

"Largo al factotum" from Gioachino Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*:

A Study of Ornamentation and Performance Practice

by

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ABSTRACT

From the time it was written, the aria "Largo al factotum" from Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* has been performed and ornamented in many different ways. The present study is an inventory and analysis of ornaments sung in 33 recordings from 1900 to 2011 and the major differences that they exhibit one from another. The singers in this study are baritones with international careers, who have performed the role of Figaro either at the Metropolitan Opera (New York) or at La Scala (Milan). The study identifies and tracks some of the changes in the ornamentation of the aria by noting common traits and new approaches across the one hundred eleven years of practice illustrated by the recordings.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper and project to my wife, Kristin Briggs, my parents, Mark and Christine Briggs, Richard and Karen Chamberlain and Cathy Chamberlain, my family, and my children.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the arias many young baritones study at length is “Largo al factotum,” from Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Singers may notice that many of the well-known baritones do not sing the same ornaments, and furthermore, that the ornaments sung are often not in the score. This led to this study and analysis of selected ornaments used in “Largo al factotum” during the age of recordings, 1900 through the present day. The author chose to limit the study to baritones who have both recorded the aria and performed the role of Figaro in *Il barbiere* either at La Scala in Milan, or at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

During the *bel canto* era of 19th-century Italian opera, singers were expected to supply ornaments for use in performance, often with advice from composers or vocal coaches. Skill in improvising these ornaments in performance was gained through extensive study and rehearsal. Ornamentation choices varied from night to night, depending on the singer’s vocal health, audience response, and other similar factors.

The embellishments were featured in the artist’s aria, whether rehearsed or improvised. Many arias from the baroque and classical periods were composed with segments of the melody repeated, or with a melody that could be easily embellished. When a section or melody was repeated in a baroque *da capo* aria, for example, the performer was expected to interpolate his own ornaments -- whether predetermined or improvised -- to showcase strengths, virtuosity, and musicianship. In the late classical and early romantic periods, Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868), Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), and other early nineteenth century composers

understood that these surviving conventions would lead to the embellishment of their music. In *Embellished Opera Arias*¹ A.R. Caswell, a scholar of opera performance practice, documents ornamentation practices from the *bel canto* era by Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865), a soprano who performed many Rossini roles. Similar written records and notebooks provide valuable examples of the types of ornaments that were used by singers of this period. Many records exist that also provide recommended ornaments from the composer himself.² Following opera premieres, Rossini wrote notes and ornaments in separate notebooks for dilettantes. Rossini took care to compose ornaments catering to the strengths of each performer. A plethora of resources exist for female roles, but ornamentation provided for male roles, the baritone in particular, is much more limited.

An analysis of one of the most popular arias written for baritone provides a unique and entertaining challenge. Of the *bel canto* male roles, the baritone role of Figaro is among the most well known in the operatic repertoire. Figaro's aria is frequently heard in auditions, recitals, and concerts; however, it has also appeared in cartoons, movies, and commercials, which has made it recognizable to the opera novice.

Very seldom are the ornaments in Figaro's aria performed the same way by different performers. This analysis will not only bring knowledge of performance practice in "Largo al factotum" to singers preparing or performing the role or aria, but

¹ Austin B. Caswell ed., *Embellished Opera Arias: Recent Researches in the Music of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries* (Madison: AR Editions, Inc., 1989), 126.

² Gioachino Rossini, Embellishments for *Tancredi*, "Lasciami: non t'ascolto," in folder entitled "Cadenze per Giuditta Pasta," Cary Collection 170, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, found in Caswell, *Embellished Opera Arias: Recent Researches in the Music of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, xiii.

will give insight to other voice types as well. Timing, correct placement, and appropriate usage of ornaments and cadenzas are skills and techniques applicable to all singers.

Ornamentation has been an accepted and expected practice since the beginning of opera, as evidenced by surviving embellishments in the aria “Possente spirto,” from Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* (1607).

Christoph Willibald Gluck was one of the prominent composers linking the baroque and classical periods. During this time, men like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), and Francesco Algarotti (1712-1764) began to call for a reform in art, and a return to simplicity. The most influential, Algarotti, wrote a treatise in 1755 entitled *Saggio sopra l’opera in musica* (Treatise on the Opera), which undoubtedly influenced Gluck.

Gluck and others believed that singers were no longer using ornamentation to serve the drama and text, but rather destroying the art form by adding superfluous ornaments to showcase their own vocal talents. Gluck wrote a preface to his opera *Alceste*, another example of “simplicity, truth and naturalness.”³ In the preface, he explained the direction of opera reform he and his librettist Ranieri de Calzabigi (1714-1795) had taken, and encouraged others to do the same. Gluck explained:

I have sought to restrict music to its true purpose of serving the poetry, as regards the expression, and the situations of the fable, without interrupting the action or chilling it with useless and superfluous ornaments, and I have believed

³ Klaus Hortschansky, ed., “Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck” Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/11301pg11?q=alceste+preface+gluck&search=quick&pos=4&start=1#firsthit> (accessed July 24, 2013).

that it could do the same thing [for the poetry] as vivacity of color and a well-varied contrast of light and shade do for a correct and well-ordered drawing, serving to animate the figures without altering their contours. Thus I have wanted neither to stop an actor in the greatest heat of the dialogue in order to wait for a tiresome ritornello, nor to stop in the middle of a word on a favourable vowel, nor to show off the agility of his beautiful voice in a long *passagio*, nor to wait for the orchestra to give him time to recover his breath for a cadenza. I did not believe it my duty to pass over the second, and perhaps most impassioned and important, part of an aria [text]...in order to give the singer the opportunity of showing that he can vary a passage in a number of capricious ways...⁴

Some composers and audience members, like the baroque singer and teacher Pier Francesco Tosi (1654-1732), have documented that the practice could easily be abused. Tosi explains, “on the last Cadence, the Throat is set a going, like a Weather-cock in a Whirlwind, and the *Orchestra* yawns.”

An informative account by Giuseppe Radiciotti (1858-1928), a Rossini biographer, relates how Rossini felt about ornamentation involving the young singer Adelina Patti (1843-1919). When Patti sang the aria “Una voce poco fa” from *Il barbiere* for Maestro Rossini, “enriched with ornamentations, roulades and cadenzas,” a smiling Rossini asked her who had written the aria she had just performed so beautifully. Radicotti explains, “To cheer up the disconcerted young lady, the maestro improvised a

⁴ Klaus Hortschansky, “Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck” Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/11301pg11?q=alceste+preface+gluck&search=quick&pos=4&start=1#firsthit> (accessed July 24, 2013).

paraphrase on the name of her singing teacher, the impresario Maurizio Strakosch (1825-1887): “Non l’ho riconosciuta, perché probabilmente è stata cambiata dal vostro professore che l’ha...*Strakoschonné!*” (I have not recognized it because probably it has been changed by your professor, who has...Strakoschonized it).⁵

Despite the reform in opera, performers in the early 19th century eventually began to incorporate ornaments more consistently in their performances. As a result of these performance practices, singers since then have been faced with the decision of whether or not to add ornaments to the arias they perform. As performers began singing ornaments in the same places, those ornaments became expected.

Early audio recordings from cylinders and records have also aided in creating this expectation. Upon hearing ornaments on recordings, many singers and conductors began expecting more than that which was printed in the score. As recordings from famous performers became available to the public, audience members and performers came to view those combinations of ornaments to be the standard. The performers of the time were then judged against these standards. The singer then chose either to follow the same ornaments that had been recorded, invent new ornaments of his own, or perform a combination of the two.

⁵ Strakosch-ed, or Strakosch-ized it. Giuseppe Radiciotti, *Gioacchino Rossini*, (Milan: 1923), 124, quoted in Gioachino Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, ed. Alberto Zedda, (Milan: Ricordi, 1969), XIV.

CHAPTER 2

BEL CANTO ORNAMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Will Crutchfield describes ornamentation in the *bel canto* period by explaining, “*Il barbiere di Siviglia* was composed at a time when liberal variation of vocal lines was still central to operatic interpretation, to the public’s appreciation of performances, and to the singer’s craft.”⁶ The practice of adding ornaments began during the Renaissance period (c1430-c1600).⁷ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the intent of the ornamentation was to “decorate” the vocal line by adding scale passages, trills, mordents, or appoggiaturas to the melodic line. It was customary for soloists to embellish the chorus, refrain, or a repeated section of a song to showcase their vocal strengths.

Coloratura, the Italian word meaning “to color,” or “to add color to,”⁸ can be added to an aria in a number of ways. One way is to establish patterns, known as turns or *gruppetti*⁹, that repeat at different intervals. These may follow diatonic or chromatic scales up or down with small variations.

To provide more musical or dramatic contrast, a *cabaletta* section, the final close section of an aria or duet in 19th Century Italian opera, may require a significant departure

⁶ Will Crutchfield, *Il barbiere di Siviglia: Works of Gioachino Rossini*, Appendix, 361.

⁷ “Renaissance,” Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/23192?q=renaissance+&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit> (accessed April 2, 2013).

⁸ Owen Jander, Ellen T. Harris, “Coloratura,” Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/06154?q=coloratura&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit> (accessed April 2, 2013).

⁹ “Gruppetti - Small groups,” Google Translate, <http://translate.google.com> (accessed August 10, 2013).

from the melody.¹⁰ Many times these lines were given a more intricate variation, further setting it apart from the original melodic material. This would involve a completely altered melodic line, rather than one or two notes being changed in the original melody.

Another reason to alter the melody is when “the vocal line takes the form of *fioritur[a]* over simple chordal accompaniment.”¹¹¹² In this case, singers may change or exchange one melodic passage or theme for another, and insert them *ad libitum*. This was done to accommodate the melody to the singer's own voice, or for “the sake of surprise and variety,” as Crutchfield states.¹³

Singers used ornaments to accommodate their range and tessitura. Singers and composers used *puntatura*, or the practice of adding unstemmed note heads or *punti* above or below the melodic line to mark notes, in order to accommodate for differences in tessitura. In this manner, if a singer's voice was too low for the role of Figaro, or too high for the role of Rosina, a few passages could be slightly altered with *puntatura* to make the role more accessible for the singer. By changing the tessitura, the singer could then showcase certain strengths and abilities that he could not have before accomplished.

The art of improvising florid embellishments reached its height during the *bel canto* era. Once, when called upon to read an aria for a new opera, Manuel Garcia, the tenor who premiered the role of Almaviva in *Barbieri*, sight-read the aria perfectly. The

¹⁰ Don Michael Randel, *Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music*, “cabaletta” (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 75.

¹¹ “Fioritura – Flowering,” (Embellishment), Google Translate, <http://translate.google.com/#auto/en/fioritura>, (accessed April 24, 2014).

¹² Crutchfield, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, 361.

¹³ Crutchfield, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, 361.

composer however was disappointed with Garcia's exact execution and lack of interpretation, and promptly asked Garcia to improvise his own ornaments in the aria. Upon hearing the ornamented aria, the composer expressed his great delight in Garcia's interpretation, stating that that was what he had intended. Donald Jay Grout states, "It must never be forgotten, in dealing with Italian opera of this period, that everything depends on the singers. Composers most often wrote their parts with certain singers in mind, and many a melody that looks banal enough on the page becomes luminous with meaning when sung by one who understands the Italian *bel canto* and the traditions of this type of opera."¹⁴

¹⁴ Donald Jay Grout, Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 395.

CHAPTER 3

WHY FIGARO?

Very few *bel canto* operas have remained as popular as Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (i.e. *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *L'Elisir d'amore* by Donizetti have been performed almost as consistently as *Il barbiere*). Part of the absence of this repertoire is due to the rise in popularity and influence of romantic composers such as Wagner and Puccini. Audiences grew to love the large, lush sound of late romantic opera. Much of the repertoire that is performed now came about through the scholarship of academics and performers such as Teresa Berganza, Marilyn Horne, Maria Callas, Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyng in the 1950s and 1960s, and continues today.

In *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Figaro is the helpful facilitator of the romance between Rosina and the Count Almaviva. The role of Figaro is one of the most beloved roles in all of opera. His mischievous and *buffo* nature stems from the *commedia dell'arte* influence of the characters Harlequin and Zanni. These two characters were typically portrayed as valets or jesters, whose conniving plots were intended to thwart the educated, but the plots often backfired on Harlequin and Zanni.

Figaro is a man who not only views himself as the most important person in town, but who considers himself brilliant when faced with the task of out-witting Dr. Bartolo. The character of Figaro was born in Pierre de Beaumarchais' (1732-1799) play, *Le Barbier de Seville* (1773). Figaro is comically created to be smarter than the upper-middle class Dr. Bartolo. In the sequel, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, Figaro delivers an inflammatory monologue, stating that Count Almaviva had only to be born to gain privilege. This comment, made by someone from the lower class, was very controversial

and quickly led to the play being banned from the stage by King Louis XVI (1754-1793).¹⁵ Figaro first appeared in opera in Giovanni Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1782), and later in W.A. Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786).

People in any era relate to the theme of a common peasant overcoming obstacles of class or circumstance. Figaro is clever, humorous, and creative; traits that demand admiration. Many of these traits are shown not only in the events of the opera (his idea to dress the Count as a soldier, then as a music teacher, and the often-staged unexpected kiss on the lips with Dr. Bartolo), but especially in "Largo al factotum," Figaro's entrance aria.

The personality of Figaro is anything but rigid-- he is smooth, flexible, and changes with the needs or wants of his clientele. These characteristics can be illustrated musically through *rubati* or ornamentation. Figaro especially paints the text with ornaments when talking about how jovial and admired he is. As the singer adds to the music and written line, his character becomes more alive, dynamic, and exciting.

¹⁵ Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, *The Figaro Trilogy*, trans. by David Coward. (New York: Columbia University, 2008), 192.

CHAPTER 4
THE ANALYSIS

When listening to baritones today, both in current recordings as well as in local and regional concerts and competitions, some ornaments in this aria have become standard. This analysis will explore when these ornaments come into popularity and become a standard performance practice. Of the ornaments and cadenzas analyzed, the most popular ones today often include a number of high G4's or a high A4, or both. Over time, these powerful high notes have become expected. Of course there are many factors that audience members, judges, or even directors consider: the timbre of the voice, the personality used in the interpretation, how well the voice sits in the tessitura, etc. rather than listening solely for the high notes. Nonetheless, the natural tendency is to listen for whether the performer will ascend successfully up to the anticipated high notes and cadenzas or not.

mm. 150-153, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



There are a few ornaments that stand out as the anticipated ornaments in the piece. The first place is measure 150, which involves a G4 achieved by ascending a G major *arpeggio* from G3 up to G4, and then sustaining it for a beat or two until the orchestra returns. This note is often tied over into the next phrase “Ah, che bel vivere.” (mm. 150+ additional counts added)

mm. 156-157, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



The next ornament follows immediately (m. 157), sometimes allowing only one or two breaths before the *fioratura*. In this cadenza, which is not notated in Rossini’s original score, the baritone sings C3 and ascends up an arpeggio to E4 and G4, and then comes down to an F#4, only to ascend back up to G4 and A4, and then work his way down the scale to a low C3. The singer may then ascend back up to C4 with a tie (still one complete phrase and breath) to complete the phrase, “Che bel piacere,”(m. 157). This cadenza is sung as fast or slow as the singer prefers.

mm. 202-205, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



There are two other opportunities for the singer to interpolate an A4. The ornament from m. 83 indicates in Rossini’s score a possible A4 on the word “Bravo,” and the ornament from m. 203 shows that the singer can interpolate the A4 on the word “per” of the phrase “per carità,” on the third time repeat of the phrase. These are not used nearly as often as the previous ornaments mentioned, but still give the baritone an opportunity to color his aria with other high notes.

In analyzing performers from different eras, it is understood that many of the baritones involved used different musical scores and editions of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. If the performers did use the same edition of the score as baritones in other countries and from different eras, one must remember that many opera conductors and directors have preferences where ornaments and cadenzas are concerned. Therefore, where the performers and their interpretation are being analyzed, it is understood that there are other artistic factors that may have influenced their performance.

CHAPTER 5

THE ORNAMENTS

mm. 37-41, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



mm. 37-41 – “la la la la”

The first ornament begins before the first line of lyrics at mm. 37-41 on the text “la la la le-ran.” Only two singers in this analysis perform this ornament: Basiola (1935) and Gobbi (1946).

mm. 50, 58 G4’s and E4’s

After singing “la la la le ra,” four times, Figaro then enters the scene for the first line of text, “Largo al factotum della città,”(mm. 44-46) meaning, “Make way for the jack-of-all-trades of the city!” Rossini then writes a G4 as the final note of the phrase to immediately show the vocal ability of the singer. In the next “la la la” line (mm. 56-58), Rossini composes an E4 as the final note. The G4 and E4 from mm. 50 and 58 respectively are very often sung out of rhythm with a slight fermata, making the high notes more impressive. The alternate ornament here is replacing of G4 with G3 (m. 50), and replacing the E4 with a C4 (m. 58).

The baritones who use this alternate ornament are Giuseppe Campanari (1900), Carlos Francisco (1901), and Emilio de Gogorza (1905). All men sing the variation as mentioned. Mattia Battistini (1903) and Giuseppe De Luca (1917) quickly sing a brief

G4 (m. 50), but then sing the C4 in place of the E4 (m. 58). Mario Basiola (1935) also sings a variation similar to this ornament in m. 87. Rather than ascending to the E4 when this phrase is repeated, he stays on the C4. It is apparent that this ornament was not sung often in the last 100 years among the recordings and artists heard in this study.

mm. 48-50, 56-58 “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini
(from original score)



mm. 48-50, 56-58 “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



m. 65 The Cut

At this point, a cut is made in the aria that begins at m. 66 and lasts until measure 156. The singer then continues by singing “piacere,” (m. 157), but then sings the large cadenza normally interpolated in m. 157, rather than the simple eighth notes found in the score from m. 66 or m. 157. The baritones who choose to include this cut are from the earlier recordings: Giuseppe Campanari (1900), Carlos Francisco (1901) and Emilio de Gogorza (1905).

The purpose of this cut could exist for multiple reasons. It could be cut to reduce the amount of recording time so that the whole aria may fit comfortably on a record of this period, or it might be a cut when performing the aria in a concert setting.

m. 66 (two options), “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



Che bel pia - ce - re

Che bel pia - ce - re

m. 66 – “che bel piacere”

In measure 66 (Example 1), on the final syllable of the text “piacere,” the singer is given the opportunity to add an ornament during the fermata on the eighth note rest in the orchestra. The ornaments sung are either a turn (singing that pitch, moving up a step, then down two steps, then back up a step to the original pitch), a leap of a third from C4 to E4 descending then to D4 and C4, or a combination of the two. There are other possibilities, but these are the ornaments performed in this analysis, with little or no exception.

The most commonly used ornament is the turn on C4 and leap to E4, followed by a descent to D4 and C4, sung by 15 of the 24 singers who ornament this passage. The men who perform this are Battistini (1901), Emilio de Gogorza (1909), Ruffo (1920), Tibbett (1930), Gobbi (1946), Merrill (1947, 1958), Bastianini (1956), Milnes (1974), Nucci (1982, 1988), Hagegård (1992) and Hampson (1994). Those who only do the ascent (7 of 24) to E4 from C4 and then descend to the tonic are De Luca (1917), Winogradoff (1922), Granforte (1928), Basiola (1935), Merrill (1962, 1978) and Braun (2008). Dennis Noble sings two turns on C4. Another ornament not typically

sung is a descending scale from C4 to C3, sung by Mattia Battistini (1903). Lawrence Tibbett sings a turn and a half by ascending up a step to D4, down to C4 and B4, and ascends again to C4 and D4 resolving on C4. The only baritone who sings just the turn is Hermann Prey (1959, 1965), and he sings it at a slow tempo.

The turn of the C4 and the following ascent is the most popular in the beginning of the century, and then comes back into popularity in 1946 with Tito Gobbi. This remains the most commonly performed until Robert Merrill sings only the ascent in 1962.

mm. 81-84, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini (from original score)



m. 83 “Bravo!”

This particularly difficult ornament involves jumping from D4 up to an A4 and down an octave to A3. The downward leap appears on the word “Bravo!” and the phrase comes just after having sung a G4 on the final note of the previous phrase, usually longer than the allotted rhythm. This ornament option appears in the Bärenreiter 2010 Critical Edition score, the Alberto Zedda Ricordi Critical Score from 1969, and others such as G. Schirmer and Boosey & Hawkes. Even though it is printed, no baritones from this study sing this ornament until 1959. The first two interpolations of the A4 are first performed by Hermann Prey, in 1959 and in 1971. The former is in a stage production from a black and white video produced by the Bayerischen Staatsoper on Deutsche Grammophon with

Joseph Keilberth conducting. The latter is the video production produced by La Scala on Deutsche Grammophon with Claudio Abbado conducting, directed by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. The other baritones to sing the A4 are Milnes (1974), Nucci (1982, 1988), Allen (1983), Hampson (1993, 1994), and Braun (2008).

mm. 131-135 “Lancette e forbici”

During the next small “X” section, the Barber sings the text, “rasori e pettine, lancette e forbici, al mio comando tutto qui sta.”(mm. 127-131) As if the patter text of this phrase were not challenging enough for a baritone, Rossini then writes the same line of text for Figaro, but rearranges the nouns from the first musical phrase to be, “lancette e forbici, rasori e pettine,”(mm. 131-133). All the singers with the exception of Lawrence Tibbett (1930), Robert Merrill (1947, 1958, 1962, 1978) Hermann Prey (1965), Leo Nucci (1982), Thomas Hampson (1993,1994) and Russell Braun choose to repeat the first line of text rather than switch the text. Some of the singers change part of the text, but then return to what is written. Titta Ruffo (1906, 1920), Apollo Granforte (1928), and Mario Basiola (1935) combine both methods.

The men who sing the aria in other languages repeat the line of text exactly as written. These men include Winogradoff (1922) in German, Noble (1926) in English, and Prey (1959, 1971) in German. After repeating this text, Bastianini (1956) releases a hearty laugh.

mm. 136-139, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



m. 137 “v’e la risorsa”

When speaking of the benefits that come with his job, Figaro may sometimes sing a half step upward inflection on the phrase “v’e la risorsa,” which foreshadows a change in the major tonality, just before it shifts from E \flat major to C minor (mm. 139-140). The second syllable of the word “risorsa” is sung a half step higher, and not only creates a color shift, but is usually sung slower. This allows Figaro to set up the *colla voce* phrase at (mm. 136-150). These measures are not marked *colla voce* in every score, but in all the recordings examined no one sings them at or near *a tempo* except Titto Gobbi (1957) and Thomas Hampson (1993).

This ornament is performed by the majority of baritones in the first half of the nineteenth century, with very few exceptions. The interpreters who omit this ornament before 1950 are the three baritones who sang the cut from mm. 65- 157 and therefore skip this section: Campanari (1900), Francisco (1901), and de Gogorza (1905). The others who do not sing this half step inflection were those singing in a different language: Winogradoff (1922), Noble (1926) and Prey (1965). This could be because they chose to adhere more closely to the original score, or because of notes and rhythms learned in a different language/edition of the printed score.

The only singers to use this ornament after 1947 are Gobbi (1957) and Merrill (1962). In 1983, the ornament regains popularity with Thomas Allen (1983), and is also

sung in later recordings by Hagegård (1992), Hampson (1993, 1994) and Braun (2008). Two other men, Gogorza (1909) and Ruffo (1920), add yet another ornament by singing a half step lower on the word “del” of the next phrase, “poi del mestiere,”(m. 138). The addition of the half-step inflections creates a playful and mysterious color.

mm. 141-144 “Colla donnetta...”

As Figaro describes the differences in his clients in “colla donnetta... col cavaliere...” the music allows a wide variety of text painting and staging to take place. Figaro states, “with the little lady, with the gentleman, with the little lady, with the gentleman.” The way these lines are sung, and the “la le-ran le-ra” between paint Figaro’s subtext. Singers choose to paint the text in very contrasting ways, making “colla donnetta”(mm. 140-142) slower, softer, and lighter. The phrase “col cavaliere” (mm. 142-144) can be sung faster, louder, and with a full, warm sound. This choice demonstrates the various male and female character voices, or Figaro’s attitude towards them.

Battistini (1903) and Ruffo (’06-’12, 1920) both add turns on the A \flat ’s in mm. 141 and 143. Amato (1911), Gobbi (1946), and Milnes (1974) add more color to the phrases, as does Merrill (1958, 1962) who adds a very bright and almost nasal color to the character of the “donnetta.” Winogradoff (1922) not only changes the color between the two genders, but also adds more vibrato on the text “cavaliere.” Russell Braun (2008) ascends from A3 to B3 on the phrase “col cavaliere” on the syllable “ca.”

mm. 144-148, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini (from original score)



mm. 144-147, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



mm. 145-148 “colla donnetta...la lera lera”

This section of music is seldom performed as notated in Rossini’s score. The filigree of the nonsense syllable “la” and its variations (leran, lera etc.) is used to effectively paint a picture of the kind of business Figaro gets involved in from day to day. The “la lera la” sections (mm. 145-146, 147-148) are composed with a leap between the C4 and the Eb4, and in the case of the first example, there is a leap up from B4 to D4. These portions of music are normally sung with passing tones between the leaps. The five notes in mm. 145-146 become seven or eight notes, and the four notes in mm. 147-148 become at least six, though very often this is only the minimum.

All the men in the study have added notes in this section of the aria, with the exception of Mattia Battistini (1903) and Thomas Hampson (1994). Hampson does not slow this section of music like the other baritones, but sings *a tempo* to the end of m. 150. Campanari (1900), Francisco (1901), and de Gogorza (1905) sing the cut at m. 65 and skip this section. Some of the cadenzas are sung simply, while others are exactly as stated above. A few interpretations are more elaborate and less predictable, such as

Ruffo (1906), Gobbi (1946, 1957), and Prey (1959). Ruffo ascends to C4 D4 Eb4, and then sings D4 Eb4 F4 Eb4 D4 Eb4 D4 in quick succession. The ornament Gobbi uses (1957) is approached softly, while Prey (1959) uses much more finesse than the others. Gobbi's other approach (1946) is quite flashy. He sings the anticipated C D and E flat, and rapidly repeats the sequence four more times. On the last repetition, Ruffo adds a turn on top ascending to F4, Eb4, D4 and C4.

mm. 150 + added measures, "Largo al factotum" from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



mm. 150+ with G4

As the small "X" section comes to a close, the half cadence on the last measure (m. 150) sounds on a G major chord, allowing Figaro to sing an arpeggio up a G major scale. Rossini only wrote the first three parts of the scale, from the G3 to the D4. The baritone is given the option to sing the G4 afterwards, or to avoid it entirely. One could choose to preserve voice and energy for the high note at m. 157. However, this is an opportunity for a baritone to showcase his high notes. Only three baritones since 1922 chose to omit these notes in recording (Granforte, 1928, Tibbett, 1930, and Hampson, 1993 and 1994), either due to the reasons previously mentioned, or upon request made by the director or conductor.

Mattia Battistini (1903) sings a variation that provides a unique contrast. Rather than singing the arpeggio, he sings passing tones between each tone, and begins again after reaching each chord tone. It appears as G3, G3 A4 B4, B4 C4 D4. Winogradoff also sings a variation, but ascends via the arpeggio, and continues to A4 and sings a series of turns descending to G3.

Some baritones sustain this long note at the top of the range and continue singing the next musical phrase in one breath. The recordings of Ettore Bastianini (1956), Leo Nucci (1982) and Peter Mattei (2011) are examples of this phrasing.

mm. 156-157, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



m. 157 “bel piacere” cadenza

Rossini writes m. 157 as two eighth notes on C4 as he did m. 66. Performance practice says that if the same melodic passage returns in an aria, the singer has the option to ornament or sing the passage differently. In this case, there is a fermata on the rest in the orchestra, which allows the singer to ornament at will. This measure features an ornament from every singer except two. (Thomas Allen, 1983, and Peter Mattei, 2011) The cadenza performed at this point is an ascending arpeggio on a C major chord, from C4 to G4, followed by a downward run of an octave and a half to C3. The cadenza usually involves an interpolated A4 at the top of the cadenza, with a preceding turn, as well as a tie from the C3 up the octave to C4 at the end of the phrase.

The high A4 is one of the triumphant moments of the aria, and is present on occasion from the Campanari (1900) recording through to the Braun (2008) recording. Documenting this cadenza has been split up four ways, varying on whether the singer interpolates the A4, as well as the C4 at the end of the cadenza rather than the C3. The performer may also choose to sustain the high G4 or A4 for 2 or 3 beats. The length of the highest note held will not be measured in this study.

mm. 156-157, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini, Option A



Group A (5 recordings) consists of the baritones who do the simplest form of this cadenza. The men sing the C4, followed by the E4 and G4, but then descend quickly an octave and a half to C3 and end the cadenza. Emilio de Gogorza (1909), Titta Ruffo (1920), and Robert Merrill (1947, 1978) sing the cadenza in this manner. In 1905, de Gogorza sings a variation of this ornament by singing a C4, an E4, a turn up to F4, and then a scalar descent to C3.

The difference between Group A and Group B (12 recordings) is that B sings the same cadenza, but finishes with a tie from the C3 up to the C4. These men are Titta Ruffo ('06-'12), Joseph Winogradoff (1922), Apollo Granforte (1928), Mario Basiola (1935) and Robert Merrill (1958, 1962). Of these men, Ruffo and Basiola sing the cadenza and continue singing into the following phrase without a breath. Giuseppe de Luca (1917) and Mattia Battistini (1903) ascend to the E4, but stop there and then descend to sing the rest of the cadenza, ending on C4. Another variation is even simpler

than Group A. Ettore Bastianini (1956), Tito Gobbi (1957) and Hermann Prey (1959, 1965) end on the C4, but stick to an ornament very similar to m. 66 rather than a cadenza. Both the baritones sing a turn on the C4, ascend to E4, and then descend to C4 where they end the phrase.

mm. 156-157, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini, Option B



Group C (5 recordings) is similar to Group A, with the inclusion at the top of the cadenza of a turn from G4 up to A4. Carlos Francisco (de Gogorza), Dennis Noble (1926), and Leo Nucci (1982, 1988) are the four recordings that have this ornament, and Noble ending his cadenza with a laugh. The 1994 Thomas Hampson recording differs slightly in that he ascends to a C5 after singing three turns, and descends to a G3 rather than the C3.

mm. 156-157, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini, Option C



The final group D (9 recordings), is similar to Group B in that the last note is C4, but the A4 is interpolated. The men who sing this cadenza are Giuseppe Campanari (1900), Pasquale Amato (1911), Tito Gobbi (1946), Hermann Prey (1971), Sherrill Milnes (1974), Håkan Hagegård (1992), Thomas Hampson (1993), and Russell Braun (2008). This cadenza gives the singer the opportunity to be the most impressive, as it

includes the most notes and challenging intervals and pitches. However, Lawrence Tibbett (1930) sings a variation of this cadenza by extending through a downward melisma past C3 to G3, and then up to C4. Not only does the A4 sit at the top of the baritone range, but singing a G2 with an operatic resonance at normal volume is very difficult, as it sits at the bottom of the baritone range.

mm 156-157, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini, Option D



mm.187-192, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



mm. 187-192 “Figaro!”

The word “Figaro!” is repeated on the same pitches, E4 D4 and C4. At this point the orchestra stops and the interpreter is allowed to sing the passage as fast or slow, or as loud or soft as he wants, and on any pitches he desires. Many men begin this passage with a very small light timbre, and gradually change to a larger, full voice. Of all the baritones studied, most add different colors, sing loud and soft at times, and sing pitches that differ by more than a fifth away from what is written in Rossini’s score. Many of the men sing a C5 in falsetto as part of this improvisational section. Those who vary a few pitches or not at all are Campanari (1900), Battistini (1903), de Gogorza (1905), De Luca

(1917), Prey (1971), Nucci (1982, 1988), Allen (1983), and Hampson (1993). Due to the wide variance of approaches and different notes and timbres used, each interpretation will not be broken down and listed here.

mm. 201-205, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



mm. 202-203 “Per carità”

In this ornament the text “per carità” happens twice with every note on E4. The first option the singer may choose is to sing a portamento down an octave beginning on E4 and descending to E3 on the last syllable of “carità.” Each singer who sings this ornament does so twice.

The four singers who sing this ornament are from the early part of the 20th century: Campanari (1900), Francisco (Gogorza) (1901), Ruffo (’06-’12) and Gogorza (1909). When Emilio de Gogorza records it as Carlos Francisco, he slows down the tempo.

mm. 202-205, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



m. 203 “Per carità” A4

The other ornament that is often performed at these same measures is the use of an A4 on the repeat of the word “per,” at m. 203. Though this ornament is heard more frequently today, there are only three men from this study who have recorded it: Sherrill Milnes (1974), Robert Merrill (1978), and Russell Braun (2008). This is the third opportunity for the baritone to showcase an A4 in this aria.

mm. 207-209, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



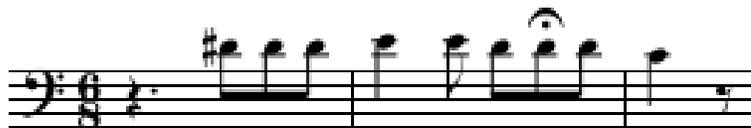
m. 208a “Per carità” fermata on text “per”

The other widely used approach by the men in the study is when the fermata is sustained on the word “per” instead of the first syllable of the word “carità.” The men who choose this fermata are all from the early part of the 20th century: Francisco (1901), Battistini (1903), Ruffo (’06-’12), Gogorza (1909), De Luca (1917), Ruffo (1920), and Granforte (1928). After singing the fermata, Gogorza (1909) sings a G3 on the first syllable of “carità.” Another variation of this fermata is the addition of an E4, and return to D4 with a resolution to C4, as performed by Ruffo (1920) and Granforte (1928).

m. 208b “Per carità” fermata on text “per ca-”

As the A minor section comes to a close and the key returns to C major, the final cadence before m. 209 is very often suspended with a fermata. One way for the singer to use a fermata is to sustain the syllable “ca-” of “carità.” (mm. 208-209) The singers who use this approach are all from 1935 and later, with the exception of Pasquale Amato (1911). The only baritones who do not sing this ornament after 1935 are Prey (1971), Nucci (1982), Allen (1983), and Hampson (1994). In the German performance of the aria, Hermann Prey incorporates a fermata in both recordings (1959, 1965), though the placement of the text and fermata is different in German.

mm. 207-209, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



u- no al -la vol - ta per ca -ri - ta.

mm. 229-233, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini (from original score)



mm. 229-233, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



mm. 229-233 “Della città”

At m. 237 before the *Allegro Vivace* (m. 237), Rossini writes the text “della città” four times; each time the vocal line includes a D4, followed by a step up to E4 and then two steps down to D4 and C4, all sung on eighth notes. When Giuseppe Campanari (1900) performs mm. 229-233, he sings the text “della città” twice instead of four times, and changes the rhythm to dotted quarter notes instead of eighth notes. Apollo Granforte (1928) omits the last “della città” (mm. 232-233), but sings the original rhythm.

mm. 245-253 “Ah bravo Figaro”

The patter singing at the *Allegro Vivace* section (m. 237) is exhilarating. Because the eighth notes are sung at a faster tempo, it becomes more difficult to articulate the text. For myriad reasons, many of the performers decide to repeat the text from mm. 237-245 in the next eight-bar phrase, mm. 245-253, rather than sing the text Rossini wrote. Since

the written text communicates the same idea as the repeated text, both options are acceptable. There are only ten men who sing the text as written.

The men who repeat the text exactly from mm. 237-245 are Francisco (1901), Gogorza (1909), Granforte (1928), Tibbett (1930), Basiola (1935), and Merrill (1962, 1978). Dennis Noble (1926) sings different text both times, and Prey (1959, 1965) and Winogradoff (1922) repeat the text in German.

Lawrence Tibbett repeats the text, but does so at an even faster rate than the first time he sang them in mm. 237-245. Robert Merrill (1962) also repeats the text, but the colors he uses are very different and creative, ranging from very bright and nasal to dark at times.

Campanari (1900) not only sings his own text at the second eight-bar phrase, but sings both phrases on text other than what is printed. De Luca (1917) sings the first line of text as written, but at m. 237 sings a different text than in the score. Robert Merrill (1947, 1958) begins by repeating the text that is printed in mm. 237-245, but then sings different lyrics than those from the repeated measures. Nucci (1982) and Hampson (1994) sing the phrase “fortunatissimo” twice during the second half of the phrases, while Milnes (1974), Allen (1983), Hampson (1993), Braun (2008) and Mattei (2011) all sing “a te fortuna” twice.

mm. 254-258, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini (from original score)



mm. 254-258, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini



mm. 254-261 “Sono il factotum della città”

The phrase, “sono il factotum della città, “ is written twice without any breaks between mm. 254-261. Another option is to change the rhythm of “son il” to shorter values, and begin each phrase one beat (a dotted quarter note) behind. Rather than singing dotted notes, the interpreters here sing more of a quarter note followed by an eighth note pattern in this section of the aria. There is also a one-beat rest between each two measure phrase, which allows for extra breaths or more artistic license. The two men who sing this ornament are Titta Ruffo (’06-’12, 1920) and Apollo Granforte (1928).

m. 265 “Della città”

In the sequence that Figaro sings twice in mm. 261-265, “sono il factotum della città,” ends with an E4. At the end of the phrase, however, (m. 265), the sequence ends on a C4 before the final cadence. Seven of the recordings feature singers who decide to end the phrase with an E4 rather than a C4. This phrase ending not only aligns itself with the preceding sequence, but prepares the singer for the ascent to the F4 and G4 in the next

measures. The baritones who sing the E4 are Ruffo ('06-'12, 1920), Amato (1911), De Luca (1917), Basiola (1935), and Prey (1959).

mm. 265-267, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini (from original score)



mm. 265-267, “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioachino Rossini

Option A

Option B

Option C



mm. 265-266 “Della città”

The final cadence section of the aria offers a variety of possibilities, though two of the three variations have not been widely recorded in this study, since 1917. Rossini writes the last four notes of the vocal line “della città,” as F4 G4 G3 and C4. This melody was not present in any of the documented recordings.

The first alternate notes presented are F4, G3, G4 and C4. Campanari (1900), Francisco (1901), and Gogorza (1905, 1909) are the baritones who sing this pitch variation.

The second alternate notes are D4, E4, G4 and C4. The first two pitches are different than the F4 and G4 traditionally sung. These pitches are a continuation of the pitch phrase that just ended on C4, and make the interval leap from E4 to G4 a minor

third, rather than the normal perfect fourth that occurs between C4 and F4. The only two men who sing this in the study are Battistini (1903) and De Luca (1917). The third alternate notes are F4, G4, G4, C4, which is the most common arrangement of tones in the latter years of this study.

At this point, the tempo slows down gradually in preparation for the fermata in m. 266. However, Leo Nucci (1982) sings a fermata in m. 265 on the syllable “-la” of “della.”

m. 266 “città”

All 33 singers involved choose to sing a G4 with a fermata on the penultimate pitch, rather than a G3 as Rossini wrote. This heightens the exhilaration of the final moments of the aria. The length of the fermata varies by performer.

Joseph Winogradoff (1922) is the only performer who inserts a cadenza in m. 266. Winogradoff sustains the G4, and then descends stepwise to a G3, and ascends back up past G4 to A4. He re-enters singing a G4 and after sustaining once more for a few counts, descends by portamento to C3 at the cadence.

mm. 267 – 273 “La la la la”

As the orchestra plays the closing notes of the aria, which resemble a passage from the beginning of the aria (mm. 37-41), the singer may accompany the melody found in the first violins. He may sing “la la la” until the final two measures or the final cadence.

The men who sing the “la la la la” text to the end of the song are Ruffo (’06-’12), Gogorza (1909), Amato (1911), De Luca (1917), Tibbett (1930) and Milnes (1974). Those who sustain the final note to the final two measures of the piece are Ruffo (1920), Noble (1922), Bastianini (1956), Gobbi (1957), Merrill (1958, 1962, 1978), Nucci (1982, 1988), Hagegård (1992), Hampson (1994), and Mattei (2011). Basiola (1935), Merrill (1947), and Prey (1959) sustain the C4 through the final chord. Robert Merrill (1978) not only sustains the note to the last two measures, but in this live concert performance he also says “eh, Figaro,” as the orchestra plays their last chord.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the present discussion of thirty-three recorded interpretations of “Largo al factotum,” the author has brought to the reader’s attention many differences in timbre, vocal classification, dynamics, tempo, and ornamentation. Close examination has shown that many ornaments common in the early years of the twentieth century disappeared after 1935. For example, singers from the latter half of the nineteenth century were much more likely to add a high A when desired, as well as a fermata on the text “per carità” at m. 208.

In the early twentieth century, ornamentation without high notes also gradually disappeared. As the *bel canto* repertory began to show signs of re-establishing itself in the repertory, beginning in the 1950s, baritones became more adventurous and sang more ornaments in general. In the 1960s singers began to add even more complex ornamentation, and they were more likely to add variety of character through expressivity. By changing the tempo, dynamics, timbre, and the vibrato used in their voices, these artists added a dimension of characterization through subtlety.

The pendulum swung again, against ornaments, in the 1980’s and 1990. Several conductors (for example, Riccardo Muti) and the singers associated with them discouraged ornaments in great number. Some recordings from this period even skipped full sections in which ornaments had traditionally been placed. Conductors and some scholars during this time believed in a “purist” approach to opera and performed works *come scritto*, or “as written.” The recordings of Hampson, Allen, and Mattei (m. 150) provide examples. After such scholars as Phillip Gossett and Will Crutchfield had

presented documents and manuscripts proving that Rossini encouraged ornamentation in his music, the opinion was bolstered, that simply using few ornaments did not lead to historically accurate performances.

Current performers are faced with the challenge of not only singing the music so as to rival their competitors, but must also meeting the expectations of an increasingly educated and sophisticated audience by providing appropriate ornamentation, chosen and performed in historically performed ways. Originality of selection is important, but old favorites from earlier eras continue to play a role. Perhaps it is also not surprising that as historical knowledge among singers grew, their choices became more historically informed.

No single interpretation of the aria towers above all the others. One inescapable conclusion of this study is that no matter which ornaments are sung, no matter where they are sung, they will not mean much if the interpreter doesn't sing them in the character of Figaro. Mere quantity is not enough: the ornaments and the interpretation will be successful if the performer has prepared thoroughly, studied diligently, and invested his full musicianship and energy in the character.

As a performer himself, the author hopes that this study will help others discover the many specific that earlier artists have contributed to this aria. Those who seek out these recordings may also discover that the role can be successful in different timbres and voice types. The men who sang the role at the beginning of the twentieth century had lighter voices than the baritones who sang it in the 1920s-50s. At mid-century, Figaro baritones had larger voices that were well suited to *verismo*, to Puccini, and even to Wagner. But beginning in the 1960s, one again encounters light lyric baritones together

with baritones with larger voices, suggesting that size of voice alone does not a successful Figaro make.

The information presented here, it is hoped, will help teachers coach the next generation of singers on acceptable ornamentation practices and how to measure which ornaments are suitable for each singer. The goal of these new performers and new performances, perhaps, should always be to display Rossini's Figaro to today's listener in the light of Rossini's own practices, to the extent that we are able to recover them.

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