁷ “Vocem diversam, diversi animi motus requirunt, ira acutam, incitatum, & crebro incidentem; miseratio, & maeror flexibilem, plenam, iteratam, flebilem requirunt, metus demissam haesitantem, & abiectam vocem postulat,

In the theatrical context, Perrucci draws together the considerations of *kairos* and *decorum* that should govern expressive declamation. His main source is also Cicero:⁷⁸

As for what touches upon the Rule, the voice must, as we said, change itself opportunely according to the time and the circumstances, varying the form of speech, having regard to who is speaking and to whom; it must be now severe, now pleasant, now raised, now lowly, now jocular, now harsh; and to make some distinction as to whether speaking of love, or of anger, or of compassion, or with fear, or with forcefulness, or with contempt, or with reverence, or with disputation, or with desperation, and as the voice is the interpreter of the mind, it will have as many changes as there are motions [of the mind]. Thus in love the voice must be sweet, and rather faint; in anger, terrible, harsh, and interrupted by sighs; in compassion, pathetic and low-pitched; in fear, timid and tremulous; in forcefulness, vehement; in delight, lively; in arrogance, high; in contempt, more extended; in reverence, humble and full; in disputation, elevated with full force, and in despair, confused. In exhortation it should be loud; in digressions, diffuse; in familiar speaking, regulated between the high and low, rising as it becomes more impassioned, descending as [passion] is suppressed. To sum up, it changes itself, as was mentioned, according to the circumstances, and seeks with diverse sounds to move the affections of the audience.⁷⁹

It was noted above that for Franciscus Lang, the process of moving the audience begins with the actor rousing in himself the passions that are to be expressed. Doing this involves adopting the appropriate vocal quality to enter into the emotions being experienced by the

vis quaerit vocem contentam, vehementem, imminentem quadam incitatione gravitatis; molestia sine commiseratione grave quiddam, & uno pressu, ac sono obductum genus vocit habere debet." Marco Antonio Majoragio, *M. Antonii Maioragii In tres Aristotelis libros, De arte rhetorica, quos ipse latinus fecit, explanationes* (Venetiis: apud Franciscum Franciscium Senensem, 1572). Reproduced here as quoted in Bernardi, *Thesaurus rhetoricae*, 174r.

⁷⁸ *Orator*, XVII.55; *De oratore* 3.216-219

⁷⁹ "Per quell che tocca alla Regola, deve la voce, come dissi, mutarsi, secondo l'opportunità del tempo, e l'occasione, variandosi, la forma del parlare; con haversi riguardo che si dice, e con chi si parla; dovendo essere or severa, or piacevole, or alta, or umile, or gioconda, or dura; E per darne qualche distinzione, o si parla per Amore, o per Ira, o per commiserazione, o con paura, o con forza, o con disprezzo, o con riverenza, o con contrasto, o con disperazione, ed essendo la voce l'interprete della mente, quanto saranno i moti di questa, tanto saranno le mutazioni; così nell'amoroso la voce deve portarsi dolce, ed alquanto fiavole; nell'Ira atroce, aspra, ed interrotta da sospiri; nella commiserazione patetica, e grave; nella paura vergognosa, e tremula; nella forza vehemente; nel diletto allegra; nell'arroganza alta; nel disprezzo più distesa; nella riverenza umile, e piena; nel contrasto con tutta la forza elevata, e nella disperazione confusa. Sia nell'esortare forte, nelle digressioni diffusa, nel parlar familiare, regolata tra l'acuto, e'l grave, concitandosi gli affetti s'inalzi, comprimendosi discenda; si mutino per fine, come disse, secondo l'occasioni, e con diversi suoni si cerchi di muovere gli affetti degli spettatori." Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 116.

character being portrayed, and once more, many of the examples are paraphrased from Cicero:

Therefore one must notice what kind of modulation of the voice is suited to some particular emotion. Thus love calls forth a loving, tender voice; hate, a severe, hard voice; joy, a laughing, excited one; sadness, a broken, plaintive one, interspersed with sighs; fear, a tremulous, hesitant one; boldness, a brave and quarrelsome one; anger, a rash, hasty and eager one; contempt, a frivolous and rather absurd one; admiration, an astonished, half-silent, stammering one; complaint, a noisy, contentious and pathetic one.⁸⁰

Another interesting source which demonstrates a close connection between rhetoric and recitative is the final chapter of Johann Joseph Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725).⁸¹ Although the author was Austrian rather than Italian, copies of the treatise in its original Latin were available in Italy, and it was also published in an Italian translation (1761) which Lorenzo Bianconi reports was widely used by composition students at the Neapolitan conservatoires.⁸² Fux's subject is ostensibly composition, however his discussion of the expression of the affections in recitative is closely based on the same passage from Cicero's *De oratore* which we have already seen reflected in the writing of Majoragio, Perrucci and Lang (above), and is therefore often couched in terms of delivery, for example, "Anger is expressed in a kind of stirring voice, tending to sharpness ... Fear requires a low and hesitant voice ... Pleasure uses a fluent kind of voice, but pleasant and temperate. The mood of love is

⁸⁰ "Advertendum igitur qualis cuilibet affectui moderatio vocis conveniat. Sic Amor exigit amabilem, affectuosam; Odium severam, duram; Gaudium hilarem, excitatam; Tristitia fractam, querulam suspiriis interruptam; Timor tremulam, dubiam; Audacia fortem, contentiosam; Ira impetuosam, præcipitem, hiulcam; Contemptus levem, & quasi ridiculam; Admiratio attonitam, semitacentem, & semiloquentem; Querela clamosam, rixosam, patheticam." Lang, *Dissertatio*, 58.

⁸¹ Johann Joseph Fux, *Gradus ad Parnassum: sive Manuductio ad compositionem musicae regularem, methodo nova, ac certa / elaborata a Ioanne Josepho Fux...* (Viennae Austriae: typis Ioannis Petri Van Ghelen, 1725).

⁸² Johann Joseph Fux, *Salita al Parnasso, o sia guida alla regolare composizione della musica. Con nuovo, e certo Metodo non per anche in ordine si esatto data alla luce, e composta da Giovanni Giuseppe Fux principale maestro di cappella Della S. C. e R. C. Maestà di Carlo VI. Imperatore de' Romani fedelmente trasportata dal Latino nell'idioma Italiano dal Sacerdote Alessandro Manfredi cittadino reggiano, e professore di musica* (Carpì: Nella Stamperia del Pubblico per il Carmignani, 1761; reprint, facs. edn. Bologna: Forni, 2002). Remarkably, this was the first treatise dealing with theatrical composition to be published in Italian; see Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, eds., *Opera production and its resources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 310. In his preface to this Italian edition, Niccolò Piccini noted that the book had been recommended to him by Francesco Durante, presumably in the earlier Latin edition available when Piccini was a student at Naples in the 1740s. The SBN Union Catalogue shows sixteen copies of the Latin edition of 1725 currently held in Italian libraries.

expressed by an amiable voice, tender and emotional".⁸³ If composition students in Naples had not had the opportunity to study Cicero in rhetoric classes, either directly or mediated through a text such as Soarez's *De Rhetorica*, they may thus have encountered his ideas transmitted to a specifically musical context in the guise of Fux's treatise.

In Tosi's discussion of recitative, much the same considerations apply in relation to timbre as to dynamic. In accordance with the rhetorical tradition, he sees all aspects of declamation as arising directly and organically from text expression. Since this is a process of "natural imitation" governed by the principles of decorum,⁸⁴ there is no point in trying to specify in detail how to do it. If a student does not have a natural talent for "imitation" a teacher may be able to supplement with art whatever is lacking in nature, but this is not something to be learnt from a book, so Tosi confines himself instead to pointing out the worst infractions of decorum that he considers to be prevalent in the theatres. Those relating to dynamic were discussed above, and those relating to timbre will be addressed below, in the context of the limits to the range of timbres appropriate for declamation. Much the same applies to Mancini. While he does not give any detailed instructions on the use of timbre, it is clear that he considers it to be an important expressive resource for singers to use in recitative, since his advice to "listen to the speech of a good orator" includes observing the orator's "variety of voice" including the way he "now harshens, now makes it sweet, according to the diverse passions which he intends to arouse in the listeners".⁸⁵ The explicit reference to oratory as a model makes it clear that he considers the principles of declamation in the rhetorical tradition to apply to recitative. These, learnt from a competent teacher and supplemented by observation of good practitioners, will supply the detail of how to use timbre effectively in one's own delivery.

⁸³ "Lo Sdegno esprimasi con genere di voce commossa, che tenda in acuto ... Il Timore vuole una voce dimessa, che vada esitando ... Il Piacere si serve di un genere di voce sciolta, piacevole però, e moderata. L'Affetto dell' Amore si esprime con una voce affabile, tenera, e affettuosa." Fux, *Salita al Parnasso*, 234. My translation, based in part on the translation of the relevant chapters from the Latin, in Susan Wollenberg, "'Gradus ad Parnassum' (1725): Concluding Chapters," *Music Analysis* 11, no. 2/3 (1992): 238-39.

⁸⁴ "The Master is obliged to teach the Scholar a certain natural Imitation, which cannot be beautiful, if not expressed with that Decorum with which Princes speak, or those who know how to speak to Princes." Tosi, *Observations*, 67.

⁸⁵ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 220.

Timbre is one of the chief expressive resources for singers performing recitative; however, the scope of timbres appropriate to be employed for expression is constrained by the principles of decorum, with its associated encompassing concepts of *kairos* and audience.⁸⁶ *Kairos* determines what kind of delivery is appropriate in the circumstances in which the speech is given (as distinct from the subject matter of the speech itself, which is the domain of *decorum*). The speaker must at the same time take into account the audience being addressed; in the theatre this means both the character being addressed on stage and the “real” audience in the auditorium. Between them, these define on the one hand the aspiration towards beauty of sound and sonority, and on the other, the limits placed on less agreeable tone beyond which the singer should not go, even for expressive purposes. Perhaps more than any of the other parameters discussed here, timbre is subject to the constraints of decorum, which dictate the acceptable range for a given performance context.

The wide range of possible timbres that Quintilian suggests may be used over the course of an oration was noted above (Chapter 4). The scope for variation within any one section is rather less, however, in accordance with the requirement for evenness (above), and is to be guided by the topic being addressed. Following his general comments on the importance of variety, Quintilian continues,

[W]ithin the limits of one passage and the compass of one emotion we may vary our tone to a certain, though not a very great extent, according as the dignity of the language, the nature of the thought, the conclusion and opening of our sentences or transitions from one point to another, may demand. Thus, those who paint in monochrome still represent their objects in different planes, since otherwise it would have been impossible to depict even the limbs of their figures.⁸⁷

There are also more general limits on the range of acceptable timbre. Despite the demands of text expression, really harsh and unpleasant sounds are never acceptable in declamation, as Cresollius vividly illustrates.

⁸⁶ *Kairos*: the opportune occasion for speech. On the encompassing concepts of *kairos*, audience and decorum, see Chapter 1.

⁸⁷ XI. iii. 45-6. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

A very honest man, when asked how the matter appeared to him, praised firstly the talent and learning of the [orator], but with regard to what pertained to the voice (which clearly was the most harsh of all which I happened to hear), he replied that he seemed to hear the sound of a strangulated cat, because according to his way of thinking, as among his friends, he [this very honest man] spoke for the sake of setting forth the truth rather than for the sake of any affront.⁸⁸

In line with the Cartesian and rationalist bent of the Port-Royal school,⁸⁹ Lamy justifies the prohibition against harsh and unpleasant delivery with a scientific, physiological explanation for its disagreeable effect:

There is a strange sympathy betwixt the Voice of those who speak, and the Ears of those who hear: Words that are spoken with pain, are offensive to the Hearer. The Organs of the Ear are dispos'd in such sort, that they are offended by a pronunciation that grates upon the Organs of the Voice. A Discourse cannot be pleasant to the Hearer, that is not easie to the Speaker; nor can it be easily pronounc'd, unless it be heard with delight.⁹⁰

Moderation is also a watchword for Perrucci. In the theatre, as in the pulpit, an excessively mannered delivery will weaken rather than enhance expression. In delivery, "more" is not necessarily "better". Different tones of voice are to be used to distinguish characters and express their emotions, but

avoiding affectation, because every extreme is a fault ... In the serious [tone] making it overstretched; in the light, excessively impassioned; in the slender [*sottile*], using the falsetto; in the

⁸⁸ "Rogatus vir honestissimus, quid sibi videretur, laudavit imprimis hominis ingenium atque doctrinam, sed quod ad vocem attinet, (quae sane fuit omnium quas mihi audire contigit asperrima) strangulatae felis sonitum audire sibi visum respondit, quod ex animi sui sententia, ut inter amicos, & exponendae potiùs veritatis, quàm ullius contumeliae causa dicebat." Ludovicus Cresollius, S.J., *Vacationes Autumnales sive de perfecta oratoris actione et pronuntiatione Libri III. In quibus è scriptorum elegantium monumentis, gestuum & vocum rationes non indocta copia & varietate explicantur, & vitia in agendo notantur. Opus omnibus eloquentiae studiosis, & qui vel sacro, vel profano in loco publicè dicunt, utilissimum* (Paris: Sebastiani Cramoisy, 1620), 507.

⁸⁹ On the influence of Descartes and the rationalist philosophy of the abbey of Port-Royal on Lamy, see John T Harwood, ed., *The Rhetorics of Thomas Hobbes and Bernard Lamy: Edited with an Introduction and Critical Apparatus by John T. Harwood, Landmarks in Rhetoric and Public Address* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 131-49.

⁹⁰ Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal, in pursuance of a former treatise, intituled, The art of thinking. Rendred into English*, 124.

tremulous, making it leap about; in the high, angry; in the wavering, the sound of bagpipes; in the grating voice, a croaking ... and in wanting to make it thin, putting it in the nose.⁹¹

Tosi's list of the "insufferable abuses" common in theatrical recitative delivery makes it clear that affectation or going to extremes is as much a fault in *dramma per musica* as it was for Perrucci in spoken theatre. His distinction between theatrical and chamber recitative serves to remind the performer that the scope for this kind of intense emotional expression is restricted in the theatrical style to those impassioned passages normally set in obbligato recitative. The highly charged affective style of chamber recitative "adapted to move the most violent passions of the soul" appears to invite a wide range of timbres, and probably of dynamic effects as well:

The theatrical leaves it not in our Election to make Use of this Art, lest we offend in the Narrative - which ought to be natural, unless in a *Soliloquy*, where it may be in the style of Chamber-Musick.⁹²

Conversely, the "natural" non-passionate passages in *recitativo semplice* which deal with more mundane matters or simple narrative – reminiscent of the "statement of facts" in Cicero's and Quintilian's legal oratory – demand a more restricted palate. This may be what Tosi has in mind when he refers, in his catalogue of faults in theatrical recitative, to "some who sing stage recitative like that of the ... chamber" and further on, "some who through trying too hard (*per troppo interessarsi*) make a barking sound." Other faults in his list include delivering recitative as if begging (*lo mendica* – perhaps implying a whining timbre), or disdainfully; speaking it dopily (*lo dice melenso*), singing through the teeth (a technical fault - above), hissing, shrieking or shouting it.⁹³

Mancini provides a hint about the appropriate range of timbres when he says that his model orator "harshens" his voice (*l'incrudisce*) as well as making it sweet (*dolce*). Harshness, then, is acceptable, within the limits of good taste and the prevailing style of delivery more

⁹¹ "Lungi però l'affettazione, perchè ogni estremo è vizioso ... Solendo nella grave farla stirata, nella tenue soverchio appassionata, nella sottile far il falzetto, nella termula far il saltarello, nell'alta l'arrabbiato, nella varia il suono della zampogna, nella stridola la gracchiante ... e nel voler portarla sottile dar nel naso." Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 117.

⁹² Tosi, *Observations*, 68.

⁹³ Tosi, *Opinioni*, 69-70.

broadly. The way this style has developed since Tosi's time is suggested by Mancini's views on genre and delivery. Much as he agrees with Tosi on most points, including endorsing the earlier writer's full list of faults in the declamation of theatrical recitative, one signal of the changes in delivery style during the eighteenth century is his rejection of Tosi's distinction between the church, chamber and theatre styles

I know that among our professors the opinion was at one time prevalent that the recitatives for the chamber should be spoken (detti) differently from those for the theatre, as well as those for the concert hall or the church. As much as I have reflected on this, I have found no certain reason why there should be this difference. I think that the recitatives for the church, the chamber, the theatre, ought all to be given in the same manner, I mean to say, in a natural and clear voice, which gives the just and complete strength to every word; which distinguishes the commas and the periods; in a manner which enables the listener to understand the sense of the poetry.⁹⁴

Here, in a nutshell, is Mancini's prescription for good declamation. His concern is primarily with clarity, particularly in conveying the text. "Naturalness" is once more invoked, undefined, but here apparently used in contradistinction to artifice or affectation. This suggests that in Tosi's terms, the more "natural", *parlando* theatrical style of delivery for *recitativo semplice* has conquered those of the church and chamber and is now applicable in all performance contexts.

Sonority

Another consideration which helps to define the expectations of timbre in recitative is that of sonority (the quality of fullness or richness of sound in language). It is of course the poet's responsibility in the first instance to provide sonorous and euphonious language, and in this sense, sonority belongs to the realm of *ornatus* as a virtue of compositional style, rather than to that of delivery. At the same time, it is the performer's responsibility to understand and work with that "built in" sonority in the language of the libretto to create a suitably euphonious sound. While dramatic poetry can be read privately for pleasure (and often was), it was composed expressly for reciting, and acquired its full force when declaimed

⁹⁴ Italian text in Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 240-1. Translation in Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 73.

aloud, just as Cicero's legal speeches or the rhetorically crafted sermons of early modern preachers were designed to have their full effect when heard "live". When vocalised, words create what Emmanuele Tesauro called "pictures which have sound for colours, and the tongue for a paintbrush".⁹⁵

The value placed on sonority of language by the Arcadians, who were so instrumental in the reform of *dramma per musica* at the turn of the eighteenth century, had its most obvious antecedents in the sixteenth-century Petrarchan movement. Sonority was also integral to the classical principles of rhetorical style, however, and thus formed part of the rhetorical education of the *letterati* who wrote opera libretti. Quintilian set out the basic principles of linguistic sonority in Book 8 of his *Institutio oratoria*:

But as several words may often have the same meaning (they are called synonyms), some will be more distinguished, sublime, brilliant, attractive or euphonious than others. For as those syllables are the most pleasing to the ear which are composed of the more euphonious letters, thus words composed of such syllables will sound better than others, and the more vowel sounds they contain the more attractive they will be to hear. The same principle governs the linking of word with word; some arrangements will sound better than others. But words require to be used in different ways. For example, horrible things are best described by words that are actually harsh to the ear. But as a general rule it may be laid down that the best words, considered individually, are those which are fullest or most agreeable in sound.⁹⁶

Even if they did not read it directly in Quintilian, generations of early modern schoolboys encountered the concept of sonority through Soarez's paraphrase of this passage in his Jesuit rhetoric:

Some individual words are by nature more harmonious, sublime, flowing, and, in a way, more elegant; others are the contrary ... As syllables formed from the more euphonious letters are louder, so words fashioned from such syllables are more sonorous. The more vowel sound each syllable has, the more pleasing it is. Joining words together produces the same result as the combination of syllables: one arrangement sounds better than another. In general, the best

⁹⁵ "il suono per colori, & per penello la lingua". Emanuele Tesauro, S.J., *Il Cannocchiale aristotelico, O sia, Idea dell'arguta et ingegniosa elocutione, Che serue à tutta l'Arte oratoria, lapidaria; et simbolica. Esaminata co'principij del divino Aristotele, dal Conte & Cavalier Gran Croce D. Emanvele Tesavro, Patritio Torinese. Quinta Impressione* (Torino: Bartolomeo Zauatta, 1670), 17.

⁹⁶ VIII.iii.16-17. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

individual words are considered those which have either the fullest or the most agreeable sound.⁹⁷

Thus “*quamquam, moderatio, and concertare* are more harmonious than [their synonyms] *etsi, modestia, and confligere*”.⁹⁸

It is noteworthy here that while Quintilian favours language that sounds attractive, he does not advocate a constant and unrelieved euphony. Language that is “distinguished, sublime, brilliant” need not be beautiful, particularly when “horrible things” (*rebus atrocibus*) are to be described: Bembo’s *gravità* as well as his *piacevolezza* is admissible within Quintilian’s scheme. Soarez, on the other hand, seems to place a higher premium on beauty of sound for its own sake and leaves out Quintilian’s approval of “words that are actually harsh to the ear”.

If this approach seems to incompletely reflect the Petrarchan ideal of Bembo, it is perhaps closer to the stylistic principles of the foremost theoretician of the Italian literary baroque, Emanuele Tesauro. Tesauro’s treatise on style, *Il Cannocchiale Aristotelico*,⁹⁹ is concerned primarily with the compositional, rather than the performative aspects of rhetoric; however, like Lamy, Tesauro takes an active interest in the vocalised sound of words and includes one of the most comprehensive treatments of sonority in the early modern rhetorical literature. Amongst what he calls the “harmonic figures” (*figure harmoniche*) of speech, he introduces sonority:

⁹⁷ Latin text in Cipriano Soarez, *De arte rhetorica libri tres: ex Aristotele, Cicerone, et Quintiliano praecipue deprompti* (Hispani: Ex officina Alphonsi Escruiani. Expensis Andreae Pescioni, 1569), 41r. Translation in Lawrence Flynn, S.J., “The ‘De arte rhetorica’ (1568) by Cyprian Soarez, S.J.: A Translation with Introduction and Notes” (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1955), 270-71.

⁹⁸ Latin text in Soarez, *De arte rhetorica*, 41r. Translation in Flynn, “The ‘De arte’”, 270.

⁹⁹ I have used the 5th ed. (1670), the last to be fully revised by the author (see fn 94, above, and Ch1 fn.47.) The SBN Union Catalogue of Italian libraries shows copies of fourteen different editions of *Il cannocchiale* from 1654-1702, suggesting that it had wide currency until at least the early eighteenth century. Another indication of its ongoing influence is its use as a rhetoric text book by the Jesuits, notably in their Collegio dei nobili in Bologna. See Gian Paolo Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento: i seminaria nobilium nell’Italia centro-settentrionale* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1976), 221.

I pass on to another embellishment of language which, with our author,¹⁰⁰ we shall designate “sonority”. Now this sonority arises from the beauty of the bright vowels, the clarity of the consonants and the grandeur of the words.¹⁰¹

What follows is a detailed analysis of the effect of each vowel and consonant, classified according to their aural qualities. First come the “bright and perfect” vowels, A, E and O. The brightest is A, “messenger of a tranquil and smiling heart”,¹⁰² closely followed by E, which is less clear and sonorous, but more sweet (dolce) “and therefore mistress of prayers”.¹⁰³ By contrast, O makes a sound “more sonorous and more masculine than A, but less natural and less sweet, and therefore more apt to stir the spirits than to soothe them.”¹⁰⁴ Thus A and O, with their respective qualities of sweetness and sonority “contend in nobility, like the lyre and trumpet”.¹⁰⁵ The remaining vowels, U and I, are “absolutely displeasing and lacking in sweetness/gentleness (unsoave)”.¹⁰⁶ U has a “hooting, lugubrious, gloomy sound”,¹⁰⁷ while I matches its written shape by being sharp and thin (acuta & esile), and is thus the direct opposite of O in both shape and sound. Because of these differences in sound, “good choir masters advise against performing diminutions or embellishments on these last vowels U and I”.¹⁰⁸ He sums up:

¹⁰⁰ The author in question must be Aristotle, on whose principles the whole treatise purports to be based. It is noteworthy, however, that in contrast to the rest of his book, *Tesaurus* provides no references in this section to Aristotle’s writings. Aristotle does not directly treat sonority in either the *Rhetoric* or the *Poetics* and I have found no reference to “sonorità” in Segni’s Italian translation of the *Rhetoric* (1551), although there are several others with which *Tesaurus* might have been familiar, for example those of Annibale Caro (1570) and Alessandro Piccolomini (1571).

¹⁰¹ “Passo all’ altro abbellimento della Parola, che col nostro Autore dinominammo SONORITA. Hor questa Sonorità nasce dalla BELTA delle SQVILLANTI VOCALI: dalla NETTEZZA delle CONSONANTI: & dalla GRANDEZZA delle Parole.” *Tesaurus, Il Cannocchiale aristotelico*, 162.

¹⁰² “Messaggiera di vn cor tranquillo e ridente”. *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ “... & perciò ministra delle preghiere.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ “Più sonoro & maschile che la A: ma men naturale & men dolce: acconcio pertanto à turbar gli animi più che placarli.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ “... stan piatendo di nobilità, come la lira, & la tromba”. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ “... assolutamente rinresceuoli, & insoai”. *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁰⁷ “suono vlulante, lugubre, & fosco”. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ “Gli buon Maestri di Coro, auuisano di non minuire ò gorgheggiare insù queste vltime Vocali V & I.” *Ibid.* This is confirmed by Caccini, who allows “u” for passaggi in the soprano voice and “i” in the tenor, but notes that “the rest are all in common use, the open, rather than the closed vowels being much more sonorous, as well as

Therefore, to weigh up the sound of each vowel, we must say that A is equally sweet and sonorous. O, more sonorous and less sweet. E more sweet and less sonorous; U, dull and lacking sweetness, and I, sharp and lacking sweetness ... For if precedence were assigned to these five in order of sonority, as musicians order the proportions of harmonic notes, they could be reversed, beginning with the sharpest [*più acuta*], and rising in levels of sonority in this order:

I. U. E. A. O.

Thus, I would be the soprano; U, the contralto; E, the tenor; A, the baritone; and O, the bass.¹⁰⁹

Words composed of sonorous vowels sound best and most sonorous. Since variety creates its own kind of harmony, next best are words that use all five vowels, preferably in alphabetical order, as in *sAlEbrIcOsUs*, or in order of sonority, as in *vItUpErAtoOr*. The same effect occurs in a phrase, as in the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid*: "*arma vIrVmquE cAnO*." Even words that include syllables with the "defective" U and I will be acceptable to the ear if the stressed penultimate syllable is a bright one, as in "*imperAre*".¹¹⁰

Consonants are similarly divided into the "spirituali" (formed with the lips and breath), the lambent, and the guttural, and each has its particular sonority. P, L and T are sonorous and sweet, while B, F, M, N, Z, G and soft C are sweet, but not sonorous. S, Q, and Hard C are vigorous but not very clear (*gagliarde ma poco nette*), and R and X are extremely harsh (*asprissime*).¹¹¹ When vowels and consonants are combined into syllables, "the syllables will

being the most suitable and the easiest with which to practice placement of the voice". Preface to *Le nuove musiche*. Trans. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 609.

¹⁰⁹ "Adunque per bilanciare il suono di ogni Vocale; dourem dire, che la A sia vualmente *dolce & sonora*. La O, più *sonora* e men *dolce*. La E, più *dolce & men sonora*. La V, *insoaue & ottusa*: & la I, *insoue & acuta* ... Che se à tutte cinque si denno à merto di Sonorità assegnar le precedenza; come i Musici ordinano le proportioni delle harmoniche Note: si può à veci conuerse, incominciando dalla più acuta; andar poscia crescendo per numerosi gradi nella *Sonorità* con quest'ordine: I. V. E. A. O. Talche la I, farà il *Sourano*: la V, il *Contralto*: la E, il *Tenore*: la A, il *Tenor baritono*: & la O, il *Contrabasso*." Tesaurus, *Il Cannocchiale aristotelico*, 163.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. While Tesaurus's examples are in Latin, his principles of pronunciation are generally equally applicable in Italian.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 169-72.

be most beautiful where the vowels are articulated by the most beautiful and clearest consonants".¹¹²

Thus, while Tesauro does not entirely exclude the possibility of situations where majesty and energy of style may take precedence over beauty of sound,¹¹³ the thrust of his analysis is overwhelmingly directed to the achievement of an overall sound which is clear, sonorous and sweet. For all that his Marinist aesthetic was rejected by the Arcadian reformers, the principles of sonority set out by Tesauro were well ingrained in Italian literary and musical culture and remained so into the eighteenth century, most notably, in relation to opera, in the poetry of Metastasio.

Tesauro did not enter into a philosophical justification for his preference for euphonious sound, perhaps because the topic was not directly addressed by his nominal model, Aristotle, or because he considered such a justification superfluous when euphony was a well accepted principle for which Quintilian provided the necessary classical authority. A modern rationalisation for beauty of sound was, however, provided in the almost contemporary rhetoric of Bernard Lamy, who reasoned that

We feed with more Appetite upon wholsom and relishable Meats: We listen more easily to a Discourse, whose smoothness lessens the trouble of attending. It is with Sciences as with Meats: We must endeavour to make those things pleasant, that are useful.¹¹⁴

Thus, while delight in a pleasant sound is a good thing in itself, the more fundamental purpose of cultivating beauty of sound is to make the content of the speech more palatable, and thus more readily accepted.

Pleasure goes far with every Man; 'tis that which is the principle of all our Motions, and sets them on work. Prudence requires that we make use of this inclination to conduct us to our design'd end; that we delight the Ears, which being the Porters of the Mind, may give our words the more favourable admission. Besides, the pleasure which we give in Speaking, is

¹¹² "Le Sillabe esser più belle, doue le Vocali da più belle & più nette Consonanti son percosse". Ibid.

¹¹³ Tesauro raises this possibility only in the context of accounting for the orthography of modern Italian, in which double consonants are used in certain words by "le moderne Academie, preferendo alla Dolcezza la Maestà & energia". Ibid., 176.

¹¹⁴ Lamy, *The Art of Speaking: Written in French by Messieurs du Port Royal, in pursuance of a former treatise, intituled, The art of thinking. Rendred into English*, 125.

preceded by our own proper advantage; because the ease of the Speaker, causes the satisfaction of the Hearer.¹¹⁵

This view of the purpose of literary endeavour was entirely consonant with the ideals of the Arcadian movement. For Arcadians such as Lodovico Muratori, Giovanni Crescimbeni and Gianvincenzo Gravina, the primary purpose of dramatic poetry was to make virtue attractive and vice disagreeable. To achieve this, dramatic poetry must be beautiful as well as morally forceful. Moral values could then be taught under the guise of giving pleasure. These principles are fundamental to the poetry of opera librettists associated with Arcadia, including the pre-eminent librettist of eighteenth-century *dramma per musica*, Pietro Metastasio. In accordance with the classicising agenda of the Arcadians, Metastasio rejected the kind of baroque extravagance advanced by Tesauro in favour of compact and economical verse, yet his poetic style was nevertheless renowned for beauty of sound as well as of sense. As Metastasio expressed it in his only prose essay, the "Estratto dell'Arte poetica d'Aristotile",¹¹⁶ the poet's language imitating speech should be "harmonious and measured; it should also be pure, noble, elegant and sublime."¹¹⁷ It should, in other words, exhibit the virtues of style, particularly purity, ornateness and decorum. Further, "The most excellent imitator is he who can impress upon his chosen material the greatest degree of resemblance to the truth without altering the nature [of the material]".¹¹⁸ The nature of the material in dramatic poetry is beautiful language and noble concepts that give moral instruction. The poet's task is thus to be a painter, not a photographer; to create "verisimilitude" through *imitatio*, not mere copying; to transform the crude "truth" of real life into a more pleasing form through artfully concealed artifice; to show things as they should be rather than as they are. For Metastasio, making poetry too realistic would be like painting marble statues to make them more lifelike, or portraying a peasant on stage by putting on "filthy rags and

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Pietro Metastasio, "Estratto dell'arte poetica d'Aristotile e considerazione su la medesima," in *Tutte le Opere di Pietro Metastasio*, ed. Bruno Brunelli (Milan: Arnaldo Mondadori, 1965).

¹¹⁷ Translation in Piero Weiss, "Metastasio, Aristotle, and the Opera Seria," *The Journal of Musicology* 1, no. 4 (1982): 393-4.

¹¹⁸ Translation in Ibid.

using the disgusting manners and corrupt speech that are so much more consonant with the truth in such persons".¹¹⁹

Thus the principles of euphonious sonority remained intrinsic to Metastasio's poetic style. Aria texts continued to be constructed in the way that Tesauro had described, to place "singable" vowels, particularly 'a', on important syllables likely to carry coloratura, since, as Tosi put it "Every master knows that on the third and fifth vowel [that is, I and U] the divisions are the worst".¹²⁰ Echoing Bembo's theory of *gravità* and *piacevolezza* conveyed in the sound of the words,¹²¹ the placement of hard and soft consonants and open and closed vowels also contributes to the effect of Metastasio's verse more generally,¹²² including in recitative. It is presumably this Petrarchan – and later, Arcadian – concern with the sound of language that Antonio Eximeno had in mind when he credited "the sweetness of Metastasio's language" with having "caused the development of that divine school of singers that now is beginning to decline, according to whose taste Raff, Farinelli, Cafarelli, Gizziello, Guarducci, Mazzanti and Guadagni have all sung".¹²³

While this sonorous quality of language is built into the text and is to that extent an intrinsic component of delivery when the text is sung or declaimed, the conscious projection by the singer of the sound-quality of the words can contribute to reinforcing the effect. In recitative it is incumbent on the singer to emphasise the fullness and warmth of the words, particularly where a "sonorous" timbre is called for by the subject matter, character and circumstances. On the other hand, there may also be occasions when the performer needs to minimise the sonorousness of the poet's language in order to express a harsher affection, if this is not built

¹¹⁹ Translation in *Ibid.*: 394.

¹²⁰ Tosi, *Observations*, 56.

¹²¹ *Prose della volgar lingua*, 1525. For a discussion of Bembo's theory and its application in music in Willaert's setting of Petrarch's "*Aspro core e selvaggio...*" see Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985), 355ff.

¹²² See, for example, Daniel Hertz's analysis of the aria "*L'onda dal mar divisa*" from Metastasio's *Artaserse* in Daniel Hertz, *From Garrick to Gluck: essays on opera in the age of Enlightenment* (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 2004), 72.

¹²³ Antonio Eximeno y Pujades, *Dell'origine e delle regole della musica* (Rome: 1774), 442. Translation in Hertz, *From Garrick to Gluck: essays on opera in the age of Enlightenment*, 71.

into the sound of the words themselves. In either case, an awareness of the sonority of poetic language will be important for the performer in declaiming.

To sum up, while the “spokenness” of *recitativo semplice* changed in the direction of a more *parlando* delivery between the mid-seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, the ideal throughout the period was to imitate spoken declamation. As in spoken declamation, timbre responds to affect in recitative, with a considerable range of timbres allowed, including a degree of harshness, but the encompassing concepts of decorum, *kairos* and audience define the ideal sounds and also the outer limits of this variation of timbre. The ideal is an aptly varied middle course, in which beautiful sonority is the norm in the many emotionally neutral passages of dialogue and narrative, but sweetened or “harshened” as required to express the more affective passages.

Pitch

Pitch is the vocal parameter over which the singer has least control in *recitativo semplice*. In spoken oratory in the rhetorical tradition, pitch, like rhythm, dynamic and timbre, was considered to be an important parameter which the speaker should vary for both interest and expression, but in recitative control of pitch is almost entirely usurped by the musical construction of pitch by the composer. Thus, while rhythm was also written into the musical score, given the declamatory flexibility with which rhythm was interpreted, pitch may reasonably be described as the only parameter apart from the words themselves which was specified for the singer in substantially prescriptive detail. To put it another way, pitch is the only vocal parameter which was thoroughly appropriated from the domain of delivery (where it would be in oratory) to the compositional canons (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio*).

The extent to which there may have been some scope for improvisation or variation of pitch in *recitativo semplice* will be addressed below, but such variation was in any case essentially marginal. The realisation of unnotated appoggiature remained the singer’s responsibility, it is true, but even these were largely obligatory, making their realisation largely a matter of “reading” the notational convention that applied in a particular context, rather than of expressive interpretation. Thus, the singer’s role in applying rhetorical principles to pitch is rather different from what it is in relation to the other parameters. Where the singer’s

decisions about how to use rhythm, dynamic or timbre for expressive effect are in a real sense “compositional”, the singer’s role in relation to pitch is much more one of interpretation. It involves understanding the meaning of the pitch content written in by the composer and using the control the singer has over the other parameters to highlight the expressive implications of the melodic shape by, for example, emphasising particular notes or phrases with dynamic, rhythmic or timbre variation.

That the ancients took pitch in speech seriously is indicated by Cicero’s anecdote in *De oratore* about the orator Gracchus, who spoke with a slave concealed behind him discretely sounding notes on a flute to recall him to a suitable pitch if he went too low or strained his voice.¹²⁴ The principles of pitch variation in oratory were set out in more detail by Quintilian in Book 11 of his *Institutione oratoria*.

The deepest bass and the highest treble notes are unsuited to oratory: for the former lack clearness and, owing to their excessive fullness, have no emotional power, while the latter are too thin and, owing to excess of clearness, give an impression of extravagance and are incompatible with the inflexions demanded by delivery and place too great a strain upon the voice ... For the voice is like the strings of a musical instrument; the slacker it is the deeper and fuller the note produced, whereas if it be tightened, the sound becomes thinner and shriller. Consequently, the deepest notes lack force, and the higher run the risk of cracking the voice. The orator will, therefore, employ the intermediate notes, which must be raised when we speak with energy and lowered when we adopt a more subdued tone.¹²⁵

Much of this passage was quoted word for word by Perrucci in 1699, suggesting that it continued to inform the turn of the century rhetorician’s concept of appropriate pitch range.¹²⁶ There are two main ideas here. First, the extreme ranges of the voice are unsuitable for oratory for a variety of reasons which may be correlated with the virtues of delivery: straining the voice is a contravention of *puritas*, while the high and low ranges have

¹²⁴ *De oratore*, III.225. The story would have been familiar to many educated men in the eighteenth century, who had been required to study Cicero at school. It was recounted by Planelli, for example, in his essay on theatre music, where he argued that “This style abhors tones that are too high and too low. Pathos consists of a just medium.” Planelli, *Dell’opera in musica, trattato del cavaliere Antonio Planelli dell’ordine gerosolimitano* (Napoli: Nella Stamperia di Donato Campo, 1772; reprint, ed. Francesco Degrada, Firenze: discanto edizioni, 1981). The relevant passages are translated in Fubini, ed., *Music and Culture*, 241, 49.

¹²⁵ *Institutio oratoria*, XI.iii.41-2. Translation in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H. E. Butler.

¹²⁶ Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa*, 114.

respectively too much and too little clearness (*perspicuitas*). The high being too thin and the low too full, both fail to demonstrate *ornatus*, and they each also fail in *decorum*, the low for lack of emotional power and the high as it gives an impression of extravagance. Thus, the appropriate range for oratory is the middle voice, which avoids these failings. Secondly, variation within this middle range is to be used for expression.

The idea that different affective qualities were associated with high, middle and low pitch was taken up by subsequent writers including Girolamo Mei, who applied it to music:

It is likewise very well known that pitches intermediate between the extremely high and the extremely low are appropriate for showing a quiet and moderate disposition of the affections, while the very high are signs of a very excited and uplifted spirit, and the very low of abject and humble thoughts.¹²⁷

The “excited and uplifted spirit” associated with high pitch need not be equated with happiness, rather it signals a degree of agitation:

As anybody can hear, someone who laments never leaves the high pitches, and contrariwise someone who grieves does not leave the low pitches, unless a short distance, never crossing over into the intermediate pitches, which would not be suited to such a purpose.¹²⁸

This idea was influential in the philosophical justification for monody, since it precluded the expression of the affections through polyphony: if different voice ranges intrinsically expressed different affections, voice parts sounding simultaneously in different ranges must necessarily express contradictory affections, cancelling out each other’s affective power. Conversely, to avoid this trap and realise the expressive possibilities of the solo voice, Vincenzo Galilei argued that monody should be restricted to a narrow, speech-like range; indeed it “should be different from speech only enough to distinguish it from speaking”.¹²⁹

Using few notes is natural both in speaking and singing, since the end of one and the other is solely the expression of the conceits of the soul by means of words, which, when well

¹²⁷ Girolamo Mei, "Letter to Vincenzo Galilei, 8 May 1572," in *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 58-9.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹²⁹ Vincenzo Galilei, "Dubbi intorno a quanto io ho detto dell'uso dell'enharmonio, con la solutione di essi," (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. MS Galilei 3: n.d.), fol. 66v. Translation in Palisca, *Humanism*, 394.

expressed and understood by the listeners, generate in them whatever affections the musician cares to treat through this medium ... The three or four notes that a tranquil soul seeks are not the same as those which suit the excited spirit, or one who is lamenting, or a lazy and somnolent one. For the tranquil soul seeks the middle notes; the querulous the high; and the lazy and somnolent the low.¹³⁰

While a well managed singing voice can accommodate more extreme pitches than are used in speech, and can do so without placing what Quintilian called "too great a strain upon the voice," the timbre of this kind of vocalisation sounds more "sung" than declamation in the middle, or speech range of the voice does. This can be appropriate for those more affectively intense moments experienced by the "excited spirit". Nevertheless the norm for recitative composition throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remained centring the tessitura on the middle voice, with only occasional excursions beyond comfortable speech-range.

In addition to the management of the overall tessitura of recitative to match the pitch range of speech, there is the question of imitating the specific pitch contour and inflections of speech. This was clearly identified by Doni as a goal of the early *stile rappresentativo* when he writes that the composer of such music should

express these very accents and inflections of pitch which are naturally uttered in speaking ... For this reason he should diligently observe which syllables are intoned with a uniform and steady accent, and on which ones the voice is raised or lowered, and to what note or interval, considering those rapid transitions which occur between the accented syllables, and all the varieties which are made principally by the most artful and expert speakers, according to the manner, affection, and sentiment of that which is spoken, for example, interrogations, threats, and all kinds of interjections and representational speech.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Galilei, "Dubbi intorno a quanto io ho detto dell'uso dell'enharmonio, con la solutione di essi," fol. 67r-v. Translation in Palisca, *Humanism*, 393.

¹³¹ " ... esprimere quegli accenti stessi, e piegamenti di voci, che naturalmente si fanno favellando.... Doverà perciò osservare diligentemente quali sillabe s'intuonano con accento uniforme, ed equabile, e in quali si alza, o abbassa la voce, e insino a che segno, o intervallo, ponendo mente a quei transiti veloci, che si fanno intorno le sillabe accentate, e tutte le varietà, che si fanno, principalmente da' piu leggiadri, ed esperti Dicatori secondo il costume, affetto, e sentimento di quello, che si dice, come nelle interrogazioni, minnacce, ed ogni sorte d'interiezione, e parlare figurato." Italian text in Giovanni Battista Doni, "Trattato della musica scenica (1630)," in *Lyra Barberina amphichordos*, ed. A.F. Gori and G.B. Passeri (Florence: 1763; reprint, facsimile edition, Bolgna: Forni, 1974), 30. Translation in Margaret Rosso Grossman, "G.B. Doni and theatrical music" (PhD, University of Illinois, 1977), 173.

Peri implied that imitating speech contour was one of his guiding principles,¹³² and John Walter Hill's analysis indicates that his works in *stile recitativo* do in fact have this quality.¹³³ As Dale Monson has pointed out, however, no eighteenth-century Italian theorist defined rules for the composition of a melodic contour in recitative.¹³⁴ Certain typical gestures, such as rising inflections for questions, are easily identified in recitative, but there is no Italian theoretical literature on *recitativo semplice* composition before 1780 to explain how composers of *dramma per musica* understood this issue more generally.

At the same time, there are some strong indications from commentators other than composers and theorists. Writing in 1710, John Hughes identified speech contour as a characteristic of recitative that English music should adopt "after the model of the Italians". "Recitative music", he wrote, "takes its rise from the natural tunes and changes of the voice in speaking and is indeed no more than a sort of modulated elocution".¹³⁵ No less an authority than Metastasio also drew a connection between speech inflection and recitative in his "Estratto dell' *Arte Poetica*". In arguing for the legitimacy of recitative and aria as modern analogues of ancient Greek practice, Metastasio comments that

The art of recitative for the most part only restricts itself by retaining the voices within the confines of the harmonic system. This allows very liberal opportunity to imitate the inflections of natural speech by singing. All recitatives, therefore, have just enough of art to be music, but

¹³² In explaining his concept of musical recitation, Peri implies that his melodic shape is intended to mimic that of speech: "I recognized likewise that in our speech certain sounds are intoned in such a way that a harmony can be built upon them, and in the course of speaking we pass through many that are not so intoned, until we reach another that permits a movement to a new consonance ... I held [the bass] fixed through both dissonances and consonances until the voice of the speaker, having run through various notes, arrived at a syllable that, being intoned in ordinary speech, opened the way to a new harmony." Preface to the score of *Euridice*. Italian text and translation in Palisca, *Humanism*, 429-30.

¹³³ John Walter Hill, "Beyond Isomorphism toward a Better Theory of Recitative," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 9, no. 1 (2003).

¹³⁴ Dale E. Monson, "'Recitativo semplice' in the 'opere serie' of G. B. Pergolesi and his contemporaries" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1983), 73. Monson also found no evidence of different recitative styles for different characters, in his own or others' research. Unlike the situation for arias, changes to recitative to suit different performers (for example, Anna Giraud's preference for pathetic roles) only ever involved transposition or rewriting for a different tessitura, not expressive change. Monson, "'Recitativo semplice' in Pergolesi", 82-3.

¹³⁵ John Hughes, "Essay for the improvement of theatrical music in the English language after the model of the Italians", in the preface to his libretto *Calypso and Telemachus* (1710). Quoted in Dennis Drew Arundell, *The critic at the opera: contemporary comments on opera in London over three centuries, Da Capo Press reprint series* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 209.

not everything that would be needed to merit the name of *melodia* [that is, the ancient Greek form of which he believes the modern aria to be the analogue].¹³⁶

In its context, Metastasio's comment might be read as a merely theoretical concept aimed at bolstering the classical pretensions of his broader argument, but the practical musician Mancini, too, is quite explicit about the nature of *recitativo semplice* as an imitation of the inflections of speech:

[Simple] recitative, when written by an understanding master, is most natural, because the simple notes which compose it are not only situated on the natural notes of each voice, but are so designed and reappear in such a manner as to perfectly imitate a natural discourse, so that each period can be distinguished, and one can mark the question marks, exclamation points, and closes. All of this is expressed in the cantilena, which varies with the movement and diversity of the tones, which change as the sentiments of the words differ, and according to the various emotions [commozioni] which one wishes to arouse in the souls of the audience.¹³⁷

Score analysis to show how and to what extent this principle was put into practice in particular compositions lies beyond the scope of this study.¹³⁸ More generally, however, the well-known observation that operatic recitatives were constructed out of rhythmic-melodic formulas for various kinds of phrases need not be seen as contradictory to the idea of imitating declamatory speech contours, since these could themselves be expected to follow a degree of patterning. Luigi Tagliavini has pointed out, for example, that the last accented syllable of each poetic line in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century recitative is marked by a "musical accent", typically signalled by a rise in pitch, and generally contained in an

¹³⁶ Italian text in Metastasio, "Estratto dell'arte poetica d'Aristotile e considerazione su la medesima," 964-5. Translation in Monson, "'Recitativo semplice' in Pergolesi", 67-8.

¹³⁷ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 237-8. Translation in Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 72.

¹³⁸ The issue was addressed to some extent for mid-seventeenth century Roman opera in Murata, *Operas*, 123ff. On recitative in Agostino Steffani's operas see Candace Ann Marles, "Music and drama in the Hanover operas of Agostino Steffani (1654-1728)" (PhD, Yale, 1991), 297ff. Dale Monson found that in Pergolesi's operas "the principal influence on the overall shape of a recitative melody rested on musical grounds, and was not a direct result of a dramatic interpretation of the text" (p.210), however he did not look specifically for imitation of the inflection of declaimed speech. See Monson, "'Recitativo semplice' in Pergolesi", 197ff. Downes' comparison of seven settings of the same phrase from Metastasio's *Artaserse* found striking similarities of style, including phrasing, rhythm and cadential patterns. It also reveals substantial commonality, though by no means uniformity, of melodic contour. Edward O. D. Downes, "'Secco' recitative in early classical 'Opera Seria' (1720-80)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 14, no. 1 (1961): 66-7.

appoggiatura.¹³⁹ This makes perfect sense in the light of Mei's observation as early as the 1540s that in spoken Italian, accent is primarily pitch inflected, rather than quantitative.¹⁴⁰ Such "building in" of speech inflection into the stereotypical melodic shapes of recitative is surely an instance of the kind of writing which Mancini describes as "most natural", being designed to "perfectly imitate a natural discourse".¹⁴¹

For the present purpose, however, the significance of the concept of imitating speech contour is not in the analysis of recitative composition, but rather the implications it has for vocal performance practice. If the pitch contour of recitative is conceived not as a melody but as what Hughes calls "a sort of modulated elocution", and Mancini a "natural discourse", it ceases to be an externally imposed musical framework onto which declamatory dynamic, timbre and (to some extent) rhythm must be projected. The pitch contour instead becomes an integral element of a declamatory complex. It remains an element over which the singer-*recitatore* cedes primary control to the composer, but which feeds back to the expression of the text through the other parameters as part of an organic whole.

Pitch contour is of course also conditioned by its supporting harmony. This is significant not so much in terms of the larger harmonic directions of passages of recitative, which are highly flexible and determined primarily by practical considerations such as the key of the following aria rather than expressive aspirations,¹⁴² but mainly in terms of localised expression of particular *concetti* through, for example, dissonant harmonies that are matched by dissonant melodic leaps. As Murata points out, a falling diminished 5th represents the same gestural contour as a falling perfect 4th, but they are far from being musically

¹³⁹ Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, "'Sposa! Euridice!' Prosodischer und musikalischer Akzent," in *De editione musices: Festschrift Gerhard Croll zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Wolfgang Gratzner and Andrea Lindmayr (Germany: Laaber-Verlag, 1992).

¹⁴⁰ Palisca, *Humanism*, 348.

¹⁴¹ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 237. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 871-2.

¹⁴² See, for example, Strohm's analysis of Vivaldi's recitatives in Strohm, *Giustino*, 19-22. Marita McClymonds and Daniel Hertz also point out the tendency for recitatives to gravitate to the flat tonalities for tender moments and "negative" events, and to the sharp side for "positive" events and aggressive actions. See Marita McClymonds and Daniel Hertz, "Opera Seria," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (www.grovemusic.com, Accessed 14 February 2007). These harmonic "gestures" may act as additional cues to the singers with regard to expressive intent, but have little direct influence on the declamatory contour of the cantilena itself which, Strohm's analysis suggests, tends to have its own local logic which is to a substantial extent independent of the larger harmonic framework.

equivalent.¹⁴³ Just as a singer's declamation will be influenced by a striking harmonic gesture in the continuo, which highlights a *conchetto* in the text or expresses affective content,¹⁴⁴ similarly striking gestures in melodic contour will signal moments of expressive significance to be projected with an apt combination of dynamic, rhythmic and timbral nuance.

The most obvious elements of pitch in the vocal line of recitative which were not explicitly notated by composers are the appoggiaturas; other ornaments were generally excluded from Italian recitative. For Tosi, not writing out the appoggiatura was a matter of honour:

If the Scholar be well instructed in this, the *Appoggiatura's* will become so familiar to him by continual Practice, that by the Time he is come out of his first Lessons, he will laugh at those Composers that mark them, with a Design either to be thought Modern, or to shew that they understand the Art of singing better than the Singers. If they have this Superiority over them, why do they not write down even the Graces, which are more difficult and more essential than the *Appoggiatura's*?¹⁴⁵

Cadential appoggiaturas need not detain us here since, although they are unnotated, their execution (at least as far as pitch is concerned) involves well established conventions of interpreting the musical notation rather than the discretionary application of rhetorical principles. More interesting from the rhetorical point of view are appoggiaturas applied in other places in recitative. Italian sources have nothing to say on this question in the century after 1620, and Tosi, too, casts little light on it despite devoting a whole chapter to the appoggiatura. Commenting generally, rather than about recitative in particular, he advises that the appoggiatura is easy to teach and to learn, and "has obtained the sole Privilege of being heard often without tiring provided it does not go beyond the Limit prescribed by Professors of good Taste".¹⁴⁶ Appoggiaturas may rise or fall by a whole tone or a semitone major (*semituono maggiore*), and also by more distant intervals as long as these are not

¹⁴³ Murata, *Operas*, 123.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Ruhnke's analysis of this process in Gasparini's *Il Bajazet* (1719), in Martin Ruhnke, "Prinzipien der musikalischen Rhetorik in der Rezitativ-Harmonik bei Francesco Gasparini," in *Die Sprache der Musik: Festschrift Klaus Wolfgang Niemoller zum 60. Geburtstag* (Germany: Bosse, 1989).

¹⁴⁵ Tosi, *Observations*, 38-9.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 31-2.

“deceitful” (d’inganno), a term Galliard interprets as meaning the tritone and major sixth.¹⁴⁷

Tosi does not deign to explain their placement, however, since

The Addition of one Note cost little Trouble and less Study. Poor *Italy!* Pray tell me; do not the Singers now-a-days know where the *Appoggiatura’s* are to be made, unless they are pointed at with a Finger? In my Time their own Knowledge shewed it them. Eternal Shame to him who first introduced these foreign Puerilities into our Nation, renowned for teaching others the greater part of the polite Arts; particularly, that of Singing! Oh, how great a Weakness in those that follow the Example! Oh, injurious Insult to you Modern Singers, who submit to Instructions fit for Children! Let us imitate the Foreigners in those Things only, wherein they excel.¹⁴⁸

A somewhat different case is represented by Mancini. He also does not address appoggiaturas in recitative in any depth, perhaps for similar reasons, and when he does touch on the subject he does not even mention the cadential appoggiatura, which he presumably takes for granted as Tosi did. He does, however, describe a different usage:

And here I lay down another proposition, which I tell you, that all the merit of recitative consists in knowing well how to place the appoggiatura, or the musical accent, as it is commonly called; this precious accent, which is all the pleasing quality of a beautiful cantilena, consists, in sum, in a note a tone above that which is written, and this should be used only [*singolarmente*] on those occasions when syllables making up a word are set to notes of the same pitch. Here for greater clarity, is an example:¹⁴⁹



As might be expected in light of the foregoing, the appoggiatura in this instance marks out an accented syllable by raising its pitch. Although Mancini appears to be saying that this rule

¹⁴⁷ Tosi, *Opinioni*, 19-23. Galliard’s translation and annotations in Tosi, *Observations*, 31-40.

¹⁴⁸ Tosi, *Observations*, 39-40.

¹⁴⁹ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 239. Translation based on that in Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 73. The example is similar to one discussed five decades earlier by Telemann in the preface to his *Harmonischer Gottes-Dienst* (1725-6). The possibility should perhaps not be excluded that Mancini, writing in Vienna, is describing a German practice which has crept into Italian music in the intervening period, but it seems far more likely that both writers are describing a well established Italian practice which had earlier moved (as most musical developments did) in the opposite direction.

applies only (or particularly?) where a sequence of syllables belonging to a single word are set to the same pitch, the example contradicts this, suggesting that it may apply wherever a series of notes at the same pitch includes an accented syllable, whether or not within a single word. In any case, this explanation of the role of the *appoggiatura* fits well with the idea of declamatory patterning by pitch accent, mimicking the pitch contour of declaimed speech.

There remain two other possible instances in which singers may not have precisely reproduced the written pitches in recitative: firstly, if there were instances in which some kind of *Sprechstimme* was used to more closely approximate what Mei, following Aristoxenus, called the “continuous,” sliding pitch of speech,¹⁵⁰ and second, if a degree of improvisation (apart from the placement of *appoggiaturas*) were accepted.

Despite some apparently approving, or at least neutral references to “speaking” the recitative (see Chapter 5, above), it seems unlikely that this implied any licence to move far from accurate diastematic pitch, at least for the serious characters in *dramma per musica*. While Mancini considers making recitative too “sung” as a fault,¹⁵¹ Tosi conversely criticised the singer who “speaks it” (*lo parla*).¹⁵² If, as I have argued, the main feature that distinguishes the vocal delivery of *recitativo semplice* from declaimed speech is the use of diastematic pitch, it must be the failure to maintain that distinction that Tosi has in mind. It may be that Mancini, writing half a century after Tosi, was prepared to accept a more literally “*parlando*” or spoken delivery than Tosi would have considered appropriate, but there is nothing in his treatise to suggest that this would include imprecision of pitch. Rather, his point seems to be about maintaining flexibility of rhythm, timbre and dynamic, and clear articulation of the words and punctuation. It is a warning against reading the recitative *cantilena* as a melody and attempting to “sing it, tying the voice continually”.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Palisca, *Humanism*, 348. See Chapter 5, above.

¹⁵¹ “Difetto adunque sarebbe, se un attore, invece di dire il recitativo con voce sciolta, lo volesse cantare legando continuamente la voce.” Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 239.

¹⁵² Tosi, *Opinioni*, 43.

¹⁵³ Mancini, *Practical Reflections*, 73. He perhaps also has in mind a point about vocal technique. While the recitatives should be, in Tosi’s words, “expressed with Strength, and supported without Affectation” (Tosi, *Opinioni*, 48.), [espressi con forza, e sostenuti senza affettazione (Tosi, *Observations*, 76.)], the singer should allow the posture of the vocal mechanism to remain closer to that used in declaimed speech than to the more intense posture required to maintain the legato line and greater consistency of timbre appropriate to aria singing.

The question of possible improvisation of the cantilena itself is difficult – perhaps impossible – to resolve. Neither Tosi nor Mancini addresses this issue directly. While Perrucci suggests improvisation in the case of a memory lapse or other mishap in a *commedia premeditata* (composed play), he seems to rule it out for *dramma per musica* when he describes forgetting one's lines as "an irremediable defect in reciting in music, it not being possible to sing in the manner of improvised acting".¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, the relentless pace of the eighteenth-century opera industry with its constant demand for new pieces must have made for occasions when either the notes or words, or both, were forgotten, particularly in recitative, given its lack of repetition structures or large-scale melodic logic and the sheer amount to be memorised. How might singers have coped with this situation? In practice, forgetting the words may not have been a major issue. In many cases the libretto was familiar from previous settings by other composers (even if adapted and perhaps cut) and a prompter was generally available.¹⁵⁵ If the notes were forgotten, there were at least the common formulaic pitch contours of recitation to fall back on. The main thing was not to get lost harmonically and so lose touch with the continuo players and the harmonic direction of the scene, which could change rapidly for either expressive effect or in preparation for an approaching aria – not to mention bamboozling other singers involved in the dialogue. It is presumably with this in mind that C.P.E. Bach advises harpsichordists that "When a singer departs from the written notes, it is better to strike a full chord repeatedly than to play individual intervals."¹⁵⁶ In other words, bringing the singer back to the right key is a higher priority than ensuring that they reproduce the exact written pitches. He takes this further:

¹⁵⁴ "difetto irremediabile nel recitare in musica, non potendosi cantare come recitare all'improvviso." Perrucci, *Dell'arte rappresentativa*, 138-9.

¹⁵⁵ It was not uncommon for singers to repeat the same role in a particular drama in more than one musical setting, for example, the tenor Francesco Borosini performed the role of Bajazet in Gasparini's (1719) and Handel's (1723) settings of Count Agostino Piovene's *Tamerlano* (retitled *Bajazet* in Gasparini's 1719 version). See Reinhard Strohm, "Francesco Gasparini's later operas and Handel" in Reinhard Strohm, *Essays on Handel and Italian opera* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 84. Strohm also documents the extent of this practice in his essay "Metastasio's *Alessandro nell'Indie* in its earliest settings" in Strohm, *Essays*, 84. The fact that the recitatives were generally composed before the arias would also have provided some extra time to memorise them. Marcello makes much of the ubiquity of the prompter in his *Teatro all moda*.

¹⁵⁶ „Wenn der Sänger nicht recht tonfeste ist, so thut man besser, daß man die Harmonie zugleich einigemal hintereinander anschläget, als wenn man einzelne Intervallen anbietet." C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen: Zweyter Theil, in welchem die Lehre von dem Accompannement und der freyen Fantasie abgehandelt wird* (Berlin: In Verlegung des Auctoris, 1762), 317. Translation based on C. P. E. Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, ed. William J. Mitchell, trans. William J. Mitchell (London: Eulenburg, 1974), 423.

In recitatives, correct harmony is the primary factor, and one must not always require that the singer sing only the written notes and no others, especially in indifferent passages. It is sufficient if he declaims within the confines of the proper harmony ... If the singer is of sufficient ability, there is no need for alarm when he chooses to sing Example *a* of Figure 466 in the manner of Example 1 or 2. Causes for such changes may be a desire to find a convenient register, or simply forgetfulness. In memorizing their parts, singers often confuse the many similar patterns of recitatives, for they are more impressed by the underlying harmony than by the melody.¹⁵⁷

Figure 466

Here Bach clearly allows for the singer to deliberately choose a different realisation from the written one, rather than merely to recover from a memory lapse, though the only reason he gives for this is the need to find a more convenient register. That is surely a situation which must have arisen in many opera productions.¹⁵⁸ Since the recitatives were often composed first, before the composer had had a chance to consult personally with the singers, there must have been instances in which particular passages sat uncomfortably on first reading and needed to be modified. Rather than transposing or recomposing an entire passage, at least some composers may have acquiesced if a singer changed a few notes within the confines of the style and principles of good declamation.

The parameter of pitch, then, presents rather different challenges in the singer's realisation of *recitativo semplice* than do rhythm, dynamic or timbre. It is the parameter over which the singer has least direct control, since composed pitch is less flexible than composed rhythm, and dynamic and timbre are generally not specified at all. Yet, like composed rhythm,

¹⁵⁷ Bach, *Versuch*, 317. My translation, adapted from Bach, *Essay*, trans. by Mitchell, 423-4.

¹⁵⁸ It is not entirely clear to what range of repertoire Bach means this passage to apply. The context makes clear that he is talking about theatre music, and it is conceivable that he means only the "intermezzos and comic operas with much noisy action" mentioned two paragraphs earlier, but the passage in question is presented as a separate idea and there is nothing in it to suggest that *dramma per musica* – much of which was performed at the Berlin court – is excluded.

composed pitch provides cues to the composer's conception of the prosody and declamatory shape of the words. Nuances of relative pitch (such as dissonant leaps) and absolute pitch (particularly at the extremities of the tessitura) also provide opportunities for declamatory subtlety. The pitch contour of recitative is not a "tune" as in an aria, where an external musical logic dictates melodic shape; although the composer specifies the pitches of the cantilena in considerable detail, it is still the singer's responsibility to actively engage with its meaning as an element of declamation.

Like Gregorian chant, *recitativo semplice* can have its own musical interest, but that musical interest is not intrinsic to its purpose. Rather, it is an alliance of music and words which has an extra-musical function which its musical aspect is there to serve: in the case of *recitativo semplice*, it is intended to be dramatically effective. We therefore cannot hope to understand recitative in purely musical terms. Neither can it be understood purely as declamation, however. Its location in the contested middle ground between speech and song is a source of sometimes uncomfortable ambiguity, but also of the flexibility that is its greatest strength.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

The evidence of contemporary sources shows that the rhetorical conceptual framework which underlay all performative disciplines in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also informed the performance practice of theatrical recitative throughout the period. More specifically, the principles of rhetorical *pronuntiatio* represent the only viable conceptual framework for a theory of delivery in the *recitativo semplice* of *dramma per musica*, which otherwise lacks a theoretical basis. There is no alternative contemporary model for communication that could be applied to recitative in this period; according to Sommi, Cecchini and Perrucci, delivery in even the improvised *commedia dell'arte* was explained (even if not explicitly constructed) according to rhetorical principles.

Singers' training in delivery was primarily experiential; very few singers studied rhetoric formally, yet its compositional principles of invention, arrangement and style were built into the poetry that they sang, the prose they read, and the speeches and sermons that they heard in the course of their professional and private lives. They were constantly exposed to the practices of rhetorical delivery, which informed all kinds of public, artistic, and (amongst the upper classes) even private communication. Pulpit and legal oratory, theatre acting and poetry recitation all conformed to the principles of classical rhetoric.

These principles are traceable through the literature of classical and early modern rhetoric to that of Italian theatre and singing. These sources set out the rhetorical understanding of how communication works, the nature and purpose of delivery, and the way good delivery is learnt. Sources on singing, in particular the treatises of Tosi and Mancini, make it clear that the principles of good recitative performance are those of good, spoken, poetic declamation, modified only by the specifically musical components of recitative. In effect, it is only the composer's specification of "diastematic" or intervallic pitch in the cantilena, and the sketched outline of rhythm and accompanying harmony, that separates recitative from

spoken poetic declamation. The principles of declamation thus provide a coherent model for the application of those aspects of recitative delivery which are otherwise not addressed in the musical literature. This includes judicious management of the principal parameters of vocal delivery – rhythm, dynamic, timbre, pitch – to appropriately express the words. This is done by using the pitch and rhythmic outline provided by the composer in the score, guided by the harmonic context, and above all, the words themselves.

So, what general conclusions may be drawn about the implications of the rhetorical tradition of vocal delivery for the unnotated parameters of recitative delivery? Perhaps the most significant observation about this body of knowledge is its relative stability over time. Aesthetic preferences clearly varied at different times and in different locations, yet the guiding principles of the rhetorical tradition remained unequivocally in place throughout much of Europe, and certainly across Italy throughout the early modern period. These were not a rigid set of rules, but on the contrary discouraged any mechanical, mannered or affected style (though the definition of this may not have been the same as ours). The consistency in the precepts put forward by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers about the use of the voice is not surprising when considered in the light of the equally consistent association in the literature between the use of the voice and the other half of the art of delivery, gesture. As Dene Barnett argued in his *The Art of Gesture: The principles and practices of 18th century acting*, the principles of classical gesture were remarkably consistent in their presentation by writers across Europe during the early modern period and remained largely in place until well into the nineteenth century.¹ It makes sense that the fundamental principles of vocal delivery should also have been largely consistent, even if the specifics of their application varied between national styles and across time.

Some of what the rhetoricians have to say about delivery may perhaps strike us today as merely common sense – for example matching delivery to the meaning of the words, or cultivating a clear, strong, pleasant voice – yet common sense was an idea not invented until the Enlightenment; what Soarez, Caussin, Lang and other rhetorical authors are setting out is

¹ Dene Barnett, with the assistance of Jeanette Massy-Westropp, *The Art of Gesture: The practices and principles of 18th century acting* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1987). On the persistence of the classicist acting style into the nineteenth century, see, for example, Alfred Siemon Golding, *Classicistic acting: two centuries of a performance tradition at the Amsterdam Schouwburg; to which is appended an annotated translation of the "Lessons on the principles of gesticulation and mimic expression" of Johannes Jelgerhuis* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

a remarkably consistent, detailed and strong framework of aesthetic criteria. While the prevailing style of music changed dramatically between the late seventeenth century, when Ferrucci was active, and the appearance of Mancini's singing treatise in the late eighteenth, the underlying aesthetic principles governing delivery remained remarkably consistent throughout this period – as indeed they had been for a long period before.

These aesthetic principles may be summed up under the headings of the virtues of delivery. In recitative as much as in spoken declamation, these mirror the virtues of style: purity (*puritas*), clarity (*perspicuitas*), ornateness (*ornatus*) and appropriateness (*decorum*). Delivery must thus be pure in language and vocal quality, and close attention is to be paid to the sense of the words, which are to be enunciated clearly, with punctuation used sensitively to articulate meaning. The voice should also be adorned with beauty of sound and secure vocal control. The normative or neutral tone in which ordinary dialogue is delivered should be sonorous and full, though Mancini makes it clear that in recitative there should not be a continuously "sung" delivery which concentrates on beautiful sound at the expense of vivid expression. Harsh sounds may also be used where appropriate to the subject matter. This tends to confirm Edward Foreman's view that the so-called "bel canto ideal" is not simply about beauty of sound. In recitative as much as in aria singing, this repertoire demands flawless and highly flexible vocal technique but does not seek unrelenting beauty and purity of sound. Rather, technical facility and exceptional vocal control allows for a highly varied delivery.²

Decorum demands that delivery be appropriate to the subject matter. It goes hand in hand with two other encompassing concepts, those of appropriateness to the audience, and *kairos*, or aptness to the circumstances in which one is speaking. To appropriately convey the subject matter, the content of the words is to be conveyed both generally, with regard to the overall affect of the passage, and in detail from word to word. Within the bounds of decorum and good taste, dictated in part by the level of style appropriate to the subject, there should be pronounced variety and flexibility in delivery. This variety was valued across all of the parameters of vocal delivery – pacing, articulation, vocal colour, dynamic.

² Edward Vaught. Foreman, "A Comparison of Selected Italian Vocal Tutors of the Period ca. 1550 to 1800" (D.M.A., University of Illinois, 1969), 3.

Variety in delivery had two main purposes. In the first place, it created interest and avoided boredom, an intrinsic good from the point of view of the audience, but also an advantage to the performer in fulfilling the dual purpose of *dramma per musica*: to entertain, and in doing so to convey the moral message at the heart of the libretto. Secondly, variety of delivery was essential for appropriately expressing the *affetti* (affections or feelings) and *concetti* (thoughts) embedded in the words, and thereby moving the affections of the audience. To achieve this, vocal delivery was expected to use a wide range of expression, limited only by the physical capabilities of the performer and the bounds of decorum and good taste. It is impossible to precisely quantify how much variety was expected or allowed, but both the “neutral” pace, tone colour and volume suitable for plain dialogue, and the range of deviation from these norms appropriate for expression, were expected to vary according to a whole range of considerations including the character portrayed, the acoustic of the theatre, the audience (both on stage and in the auditorium), local traditions, and the personal acting style and strengths and weaknesses of the individual performer.

Decorum also applied in something like its more modern sense. Just as nobility was expressed in real life through a reserved manner, a certain sang-froid which restrained the expression of personal emotions, the same applied on the stage. The Cartesian affections, conceived as universal, abstract states, provided an acceptably distanced paradigm within which even nobles could safely move and be moved within the bounds of decorum, or courtly behaviour. There should thus be an overriding sense of restraint and moderation in acting and delivery, which also reflected the stylistic register of tragedy, to which *dramma per musica* aspired. The characters, correspondingly, are overwhelmingly members of the nobility and their retainers. Barbarian kings still behave like kings. Even shepherds often turn out to be nobles in disguise, as Aminta does in Metastasio’s *Il re pastore*. Since theatre aspires to artistic verisimilitude rather than literal truth, all of these characters speak with what Tosi calls “that Decorum with which Princes speak or those who know how to speak to Princes”.³

³ Pier Francesco Tosi, *Observations on the florid song, or, Sentiments on the ancient and modern singers. Written in Italian by Pier Francesco Tosi, of the Phil-Harmonic Academy at Bologna. Translated into English By Mr. Galliard*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Wilcox, 1743), 67.

Continuity and change

The focus of this study has been on explicating the principles of classical rhetoric as they are reflected in sources that influenced the performance practice of *recitativo semplice*. There has therefore been an emphasis on the continuity which is undoubtedly present with regard to rhetorical concepts in the sources. Yet it is also clear that while these fundamental principles continued to be valued, particularly in relation to delivery, the way they were applied in practice changed during the eighteenth century, in some respects marginally, in others much more fundamentally. The virtues of delivery again provide a useful framework for considering the areas in which there was either continuity or change.

In relation to *puritas*, there appears to have been little change. Mancini's views on the importance of a pure Tuscan pronunciation are, if anything, stronger than those of Tosi, and are at least as forceful as the injunctions of Cicero on this point. Much the same can be said of *perspicuitas*, or clarity. Both Tosi and Mancini emphasise the importance of clear articulation of individual words and of the punctuation that makes sense of them in larger units. With regard to the innate characteristics of voice encompassed by *ornatus*, there was some change through the century in the pitch ranges that were favoured for aria singing, notably a greater emphasis on the extreme high range in female voices, but there is little to indicate that there was any significant change in the innate qualities of voice that were valued in recitative.

The situation is rather different with regard to decorum and its closely associated concepts of variety and the expression of the affections. Each of these persisted as a major theme in rhetorical theory throughout the early modern period and each was regularly invoked in relation to recitative, yet they cannot have been immune from the substantial changes in musical style and aesthetics in the course of the eighteenth century. It is nevertheless clear that variety as a general principle continued to be valued as much late in the century as it had been at the beginning, as did the principle that the voice should reflect the emotional content of the words. The continuity of these principles through to the time of Mancini, despite the substantial changes in musical style during the century, is significant in itself. Exactly how their application in recitative may have changed in detail during the century is a subject that goes beyond the scope of the present study; however a few reflections may not

be out of place here on aspects of continuity and change in the concepts of the affections and the imitation of nature as they relate to the performance practice of Italian recitative.

Moving the affections

As Enlightenment concepts of personal, subjective expression in drama replaced the older principle of representing more generalised character types, this was reflected in a new style of acting and evolving conceptions of the affections. For Tosi, writing in 1723, the affections are discrete, rationalised emotional states, each of which has its own distinct manner of delivery, which he divides broadly into the categories of the “lively” [*l'allegro*] and the “pathetick” [*patetico*].⁴ He praises particular singers for their ability to convey particular affective states, for example “Cortona in the Tender” and “Baron Balarini in the Imperious”.⁵ For Mancini in 1777, expressing the affections is still a primary expressive goal, but there is less focus on categorising and specifying particular affective states, reflecting the then more modern view that emotions are more complex, fluid and individual than earlier theories of the affections had allowed.

At the same time, however, scientific thinking of the mid-eighteenth century continued to see emotional states as produced in an essentially mechanical way in response to stimuli, whether real or imagined (as in the case of memories). Thus Planelli, writing only two years before the appearance of the first edition of Mancini’s treatise, prefaced his discussion of theatre music with an exposition of a theory of pathos in music which recalls Locke’s doctrine of the Association of Ideas and David Hartley’s theory of the nervous system based on Vibrations. Just as an emotive tone of voice stirs emotion in us by reminding us of the emotions felt on occasions when we have heard such tones before, or a portrait of a loved or hated person arouses the emotions associated with that person “rekindled through an association of ideas”, so music “acts on the mechanical part of our emotions” and agitates both the spirit and the body by imitating the tones of voice associated with particular emotions. The mechanism by which Planelli conceives this as happening is a vibration of the

⁴ *Ibid.*, 71. Italian text in Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de’ cantori antichi, e moderni o sieno Osservazioni sopra il canto figurato* (Bologna: L. dalla Volpe, 1723), 44.

⁵ Tosi, *Observations*, 70.

nerves, which respond to particular frequencies just as the strings of an instrument are set in motion by sympathetic vibrations.⁶

We also experience such a vibrating effect on our nerves, to the extent that, while listening to a sound, we often feel a trembling sensation in some part of our body. Therefore, our nerves also have a definite sound. It follows that (1) they will be directly and necessarily moved by music containing sounds that are consonant with those to which they are naturally inclined, and (2) that a musical mode based on sounds that are consonant with those of the diathetic⁷ nerves will necessarily and directly move such nerves. Because of the agreement that exists between the latter and the emotions, their oscillations will awaken the passion that corresponds to the particular motion produced in them.⁸

This kind of conception of the workings of the affections or passions allows for individual, personal responses to events and experiences, but it is still a thoroughly physiological, mechanical model in which the passions can be named as discrete emotional states of fear, love, hatred, compassion, sadness, disdain, happiness and so on. While in *opera buffa* the spontaneous outbursts of individual characters' passions were breaking down the rationalised boundaries of the affections as persuasive means (as they were considered in traditional rhetoric), the same was not necessarily true in the more rarified world of *opera seria*. Any implications for the performance practice of recitative in *opera seria* are therefore likely to arise not so much from substantial changes in the psychological theory of the affections as from the mid-century revolution in acting style which owed much to the evolving conception of "naturalness" in delivery.

Naturalness

Virtually every early modern writer on rhetoric, acting or music says that delivery should be "natural", echoing the classical concept of the "imitation of nature", but the meanings attributed to naturalness were often contested and contradictory. According to Enrico Fubini

⁶ Planelli, *Dell'opera in musica, trattato del cavaliere Antonio Planelli dell'ordine gerosolimitano* (Napoli: Nella Stamperia di Donato Campo, 1772; reprint, ed. Francesco Degrada, Firenze: discanto edizioni, 1981). Translation in Enrico Fubini, ed., *Music and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe: A Source Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 241-3.

⁷ Planelli had earlier defined these nerves as "those that wind through the chest and stomach regions" which "are particularly apt to serve the passions". See Fubini, ed., *Music and Culture*, 242.

⁸ Translation in *Ibid.*, 243.

During the seventeenth century the term "Nature" was usually used as a synonym for "reason" or "truth", and "imitation" indicated the procedure which was supposed to enhance an intellectual truth and render it more pleasing and acceptable. But during the second half of the eighteenth century, paradoxically, we can find the term "Nature" used almost as a synonym for "feeling", "spontaneity" or "expressiveness", with "imitation" indicating "dramatic logic" or "dramatic truth": the link between art and reality.⁹

In theatrical terms, this change was most strikingly evident in the revolution in acting style in the 1740s associated with the English actor David Garrick, who personified the move towards convincingly portraying individuals, rather than the defining features of ideal types.¹⁰ Though his style was still within the overarching framework of classicism, Garrick was noted for his less stylised movement on stage, the expressive range of his voice, and his emphasis on staying in character:

When three or four are on the stage with him, he is attentive to whatever is spoke, and never drops his character when he has finished a speech, by either looking contemptibly on an inferior performer, unnecessarily spitting, or suffering his eyes to wander through the whole circle of spectators. His action corresponds with the voice, and both with the character he is to play.¹¹

In acting this way, Garrick was doing no more than meeting the requirements of Quintilian and Cicero for good oratory, but these requirements had apparently not been met, or at least had not been interpreted in the same way in any European theatre tradition until that time. As Daniel Hertz notes, until Garrick's brilliant debut in 1741, "the practice in tragedy had been to advance with ceremony to the front of the stage, strike a pose, then remain immobile while declaiming. As in the aria opera of Metastasio, the typical stage picture consisted of one or more figures rooted front and center stage. Perhaps the stylized declamation of

⁹ Enrico Fubini, *The History of Music Aesthetics*, trans. Michael Hatwell (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).

¹⁰ Garrick's career has been the subject of several biographies which are cited in Daniel Hertz, *From Garrick to Gluck: essays on opera in the age of Enlightenment* (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 2004). On his influence on "naturalness" in acting style in particular, see George Taylor, "'The Just Delineation of the Passions': Theories of Acting in the Age of Garrick," in *The Eighteenth-Century English Stage: The Proceedings of a Symposium sponsored by the Manchester University Department of Drama*, ed. Kenneth and Peter Thomson Richards (London: Methuen, 1972). See also Kristine Hecker, "The Art of Acting in Past Centuries: Reconstructing what could not be preserved," in *Records and Images of the Art of the Performer: 18th International Congress, Stockholm 3-7 September 1990*, ed. Barbro Stribolt (Stockholm: International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts, 1990).

tragedy came closer to recitative than we now realize".¹² In the last quoted sentence, it seems to me that Heartz approaches, if from a different direction, the reality towards which the sources cited in this study point. It is not so much that declamation in tragedy approached that of recitative, as that Italian recitative had moved only a relatively short distance beyond spoken recitation of the kind used in tragedy. It was simply a more "heightened" version of the stylised declamation used in the theatre but also in the pulpit, and to some extent even at the bar and in other public speaking contexts. The connection between tragic theatrical declamation and recitation in music appears more direct in the case of French *récitatif*, given its reputed provenance as Lully's creation in conscious imitation of the theatrical declamation of Mlle Champmeslé, but the relationship of Italian recitative to spoken declamation was perhaps not as far from this model as has often been assumed.¹³

Garrick's revolutionary influence on acting was felt well beyond England,¹⁴ and also extended to Italian opera, in the person of the eminent castrato Gaetano Guadagni. Burney reported that Guadagni's "ideas of acting were taken ... from Garrick, who, when he [Guadagni] performed in an English opera called the *Fairies* [1755], took as much pleasure in forming him as an actor, as Gizziello did afterwards in polishing his style of singing". The singer's acting was much admired when he created the role of Orpheus in Gluck and Calzabigi's *Orfeo*; indeed Burney considered that "as an actor, he seems to have had no equal on any stage in Europe".¹⁵ It appears, then, that Garrick's training led to some extension of Guadagni's expressive range, but how, if at all, this was reflected in his vocal delivery of recitative is not clear. It should be remembered, too, that Guadagni's acting training in the modern style appears to have been exceptional in an Italian opera singer at that time and

¹¹ A critic writing in 1742, quoted in Heartz, *From Garrick to Gluck: essays on opera in the age of Enlightenment*, 258. Original source not identified.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Claude Palisca's argument that Lully's recitative was modelled as much on Italian recitative as it was practised in his youth, as it was on spoken recitation in the French theatre, also tends to reinforce the thought that the distance between Italian and French spoken recitation, as well as their respective musical forms, may, at least in the mid-seventeenth century, not have been as great as has often been assumed. See "The Recitative of Lully's *Alceste*: French Declamation or Italian Melody?" in Claude V. Palisca, *Studies in the history of Italian music and music theory* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1994), 491-508.

¹⁴ See, for example, the account of the impression made on a French actor by Garrick's style, quoted in Heartz, *From Garrick to Gluck: essays on opera in the age of Enlightenment*, 258. The whole episode is recounted in Frank A. Hedgcock, *A Cosmopolitan Actor: David Garrick and his French Friends* (London: 1912).

¹⁵ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is prefixed, A Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients ...* 4 vols. (London: 1776-89), 495.

cannot be taken as evidence of a more general transformation in acting in *dramma per musica*. Indeed, Mancini deplors the state of operatic acting in 1777, fifteen years after Guadagni's celebrated performances in *Orfeo*, commenting that with the rise of *opera buffa* and ballet, "the actors [*comici*] and comics [*buffi*] with their gesticulation and the dances with their pantomime are effectively the only ones who still use and appreciate good acting."¹⁶

How, then, may the evolving concept of naturalness and the consequent developments in acting style have played out in the delivery of *recitativo semplice*? Mancini has a considerable amount to say about acting in his chapter "On Recitative and Delivery", and some of his comments do appear to endorse the modern style; however, they are also contradictory in some respects, in keeping with the transitional period in which he wrote. His admiration for Gluck suggests a sympathy with the "reform" style,¹⁷ yet Guadagni does not rate any more than a passing mention amongst his several lists of eminent singer-actors. In fact his examples of praiseworthy actors who knew the value of good recitative delivery – Nicola Grimaldi (*detto Nicolini*), Marianna Benti Bulgarelli, Antonia Merighi – are entirely drawn from the early part of the century, well before Garrick's influence. His lack of detail on the specifics of vocal delivery (see Chapter 6, above), together with his praise of the '*comici*' (probably actors in the improvised *commedia*) might be taken to reflect the late eighteenth-century association of "naturalness" with an unstudied, spontaneous delivery which is not susceptible to generalised rules, yet he specifically depreciates "natural ability" in favour of learnt acting technique.

Do not deceive yourself that [acting] is a pure gift of nature. Learning it requires art and study. Granted, by nature one person more than another has a good disposition for performance, but ... what comes from nature flawed and crude must be polished and refined with art and study. People say – and it is very true – that one's delivery should be natural rather than studied, and never, above all, too affected ... This does not mean, however, that one should not study the true style of acting, but only that one should not make delivery affected, adapting and conforming the words being spoken and the character being

¹⁶ Giambattista Mancini, *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (Milano: Giuseppe Galeazzi, 1777; reprint, Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni, 1996), 236.

¹⁷ See in particular his panegyric on Gluck in his chapter "On Recitative and Action": *Ibid.*, 230-31. Translation by Wye J. Allanbrook in Leo Treitler, ed., *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, Revised ed. (New York: Norton, 1998), 873.

represented. This power to adapt and conform is what we call naturalness, which is precisely what is to be learnt from study.¹⁸

Decorum in physical movement is to be learnt from a dancing school; fencing and horseback riding from relevant training schools.¹⁹ Gesture coaching should be sought from classically educated *letterati*, of whom he provides a list which gives pride of place to Metastasio,²⁰ who, as we have seen above (Chapter 6), abhorred realism on stage.

The overall impression one gains from Mancini is of a sense of change, but certainly not of revolution; of a style of acting evolving in response to changing sensibilities, including the influence of the spoken theatre and *buffa* style, but not seen as in any way a radical departure from the classicist acting of the earlier part of the century. In the absence of formal acting training for most singers, change was probably incremental, based primarily on observing and imitating colleagues who worked in a range of styles. As the lines between the *buffa* and *seria* genres became more blurred and singers specialised less rigidly in one type or the other, opportunities to do this increased in the middle part of the century. Regina Mingotti, for instance, excelled in both *seria* and *buffa* roles. Perhaps this played some part in developing her skills as “a most judicious and complete actress, extending her intelligence to the poetry, and every part of the drama”.²¹ Ultimately, the style of delivery should match the stylistic register of the poetry, which varies in different kinds of scenes but in *dramma per musica* never drops below a level of artifice which filters truth to make it beautiful and orderly (to delight), moral (to instruct), and emotionally engaging (to move).

Implications for other genres of recitative

The subject matter of this study has been restricted to *recitativo semplice* in the theatrical style, but the same rhetorical principles are also applicable to the sacred and chamber styles. In Mancini’s view there is in any case no meaningful distinction to be drawn between these types, however the situation is less obvious for the early part of the eighteenth century, given

¹⁸ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 241-42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 243.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

Tosi's quite distinct definitions of the three genres. Yet even the distinctions Tosi draws relate essentially to the degree of intensity of expression appropriate to each context rather than to any fundamental difference in approach. In fact, the three genres of recitative as he describes them correspond in some respects to Cicero's three levels of style, a concept deeply rooted in the rhetorical tradition.²² The impassioned chamber type which is "adapted to move the most violent passions of the soul" conforms to Cicero's high or vigorous style, used for persuasion, a goal which Tosi names explicitly in relation to the chamber type.²³ Theatrical recitative, on the other hand, sticks to the plain style, avoiding any artifice which would interfere with the "natural narrative", except in soliloquies which may be composed in the chamber style. Tosi's definition of the ecclesiastical genre is more vague: it requires "sustained nobility",²⁴ and should be devoid of "wanton graces" but requires some *messa di voce* and many appoggiaturas; however, unhelpfully for our purposes, "the Art of expressing it is not to be learned, but from the affecting Manner of those who devoutly dedicate their Voices to the Service of God."²⁵ It appears nevertheless to partake of some of the characteristics of each of Cicero's levels, perhaps depending on the particular text set.²⁶ The appropriate level of style is thus one of the characteristics which a singer must analyse in deciding how to perform a particular work, but this determines how, rather than whether, the principles of rhetorical delivery are applied.

Although *recitativo obbligato* presents different opportunities and limitations for the singer than does *recitativo semplice*, it, too, is largely subject to the same rhetorical principles. The presence of the orchestra means that rhythmic freedom is at least curtailed in order to preserve ensemble, and vocal lines may be more melodic than those of *recitativo semplice*. It is

²¹ Burney, *General History*, 465. The work of companies, including Mingotti's, which crossed genre boundaries is discussed in Reinhard Strohm, *The eighteenth-century diaspora of Italian music and musicians* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001), 26ff.

²² *Orator*, xxi.69.

²³ In the chamber style, "where Passion speaks, all *Shakes*, all *Divisions* and *Graces* ought to be silent, leaving it to the sole Force of a beautiful Expression to persuade". Tosi, *Observations*, 68.

²⁴ "una continua nobiltà sostenuta". Tosi, *Opinioni*, 41. Galliard translates this more idiomatically as "a noble Majesty throughout": Tosi, *Observations*, 66.

²⁵ Tosi, *Observations*, 66.

²⁶ The primary goal of preaching was undoubtedly to teach, a function traditionally associated with the low or plain style, yet baroque pulpit oratory in the wake of the counter-reformation was often florid and set out also to delight and move, the more powerfully to touch the hearts as well as the intellects of churchgoers. Tosi appears to indicate that church singing should have similar goals and qualities.

therefore tempting to place *recitativo obbligato* somewhere further towards the “song” end of an imaginary continuum between speech and song, with *recitativo semplice* further towards the “speech” end, and Caccini’s *stile recitativo*, as he said, around half-way along. But there is a danger in such a view of losing sight of the declamatory nature of *recitativo obbligato*, which, in contrast with *arioso*, remains fundamentally a heightened form of speech rather than a reduced form of song.

It is interesting to note that as late as 1777, Mancini still emphasises the similarity, rather than the difference between the simple and obbligato recitatives. In his view, strict time is required in the obbligato form, but this is in order to maintain dramatic momentum rather than for the sake of ensemble.

Its vocal line is not at all different from that of the *simple*. The methods of the two are always the same, except that in the *instrumental* orchestral accompaniment is added so that the orchestra can act when the actor is constrained to a dumb show. Thus the orchestra always follows the actor, even when he is speaking, in order to give greater prominence and embellishment to what he says. Customarily, the voice and orchestra are required to perform in strict tempo in order not to intrude on the feeling and power of the expression.²⁷

This “strict time” appears to encompass some flexibility, however, since he considers obbligato recitative to require exactly the same “looseness”, resembling “a perfect and simple spoken declamation” as does simple recitative (above). The apparent conflict between these two requirements – those of strict time and “looseness” – perhaps disappears when an obbligato scene is composed well enough to create the illusion of free declamation by “composing in” the requisite pacing and articulation. The singer can also reinforce the sense of freedom and naturalness by variation in dynamic and timbre to create variety within a nominally strict rhythmic structure.

The picture is also confused by the presence of at least three types of orchestral recitative during this period. The kind of *accompagnato* recitative in which the strings play sustained chords throughout must be reasonably in time to preserve ensemble, however this still allows a degree of flexibility where chord changes are slow enough for the maestro di capella to follow the singer. The singer can also employ a degree of rubato over a steadily moving

²⁷ Mancini, *Riflessioni*, 238. Transl. Margaret Murata in Treitler, ed., *Source Readings*, 872.

accompaniment. In *obbligato* recitative, on the other hand, where the orchestra interjects between unaccompanied vocal phrases, the singer has some scope to vary his or her pacing, since the orchestra takes its cues line by line rather than in strict time. It is only in the more arioso-like orchestrally accompanied type that declamation really needs to be in tempo.²⁸

Future research

The influence of the rhetorical tradition on recitative performance practice remains a fruitful area for research with much remaining to be done to fill out how delivery worked in practice and how it changed over time. Aspects which may reward further investigation include the way the contour of natural Italian speech is reflected and manipulated in *recitativo semplice*; surveying extant teaching materials and singers' part books for any annotated indications of expression; synthesis of the principles of vocal delivery investigated in this study with those of gesture (on which much work has already been done, in particular by Dene Barnett), in the light of poetic and musical analysis of specific works; and the application of eighteenth-century "rhetorical grammar" to the analysis of recitative performance practice.

Peroratio

Recitative is so integral an element of eighteenth-century opera that without understanding it we cannot hope to understand the genre as a whole. Yet the notation of *recitativo semplice* leaves so much to the discretion of the performers that it, in turn, cannot be understood without making sense of its performance practice. The aim of this study has therefore been to play a part in reconstructing a theoretical and practical basis for that performance practice, and in particular, for the unnotated aspects of recitative for which it is otherwise almost impossible to account.

While we are never likely to have a complete picture of the historical performance practice of eighteenth-century recitative, the principles of classical rhetoric provide, if not a precise template for performance, then at least a coherent guide to the underlying principles of delivery. If this study provides a useful resource for those who, in Giambattista Mancini's

²⁸ All three forms are exemplified in Bajazet's celebrated *scena* in final act of Handel's *Tamerlano*.

words, wish to acquire the attainments necessary to recite well in the theatre, it will have achieved much of its purpose.

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