

**KAZIMIERZ WIELKI UNIVERSITY IN BYDGOSZCZ
FACULTY OF MUSIC EDUCATION**

JUSTYNA GĘSICKA

**Analysis of selected arias from Gioacchino Rossini's operas in
the context of performance and interpretation practice**

DOCTORAL THESIS

Description of the work – Selected arias from Gioacchino Rossini's operas

PROMOTER

prof. dr hab. Małgorzata Grela

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INTRODUCTION

For as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by the possibilities of the human voice in the context of performing fast coloratura runs. My interest in the subject arose even before I began studying classical singing. As a child, I enjoyed listening to and trying to imitate the embellishments performed by pop singers, which demonstrated the agility and range of the instrument built into the human body. After beginning my vocal studies, my fascination with coloratura continued unabated. The discovery of the beauty and richness of the music of the outstanding Italian Romantic composer Gioacchino Rossini was a turning point in deepening my interest. The composer's musical language impressed me primarily because the extensive passages he used, showcasing the singer's virtuosity, can be treated as a new way of expressing emotions. In Rossini's work, words are combined with vocal “acrobatics” to create a heightened emotional message. Michał Bristiger writes in his publication: *According to a common view that has persisted for nearly two hundred years, music is stronger than words in their relationship. What is more, words seem to be “absorbed” by music¹. Rossini's words are “clothed” in emotional, sonorous colors. Bristiger goes on to write: In a song, we often do not understand the words at all, or their meaning reaches us only fragmentarily; how could it be otherwise, since vocal music is written in many languages unknown to us, and listeners do not lose the feeling that they are “listening” to it, even when the song is in a foreign language. Even composers often listen to vocal works as if they were written “without words,” even though in their own creative practice they deal with verbal texts².* The above quote fully reflects the compositional intent of the Italian Romantic, who created his own unique language, combining the components of expression in such a way as to delight in every possible aspect of performance and emotion. Rossini ensured that vocal performances not only impressed the listener, but also conveyed a wealth of emotion.

While exploring the topic of Rossini's vocal music with interest, I came across issues that require further elaboration, such as the performance of a given aria by different female voices, from contralto to coloratura soprano, and the resulting differences, as well as the performance rules established by the composer. As this music

¹Brigster M., *Związki muzyki ze słowem*, PWM, Warszawa 1986, p. 12.

²Ibid, p. 13.

is very attractive to perform, for decades, despite the rules of ornamentation set by the composer, many singers performing Gioacchino Rossini's vocal works added their own embellishments to the existing compositional scores. Ludwik Bielawski stated: *A work of art lives and reveals its meaning in the events of its performance and perception. This opens up a new area of interpretative possibilities. Temporality and spatiality are conditioned here by all the properties of the previous levels and enriched by their own, determined by the duration and place of the event in which living people participate*³. Due to the many performances by different singers over the years, musical phrases have developed that are customarily subject to change. These variables are referred to as performance practice and are incorporated into the customary performance of individual pieces. **The aim of my work is to present the current performance practice of selected arias from Gioacchino Rossini's operas in an independent artistic statement, as well as to highlight performance and interpretation issues. The main problem I would like to address is formulated as follows: Does the current performance practice differ from the performance traditions that have developed over the years?** In my opinion, the subject matter of the doctoral dissertation, as presented here, will provide a clear set of principles for performing Rossini's vocal music. It may also serve as a compendium of knowledge for singers who are at the beginning of their vocal career with the works of the Italian composer.

The first chapter of the dissertation is devoted to presenting the composer's profile, focusing on his operatic works.

The second chapter contains a general vocal characterization of Rossini's works, including observed differences in the performance of selected arias through the prism of voice type. In this chapter, I will also discuss the ornamentation rules dictated by the composer and outline current performance practice. In this chapter, I will briefly describe what opera performances are currently being staged on Polish opera stages.

The third chapter of the doctoral dissertation contains a description of the completed Artistic Work. The pieces comprising the aforementioned artistic work are arranged in chronological order of their creation. I apply this principle throughout the dissertation, as well as in the musical appendix. Each of the selected pieces includes an outline of the opera libretto, a description of the character performing the aria,

³Bielawski L., *Interpretacja dzieła muzycznego*, w: „Interpretacja muzyki”, red. L. Bielawski, J. K. Dadek-Kozicka, XXVII Konferencja Muzykologiczna Związku Kompozytorów Polskich *Naukowe podstawy interpretacji muzyki*, Instytut Sztuki PAN, Akademia Muzyczna w Warszawie, Warszawa 1998, p. 29.

and the aria's place in the entire work. I will then present the difficulties that a given aria poses for the performer and describe my own methods for overcoming the performance difficulties encountered in the works. I will include musical excerpts that I have modified, specifying the principle on which I based the modification.

CHAPTER 1. GIOACCHINO ROSSINI – SKETCH FOR A PORTRAIT OF THE COMPOSER

1.1 Composer silhouette

In the following subsection, I would like to introduce the composer's biography, showing him through the prism of his operas.

Gioacchino Antonio Rossini, born on February 29, 1792⁴ in the Italian city of Pesaro, in the Marche region, in the province of Pesaro and Urbino. *Genius and charlatan. The idol of the salons and a misanthrope. An ascetic and a sybarite. A titan of work and a lazy man. A specimen of mental equilibrium and a neurasthenic*⁵. He came from a family of petty nobility. The father of the great composer was Giuseppe Antonio Rossini, a trumpeter and French horn player who taught French horn at the Philharmonic Academy in Bologna⁶. He was an extremely cheerful and open-minded man. Rossini's mother, Anna Guidarini, was an opera singer endowed with a very pure soprano voice of beautiful color. In addition, she was a woman of exceptional beauty. From his childhood years, Gioacchino's parents made sure that he received a basic general and musical knowledge.

The first real musician with whom the young Rossini took piano and singing lessons was the canon Giuseppe Malerbi⁷. The said canon came from a respectable family, boasting good fame, education and manners. The young Gioacchino, about 10 years old, spent a lot of time with the teacher and his family, so this one had a great influence on his later personality development. After the Rossini family moved to Bologna, the composer's next teachers were Fr. Angelo Tessi, a monk, with whom he studied harmony and accompaniment, Rastrelli, with whom he learned the basics of violin playing, and Matteo Babini, a prominent tenor known at the time, under whose tutelage Gioacchino trained vocally. As a trained accompanist and gifted with a beautiful high voice, Rossini began his singing career. He was admitted to the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna. Rossini's plans to be a singer unfortunately could not come to fruition due to voice mutation; *Initially I had no other goal than that of acquiring a musical education greater than that of my fellow singers in general [...]*.

⁴Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 43.

⁵Mianowski J., red. Golianek R. D., *Krzywe lustro opery, Rossinina, Rossini alla polacca, czyli o obecności Polski w Europie*, Mado, Toruń 2011, p. 63.

⁶Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1338.

⁷Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 20.

Later came the voice mutation. My first songs were well admitted and in this way, almost accidentally, I went in the direction of a career as a composer and at it I have remained [...] ⁸. From the accounts, it is difficult to surmise whether Rossini exhibited compositional inclinations, but a found manuscript of *Six Sonatas for String Instruments*, bearing the composer's signature with the date of composition, makes it clear that already at the age of twelve he completely unconsciously, but intuitively, created an uncommon work. Although the composer himself was not thrilled with it and, making a self-criticism, called them “terrible sonatas,” the fact that he created them in just three days for a total of 139 pages, yielding about an hour and a half of music, is shocking, and the techniques Rossini used were beyond the comprehension of even an adult, experienced composer.

At the age of just fourteen, Rossini was commissioned to write his first opera, titled *Demetrius and Polybius*, in which the composer's characteristic ornamentation and coloratura can already be seen.



Example 1 Gioacchino Rossini, *Demetrius and Polybius*, a quartet excerpt from Act II of the work. Stendhal described it as Rossini's masterpiece at the time, about which he wrote as follows *This quartet is Rossini's masterpiece. Nothing in the world surpasses this work. If Rossini had not written anything else, and so Mozart and Cimarosa would have considered him an equal*

In 1806, the composer of *The Barber of Seville* entered the Liceo Musicale in Bologna, where he furthered his knowledge of counterpoint and diligently studied the works of Mozart and Haydn. Familiarizing oneself with Rossini's works, it is easy to see even the fragments of melodies from Mozart's compositions, which shows how fascinated the young Rossini was by the works of the Classic. Through the acquaintance of his parents, the young Gioacchino, on recommendation, was offered the opportunity to go

⁸Ibid, p. 32.

to Venice, to the San Moisè theater, to replace, as a matter of urgency, a composer who had not fulfilled his contract with the theater. Thus, he got the opportunity to compose five one-act comic operas⁹. The resulting opera was titled *La cambiale di matrimonio* (*The Marriage Bill*). The opera's libretto was based on a comedy by Camillo Federici with the same title as the aforementioned opera. The comedy was a very popular operatic theme at the time and was also used in his opera by composer Carlo Coccia. *The Marriage Bill* was positively received by the public. After the successful premiere of his first work, he wrote four more operas for the Venetian theater: *L'inganno felice* (*The happy deception*) (I 1812), *La scala di seta* (*The silk ladder*) (V 1812), *L'occasione fa il ladro* (*Opportunity makes the thief*) (XI 1812) and *Il signor Bruschino ossia Il figlio per azzardo* (*Signor Bruschino or The son by chance*) (I 1813). After the success of the premiere of *The Happy Deception* in Venice, Stendhal, who was an eyewitness to the events, wrote thus: *In this last-named work, genius breaks through with unmistakable brilliance. The experienced critic can detect most painly in this little one-act opera the germs of the ideas which later, in a dozen or a score of major passages, were to send the fame of Rossini's masterpieces ringing through the world [...]*¹⁰. It is admirable and revealing of Rossini's true genius that he was able to write several operas at one time. While composing works for the San Moisè Theater in Venice, he also created a comic opera for the Teatro del Corso in Bologna - *L'equivoco stravagante* (*A Bizarre Misunderstanding*, X 1811), a dramma con cori (Italian – drama with choirs) for Teatro Comunale in Ferrara – *Ciro in Babilonia* (*Cyrus in Babylonia*, III 1812) and another comic opera for La Scala – *La pietra del paragone* (*The Test Stone*, IX 1812)¹¹. Writing so many works in such close proximity resulted in many borrowings from one opera to another. Often with Rossini, the same overtures can be heard in several operas, such as the overture to the work *Aureliano in Palmira* (*Aurelian in Palmira*) he also used in the opera *Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra* (*Elizabeth Queen of England*)¹², after which the same overture became part of the opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*). Similar practices also applied to sung parts, for example, the cabaletta *Non Più Mesta* from Angelina's aria from act II of the opera *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*) and the very rarely performed aria of Prince Almaviva from act II of the opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) – *Ah il*

⁹Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 37.

¹⁰ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 48.

¹¹Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1339.

¹² Fraccaroli A., *Divino Maestro – novel about Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1977, p. 143.

più lieto il più felice. - Both arias have the same introduction and almost the same formal structure. At the beginning of Count Almaviva's piece, the vocal melody is identical to Angelina's aria. As the work unfolds, differences can be seen in subtly different coloraturas or groupings of rhythmic values. In this work, too, the composer added a chorus part and placed the aria in the opera's final moment. Comparing the score material of the two arias, it is indisputable that the Count's aria was the prototype of the Cinderella aria.

The creator of the *Barber of Seville* was becoming increasingly popular and respected. Unfortunately, he was not yet an authority in the wider artistic circle, so that he could afford to argue for higher salaries with impresarios and theaters. Consequently, in order to support himself and his parents, he accepted various job offers – accompanist, conductor and commissions for various smaller works. His last comic farce, *Signor Bruschino*, was unfortunately not a success. The composer, fortunately, being optimistic by nature, did not read this as his downfall; on the contrary, having waited a short time, he composed an outstanding work later that year. The result was a melodrama eroico (heroic opera) entitled *Tankred*. *Tankred* was so successful that melodies from the opera could be heard in the palaces of the wealthy, as well as in the homes of ordinary people. As a result of composing this work, the door to a worldwide career opened for Rossini. Stendhal wrote about the success of *Tancred* as follows:

*Of all the lands of Italy, Venetia stands supreme in the sureness of its taste and the keenness of its appreciation of music written for the human voice; the reader, then, can imagine for himself the success of this superb opera. Had the King-Emperor Napoleon himself thought to honour Venice with his presence, the excitement of his arrival could have done nothing to tear the people away from Rossini*¹³.

An excellent example of the fact that Rossini's work was a triumph not only among people not connected with music professionally, but also among significant artists-composers of the time, can be seen in the fact that Paganini wrote his famous violin variations based on *Di tanti palpiti*, the aria of the title character *Tankred*. The concert performance of the overture to the opera *Tankred*, taken from the earlier-composed Test Stone, also enjoys unflagging enthusiasm to this day¹⁴. Another opera that won the hearts of the public from its first performance was *L'italiana in Algieri* (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*). The amazing fact is that Rossini composed this comic

¹³ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 50.

¹⁴ Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 62.

opera the same year as *Tankred*, and exactly four months after composing the opera seria, what's more, it took the composer only 27 days to write it!¹⁵ *The Italian Girl in Algiers* is such an excellent opera that, according to an eyewitness and also the author of the book *Rossini* - Viaroslav Sandelewski, at a performance in Turin in 1927, the present Richard Strauss hearing the work for the first time, did not hide his enthusiasm¹⁶. After the success of both operas, Rossini became a “star” and “idol” of Venetians and especially Venetian women. Handsome, brilliant and endearing with his wit, the young and famous man attracted many women towards him. The next commissions entrusted to Rossini by La Scala in Milan were *Aurelio in Palmira* (*Aurelian in Palmira*), an opera seria, and *Il turco in Italia* (*The Turk in Italy*), an opera buffa. The former, unfortunately, did not achieve much success, while the latter was not appreciated by Milanese until several years later. After Rossini returned to his beloved Venice, the composer got another commission and wrote an opera seria titled *Sigismondo* (*Sigismund*), set (interestingly) in Poland, with the title character King Sigismund. Unfortunately, after the failures in Milan, Rossini (perhaps) was still experiencing disappointment, which did not allow him to focus on composing a new work with the brilliance of mind he wished he had, so the opera was not a success. In the middle of 1815, Rossini was offered a several-year contract in Naples by the eccentric but highly influential impresario Domenico Barbaja¹⁷. The contract was to become artistic director and composer at two opera houses: San Carlo and Del Fondo, where he was to compose two new operas annually¹⁸. Neapolitan audiences were very demanding, capable of criticizing even Mozart - so adored by the master of *opera buffa*. Knowing this, Rossini had to convince and enthuse the audience in Venice if he was to actually be able to stay a few years in his position. He began composing the opera *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra* (*Elizabeth, Queen of England*). For the first time in his entire career to date, the great creator of the *Barber* had plenty of time and could show great precision in creating an opera that would make him known in southern Italy. He entrusted the title role to Isabella Colbran. Rossini knew Colbran from his youthful days spent in Bologna. More than a dozen years later, the master of opera buffa was still impressed by the singer, who reciprocated the composer's affection. As the Master of *bel canto* wanted to perform at his best on the new artistic stage, but also wanted to

¹⁵Ibid, p.62.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 65.

¹⁷red. Michalik M. B., *Kronika opery*, wyd. Kronika, Warszawa 1993, p. 70.

¹⁸Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 81.

impress Isabella Colbran, he decided to write a leading role for her. The premiere of *Elizabeth, Queen of England* won the hearts of Neapolitan audiences and did not leave the stage for a month¹⁹. Not long after the success of *Elisabeth*, Rossini composed *Torvaldo e Dorliska* (*Torvaldo and Dorliska*), commissioned by the Teatro Valle in Rome, which proved to be a failure for the composer.

Already while working on *Torvaldo and Dorliska*, Rossini received a commission for what later turned out to be his life's work, namely *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*). The composer signed the contract, which he had one month to complete. According to accounts from several sources, Rossini fulfilled the contract much faster. Following the information provided by Sandelewski: (...) *Relying on Garcia's account [which] gives only eight days, singer Righetti-Giorghizas asserts that it cost the author "a lot of time" to compose the opera. Rossini himself could not specify. When asked (...) he answered "twelve", while to Wagner (...) he declared "thirteen"*²⁰. According to analyses of documents available to Sandelewski, it appears that for the period of the *Barber's* overall composition can be considered 24-25 days. Although the premiere performance was not a success through a combination of unfortunate accidents, subsequent performances became a string of successes and paeans to Rossini. After the great success of *The Barber*, Rossini returned to Naples, where he composed the cantata *Le nozze di Teti e di Peolo*. In the space of six months after his success in Rome, Rossini became preoccupied with his private life and tasting the true Italian *dolce vita*. In September, a new opera entitled *La gazetta* appeared. The public, which had been eagerly anticipating another opera after the already famous *Barber*, was unfortunately not satisfied with the new work, which was soon taken off the stage. Rossini was uncomfortable with the thought of inconsolable, sophisticated Neapolitan listeners. In order to rehabilitate himself, he decided to write a more elevated work, above all with an incomparably better libretto. The creator of *The Italian Girl* decided to take an interest in the tragedy *Othello*, a work by the eminent creator Shakespeare. The new opera seria premiered in December 1816 and was a huge success. After a successful performance of the work, Rossini moved back to Rome, where he began work on a new comic opera. In an amazingly short time (...) *Rossini composed the music in 24 days*²¹, *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*) was created. The premiere took

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 84.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 90-91.

²¹ Ibid, p. 114.

place in January 1817 at the Teatro Valle. The premiere performance was not met with rapture by the Roman audience, something Rossini, who remembered the reaction to the *Barber*, took with great composure. Composed in the same time frame as *The Barber of Seville*, *Cinderella* was equally successful, which has continued uninterrupted to the present day, and together with the aforementioned comic opera are the diamonds of Italian *opera buffa*.

After releasing to the world such a magnificent work as *Cinderella* unquestionably is, Rossini almost stopped writing *opera buffa*, or at least postponed its creation for a long time.

Two months after the premiere of *Cinderella*, the composer again moved to Milan, where he wrote *La gazza ladra* (*The Thieving Magpie*). This time, the author of *The Italian Girl*, had more time to compose. Rossini, according to Sandelewski, wrote to his mother regarding the libretto for the new production thus: *The text is rhymed by a poet of fresh date, which gives me more than a little trouble [...]. The topic itself is very beautiful and I expect that, God willing, something really good will come out of it*²². May 31, 1817 saw the premiere of the semiseria opera, *The Thieving Magpie*²³, which was an unmitigated triumph. The composer from Pesaro moved many more times between the most important centers of Italian operatic life. Immediately after the performance of *Magpie the Thief*, he went to Naples, where he wrote an opera seria entitled *Armida*, commissioned by the San Carlo Theater, which premiered less than five months after the aforementioned *Magpie the Thief*, namely on November 11, 1817²⁴.

Another opera in Rossini's collection is *Adelaide di Borgogna* (*Adelaide of Burgundy*), which he wrote for the Teatro Argentina in Rome, and which premiered on December 27, 1817²⁵. Unfortunately, this mentioned work did not go down as a great achievement of the composer and was not popular with the public from the very beginning.

At the request of the San Carlo Theater in Naples, the Maestro created an operatic work with a sacred theme. On March 5, 1818²⁶, *Mosè in Egitto* (*Moses in Egypt*) was staged. The new opera had to be written on the basis of sacred literature,

²² Ibid, p. 120-121.

²³ *I classici della musica, Corriere della Sera*, 8 Gioacchino Rossini, editors Paolo Mieli, Skira, Milano 2007, p. 123.

²⁴ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, s. 1366.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 1368.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 1396.

since it was a Neapolitan tradition that no secular work could be staged during Lent²⁷. The opera was a great success. Stendhal, who was in Naples at the time and saw the performance, even though he was not an admirer of sacred themes, wrote this about the said performance in his book: *Rossini's grasp of his medium is so perfect that, some may suspect him of having "invented" the science of music, rather than of having learned it*²⁸, and *Who will deny, in the light of such an experience (which this work is), that music can provoke an immediate and physical nervous reaction? This "Prayer" all but brings tears to my eyes whenever I think of it*²⁹.

After another success, the Swan of Pesaro - as he used to say about himself when disputing his origins - *They already call me the Swan of Pesaro; so I will also be the Odin of Lugo*³⁰, he traveled to his hometown, and later to Bologna, to visit his parents. During the holiday trip, he created a short one-act farce commissioned by the police prefect, who was also an inspector of the local theaters³¹. The new opera was titled *Adina*, and premiered in Lisbon on June 22, 1826 at the Sao Carlos Theater³².

After a long rest break, Rossini began work on a new two-act opera seria for the San Carlo Theater in Naples, with which he was still bound by a contract for annual new compositions. The resulting work was entitled *Ricciardo e Zoraide*. The production premiered on December 3, 1818 at the aforementioned theater³³. This was Rossini's first opera in which the overture did not exist on its own³⁴. The work was very well received by Neapolitan audiences. Over time, however, it was discontinued due to, among other things, the inability to find singers who could perform the main parts³⁵.

Shortly after the premiere of *Riccardo and Zoraida*, the composer wrote another work for the same theater, which in terms of style was also new to Rossini - This was an attempt, Rossini wanted to tackle the genre of traditional French opera at work³⁶. The composition was titled *Ermione (Hermione)*. Its premiere took place on March 27, 1819 and unfortunately, immediately after the premiere it was taken off the stage³⁷. Less than a month later came the Master's next opera with the title *Eduardo e Cristina (Edward*

²⁷ Ibid, p. 1390.

²⁸ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, s. 320

²⁹ Ibid, p. 325.

³⁰ Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 14.

³¹ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1371.

³² Ibid, p. 1370.

³³ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 480.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 394.

³⁵ Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 139.

³⁶ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 394.

³⁷ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1373.

and Cristina), which premiered at Teatro San Benedetto in Venice on April 24, 1819³⁸. The work, which was created in such a short period of time, was not completely “new,” it was a conglomeration of earlier operas. As Piotr Kaminski writes: (...) *Nineteen numbers out of 26 are from earlier works. Rossini simply reached for recycled materials native to his fresh work, drawing full handfuls of music from “Adelaide,” ‘Hermione’ and “Ricciardo and Zoraida”*³⁹.

When creating his new work, Swan of Pesaro shaped it, with full deliberation, from pieces previously composed and known to the public. I take the liberty of saying that he may have been guided by the idea that audiences like best what they already know. To the accusations of the San Benedetto Theater impresario directed in his direction regarding the repeated melodies, he responded: *What did I contract to do? Merely to provide you with music which should be applauded. This music has been applauded, e tanto basta*⁴⁰. You can't deny the composer was right, the opera was a huge success and according to Sandelewski: *The show, which began at eight in the evening, ended at two in the morning, as almost all the “numbers” had to be encoed*⁴¹.

After a hiatus of several months, *La donna del lago* (*The Lady of the Lake*) saw the light of day on September 24, 1819⁴². The work is a two-act opera seria. The opera was based on a novel by Walter Scott. Although the composition was not initially received with enthusiasm by Neapolitans, after subsequent performances it did not leave the theater's stage for as many as 12 years⁴³. As the main character, Rossini cast the reliable Isabella Colbran, capable of singing the demanding coloraturas of the wide ambit prescribed by the composer, and with whom he still had a close personal relationship. The maestro, according to Sandelewski, wrote the new work with pleasure, care and diligence⁴⁴. According to Piotr Kaminski in the compendium *Thousand and One Opera*, the composition was innovative: *The Lady of the Lake is Rossini's leap into the Romantic world, abandoning the legacy of the 18th century, the continuation of which was all comic and serious operas*⁴⁵. Stendhal, on the other hand, states as an eyewitness that: *It was general agreed among the dilettanti of Naples that “La donna*

³⁸ Ibid, p. 1393.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 1393.

⁴⁰ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 400.

⁴¹ Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 142.

⁴² Red. Jabłoński M., Zakład Muzykologii Instytutu Historii Sztuki UAM w Poznaniu, *Twórczość Gioacchino Rossiniego*, Ars nova, Poznań 1993, p. 71.

⁴³ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1375.

⁴⁴ Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 146.

⁴⁵ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1375.

del lago” marked a first step upon the return road towards the style of years of the earlier part of Rossini's career (...) ⁴⁶.

Just three months later, commissioned by Milan's La Scala, the *bel canto* master created the opera series *Bianca e Falliero* (*Bianca and Faliero*). The premiere of the new work took place on the second Christmas holiday, i.e. December 26, 1819⁴⁷. The aforementioned opera was the last work created by Rossini for La Scala⁴⁸.

The production, created in haste, and with no small amount of fatigue on the part of the composer, had many borrowings from operas already written. Particularly noteworthy here is the quartet from Act I, about which Stendhal writes: *The music has something of the tenderness of Mozart, but without his profound pathos. I am prepared to poise this quartet unashamedly upon the pinnacle and summit of Rossini's achievement (...)* ⁴⁹.

After the premiere of *Bianca and Falier*, Rossini had a moment of *farniente* (Italian -for inactivity). After completing work on the aforementioned work, a significant decline in the pace of creating new works became noticeable. Due to anti-royalist movements within Italy, the composer was conscripted into the National Guard in 1820. It can be speculated that the short stay in the army translated into the perception of the world by the author of *Barber*, because, according to Sandelewski, the new opera that Rossini composed was very meticulously and carefully created⁵⁰.

The premiere of the new opera series entitled *Muhammad II* took place on December 3, 1920⁵¹ at the San Carlo Theater in Naples. As with *The Lady of the Lake*, so it was with *Mahomet II*, namely at the premiere performance it did not succeed as spectacularly as the composer had wished. The new opera eventually won acclaim for its music, which was typical of Rossini – full of energy, complex arias, rich orchestrations and beautiful ensembles. Rossini was already an established composer by then, so his new work attracted a lot of interest. However, *Mahomet II* was more different from Rossini's popular operas, which meant that audiences weren't quite sure how to take the novelty. The Swan of Pesaro once again created a leading role for his

⁴⁶ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 391.

⁴⁷ red. Jabłoński M., Zakład Muzykologii Instytutu Historii Sztuki UAM w Poznaniu, *Twórczość Gioacchino Rossiniego*, Ars nova, Poznań 1993, p.71.

⁴⁸ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1376.

⁴⁹ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 398.

⁵⁰ Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 154.

⁵¹ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 542.

muse Isabella Colbran, which she undoubtedly was, as can be judged by her many performances of leading roles in Rossini's operas.

Early in 1821, on February 24⁵² to be exact, the opera semiseria *Matilde di Shabran* premiered. The work began to be written while Rossini was still writing *Mahomet II* in Naples, at which time he accepted a commission from the Apollo Theater located in Rome. The new opera was unlike its predecessor in terms of the ordering aspect. Rossini wrote in a hurry, and had no luck with the valuable libretto on which the opera was based. He borrowed many of the structures from his other operas and asked for help with several pieces by another composer, Giovanni Paccini⁵³. The result was perhaps the longest opera ever written by a master of opera buffa. The work was about 800 pages long and lasted four hours. Surprisingly, the premiere performance was orchestrated by Rossini's colleague Nicolo Paganini.

The relationship between Gioacchino Rossini and Niccolò Paganini was full of mutual respect and admiration. Paganini was inspired by Rossini's operas, which influenced his playing style and compositions. Rossini, in turn, was inspired by Paganini's technical virtuosity, which in turn may have influenced his approach to composing instrumental parts in operas and the rich ornamentation of vocal parts. Both great composers were characterized by a similar sense of humor.

Returning to the composed work - Matilda was not a success, despite the efforts of both great musicians.

On February 16, 1822⁵⁴, the last opera entitled *Zelmira* premiered, closing the Neapolitan stage of Genius' oeuvre. The newly composed opera series is notable for its intricate plot and complex vocal parts, which required great technical and fitness skills from the singers. The work demonstrates Rossini's talent for dramatic compositions and intense, emotional scenes. He put a great deal of heart and effort into creating this composition for two reasons: the first was that the opera was to close his collaboration with the San Carlo Theater in Naples, and the second was that the opera was to present him in the most favorable way to Viennese audiences.

When revolution broke out in Naples a year earlier, Barbaja - then impresario of the aforementioned theater - had to make a plan to secure his capital and to go abroad to Vienna, where he took up the position of impresario of the Theater at the Carinthian

⁵²red. Jabłoński M., Zakład Muzykologii Instytutu Historii Sztuki UAM w Poznaniu, *Twórczość Gioachino Rossiniego*, Ars nova, Poznań 1993, p.71.

⁵³Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1379.

⁵⁴Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 157.

Gate. Because of his achievements and good long-term cooperation with Rossini, he suggested that Rossini go with him and make a new contract.

After staging *Zelmira* in Naples, on March 6, 1822⁵⁵, in a small town near Bologna, Rossini married Isabella Colbran, with whom he had been in a relationship for many years, and who was the love of impresario Barbaja. The singer is described by the literature as a low soprano, high mezzo-soprano with incredible vocal agility and mobility. According to Stendhal, she was one of the most prominent singers in Europe between 1806 and 1815⁵⁶. *Prima donna* of the San Carlo opera house in Naples. Arnald Fraccaroli, in his novel about Rossini, *Divino Maestro*, described Colbran as follows: *She was very beautiful, with a typically Spanish beauty: large black eyes, sensuous lips, a complexion of a slightly amber hue. Tall, she had something of the matron in her, as she was of full but firm shape, as befits a protagonist of a serious opera, but despite this abundance, her movements were deft, full of elegance*⁵⁷.

After the wedding, the Master and his wife traveled to the Austrian capital. The premiere of *Zelmira* in Vienna took place on April 13, 1822. The creator of the *Barber* undeniably became a star after staging several of his operas in the Danube city, so much so that the great Beethoven saw him as a huge threat, and felt jealousy towards him, sparing no unkind words for the Master's *buffa opera* works. Despite the incredible foreign success, after a few months Mr. and Mrs. Rossini returned to Italy.

Another great, as it turned out, work created by Rossini in just five weeks was *Semiramide*. The opera seria created on commission from Venice's La Fenice Theater premiered on February 3, 1823⁵⁸. The libretto was provided to the composer by Gaetano Rossi, who wrote it based on a tragedy by Voltaire. Although the premiere of the work was not a success, *Semiramide* is still one of the composer's flagship opera compositions in opera houses around the world.

One can guess what might have led to the not-so-successful beginning of the show's staging. The entire opera lasted almost three and a half hours, compared to the composer's other works (not counting the aforementioned *Matilde di Shabran*). After the changes were made, it gained popularity, as a result of which it did not come off the stage for 28 days⁵⁹. Rossini used rich and complex orchestrations and intricate vocal

⁵⁵ Fraccaroli A., *Divino Maestro – novel about Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1977, p. 213.

⁵⁶ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 154.

⁵⁷ Fraccaroli A., *Divino Maestro – novel about Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1977, p. 210-211.

⁵⁸ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1380.

⁵⁹ Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 172.

parts in this opera, making it one of his most sophisticated works. Noteworthy are the beautiful, elaborate recitatives and the “pearl” overture, often played as an individual work in many philharmonic halls around the world. *Semiramide* is the last operatic work written in the composer's homeland.

After the success of the new opera seria, Rossini left for London with his wife, but before arriving there on the way he stopped in the musical capital of Europe at the time - Paris. In the City of Lights, the maestro was already very popular and highly regarded. Theaters staged his operas, and the very figure of Rossini aroused much controversy. Aristocrats wanted to host the great Creator of the *Barber of Seville* in their salons, and after the staging of *Semiramide*, the National Guard Orchestra played outside the apartment where Rossini was staying. The Swan of Pesaro was also given an honorary place in the Academy of Fine Arts⁶⁰. Upon reaching London, where Rossini was received with all honors, including an invitation from the monarch George IV to his Brighton residence. The Grand Master was increasingly invited to receptions, where he often played and sang. In the book *Conversations with Rossini* by Ferdinand Hiller, Rossini himself says:(...) *in England, I never earned enough from my compositions to set aside savings. And the money I made in London was as an accompanist rather than as a composer*⁶¹. The main purpose of coming to the English capital was to be engaged by the King's Theatre, where the maestro was to orchestrate several of his operas. Rossini was also supposed to write a new opera, but unfortunately his impresario went bankrupt and the composer did not complete the work. In the middle of 1826, Mr. and Mrs. Rossini left England. It is possible to consider the reasons why the composer, who was successful in his country, decided to leave it. There are indications that the decision stemmed from a desire for further personal development and a desire to confront a different audience. He did not want to stay in London, despite a very warm reception, because of the trivial musical culture. As he himself said in the aforementioned Hiller's piece - good, valued musicians, were not respected and fairly compensated for their work: *For the first soirée I attended, it was said that Puzzi, a famous horn-player, would be present, and Dragonetti, the even more famous double-bass. I thought they would both be playing solos, but nothing of the sort! They were there to help me accompany*⁶².

⁶⁰ Poźniak W., *Cyrulik sewilski*, PWM, Kraków 1955, p. 42.

⁶¹ Hiller F., *Conversations with Rossini*, Pallas Athene, London 2018, p.19.

⁶² Ibid, p. 19.

In February 1826, at the French embassy in London, Rossini signed a contract to write a new opera in Paris. But instead, on November 26, 1824⁶³, he took over as Director of Music and Stage of the Royal Italian Theater in the French capital.

A new opera, created while he was directing the Italian Theatre, Rossini composed for the coronation of Charles X, which took place in Remi. From there, the one-act opera-cantata *Il viaggio a Remis* (*Journey to Remis*) premiered on June 19, 1825⁶⁴. A unique composition, Rossini proved that he was capable of creating an outstanding work in an extremely short time. The opera was delightful despite the not very graceful libretto, musically and harmonically it was constructed in such a way that the drama of the music was “a story in itself” and the words played “second fiddle” here. As Kaminski recalls: *Rossini's muse avoids the stench of realistic psychology, preferring abstraction to it, the free play of geometric shapes. In “Journey to Remis,” she has finally freed herself from the ballast of literature and spins her goats under the circus vault, to the delight of generations*⁶⁵. On the one hand, the new work was received with great admiration by some Parisian audiences, while on the other hand, the opera was met with criticism in terms of the dramatic plot, so after the third performance, the composer himself took it off the poster.

Paris audiences eagerly awaited a new opera production. Rossini, however, was not too keen on creating something that would be easy for him. He didn't want to create a new opera in the old Italian style he had known for years, even though he was, incidentally, Director of the Italian Theater. The maestro decided to take some trouble, learn the aesthetics of a new audience, assimilate the language and surprise the audience with something similar to the operas of Gluck's or Rameau's time. The Swan of Pesaro decided to significantly refresh the opera he created six years ago, namely *Mahomet II*.

The 1820 production, written for the San Carlo Theater, was not well received at home. Rossini hoped that after reworking, thoroughly revising the libretto, including changing the title and character names, and expanding the entire work by another act, the opera would appeal to the tastes of Parisians and convince them of the composition, which he himself held in high esteem. The premiere of *Le Siège de Corinthe* (*The Siege of Corinth*) took place on October 9, 1826 at the Théâtre de l'Opéra⁶⁶. The Grand Master was not wrong about the sense of reworking the old version of Muhammad. Paris

⁶³Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 183.

⁶⁴ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 480.

⁶⁵Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1385.

⁶⁶Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 187.

audiences received the opera with great enthusiasm, and the inclusion of features typical of French opera was strongly appreciated. It should be added that despite the fact that the opera was already written in French, it retained a Rossinian Italian songfulness. According to Sandelewski, *Gazette de France* wrote after the premiere that: *We are dealing with a real opera revolution [...] The “French Scream” has been eliminated once and for all. From now on, the Opera will sing as it sings at the Théâtre Italien. Long live Rossini!*⁶⁷.

After his successful reworking of *Muhammad II* for *The Siege of Corinth*, the composer decided to rework another of his earlier operas. And here it should be mentioned that Rossini reworked his works not because he was pressed for time, but because he was(...)he would like to see those operas staged again, and for that it is necessary that they meet his criteria today. He finds pleasure in this restoration of life to the works he loves (...) ⁶⁸. The choice this time fell on *Moses*, which, after modifications, was titled *Moïse et Pharaon (Moses and Pharaoh)*. After making all the necessary structural and literary changes, the maestro was so pleased with his work that he decided to show off the “new” work to his mother. Unfortunately, it turned out that the composer’s parent, Anna Guidarini, was in poor health, and despite the provision of the best medical care by professors hired by Rossini - she died a short time later.

After the death of his beloved mother, Rossini broke down, as this was his first encounter with such great tragedy and sorrow. However, he longed to make his mother proud of him, believing that she was watching him from above, and returned to work on the “new” *Moses* with vigor. On March 26, 1827, with full occupancy at the Salle de Peletier Opera House, the new production premiered and absolutely became a triumph for Rossini. A full-fledged *Grand Opéra* was created. The performance delighted the Parisian audience, which cheered after the last notes rang out. The Grand Master, however, could not fully enjoy his spectacular success. Balzac wrote of the premiere performance as follows: *The mystery of such great harmony, refreshing the mind, is, I think, a property of some human creations, exceedingly rare: it lifts us for a moment into infinity, and this infinity we feel and hear in the magnificence of melodies that know no bounds, like those that resound at the feet of the throne of God*⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 188.

⁶⁸ A. Franc Carrolli A., *Divino Maestro – novel about Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1977, p. 271.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 276.

After the death of his beloved mother, Rossini brought his father to Paris. Rossini's wife, who had also declined in health, had also not been seen in the cast for some time. No longer able to sing, and being in the prime of life, she broke down and fell into a gambling addiction. The bond between the couple gradually weakened.

Another opera that Rossini wanted to revive was the not-so-long-ago performed *Journey to Remis*. To help rework the work, the Maestro asked the then-acclaimed French playwright Eugène Scribe. An opéra comique title *Le comte Ory* (*The Count of Ory*) was created on the skeleton of the opera-cantata. Swan of Pesaro in this work(...) *He combined the barely perceptible aftertaste of eroticism with the elegant and self-ironic manner of French comedy, inventing an unusual model of opera with sung recitatives (instead of spoken recitatives, as was the French tradition) and, moreover, performed on the opera stage, reserved for opera seria, a slap in the face of tradition that only Rossini could afford*⁷⁰. The premiere of the new comic opera took place on August 20, 1828⁷¹, and was a great success, so much so that three years after the premiere it was played about a hundred times.

Rossini, having already established himself and being respected in the milieu of the musical capital of Europe of his time, knew that he could not afford any fiasco. Deciding to do something completely new, he had to create an ideal work of great importance. The last opera that the now mature Master composed was *Wilhelm Tell*.

The opera performance was based on a drama by Schiller. The maestro wrote the entire opera in just ten months and was convinced that he had created an exceptional work. He worked with great zeal and meticulousness. On August 3, 1829, *Wilhelm Tell*, a four-act opera seria, saw the light of the stage. Despite the composer's great efforts, the premiere did not achieve the much-anticipated success that the creator had hoped for. Despite the fact that the public did not receive the new composition with enthusiasm, (...) *musicians considered Wilhelm a masterpiece*⁷².

Rossini's last opera became a masterpiece by all accounts. According to Sandelewski, the editor of Fétis, a prominent Belgian musicologist at Revue Gazette Musicale, wrote that, according to him, the general public could not understand Rossini's innovation and appreciate the excellence of *William Tell*. According to Fétis, it was the most outstanding operatic composition of the Italian genre series since

⁷⁰I classici della musica, Corriere della Sera, 8 *Gioacchino Rossini*, pod dyрекcją Paolo Mieli, Skira, Milano 2007, p.78.

⁷¹Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 201.

⁷²Franccaroli A., *Divino Maestro – novel about Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1977, p. 283.

Monteverdi. However, the only flaw that this opera had was the “lack of dramatic nerve” in the libretto⁷³. After ten days, the Maestro traveled to his homeland to rest and gain distance after, in his mind, his defeat.

A year after the premiere, the composer was forced to return to Paris to take care of his financial affairs, as Charles X, with whom Rossini had a lifetime annuity and a contract for new operas, had been deposed due to the revolution. In 1831, the first signs of a nervous breakdown became noticeable in Rossini. He was nursed in his illness by the amateur singer Olympe Pélissier. Three years later, he returned to Bologna. A short time later, the Maestro bid farewell to his friend Vincenzo Bellini, whom he had helped in his career. In 1836, he and his wife Isabella signed separation papers. During this time he met the Schumann couple. Two years later, Isabella died. Ten months after this event, Rossini married the aforementioned Olympe Pélissier.

In 1858, Swan of Pesaro met Richard Wagner. Settling in France, in a villa, in Passy near Paris, he stabilized his life. He died ten years later - on the 13th of November 1868⁷⁴. *In 1887, on the initiative of the Italian government, his remains were transported to Florence, where they rested in the Basilica of Santa Croce*⁷⁵.

1.2. Brilliant creator of comic opera

In the following subsection, I want to explain why, despite the fact that Rossini has in his operatic oeuvre the vast majority of the opera series is recognized and associated primarily with the opera buffa. I also want to briefly explain and explicate the genesis of the *opera buffa* itself for a better understanding of Gioacchino Rossini's overall oeuvre and phenomenon.

Piero Weiss and Julian Budden, in an article titled *Opera buffa*, in Grove's Encyclopedia, state that the term *opera buffa* was first applied to the genre of comic opera, which gained popularity in Italy and abroad in the 18th century. The phrase *buffone* itself means, literally translated from Italian, jester, and *buffo* – funny. Initially, the name appeared only in the meanings of librettos and was also replaced by the terms *dramma bernesco*, *dramma comico*, *divertimento giocoso* and *commedia per*

⁷³Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 207.

⁷⁴Poźniak W., *Cyrulik sewilski*, PWM, Kraków 1955, p. 44.

⁷⁵Konieczna A., *Gioacchino Rossini*, <https://polskabibliotekamuzyczna.pl/encyklopedia/rossini-gioacchino/>, [06.06.2024].

*musica*⁷⁶. With the development of both dramaturgical and musical opera series and the increase in its complexity(...) *began to write small humorous scenes, intermezzi, which were woven between acts as moments of comedic relaxation. Often they were played in front of the lowered curtain, then when the technical staff changed the decoration behind it*⁷⁷. In a short period of time, the initially short scenes, intended to fill the antecedent, were gaining in size and popularity among the opera series, which was tired of being too serious.

Intermezzi had another very important advantage, unlike opera seria, which told stories of rich, aristocratic people, the former dealt with more down-to-earth subjects. The protagonists of early *opera buffa* were simple people such as servants or people living in the countryside. The themes addressed in comic operas aroused the interest of the social strata, whose fate was the main plot. The distance from operatic works that the lower strata of society had was diminishing, all the more so as the Neapolitan dialect was often used in *intermezzi*⁷⁸. Also characteristic of the *intermezzo* was the reference to the old *commedia dell'arte* (Roman pantomime, clownish displays of medieval histrionics), i.e. the introduction of silent characters, such as in the *Barber of Seville* the character of Ambrose. People who were less wealthy and not fortunate enough to be born into noble families began to feel more emboldened to visit opera theaters. Rossini used in it [*opera buffa*] typical Italian motifs - besides absurdities and comic plot twists, he also introduced plenty of farcical elements and frequent references to contemporary events⁷⁹. An appropriate term for Rossini's undeniable contribution to popularizing comic opera and making it accessible to a wider audience is a quote from the book *Przygoda z operą*:(...) *Rossini's Il barbiere di Siviglia was written more than half a century after Handel's death, but if it is staged today, no one goes to the theater to assist in the dignified presentation of the master's esteemed work; the audience goes to be merrily entertained, to listen to well-known and well-loved melodies, written in an absolutely contemporary language accessible to all. Therefore, we can talk about the*

⁷⁶por. Weiss P. and Budden J., *Opera buffa*, Grove Music Online, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043721?rskey=KdHvO9&result=1> , [08.07.2024].

⁷⁷Barber D. W., *Kiedy gruba dama śpiewa czyli historia opery wyłożona wreszcie jak należy*, Wydawnictwo Adamantan, Warszawa 2001, p.31.

⁷⁸Kański J., *Przewodnik operowy*, PWM, Kraków 1964, p. 16.

⁷⁹Sikora H., *Gioacchino Rossini: kompozycje i opery*, <https://podles.pl/gioacchino-rossini-kompozycje-i-opery#gioacchino-rossini-mistrzem-w322oskiej-opery-komicznej>, [9.07.2024 r.].

*golden age of opera at that time: it was written for everyone, and that is what it has remained to this day*⁸⁰.

The first intermezzo, was *La serva padrona* (*The Servant Mistress*) by G. B. Pergolesi, which, as you can read in the *Kronika opery*, was the first outstanding *opera buffa* that transcended its time in meaning⁸¹. However, when it comes to the fully developed form of *opera buffa*, the first thoughts and associations fall on Rossini. The phenomenon of the Genius of Pesaro consisted in (...) *restoring the artistic value of Italian opera, (...) giving absolute priority to music*⁸².

To emphasize the timeliness of these words, I would like to quote an excerpt from Michal Bristiger's statement: *According to the common view, which has persisted for almost two hundred years, music is stronger in its relationship with words. Moreover, the word is probably "absorbed" by it*⁸³. The creator of *The Barber of Seville* recognized the public's weariness with *opera seria*, the seriousness of which was becoming an excessive burden at the time. As Henryk Swoleń writes: [Rossini] *He broke with the schematicism of recitatives, did not allow the tyranny of primadonnas, although knowing as little as anyone about singing, he gave in his arias to the performers a huge field of play*⁸⁴.

The Swan of Pesaro included all the elements characteristic of the genre in its comic works, and added humor and lightness in keeping with its personal nature. The dramatic weight of *opera seria* was exchanged for the airiness, comicality and energetic subtlety of *opera buffa*, which was sorely lacking for listeners of that era. What is most valuable in Rossini's music is the composer's art of achieving an impression of finesse, accessibility and brilliant wit in a demanding musical texture that challenges both vocalists and orchestra.

Based on the inventory of Gioacchino Rossini's operatic works created by Jarosław Mianowski⁸⁵, it can be noted that although in his entire operatic output of 40 operatic works, we can name 16 typical *buffa operas*. However, especially because of them, the Master of the Buffa opera went down in music history as the chief representative and symbol of this genre.

⁸⁰ Łętowska E., Łętowski J., *Przygoda z operą*, Agenja Wydawnicza Interster, Warszawa 1991, p. 22.

⁸¹ red. Michalik M. B., *Kronika Opery*, Kronika, Warszawa 1993, p. 31.

⁸² Swolkień H., *Spotkanie z operą*, PZWS, Warszawa 1971, p. 122.

⁸³ Bristiger M., *Związki muzyki ze słowem*, PWM, Warszawa 1986, p. 12.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 122.

⁸⁵ red. Jabłoński M., Zakład Muzykologii Instytutu Historii Sztuki UAM w Poznaniu, red. *Twórczość Gioacchino Rossiniego*, Ars nova, Poznań 1993, p. 70-72.

To conclude this subsection I would like to quote the words of Master Beethoven: *As long as opera exists, so long will Rossini's "Barber of Seville be staged"*⁸⁶.

⁸⁶Rotondi G., *Arte Gioachino Rossini, il Napoleone della musica*,
<https://www.focus.it/cultura/arte/gioachino-rossini-il-barbiere-di-siviglia>, [9.07.2024 r.].

CHAPTER 2. PERCEPTION OF SELECTED VOCAL WORKS OF GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

2.1 Vocal characteristics of selected Rossini arias

When one thinks of the qualities that are characteristic of Rossini's vocal music, regardless of which voice is involved in the performance of a particular aria, the first thought that comes to mind is the expression **coloratura**. According to the most readily available item of literature for any person wishing to explore the meaning of the term is Jerzy Habela's Music Glossary, in which the concept of **coloratura** is described as follows: ***Coloratura** (Italian: coloratura, literally: coloring) - 1. In vocal works, the embellishment of melodies with rich ornaments, figurations and virtuosic passages⁸⁷.*

If we look in the literature more specialized in the subject of Rossini's vocal music, the concept of **coloratura** is explained as follows: *A **coloratura** is a rapid passage in which several notes are sung on the same syllable. The use of such passages is older than musical theater; as early as the 15th century, authors noted that the nightingale, in which a singing pattern was seen, made trills, retchings and growls. The term coloratura comes from "colorare" (Italian for to color), which refers not to the chromatic quality of a melody decorated with such ornaments, but to the fact that many "black" notes are repeated in it. Such passages were formerly also called gorga or gorgia, terms that have now been forgotten⁸⁸.*

Coloraturas are an intrinsic attribute of any vocal parts of the bel canto master, they have become his flagship attribute. *Rossini, without essentially departing from the scheme of opera buffa, elevated it with a wealth of brilliant ideas to a high level, laying one of the foundations for Italian Romantic opera of the 19th century. He was the first to precisely notate coloraturas and thus put limits on the singers' arbitrariness⁸⁹.* Not everyone is a fan of Rossini's ornaments, some love them, while others do not like them. According to my subjective opinion, Rossini's coloraturas are a synthesis of all the components of bel canto singing, I mean the demonstration of vocal qualities and great technical skills that do not "conflict" with the transmission of emotions contained in the text and music. Many consider Rossinian coloraturas to be exaggerated, inadequate to

⁸⁷Habela J. , *Słownik muzyczny*, PWM, Kraków, 1972, p. 92.

⁸⁸Berne P., *Belcanto – prassi esecutiva dell'opera italiana da Rossini a Verdi*, Libreria Musicale Italiana, Lucca 2024, p. 155.

⁸⁹red. Michalik M. B., *Kronika opery*, Kronika, Warszawa 1993, p. 71.

the situation of the moment in opera. Stendhal mentions in his accounts a statement by a Milanese correspondent of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* in 1820, who described Rossini's style as a so-called "false system"⁹⁰. The *Barber's* author, however, deliberately and deliberately created his unique trademark of intricate, virtuosic coloraturas. Often it is for these quick note runs, written in extensive tessitura, that young vocal students choose Rossini's arias for the purpose of displaying their vocal artistry in its full glory.

Over the years of studying, I have participated in many vocal competitions for students and graduates of music colleges, and I can say with certainty that the works of Gioacchino Rossini continue to "triumph". They often appear not only as a participant's choice in the first or second stage of the competition, but are included in the statutory repertoire lists of the final stages of the competitions, which are usually performed with orchestras. Many singers love Rossinian arias and find their way through this challenging repertoire. A sizable number, however, do not find pleasure and liking in the, often breakneck, arias of the Barber's creator. Quick circuits, extensive fiorituras and long distances between notes in a short period of time often "instill fear" in performers. Also, not every voice is made to perform this type of music, voice, physiognomic and physical conditions determine this. The aforementioned author of the Music Glossary, in further explanation of the term **coloratura**, writes as follows: 2. *vocal performance technique of coloratura melody; coloratura - a term for a voice capable of performing coloratura, especially soprano*⁹¹.

It must be admitted that it is the soprano voice that is the most common type of voice in the coloratura genre, and at the same time the most recognizable in this type by laymen when it comes to vocal technique and knowledge of voice types. The great fame of this type of voice was brought by the part of the Queen of the Night from W. A. Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, which is still regarded today as the greatest work and the pinnacle of the vocal skills of the voice that is the coloratura soprano. Few people unfamiliar with opera singing know that there are more coloratura voices than just the aforementioned soprano. In the categorization of voices, there is also a coloratura mezzo-soprano. More on the issue in the following subsection.

⁹⁰ por. red. Jabłoński M., Zakład Muzykologii Instytutu Historii Sztuki UAM w Poznaniu, *Twórczość Gioacchino Rossiniego*, Ars nova, Poznań 1993, p. 12.

⁹¹ Ibid.

2.2 Differences in musical interpretation between arias performed by soprano, mezzo-soprano and contralto

At the turn of the century, several systems for classifying voice types developed. According to the system of voice classification *Stimmfach*- a way of dividing voices, which appeared in the mid-19th century in Germany, which in the 1950s in the group of soprano, mezzo-soprano and alto voices, in which coloratura mezzo-soprano is also distinguished⁹².

This is a very detailed classification of voices, which has many advantages as well as disadvantages. The advantage is undoubtedly the perfect match of the voice to the character of the character, as desired by the composer creating the part. Unfortunately, from my point of view, this classification is imperfect to some extent, because I believe that there cannot be and are no universal singers, and also one voice cannot estimate to only one or two parts. In addition, the technique of the art of singing is a “boundless of new discoveries”. The voice changes with age, with the improvement of technique, mental and emotional maturity as well as the sheer physicality of the body, and therefore it is impossible to classify the voice unequivocally for years and put it into one box.

| <u>soprano</u> | <u>mezzosoprano</u> | <u>alto</u> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| dramatic | Dramatic | dramatic |
| lirycal | Lirycal | low (equivalent of the male basso profondo) |
| coloratura | Coloratura | |
| lirycal-coloratura | | |
| dramatic-coloratura | | |
| subrette | | |
| spinto | | |

Table 1. List of female voice types

There are many scientific approaches to the topic of voice classification. I created the above table, showing the differences in the area of voices, based on

⁹²Pasternak T., *Soprano drammatico d'agilità, tenor dramatyczny, kontralt czy basso profondo? Stimmfach, czyli jak określić rodzaj głosu*, <https://orfeo.com.pl/stimmfach-to-niemiecki-system-kategoryzacji-glosow/>, [17.10.2024].

common knowledge, but also based on the above-mentioned *Stimmefach* classification. I have not included the contralto voice for reasons I will explain in a moment.

Contralto – the most apt description of this voice was given by Ewa Podles herself, the greatest Polish opera star with this type of voice: *Probably no one to date, like Théophile Gautier, has more aptly and more briefly described the contralto as a hermaphrodite voice - a male voice and a female voice in one. Its low, chest register is almost a baritone voice; its high, head register, a soprano register. (...) The effect of the sum of these two registers is a natural three-octave scale. Another extremely distinctive feature of the contralto, is also a natural predisposition to fluency, which, after proper professional training, becomes a stunning coloratura*⁹³.

The contralto voice is a unique voice and the rarest among women. Sometimes in the literature, the name contralto is used interchangeably with coloratura mezzo-soprano, but I believe that this is not a correct procedure, due to too many differences separating the two voices. The contralto has a very strong chest register with a very dark tone. A coloratura mezzo-soprano, which has the same tones in its range in the low register, will never sound as dark as a contralto.

In the 19th century, the time of Rossini's life in Italy, there was no effort to systematize voices, to fit into a strict framework. *Soprano, tenor and bass were the only names for the types of voices used in the designation of most early operas. Even in the late 19th century, the name "soprano" was still used by some composers to designate any female voice, including mezzo-sopranos. Before the modern orchestral era, in the second third of the 19th century, all singers were trained to sing almost anything*⁹⁴. Hence there may be inaccuracies in the designations of the type of voice in piano extracts of Rossini operas. Often in several different extracts of the same work one can find different designations of the voice performing the part, for example, in *The Barber of Seville*, published by the Bearenreiter publishing house in 2010⁹⁵, Rosina is designated as a contralto. A work published by the Ricordi publishing house in 1944⁹⁶ is similarly labeled. On the other hand, already in the *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-*

⁹³Cormier Brigitte, *Ewa Podleś – Contralto assoluto*, Podleś E., *O kontralcie*, PWM, Kraków 2013, p. 286.

⁹⁴Boldrey R., *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias*, PST, Dallas 1994, p. 412.

⁹⁵Rossini G., *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Baerenreiter, Kassel 2010.

⁹⁶Rossini G. *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Ricordi, Milano 1944.

*soprano*⁹⁷ collection (as the name suggests), Rosina's aria is to be performed by a mezzo-soprano, which was Geltrude Righetti, for whom Rossini wrote the part.

Nowadays, Rosina's parts are also sung by lyric-colored sopranos, but this often involves many changes in the score and octave transfers of whole groups of notes or changes in ornamentation for the convenience of the higher voices or sometimes even a change of aria. For example, Rosina's aria from Act II of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, entitled *Contro un cor*, was not infrequently changed by sopranos to the Queen of the Night aria from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, *Di tanti palpiti* aria from Rossini's *Tankred*, Variations by Porch, *Arditi's Il bacio*, and Marcelina Sembrich-Kochanska even performed Chopin's *Życzenie*⁹⁸.

This example shows the performance practices that have prevailed since the 19th century, which, despite the passage of years and the efforts of musicologists to systematize and classify them, continue to this day.

In an effort to access and systematize, based on the literature available to me, the voices of the right-hand singers of the various parts from the Rossini operas I selected for my research, I found and reviewed scans of the manuscripts of the Rossini operas I selected. In none of the manuscripts is there a list of characters, much less the types of voices listed, unlike in current opera extracts, where usually the cast along with the types of voices are presented in the opening pages of the edition. In preparing for my research, I decided to choose and rely on the editions of a single publisher. I considered the Ricordi company to be the best publisher, due to the fact that it is located in Italy, assuming that it should have the best and most accurately systematized editions.

Based on Ricordi's editions, I can point out that the various characters from the selected operas, present themselves vocally in theory as follows:

Italiana in Algieri – Isabella – mezzo-soprano/contralto – depending on the year of release

Il barbiere di Siviglia – Rosina – contralto

Otello – Desdemona – soprano

La Cenerentola – Angelina – contralto/mezzo-soprano – depending on the year of release

⁹⁷Narici I. (edycja), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020.

⁹⁸Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, s. 97.

La donna del lago – Elena – soprano

Maometto II – Anna – soprano

Semiramide – Semiramide – no designation.

The main female parts of the operas I have selected by the Master of Pesaro were written for: Marietta Marcollini (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*), Geltrude Righetti (*The Barber of Seville*, *Cinderella*) and Isabella Colbran (*Otello*, *Lady of the Lake*, *Mahomet II*, *Semiramide*). Wanting to know what type of voice the first female performers of parts in Rossini's operas had, I encountered a lot of inaccurate information. I will present below a classification of the scales of the different voices according to Manuel García, in order to be able to refer to the range of the singers' scales and the ambitus in each part.

1.4 CLASSIFICAZIONE DELLE VOCI SECONDO GARCÍA

The image displays six musical staves, each representing a different voice type. Each staff shows a scale with notes and rests, divided into sections labeled 'petto' (chest) and 'falsetto' (falsetto), with 'testa' (head) indicated at the end. The scales are written on staves with treble and bass clefs. The Mezzo-Soprano, Soprano, and Contraltino scales are circled in red.

- Mezzo-Soprano**: Scale starting on a middle C, moving up to a high C, then down to a low C. Labeled 'petto', 'falsetto', and 'testa'.
- Soprano**: Scale starting on a middle C, moving up to a high C, then down to a low C. Labeled 'petto', 'falsetto', and 'testa'.
- Basso**: Scale starting on a low C, moving up to a high C, then down to a low C. Labeled 'petto' and 'falsetto'.
- Baritono**: Scale starting on a low C, moving up to a high C, then down to a low C. Labeled 'petto', 'falsetto', 'petto', and 'falsetto'.
- Tenore**: Scale starting on a middle C, moving up to a high C, then down to a low C. Labeled 'petto', 'falsetto', and 'testa'.
- Contraltino**: Scale starting on a middle C, moving up to a high C, then down to a low C. Labeled 'petto', 'falsetto', 'testa', 'petto', 'falsetto', and 'testa'.

Example 2 Classification of voice scales according to Manuel Patricio Rodríguez García⁹⁹⁹⁹ Brazzoni, *Metodo di Canto Italiano dal Ricercar cantando a Rossini*, Ut Orpheus, Bologna 2011, p. 19.

According to García's classification of voices, the ranges of soprano, mezzo-soprano and contralto are presented as follows:

- soprano b-C³
- mezzosoprano to g-a²
- kontralto d-fis²

According to the literature available to me, various authors describe the voices of female singers as follows: Stendhal, who was an eyewitness to most of Rossini's premiere performances, describes Marietta Marcollini as a mezzo-soprano¹⁰⁰, the same is written about her by Sandelewski¹⁰¹, while Kaminski in *Tysiąc i jedna opera* describes her as an alto voice¹⁰². In the opera extract of Ricordi's¹⁰³ *Italian Girl in Algiers*, Isabella's part has a tessitura from a to h² and is described as a contralto voice. Summing up all the statements, we can be sure that Marietta Marcollini was a middle voice, and this in turn can be understood as she used a mezzo-soprano with an extended range in the upper register.

Geltrude Righetti-Giorgi by Sandelewski is described as a mezzo-soprano¹⁰⁴, also according to Kaminski in *Tysiąc i jedna opera*¹⁰⁵, she is referred to by the same name. In Stendhal, on the other hand, one cannot find a clear nomenclature, as he uses the term Signora Righetti throughout. Only in the footnotes from the editor, one can find a note that she was referred to as the best soprano of her time¹⁰⁶ (this may have been due to the lack of systematization of voice types at the time). Bearenreiter¹⁰⁷ and Ricordi¹⁰⁸ publishers issuing piano extracts for the opera Barber of Seville state that the part is written for contralto (the range of Rosina's part depending on the publisher is g-c³). The same is true of the Ricordi¹⁰⁹ publishing house's Cinderella piano extract (the range of Angelina's part is f-h²).

Therefore, it can be assumed that Righetti-Giorgi was a contralto or mezzo-soprano with very strong capabilities in the upper register, and thus could have been

¹⁰⁰Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 542.

¹⁰¹Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 43.

¹⁰²Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p.1350.

¹⁰³Rossini G., *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Ricordi, Milano 1981.

¹⁰⁴Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 91.

¹⁰⁵Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p.1357.

¹⁰⁶Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 499.

¹⁰⁷Rossini G., *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Baerenreiter, Kassel 2010.

¹⁰⁸Rossini G., *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Ricordi, Milano 1944.

¹⁰⁹G. Rossini, *La Cenerentola*, Ricordi, Milano 1961.

referred to as a soprano at the time. However, looking through the prism of today's voice classifications, I believe that calling her a soprano would be incorrect.

Isabella Colbran, according to most accounts, is described as a soprano. In Stendhal we can not find a clear indication of what voice Colbran had (as in Righetti-Giorgi) Stendhal still refers to her as Signiorina Colbran, only in the index of persons (created by the editor) she is described as a coloratura soprano¹¹⁰. Similarly, with Sandelewski, one cannot find in him a definition of the voice that Rossini's first wife had. Kaminski writes:(...) *they were voices with an extensive scale (Colbran is a high mezzo-soprano or low soprano - as one prefers)*(...)¹¹¹.

The Ricordi publisher's piano extract for the opera *Semiramide*¹¹² conspicuously lacks a designation for the voice performing the title part (range b-h²), while in the *Otello*¹¹³ extract (range h-c³), Desdemona's part is specified as a soprano. The part of Elena from *Lady of the Lake*(the range of the aria *Tanti affetti.../Fra il padre...* is as-b²), as well as the part of Anna from *Mahomet II* are specified parts for soprano (the range of the aria *Giusto ciel* is cis¹-fis²), but the arias I analyze are entered by the Ricordi publishing house in the collection of arias for mezzo-soprano¹¹⁴. Therefore, it can be conceded that Ms. Colbran could have been a soprano with abilities in the lower register or a coloratura mezzo-soprano.

¹¹⁰ Stendhal, *The life of Rossini*, translated by R. N. Coe, Alma Classics, Richmond (UK) 2019, p. 520.

¹¹¹ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc I jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1356.

¹¹² Rossini G., *Semiramida*, Ricordi, Milano 2015.

¹¹³ Rossini G., *Otello*, Ricordi, Milano 2008.

¹¹⁴ Narici I. (edition), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020, p. 185-197, 206-208.

| Data | Dzieło | Postać | Wykonawczynie | Głos |
|------------|---------------------------|------------|--------------------|--|
| 22 V 1813 | <i>Włoszka w Algierze</i> | Izabela | Marietta Marcolini | Mezzo-soprano with strong chest register |
| 20 II 1816 | <i>Cyrulik sewilski</i> | Rozyna | Geltrude Righetti | Mezzo-soprano with lightness in the upper register |
| 4 XII 1816 | <i>Otello</i> | Desdemona | Izabela Colbran | High mezzo-soprano, low soprano |
| 25 I 1817 | <i>Kopciuszek</i> | Angelina | Geltrude Righetti | Mezzo-soprano with lightness in the upper register |
| 24 IX 1819 | <i>Pani Jeziora</i> | Elena | Izabela Colbran | High mezzo-soprano, low soprano |
| 3 XII 1820 | <i>Mahomet II</i> | Anna | Isabela Colbran | High mezzo-soprano, low soprano |
| 3 II 1823 | <i>Semiramida</i> | Semiramida | Isabela Colbran | High mezzo-soprano, low soprano |

Table 2. List of the first female performers of leading roles in selected operas by G. Rossini

Analyzing all the source materials mentioned above, I conclude that each of the above arias is within the range of a coloratura mezzo-soprano with a wide scale and high mobility, and this is how the publisher presented the mezzo-soprano in *Ricordi Opera Antology Mezzosoprano*. Keeping in mind that contralto voices are scarce, the parts of this voice can be successfully sung just by a coloratura mezzo-soprano. The low notes may not have the dark tinge they would have when performed by a contralto, but they will still be sung as the author of the work wrote them down.

Isabella's aria *Cruda sorte* from *The Italian Girl in Algiers* is always sung by a contralto or mezzo-soprano. When viewed through the prism of the entire part, this is the lowest tessitural role I have analyzed in the following dissertation. The biggest difference in the performance of this aria between contralto and mezzo-soprano is the timbre of the voice, and thus the character of the character, as both mezzo-soprano and contralto are able to sing all the notes written by the composer, without any interference with the score. The only differences in the musical material - but also insignificant -

may occur in cadences and places that have become “established” in performance practice over the years, which I will mention in the following subsections.

The Barber of Seville, is one of Gioacchino Rossini's most frequently staged operas in the world. The part of Rosina, although originally written for the aforementioned mezzo-soprano Geltrude Righetti, has also been sung by contralto and sopranos over the years. Undeniably, this is the role in which the most changes regarding the musical material can be found.

I have already mentioned the replacement of the *Cara imagine* aria from Act II with completely different pieces, but the first aria I analyze in this work, namely *Una voce poco fa*, has also undergone changes. The aforementioned Cavatina currently functions in two keys, E major and F major. The former key is always sung by mezzo-sopranos and contraltos, while the one in F major was intended for sopranos. This begs the question, why are there so many changes in the performance of this part and why is it sometimes sung by sopranos, even though Master Rossini wanted otherwise? We can find the answer in Sandelewski, who writes: *Since very few sopranos can perform this part well, and many coloratura sopranos wish to create the role of Rosina, so the role is generally given to a soprano. This entails a whole series of “corrections” in the original part (...)*¹¹⁵.

Włodzimierz Poźniak in his book *The Barber of Seville* also notes that: *At present (year 1955) the part of Rosina, after some minor changes, is performed by the soprano*¹¹⁶. Today, most of the world's top opera houses have returned to performing the part of Rosina by mezzo-sopranos. For example:

- at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 2025, the part of Rosina is sung by mezzo-sopranos Isabel Leonard and Aigul Akhmetshina¹¹⁷,
- at La Scala in Milan in 2023, the part of Rosina was sung by mezzo-sopranos Mara Gaudenzi and Chiara Tirotta¹¹⁸,
- at the Wiener Staatsoper in 2025 also sings mezzo-sopranos - Patricia Nolz, Maria Kataeva¹¹⁹,

¹¹⁵Sandelewski W., *Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1980, p. 97.

¹¹⁶Poźniak W., *Cyrulik sewilski*, PWM, Kraków 1955, p. 48.

¹¹⁷Metropolitan Opera New York, <https://www.metopera.org/season/2024-25-season/il-barbiere-di-siviglia/>, [05.02.2025].

¹¹⁸La Scala Milano, <https://www.teatroallascala.org/it/stagione/2022-2023/opera/il-barbiere-di-siviglia.html>, [5.02.2025].

- at the Royal Opera House in London in 2023, mezzo-soprano Aigul Akhmetshina plays the role of Rosina¹²⁰.

The biggest differences in the performance of Rosina's parts between sopranos and mezzo-sopranos and contraltos are changes in the coloratura notation. Often sopranos greatly expand Rossini's notated coloraturas, and sometimes even change them completely - not cadences or performance traditions (about which in the following subsections), but a complete change of coloraturas to: "tailor-made" - introduced for their own convenience and the desire to make a greater impression on listeners. In my opinion, this practice, unfortunately, is incompatible with the philosophy and creative intentions of Master Rossini, who wrote out coloraturas to avoid over-expanding the creative inventiveness of singers, as was the case in the Baroque period. As a confirmation of my thesis, I will cite some quotes from literary items that most accurately define the above problem. I will cite some quotes from literary items that most accurately define the above problem. In the novel about Rossini *Divino Maestro* by Arnaldo Fraccaroli, one can read:- *And those trebles! Those ornaments! - Is it true that you wrote all of them yourself and that you even fixed the individual notes of the virtuoso cadences?, [to which Rossini replies] - Most true. I do not allow the whims of singers who distort and falsify with their improvisations the ideas of the author*¹²¹. Going further in the same title, one can read how Rossini addressed Maria Malibran's overly ornate aria from *The Thief's Magpie*:-*Did you hear me, Master?,-Yes, dear. Beautifully, beautifully. Just tell me whose aria you sang?...(...) You are the eighth wonder of the world. Only when it comes to music, I would like to know the author of this cavatina*¹²². You can read about a similar situation from Paris in the entry *Spotkanie z operą* by Henryk Swolkien:- *Master! By singing just one of your arias I earned so much money! (...) - That's very good (...) so you will have something to learn singing for*¹²³. In his work entitled *The Works of Gioacchino Rossini*, Michal Bristiger writes: *Ornament ceases to be an element added to the basic structure, ornament becomes so dense in his (Rossini's) work that it dissolves what is to be ornamented. The sense of improvisational*

¹¹⁹Wiener Staatsoper, <https://www.wiener-staatsoper.at/en/calendar/detail/il-barbiere-di-siviglia/2025-06-16/>, [05.02.2025].

¹²⁰Royal Ballet and Opera House London, <https://www.rbo.org.uk/about/cast-sheets/2022-23>, [5.02.2025].

¹²¹Fraccaroli A., *Divino Maestro – novel about Rossini*, PWM, Kraków 1977, p. 133-134.

¹²²Ibid, 363.

¹²³Swolkien H., *Spotkanie z operą*, Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, Warszawa 1971, p. 124.

freedom is curtailed, since the coloratura is precisely written out (although further improvisational addition of ornaments is condoned)¹²⁴. Three recordings can serve as excellent examples of the two radically different performances: the first two recorded in 1968 and the third recorded in 1984. The first recording shows mezzo-soprano Teresa Berganza¹²⁵ performing the part of Rosina at a recorded performance of *The Barber of Seville* from the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the second television recording made with coloratura soprano Lucia Popp¹²⁶, and the third recording from a performance of *The Barber of Seville* from the Aix-En Provance festival, performed by contralto Ewa Podles¹²⁷. In the Metropolitan Opera recording, Teresa Berganza sings in the key of

E major exactly what Rossini wrote, only in the cadenzas does she allow herself individual vocal display. In the second recording, the soprano sings in the key of F major, and in addition to the cadences and places customarily changed over the years, she changes and adds so many passages that the original melodic line seems to blur. One can't help but admit that this is a very impressive performance that pleases the audience and arouses admiration, but knowing the examples already dating back to the life of Pesaro's Swan, unfortunately it can't be said that this is the kind of performance the author would have wished for. Ewa Podles' recording is, in my opinion, a perfect example of the balance between the composer's notation and the composer's own showmanship, and the performance practice of habitually changing where it is customary to do so.

As for *Cinderella*, usually the entire part is performed by mezzo-sopranos or, more rarely, contraltos, and the difference between these performances is usually the timbre of the voice. As for the changes in musical material between these voices, they are not great and tend to occur only in the aria, in places that are customarily subject to changes. Given the musical appeal of the *Nacqui all'affanno.../Non più mesta* aria in particular, there are isolated instances that sopranos can be heard in concert versions. Such recordings were made, for example, by Diva Maria Callas¹²⁸. Callas sang all the musical material the way the composer wrote it down. This aria is so "saturated" with fast runs in a very extensive scale that it's basically hard to get your own creative invention in there anymore.

¹²⁴Bristiger M., red. Jabłoński M., *Twórczość Gioacchino Rossiniego*, Ars Nova, Poznań 1993, p. 13.

¹²⁵Berganza T., *Una voce poco fa*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbxqnaMPg7U>, [5.02.2025].

¹²⁶Popp L., *Una voce poco fa*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F65MLngYrOw>, [5.02.2025].

¹²⁷Podleś E., *Una voce poco fa*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtDqAcvzaww>, [5.02.2025].

¹²⁸Callas M., *Nacqui all'affanno.../Non più mesta...*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdzQKXEJDNu>, [6.02.2025].

The next parts I would like to describe in terms of differences in soprano or mezzo-soprano performance are the parts of Desdemona from *Otello*, Elena from *Lady of the Lake*, Semiramide from the opera of the same name, and Anna from *Muhammad II*. Nowadays, these parts are mostly sung by sopranos, but when it comes to stage performances of arias, lower voices can often be heard in individual arias. If they are sung by a mezzo-soprano it is one who is very capable in the upper register and, above all, one who is able to maintain a higher than standard mezzo-soprano tessitura for an extended period of time. Among the performers of the above parts we can find such singers as Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade and Joyce DiDonato. No contralto can be found among the performers. If we talk about the differences between the performances-when the arias are sung by a higher or lower voice-we should first of all pay attention to the color and weight of the voice.

There is an additional difference – although these arias are saturated with coloraturas, when sopranos are heard in them, the arias are often accompanied by even more of their own ornamentation, sometimes even at the expense of changes to the main melody. To illustrate the differences in the performance of the Desdemona arias, I would like to present the 2015 performance by soprano Olga Peretyatko, from La Scala¹²⁹ in Milan, and the performance by mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli, which was recorded at the Zürich Opernhaus, released by the DECCA publishing house in 2014 and promoted by the Metropolitan Opera in New York¹³⁰. In Peretyatko there are many added fiorituras in the high register. Sometimes the coloraturas are so extensive that the melody written down by Rossini cannot be heard. Bartoli, on the other hand, realizes the musical material as the composer wrote it down. There are only minor changes, e.g. in bar 190. we have a repeated sequence with triplets, in which Bartoli starts each first value of the triplet a third higher (marked red) than the previous one, forming a septimal dominant (marked orange) with the note that begins the phrase.

¹²⁹Peretyatko O., *Assisa a' piè d'un salice*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuFCA8jG8rA>, [10.02.2025].

¹³⁰Bartoli C., *Assisa a' piè d'un salice*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJA5uqlonzY>, [10.02.2025], (the beginning of the aria: 05:27).



Example 3. Excerpt from the aria *Assisa a' piè d'un salice* of the opera *Othello*¹³¹



Example 4. Excerpt from the aria *Assisa a' piè d'un salice* from the opera *Othello* 1.

As for the part of Elena from the opera *Lady of the Lake*, it's hard to say whether she is more often sung by a soprano or a mezzo-soprano, since it's an incredibly rarely staged opera. In 2015, mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato made her debut in the part of Elena at the Metropolitan Opera in New York¹³². The aria itself, *Tanti affetti in tal momento*, is sung by both sopranos and mezzo-sopranos in the concert version. Among the mezzo-sopranos we can hear performances by Marilyn Horne, Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade and the aforementioned Joyce DiDonato, while among the sopranos performing the aria are Montserrat Caballé, Kiri Te Kanawa, Mirella Devia or Katia Ricciarelli. The *Tanti affetti* aria is written in such an expansive scale that it is incredibly attractive and impressive in any version of performance - soprano or mezzo-soprano. In each performance there are changes in ornamentation and a different

¹³¹ Rossini G., *Otello*, Ricordi, Milano 2008, p. 332.

¹³² Rossini G., *La donna del lago*, Metropolitan Opera, New York, <https://ondemand.metopera.org/performance/detail/df3ca28d-828d-5ad7-872d-43bd4d843151>, [20.02.2025].

distribution of the syllables of the words under the inscribed coloratura, which entails a different distribution of breaths in each phrase. The changes are caused by a wide scale and a rather fast tempo, so each voice tries to adjust it to its abilities, in order to be able to sing this aria with the right expression at all.

Listening to the performances of the aforementioned singers, I noticed a difference in performance tempos between sopranos and mezzo-sopranos. The tempo of the aria was set by the composer to moderato, which oscillates between 86-97 beats per minute. In the individual performances, the tempos are as follows:

Mezzo-sopranos performances:

Cecilia Bartoli ~ 85 BPM¹³³

Joyce DiDonato ~78 BPM¹³⁴

Marilyn Horne ~74 BPM¹³⁵

Frederica von Stade ~ 82 BPM¹³⁶

My interpretation ~ 84 BPM

Wykonania sopranowe:

Montserrat Caballé ~ 120! BPM¹³⁷

Kiri Te Kanava ~ 104 BPM¹³⁸

Mirella Devia ~ 96 BPM¹³⁹

Katia Ricciarelli ~ 105 BMP¹⁴⁰

The above results confirm the theories of coloratura techniques corresponding to soprano and mezzo-soprano voices, i.e., *l'agilità legata e granita* (Italian for connective

¹³³Rossini G., Cecilia Bartoli, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYnZqRVmOCw>, [21.02.2025].

¹³⁴Rossini G., Joyce DiDonato, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjSRQlhjd9I>, [21.02.2025].

¹³⁵Rossini G., Marilyn Horne, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYMt6qdY67s>, [21.02.2025].

¹³⁶Rossini G., Frederica von Stade, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryquIEXUrL8>, [21.02.2025].

¹³⁷Rossini G., Montserrat Caballé, *Tanti affetti*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxSOvMXi6_U&list=RDmxSOvMXi6_U&start_radio=1, [21.02.2025].

¹³⁸Rossini G., Kiri Te Kanava, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvjDzSwpECA>, [21.02.2025].

¹³⁹Rossini G., Mirella Devia, *Tanti affetti*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haED_Nqt3mA, [21.02.2025].

¹⁴⁰Rossini G., Katia Ricciarelli, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8D66V0PxFzU>, [21.02.2025].

and selective agility) for both female and male high voices, and *l'agilità martellata* (Italian for hammer agility) for lower voices: mezzo-soprano, baritone or bass. According to Peter Berne in his book *Belcanto – prassi esecutiva dell'opera italiana da Rossini a Verdi*, where he also cites Manuel Garcia's claims, the *legata e granita* technique is described as follows: *The word “granita” should indicate that the individual notes of the piece should be clearly distinct in themselves, like grains placed side by side, while the word “legato” indicates that they should be aligned without leaving spaces between them, like a string of pearls*¹⁴¹. On the other hand, the technique suitable for lower martellata voices is described as follows: *Hammer technique, is clearly defined by its name. Hammered coloratura technique is nothing more than “legata e granita” to which is attached a very clear articulation. The notes follow each other without any interruption, but each note is given a strong accent, which gives it more clarity*¹⁴². Physically speaking, sopranos inherently sing coloraturas faster than mezzo-sopranos because their voice is lighter. However, looking at the tempo marking of the bel canto master, you can be sure at this point that the part is written for a lower voice with a high proficiency and wide scale, which will perform coloraturas just as well as a soprano, but a little slower. By singing the coloraturas more slowly, you can be sure that all the notes written by Rossini will be sung and that each note will reach the listener's ear.

Giusto ciel in tal periglio is an aria from Act I of the opera *Muhammad II*. As in the previous case, this aria is reached for by both mezzo-sopranos and sopranos. Of all the arias I have chosen, this one is of the narrowest ambitus. However, it should be noted that despite its relatively small ambitus, this aria is the only one that begins with a sound in the double octave. The lowest sound here is only a *cis*¹ and the highest sound recorded by the composer is a *fi*². The total sounds of the aria are 191, of which 94 are in the colon octave and 97 are in the rhotic octave. In the colon octave, we often have long tones going up. Building tension, they are in the space from *dis*² to *fi*². These sounds lie in the transitional register in both mezzo-sopranos and sopranos. One could say that this is a middle aria, but in a slightly higher tessitura. It is kept in *andante* tempo and does not have many *fiorituras*. Depending on the performer, one can see subtle differences in the performance of the aria's ending. However, both mezzo-

¹⁴¹ Berne P., *Belcanto – prassi esecutiva dell'opera italiana da Rossini a Verdi*, Libreria Musicale Italiana, Lucca 2024, p.157-158.

¹⁴² Ibid, p.158.

sopranos and sopranos do not allow themselves too much ornamental invention on their own. Also, when it comes to changes in the substitution of the verbal text for the musical text, the changes are often identical in both types of voice.

The last one I discussed in terms of performance differences is the *Bel raggio lusinghier* aria from the opera *Semiramide*. A magnificent, conditionally difficult aria, requiring long breathing and control of phrasing. One of Master Rossini's most popular female arias. This aria was sung by the most famous female voices starting with Maria Callas, Marilyn Horne, Cecilia Bartoli, Teresa Berganza, Joan Sutherland or Diana Damrau and many others. It is undoubtedly a masterful aria. As for the whole part of *Semiramide*, it is usually entrusted to a soprano. *Semiramide* is the last opera the Master of Pesaro created for the La Fenice theater in Venice, and also the last Italian theater he wrote for. It is one of Rossini's most popular operas, but is performed relatively infrequently due to the difficulty of selecting a cast of singers capable of singing the highly ambitious music written by the Barber's creator. *Semiramide* was last staged at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in the 2017/2018 season, where the title character was performed by soprano Angela Meade¹⁴³. As for Milan's La Scala, unfortunately, *Semiramide* was last on the billboard there in 1962, where the main part was sung by world-renowned soprano Joan Sutherland¹⁴⁴. Despite the fact that the whole part is held in a rather soprano tessitura, in 2017 at the Royal Opera House it was taken up by an outstanding coloratura mezzo-soprano of the present time, known for many performances of Rossini parts - Joyce DiDonato¹⁴⁵. However, if we talk about the *Bel raggio lusinghier* aria itself, it is successfully sung by many mezzo-sopranos in concert versions. Having listened to many recordings, I can say that it is very rarely performed exactly as written by the author of *Barber*. Despite the great number of difficulties contained in this aria, usually female performers, abstracting from the voice they have, "embellish" this piece even more. It is difficult to cite the exact passages in which changes are made, because in each performance the aria sounds completely different. Each singer, regardless of the voice at her disposal, changes the fioriture according to her own preferences.

¹⁴³Rossini G., *Semiramide*, Metropolitan Opera, <https://ondemand.metopera.org/performance/detail/3e89f0f1-eec9-5d82-a0cb-62018ae456b4>, [24.02.2025].

¹⁴⁴Rossini G., *Semiramide*, La Scala, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoVw45FcsBA>, [24.02.2025].

¹⁴⁵DiDonato J., *Semiramide*, <https://joycedidonato.com/press/joyce-didonato-fiery-and-sensuous-as-semiramide-at-the-royal-opera-house/>, [24.02.2025].

According to musicologists¹⁴⁶, *Semiramide* has many elements from Baroque opera, such as the expanded role of the primadonna, Semiramide, the character of Arsace played by a woman (mezzo-soprano) as a reference to Baroque castrati, a small number of collective scenes in favor of duets and arias, and the setting of the stage action in peri-partum time. So if the aforementioned opera has so much of Baroque opera, looking at the structure of the *Bel raggio lusinghier* aria and its performance practice of extra embellishment, especially at the return of the words *Dolce pensiero* (bar 77.) – or *cabaletta* – one can see some similarities to something like a da capo aria. According to the laws (which I'll talk about in the next subsection), bars 77-93 can be ornamented, since they are a complete repetition of the material from bars 48-64; unfortunately, many singers, instead of actually stopping at just introducing variations of the repeated motif, go further, singing the altered musical material to the very end of the piece. Although Rossini specifically wrote down coloraturas (as I wrote about earlier), in this case, performance practice and insubordination on the part of female singers is often stronger. One of the few performances in which all the notes are made according to the composer's notation, and in which the singer doesn't even add her own cadences, even though practice permits, is Teresa Berganza's 1959 recording¹⁴⁷. This aria, like *Tanti affetti...* from *Lady of the Lake*, is always sung by higher mezzo-sopranos or coloratura sopranos. Aside from the difference in voice weight, there are no major variables between the soprano and mezzo-soprano performances. All voices sing the notes written by Rossini, making variations in the aforementioned bars in the character and capabilities of their voices.

2.2.1 Implementation practice

During Rossini's time, ornamentation began to move away from the improvisational practices of the Baroque era. Composers began to write all melodic embellishments into the score in order to limit the improvisational possibilities of singers, as had been the case in the era of castrati. However, despite the inclusion of coloratura in the score, the bel canto era still saw the custom of performers modifying melodies. In order to find a consensus between the composer's wishes and the deeply

¹⁴⁶ Opera World Press, <https://poprostuopera.wordpress.com/2019/03/10/ostatnie-dzielo-baroku-semiramida-cz-2/>, [27.02.2025].


¹⁴⁷ Rossini G., *Bel raggio lusinghier*, Berganza T., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9_7a4smdQE, [25.02.2025].

rooted habits of singers, places were introduced in the piece where individual singers were allowed to introduce variations. Such places, as Peter Berne points out¹⁴⁸, were:

- repetitions/recapitulations
- conclusions of musical phrases,
- cadences
- final bars in an aria embellished with variations of rhythmic formulas or the

introduction of a high note.

At first, I began to wonder whether Rossini's repetitions had to be formally

marked with a sign , so that they could be considered repetitions and decorated in accordance with the law. However, after reviewing the sheet music, I have concluded that none of the pieces discussed in my dissertation formally contain a single repetition mark. Therefore, judging by the number of changes made by singers, after listening to a huge number of performances, I can confidently say that it is sufficient to repeat a given musical motif in order to be able to embellish it. Generally speaking, changes in repetition at that time were possible after it had been determined whether the composer himself had already added them or provided them personally to the singer. Nowadays, it is common to find piano scores with notes written above the staves describing how a given fragment can be changed according to the composer.

Each composer had a slightly different approach to the emerging system. Schubert expressed a very radical opinion on embellishments added by singers, claiming that *if the melody had already been written by the composer with embellishments, the singer must refrain from adding anything else*¹⁴⁹. However, this was dictated by a different way of thinking between Italy and Germany, because in Italy the voice of singers in music had been in a very strong position for many years, while in Germany the emphasis was more on purely instrumental music. As Peter Berne further notes: Rossini was still somewhat attached to the customs of the Baroque tradition, so he almost always allowed singers to vary their repetitions¹⁵⁰. Usually, the motif recurred in the cabaletta, i.e. the second part of the aria, which was characterized by a faster tempo than the preceding part called *cantilena* or *cantabile*. Following Bern, it was also possible to add small variations to the existing melody in the form of *appoggiaturas*,

¹⁴⁸ see in Berne P., *Belcanto – prassi esecutiva dell'opera italiana da Rossini a Verdi*, Libreria Musicale Italiana, Lucca 2024, p. 165.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 189.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 189.

acciaccaturas, *gruppettas*, *mordents*, and *trills*¹⁵¹. It was also permitted to change or eliminate words, or to add syllables to the musical text if this would make it easier for the singer. Such changes could only be made in arias or, less frequently, in duets, but only after prior agreement with the partner. In ensembles or other group scenes, such changes were not permitted.

Moving on to the performance practice that can be observed over the years, it can be said without a doubt that singers often allow themselves more embellishment than Rossini himself allowed, even though he was quite liberal in this regard. The problem of non-compliance with the rules can also be seen in the fact that not every singer has the will and time needed to educate themselves in a given, rather narrow field – in this case, knowledge of the rules of ornamentation in Rossini's vocal music. The same is true of performing Baroque music – there are vocalists who, having familiarized themselves with the rules and tables constructed for the legitimate performance of vocal music of that time, become specialists in it.

Another problem that leads singers to overuse the right to ornament the melody line is the desire to impress and entertain the audience. For years, the human voice, as an instrument, aroused the most emotion in the listener. The peak of admiration for the possibilities of the human voice was the Baroque period, with the aforementioned castrati and a multitude of coloraturas. Often, the more breakneck musical phrases, the greater the applause.

Due to changes introduced by singers over the years in individual parts of given arias, a **performance practice** has developed. In other words, parts of a piece that should not be changed, due to the number of performances in which a given fragment was changed, adapt to the changing times, creating a permanent change.

An example of changes (one of many) in Rossini's repetitions is a fragment from the aria *Una voce poco fa*.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 189.



Example 5. Manuscript of Rosina's aria – Una voce poco fa from Act I of the opera *The Barber of Seville*

In Rossini's original manuscript from 1816, there are four bars in which six thirty-second notes on F sharp¹ and a quarter note on C sharp² are repeated four times. Since the motif is repeated twice, Rossini allowed the singer to vary it. Currently, a different pattern has become established in performance practice over the years, namely, the first two bars are sung according to Rossini's notation, and the next two are sung according to performance practice. The fragments I have entered and marked in red show how bars 32 and 33 are most often performed at present.

166

31

-rà, io l'in-ge - gno a-guz - ze - rò, al - la fin s'ac - che - te -

33

-rà e con-ten - ta io re - ste - rò. Sì, Lin - do - ro mio sa -

Example 6. Excerpt from Rosina's aria – *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 1.

2.2.2. Tenure – a display of vocal artistry through the prism of voice type

A cadence is a moment in a piece where a singer can show off all their skills. It is a time for personal creativity, which the composer allows. As Brazzoni writes: *The cadenza must respect the character of the aria, it must not exceed limits that could be boring, it must be perfectly intoned so that the last syllable of the word can be heard clearly, without leaving it heavy or lifeless. The cadenza must be prepared messa di voce; it must be the epilogue of the aria, and therefore contain its most important fragments; it should be sung in one breath and ended with a trill*¹⁵². To illustrate what a cadenza performed by sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, and contraltos might look like, I am attaching graphics showing selected cadenzas performed by individual singers in selected arias. To compare the cadenzas of sopranos and mezzo-sopranos, I chose the cadenza from the aria *Tanti affetti*, from bars 28-29. The graphics show only the pitch and number of notes, along with the text and breaths. However, due to the fact that

¹⁵² Brazzoni, *Metodo di Canto Italiano dal Ricercar cantando a Rossini*, Ut Orpheus, Bologna 2011, p. 141.

cadences are sometimes performed *ad libitum*, I decided not to assign them rhythmic values, and I do not count trills and runs.



Example 7. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *The Lady of the Lake*

Above is the basic version, composed by Rossini.



Example 8. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *The Lady of the Lake 1*.

Cadenza performed by Cecilia Bartoli (mezzo-soprano)¹⁵³.



Example 9. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *The Lady of the Lake 2*.

Cadenza performed by Joyce DiDonato (mezzo-soprano)¹⁵⁴.



Example 10. France aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *The Lady of the Lake 3*.

Cadence performed by Mirella Devia (soprano)¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵³ Rossini G., Cecilia Bartoli, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYnZqRVmOCw> , [04.03.2025].

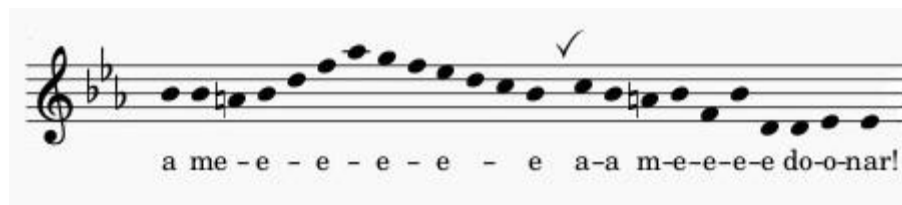
¹⁵⁴ Rossini G., Joyce DiDonato, *Tanti affetti*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjSRQlhjd9I>, [04.03.2025].

¹⁵⁵ Rossini G., Mirella Devia, *Tanti affetti*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haED_Nqt3mA, [04.03.2025].



Example 11. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *The Lady of the Lake 4*.

Cadence performed by Montserrat Caballé (soprano)¹⁵⁶.



Example 12. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *The Lady of the Lake 5*.

My version of the cadenza in aria *Tanti affetti*.

Cecilia Bartoli – 12 notes

Joyce DiDonato – 35 notes

Mirella Devia – 22 notes

Montserrat Caballé – 30 notes

My range – 23 notes

As can be seen in the above graphics, each voice performs cadences according to its capabilities and creativity. It can be noticed that sopranos have a natural ease with high notes – for example, Mirella Devia, who sang c^3 after performing a trill. High voices also have an ease in performing fast runs due to a different type of coloratura singing technique, as can be seen in Monserat Caballé, who sang the entire cadence on one breath. Mezzo-sopranos can also impress with high notes in fast runs, but after listening to many performances, I notice that they rarely rise above a^2 and are slightly slower in performing fiorituras.

I will also analyze how cadences look when we compare the performances of mezzo-sopranos and contraltos. To illustrate any differences, I will use the cadence from bars 25-26 of Isabella's aria *Cruda sorte!*.

¹⁵⁶Rossini G., Montserrat Caballé, *Tanti affetti*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxSOvMXi6_U&list=RDmxSOvMXi6_U&start_radio=1 , [4.03.2025].



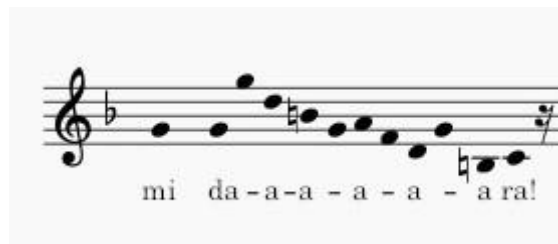
Example 13. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri*

This is how the original version which was written by the composer.



Example 14. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 1.

The cadenza proposed by Ewa Podleś (contralto)¹⁵⁷.



Example 15. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* From the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 2.

Term served by Nicole Lemieux (contralto)¹⁵⁸.



Example 16. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 3.

The term of office of Cecilia Bartoli (mezzo-soprano)¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁷ Rossini G., Ewa Podleś, *Cruda sorte*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjOb_BFKZIo, [5.03.2025].

¹⁵⁸ Rossini G., Nicole Lemieux, *Cruda sorte*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rihArMnlpIY>, [5.03.2025].

¹⁵⁹ Rossini G., Cecilia Bartoli, *Cruda sorte*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNP9MVutmq0>, [05.03.2025].



Example 17. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 4.

Term proposed by Teresa Berganza (mezzo-soprano)¹⁶⁰.



Example 18. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 5.

Cadenza in my interpretation.

Ewa Podleś – 3 notes

Nicole Lemieux – 12 notes

Cecilia Bartoli – 19 notes

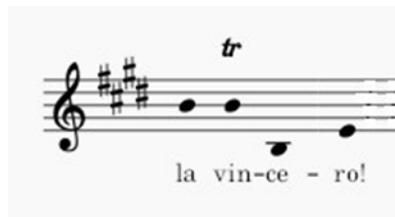
Teresa Berganza – 19 notes

My interpretation – 22 notes

From the above graphic representation of the cadence of bars 25-26 in the aria *Cruda sorte!*, it can be concluded that contraltos, due to the greater weight and density of their voices, are more conservative in terms of the length and complexity of their coloratura. They are capable of singing high notes, as can be seen in the example of Nicole Lemieux, who reached a g^2 in the cadence, but they are more cautious when it comes to the number of notes combined with speed. Mezzo-sopranos show greater proficiency and ease in performing many notes at a fast tempo, due to the fact that their voices are lighter and brighter in tone than those of contraltos, which is why they are able to sing more notes at a faster tempo than contraltos.

I would also like to look at the cadences in the aria *Una voce poco fa*, because it is a piece performed by all three voice types: contralto, mezzo-soprano, and soprano.

¹⁶⁰ Rossini G., Teresa Berganza, *Cruda sorte*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROE_qZyM6vE, [5.03.2025].



Example 23. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 6.

The proposition of cadenza of Nicole Lemieux (contralto)¹⁶⁴.



Example 24. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 7.

Cadenza by Diana Damrau (soprano)¹⁶⁵.



Example 25. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 8.

Cadence Kathleen Battle (soprano)¹⁶⁶.



Example 26. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 9.

Cadenza in my interpretation.

Cecilia Bartoli – 4 dźwięki

Joyce DiDonato – 7 dźwięków

Ewa Podleś – 14 dźwięków

¹⁶⁴ Gossini G., Nicole Lemieux, *Una voce poco fa*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ct-wI0vvkSs>, [7.03.2025].

¹⁶⁵ Rossini G., Diana Damrau, *Una voce poco fa*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFvpBjIVu7o>, [7.03.2025].

¹⁶⁶ Rossini G., Kathleen Battle, *Una voce poco fa*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rHTou1Atas>, [7.03.2025].

Nicole Lemieux – 4 dźwięki
Diana Damrau – 29 dźwięków
Kathleen Battle – 41 dźwięków
Moja cadence – 4 dźwięki

At first glance, it is clear that coloratura sopranos created the most elaborate melodies, rich in notes and wide range, adding *staccato* articulation to eight notes (both Damrau and Battle). Mezzo-sopranos and contraltos are more economical in embellishing this cadence, with the exception of Ewa Podleś, who is the only one to have created a longer cadence.

2.3 Gioacchino Rossini's operas in Poland

Gioacchino Rossini's operas have enjoyed enormous popularity for years and often elicit enthusiastic responses from audiences. The most popular are still those that brought him the most fame during his career. Audiences appreciate them for their lightness, good humor, emotionality combined with melodiousness, spontaneity, energy, and display of vocal virtuosity, which arouses the admiration and curiosity of listeners/viewers. From a producer's point of view, his operas are also difficult because of the need to assemble a team of singers capable of meeting the high vocal demands of the Swan of Pesaro. Some of Rossini's operas require a large cast, such as the monumental scenes from *William Tell*.

Unfortunately, Rossini's operas are not performed very often on Polish opera stages these days. In Poland, you can see *The Barber of Seville*. It has been performed on the stages of almost all opera theaters in our country. I myself was extremely lucky in 2018 to play the role of Rosina in two productions (directed by Sławomir Żerdzicki and Jitka Stokalska) at the Opera Nova in Bydgoszcz. Unfortunately, the production directed by Żerdzicki was the last performance of *The Barber of Seville*, after which it was taken off the bill at the Bydgoszcz opera house.

Taking the beginning of 2000 as a benchmark, *The Barber of Seville* was in the repertoire of: the Grand Theatre – National Opera in Warsaw, the Warsaw Chamber Opera, the Polish Royal Opera in Warsaw, Opera Nova in Bydgoszcz, the Grand Theatre in Łódź, the Krakow Opera, the Baltic Opera in Gdańsk, the Wrocław Opera, and the Opera at the Castle in Szczecin. In addition to the famous *Barber of Seville*, Polish theaters also stage (but less frequently) *L'Italiana in Algeri* (Polish Royal Opera

and Wrocław Opera) and *Cinderella* (Polish Royal Opera, Wrocław Opera, Warsaw Chamber Opera). Unfortunately, nowadays we can only admire these three operas by the master of bel canto in Poland.

According to Kornel Michałowski's list, between 1818 and 1992, as many as twenty of Rossini's operas could be heard in Poland, including: *The Happy Deception*, *The Silk Ladder*, *Bruschino*, *Tancredi*, *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *The Turk in Italy*, *Elisabeth - Queen of England*, *Torvaldo and Dorliska*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Otello*, *Cinderella*, *La gazza ladra*, *Armida*, *Moses in Egypt/Moses and Pharaoh*, *Richard and Zoraida*, *La donna del lago*, *Zelmira*, *Semiramide*, *Count Ory*, and *William Tell*. However, the three operas I mentioned earlier were the most popular from the above list, and they have survived in the repertoire to this day.

Trying to answer the question of why so few Rossini operas are currently performed in Poland, and analyzing Michałowski's list, I suspect that this is dictated by popularity, and thus ticket sales, because audiences like what they already know. Rossini's other operas are being supplanted by more popular works by other composers, often forming a fixed repertoire in most Polish opera houses. Another obstacle to the popularization of Rossini's other operas is the stereotyping of the composer himself. The author of *Cinderella* is immediately associated with *opera buffa*, and only his comic operas are performed. Few people know that he also composed mostly *opera seria*. I believe that other works by Rossini have not been given a chance to become sufficiently known and loved.

CHAPTER 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTISTIC WORK

3.1 Issues and performance interpretation of selected arias

In this chapter, I intend to analyze the main vocal and interpretative difficulties in the context of elements that vary according to performance practice and the principles of performing Rossini arias. I will also analyze the difficulties encountered during the preparation for the recording of the artistic work and discuss strategies for overcoming them. The reception and issues surrounding each aria may differ depending on the singer performing it.

The description of the artistic work constitutes an independent artistic statement. The recorded material and accompanying description document subjective reflections and technical and interpretative difficulties encountered in the process of preparing and performing musical works as part of the Artistic Work. My goal is also to present a concise description of individual arias, taking into account their affiliation with specific operas, mood, theme, and dramatic context in which they are performed, as well as the characteristics of the characters performing them. The translations of the arias constitute an independent work in the process of preparing for the realization of the work. I often presented variable elements without illustrating the rhythm of individual groups, because I wanted to show the number of sounds, as it varies depending on the condition of the performer. I decided to arrange the pieces in chronological order of their creation, both in the artistic work and in the following chapter, in which I analyze them. All the sheet music I used is included in the appendix to the dissertation in the order in which it is described.

3.1.1. Isabella's aria *Cruda sorte!* from Act I of the opera *L'italiana in Algeri*

L'Italiana in Algeri – a two-act opera buffa composed in 1813. The libretto was written by Angelo Anelli¹⁶⁷.

The titular Italian woman sets off on a journey in search of her beloved Lindoro. Having survived a shipwreck, she finds herself in Algiers in front of the palace of Bey Mustafa, who wants to get rid of his wife Elvira by marrying her off to Lindoro, a slave from Italy, and find a new partner. The Italian woman is considered by all the men around Mustafa to be an extraordinary beauty with a fiery temperament. The woman is captured and brought to Mustafa. The Bey immediately wants to take possession of the

¹⁶⁷ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1350.

new arrival. The heroine is terrified of the passionate Mustafa, but out of love for Lindoro, she is ready to face the adversities she has encountered and devise a plot. The titular Italian woman knows how to deal with men to achieve her goal. Isabella performs the aria *Cruda sorte!*.

Izabela is an intelligent, young, and inspiring woman. She is clever and cunning, charismatic and charming, but also very brave and independent. For love, she is ready to set off for a foreign continent to find her beloved. Her strength of character and external beauty are immediately noticed by the Arabs. The aria *Cruda sorte!* is multifaceted, showing both the character's despair at the situation she finds herself in and her inner determination to escape from it. Aware of her strengths, both external and internal, she uses them to put her plan into action while mocking the male gender. In the following scenes, Isabella deceives Mustafa by pretending to be interested in his advances, while in reality she is plotting her escape.

Isabella is one of the most fascinating and modern characters in Rossini's operas – a strong woman who not only knows how to defend herself, but also how to defeat men using their own methods. Ultimately, the heroine manages to deceive Mustafa and escape with Lindoro and other people whom she helped to free from the Bey's captivity.

Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!
Questo è il premio di mia fe'?
Non v'è orror, terror nè affanno
pari a quel ch'io provo in me.
Per te solo, oh mio Lindoro,
Io mi trovo in tal periglio!
Da chi spero, oh Dio, consiglio?

Chi conforto mi darà?
Qua ci vuol disinvoltura,
non più smanie nè paura:
di coraggio è tempo adesso,
or chi sono si vedrà!
Già so, per pratica,
qual sia l'effetto

Cruel fate! Tyrannical love!
This is the reward for my constancy?
There is no horror, terror, or affliction
Equal to what I now feel.
For you alone, O my Lindoro,
I find myself in such danger.
From whom can I hope, O God! To
obtain counsel?
Who will give me comfort?
In this case I need to keep a cool head,
no more nervousness or fear:
this is the time for courage,
now we'll see what I'm made of.
I already know by experience
What effect

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| d'un sguardo languido, | A languid look, |
| d'un sospiretto... | A subtle sigh can have... |
| So a domar gli uomini; | I know how to take control |
| come si fa! | Over men. |
| Si, si, si, si | Yes, yes, yes |
| Sien dolci o ruvidi, | Whether they be gentle or rough, |
| sian flemma o foco, | Calm or excitable, |
| son tutti simili | They are all the same |
| a presso a poco... | More or less... |
| Tutti la chiedono, | They all ask, |
| tutti la bramano: | They all yearn |
| da vaga femmina felicità! | From an enchanting woman |
| | For happiness. ¹⁶⁸ |

Izabela's aria is written in the lowest tessitura compared to the rest of the arias I have selected from the musical work. The composer wrote it with Marietta Marcollini in mind, who was blessed with a beautiful, low voice. The first part of the aria, in *andante* tempo, often oscillates around transitional sounds (Italian: *passaggio* – transition between the chest and mixed registers, respectively for the mezzo-soprano voice e¹, f¹, g¹). In this part, it is particularly important to maintain a high position while keeping the chest register open and paying attention to the closeness of the sound.

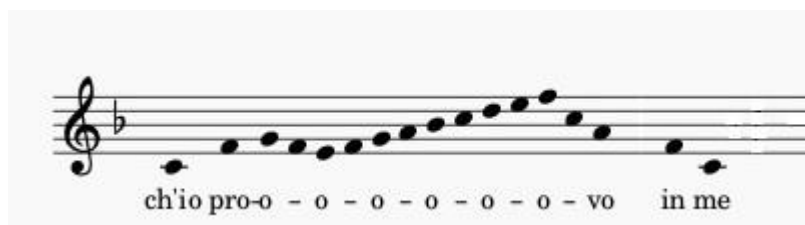
Having performed this aria for several years, I worked long and hard to find the right balance between maintaining the closeness of the sound while keeping a high position and the aforementioned open, resonant chest register. In a long-sustained low tessitura, there is a risk of overloading the low register in order to achieve a dark tone of voice. Unfortunately, this can result in a subsequent lack of selectivity in coloratura, voice resonance throughout the first part of the aria, and difficulty in reaching high notes in the cabaletta. In the *cantabile* section, it is advisable to strive for continuity of sound through controlled, balanced *appoggio* (understood as breath support for the sound) and emission of uniform stability, while maintaining the closeness of the sound,

¹⁶⁸ Narici I. (edition), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020, p. XIX.

which allows the phrase to be performed in a *legato* manner, without excessive accentuation of individual notes.

In the first bar with an upbeat, the orchestra plays two chords, first *forte* and then *sforzato*. The words with which the aria begins are: *Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!* (translation attached), which carry a huge emotional charge. The text, combined with the instrumentation, can provoke the singer to start the piece too quickly, nervously (unexpected pauses), and cause the voice to be carried too widely, which can result in a loss of high position and, at a later stage, the inability to make dynamic changes throughout the aria. When performing the beginning of the aria, I had to maintain a balance between the desire to convey emotions, the excess of which could lead to overloading the lower register, as I mentioned earlier, and maintaining technical correctness.

Another point analyzed is the coloratura written by the composer on the words *ch'io provo in me*, in tact 8. When writing coloratura, Rossini not only wanted to enrich the vocal layer musically and allow the singer to show off their vocal skills, but above all, he wanted to reflect the emotions accompanying a given character, which sometimes cannot be expressed in words alone. The above-mentioned text of the piece is accompanied by the annotation *a piacere* (Italian for “with pleasure”). When performed correctly, coloratura can convey the character traits of the main character, namely energy, vigor, emotionality, and temperament—despite the difficult situation she finds herself in, these traits herald a happy ending. It is customary for singers to perform the run of notes up to f^2 (Ewa Podleś, Cecilia Bartoli) or even b^2 (Marylin Horne), which adds more color to Isabella's character. Following this performance practice, I decided to extend this coloratura, performing it up to f^2 as follows:



Example 27. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 4.

The coloratura discussed above is followed by the sentence: *Per te solo, o mio Lindoro, io mi trovo in tal periglio*. The first part of this sentence should be sung with warmth and tenderness, as a phrase addressed to a loved one. The aforementioned musical phrase must be performed *legato*. The dynamics of the orchestra are marked

piano pianissimo, so the singer can perform the phrase in a similar dynamic to that marked. The aforementioned elements will not be possible if we start the aria in too low a position and with a chest register that is too deep.

The next expressive coloratura, which no singer usually changes, is found on the words in *tal periglio*, in tacts 12-13. It can evoke a sense of fear and inner anxiety. It was written in a relatively low register, which intensifies the feeling of inner terror, and the final slowing down of the notes symbolizes composure and the preservation of so-called coolness and common sense. When performing this passage, one should not focus too much on singing the lower note *h*, in order to be able to sing the transitional notes smoothly and without difficulty, reaching *b*¹. Moving on to tact 17, one can focus on the sixteenth rest on the word *conforto*. In my opinion, it may reflect the broken breath resulting from fear, which interrupts the words. In tact 18, although the composer did not write the *accelerando* marking, the tempo usually speeds up slightly from the words *Da chi spero*, reflecting the impatience reflected in the questions *Chi conforto mi dara? Oh Dio consiglio?*, which culminate in the first part with a coloratura on the repeated words *Chi conforto*. The cantabile part ends with a cadence on the words *mi darà*. Since cadences are a moment of creative freedom for every singer, I decided on the following performance in my interpretation:



Example 28. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sore!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 5.

Moving on to the second part of the aria – the *cabaletta* – at the turn of bars 41-42 we reach a cadence, which I decided not to embellish. The only technique I wanted to use was to perform a crescendo and decrescendo on the note *b*, giving it a warmer tone by technically smiling on this word. In tacts 44 and 45, I draw attention to the sixteenth note embellishments on the words *pratica* and *l'effetto*. The embellishments must sound selective and resonant, so attention should be paid to the support on the first sixteenth note, while ensuring the closeness of the sound. In measure 47, there is a cadence at the end of the phrase on the words *sospiretto*. To convey the character of the word *sospiretto*, I decided to perform a cadence that imitates and expresses a sigh. For this, I decided to use a leap from *a*¹ to *f*² and a transition through the notes *b*¹, *c*², *g*

sharp¹, a¹ to f¹ using *ritardando*, where the slowing down serves to reduce the level of intensity/energy, symbolizing a sigh of reverie, and the breath between the notes conveys an actual sigh.



Example 29. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 6.

The next variable is the cadence of the phrase in tact 61. I have rarely encountered ornamentation of this fragment in recordings. In accordance with performance practice, I also decided not to ornament this cadence.

In tact 67, the composer wrote a fermata over the word *bramano* (Italian for “longing,” “desire,” “lust”). In order to emphasize the expressiveness of the word and thus reflect the character of Isabella, who in the words of this phrase *Tutti la chiedono, tutti la bramano*, arouses the passion of the gathered crowd of men, I decided to perform the following cadence:



Example 30. Excerpt from the aria *Cruda sorte!* from the opera *L'Italiana in Algeri* 7.

The last change I made while working on this aria was to omit measures 82-83 and 89. In accordance with performance practice, these measures can be omitted, which is what I decided to do. This practice stems from the need to conserve energy for the final cadence, which contains sustained notes e² and f², which are its climax and form the framework for the entire aria.

To sum up, in the above aria by Isabella, *Cruda sorte!*, I achieved all the goals I set for myself, resulting from the requirements specified by the composer in the musical material and implementing issues resulting from the performance practice shaped over years of performances by many singers. I tried to describe each of the variables and present their relevance in the performance of the recorded artistic work.

3.1.2 Rosina's aria *Una voce poco fa* from Act I of the opera *The Barber of Seville*

The Barber of Seville – a two-act *opera buffa*, composed in 1816; libretto – Cesare Sterbini, based on Pierre Beaumarchais¹⁶⁹.

The action takes place in Seville and tells the story of the romantic adventures of the young Count Almaviva, who wants to win the heart of the beautiful Rosina. However, her guardian, the old and greedy Doctor Bartolo, who wants to marry Rosina himself, tries to thwart his plans. Rosina reciprocates the Count's feelings. She devises a plan to meet her beloved and outwit her guardian. The character of the heroine and the strategies she adopts are reflected in the aria *Una voce poco fa*, in which she talks about her feelings for Almaviva and what she might do if Bartolo tries to prevent her from seeing her beloved. In order to reach his beloved, the count uses various disguises and changes in appearance, as well as tricks, aided by the clever and witty barber Figaro. It is he who plots the intrigues that lead to a happy ending – Almaviva and Rosina get married, and Bartolo falls victim to a strategy of deception.

Rosina is a young, attractive woman. Although at first glance she may seem submissive and delicate, she is actually clever, cunning, and determined in pursuing her goals. She is cheerful and romantic, but certainly not naive. She is a dynamic character. On the one hand, she is romantic and charming, and on the other, she is strong and determined. *Una voce poco fa* is not only a beautiful piece, but also a perfect characterization of the main character. The aria shows her as a romantic, intelligent, and independent woman who does not allow herself to be dominated by her guardian Bartolo. It is one of the most recognizable opera arias and is often performed at vocal competitions.

An aria is called a *cavatina*. In 18th-century opera, this term, a diminutive of “cavata,” refers to a short aria without a *da capo*; it can appear as an independent piece or as an interpolation in a recitative¹⁷⁰. It has a two-part structure: a cantabile section beginning with the title words, and a cabaletta section beginning with the words *Io sono docile...*. The piece was written by Rossini in E major, intended for contraltos and mezzo-sopranos. Today, it is also performed in F major for soprano voices.

As in all the arias of the Swan of Pesaro, this aria requires the singer to be highly proficient in coloratura and interval leaps, as well as having a wide vocal range. In order

¹⁶⁹Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1357.

¹⁷⁰Grove Music Online, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005215?rkey=L4d9vG&result=1>, [17.03.2025].

to achieve a balanced tone in all registers, a smooth, uniform, and flexible breathing pattern, a high position, and the ability to work on the color of the voice to reflect the emotions of individual musical phrases are required. In this aria, the composer makes full use of the color of the mezzo-soprano voice. In the chest register, one can find the warmth and legato characteristic of romanticism, as well as a lower, sharper tone of musical expression reflecting decisiveness and determination in action. The high register and fast runs reveal the character's playfulness, humor, cleverness, and self-confidence.

Una voce poco fa
qui nel cor mi risuonò;
il mio cor ferito è già,
e Lindor fu che il piagò.
Sì, Lindoro mio sarà;
lo giurai, la vincerò.
Il tutor ricuserà,
io l'ingegno aguzzerò,
alla fin s'accheterà
e contenta io resterò.
Sì, Lindoro mio sarà;
lo giurai, la vincerò.

Io sono docile, son rispettosa,
sono obbediente, dolce, amorosa;
mi lascio reggere, mi lascio reggere,
mi fo guidar, mi fo guidar.
Ma se mi toccano
dov'è il mio debole,
sarò una vipera,
e cento trappole
prima di cedere
farò giocar, giocar.

A voice a moment ago
Here in my heart echoed;
my heart is already wounded,
and it was Lindoro who pierced it.
Yes, Lindoro will be mine;
I made an oath, I shall prevail.
The tutor will object;
I'll sharpen my wit.
In the end he'll relent,
And happy I'll remain.
Yes, Lindoro will be mine;
I made an oath, I shall prevail.

I am docile, I'm respectful,
I'm obedient, sweet, and loving;
I submit to rule, I trust in guidance.
But if they dare touch me
Where my weak spot is,
I can be a viper,
And a hundred traps
Before giving up
I'll set.¹⁷¹

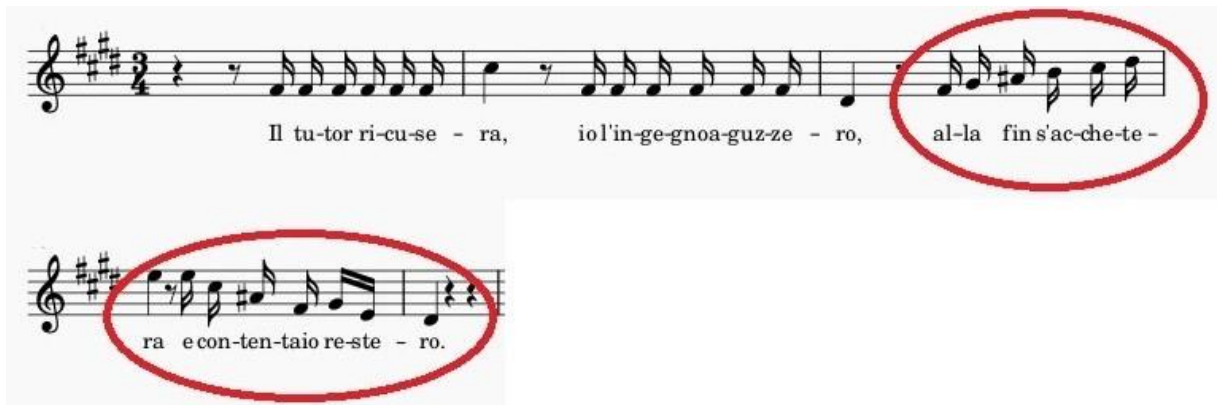
¹⁷¹ Narici I. (edition), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020, p. XVIII.

The aria begins in a low register with the words *Una voce poco fa qui nel cor mi risuonò...* sung in mezzo piano (Italian for “moderately soft”). This technique shows Rosina's delicacy and youthful shyness, as she blushes before herself, admitting her love for the Count. From a technical point of view, care should be taken in this musical phrase to ensure that the rhythm is not too scanded. Despite the dotted rhythmic values, a calm legato should be maintained. In each of the successive coloraturas, new emotions can be found, e.g. in tact 22, we can see the beginning of the plan to win Lindor (Rosina does not initially know that Lindor is the Count), and in tact 26, Rosina shows confidence and determination in carrying out the idea that began to form in her mind through a coloratura descent from g^2 to c^1 . In addition, Rosina's confidence in the musical phrase is enhanced by the orchestra, which plays *sforzato* on the word Lindoro. In tact 27, according to performance practice, it is possible for performers to make changes. In accordance with performance tradition, I decided to add an ornament on the word lo (Italian for “his”) to convey the lesson in the direction of Lindoro.



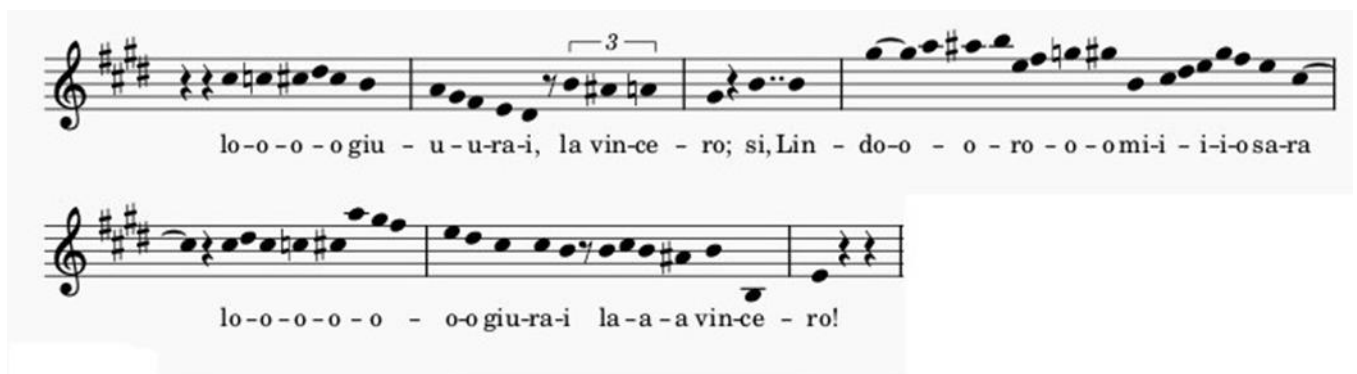
Example 31. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 10.

Tact 28 is also freely performed by singers, but in my interpretation I decided not to embellish this coloratura. Measures 30-31 are musical phrases written on the note f^1 ending with c sharp² the first time and d sharp¹ the second time. The words *Il tutor ricuserà...* indicate the character's inner thoughts, and the aforementioned placement of notes in the octave pretends to achieve the effect of speech, which is also imposed by the dynamics of the text. The next tacts, 32-33, are identical to the previous two, according to the composer's notation. In accordance with the performance practice I described in section **2.2.1 Performance practice**, it is permissible to perform the repeating musical phrases differently. This makes the piece more attractive and interesting. In addition, the changed melody creates a smooth transition to the next part of the aria.



Example 32. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 11.

Measures 34 to the end of the cantabile section, i.e. to measure 42, are often changed by singers in practice, which is due to the rules introduced by Rossini. Since measures 21-27 are identical to measures 34-40, variations can be introduced during the repetition. Depending on the type of voice performing the aria, in the aforementioned tacts 34-40 there are more or fewer embellishments performed in a longer or shorter time and within a different range. Usually, coloratura sopranos embellish these bars of the piece the most. This is undoubtedly a moment for individual vocal virtuosity, which can be expressed under the pretext of conveying the emotions of joy, hope, love, and impatience of the main character. A perfect example illustrating the above statements is the performance by Kathleen Battle or Diana Damrau. Measures 41-42 constitute the cadence ending the cantabile section, so naturally they can be changed at the discretion of each singer. In my interpretation, I decided to embellish this musical section in the following way, starting from measure 36 to measure 42, i.e. together with the cadence ending the cantabile section.



Example 33. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 12.

In the above excerpt, I wanted to convey the emotions of reverie in the words *lo giurai* and emphasize Rosina's determination by placing strong emphasis on the word *la*

vincerò. I performed the cadenza closing the cantabile section without elaborating on it. My intention was to emphasize the calmness and determination in the main character's actions.

The beginning of the *cabaletta* should be performed calmly, with moderate dynamics and selective coloratura, in order to convey the meaning and emotion of the words *Io sono docile, son rispettosa, sono ubbidiente...* (or *obbediente* – both forms have the same meaning). Despite the large leaps, e.g. in tact 62, they should be performed smoothly to maintain the feeling of Rosina's calmness and docility.

In tact 66, most singers usually use an octave leap and staccato articulation on the marked fermata, which I also decided to use.



Example 34. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 13.

This technique aims to ensure a smooth transition to the next part of the aria with a clear transformation: from calmness and gentleness to an attitude characterized by energy, defiance, and determination.

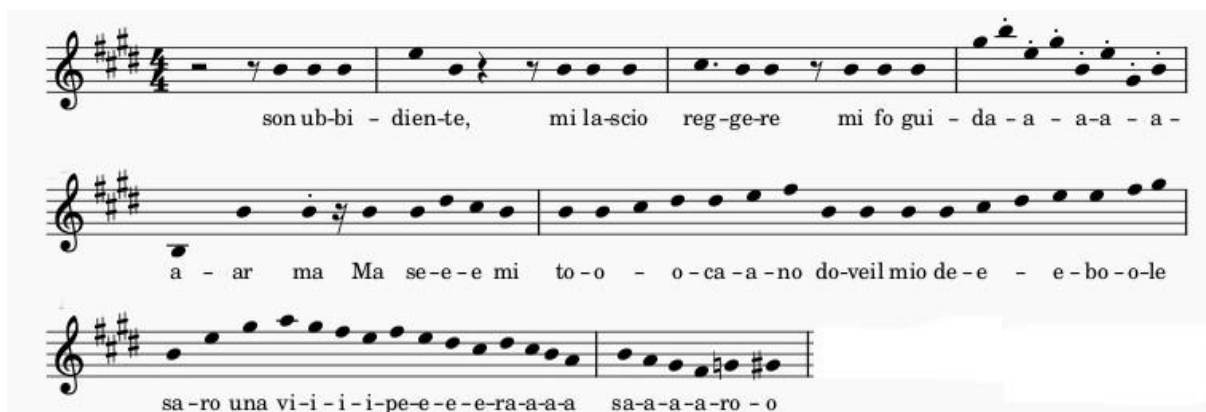
Continuing in measures 70, 71, and 72, the pattern of three eighth notes in *staccato* articulation is repeated. I decided to change the pitch of the last repeating motif in measure 72 as follows.



Example 35. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 14.

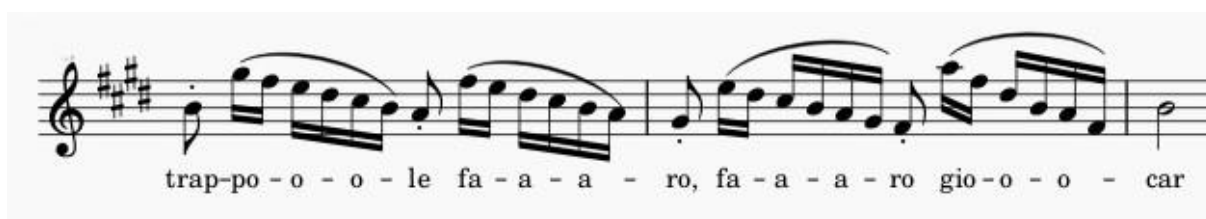
Changing the pitch of the eighth notes adds variety to the melody and naturally leads into the next tact. In this tact (i.e. tact 73), care should be taken to play the notes as written: *portato* – selectively, while maintaining the *legato* connection between the notes.

Another musical fragment that undergoes changes according to performance practice is the fragment from bars 86 to 94. Customarily, regardless of the voice, changes are made from the words *sono ubbidiente*. This is not in accordance with the rules given by the composer, but it has become established over the years of performance by various singers.



Example 36. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 15.

The cadence in tacts 89-90, on the words *mi fo guidar*, can be performed freely. However, continuing the performance from tacts 90-91, the musical material can be altered according to the rules laid down by Rossini (repetition of earlier musical material). The transformation of the above musical structures is intended to maximally convey Rosina's determination and confrontational attitude. The last musical change I decided on is the one in bar 106. I decided to add an element that conveys and emphasizes playfulness for the last time on the word *giocar*.



Example 37. Excerpt from the aria *Una voce poco fa* from the opera *The Barber of Seville* 16.

Tacts 110-112 are a preparation for the final cadence, which crowns the entire aria. I decided not to include the thirty-second ornaments in tact 111. These ornaments require great precision of articulation and intense engagement of the respiratory muscles, which makes it difficult to perform the final cadence, which reaches a sustained B flat. For the same reason, tact 112 has also been deliberately omitted from the interpretation. This is

a permissible practice in performance, which allows for a brief breathing break before the aforementioned cadence.

3.1.3 Desdemona's aria *Assisa a' piè d'un salice* together with *Preghiera* from Act III of the opera *Otello*

An opera in three acts; libretto written by Marquis Francesco Maria Berio di Salsa, inspired by Shakespeare's play of the same title. The opera was first performed in 1816¹⁷².

Desdemona, daughter of the Venetian doge, loves and secretly marries Othello, a Moorish military commander who has just returned from Cyprus after defeating the Turks. Rodrigo, the doge's son, is infatuated with Desdemona and has her father on his side. Iago also once loved Desdemona. Moreover, he is jealous of Othello's military success and plots to destroy him. He convinces Othello that Desdemona is cheating on him with the Doge's son. Othello and Rodrigo fight a duel. Desdemona waits melancholically for the outcome, singing *Assisa a' piè d'un salice* (*Song of the Willow*). Blinded by jealousy, Othello believes the lie and, in an act of desperation, kills Desdemona. When the truth comes out, Othello sinks into despair.

Desdemona is a tragic character. She is noble and loyal in her love for Othello. Despite unjust accusations, she does not try to defend herself desperately, but accepts her fate with dignity. She is a victim of the intrigues and manipulations of jealous men. The heroine's lyricism and sensitivity are illustrated by a part full of beautiful, melancholic phrases, especially in the famous aria in which she expresses her sadness and premonition of the coming tragedy.

Unlike most of Rossini's arias discussed here, Desdemona's aria is not in two parts, i.e. it does not consist of a *cantabile* and a *cabaletta*. *Canzone del salice* – *Song of the Willow* – as Desdemona's aria is also commonly known, is a *romanza* stylized as a folk song. During the aria, there is a brief dialogue – *recitativo accompagnato* – between Desdemona and Emilia – the maid and confidante of the title character, followed by a return to the song. The entire scene consists of the aforementioned *Song of the Willow* and a *Prayer* – *Deh calma o ciel*. In the completed musical work, I decided to perform the entire scene together with the recitatives, arranged in such a way as to constitute a coherent but independent statement by the characters. The form I

¹⁷² Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera, Otello*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1361.

ultimately adopted, adapting the musical material to a logical, final combination of the entire scene, was taken from Joyce DiDonato's concert performance of the aforementioned scene. The singer performed the dramatic segment at Carnegie Hall in 2014 with pianist David Zoblem. I marked the adopted form in the sheet music, which is included as an appendix to the dissertation. I believe that the aria itself does not provide a sufficient "sense of fulfillment". The vocal part ends on the note E-flat, which is a third in the key of the aria, G minor. It is logical, both musically and dramatically, to perform the entire scene. The musical aspect encourages this, because the *Prayer* (*Preghiera*) is in the key of A-flat major and ends with the tonic of that key, which gives the listener a sense of a natural ending. Dramatically, this is indicated by the fact that the Prayer, which follows the aria, full of tension and suffering, is a summary of Desdemona's speech. *Deh calma o ciel* is a moment of calm, but also an emotional climax that shows the psychological depth of the main character.

Desdemona's aria is completely different from most of the arias I have chosen in my artistic work. This aria is characterized by lyricism and melancholy. The musical phrases are subordinate to the logic of the poetic text. The vocal lines are long and cantilenous, reflecting the nostalgia and reflective nature of the aria. In the long phrases sung legato, there are elements of Rossini's coloratura, which, despite the calm phrasing, must be very selective. In *Song of the willow*, there are only a few places that can be varied, e.g. tacts 156-159 and 173-176, which the singer can embellish at her discretion, in accordance with the composer's historical consent. In the aria, natural melodic arcs can be seen in each phrase, consistent with the poetic text. The recitative, which occurs during the aria, is intended to improve the flow of the action on stage, but at the same time to snap Desdemona and the audience out of their reverie. The recitative dramatically connects the allegorical story presented by the heroine with the story in which she finds herself at that moment. The *Prayer*, which follows the emotionally demanding aria, must convey maximum calm, fluidity, and emotional release. The musical phrases must be performed legato in moderate dynamics, reflecting the mood of prayer.

In my performance, I decided to stick to the musical material written by the composer. Formally, there are not many identical musical motifs here that could be subject to changes permitted by the composer. Therefore, in the recording, I decided to make only one change in bar 190, where the same triplet group is repeated four times in

terms of both ambience and rhythm. I made this change according to Rossini's rules and in line with the performance practice that has prevailed for years.



Example 38. Excerpt from the aria *Assisa a' piè d'un salice* from the opera *Otello* 2

The fragment that I decided to change is almost always transformed by the singers. The first group is sung according to the composer's notation, while the subsequent groups are transformed individually, according to personal preference.

Assisa a' piè d'un salice,
immersa nel dolore,
gemea traffita Isaura
dal più crudele amore:
L'aura tra i rami flebile
ne ripetva il suon.

Sitting at the foot of a willow tree,
Immersed in pain,
Izaura moaned breathlessly
Because of the cruelest love.
The air between the branches
Echoed the sounds

I ruscelletti limpidi
a' caldi suoi sospiri,
il mormorio mesceano
de' lor diversi giri:
L'aura fra i rami flebile
ne ripetva il suon.

Transparent streams
Her burning sighs
Mixed with the murmur
Of passing roads.
The air between the branches
Repeated the sounds.

Salce, d'amor delzia!
Ombra pietosa appresta,
di mie sciagure immemore,
all'urna mia funesta;
nè più ripeta l'aura
de' miei lamenti il suon.

Willow, love, and joy!
A pitiful shadow approaches,
Forgetting my misfortunes,
To my urn;
Even the wind will not repeat the sounds
of my lament.

| | |
|---|--|
| Che dissi... | What I just said... |
| Ah m'ingannai!... | Ah, I made a mistake! |
| Non è del canto questo il lugubre fin. | This is not the sad end of the song. |
| M'a ascolta... | Listen to me... |
| Oh Dio! Qual mai strepito è questo!... | Oh, God! What is that noise...! |
| Qual presagio funesto! | What a terrible omen! |
| Io credeva che alcuno... | I believed that some... |
| Oh come il cielo s'unisce a'miei lamenti!... | Oh, heaven joins my lamentations!... |
| Ma stanca alfin di spargere, | But tired of pouring out |
| Mesti sospiri, e pianto, | Sad sighs and tears, |
| Morì l'afflitta vergine. | The suffering maiden died. |
| Morì... Che duol! | She died... What pain!... Ungrateful... |
| L'ingrato...L'ingrato... | Ungrateful!... |
| Ahimè! Che il pianto proseguir non mi fa. | Alas! That won't change anything. |
| [PREGHIERA] | [PRAYER] |
| Deh calma, o ciel, nel sono per poco le mie pene, | Oh, peace, oh heavens, my worries are short-lived, |
| Fa, che l'amato bene mi venga a consolar. | Let my beloved come to comfort me. |
| Se poi son vani I preghi, | If prayers prove futile, |
| Di mia breve urna in seno | For my swift urn in the bosom (of nature), |
| Di pianto venga almeno il cenere a bagnar, | At least let the ashes be wet with tears, |
| Si, si, il cenere a bagnar. | Yes, yes, wet with tears. ¹⁷³ |

The main technical problem I encountered at the very beginning of learning the piece was combining a *legato* phrase based on breathing with selective singing of individual coloratura groups. During the learning process, I focused on the precise execution of coloratura, while maintaining a stable and consistent breathing pattern, which is the foundation for *legato*, thanks to which the passages gained fluidity and articulatory coherence. Another difficulty for me was mastering a long phrase with a

¹⁷³ Own translation.

wide range, requiring stable sound production and inner calm during performance. With time spent studying, listening, and practicing the most problematic phrases, the muscles involved in the breathing process gained flexibility and strength.

The final part of the aria, starting at tact 218, is the climax and the most emotionally diverse section in the entire eighteen bars. Performing this section of the aria required me to use a wide range of technical and interpretative means in order to achieve the desired expressive effect. The transition from the tense beginning of the phrase *Ma stanca...* through the piano dynamics on the words *mori l'aflitta vergine*, reflecting suffering and resignation, through the depiction of crying and helplessness on the repetition of the words *ma stanca* in the phrase, where the sixteenth note groups are separated by pauses, to the climactic A flat on the word *l'ingrato*. After the high climactic note, there is a recitative commentary by the heroine *Ahimè! Che il pianto...* expressing a feeling of regret and surrender, which in turn is an emotional introduction to the *Prayer*. The *Preghiera* itself required me to be very calm in order to convey the spiritual nature of the piece. In this part of the scene, I had to control my breathing and manage it effectively more than at any other moment, while maintaining the *mezzo piano* dynamics in the initial phase of the first phrase. Throughout the performance of *Preghiera*, I tried to follow the dynamic markings written in the vocal part and pay attention to the markings intended for the instruments in order to convey Rossini's compositional intent as accurately as possible.

3.1.4 Angelina's aria *Nacqui all'affanno/Non più mesta* from Act II of the opera *La Cenerentola*

Dramma giocoso in two acts; libretto by Jacopo Ferretti. The work premiered in 1817¹⁷⁴.

The opera plot is based on the popular fairy tale of Cinderella. The story tells of Angelina, known as Cinderella, who is a good and modest girl living with her cruel stepfather, Don Magnifico. Although Don Magnifico favors his two vain daughters, Clorinda and Tisbe, it is Cenerentola who wins the heart of Prince Ramiro. In order to find a suitable wife, Prince Ramiro decides to pretend to be his servant while his actual servant, Dandini, plays the role of the prince. During a ball at the palace, Angelina, dressed in a beautiful gown, delights everyone. As in the fairy tale, she must leave the prince's palace before the guests begin to leave the ball. She leaves only a clue as to her

¹⁷⁴ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, Kraków 2015, p. 1362.

identity. Unlike the traditional fairy tale, Rossini's opera does not feature a magic slipper. Instead, Cinderella gives the prince a bracelet so that he can find her later. In the finale, Angelina's goodness, modesty and honesty are rewarded. The prince finds her, she forgives her family and becomes a princess. The finale is summed up by the aria *Nacqui all'affanno/ Non più mesta*, which captures the joy of the main character.

The characterization of Cinderella remains the same as in the fairy tale. Angelina is a young, beautiful, charming and graceful woman, endowed with a huge heart. Although she is treated badly by her stepfather and her two stepsisters, she does not repay them. She lives a simple life, performing the duties of a housewife and cleaning lady. She humbly endures all the moods of the household, without complaining. In moments of solitude, she dreams of a fairy-tale life, often singing a song about a king who found a good, innocent woman and took her as his wife. The main character, while singing the aforementioned song, does not yet know that the story in it will be prophetic.

The aria *Nacqui all'affanno/Non più mesta*, is the finale of the entire opera. It is a piece that sums up and describes the entire life of the main character. This work contains all the emotions that Angelina has carried in her heart over the years, which she now looks back on with the perspective of the passing of time and her found happiness. The main technical problem of the aria is the richness of coloratura, written in extensive scales, fast runs, large interval leaps and long phrases. An episode that deserves special attention is the section from bar 82 to the end of the aria's duration. This passage is the most challenging in terms of the requirements of the physiology of the human body, as it requires the work of particularly strong respiratory muscles, high performance condition and precise training of coloratura runs. I tried to train the aforementioned passages by singing them at a moderate tempo, reaching the target tempo. The goal of such preparation is to achieve maximum respiratory capacity and ensure selectivity and articulatory clarity of each coloratura.

Nacqui all'affanno e al pianto.
 Soffrì tacendo il core;
 ma per soave incanto,
 dell'età mia nel fiore,
 come un baleno rapido
 la sorte mia, la sorte mia cangiò.
 No, no! Tergete il ciglio.
 Perché tremar, perché?
 A questo sen volate,
 figlia, sorella, amica,
 Tutto, tutto, tutto, tutto trovate in me.

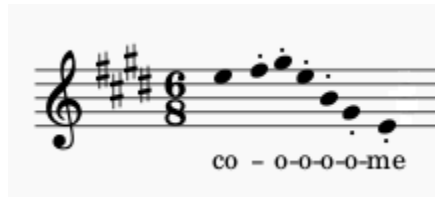
I was born to woe and weeping.
 My heart suffered in silence;
 But through a sweet enchantment,
 In the flower of my youth,
 Like a flash of lightening
 My luck changed.
 No, no! Wipe your tears.
 Why do you tremble, why?
 Rush to this breast;
 A daughter, a sister, a friend,
 All that you will find in me.

Non più mesta accanto al fuoco
 Starò sola a gorgheggiar, no!
 Ah fu un lampo, un sogno, un gioco
 Il mio lungo palpitar.

No longer sad by the fireplace
 Will I remain singing all alone.
 Ah, only an instant, a dream, a jest
 Was my long anguish¹⁷⁵.

The aria is in two parts. It consists of *cantabile Nacqui all'affanno*, and *cabaletta – Non più mesta*. The beginning of the piece should be performed in moderate dynamics and legato articulation, which is due to its expressive nature - the part refers to the difficult, sorrowful years in Angelina's life. Accordingly, in the passage occurring in tact 13, on the word *core* (Italian “heart”), I tried to convey the emotion of pain by gently reducing the projection and softening the climactic a^2 sound, performed in mezzo piano dynamics. In the aforementioned tact, singers, according to established performance practice, often add three notes to the passage. Namely, after a^2 , there is a gis^2 , fis^2 , gis^2 . In my interpretation, I decided to stay with the version written by the composer. Another change I decided on according to the rules introduced by Rossini is at the beginning of tact 23. Because of the repetition of elements that already existed in tact 19, I decided to express more clearly the character of the words *come un baleno* by adding coloratura on *staccato*, to convey the impression of lightness and elusiveness and the speed with which the flash appears.

¹⁷⁵ Narici I. (edition), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020, p. XVIII.



Example 39. Excerpt from the aria *Nacqui all'affanno/ Non più mesta* from the opera *Cinderella*

The next change I made is to drop the repetition of the word *rapido* in tact 24. I did this according to Rossini's rules. I replaced the word with the vowel “a,” which also captures the character of this tact, symbolizing the speed and lightness with which the flash appears, and how it suddenly disappears. At the fermata, which is also the moment of breakthrough between the parts of the piece, I chose a trill performed at a variable tempo as a form of cadence. In the actual beginning of the *cabaletta* - from the words *Non più mesta*, in tacts 57-59 and similarly in tacts 61-63, attention should be paid to the precise intonation of the score. Pauses create clarity in the sounding out of each note separately. The new phrase with the repetition of the words *non più mesta* in opposition to the first motive on these words should be performed *legato*, in moderate dynamics. In tact 73 I decided to add the sounds h, dis¹, fis¹, h¹ on the fermata. I carried out this procedure in accordance with the rules and performance practice. The introduction of these sounds intensifies the emotional expression of the negation, and at the same time provides a preparation for the next fast musical phrase.



Example 40. Excerpt from the aria *Nacqui all'affanno/ Non più mesta* from the opera *Cinderella* 1.

Tacts 78-81 are a repetition of the motif from tacts 66-69, and in accordance with the rules, I decided to make tact 81 more interesting by adding a passage composed of *staccato* notes.



Example 41. Excerpt from the aria *Nacqui all'affanno/ Non più mesta* from the opera *Cinderella* 2.

Tacts 98 to 102 are an analogy of the musical episode 89-93. Taking the opportunity to make changes in the repetition of the musical motif, I decided to vary the 101st tact with a passage reaching cis^3 in *staccato* articulation on the word *gioco*, in order to convey the emotions of happiness that are spreading the main character at this moment.



Example 44. Excerpt from the aria *Nacqui all'affanno/ Non più mesta* from the opera *Cinderella* 5.

For the rest of the aria's duration, I chose not to make any changes, despite the composer's acquiescence to them as well as performance practice. I decided that the material was so attractive and complicated in performance that I would sing the basic version, composed by Rossini. Tacts 110-111 and 116-117 deserve exceptional performance and analytical attention. These are passages in very high tessitura, containing a huge number of notes performed at a fast tempo. Special care should be taken not to isolate the passage in the h^2 approach, relying solely on the head register. One should also master the proper focus of the sound as well as the correct breathing *appoggio* while maintaining flexibility in the body. In light of the performance tradition associated with the realization of the final cadence, it is permitted to omit one or two bars immediately preceding the climactic sound, which I decided to take advantage of. After the exhausting part of the aria, I decided to leave two bars for the relief of the respiratory mechanism and a brief recovery, preparing for the approach and held h^2 sound that forms the bracket of the entire piece.

3.1.5 Elena's aria *Tanti affetti in tal momento* from Act II of the opera *Lady of the Lake*

A two-act *opera seria*. The opera's themes are based on a poem by Scottish poet Sir Walter Scott entitled *The Lady of the Lake*. The libretto was written by Andrea Leone Tottola. The premiere took place in 1819¹⁷⁶.

The stage action takes place in 16th century Scotland. The young girl Elena is the daughter of Douglas, the leader of the highlanders (highlanders of northern

¹⁷⁶Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1374.

Scotland), fighting against King James V. The girl is in love with Malcolm, a rebel warrior. Douglas, promised her hand to the hope of the highlanders – Rodrygo. King, seeing a beautiful girl by chance in the woods, falls in love with her, introducing himself as Uberto. Unluckily for the king, Elena is in love with Malcolm, a young warrior. During a meeting in the forest, the king confesses his love to Elena, and although she sincerely declares that she is in love with another, the king hands her a ring. The whole situation is seen by Rodrygo and he challenges the entire clan of Uberto (King James V) to a duel. Rodrygo dies in the duel, and the entire rebel army fails. Elena's father gives himself up to the King. Elena, during an audience with the King, recognizes in him the honest and worthy suitor Uberto. Using a ring given by him, she asks for mercy for her people. The King agrees to the girl's request. In the final scene, James V gives the hand of the beautiful Elena to Malcolm, and she sings the aria *Tanti affetti*.

Tanti affetti in tal momento
 mi si fanno al core intorno,
 che l'immenso mio content,
 io non posso a te spiegar.
 Deh! Il silenzio sia loquace...
 Tutto dica un tronco accento...
 Ah, Signor! La bella pace
 tu sapesti a me donar.

So much affection in this moment
 Sorrounds my heart,
 That my happiness is so great
 I cannot describe it to you.
 Ah! Let the silence be eloquent...
 Let a brief word say it all...
 Ah, lord! What wonderful peace
 You have given me!

Fra il padre e fra l'amante...
 Oh, qual beato istante!
 Ah! Chi sperar potea
 tanta felicità!

Between my father and my lover,
 Oh, what a blessed moment!
 Ah! Whoever could have hoped
 For so much happiness¹⁷⁷!

Elena is a young, beautiful woman, filled with empathy, sincerity, honesty and courage. Although her character becomes the object of intrigue and jealousy from suitors (much like Desdemona in the opera *Othello* discussed earlier), she maintains loyalty to her family, honesty with herself and others. She is characterized by

¹⁷⁷ Narici I. (edition), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020, p. XIX.

patriotism, while at the same time she has to fight an internal battle between the feelings she is haggling over towards her homeland and family and her love for a man who is on the other side of the barricade (similar to Anna from the opera *Mahomet II*, which I write about in the next section). Her pure intentions are rewarded in the opera's finale, resulting in Elena's great joy, which she expresses in the aria *Tanti affetti*.

Elena's aria is undoubtedly one of the most demanding arias in every aspect of singing technique. It contains the widest sonic ambitus within short musical sections relative to the other arias I have selected. An example illustrating the above statement is, for example, tact 74, which in the coloratura course contains a span of more than two octaves from a to b^2 . This piece makes a whole series of demands on the singer, from a stable, efficient breathing apparatus, through balanced registers and a wide scale, to a very good condition and the ability to convey emotions at particular moments of the work. However, the aria is composed by Rossini in such a way that the complex musical sections are separated by instrumental passages in which the singer can momentarily regenerate the singing apparatus.

When beginning preparations for the performance of the aforementioned aria, it was necessary to study the musical material in depth in order to achieve full intonation precision and confidence in the realization of each note. The performance of this aria was both a significant artistic challenge for me and the realization of a long-awaited interpretive goal, the subject of personal performance aspirations.

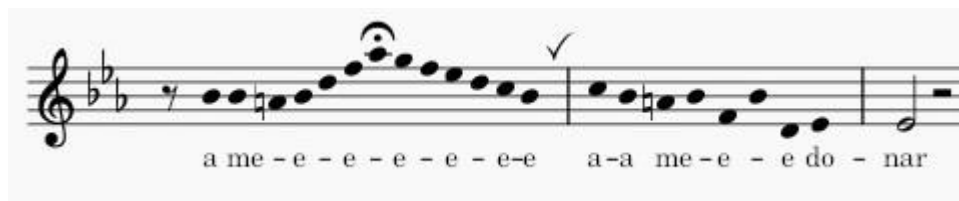
Tanti affetti, is, like Rosina's or Angelina's aria, in two parts. It consists of a *cantabile* section and a *cabaletta*. The entire *cantabile* section should be performed very precisely intonationally as well as rhythmically, since the accompaniment, from tact 4 to tact 25, does not change rhythmic values, moreover, it is maintained from the beginning of bar 4 in *piano pianissimo* dynamics. The above components give the impression of purity and uniformity. The piano (or orchestra) layer provides a musical background to the speech of the singer, who stands in the foreground, so any inaccuracy of the note material will be heard. When preparing to make the recording, I had to pay great attention to textual fluidity and uniformity. Episodes of the singer's speech are punctuated by pauses. Thanks to the presence of pauses, the performer gains the opportunity to physically prepare for the next section of the piece and to take a calm, deep breath. However, care must be taken to ensure that these pauses do not lead to fragmentation of the musical phrase, which could disrupt its logical and coherent flow in the context of the overall musical statement. I tried to conduct the beginning of the

aria with calmness. I wanted to convey the emotions of disbelief and surprise in the face of the circumstances, as well as the subtly delineated, deeply experienced joy that accompanies the character of Elena at any given dramatic moment. Initially, a major challenge for me was to perform selectively and at the right tempo the two identical passages from tacts 14 and 16. In the course of preparation, by singing these elements at a variable tempo, I managed to achieve the desired effect. Despite the fact that the aforementioned passages are identical in structure, I did not choose to make changes to either of them, as I felt they were so complex in their structure and attractive to the listener that it was not necessary. On the other hand, the change I made is a variation in the last group of thirty-two in tact 19, in which two identical musical elements occur side by side. In order to add variety to the phrase, and thus add feeling to the word *donar*, I decided to perform this group by expanding it.



Example 45. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *Lady of the Lake* 6.

In tacts 21 and 23, in the course of working on the material, a difficulty arose related to the optimal placement of the breath so as not to disrupt the continuity of the coloratura passage and to avoid the effect of suggesting respiratory fatigue or performance tension. While working on the piece, I came to the conclusion that the most effective place to perform the breath in tacts 21 and 23 is the space between the words *sapesti* (breath) and *me*. At the same time, I decided to phonetically combine the conjunct *a* with the following word *me*, which allowed the next coloratura element to begin naturally with an open consonant, promoting fluency and articulatory clarity. Starting from tact 26, the texture of the accompaniment changes and the dynamics increase to *forte fortissimo*. The aforementioned dynamics determines to achieve a similar dynamic degree in the singer, which generates increased airflow. Due to the dynamic change and respiratory exploitation, I decided to end the word *sapesti* at the first value of tact 27, then start it again in the next coloratura. In view of the free execution of the cadence, I abandoned the composer's notation given in tact 29 in favor of my own creative invention.



Example 46. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *Lady of the Lake* 7.

While working on the cabaletta, due to the performance difficulties it provides, I decided not to add any variables to it and perform the base material given by the composer. The beginning of this movement should be performed calmly, describing what is taking place in the drama of this moment of the work and conveying the emotions of surprise and joy, the fullness of which is reflected in the passage in tacts 42-43. Special attention should be paid to the end of the coloratura, which is a two-octave leap from h^2 to h . While maintaining the brilliance of the upper tone, keep the lower h sounding and equal in tone. From tact 46th to 53rd follows the first utterance of the words *Ah. Chi sperar potea, tanta felicità!* being the foundation of the text, which is subjected to variations by the composer during the course of the aria. The purpose of repeating the above phrase several times is to show the heroine's joy as extensively as possible in the many coloraturas expressing it, which at the same time are a vocal display. Accordingly, these first bars should be sung according to Rossini's marking. From tact 61st to 67th we have the first change on the mentioned words, which become the theme of each subsequent musical transformation.

During the preparation of the musical material, I tried to realize the marked musical arcs of the mentioned bars as accurately as possible. In tact 65, I took advantage of the chaperones specified by the composer to repeat the word, while preserving the notation of the passage. The second variation of the theme revealed a performance difficulty related to the passage in tact 70, requiring special articulatory precision. Initially, I encountered difficulty in smoothly descending to the h sound, and then in realizing the ascending intervals - fifths and thirds, alternately - leading to the f^2 sound while maintaining a uniform, even tone of voice throughout the melodic passage. The 74th tact, as I mentioned at the beginning, vividly exposes the breadth of the scale. In the course of preparation, I aimed to maintain maximum fluidity and equalization in timbre throughout the entire duration of the coloratura. Wanting to achieve the desired goal in this tact, I decided to take a breath in the middle of the phrase's duration, in such a way as not to disturb its fluidity. The next tact, i.e. the 75th, which includes the word

felicità, is completely identical to tact 52. With the repetition of this uncomplicated musical phrase, I thought I could make it more interesting and start the descent with the as^2 sound.



Example 47. Excerpt from the aria *Tanti affetti* from the opera *Lady of the Lake* 8.

In the third variation, from tact 84 onward, there are extended coloratura processions with a descending direction. This treatment conveys Elena's strenuous effort to control her emotions, as evidenced by the long and broad phrase beginning in bar 88 and ending in tact 90. It is a coloratura march consisting of semitones from h to b^2 , performed on a single breath with attention to the actual preservation of the semitone notation. The fourth variation of the theme, is quite similar to the second, and as a result, in place of the extensive coloratura from tact 97, I decided to repeat the very attractive coloratura from tact 74. The fifth entry of the variation theme is written for the most part in a tessitura intended for the soprano, and as a result, it provided me with the most performance as well as intonation difficulties for the rest of the aria's duration. In this movement one can find similarities of modifications of previous entrances of the theme. Here you will find fast runs combined with interval leaps, as well as gamut passages consisting of sequentially arranged notes of the scale. In the sixth variation, there is no opportunity for even a momentary respiratory recovery, as the fifth modification flows into it smoothly and without a clear caesura, which significantly increases the level of performance difficulty and places high demands on the singer's respiratory fitness and continuity of phrasing. It culminates in the last-eighth entry of the words *Ah! Chi sperar potea, tanta felicità*, in which the tessitura is maintained within b^1 - b^2 , where b^2 is held in the main cadence.

Although there is a performance practice in this aria in which singers change entire musical phrases at will, due to the high technical requirements and complexity in the construction of the piece, I decided to stay with the version proposed by Rossini, which I feel is excellent.

3.1.6 Anna's aria *Giusto ciel, in tal periglio* from Act I of the opera *Muhammad II*

Mohammed II is an opera in two acts. The libretto was written by Cesare della Valle. The opera premiered in 1820¹⁷⁸.

The action takes place in the city of Negropont, which is under siege by the Turks. The council of the Venetian colony, headed by Paolo Erisso, is considering a strategy against the enemy – Mehmed II, who is besieging the capital. Anna's father's loyal officer, Condulmiero, suggests surrendering, but the young soldier Calbo wants to fight and inspires the entire army to do so. They prepare to fight the enemy. Erisso, impressed by the courage of the young Calbo, decides to introduce him to his daughter Anna and give him her hand in marriage. However, the girl declares that there is someone else in her heart. While in Corinth, she met a young man named Uberto, with whom she fell in love, but she did not know that Uberto was actually Muhammad II. The battle begins. The terrified women begin to pray, and Anna sings *Giusto ciel*. Unfortunately, Muhammad II wins the battle. Anna's father and Calbo are taken captive. The ruler decides to release the young warrior in exchange for Anna's hand in marriage. Although the girl recognizes Muhammad as her beloved, she cannot agree and remains loyal to her father, while assuring Muhammad that she reciprocates his feelings. Muhammad goes into battle and gives Anna a ring. Her father and Calbo hide in Anna's mother's underground tomb. The girl gives her father and Calbo the ring and two Turkish clothes so that they can escape. While in the tomb, as a sign of devotion and patriotism, Anna marries the young soldier, after which the young man from Erisso and she flee. When the Turks, after a victorious battle, find the girl in the tomb, Mohammed demands the return of the ring. Anna knows that she will be killed. The girl, wanting to show her loyalty one last time before her death, turns to Mahomet and informs him that her husband and father were supposed to return the ring to him in battle, and then commits suicide on her mother's grave.

Anna is a tragic heroine, combining the traits of a lyrical heroine and a strong patriot, which makes her one of the most interesting characters in Rossini's operas. She is a young, sensitive, loyal, and strong woman. Above all, she values honor. She is ready to nobly give her life and renounce love for her country, remaining faithful to her father and homeland.

¹⁷⁸Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1377.

The aria *Giusto ciel in tal periglio* is the shortest of the arias I have chosen for my artistic project. However, despite its short length, this piece is not without technical difficulties. It is the only aria among those selected that begins in a double octave. It is composed of long, calm phrases, which require flexible but effective breath control. The demanding breathing technique is combined with increasing tension in the climactic moments, oscillating on transitional notes in a double octave. To add to the difficulty, these notes are often long and developing – *piena di voce*. A perfect example is measures 16 (with the upbeat) to 21, in which the dynamics develop, so that in measure 17, on the notes E flat² and F sharp², and similarly in measures 20, 34, and 37, leading to forte and closing the phrase with a run in a dynamic similar to *mezzo piano* on the word *pietà*. The notes in this aria also require coloratura, in particular the sextuplets in measures 14 and 31. Sextuplet groups should not be treated rigidly metrically – their realization should take into account phrasing and internal motorics, which give them direction and musical vitality. The same applies to the triplets repeated in tacts 17, 34, and 37.

While listening to other performances in preparation for the best possible realization of the material, I came across some textual changes. In practice, the words *non m'avanza* and *non ci avanza* (tacts 10-11, 27-28) and *implorer la tua* and *che gemendo implorare* (tacts 16-17, 33-34) are used interchangeably. Textual transformations can facilitate performance by reducing the breathing load associated with a less demanding phonetic system. In my performance of the aria in question, I decided to stick to the text provided by the publisher Ricordi.

Another aspect I would like to mention is the fact that this aria contains many repeated motifs, which could theoretically be embellished further. In my interpretation, I decided not to do so. The reason for sticking to the composer's original score is the character that the aria is supposed to reflect, as intended by the composer. This piece is an expression of prayer. In my opinion, simplicity is the fundamental source of expression in this piece, whose prayerful character requires a quieting of the means of performance in favor of the inner intensity of the message.

Giusto ciel, in tal periglio,
più consiglio,
più speranza
non m' avanza,
che piangendo,
che gemendo
implorar la tua pietà...

Righteous heaven, in such danger
No better wisdom,
No more hope
Remains to me
Than, crying
And moaning,
To implore your mercy¹⁷⁹.

3.1.7 Semiramide's aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* from Act I of the opera *Semiramide*

A two-act opera seria. The work is based on Voltaire's tragedy *Sémiramis*. The libretto was written by Gaetano Rossi. The work premiered in 1823¹⁸⁰.

Semiramide, ruler of Babylon, is to appoint a successor to the late king, her husband Ninus, whom she killed with the help of Prince Assur. Assur is the new candidate for king. When Semiramis is about to announce him as the newly elected king, lightning strikes. The high priest declares that the king will only be chosen when a messenger arrives from Memphis. Semiramis awaits Arsaces, who is to return from the battlefield and with whom she is in love, singing *Bel raggio lusinghier*. The young man returns from war, but he does not share the queen's feelings. The man loves Princess Anzema, who, during the lifetime of King Ninus, was betrothed to his son Ninias. It turns out that Assur is also courting Anzema. Semiramide has a dream in which she falls in love with a young knight and is convinced that it is Arsaces, not knowing that she is his mother. The queen proclaims the young man the new king and her future husband. As she does so, lightning strikes again and the ghost of the deceased king appears, saying that he will become ruler, but must descend into the royal crypt. The high priest crowns Arsaces, revealing to him the truth that he is the son of King Ninus, the missing Ninias. When Semiramis learns that the young man she has fallen in love with is her son, she begs him to take her life. The queen descends into her husband's crypt to pray. The high priest orders the new king to descend into the tomb and promises that the gods will guide his hands. The high priest orders Arsaces to attack, and Arsaces, thinking that he is attacking Assur, unfortunately kills his own mother.

¹⁷⁹ Narici I. (edition), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020, p. XX.

¹⁸⁰ Kamiński P., *Tysiąc i jedna opera*, PWM, Kraków 2015, p. 1380.

Semiramis is a tragic heroine. She is powerful and skilled at manipulating people. She kills her own husband for power. She is torn between her feelings and absolute power. Although she is a ruler and has an entire kingdom under her control, she is in fact a lonely woman. When she begins to realize the mistakes she has made in the past, it is too late to fix them, and she falls victim to her own intrigues. When she learns that Arsaces is her son, she realizes the deeds she has committed and is ready to face the consequences. Semiramide is the opposite of most of Rossini's leading female characters. She is a mature woman. She is neither honest nor fair. She is a woman with a dark past, upon whom justice is served.

The aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* is one of Rossini's most famous showpiece arias. It is peppered with long, elaborate coloraturas. Like all Rossini's works, it requires the singer to have a wide range, good stamina, and perfect *appoggio*. None of the arias I have selected contain such long, successive coloraturas as the one currently under discussion. This is well illustrated by the sheet music from tact 86 to 98, which shows complex coloratura passages requiring precise articulation and intonation control.

While preparing this aria, I encountered many performance problems. One of the basic difficulties at the initial stage of work was the need to achieve respiratory efficiency that would allow for the smooth execution of long musical phrases, without signs of respiratory tension or weakening of the voice at the end of the phrase. I sought to achieve a balance between activating the muscles involved in voice production and their functional relaxation, enabling free and dynamic vocal performance. The aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* is written in a fairly high tessitura. Due to the demanding high register of the piece, I had to pay special attention to the integration of registers. In the initial phase of practicing the piece, there was a separation of the head register, which led to a disturbance in the *appoggio* breathing and a loss of stability in the sound, as well as uniformity in tone.

Bel raggio lusinghier
di speme e di piacer
alfin per me brillò:
Arsace ritornò, sì, a me verrà.
Quest'alma che sinor
gemé, tremò, languì...

Beautiful alluring beam
Of hope and pleasure,
In the end, it shone for me:
Arsace returned, yes, he will come to me.
This heart which up to now
Mourned, trembled, languished...

Oh! come respirò!
 Ogni mio duol sparì,
 dal cor, dal mio pensier
 si dileguò il terror...
 Bel raggio lusinghier
 di speme, di piacer
 alfin per me brillò:
 Arsace ritornò, - Qui a me verrà .

Oh! How it sighed!
 All pain vanished
 From my heart; from my thoughts
 The fear disappeard!
 Beautiful alluring beam
 Of hope and pleasure,
 In the end, it shone for me:
 Arsace returned, yes, he will come to me.

La calma a questo cor
 Arsace renderà :
 Arsace ritornò, qui a me verrà ...

Peace to his heart
 QArsace will bring.
 Arsace returned, and will come here to
 me!

Dolce pensiero
 di quell'istante,
 a te sorride L'amante cor.
 Come più caro,
 Dopo il tormento,
 È il bel momento
 Di gioia e amor!

Osweet thought
 Of that moment
 Upon you smiles
 This loving heart.
 How much more precious,
 After the anguish,
 Is the wonderful moment
 Of joy and love¹⁸¹!

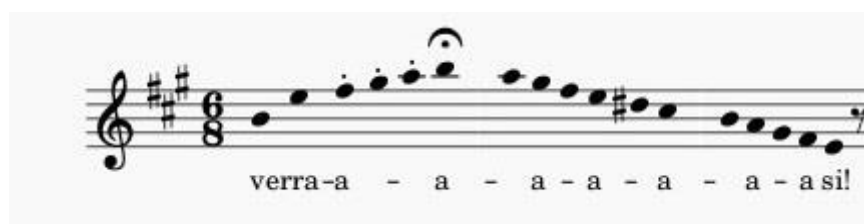
When beginning the performance, the phrase should be sung as smoothly as possible, without any accents that could disrupt its coherence. The text, in combination with the interpretation of the musical score, should express the joy and hope of a mature woman – a person who is emotionally stable, self-aware, conscious of her expectations, and sure-footed. In order to consistently convey the emotional musical phrase in the further course of the aria, and to maintain a sense of balance, I decided to omit the ornamentation, which is a group of three sixteenth notes in tact 12. Next, in order to emphasize the description of the heroine's feelings in the words *gemé*, *tremò*, *languì*, I decided to emphasize the consonant “t” and add an ornament resulting from performance practice on the word *languì*.

¹⁸¹ Narici I. (edition), *Ricordi Opera Anthology Mezzo-soprano*, Ricordi, Milano 2020, p. XX.



Example 48. Excerpt from the aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* from the opera *Semiramida*

The motifs contained in tacts 17 and 19 show structural similarity; however, it was decided not to modify either of them. When performing the passage leading up to the note a^2 , I tried to pay particular attention to achieving fluidity and a uniform tone color. In measure 22, I encountered a difficulty related to the sustained high tessitura in the piano dynamic. The words in the musical phrase covering measures 22-24 are separated by pauses, which makes it even harder to get a melody line that feels light to the listener. These pauses can cause pressure in the respiratory column, which leads to separation of the head register and loss of breath connection. In order to maintain a correct, flexible breathing path, it is necessary to strengthen the muscles while keeping the body flexible and to relax the jaw in order to maintain the correct sound position. Each of the successive musical phrases of the cantabile part should be performed legato with calmness in order to convey Semiramide's emotional maturity. In order to emphasize the importance of the words *verrà*, expressing the joy and slight impatience of the main character, I decided to perform a coloratura in the cadence ending the cantabile, with h^2 as the climactic note. In many performances, I have noticed that singers, regardless of voice type, perform this cadence by singing h^2 . So I decided to apply this performance tradition in my final term as well.



Example 49. Fragment from the aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* from the opera *Semiramida* 1.

The *cabaletta* should begin at a tempo that is comfortable for the singer, but close to *allegro*. This is an important performance element, as it determines the tempo of the return of the theme in tact 77 and thus the long coloratura passages covering, for example, bars 85-89. Allegretto ranges between 104 and 120 BPM. In my interpretation, I considered the most optimal performance tempo to be around 94 beats per minute (BPM). I tried to keep the beginning of the cabaletta at a moderate dynamic.

The first performance difficulty that appears in tact 56 is three eighth notes in staccato articulation on the note e². The sound, located in the higher tessitura in the articulation, initially caused too much air pressure, which meant that I could not maintain the tension and often isolated the head register while stiffening my jaw. In the process of preparing the aria, I tried to make my breathing more flexible and reduce the tension in my body and jaw, which resulted in a more even tone. The use of appropriately light articulation of the aforementioned eighth notes prepares me for the performance of the complex and breath-demanding coloratura covering measures 57-60. The aforementioned coloratura passages posed a challenge for me in terms of performance. I devoted a significant amount of time to these passages alone. Initially, my breathing apparatus was not efficient enough to perform the entire passage at the target tempo. The key issue turned out to be maintaining controlled diaphragmatic-rib breathing. The vocal apparatus required systematic training of the muscles involved in maintaining a correct, flexible breathing path in order to adapt to the specific exertional requirements of a given musical phrase. Another aspect that needed to be worked on was tact 64, which, after a long passage, was performed at too slow a tempo, caused by exertion and the desire for quick recovery. In the course of the work, as the muscles became accustomed to performing extensive coloratura, this bar was also stabilized rhythmically. Between the end of the first run on the words *Dolce pensiero* and the second introduction of these words, the composer wrote a substantial orchestration fragment, which gives the singer time to regenerate her entire vocal apparatus. The second introduction of the theme begins with the note e², over which a fermata is written, on the word *Ah!* To reinforce the emotion and affectation of the aforementioned word – a sigh – I decided to perform a cadenza.



Example 50. Fragment of the aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* from the opera *Semiramida 2*.

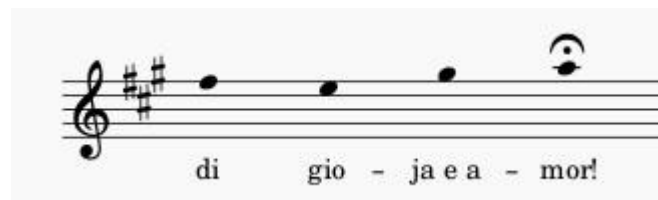
After performing the cadence, I began, as I did on my first entrance, with the phrase from e¹ on the third beat of the tact. This cadence is based both on the composer's permission and on performance practice. The musical and textual continuation in tacts 78-85 is a repetition of the first motif from tacts 48-56. In this context, the composer

allows the singer to introduce variations, which I decided to take advantage of by modifying measures 78 and 79 as follows:



Example 51. Fragment of the aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* from the opera *Semiramida* 3.

I think that the changes in the direction of the passages give the impression of refreshing the musical material in the repeated phrase, lending lightness and reinforcing the interpretative impression of the heroine's lyrical reverie. In the rest of the aria, I decided not to embellish the musical material, even though it is permitted. The composer's score is so interesting and demanding in terms of performance that I decided to stick with it. I was also prompted to do so by the fact that after the passage in tacts 91-93, the composer adds a further coloratura sequence that does not appear earlier (tacts 94-95), so it should be performed in the original score. In tacts 97-98, it is possible to create variations from the aforementioned bars. Despite this, I decided to perform Rossini's score consistently. In the final section of the aria, as in Isabella's aria *Cruda sorte!*, in accordance with performance practice, I omitted measure 105 in order to sing the climactic note a^2 in the final cadence.



Example 52. Excerpt from the aria *Bel raggio lusinghier* from the opera *Semiramida* 4.

SUMMARY

The aim of my dissertation was to present current performance practice in the context of independent artistic expression in seven selected arias from Gioacchino Rossini's operas. In my dissertation, I included a compositional outline and a description of the vocal issues in selected works. I also outlined the differences in the performances of individual arias, looking through the prism of the type of voice that performs a given piece, and included examples. I described the performance principles for Rossini's arias as well as performance practice. In the description of the artistic work, I included and explained the rationale behind the changes made to the musical material of selected works. I described and presented a graphic record of the elements that underwent transformation.

While researching sheet music and recordings, I tried to find an answer to the question posed at the beginning of my dissertation: **Does the current performance practice differ from the performance traditions that have developed over the years?** After thoroughly delving into the performance issues of selected works, I came to the conclusion that current performance practice does not differ from the performance traditions shaped over the years. Despite the performance guidelines set by the composer, it is still possible to hear performances that deviate significantly from Rossini's criteria, thus creating new musical passages that involuntarily transform into performance traditions. The performance of the works in question varies and will always vary when viewed through the prism of the voice that performs a given aria, adapting it to its vocal conditions.

The selection of repertoire and the order of pieces were carefully considered by me and arranged in chronological order of their creation. In my opinion, the recorded artistic work is a successful synthesis of performance tradition and the principles of interpretation formulated by Gioacchino Rossini.

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