

REDISCOVERING THE UNIQUE ROLE OF THE CONTRALTO IN THE OPERAS  
OF GIOACHINO ROSSINI

by

Piper Pack-Smith

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A Document Submitted to the Faculty of the

FRED FOX SCHOOL OF MUSIC

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

In the Graduate College

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my parents for instilling me with a love, understanding and appreciation for music, supporting me through this degree, including countless hours of babysitting and moral support needed to accomplish a doctoral degree with a family.

I would like to thank Dr. Kristin Dauphinais for voice training that really listened to my individual needs as a singer, as well as inspiring me to find more creative ways to deal with my own students.

I would like to thank the Fred Fox School of Music Voice Department and Music Education Department for giving me the opportunity to pursue this degree, to give me many chances to perform roles I loved, and most of all to find my own voice as teacher, researcher, and recitalist.

I would like to thank my husband Tye, the superhero, who got far less sleep than I did in these three years, taking care of our young children, cooking countless dinners, dealing with emergencies, working overnights, shuttling us across the state, and believing in me every single moment, even when I thought that I couldn't do it.

I would like to thank my children, too young to read this, who unwittingly sacrificed so many hours of "mom" time so that I could study, write, practice and earn a DMA.

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## **Abstract**

Gioachino Rossini was perhaps more prolific than any known composer in his operatic writing for the mezzo-soprano and contralto voices. While modern practice casts many of these roles as somewhat interchangeable among mezzo-sopranos, recent writings have lamented the decline in the number of contraltos. This asks the question of whether or not the composer's own distinctions indicate that contraltos should be uniquely represented in these roles. This paper is an examination of Rossini's writing for some of his favorite singers, including Marietta Marcolini, Adelaide Malanotte, and Isabella Colbran, as well as later interpretations by Giuditta Pasta, in order to discover the unique imprint that they left on these roles. In addition, this paper will outline the history of the contralto as it pertains to the development of Rossini as a composer and the facets of character, tessitura, range and ensemble writing to explore how Rossini may have heard and appreciated the central part of the female voice, and what makes his writing for these voice types historically distinct and significant.

"Contralto is a low sort of music that only ladies sing."<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

If one is either pursuing the practice of singing in the lower female voice or studying the evolution of those voice types related to it, they will almost definitely come across the important relationship to the music of Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). Historically, this prolific and well-received composer has been extremely vital to study for his use of written ornamentation, as well as his use of a musical and dramatic structure that, while not his invention, became his key to commercial success, and made him influential to both his contemporaries and composers since that time.

These aspects of Rossini should also include his vast contribution to the contralto and mezzo-soprano voice types, primarily in the genre of opera. The operas of Rossini served as a bridge between the historic importance of the castrati and the women who would eventually take over those roles. Rather than re-writing the heroic male character as tenor to preserve the on-stage figure, Rossini chose to preserve the tessitura formerly highlighted in castrati using the voice of the female contralto.

It is clear that the musical tastes of Rossini were to keep voices in a warm, rich, middle area, and display virtuosity in terms of flexibility and color rather than vocal

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Abingdon, *Boners: Being a Collection of Schoolboy Wisdom or Knowledge as it is Sometimes Written, Compiled from Classrooms and Examination Papers* (New York: Viking Press, 1931), 32.

extremes. Within a canon of centuries of opera, this has given Rossini a very unique sound, easily identifiable and consistently popular. This has also given those analyzing his music the ability to see how he separated the contralto voice from middle and higher voice types in a distinct way. For Gioachino Rossini, the contralto voice, which highlights the lowest and middle sections of the female range, could be primary to both the drama and overall sound of the composition. In his own words:

The contralto is the norm against which the other voices and instruments must be gauged. If you want to do without the contralto you can push the *prima donna assoluta* as high as the moon and the *basso profondo* right down to the bottom of the well and this will leave you with nothing in the middle. One should concentrate on the central register in order to always be in tune; at the extreme ends, what you gain in force you often lose in grace, and by this abuse you paralyse the throat, resorting as a remedy to *canto declamato*, that is, out-of-tune shouting.<sup>2</sup>

This quote also continues to explain how the voice affects him as a composer: "Then it becomes necessary to give the orchestration more body in order to cover the excesses of the voice, to the detriment of good musical color."<sup>3</sup>

While it may seem obvious that Rossini wrote for a specific lower female voice type, training and performance has evolved to exclude this voice, frequently allowing it to be sung by mezzo-sopranos with a distinctly different color, range, and tessitura. This has arguably affected aspects of training and vocal marketability. Now, nearly 200 years after the death of Rossini, the taste for these voice types has evolved. Subsequent composers have led the average opera listener to expect the primary role to be sung by tenors or

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<sup>2</sup> Leonella Grasso Caprioli, "Singing Rossini," *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 192.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

sopranos, utilizing the highest reaches of their range to expose dramatic moments, and the importance placed on the extremes of vocal ranges has also replaced the *primo uomo* concept, with its fluid middle and gender interchangeability.

The middle voice as heroic or primary has become a rarity, and this rarity has certainly had some bearing on how voices are marketed, taught and labelled. Using *Opera News* references, as well as operabase.com and various opera advertising sources, Table 1 shows a listing of all public performances of the role of *Isabella* in *L'italiana in Algeri* between 2015 and 2017, a role that will be examined further in this paper. Originally written for a contralto, this role is now sung almost exclusively by those using the label mezzo-soprano. This leads one to ask whether there is a modern distinction between the two beyond the semantic, and if so, can it be reconciled with the current definitions of mezzo-soprano and contralto.

<b>Table 1: Modern Casting of the Role of Isabella in <i>L'italiana in Algeri</i></b>			
<b>Opera Company</b>	<b>Singer</b>	<b>Voice Type</b>	<b>Month/Year of Performance</b>
<b>Opera Philadelphia</b>	Stephanie Blythe	Mezzo Soprano	February 2017
<b>Musikfest Bremen</b>	Mariana Pizzolato	Mezzo Soprano	June 2016
<b>Opera Southwest</b>	Heather Johnson	Mezzo Soprano	October 2016
<b>Baltimore Concert Opera (concert version)</b>	Heather Johnson	Mezzo Soprano	October 2016
<b>Opera de Lausanne</b>	Anna Bonitatibus	Mezzo Soprano	March 2015
<b>Teatro Municipal de Santiago</b>	Mariana Pizzolato	Mezzo Soprano	July 2016
<b>Tchaikovsky Concert Hall</b>	Patricia Bardon	Mezzo Soprano	April 2015
<b>Palau des les Artes</b>	Daniela Barcellona	Mezzo Soprano	June 2017
<b>Palau des les Arts Reina Sofia</b>	Daniela Barcellona	Mezzo Soprano	June 2017

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, author Pitts Sanborn wrote “The Doom of the Contralto,” in which he states “three generations of composers, with the futures of their operas, rather

than the contralto voice at heart, have neglected them.”<sup>4</sup> Eric Myers from *Opera News* points out, “the Metropolitan Opera, for example, does not list contraltos on its register, classifying female singers as soprano or mezzo-soprano.”<sup>5</sup> And J. B. Steane, in the chapter of his book devoted to contraltos, “One searches for the really deep voices and they seem to be almost extinct.”<sup>6</sup>

In Dan Marek's 2016 book *Alto: The Voice of Bel Canto*, he writes "The problems lie deeper. In a recent issue of *Musical America International Directory of the Performing Arts*, there were 455 mezzo-sopranos and only 24 contraltos." He goes on to question this odd phenomenon. "What happened? Has the female physiology changed that much in the two hundred years since Gioachino Rossini's (1792-1868) time? Of course not! The answer is that natural contraltos, fearful of being shut out of all the juicy roles, call themselves mezzos in order to work regularly."<sup>7</sup> Luigi Lablache, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century bass, in his book *Method of Singing*, writes at this confusion, "as far as for contralto voices, they are so varied in their capacities that it is impossible to prescribe general studies for them."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Pitts Sanborn, "The Doom of the Contralto," *Scrap Book*, Vol. 4 part I (1907): 76.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Myers, "Sweet and Low: The Case of the Vanishing Contralto." *Opera News*, (December 28, 1996): 18. accessed <http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy3.library.arizona.edu/docview/1780439?accountid=8360>.

<sup>6</sup> J.B. Steane, *Voices, Singers, and Critics* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1992), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Dan H. Marek, *Alto: The Voice of Bel Canto* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## Defining the Contralto

Generally, when seeking to define voice types, there are two sources most commonly used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Richard Boldrey's *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias* is an extremely thorough catalog of voice types, specifically delving into the delineation of the "fach," and the expectations of singers who are beginning to learn or intend on performing these roles. Boldrey defines the contralto as such: Contralto (Fr. *Alto*, Germ. *Alt*) is "the lowest female voice, who sings often down to a low g and seldom goes above e. . . is usually darker than a mezzo-soprano and makes more use of the chest mixture."<sup>9</sup>

In opera, this voice type has evolved from the castrato male version into the modern female version described above, and mostly came into its own during the mid-Romantic period. The term contralto has been redefined for various periods of music, roughly as follows: pre-1800, 19<sup>th</sup> century, and 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. While Richard Boldrey gives a general sense of the range, contralto repertoire has frequently showcased a wider range of G3-B5 in works of such prominent composers as Rossini and Verdi.

*Handbuch der Oper*, written by Rudolph Klobier in 1966 also has a very thorough section on fachs, where he defines two types of altos. Klobier's catalogue, which essentially a "sampling" of roles (from Monteverdi to Strauss) lists by voice type from highest to lowest fach, and the roles that might be appropriate for that fach. Likely because of the German focus of his writing, Rossini's operas are scarcely mentioned (primarily he lists roles for *Guillaume Tell*, the final Rossini opera). However, it is

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Boldrey, *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias* (Dallas: Psst...inc., 1995), 26.

interesting to note that he breaks the lower female voice types into *Dramatischer Mezzosopran* (dramatic mezzo-soprano), *Spielalt* (literally "spoken alto" but usually translated as lyric mezzo-soprano), *Dramatischer Alt* (dramatic alto) and *Tiefer Alt* (low alto).<sup>10</sup>

For purposes here, the fach system has great limitations. Used mostly as a way for singers to span multiple roles in different genres at the same opera house, it is a far cry from the historically flexible time of Rossini, where singers might fulfill a short contract or even single opera engagement at one house before moving to another, as well as taking into account that much of what the fach system deals with was written later than the singers of Rossini's time. For example, it was quite common for Rossini to transpose, insert new arias or even re-write arias for the singers he wished to feature, whereas the fach system, notably a German invention of more specifically categorizing singers for the purpose of contracts, is designed to avoid such accommodations.

Commentary about the separation between the contralto and mezzo-soprano voices is found frequently in the early days of modern vocal pedagogical writings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century than the 20<sup>th</sup>. One such casual mention is in the London Magazine *Bow Bells*, which features a short editorial on the subject. "A distinct difference must be made between the mezzo-soprano and mezzo-soprano-contralto voices. Any competent instructor of singing can distinguish this difference . . . While a woman who possesses the former kind of voice may sing soprano parts with the little difficulty, the professor of mezzo-soprano-contraltos must exercise the greatest care in the selection of music

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<sup>10</sup> Rudolph Kloiber, *Handbuch der Oper* (Munich: Barenreiter, 1978), 763.

suitable to her register.”<sup>11</sup> Note that even at this point, there is an attempt to reconcile the two voices by creating a hybrid “mezzo-soprano-contralto” term.

In *Practical Suggestions on Vocal Culture*, written in 1882, fifteen years after Rossini’s death, G. N. Carozzi, a well-known vocal music publisher and contributor to articles addressing issues of voice, describes two types of contralto voices, “contralto voices are divided into deep and acute contraltos—*contralti giusto* and *contralti mezzo-soprano*.”<sup>12</sup> He adds that sopranos, and in particular the *soprano sfogato*, a defunct voice type which was used during the 19<sup>th</sup> century for voices straddling the soprano and mezzo ranges, is in itself a separate classification. He does not mention the term mezzo-soprano by itself at all, except to note that it should not be confused with the male mezzo-soprano of the baroque era.

There is also, at that time, some appearance of critics noting that the popularity of the lower women’s voice led to women trying to push a darker, richer sound in their lower ranges. With the author uncited, this opinion from the New York Observer quite harshly notes that this sound was still quite prominent in the days when castrati roles were usually being sung by women, “This species of *basso falsezza* is unfortunately too much in vogue . . . it is the destruction of music; like a dead fly in a pot of ointment. No one need pride herself upon an accomplishment that can be so well imitated by any

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<sup>11</sup> “Contralto Voices,” *Bow Bells: A Magazine of General Literature and Art, for Family Reading, Illustrated with Numerous Engravings* 13. no. 181 (June 1891): 586.

<sup>12</sup> G. N. Carozzi, “Practical Suggestions on Vocal Culture,” *Proceedings of the Musical Association*. Royal Musical Association 9<sup>th</sup> Session 1882-1883, 25. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/765215>.



hound in his midnight serenades; besides it takes from the soprano its sweetness, and the bass its gravity.”<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, one of the more controversial voice types in terms of general understanding and agreement on classification, the contralto has often been "replaced" for just that reason. Historically, a number of contralto roles have been raised to mezzo-soprano or even soprano keys, far less is written on the pedagogy associated with the contralto than any other voice type, and thus it is easily understandable that as time moves on, many have complained that the voice is "disappearing." It seems, therefore, that studying Gioachino Rossini, a prolific and well-respected composer who made no secret of his adoration of the contralto voice, might bring understanding to what this voice is capable of, and why it should be preserved as unique.

### **Intent and Scope of Study**

This study will attempt to demonstrate a difference in the core operatic repertory of Gioachino Rossini for the contralto and mezzo-soprano. If one looks through a list of singers in most opera programs today, both in academic settings and professional music organizations, it is easy to see that roles traditionally considered contralto have by and large been seen as interchangeable with the mezzo-soprano. This paper will examine specifically a sampling of the operas of Gioachino Rossini, who wrote a substantial body of music for middle and lower-voiced women, and determine whether these can be grouped together, as is often done in opera today, or if there is evidence of the need for a separation of these vocal identities.

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<sup>13</sup> X. "The Contralto." *New York Observer and Chronicle*, November 16, 1844, 184.

This exploration of Rossini and his writing for the contralto voice will be two-fold. Firstly, it is important to focus on the historic thread of the Baroque *primo uomo*, specifically in the operas of G.F. Handel, and its effect on the compositions of Rossini. Secondly, in order to more clearly understand how he demonstrated the uniqueness of this voice type, this paper will contrast the two female voice types that Rossini prominently featured in his operas, through the women for which he composed.

The contralto voice is clearly shown in his works for Marietta Marcolini, who demonstrates the style and range frequently used by the composer for the contralto voice. Similarly, the role of *Tancredi* for Adelaide Malanotte provides insight into different aspects of his contralto writing. The mezzo-soprano voice, represented frequently in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the *soprano sfogato*, can be shown in his compositions for Isabella Colbran, such as the roles of Desdemona in *Otello* and Elisabetta in *Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra*.

### **Statement of Primary Thesis**

The contralto and mezzo-soprano labels are often treated as interchangeable in the modern opera world. By looking at Gioachino Rossini's operas, specifically focusing on character, tessitura, range, vocal pairing, and color, and his passion for the baroque "primo uomo" as expressed by the castrato, a clear and unique contralto voice can be found. This provides substantial evidence of the need for separating the two labels as distinct and necessary for expressing these works.

## CHAPTER II—History of the Contralto Voice

### Early Music to Baroque

“In the beginning... there was polyphony,” writes historian Francois Velde, “and it was, like Gaul, divided in three parts: *superius* or *discantus*, *tenor*, and *contratenor*.”<sup>14</sup> The earliest origins of the term contralto can be discovered through plainchant. Essentially, the “third” voice, or contratenor, was a voice, similar to the range of the tenor, which was written after the tenor part (tenor here meaning “held”, or primary voice), and designed to act as a compliment to that part.

In the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as the medieval ear became more accustomed to complex harmonies, this contratenor line was divided into two parts. The higher of which was the *altus* and the lower, the *bassus* (at that time the term “contratenor” was still attached to each term, which simply meant high and low, but it was so lengthy that most started using the shorter, more descriptive terms.) The *altus* part was generally assigned just a little above the tenor, occasionally overlapping. Over the next century of music writing, these ranges became more well-defined in their use, and the *altus* began to move a bit higher.

At the same time, the language of music was leaving the church, straying from the Latin to the local languages. Thus, in Italy, the *contratenor altus* became the contralto (or the much-used abbreviation *alto*). The same part in England became the *countertenor*. Thus, in that time period, the contralto voice is understood to be a partner to the tenor, both occupying the same basic “middle” of the voice, male or

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<sup>14</sup> Francois Velde, “Voice Definitions and Ranges,” Accessed June 1, 2018, <http://www.medieval.org/emfaq/misc/voices.html>.

female. The superius, the voice which would later be called the soprano, functioned as an upper part of the harmony.

It is essential here to understand that the primary melody was often found in either the tenor voice, and the tenor voice was very similar in range to the countertenor or contralto. Simon Ravens' explains in his book, *Supernatural Voice: A History of High Male Singing*, that the origins of the contralto voice that is known today are found during the baroque period. He adds an early description: "Contralto: a counter-tenor, or a voice of higher pitch than a tenor, but lower than a treble."<sup>15</sup> Ravens points out that what has made this voice type unique is the mysterious lack of gender. Velde agrees and notes the importance of understanding that this *contralto* or *countertenor* voice was certainly not defined by the human being singing it, but much more the range and tessitura of that voice part. For the two centuries prior to Rossini, a *contralto* could be any one of five possibilities:<sup>16</sup>

- a man with a high natural chest voice. (quite rare)
- a falsettist: someone whose natural voice might be considered, in modern language, a tenor, baritone, or bass, but who was able to sing with a strong, present falsetto in an alto range (also sometimes called *voci naturali* to distinguish from the castrato).
- a boy alto
- a castrato with an alto range
- a female contralto, somewhat later in history because of the church's prohibitions.

Due to restrictions of the church, castrati were prominent in Venetian opera from the beginning. "Although women were not everywhere in Italy forbidden to appear

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<sup>15</sup> Simon Ravens, *Supernatural Voice: A History of High Male Singing* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2015), 144.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

on the stage, as they were in Rome, there was a considerable prejudice against them-on moral rather than religious grounds- and in some other cities they were barred from the stage until well into the eighteenth century."<sup>17</sup> "Venice was the most important center for opera in the latter half of the seventeenth century and its influence spread to all the major European cities."<sup>18</sup> Because of this, while other locations of opera did not have the same laws regarding women onstage, the popular sound of the castrati spread to other areas. Handel featured men and women in the alto voice and shared Rossini's love for that sound. "Besides Rossini," Marek writes, "George Frideric Handel was the composer who most appreciated the alto voice. In thirty-six years, he wrote forty-two operas, which included many roles for altos, both male and female."<sup>19</sup>

"Between the times of Purcell and Handel the range and tessitura of the counter-tenor part (or alto, as it was increasingly termed) rose, both in written and sounding pitch,"<sup>20</sup> as well as in popularity. Among Handel's favorite altos were Senesino, William Savage, and the alto soloist in the first *Messiah*, Susannah Cibber. Cibber was "only one of a number of female altos who. . . were gaining recognition. Her range was so low that Handel had to transpose items down for her."<sup>21</sup> As Simon Ravens writes, "Susannah Cibber sounded

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<sup>17</sup> Henry Pleasants, *The Great Singers: From Jenny Lind and Caruso to Callas and Pavarotti* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Marek, *Alto: The Voice of Bel Canto*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Ravens, *Supernatural Voice: A History of High Male Singing*. 138.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

a drum roll for female altos who would take center-stage in the next century,"<sup>22</sup> and well she did. Cibber was particularly admired by Handel, who wrote numerous arias and roles for her, including the alto arias in *Messiah*, the role of Lichas in *Hercules*, the role of David in *Saul* and the role of Micah in *Samson*.<sup>23</sup> While she died in 1766, some time before the birth of Rossini, continuing performances of these roles highlighted a trend toward women taking over the lowest of the castrato tessituras.

Handel found many of these vocal parts interchangeable. As Ravens writes, "In a copy of the printed word-book for the Dublin *Messiah* performances, someone has written singers' names. 'Lamb' (likely William Lamb) is named against the texts of two recitatives, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive' (which is an alto recitative) and 'He that dwelleth in heaven' (tenor). . . . Since modern altos and tenors sing with fundamentally different techniques, the interchangeability of these voices [here] is something we might find difficult to comprehend. But in Handel's day they sang with similar techniques . . . There is evidence, then, that Handel associated women, boys and castrati with his alto parts, as well as men using their modal<sup>24</sup> and falsetto ranges."<sup>25</sup> While it is arguable that Handel may have not preferred a specific voice type, the early 19th century followers

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Molly Donnelly, "Susannah Maria Cibber," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy. (Oxford University Press, 2001). Accessed May 16, 2018 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy3.library.arizona.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001>.

<sup>24</sup> Ravens uses the term "modal" to describe the modern practice of tenors singing high notes with their chest voice.

<sup>25</sup> Ravens, 141.

would certainly be affected by his gravitation toward lower and middle voice writing for the role of *primo uomo*, or heroic voice.

Also, during the era of Handel were the first appearances of the term mezzo-soprano. "Faustina," perhaps the best-known woman alto on Handel's roster, also known as Faustina Bordoni, is featured in many roles considered then and now to be soprano roles. However, her range was reported to be B3-G5, which today would be considered a mezzo-soprano range. Johann Joachim Quanz (1697-1773) had started using the term mezzo-soprano to describe such a singing range: "Faustina had a mezzo-soprano voice that was less clear than penetrating. Her compass was now only from B flat to G, but after a time she extended its limits downward. Her execution was articulate and brilliant."<sup>26</sup>

The preference during the Baroque period was to feature higher voices in the heroic parts. The hero, or *primo uomo*, was a male character whose voice would be high yet usually leave room above for a female secondary character. Therefore, while generally in an alto or low soprano range, the *primo uomo* was higher than the chest voice of a male, but rarely in the upper extensions of soprano to which modern ears are accustomed.

For Italians, and others internationally composing in the *opera seria* style, having a high voice in the heroic part was natural, even if the part were a hero rather than a heroine. "Until the end of the eighteenth century," writes Pleasants in his book on singers from the beginning of opera, "the bass had little standing in *opera seria*, and even the tenor was cast in secondary roles and rated accordingly in the distribution of arias. . . .

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<sup>26</sup> Marek, *Alto: The Voice of Bel Canto*, 31.

Thus, not only castrati but also females were frequently cast as heroic males."<sup>27</sup> the sound of falsetto, and therefore the alto range, became the "heroic" voice.

### **Between Baroque and Bel Canto**

In the latter years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a move away from the formality of the *opera seria* and into a representation of more common human experiences took place. Thus, the sound of the ethereal countertenor or castrato became associated with plots of enlightened kings and gods, and Handel, Gluck and Mozart all made moves toward more human, comic scenarios and fewer uses of the fluid, virtuosic castrato voice. With that, as Dan Marek writes, "the range of music was expanded so that the resplendent high note gradually became the focal point of the music."<sup>28</sup> This was to be the eventual move that the late romantic operas (such as those composed by Verdi and Wagner) would follow.

Marek continues by saying that this move towards the high note "goal" began affecting the way audiences saw and heard the leading men and women. "This led inexorably to the elevation of the high soprano as "prima donna" and the elevation of the tenor as her hero."<sup>29</sup> Florid passages, with their original intention of communication emotional content, began to lose their meanings. This followed with a competitive environment where each singer, male and female, was aiming to "top" each other with higher and higher pitches.

Generally, this requirement started encouraging the move of those who might previously have been contraltos, or singing in the contralto range, to identify as mezzo-

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<sup>27</sup> Pleasants, *Great Singers*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> Marek, *Alto, the Voice of Bel Canto*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



soprano. While previously writers noted that a singer in the alto range might have a G3-G5 span, Dan Marek comments on Charles Burney's observation of the well-known castrato Gasparo Pachierotti and his much larger range:

The normal range of the castrato contraltos was the two octave G to G of today's baritones, though an octave higher, of course . . . Pacchierotti [1740-1921] sang up to a B flat or even a C. Burney also notes the fullness and flexibility of his low voice and remembers hearing him sing tenor arias in their original pitch, descending to the B flat. This would indicate a range of at least three octaves. In other words, his voice must have provided a foretaste of those female mezzo-sopranos of the nineteenth century who inspired wide ranging roles such as Cenerentola, Rosina, Malcolm Graeme (in *La Donna del Lago* and Fides in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophete*), the delight of their originators and the despair of most of those who followed.<sup>30</sup>

During the years of Gluck and Mozart, many parts of Europe were rejecting the contralto voice and preferring more extremes as proof of a singer's virtuosic ability. Gluck preferred the *haut-contre*, or high tenor in his French operas, and the French *basses-dessus*, or mezzo-soprano, appeared in writings to have possibly been contraltos, forced into higher ranges. Stendhal writes: "Unquestionably, there must exist a certain number of contraltos in France; but as soon as a young lady evinces difficulty in reaching G or A, she is invariably told that 'she has no voice.'"<sup>31</sup>

This is not to say that the castrato voice was not often chosen by these composers. "When the fourteen-year-old Mozart received a commission to compose his first *opera seria*, *Mitridate*, *Re di Ponto*, he had to tailor his music for a company whose four leading singers were two female sopranos and two castrati, one soprano and one alto. But even in the works of his maturity in *opera seria* form, the magnificent *Idomeneo*,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 43.

composed at twenty-five, and the last opera he wrote, *La Clemenza di Tito*, the roles of romantic young lovers were scored for alto castrati, while the roles of father figures (Idomeneus and the Emperor Titus), which would have been basso parts in a mid-nineteenth-century opera, were entrusted to tenors."<sup>32</sup>

Thus, somewhat in preparation for the revolutionary years of Bel Canto opera, regions began to break apart in terms of what they considered necessary for good singing. Italian audiences were still more likely to prefer the rich, middle voice of the disappearing castrati, while other countries were looking toward high notes as the sound of the true leading operatic character.

### **Alto in the Bel Canto Years**

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about a revolution in composition for vocal writing and opera, and Rossini was key to that transformation. While *opera seria* was losing popularity, Rossini's playful dramas and comic operas were developing new ideas about voice types. Through all of this, Rossini was the ultimate champion of the alto sound. The bel canto movement and the popularity of Rossini's contraltos clearly contributed to putting many high male singers out of work. This plaintive letter, penned by a male countertenor, appeared in *The Musical World* in 1836, and begins: "we wish to draw your attention to a situation in which myself, and others who have the misfortune of being

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<sup>32</sup> Simon Karlinsky, "Contralto: Rossini, Gautier and Gumilyov," In *Freedom from Violence and Lies: Essays on Russian Poetry and Music*, ed. Robert P. Hughes, Thomas Koster and Richard Taruskin (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 440-56. Accessed June 19, 2018.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UAZ/detail.action?docID=3110521>.

denominated counter tenor singers, are placed by the introduction of female contraltos in most of the festivals and concerts. "<sup>33</sup>

These years brought about the development of the soprano and tenor as the lead roles in most opera. Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti introduced the lead female soprano with great public success. Johann Simon Mayr, the prolific German-born composer of Italian opera, whose operas were not only popular but transformative to this time, was also pivotal in bringing the soprano *prima donna assoluta* out of the off-season comic operas and into the larger stages. A number of soprano, or arguably mezzo-soprano prima donnas rose to fame as well, such as Giuditta Pasta, Isabella Colbran and Maria Malibran.

"In practice, in serious opera at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the tenor begins to be accepted for the roles of young lover and young hero which until then had always been reserved for castrati; but there was a far greater willingness to use women, and particularly contraltos."<sup>34</sup> During this period, there was some level of vocal pedagogy and compositional preferences in transition, as few tenors were trained to sing with the sound that was now replacing the young heroes, especially in Italy.

For some, however, there continued to be a preservation of the sound that was so richly accepted in the previous eras, and this movement had no greater champion than Gioachino Rossini. In preserving this contralto sound, his favorite writing appeared to be for two types of voices—the contralto, harkening back to the great *primo uomo* of the

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Giles, *The History and Technique of the Countertenor: A Study of the Male High Voice Family* (London, Scolar Press, 1994), 101.

<sup>34</sup> Rodolfo Celletti, *A History of Bel Canto* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 157.

Baroque operas before him, and eventually the *soprano sfogato*, frequently translated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a mezzo-soprano. "Since the mid twentieth century some authors have considered the *soprano sfogato* to be essentially a mezzo-soprano voice with an extended top range."<sup>35</sup>

At the end of the castrato age, and into the post-castrato age, this range, which bridges the male and female voices, could be just as powerful when sung by women, frequently and understandably playing the roles of the heroic male stars that had graced the baroque opera stage. Celletti again points out, "The Contralto voice, at the end of the eighteenth century and in the first few years of the nineteenth century, is seen as an extremely flexible voice, varied in form and often free from problems of range."<sup>36</sup> He goes on to quote Théophile Gautier when he heard Marietta Alboni, one of the greatest Rossini contraltos. "Une voix si féminine et en même temps si mâle ! Juliette et Roméo dans le même gosier!" ("A voice at once so feminine and yet so male! Juliet and Romeo in the same throat!")<sup>37</sup>

Rodolfo Celletti writes of the similarities that Rossini must have found between the baroque of prior years and the incoming female contraltos, "The contralto . . . has certain virile inflections in the lower register which by and large recall certain colours of

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<sup>35</sup>Jeffrey Snider. "In Search of the Soprano Sfogato," *Journal of Singing* 68, no. 3 (2012): 329-334. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/916635088?accountid=8360>.

<sup>36</sup>Rodolfo Celletti, *A History of Bel Canto*, translated from the Italian by Frederick Fuller (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1991), 158.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

the male alto castrato and the sexual ambiguity so dear to the bel canto style."<sup>38</sup> Certainly, there must have been some very distinct differences, and much has been studied about the very unique physiology of the castrato. However, in writing musically for these voices, composers during this time seemed to gravitate much more strongly to the female contralto than to the male singing in falsetto, and Celletti's reasoning may possibly be an explanation for that.

### **Gioachino Rossini-Background**

Gioachino Rossini was born in Pesaro (later earning the title the "Swan of Pesaro") in 1792. Giuseppe Rossini, his father, was an itinerant trumpet and horn player from a city just north of Pesaro, while his mother was a local girl whose family ran a small pensione. Their only son, Rossini was close to his parents, and spoke lovingly of them until his death. His father was imprisoned due to political beliefs for a year during his childhood, creating a passionate political opinion in the young Rossini as well.<sup>39</sup>

In the late 1790s, Italian society began to undergo a change by which it was easier for the "average folk" to attend performances as well as academic institutions. In this setting, new music was beginning to flourish, and, as was important to the Rossinis, women found it easier to find work on stage.<sup>40</sup> Anna Rossini, mother of the composer, was called "the [Angelica] Catalani of *seconde donne*."<sup>41</sup> She began a theatrical career at Ancona's Teatro della Fenice, first as a secondary soprano in comic operas by Paisiello,

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Osborne, *Rossini* (London: Dent, 1986), 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>41</sup> Marek, *Alto, the Voice of Bel Canto*, 59.

Cimarosa and Martini, and then within the next ten years, as the Teatro Comunale Bagnacavallo's *Prima Donna Assoluta* in her performances of Mayr's *Che Originali*.

It was especially popular in the opera world at this time for shorter, comic operas to fill parts of the season when the larger, more expensive operas were not being performed. This was essentially the base of Anna Rossini's career. She had begun singing professionally before her husband Giuseppe's imprisonment, but it's quite likely that while needing to support herself and her son, the career of singing locally became more vital. Though she was unable to read music, she made a living appearing in a number of operas, all comic, following the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century trend of relatable, human characters expressing comic plots.

"By the time of his tenth birthday," writes biographer Richard Osborne, "it was not unusual for [Rossini's mother] to take him on tour with her. This was an education in itself."<sup>42</sup> At the age of twelve, Rossini began performing as an alto, generally costumed, and in the buffo style, alongside his mother. Around the same time, he wrote his earliest compositions and began his studies at the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna (the 'headquarters of music in Italy' as Stendhal dubbed it).<sup>43</sup> He was admitted as a singer, and in those brief pre-teen years sang a few roles as an alto, both in a religious production (he was Mary Magdalene) by composer Padre Stanislao Mattei, and in Paer's opera *semiseria*, *Camilla*. By 1806, however, Rossini was officially billed as a tenor.

One of the earliest of Rossini's existing works is the Milan mass, written for three soloists (mezzo-soprano, tenor, bass), a three-part male chorus, and various groupings of

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<sup>42</sup> Osborne, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 8.

winds and strings. This mirrors much of his later work, which highlights lower voiced soloists and features often an all-male chorus. "What is striking," again writes Osborne, "about the *Messa di Milano* is the eloquence of the writing for the mezzo-soprano. There are three arias: 'Laudamus,' 'Qui Tollis' (with violin obbligato) and 'Crucifixus.' We know that Rossini loved the mezzo or contralto voice above others—rich, sensual, and in this context, naturally self-abasing—and here is early proof of that fact." <sup>44</sup>

When speaking of his early life as a musician, Rossini mentions that life as a castrato had not been an option. His father was jailed for a portion of his childhood, a product of his strong political views and an Italy in turmoil, and his mother made a meager living and lived in tiny quarters when there was still a practice of boys with musical talent being made castrati on the chance that they may be among the well-compensated greats. However, Rossini recounted that as his uncle pushed for his mother to make him a castrato, citing the possibility of a life of wealth, "my brave mother would not consent at any price."<sup>45</sup>

However, the influence of the castrati during his musical upbringing was profound. While at the Liceo, Rossini was exposed to two singers by whom he was later influenced: Castrato Giovanni Battista Velluti and the soprano Isabella Colbran, who would later become Rossini's muse, partner and wife. Hearing them sing together must have been pivotal for Rossini. While he was clearly moved by the "singing actress" that was Colbran, having been immersed in the theater already, he was profoundly impacted by the "old order" that was dying out, the beauty of the bel canto style as demonstrated by

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 14.

the castrati: "I have never forgotten them. The purity, the miraculous flexibility of those voices, and above all, their profoundly penetrating accent—all that moved and fascinated me more than I can tell. I should add that I myself wrote a role for one of them, one of the last but not of the least—Velutti. That was in my opera *Aureliano in Palmira*."<sup>46</sup> For Rossini, there was no better teacher of bel canto singing than the castrati. He told Wagner in 1860 (eight years before his death): "The castrati were incomparable teachers . . . The teaching of singing in the master schools attached to the churches . . . was entrusted to them. They were real singing academies."<sup>47</sup>

*L'equivoco Stravagante*, referred to as an operatic *dramma giocoso*, or playful drama, was Rossini's first attempt at a two-act opera. It had only a few performances, likely due to its controversial political subject matter. Though the opera was not ultimately successful, it was Rossini's first work with contralto Marietta Marcolini, who was cast as the primary female character, Ernestina. In keeping with Rossini's casting tastes, the smaller role of Ernestina's maid is slightly higher than the main role, and notably a mezzo-soprano.

Rossini wrote more than forty operas, many of them successful and frequently performed during his lifetime. His operas continue to be performed as part of the core repertory of the international opera world. He enjoyed a rich career, composing, conducting and as the musical director of both the Teatro di San Carlo and the Teatro del Fondo at Naples. After his striking success with *The Barber of Seville*, Beethoven noted, "Ah, Rossini. So you're the composer of the *Barber of Seville*. I congratulate you. It will

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<sup>46</sup> Pleasants, *Great Voices*, 13.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



be played as long as Italian opera exists. Never try to write anything else but *opera buffa*; any other style would do violence to your nature."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Burton D. Fisher, *The Barber of Seville* (Grand Rapids: Opera Journeys Publishing 2013), 82.

## CHAPTER III—Rossini's Leading Contraltos

### Marietta Marcolini-Background

Marietta Marcolini was a contralto, born in Florence in 1780. She was not only successful in her own right, but over the course of his career, Rossini wrote five roles for her: Ernestina in *L'equivoco Stravagante* (1811), Ciro in *Ciro in Babilonia* (1812), Clarice in *La Pietra del Paragone* (1812), Isabella in *L'italiana in Algeri* (1813) and Sigismondo in *Sigismondo* (1814).<sup>49</sup> Marcolini was not only one of Rossini's favorite contraltos, she was his first contralto. According to Stendhal's highly romanticized writing on the life of Rossini, she was his "first muse": "It was not long before Marcolini, a delightful cantratrice buffa, and at the same time a woman in the fullest flower of her youth and talent, swept him away from the great ladies who had been his finest proctresses. The gossips whispered of base ingratitude and there were many tears shed."<sup>50</sup>

Stendhal continues in his biography that Marcolini had "a ravishing contralto voice and magnificent gifts as a comic actress."<sup>51</sup> While Stendhal's comments on her personal life could be the result of merely gossip or imagination, it is known that she appeared in a number of other composer's works, primarily as the prima donna. By the time she met the nineteen-year-old Rossini in 1811, Marcolini was an established star,

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<sup>49</sup>Elizabeth Forbes, "Marcolini, Marietta," in *Grove Music Online*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), accessed May 1, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.47939>.

<sup>50</sup>Stendhal, *Memoirs of Rossini* (London, T. Hookham, 1824), 26.

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

renowned in the operas of Ferdinando Paer, as well as the German composer Simon Mayr (notably the teacher of Donizetti).<sup>52</sup>

Rossini's earliest writing for Marcolini was in the role of Clarice, in *La Pietra del Paragone*. For this opera, which also featured the same bass, Filippo Galli, for whom he would later write in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Rossini first created a consistent tessitura that would appear numerous times for the contralto. While there would be more florid passages and more expectation of an ability to dance through coloratura passages, little would change in the range and tessitura of his writing or this contralto specifically, and the "type" in which he would often cast her.

### **Marietta Marcolini-Characters**

Looking at the five roles that were created for Marcolini, a few things can be easily learned. Out of the five, three are comic roles (*L'Equivoco Stravagante*, *L'Italiana in Algeri* and *La Pietra del Paragone*), in Rossini's *dramma giocoso*, or playful drama style. In all three cases, the romantic lead is a contralto female (although admittedly one is disguised as a man) who attempts to use their cleverness to outwit others on stage. The characters of Rossini's contraltos generally take on one of two types. The three comic operas represent the transformative role of the heroic female—unique to Rossini, as many other composers before and during his time represented women as reactionary to a male character or as the predictable femme fatale. In an often-understated invention, Rossini uses the same qualities of the femme fatale and causes the audience to feel a sense of support and sees the character as heroically righteous.

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<sup>52</sup>John Warrack and Ewan West, "Marietta Marcolini," *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera*. (London: Oxford University Press), 441.

This gives some insight into Rossini's apparent fondness for Marcolini. Though she was likely to have had the gifts associated with a comic actress, she must also have been able to play Rossini's own fondness for broad, archetypal characters, generally with lead roles who are righteous and unfailing, whether they be serious or comic. An example of this type of character is presented in Isabella's opening aria in the role written for Marcolini in *L'italiana in Algeri*. Her first appearance in the opera, which takes place in the fourth scene and commences with the traditional cavatina, first explains that she does feel fear and bemoans her predicament in having been captured by pirates in a foreign land while trying to rescue her lover:

Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!	<i>Cruel Fate! Tyrannical Cupid!</i>
Questo è il premio di mia fe'?	<i>Is this the reward for my faithfulness [to Lindoro]?</i>
Non v'è orror, terror, né affanno	<i>No horror, terror or anguish exists</i>
Pari a quel ch'io provo in me.	<i>Compared to that which I now suffer.</i>
Per te solo, o mio Lindoro,	<i>For you alone, oh my Lindoro</i>
Io mi trovo in tal periglio.	<i>I find myself in danger</i>
Da chi spero, o Dio, consiglio?	<i>From whom, oh God, can I hope for counsel?</i>
Chi conforto mi darà?	<i>Who will give me comfort?</i>

However, Rossini presents a new type of hero here. Isabella is already on a righteous mission, to rescue Lindoro, when she faces a trial. The aria wastes no time in immediately turning to a strong "manifesto" of types, declaring that she knows both how to handle the situation and that she has no doubt she will be the victor. She will specifically be successful because she is a woman. While the chorus behind her assumes she will soon be a part of a harem of their leader, a "tasty bite" of sorts, she reveals her own heroic plans—which include rescuing both her and her lost love.

Qua ci vuol disinvoltura	<i>Keeping cool is what's wanted here</i>
Non più smanie, né paura	<i>No more rages or terror</i>
Di coraggio è tempo adesso	<i>Now is the time for courage</i>
Or chi sono si vedrà.	<i>Now they'll see who I am.</i>
Già so per pratica	<i>From experience I already</i>

Qual sia l'effetto  
D'un sguardo languido  
D'un sospiro.  
So a domar gli uomini  
Come si fa.  
Sian dolci o ruvidi,  
Sian flemma o foco  
Son tutti simili  
A presso a poco...

*Know the effect  
Of a languishing look,  
Of a slight sigh...  
I know what to do  
How it's done.  
Be they gentle or rough,  
Cool or fiery  
They're all similar  
More or less*

This is the "femme fatale" type: Manipulative, secretive, conniving. But Rossini and his contraltos turn that on its head to create a new character. She is the heroic female. She will do whatever it takes to win against a situation in which she is oppressed by powers much stronger than she is. And therefore, the darker, stronger, grounded contralto voice conveys both a sense of power and yet femininity. She is not to be underestimated. This voice is so uniquely Rossinian that it is nearly impossible to find other operas from that period in which the female who controls and manipulates is not, at least in some respects, the villain.

A second character type, more in keeping with Rossini's musically conservative side, is found in the other two roles written for Marcolini in the *opera seria* style. *Ciro in Babilonia* is the less successful of Rossini's lenten operas on Biblical subjects. *Sigismondo*, even less commercially successful at the time, is a rather complex Othello-like story of a King who believes he is betrayed by his Queen. In both cases, again, the contralto lead is the King, who is essentially the heroic center of the storyline. This is in keeping with the Italian baroque treatment of the "primo uomo" or leading man, with a tessitura similar to the treatment of Handel. The leading man in baroque *opera seria*, frequently someone of royalty, sometimes a tragic figure, is reinvented in opera, with virtuosity being the focus, and frequently the plot of the opera playing a distant second.

"The barrier which is often raised between Rossini's *opera seria* works and the listener of today. . . consists in the fact that, theatrically speaking, Rossini's characters have an almost statuesque rigidity."<sup>18</sup> Celletti points out in his book on the history of Bel Canto, that although subsequent and even contemporary composers might make more use of the agitation, lack of control or "passion" which the character might be experiencing, Rossini held a fondness for the characters of Handel's operas, and specifically the castrati, which stood on "pedestals." When these characters "Suffer injury and pain, they take refuge in the realistic imitation of human beings. . . . The extraordinary purity of certain melodies and their instrumental framework derived precisely from this sublimated view of passion, one which likewise makes for unrestraint and impetuosity, but with a total absence of that over-emphasis."<sup>53</sup>

It would then make great sense that these characters, both in comic and *opera seria* forms, would express through the center, or as Rossini defined, the "contralto" part of the voice. In one of Marietta Marcolini's roles, the character *Isabella*, who is trying to outwit her kidnapper, does so in the aria *Per Lui Che Adoro*. Creating an atmosphere of purpose and control, she does not leave the lower tessitura of her voice, and her ornamentation is fully written out, leaving no room for improvisational commentary. *See Appendix:*

*Musical Example 1: Per Lui Che Adoro.*

This aria appears in the second act of *L'italiana in Algeri*. Like Handel, Rossini often places a slower, more internally focused aria early in the second act. However, this is also a quiet "plot" revealed by Isabella, interrupted by musical asides which make clear her

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 164.

intentions. "[Rossini] was to keep at all times a nostalgia or the expressiveness, even more than for the virtuosity, of the castrato voice."<sup>54</sup> This is clearly shown here in the low, long legato passages in which Isabella lays out both her intentions and brags about her feminine abilities.

### **Marietta Marcolini–Range and Tessitura**

Rossini's working relationship with Marcolini produced a remarkably consistent range and tessitura in his compositional definition of the contralto. Seen here, Table 2 represents some of the telling vocal elements of four of the main characters written for Marietta Marcolini. To avoid inaccuracies and the inconsistencies that often plague Rossini opera scores, all examples here are taken from the *Complete Works of Rossini* published by the Fondazione Rossini, assisted by Casa Ricordi. Marcolini's fifth opera, *Ciro in Babilonia*, has not been included since it is not yet been published in this set.

Since Rossini's form is somewhat consistent from his earliest writing, the main character is featured in a cavatina, or entrance aria. Typically, this aria is used to "show off" the virtuosity of a main character, therefore the range and tessitura of the aria would be not only typical of the rest of the role, but likely utilize any gifts the singer of the role may possess. Below is a comparison of the elements of each cavatina.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 157.

<b>Table 2: Marietta Marcolini Roles</b>					
<b>Opera</b>	<b>Opening Pitch</b>	<b>First Ornamentation/ Measure</b>	<b>Range mm. 1-32</b>	<b>Tessitura</b>	<b>Year Written</b>
<b>Sigismondo</b>	Bb 4	Bb3-F5/ m. 8	Bb3-F5	E4-B4	1814
<b>L'Italiana in Algeri</b>	A 4	C4-C5/ m. 8 and B3-Bb4/m. 12	C4-Bb4	E4-B4	1813
<b>La Pietra del Paragone</b>	G 4	Bb3-C5/m. 8	Bb3-Eb5	E4-B4	1812
<b>L'Equivoco Stravagante</b>	Eb 4	F4-C5/m. 6	Bb3-Eb5	E4-B4	1811

What can be seen in Table 2 is not only an incredibly consistent range and tessitura, but a few notable aspects of the way Rossini was presenting his main character. Firstly, though the cavatina is thought of as an opportunity to highlight the virtuosity of the singer, Rossini does so with elements that do not use an extreme vocal range, and certainly does not use the higher end of the vocal range. The expectation here is that the singer would not be vocally fatigued singing in a tessitura that stays in the fourth octave. This is closer to the preferred tessitura of many tenors than to that of the modern soprano.

Frequently, Rossini would refer to the "contralto" as a central part of every singer's voice, rather than a distinct voice part. Here, it can easily be observed where he sees that portion of the voice lying. In addition to the comparison of these roles, it can be noted that there is a strong similarity between the writing of the Rossini cavatina and that of the entrance aria of Handel's altos. For Rossini, this range allowed him a freedom in composing, to focus, much like his Baroque predecessors, on a primary line which did



not practice "extremes" and to think of the upper and lower harmonies as secondary—which in the drama of opera translated to secondary characters as well.

The reception of the extremely popular *L'italiana* in its first performance in Paris was extremely telling to the uniquely low range of Marietta Marcolini, as well as to the importance of interpreting these Rossini characters with their intended range:

On 1 February 1817, *L'italiana* received its premiere at the *Théâtre Italien* in Paris. There is not reason to seek any other than the most natural causes to explain the failure of Rossini's first venture in Paris: the singers, and the music itself. The leading part of Isabella in *L'italiana* (originally scored for Marietta Marcolini) is written in the lower range of the mezzo-soprano and lies in fact much closer to a contralto than a soprano proper. This feature was so unusual at that time that, even as late as 1824, the *Théâtre Italien* had never engaged a leading contralto among its members. Isabella was therefore sung by a soprano, Madame Morandi, who could manage the range only when her part was raised by a fourth, while the remainder of the cast sang the music as written. The effect must have been, to say the least, odd: and the unfortunate prima donna not unnaturally lost her confidence.<sup>55</sup>

There is some demonstration here that this low tessitura was not simply due to the availability of singers, but Rossini's desire to display the rich contralto of singers like Marcolini, and that his writing was specifically designed to showcase the character of Isabella with that sound. It would indicate that much of the success of these operas involves the unique and characteristic Rossinian contralto sound. It is not merely the characterization of Isabella but also the color of the sound that leads to the success of the opera, and raising the pitch has especially led to problematic performance.

Also telling in this example is that the part was required to be raised a fourth, significantly higher than most mezzo-soprano parts would have to be raised in order for a

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<sup>55</sup>Richard N. Coe, "Stendhal, Rossini and the 'Conspiracy of Musicians' (1817-23)," *The Modern Language Review* Vol. 54, No. 2 (April 1959): 183-184.

soprano to sing them. While not as large of a transposition, the operas of Rossini have a distinction of raising and lowering the pitch of primary roles so frequently that definitive scores can be rare. This was seen with the very popular role of Rosina in the very successful *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, where the title role has been raised so often to accommodate higher voices that there was no definitive score for the opera until 1969, and the role of Bertha, the secondary maid character, has been raised and lowered between soprano and mezzo-soprano to contrast Rosina with each re-invention of the opera.<sup>56</sup>

Further, the coloratura written for Marcolini is deliberately mapped out for her vocal abilities. "But in general," writes Celletti, "especially in the parts written for Marcolini, the contralto is spared long ascending scales, and in vocalizes she usually reaches the high notes with the help of arpeggios or successive jumps. Descending scales are extremely frequent. In this respect, Rossini treats the contralto as a low voice, even when he gives it hammer-like agility phrases to sing."<sup>57</sup>

### **Marietta Marcolini—Ensemble Writing**

While functionally, these transposed operas have been successful with audiences, much difficulty comes in the ensemble writing, where Rossini is very specific about his use of color and voice pairing. This can be seen in Rossini's choice of pairings for large and small ensembles. One example of this choice is in the Act I finale of *L'italiana in Algeri*. Generally, the finales of Rossini's comic operas feature the entire cast singing

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<sup>56</sup>Betsy Schwarm & Linda Cantoni, "The Barber of Seville", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, September 8, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Barber-of-Seville-opera-by-Rossini>.

<sup>57</sup> Celletti, 160.

independent lines, and then increasingly singing homophonically, acting as one chordal body toward the end of the scene (a common device of the time, also referred to as the *stretta*). This finale begins by featuring Isabella (the contralto character) and Mustafa (the bass) exchanging long melodic lines.

In the attached musical example, *See Appendix 1*, Isabella begins a solo passage at measure 72 "Oh, che Muso." The bass, Mustafa, begins his solo at measure 87, and this turns into a duet at measure 125 *see Appendix 2*, highlighting colors between the bass and the contralto. Notice the importance of the contralto being able to sing in a very low tessitura at the end of the first act, and her color balancing that of the bass. The orchestration is sparse, primarily chords in higher wind instrument and strings, allowing the colors of the singers to be the focus of this section.

This expands into a quartet in measure 212 *see Appendix 3*, where the contralto again is highlighted singing in her lower tessitura with two baritones and a bass. When the soprano and mezzo-soprano enter at measure 251, *see Appendix 4*, they are singing in thirds, as they will be for nearly the entire remainder of the finale. The mezzo-soprano here is clearly used as a compliment to the soprano, almost as a single chordal voice. An argument could also be made that these are two types of soprano. The soprano's entrance, on a D5 is the highest note in over 200 measures.

There are portions of the finale where each of the singers is paired with nearly every other voice part, and therefore it would be incorrect to say that Rossini completely "reserves" pairings for certain voice types. However, there is certainly a musical leaning toward having Isabella, the contralto, represent somewhat of a middle ground between the two soprano voices (soprano and mezzo-soprano) and the male voices. She is the

"genderless" voice. The tessitura of the secondary character of the mezzo-soprano (notably the maid) lies nearly five notes higher than the contralto for most of the finale.

Frequently, such as the section which begins in measures 471, *see Appendix 5* when all parts are singing homophonically, the mezzo-soprano is either in unison with the soprano or a major third apart, but is never in unison with the contralto and frequently up to a 6<sup>th</sup> away, further emphasizing that when Rossini was composing for the comfort of the mezzo, as opposed to the contralto, he was imagining this voice to be more of a soprano voice. There is also a function of the tenor as a type of "contralto substitute" as in measures 245-268 from *Musical Example 3*, when Lindoro, the tenor, enters with the soprano and mezzo-soprano, therefore forming the perfect female trio in thirds (in the same octave). It is important to note that in the drama and staging the tenor is also dressed as a woman, therefore functioning both vocally and dramatically as the *contraltino*.<sup>58</sup> Surprisingly, in ensemble this can be seen as an excellent example of how Rossini utilized the contralto voice, whether in the form of male or female, as distinct from the soprano or mezzo-soprano.<sup>59</sup>

Famously, Rossini did not approve of any voice that was "forced," which of course included tenors singing with their high voice and often sopranos with larger voices. Once, after demonstrating his high C to Rossini in private audience, tenor Gilbert-Louis Duprez, who had already a well-established career in Paris, received this comment: "Very sincerely, what pleases me most about your C is that it is over, and that I am no

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<sup>58</sup> In Rossini's age, this type of tenor was often referred to as *contraltino* (or little contralto), which Italian composers, and Rossini especially, used as a sort of male version of the contralto, since the use of castrati was dying out. These tenors held extremely high tessituras and appeared in performance listed as *tenorini*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

longer in danger of hearing it. I don't like unnatural effects. It strikes my Italian ear as having a strident timbre, like a capon squawking as its throat is slit. You are a very great artist. . . why in the devil debase your talent by using that humbug?" <sup>60</sup>

### **Adelaide Malanotte—Background**

Adelaide Malanotte (-Montresor) was an Italian contralto born in Verona in 1785. Though she retired from the stage at the age of 36, her short career involved primarily taking over roles which were previously sung by castrati or male altos. Malanotte made her recorded stage debut in Verona in 1806. <sup>61</sup> Shortly after she appeared again at the larger Teatro Comunale di Bologna (where Rossini was working at the time) as Ariodante in Simon Mayr's *Ginevra di Scozia*, a role premiered and sung previously by castrati. Other roles included that of Enrico in Stefano Pavesi's *Elisabetta Regina d'Inghilterra*, Giuseppe Dario Nicolini's *Istaspe* (in the male role of Itaférne) and in Rome at the Teatro Valle in the premiere of Nicola Antonio Manfroce's *Alzira*.<sup>62</sup>

However, Malanotte is certainly best known for creating the title role in *Tancredi* in Venice, Rossini's first and arguably most successful *opera seria*. The premiere took place at the Teatro La Fenice in 1813, and Malanotte continued performances of the opera in Ferrara, Bologna, Livorno and Naples over the next few years. Malanotte also

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<sup>60</sup> Edmond Michotte, *Richard Wagner's Visit to Rossini and an Evening at Rossini's in Beau-Sejour*, edited and translated by Herbert Weinstock (Chicago: Quartet Books, 1968), 98.

<sup>61</sup> *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, "Adelaide Malanotte-Montresor." Accessed June 1, 2018, [http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2420007476/BIC?u=uarizona\\_main&sid=BIC&xid=b938f883](http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2420007476/BIC?u=uarizona_main&sid=BIC&xid=b938f883).

<sup>62</sup> Operissimo.com, "Malanotte, Adelaide." Accessed June 5, 2018, <http://hosting.operissimo.com/triboni/exec?method=com.operissimo.artist.webDisplay&id=ffcyoieagxaaaaabcusb&xsl=webDisplay&searchStr=malanotte>.

sang in two more world premieres at La Fenice after her success there: *Le Danaïdi Romane*, by Stefano Pavesi in 1816, in the role of Cajo Valerio and Francesco Basili's *L'ira d'Achille*, in the title role of Achille, in 1817.<sup>63</sup>

The premiere of *Tancredi* proved to be one of Rossini's most successful productions. Premiering in Venice in 1813, as did *L'italiana*, as Richard Osborne writes, "Tancredi broke new ground, formally and musically, but its popularity, unstoppable for the best part of a quarter century, rested on its patriotic subject matter and the sensuousness and élan of the vocal writing. In spirit and style, it is an idyllic work, a late flowering of that serene, neo-classical tradition"<sup>64</sup> There was certainly, in both style and vocal direction, an homage to the *opera seria* of the Baroque and Classical periods which had already begun to be replaced by other forms.

*Tancredi* is based on the play by Voltaire and the opera's title role is written in the score as contralto. Two versions have been written by Rossini, the first in which the protagonist is victorious (a *lieto fine*, or happy ending) and a version which is truer to Voltaire, in which the title character tragically dies. Italian audiences complained that the tragic ending interfered with their digestion<sup>65</sup> and therefore the original was more often performed during Rossini's lifetime. In the edition of the score published by the Fondazione Rossini Pesaro in 1984, with critical commentary by Philip Gossett, there is some insight into how Rossini wanted to elicit the gravity of the role of Tancredi. As he

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Osborne, *Rossini*, 23.

<sup>65</sup> Marek, *Alto, the Voice of Bel Canto*, 61.

says: "Adelaide Malanotte had to have a very dark voice, with a large extension, especially in the bass."<sup>66</sup>

Quite a few wild stories exist regarding Malanotte's casting and the early performances of *Tancredi*. She was famously "indisposed" for the first two performances, which led the opera to only be heard in its entirety on the third performance (11 February 2013). The most famous of the arias from this opera, the cabaletta "Di Tanti Palpiti" is strangely not mentioned in any review, despite the fact that, "[it] was destined to become as wearisomely popular in its day as Verdi's 'La Donna é Mobile.'"<sup>67</sup> Most believe this was due to an argument that Malanotte thought the aria was unsuited to her full-bodied contralto. As Stendhal retells, "Di Tanti Palpiti" would be dubbed "the rice aria":

Because they prefer to eat rice very much undercooked, four minutes precisely before the course is served, the chef invariably sends a minion with this important question: *bisogna mettere i risi?* (shall we put on the rice?) When Rossini, in despair [at Malanotte's urging] returned to his lodgings, the cameriere asked the usual question. The rice was set to cook; and before it was ready Rossini had completed the aria "Di Tanti Palpiti."<sup>68</sup>

Many believe that this mythological tale of speed-composing is simply a legend, and as Gossett states, "demonstrably false."<sup>69</sup> Still, the aria which Rossini originally composed for the role, "Dolci d'amore parole" is virtually impossible to find due to the success of the replacement aria, whether written due to Rossini's tastes or Malanotte's.

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<sup>66</sup>Gioachino Rossini, *Tancredi. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini*, ed. Philip Gosset, series 1, vol 10, part 1 (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1984), xvii. (My translation from the Italian)

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Stendhal, *Memoirs of Rossini*, 18.

<sup>69</sup>Marek, *Alto the Voice of Bel Canto*, 61.

## Adelaide Malanotte—Character

Malanotte had made a living as a singer in preservation of the role of *primo uomo*. Not much has been written about her skills as an actress but one review, which compares Malanotte's sound to that of an English horn, "an unpleasant singularity without which Malanotte would figure honorably among first-rank artists,"<sup>70</sup> seems to imply that she must have been charismatic on stage, in lieu of perhaps not having a beautiful tone. Despite these critiques, she would popularly be cast in operas where the heroic male figure, singing in the contralto range, would appear to reclaim his princess, his land or his honor. It is clear that this role was written for a singer who could elicit a grand, dark, heroic tone in a woman's range.

This practice of women performing male roles has not only a deep tradition but is certainly familiar to opera lovers in the modern age. Various terms have been used to describe the contralto or mezzo singing male roles. At this time, the *primo musico* (or *musichetto*) was the most popular term. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is usually termed a *trouser role*, *pants role* or even, from the theatre world, the *travesti*. However, there is a specific idea built in to the *primo uomo*. While the term by itself could simply be translated "lead man," the baroque era elevated the incredible virtuosity of a lead castrato to be far more important than the opera itself.

Therefore, the *primo uomo* character and Rossini's preservation of it was important in the character of Malanotte, a singer who became synonymous with *Tancredi* due to her many performances of the opera, without necessarily being remembered

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<sup>70</sup>Herbert Weinstock, *Rossini, A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 495.



beyond this signature role. Malanotte represents this conservative thread in Rossini's composing, and shows the thread of the heroic, sometimes tragic figure as well, who is not necessarily human in the way the audience sees him, but more of a strong archetype, was built out of preservation of the castrato. While the term *opera seria* is often used to describe *Tancredi*, it is also frequently described as a *melodramma eroico*, due to the focus on the "hero" aspect of the opera.

Much of the composing for the *trouser role* since Rossini's era has focused on characters who might realistically be higher voiced but male in appearance—boys, teenagers, and pages have been the primary delivery method for that character. However, for Rossini, there may have been some nostalgia in presenting this powerful voice as memory of the glory days of the castrati of Rossini's formative years of composing. And specifically, in this form where he writes Voltaire's tragedy into a *melodramma eroico*, the appropriateness of recapturing a voice in that range would have appealed to him.

#### **Adelaide Malanotte—Range and Tessitura**

The composer's intention was to write specifically for contralto, as evidenced by the low extension into the chest range. As the critical edition of *Tancredi* states: "It is significant that many of these embellishments [in later editions of *Tancredi*] tend to raise the tessitura of the protagonist. . . ." <sup>71</sup> Musical Example 1 is *Tancredi*'s duet with the soprano, Amenaide. The two-octave range, while not particularly "low," certainly plays more with the lower end of the female voice than with the upper end. It would be rare to find a two-voiced cadenza for two females where the soprano goes no higher than a G5.

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<sup>71</sup>Gioachino Rossini, *Tancredi. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini*, ed. Philip Gosset, series 1, vol 10, part 1 (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1984), xxxiv. (My translation from the Italian)

Rather than the more traditional ending of the soprano ending near the top of the staff for her final pitch, Amenaide cadences on an Eb4, almost undoubtedly in the chest voice, and a very unusual choice before an allegro section. Here, the orchestration is quite sparse, with short, low pitches played in the strings and the winds silent, enabling us to hear the very lowest part of the women's voices.

#### Example 1



Rossini, Gioachino. *Tancredi. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini*, edited by Philip Gosset. vol. 10, part 1 Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1984.

Originally Rossini drops Tancredi into a very low chest tone for a dramatic end to the passage, likely to create a specific color. However, as this role was more frequently sung by singers who we now categorize as mezzo-soprano, the pitch has often been raised, giving an optional higher pitch and inevitably changing the color. In this way, his reference to the color of the male contralto is most seen in moments of tenderness, such as this point, the end of the slow section of this duet between lovers.

Additionally, this nostalgia is seen in the depth, color and intended tessitura of Tancredi's cavatina. Here, he enters with a three-measure figure, in the key of C Major, outlining the I triad, moving to IV, V and I. It's a quick, strong, perfect cadence. More importantly for this character, it is almost low enough to be sung by a tenor. It immediately drops down into a likely spot for chest voice, and the tessitura remains in the bottom half of the staff for the next three pages of recitative. This entrance aria is

reminiscent of many Handel arias where the “hero” of the story is sung by an alto castrato (Handel's preferred "primo uomo") or later a female voice in the contralto range. While characters that were actually women were sung in higher tessitura, generally equivalent to our modern-day soprano, the hero’s voice was generally what Rossini found equivalent to a contralto.

Examples 7 and 8 below compare the recitative of Amadigi (described by Handel as “Amadigi of Gaulo, hero, lover of Oriana”) when he first appears in the opera with the recitative of Tancredi (described practically in a mirror image by Rossini as "Tancredi, hero, lover of Amenaide"). Rossini, highly familiar with Handel’s compositions, recreates in Tancredi the same heroic color, and the thrill of the higher pitches. In this case, it could only be sung by a woman singing deftly in and out of the reaches of her chest voice.

The range of Amadigi in this example is C4-C5 (almost identical to the opening bars of Tancredi’s recitative). The tessitura is also almost identical, staying entirely between the bottom of the staff and the C5. The orchestration is minimal, with Rossini creating the same effect of just the ringing lower voice and avoiding thickness so as to not cover the lower pitches not carrying as well over the orchestra. *Amadigi* is a rare opera in which Handel chooses the contralto to be the lowest voice (meaning he has omitted all male voices). It clearly illustrates the rationale for the contralto fach, serving as the darkest, lowest of the female voices. In addition, the similarities between the two heroes are clear. Handel’s hero and Rossini’s hero both serve as “anchors” at the bottom of the treble clef.

Example 2—Amadigi's opening recitative from *Amadigi di Gaula* by Handel

or che di negro amm - an-to e ricoperto il cielo, ognun ri - posa. Prencipe, an-  
 diamo, ove l'onor in - vita; abbando - niam quest' incan tante soglie chiegia' troppo con  
 trarie furo alla gloria mia, ed al mio amore

Example 3—Tancredi's opening recitative from *Tancredi* (some ornaments and articulation not included):

O patria, dolce, ingrata patria, al fine a te ri - torno.  
 Io ti sa - luto. O cara terra, degli avi miei, ti bacio. E questo per  
 me - gior - no-e se - re - no, co min - cia il cor, a - respi - rar mi, in seno

**Adelaide Malanotte—Ensemble Writing and Color**

It has already been stated that Malanotte's vocal color was decidedly dark. The tessitura of the aria highlights areas in which she drops into her chest and rarely vocalizes (even with ornamentation) to the top of the staff. Critics compare her tone to an "English horn" in a way that some find unpleasant. Similarly to the Handel example again, both

lead altos harmonize with their soprano love interests. An interesting contrast here is that much of Tancredi's singing interacts with a bass—as does the character of Isabella in *L'italiana in Algeri*.

This is particularly Rossinian—the role of the contralto is often highlighted by the bass, allowing Rossini to frequently write in tenths, between the two characters. Having this "low dialogue" prevents the characters from what Rossini frequently refers to as "forced" singing (i.e., singing that might appear too uncomfortably high) while still allowing text to be more clearly understood and the drama to move forward, even in conflict.<sup>72</sup> Thus the higher female voices do not lose any of the text.

Interestingly, while modern casting frequently exchanges the contralto and mezzo-soprano in these roles, transposing where desired, a quick search of recent performances on operabase.com reveals *Tancredi* worldwide shows that out of ten performances: eight cast Orbazzano as a bass and two cast him as a baritone (the same singer), showing that here, perhaps modern casting and tastes are more concerned with hearing the bass color and less with preserving the contralto.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Celleti, *History of Bel Canto*, 139. Celletti references here Marietta Alboni's letters which describe Rossini having a "positive horror" for forced, hard sounds.

<sup>73</sup> <http://operabase.com/oplist.cgi?id=none&lang=en&is=Tancredi&by=Rossini&loc=&stype=abs&sd=6&sm=6&sy=2016&etype=abs&ed=&m=&ey=2019>. Accessed June 5, 2018.

## CHAPTER IV—Rossini's Leading Sopranos

### Isabella Colbran—Background

Isabella Colbran (1785-1845) was a Spanish singer who was a collaborator, role creator, co-artistic director, partner and eventually wife of Rossini. Her role in much of Rossini's life, and certainly his life in Naples, is crucial to the study of Gioachino Rossini. She was a composer in her own right, and it is known that she released four collections of songs. Rossini and Colbran met in 1807 when she sang at the Accademia Polimniaca in Bologna.<sup>74</sup> She was already experiencing considerable success at that time and would appear at La Scala the following year.

Early reviews of Colbran were incredibly positive. *Il Redattore del Reno*, a journal in Bologna at the time, reviewed the performance with phrases including "The organ of her voice is truly an enchantment for smoothness, for strength and for prodigious extension of tones: from the bass G to the high E—that is, for almost three octaves—it makes itself heard in a progression always even in mellowness and energy."<sup>75</sup> Stendhal writes,

Her beauty was of the most imposing kind; strong features, which, in the scene, produce a most powerful effect, a magnificent figure, an eye of fire *a la circassienne*, a profusion of raven locks; in fine, she is formed by nature for tragedy. This woman, who, off the stage, has all the dignity of a *marchande des modes*, the moment she enters the scene, with her brow encircled with the diadem, inspires involuntary respect, even in those who have just [left] her in the tiring-room.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Osborne, *Rossini*, 13.

<sup>75</sup>Weinstock, *Rossini*, 15.

<sup>76</sup>Stendhal, *Memoirs of Rossini*, 110-111.

In 1815, after Rossini's great successes with a number of operas, including *L'italiana*, *Tancredi* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, he met with one of the most profound influencers of his life, Domenico Barbaia. Barbaia, notoriously described as "very intelligent, poorly educated, shrewd and energetic,"<sup>77</sup> had amassed a small fortune, primarily through gambling, and had at this point presided over several Neapolitan theaters. Soon, Rossini would enter into a contract where he would be musical director of Teatro San Carlo as well as Teatro Fondo and compose two operas for Naples each year. It is rumored, and somewhat assumed, that Isabella Colbran was Barbaia's mistress at the time, though no documentary proof of the Barbaia-Colbran relationship survives. However, one month after his final Neapolitan opera, *Zelmira*, was composed (ending his contract with Barbaia), Rossini and Colbran were married.<sup>78</sup>

A significant amount has been written about Colbran's voice. Nothing has been written about more, however, than whether Colbran was a soprano or mezzo-soprano. The Oxford dictionary describes her as "Considered to be finest dramatic coloratura of her day."<sup>79</sup> One blog article titles her, "The Gambling Mezzo-soprano."<sup>80</sup> But more often than not, quotes about Colbran take this form: "Isabella Colbran, whom Rossini would later marry, was termed a mezzo-soprano by her contemporaries, but her repertoire was

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<sup>77</sup>Weinstock, *Rossini*, 47.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup>"Isabella Colbran." *Oxford Reference*. Accessed June 2018. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095622915>.

<sup>80</sup>Barbara, "The Gambling Mezzo-soprano--Isabella Colbran," *The Espresso Break*. Accessed June 8, 2018. <http://theespressobreak.blogspot.com/2010/02/isabella-colbran.html>

more varied than such a term would suggest."<sup>81</sup> Geoffrey Riggs gives an incredibly clear summary of what has been written about Colbran's voice:

Colbran's apparent versatility was made possible by the fact that, during her prime, she had an enormous range extending down to the low G—hence her proficiency in the mezzo repertoire—and up to the E above high C—thus combining the technical resources required for practically all roles written for the female voice. One gets the impression that, though capable of surprising agility in the extreme high, her voice was essentially a dark instrument, powerful in the middle and lower range, with an innately portentous, high theatrical timbre. . . . Colbran's discernable abilities give us the clearest notion yet of the kind of vocal persona expected, of the diva who would perform such roles.<sup>82</sup>

There has also been written much of a rapid decline, and an entire portion of Stendhal's *Memoirs of Rossini (Vie de Rossini)* seems to be devoted to making sure everyone knows his profound disappointment in her voice after 1815.

But voices, like other things, are not made to last forever; and accordingly, in 1815, it began to lose its power, or we may venture to apply to her a term that is applied to vulgar singers, she began to *sing false*. From 1816 to 1822, Signora Colbran usually sung a note too high, or a note too low. Such singing would anywhere else have been called *execrable*; but it was not proper to say so in Naples. In spite of this little inconvenience, Signora Colbran did not the less continue to be the first singer of the theatre of *San Carlo*, and was constantly applauded.<sup>83</sup>

And thus a vocal picture of Colbran is formed. In her younger years, she was singing both contralto roles, such as is reported in her early days of knowing Rossini, but she was also singing soprano roles such as *Donna Anna* in *Don Giovanni* in 1812 and *The Countess* in *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1814. Such switches may have been difficult

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<sup>81</sup>Geoffrey Riggs, *The Assoluta Voice in Opera 1797-1847* (North Carolina: Macfarland, 2003), 38.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Stendhal, *Memoirs of Rossini*, 108-109.



to maintain and taken their toll on her voice, as many singers since that time have noted that not maintaining a consistent tessitura, or attempting to cross between voice types has been damaging to their technique.

### **Isabella Colbran—Character**

The roles composed for Signora Colbran very clearly illustrate the character that Rossini most associated with her. The first opera that Rossini composed in his contract with Barbaia was *Elisabetta, Regina d'Ighlitterra*, with the Queen's role specifically written for Colbran. He followed that up with the role of another Queen-like character (wife of a noble figure), Desdemona, in *Otello, Ossia il Moro di Venezia*, as well as the roles of Armida (*Armida*) Elcia (*Mosè in Egitto*), Zoraide (*Ricciardo e Zoraide*), Ermione (*Ermione*), Elena (*La donna del lago*), Anna (*Maometto II*), and Zelmira (*Zelmira*), all written by Rossini during his contract in Naples.

Looking at Table 3 below, which lists the roles written for Colbran, there are three types of characters represented in Rossini's writing for her. Sometimes these character types overlap, as seen in the table. These are the queen (or “noble wife,” as in the case of Desdemona), the noble daughter, and the love interest. Although these are very common operatic archetypes, Rossini quite clearly demonstrates a difference in what has been his traditional contralto writing and that which he creates for Colbran.

<b>Table 3: Isabella Colbran</b>			
<b>Roles Created in Naples</b>			
<b>Opera</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Range</b>
<b>Elisabetta, Regina D'Inghilterra</b>	Elisabetta	Noble, Queen, Tragic, Lead	A3-Bb 5
<b>Otello, Il Moro di Venezia</b>	Desdemona	Noble, Wife of Powerful Figure, Tragic, Co-Lead	B3-C5
<b>Armida</b>	Armida	Noble, Princess, Tragic, Co-Lead	G3-C5
<b>Mose in Egitto</b>	Elcia	Slave, Kidnapped, Seconary	Bb3-B5
<b>Ricciardo e Zoraide</b>	Zoraide	Love Interest of Lead Character	Original score not available
<b>Ermione</b>	Ermione	Daughter of another character, Co-Lead, Greek Myth, Tragic	B3-C5
<b>La Donna del Lago</b>	Elena	Daughter of another character, Love Triangle Participant	Ab3-B5
<b>Moametto II</b>	Anna	Daughter of another character, Love Interest, tragic end	B3-B5
<b>Zelmira</b>	Zelmira	Daughter of Another Character, Love Interest, Happy Ending	Bb3-B5

The queen (soprano) is the contrast to the king (contralto), the noble, dutiful daughter is in contrast to the wily, clever girl, and the love interest is often the focus of a triangle, or the impetus for the actions of a tenor, rather than the contralto being the central focus of the plot, who in turn loves a tenor. The characters of Colbran must be rescued, rather than rescue, and frequently die noble deaths, rather than triumphantly survive. These roles represent, in many ways, the archetype soprano later seen in Verdi and certainly seen among contemporaries, such as Bellini or Donizetti.

This is a striking difference in terms of gender identity. Traditionally, while the countertenor or male alto might be acceptable as a king, Rossini also felt that a woman in that role could provide the necessary gravitas. However, when the lead roles are written even a third higher in tessitura, they become in some ways "supportive," and not necessarily the driving force of the opera's plot. While Isabella in *L'italiana* plots and plans to rescue her lover Lindoro, Elcia in *Mose in Egitto* is kidnapped herself and must be rescued.

Though it may be hard to determine whether Rossini intends for his contraltos to be feminists, it remains celebrated in many performances. As Jenna Simeonov observes:

I think when *The Italian Girl in Algiers* was written it was really ahead of its time. Composed in 1813 and based on a libretto by Angelo Anelli written in 1808, *L'italiana* has really progressive views on women at a time when they had very little rights or independence. It's a feminist celebration written by two 19th-century men that easily translates into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The heroine Isabella is a brave and adventurous woman who cannot be outwitted. It's refreshing to see a story where the woman saves the man (Isabella's boyfriend Lindoro).<sup>84</sup>

### **Isabella Colbran—Range, Tessitura, and the Soprano Sfogato**

While the voice of Isabella Colbran has been debated and discussed to a large extent, one of the issues of confusion lies in the term *soprano sfogato*, which was frequently used in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century yet has completely disappeared from any opera writings of last 150 years. Since there were no recordings during the Romantic period, it leaves much debate over what this voice type actually means and even to whom it could have been properly applied. Dan Marek is one of the many who agree Colbran would likely have been referred to this way: "Like Giuditta Pasta, Colbran could be

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<sup>84</sup> Jenna Simeonov, "The Italian Girl in Algiers: Rossini's 'Feminist Celebration,'" *Schmopera*. <https://www.schmopera.com/italian-girl-rossini-feminist/> Accessed June 18, 2018.

called a mezzo-soprano with an upward extension to high E or even F on occasion or a soprano with a downward range extending to a G below middle C, giving a useable range of almost three octaves. There is a thicket of terminology for this special kind of voice. In the early nineteenth century such a voice was commonly called a *soprano sfogato*.<sup>85</sup>

Often in definition of this term, Colbran now appears as one of its primary examples, as in this online description: "The term *soprano sfogato* appeared at the same time as its greatest exponents: Isabella Colbran, Giuditta Pasta and Maria Malibran. Another example was Pauline Viardot, who alternated roles of soprano and contralto."<sup>86</sup> In addition, there is certainly some link between the contralto and the *soprano sfogato*. The singers with whom Colbran shares company above are all described as having a rich and strong low register, but appeared in a number of roles which are now certainly deemed to be higher soprano roles and rarely sung by mezzo-sopranos.

If one looks at this often-used description, it seems obvious that the term was making way for the mezzo-soprano. A singer who alternated between roles of soprano and contralto would clearly be what is now termed a mezzo. The words used to describe it are certainly that which appear alongside the mezzo-soprano description. However, there is much debate over whether this term is more descriptive of style or tone. Richard Miller, when having to deal with the term, says, "I personally avoid using *sfogata* as a descriptive term [for voices]."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Marek, 69.

<sup>86</sup><http://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/10590499> "soprano sfogato"

<sup>87</sup> Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 92.

However, there is some debate. Jeffrey Snider's article "In Search of the Soprano Sfogato" compares different accounts and describes the confusion:

Music dictionaries usually translate the word as "light" or "airy in style." While sfogato may indeed mean "airy," it is not in the sense of an "airy tone," but rather of an "airy room." (*Una stanza sfogata*, which is to say a spacious, well-ventilated space.) When applied to singers, some have used the meaning "unlimited." This is most likely because of the meaning *senza impedimento* or "without impediment." In this case the implication is of an open outdoor area, as in *un luogo sfogato*, not an "unlimited range."<sup>88</sup>

While his conclusion is that the term should be "left to historians" and not applied to modern voices, there is certainly some help here in understanding much the way Rossini may have been defining his sopranos. Some sopranos did stay in the higher reaches of tessitura, but many sopranos of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like Colbran, were likely forerunners in the development of the lyric mezzo-soprano, a term which at this point was generally left to the character meant to harmonically compliment a contralto or soprano, such as Bertha in *The Barber of Seville*, who was so frequently moved back and forth between soprano and mezzo-soprano that she has little identity of her own.

Nevertheless, although there is much room for conjecture about whether the *soprano sfogato* may have been an early representative of what is now referred to as mezzo-soprano, there is not enough evidence to be perfectly clear. Again from Snider: "It is important to remember that during this same period the term mezzo-soprano began to be widely used for a female voice between soprano and contralto. The only other Italian term applied to the soprano voice with any frequency during the first half of the nineteenth century is *soprano acuto*, or "high soprano." (Acuto, means "sharp," but may

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<sup>88</sup> Jeffrey Snider, "In Search of the Soprano Sfogato," *Journal of Singing* Jaksonville, Vol 68, iss. 3 (Jan/Feb 2012): 329.

also mean "high pitched" when applied to sound.)"<sup>89</sup> This description opens up the possibility that the "vented" soprano may have been an early version of a number of the lower, darker soprano types to which we now refer (spinto soprano, full lyric soprano, dramatic soprano).

Perhaps one of the most telling ideas about the *soprano sfogato* is in this definition: "*Sfogato* is the past participle of the verb *sfogare*, which is most commonly translated as "to vent." While the implication is that of venting as in smoke from a room, it is also used (as in English) as in "to vent one's anger."<sup>90</sup> While the modern idea of voice types attempts to divide voice types relies on a visual representation in the music, the 19th century version may have simply been applying something much more intangible to any singer who managed to capture their imagination.

It is possible to look at these ranges and tessituras side by side to see why there are singers who cross over the lines of Rossini's leading ladies. In this case, it is remarkable how similar the tessituras are. Below is data from the cavatinas of two of Marietta Marcolini's most well-known and performed roles and two of Isabella Colbran's most successful roles (in the case of *Otello*, the aria is the most well-known, since Desdemona does not have a proper cavatina). The tessituras from Colbran's arias are somewhat wider, but they generally remain within the treble clef staff with dips above and below. While Marcolini's tessituras also remain within the staff, they spend more time at the bottom half. The upper area (between B4 and E5) is generally used more by the roles written for Colbran *see Table 4*.

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 330.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 329.

Table 4: Comparison of Range and Tessitura					
Marietta Marcolini			Isabella Colbran		
Role	Range	Tessitura	Role	Range	Tessitura
La Pietra del Paragone	Bb3-Eb5	E4-B4	Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra	E4-Bb5	E4-E5
L'italiana in Algeri	C4-Bb4	E4-B4	Otello, Moro di Venezia	D4-Ab5	G4-E5

The difference can clearly be seen in the ranges of the two. While Colbran's arias have a range of almost two octaves (without any interpolated coloratura, which is often done with these roles regardless of Rossini's preference), Marcolini's arias stay just over or under one octave. Obviously, Rossini is thinking of the contralto voice here as a particular range, but the soprano role as an extended version of that range.

It would be easy to look at Table 4 and note that this is the difference between a contralto and soprano, which has never been a question. However, two remarkable differences change this definition. First, the modern soprano is defined by the ability to sing high notes. From Bertin Coffin's book on all types of sopranos: "The high extreme, at a minimum, for non-coloratura sopranos is "soprano C" [C6], and many roles in the standard repertoire call for C#[6] or D[6]. A couple of roles have optional Eb[6]s, as well. In the coloratura repertoire several roles call for Eb[6] on up to F[6]. In rare cases, some coloratura roles go as high as G[6] or G#[6]."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Berton Coffin. *Coloratura, Lyric and Dramatic Soprano, Vol. 1* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1960), 87-88.

The second is that most define voice types by tessitura, which, as seen above, is almost identical. As Richard Boldrey notes, "The soprano has the highest vocal range of all voice types, as well as the highest tessitura. A soprano and a mezzo-soprano have a similar range, but their tessituras will lie in different parts of that range."<sup>92</sup> These definitions show that Rossini was composing for a different type of voice than what might be defined by modern experts as a soprano.

In addition, these roles have been sung and recorded by as many mezzo-sopranos as sopranos. Joyce Di Donato, Marilyn Horne, Frederica von Stade and Cecilia Bartoli's recordings rival that of Montserrat Caballe, June Anderson and Virginia Zeani. Colbran's roles are remarkably suited to fill a space between mezzo-soprano and soprano, while Marcolini's roles clearly meant to be filled by a darker, lower voice.

### **Giuditta Pasta-The Transitioning Power of Stardom**

Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865) is referred to by Encyclopaedia Britannica as "the reigning soprano of her time," and most texts recognize her as an extremely celebrated soprano, for whom many roles were created, including the title roles of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* and Bellini's *Norma*.<sup>93</sup> Though Rossini did not write any roles specifically for Pasta, she was pivotal in the development of many of his scores. "From 1821 until the debut of Maria Malibran in 1828, Pasta was unrivalled as the interpreter of such roles as Tancredi, Desdemona and Semiramide," writes Osborne. " He goes on to say, "Though she was not Rossini's favourite singer, she was a singing actress of magnetism and

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<sup>92</sup>Richard Boldrey. *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias* (Dallas: Psst., 1994), 29.

<sup>93</sup> <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy4.library.arizona.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Giuditta-Pasta/58673>



persuasive power,"<sup>94</sup> and this magnetism was key for Rossini in the alteration of many of his roles.

Again, the argument can be made that although Pasta was referred to as a soprano (and *soprano sfogato* in more descriptive terms) she could be arguably referred to as what would be considered a modern lyric mezzo-soprano. Pasta was a great creator of roles for Bellini, including Romeo in Bellini's *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi* and the title role in *Norma*. A very fascinating article in the *Opera Quarterly* in 2001 addresses this changing role of the *musico* through Giuditta Pasta, and how Rossini begins to take his place in the "old order" idea of the contralto *musico*, even as early as 1831.

[Bellini's] modern style made his contemporaries' Rossinian habits sound clichéd and contributed to the obsolescence of the *musico* contraltos. . . . A love duet originally drafted for *Ernani* and his beloved Elvira ended up in *Norma*, where Bellini reworked it as a duet for Norma and Adalgisa. The once-conventional love scene for prima donna and female *musico* was thus converted into an expression of women's friendship and maternal concern, a situation more congenial to the emerging taste for theatrical realism.<sup>95</sup>

Mezzo-Soprano Marilyn Horne has observed the unusual transition during this period. She explains the change in how this middle voice is seen: "Bellini wrote very high for Adalgisa and even for Romeo in *Capuleti*. The Verdi mezzo roles [that followed] were high. Since that time, [these] vocal categories have gotten confused."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Osborne, *Rossini*, 371.

<sup>95</sup>Heather Hadlock, "On the Cusp Between Past and Future: The Mezzo-Soprano Romeo of Bellini's *I Capuleti*," *Opera Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (2001): 400.

<sup>96</sup>Eric Myers. "Sweet and Low: The Case of the Vanishing Contralto." *Opera News*. 61, no. 7 (December 28, 1996): 21.

So many historians and music critics have referred to Pasta as a mezzo-soprano that it has become more likely than the standard "soprano" denomination often applied to her. Here is Stendhal's evaluation of his (much loved) Pasta:

Madame Pasta's voice is of very considerable compass. It extends from A, above the bass-cliff note, to C flat, and even to D sharp in Alt. She enjoys the rare advantage of being able to sing music set to for a contralto as well as a soprano voice. The voice possessed but of little or no science in music. I should not hesitate to declare that the character of her voice is a mezzo-soprano. The master who wishes to do justice to the voice should set the general tenor of her airs according to this modification of its powers and employ all the other resources of her beautiful treble *en passant*, and as occasion may require.<sup>97</sup>

What would appear here is that the power of the popularity and magnetism of Pasta, in the years of Rossini's life when his operas were still regularly being performed but he was no longer composing (his "silent" years), were pivotal in the way these roles have been presented since. The tradition of the *contralto musico* that Rossini was dedicated to protecting eventually gave way to modern tastes and operatic stars like Pasta, who were inventing a new "lyric mezzo soprano." After Pasta's tremendous success singing Desdemona (a role much more closely suited to the descriptions of her voice and range), she went on to interpret other roles written by Rossini, whether or not the range and tessitura would be appropriate. Therefore, Pasta's greatest roles of Rossini remain today the very contrasting Desdemona and Tancredi, two roles which occupy completely separate tessituras and ranges, which needed to become altered so that a single operatic star could continue their popularity. That alteration has continued to affect the perception of these roles as suitable for the same singer, whether or not that was an original intention.

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<sup>97</sup>Stendhal, *Memoirs of Rossini*, 259-260.

The clearest evidence of this may be the in the opening pages of the beginning of the critical edition of *Tancredi*, published by the Fondazione Rossini Pesaro. In the commentary there is an entire section focused on "Rossini e Giuditta Pasta." This section deals broadly with both Pasta's effect on the eventual performance practice of the score, and Rossini's reluctant compliance in make changes during his "silent" period. "Rossini's relationship with this great interpreter, especially regarding *Tancredi*, is a fascinating case," they note.

One has the impression that Pasta has on numerous occasions with Rossini insisted that he modify and adapt the part to her true or presumed needs as a singer, but above all as the *prima donna*. The politeness and the complacency of the composer were external, and it seems that they were strained. . . Perhaps not all the promises made by Rossini were kept, but there are still some interesting and even surprising sources of music closely linked to Pasta.<sup>98</sup>

Specifically, as the critical edition says, it is hard to trace exactly what changes were made by later soprano requests. However, there are some likely additions made for Pasta shown in the first duet of *Amenaide* and *Tancredi* (mentioned earlier in the example of Rossini's ensemble writing for *Malanotte*). Again, from Gossett's notes in the critical edition commentary, "In the definitive score *Tancredi* descends, ending at a low Bb, but at one point Rossini had originally started to write a low G, correcting it immediately after. Contralti who were able to perform this part were numerous enough, but in the years immediately following the role of *Tancredi* was preferred by singers whose voices gravitated to a more central range (Teresa Belloc, Giuditta Pasta)." <sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Gioachino Rossini, *Tancredi*, libretto by Gaetano Rossi, ed. Philip Gossett, 2 vols., *Edizione Critica Delle Opere Di Gioachino Rossini*, vol. 10 (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini Casa Ricordi 1984), xxxiv-xxxv. (My translation from the Italian).

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*

In addition, the commentary in the critical edition offers some comments regarding Rossini's changes which are harder to track, "An examination of [the duet] could lead to a rethinking of the limits that today we are likely to give to those singers who adopt these embellishments. For Pasta, Rossini did not vary the reprise of the melody, but intervened from the first bars, investing the musical material to the point of amplifying its meaning and gesture and dilating its expressive value."<sup>100</sup>

Here again, in musical example 1 on page 50, the third bar is the original low G that was written to end the duet. Specifically after Pasta, this duet ended on a Bb. These alterations were written into so many subsequent scores that most scholars find it difficult to determine what the original pitches (written for Malanotte) might have been.

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

## Conclusion

Examining the historical motivations of composers allows one to understand more deeply the sound and colors that these minds hoped to produce. It is even more valuable to understand their limitations and allowances. Today, singers are expected to have careers that span thirty or forty years. It is rare that singers make their professional debut in their teens, and even more rare that composers are writing for them at that age. However, that was Rossini's reality. Even Giuditta Pasta, known as the great prima donna of early 1800s, had finished her career by her mid-30s already beset by vocal issues. Much of this has to do with the fact that these singers performed roles because of their star-power or their character, and certainly not due to range or tessitura—something pedagogues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century focus on almost exclusively when determining a singer's voice type.

Additionally, definitions have so widely changed, such as the soprano sfogato term which no longer exists, that singers are able to re-evaluate the true meaning of these ranges. Even the contralto, which grew organically out of the castrati range, became the lead role of many early romantic operas, and within a century had become a voice too specialized to receive much attention in terms of training and casting.

Singers of today have the blessing of specialization, allowing them to have longer careers where they can focus on the roles they do best, internationally, and perhaps even allowing more singers into the market. Sadly, there are very few contraltos marketed, owing perhaps to the years where they were too difficult to define, and where many roles had therefore been co-opted by other voice types.

Explorations like this show that composers have defied trends, and consistently written for their own passions and tastes. There is a possibility today of re-discovering

these works, performing them with the contralto voice that Rossini so passionately loved. This may allow audiences and composers alike to escape the temptation of homogenizing his works into one voice, showing the great depth and possibilities of the incarnations of what Rossini knew the contralto could do.

**Isabella's Solo "O Che Muso", Measure 72 . . . . . Act I Finale *L'italiana in Algeri*,  
Gioachino Rossini**

209

**SCENA XI**  
(Isabella, Mustafà, Gli Eunuchi)

[a tempo] [57] Andantino [8.....]

F.l.

Ob.

Cl.  
in Do

Fg.

Cor.  
in Do

Trb.  
in Do

s'accordino in Mib  
a 2

Isabella

(Oh! che mu-so, che fi-

*sottovoce*  
Oh! che ra - ra bel - tà.  
Oh! che ra - ra bel - tà.  
Oh! che ra - ra bel - tà.

I  
*pp*

Vni

II  
*pp*

Vle  
*pp*

Vc. e  
Cb.  
*pp*

[a tempo] [57] Andantino

*ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

Rossini, Gioachino. *L'italiana in Algeri. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini*, edited by Philip Gosset. Vol. 8, part 1. Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1982.

## APPENDIX B

### Isabella/Mustafa duet, m. 125.....ACT I Finale *L'italiana in Algeri*, Gioachino Rossini

217

125

I. *parlandolo*  
col - poor son si - cu - ra. Oh!chemuso!Sta'a ve - der quel ch'io so

Mu.  
- nar. Ah!m'in - can - ta... m'in - na - mu - ra. Che taglia!...Ma bi -

I Vni  
II Vle  
Vc. e Cb.

128

I.  
far, quel ch'io so far. Oh!chemuso, che figura!... Sta'a veder quelch'io so

Mu.  
- so - gna si - mu - lar. Oh!che pezzo, oh!che pezzo. Ma bi.sogna si - mu -

I Vni  
II Vle  
Vc. e Cb.

*arco*

Rossini, Gioachino. *L'italiana in Algeri*. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini, edited by Philip Gosset. Vol. 8, part 1. Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1982.



## APPENDIX C

### Quartet, m. 208.....Act I Finale *L'italiana in Algeri*, Gioachino Rossini

226 208

Ob. *[P]*

Cl. *in Do* *[P]*

Isabella

Haly Ca - ro,  
(Costui dalla pa - u - ra non o - sa più par - lar.

Tad. - far! Un palo addirit - tu - ra? Taddeo, che brutto af -

Mu. Ca - ra, me stes - so mi fai scor -

[in] punta d'arco

Vni I

Vni II

Vle

Vc. e Cb.

212

Ob.

Cl. *in Do*

I. ca - pisco a - des - so, ca - pisco a des - so che voi sa - pe - te a -

Haly Costui dalla pa - u - ra, costui dalla pa - u - ra, costui dalla pa - u - ra non o - sa più par -

Tad. - far! Un pa - lo, Tad - de - o, che brut - to af -

Mu. - dar, ca - ra, ca - ra, me stes - so fai scor -

Vni I

Vni II

Vle

Vc. e Cb.

Rossini, Gioachino. *L'italiana in Algeri*. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini, edited by Philip Gosset. Vol. 8, part 1. Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1982.

## APPENDIX D

Treble entrance, m. 251-267.....1 Act I Finale *L'italiana in Algeri*, Gioachino Rossini

245

Fl.

Ob.

I Vni

II Vni

Vle

Vc.

Cb.

251 [67]

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. in Do

Fg.

[Solo]

p

[Solo]

p

Elvira

Pria di di - vi - derci da voi, Si - gno - re, ve - nia.mo a e - spri - mer - vi

Zulma

Pria di di - vi - derci da voi, Si - gno - re, ve - nia.mo a e - spri - mer - vi

Lindoro

Pria di di - vi - derci da voi, Si - gno - re, ve - nia.mo a e - spri - mer - vi

[67]

I Vni

II Vni

Vle

Vc.

Cb.

ince  
no  
20  
le  
es

Rossini, Gioachino. *L'italiana in Algeri*. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini, edited by Philip Gosset. Vol. 8, part 1. Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1982.

## APPENDIX E

### Stretta, Measure 473.....Act I Finale *L'italiana in Algeri*, Gioachino Rossini

473

Ott. *[cresc.]*

Fg. *[cresc.]*

Cor. *in Do* *[cresc.]*

E. *[cresc.]*  
 Zul. *[cresc.]*  
 I. *[cresc.]*  
 Lin. *[cresc.]*  
 Haly *[cresc.]*  
 Tad. *[cresc.]*  
 Mu. bum, bum bum, bum bum, Bum

Vnl I *[cresc.]*  
 Vnl II *[cresc.]*  
 Vle *[cresc.]*  
 Vc. e Cb. *[cresc.]*

Rossini, Gioachino. *L'italiana in Algeri*. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini, edited by Philip Gosset. Vol. 8, part 1. Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1982.



476

Ott. *f* *ff*

Fg. *f* *ff*

Cor.  
n Do *f* *ff*

E. *f* *ff*  
\_vel\_lo sbalor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'onde ei sco-gli io sto pres-so a nau-fra-

Zul. *f* *ff*  
\_vel\_lo sbalor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'onde ei sco-gli io sto pres-so a nau-fra-

ent  
I. *f* *ff*  
\_vel\_lo sbalor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'onde ei sco-gli io sto pres-so a nau-fra-

Lin. *f* *ff*  
\_vel\_lo sbalor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'onde ei sco-gli io sto pres-so a nau-fra-

Haly *f* *ff*  
\_vel\_lo sbalor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'onde ei sco-gli io sto pres-so a nau-fra-

Tad. *f* *ff*  
\_vel\_lo sbalor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'onde ei sco-gli io sto pres-so a nau-fra-

Mu. *f* *ff*  
bum, bum bum, bum bum, bum

I *f* *ff*

7ni II *f* *ff*

Vle *f* *ff*

Vc. e Cb. *f* *ff*

Rossini, Gioachino. *L'italiana in Algeri*. Edizione Critica Delle Opere di Gioachino Rossini, edited by Philip Gosset. Vol. 8, part 1. Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini, 1982.

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Ott. *p*

Ob. *p*

Fg. *p*

Cor. *in Do*

Trb. *in Do*

E. *-gar. Va sos-so-prail mio cer-vello sba-lor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'on-dee i*

Zul. *-gar. Va sos-so-prail mio cer-vello sba-lor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'on-dee i*

I. *-gar. Va sos-so-prail mio cer-vello sba-lor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'on-dee i*

Lin. *-gar. Va sos-so-prail mio cer-vello sba-lor-di-to in tan-ti im-bro-gli; qual va-scel fra l'on-dee i*

Haly *-gar. Sì, va sos-so-pra la mia te-sta sba-lor-*

Tad. *-gar. Sì, va sos-so-pra la mia te-sta sba-lor-*

Mu. *bum, Bum bum,*

I *p*

Viol. *p*

II *p*

Vle *p*

rc. e Cb. *p*

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