

# THE VOICE OF THE CENTURY

The Culture of Italian Bel Canto in Luisa  
Tetrazzini's Recorded Interpretations

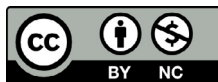


MASSIMO ZICARI



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### 3. Donizetti's Operas

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Tetrazzini made her first appearance in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* on 21 November 1892 in Buenos Aires (Teatro San Martin), and *Lucia* is the opera that scores highest in her chronology; she sang this role in 113 productions over twenty years between 1892 and 1913. Verdi's *Rigoletto* follows at some distance with sixty-seven productions, while Rossini's *Barbiere* holds the third position with only sixty-one productions. If the bel canto repertoire was the one she felt most comfortable with, *Lucia* is probably the opera that gave her the best opportunity to exhibit her talents and show off her voice. Years after her début in this role, Tetrazzini noted that 'no opera could have been selected which gave me a greater opportunity, for Lucia's arias have more possibilities for the prima donna than any of the other operas'.<sup>1</sup> Three more works bearing the name of Donizetti appear in her chronology, although in a much less prominent position. Tetrazzini made her appearance in *La figlia del reggimento* (in Italian) twelve times between 1892 and 1910, ten times in *Linda di Chamounix* until 1902, twice in *L'elisir d'amore*, once in 1897 and yet again in 1907.<sup>2</sup> *Lucia*, *La figlia del reggimento* and *Linda di Chamounix* were instrumental in Tetrazzini's initial success; having made a few appearances in Italy in 1891, one year later she joined Raffaele Tomba's company together with Pietro Cesari and started gaining plaudits in Argentina. In addition to Donizetti, her repertoire then featured a few light comic operas, like *Crispino e la comare*, by the Ricci brothers, and Emilio Usiglio's *Le donne curiose* (set to a libretto by Angelo Zanardini drawn on Carlo Goldoni), beside Bellini's *La sonnambula*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and Verdi's *La traviata*. It is fair to assume that this repertoire was chosen to respond to the orientations of the conservative audience Raffaele Tomba was catering for in Buenos Aires and the Argentinian provinces. As already mentioned, Tetrazzini held Donizetti in very high esteem and cherished his coloratura music. In *My Life of Song*, she went so far as to suggest that 'the day will come, however, when there will be born another Donizetti. Then coloratura music will take a new lease of life. It may be that one or two great coloratura singers may first arise so as to inspire the new Donizetti. Yet he will come, and the world will assuredly welcome his advent'.<sup>3</sup> Great composers needed great interpreters. However, of the four Donizetti operas appearing in the diva's repertoire, only two are to be found also among her recordings, perhaps for reasons that have less to do with her personal inclinations than the rising discographic market: *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Linda di Chamounix*. Tetrazzini recorded 'Splendon le sacre faci' from *Lucia* (Act II, Scene 2) in December 1907 with Percy Pitt conducting the orchestra and Albert Fransella playing the flute (matrix 2176f, Gramophone 053144, Victor 92018). Two years later, on 25 May 1909, she recorded 'Regnava nel silenzio' and 'Quando rapito in estasi' (scena, cavatina and cabaletta), in two different tracks (matrix 3077f, Gramophone 053223, HMV DB 528, Victor 92067/88303, 6396, & matrix 3078f, Gramophone 053224, HMV DB 528), again with Percy Pitt conducting. On 2 November 1910 it was the turn of 'O luce di quest'anima', from *Linda di Chamounix* (Act I, Scene 3), with Percy Pitt (matrix 4576f, Gramophone 2-053035), then again *Lucia* with 'Splendon le sacre faci' on 16 March 1911, this time together with Walter Rogers conducting the orchestra and Walter Oesterreicher playing the flute (C10068-1, Victor 88299, 6337; HMV 2-053047, DB 535). Later the same year, on 14 July 1911, she recorded 'O luce di quest'anima' (matrix 5179f, HMV 2-053061), to which she returned on 13 May 1914, with Walter Rogers ('Ah! Tardai troppo... O luce di quest'anima', matrix C14817-2, Victor 88506; HMV 2-053115, DB 543). As we will see, Tetrazzini's successful career is strongly associated with this composer, even though his

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1 Luisa Tetrazzini, *My Life of Song* (London: Cassell, 1921), p. 74.

2 Again, these figures represent an estimate, for each production may have involved more performances.

3 Tetrazzini, *My Life of Song*, p. 313.

operas were often considered the emblem of an old and surpassed tradition, often referred to by London music critics as the 'palmy days of the opera':

The 'palmy days' of the opera have faded away with the popularity of the works themselves. That is not a fact to be regretted, for, indeed, what was the opera house in its 'palmy' days, but a social institution, where members of society could outglitter each other in jewels, and where innumerable flirtations progressed with alarming rapidity beneath the combined influences of sentimental songs and dazzling chandeliers? A work of art cannot live in such an atmosphere, and opera was not a work of art, but a peg on which conversation and social intercourse could hang; at best, but a string of lyrical gems, oftener than of paste and glass, strung upon a thread of recitative—in short it was not organic drama, nor did it really aim at anything higher than to give the singers an opportunity of showing off their vocalization. It served its purpose and it has had its day; therefore *requiescat in pace*.<sup>4</sup>

Although not every critic shared with this author the same strong aversion to a tradition that many considered outmoded, a tension emerges from the folds of the contemporary critical discussion not only between old and new, but also between what was to be understood as a genuine form of art and what, instead, was musical entertainment devoid of any artistic value. In the background lay the figure of Richard Wagner and the recent achievements of a new generation of operatic composers. The discussion involved many issues, among them the quality of the libretto—which was often a pretext in the palmy days—the dramatic plot, and the role of the interpreters, especially the prima donnas. In this regard, fioriture were often seen as a pointless embellishment used by singers to show off the voice in a context in which the dramatic situation and the entire libretto counted for little or nothing.

### The Performance Practice of *Lucia di Lammermoor*

As was typical of the Italian operatic culture in the first half of the century, the performance history of *Lucia di Lammermoor* is also accompanied by a number of substitutions and interpolations. Not only did Donizetti endorse a compositional routine that, in response to the fast production pace, forced composers to reuse musical material belonging to earlier, and possibly unsuccessful and forgotten works, but he also had to accept that singers would make changes and adapt his music in order to meet with their vocal characteristics, and their personal likes and dislikes. However exasperating he may have found singers' requests, and however strong his opposition may have been to those alterations (all the more so if another composer's music was involved), the performance history of *Lucia* features a number of such changes.

No matter how surprising it may sound to today's opera addicts and interpreters, evidence suggests that early nineteenth-century singers used to replace those very arias in *Lucia* that we now cherish the most and which, to a large extent, have led to its worldwide success in the twentieth century. It is well-known that Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani, the first Lucia in 1835 Naples, chose Rosmonda's entrance scene (*aria di sortita*) and cabaletta from Donizetti's *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* (1834) in place of 'Regnava nel silenzio' and 'Quando rapito in estasi', which together form Lucia's 'Scena e Cavatina'. Persiani maintained this substitution when she introduced *Lucia* at the Théâtre Italien in 1837, and Donizetti endorsed her choice when he decided to include this change in the printed score of the French edition of *Lucie de Lammermoor*.<sup>5</sup> Other changes are documented, such as the substitution of a different aria for the cabaletta in the fountain scene: in Pavia in 1837 Adelaide Mazza sang 'Nell'ebbrezza dell'amore' from *Ines de Castro* by Giuseppe Persiani; in 1838 Emilia Kallez made the same change in Novara; in 1837 in Florence Eugenia Tadolini replaced the original music with a double aria from Donizetti's *Sancia di Castiglia*; Eugenia García and Benedetta Coleoni Cori substituted 'Regnava nel silenzio' with 'Al pensier m'appare

4 'Why Mascagni is Successful', *The Musical Standard*, 9 November 1892, p. 405. See also Massimo Zicari, *Verdi in Victorian London*, p. 281, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0090>.

5 William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 210. Hilary Poriss has identified four productions including the same substitution; see Hilary Poriss 'A Madwoman's Choice: Aria Substitution in "Lucia Di Lammermoor"', *Cambridge University Press*, 13.1 (2001), 1–28.

ognora', from Donizetti's *Marino Faliero*; during the 1837–1838 opera season in Turin Mathilde Palazzesi sang 'Al sol pensiero del mio contento' from Vaccai's *Il precipizio*.<sup>6</sup> Palazzesi was instrumental in another important change when performing Lucia at the Teatro Ducale in Parma during the 1836–1837 season; this time, in the mad scene, she decided to sing Fausta's Rondo, from Donizetti's earlier opera *Fausta*. The choice resulted in a successful and well-reviewed performance, after which two more interpreters went for the same substitution in at least two productions: Giuseppina Strepponi (Bologna, 1837) and Eugenia Tadolini (Florence, 1837). As has been already suggested by Hilary Poriss, 'it is possible that not only did Lucia's final scene fail to make an impression on early audiences, but it was also outshone by Edgardo's finale'.<sup>7</sup> Palazzesi's decision is consistent with Fanny Tacchiardi-Persiani's; both must have felt uncomfortable with the idea that the opera should come to its close without a final grand aria for the protagonist. In fact, early reviews of the opera tend to pay little or no attention to the mad scene and prefer Edgardo's finale, a circumstance that may have led sopranos to consider a change in the score. A Grand Rondo for the soprano may have been thought more convincing, without altering the dramatic situation too much.<sup>8</sup> The early aversion to the mad scene is further attested by a number of instrumental transcriptions and pot-pourris that neglect the mad scene and include other vocal pieces in its place.<sup>9</sup>

Gradually, after its Naples premiere, *Lucia di Lammermoor* came to gain a permanent place in the operatic repertoire and, at the same time, the habit of substituting the Rondo for the mad scene was abandoned, with Donizetti's original music definitively restored. Once the original aria had resumed its position, it is not certain when the well-known flute cadenza made its appearance, and eventually became the most celebrated passage of the entire opera. Donizetti's manuscript indicates a dominant-seventh arpeggio for the interpreter to develop into a proper cadenza, as was customary at the time. In the printed score the passage leading up to the cadenza features the flute (originally a glass harmonica) proceeding in thirds and sixths with the voice, thus serving as an invitation to continue with the same figure in an instrumental-vocal arabesque. According to a prevailing tradition, the famous cadenza with the flute originated from Teresa Brambilla in the 1850s.<sup>10</sup> However, the first incontrovertible evidence suggesting its existence dates back to 1889, when *Lucie de Lammermoor* was produced in Paris, at the Opéra Garnier with Nellie Melba in the title role. On that occasion the critic of *Le Ménestrel* observed that 'After her mad aria, [...] [Melba] received ovations from all corners of the house. Here she had a vertiginous cadenza, in which she followed the acrobatics of Paul Taffanel's flute with incomparable mastery'.<sup>11</sup> A few leaves of white paper with the annotated cadenza that were added to the score and orchestra material belonging to the Opéra since 1847 confirm that the insertion was made in 1889 and later reviews of Melba's impersonations of the same role suggest that she went on singing 'the famous cadenza with flute'. This was the case when she made her appearance as Lucia at La Scala in Milan in 1893, on which occasion the critic of the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* had words of praise. Melba's voice was an exquisite example of beauty, evenness and width of compass; she sang the music as written by the composer, without all those baroque arabesques and fermatas, and with only a few traditional embellishments in the reprises; her technical virtuosity emerged only in the 'famous cadenza with the flute' where her performance reached perfection. Her triumph in Milan was such that the flute cadenza in the mad scene had to be repeated, on both the first and the second night.<sup>12</sup>

6 Ibid., p. 3.

7 Ibid., p. 13.

8 See also Romana Margherita Pugliese, 'The Origins of Lucia di Lammermoor's Cadenza', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 16.1 (2004), 23–42.

9 See again *ibid.*, p. 28.

10 See Guglielmo Barblan, *L'opera di Donizetti nell'età romantica* (Bergamo: Ed. del centenario, 1948), p. 125.

11 *Le Ménestrel*, 15 December 1889, p. 395, cited in Pugliese, 'The Origins', p. 31.

12 *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, 19 March 1893, n. 12, pp. 192–94. 'E il trionfale successo è pienamente giustificato: voce pura come il diamante; timbro dolce, insinuante eppure vigoroso; uguaglianza perfetta dei suoni in tutta l'ampia scala che da do basso ascende al mi sopracuto senz'alcun sforzo; agilità perfetta, nitida, perlata; buona pronuncia... Ma il pregio maggiore per me sta in questo: che non abusando della straordinaria facilità della voce, la Melba canta la musica *come fu scritta!*... non ghirigori barocchi, non rallentandi, non corone, ma la frase giusta, semplice, quadrata: poche e di buon gusto le tradizionali fioriture nelle riprese: nella *Lucia* il virtuosismo fa capolino soltanto alla famosa cadenza col flauto, nella quale l'esecuzione della Melba raggiunge una perfezione unica... La seconda rappresentazione della *Lucia*, ch'ebbe luogo ieri sera, confermò il successo: fu un nuovo trionfo per la signora Melba la quale, come nella prima sera, dovette ripetere la cadenza della scena della follia'.

When Mathilde Marchesi, who was Nellie Melba's teacher in Paris, published her *Variantes et points d'orgue* in 1900, she included three cadenzas for the mad scene. The first one carries Marchesi's dedication to Melba and coincides with the 1889 Paris manuscript, the third is a variation of the first, while the second includes a quotation of the reminiscence motif 'Verranno a te sull'aure' from the duet between Edgardo and Lucia in Act I, Scene 5.<sup>13</sup>

When first sung by Lucia in the duet, the motif presents itself as shown in Figure 33.



In the 1860s and 1870s Ilma de Murska (1834–1889) and Emma Albani (1847–1930) seem to have sung their own flute-accompanied cadenzas. In 1875 the latter was extremely successful when interpreting a very well-received cadenza together with John R. Radcliff (1843–1917), the flutist who invented the ‘Radcliff system’ flute in 1870.

In the scene of the madness Mdlle. Albani, now a perfect mistress of her resources, gives fuller play to the emotions she wishes to portray than she ever did before, and the effect is all the greater. Her vocalisation here was always not merely distinguished by executive facility, but by varied and appropriate sentiment; and to this she now imparts dramatic as well as vocal expression, the interest of the scene being enhanced in proportion. The assistance she receives here from the flute (Mr. Radcliff) in the ‘cadenza a due’, where the instrument echoes the voice, phrase by phrase, cannot be overestimated. The whole display, however, ending with the melodious peroration, ‘Spargi di qualche pianto’, is admirable. The impression produced in the house was so vivid that at the end the singer was honoured with a triple ‘recall’, as unanimous as it had been well earned.<sup>16</sup>

Although it is not possible to determine its musical contents, it may be argued that the cadenza had little or nothing to do with the one Melba would sing a few decades later in Paris. In fact, no trace of the instrument echoing the voice phrase by phrase can be found in the manuscript preserved at the Bibliothèque de l’Opéra (MS A.549), where instead the parallel thirds and sixths continue until the closing trill. On the same occasion *The Daily News* commented on the flute cadenza and noted that ‘the climax of [this performance] was attained in the great scena of delirium, commencing “il dolce suono” and comprising frenzied reminiscences of previously heard phrases’.<sup>17</sup> This strongly suggests that Albani’s flute-cadenza included musical material heard earlier in the opera, as well as in Melba’s second version published in 1900. Nevertheless, none of the cadenzas included in Marchesi’s volume presents the echo effect described by the critic in 1875: with the exception of two trills in the first and second variants and a couple of ascending chromatic scales in the third, where the flute is echoed by the voice and not vice versa, the cadenzas proceed mostly in parallel thirds and sixths. Ricci’s *Variazioni* also include a cadenza purportedly sung by Albani but, again, only a couple of passages present an echo effect, with no evidence of any previously-heard phrases.<sup>18</sup>

Further reference to the manner in which the mad scene was instrumental in the successful reception of the opera appears here and there in the press, and now and again explicit mention of a flute-cadenza is made by the music critic. Thus was the case when Marcella Sembrich was Lucia in London on 23 April 1881; on that occasion *The Musical Times* commented on her wonderful interpretation and the enthusiastic response of the audience.

The first appearance this season of Madame Sembrich attracted a large audience on the 23rd ult. The Opera was *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the heroine of which is so well suited to exhibit the exceptionally fine qualities of Madame Sembrich’s voice that her entire performance was a series of triumphs. Her singing in the mad scene was so admirable as to elicit an enthusiastic encore for the scena, with flute obbligato (excellently played by Mr. Radcliff), and the sestet in the second act gained so much in effect by her exquisite vocalisation that the latter portion had to be repeated.<sup>19</sup>

On reading that John Radcliff played the flute with Sembrich six years after Albani, one may only speculate that they may have performed the same cadenza.

If it is fair to assume that by the 1880s a flute-cadenza had come to be part of a performance practice shared among the interpreters of the earlier generations, as Christine Nilsson, Ilma de Murska, Emma Albani and Marcella Sembrich suggest, it seems also clear that Marchesi-Melba’s 1900 printed cadenzas represent a turning point in the twentieth-century performance practice of Lucia’s mad scene; as early recordings suggest, Marchesi served as a prototype for many singers of later generations.<sup>20</sup> What remains to be verified is whether, and to what extent, Marchesi’s cadenzas incorporate, maybe in part, melodic material or performance models from the earlier generations. In this regard Ricci’s volumes are of little help, since not all the examples he provides are

16 ‘Royal Italian Opera’, *The Times*, 26 April, 1875, p. 9.

17 ‘Royal Italian Opera’, *The Daily News*, 26 April 1875, also cited in Matsumoto, ‘Manacled Freedom’, p. 300.

18 Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, p. 55.

19 ‘Royal Italian Opera’, *The Musical Times*, 1 May 1881, p. 241.

20 See Matsumoto, ‘Manacled Freedom’, pp. 304–12.

accompanied by the name of the interpreter who may have originally sung them. Moreover, Patti and Sembrich appear with different cadenzas in the first volume and again in the *Appendice per voci miste*, thus making it difficult to identify which cadenzas each artist may have sung, and when.

### Tetrazzini's Lucia in the Contemporary Press

As regards Tetrazzini, we do not know whether she inserted a flute-cadenza into the mad scene when first singing it in 1892; nor is it clear what she sang when she was Lucia in St. Petersburg on 22 February 1899, for the first time with Enrico Caruso in the role of Edgardo. Although the critic of the *Petersburgskie Vedomosti* suggested the role of the flute in the mad scene, his account is not sufficiently detailed to help us understand whether he was referring to the aria, where the flute plays a prominent role, or to the final cadenza:

Already in the first aria one could not have asked for anything better than her coloratura which was shown off with full brilliance in the very difficult Mad Scene (the echoes with the flute demonstrated the singer's amazingly pure intonation). In the aria accompanying the scene everything was irreproachable—the scales and trills, and all those kinds of vocal tricks which Italian composers often try to substitute for lack of melody and dramatic effect.<sup>21</sup>

The only hint about the flute-cadenza is offered by the reference to the echoes; while the aria does not feature any of them, the cadenza Tetrazzini would record a few years later certainly does. Based on these considerations, one may speculate that as early as 1899, one year before Marchesi's *Variants* were published, Tetrazzini was singing a flute-cadenza that included the echo effect we find described in the columns of the *Petersburgskie Vedomosti*.

In January 1905 Tetrazzini was singing at the Tivoli in San Francisco, where she was immediately compared to Melba and Sembrich. When she appeared in *Lucia* on 17 January, *The Argonaut* reviewed her successful performance and emphasised the quality of her vocal technique and the easy manner in which she sang Donizetti's coloratura passages.

Tetrazzini, the big little soprano, seems to fix her preference on the operas of the older school... Only a high pure soprano like her can scale such airy ladders of sound sending from each silver rung a spray of liquid pearls. Her voice is almost altogether made up of white notes and in effect her singing is as effortless as the flow of a running brook. It is odd to see how little she opens her mouth. Yet the tones come forth pure sterling silver, unalloyed by a single vocal blur resulting from misplaced effort. The real climax comes in the flute solo, which displayed not only the purity of Tetrazzini's voice, but the ease and brilliancy with which she duplicated all the chromatic flights of the flute.<sup>22</sup>

The last passage, although alluding to the presence and the importance of the flute cadenza, does not help us to reconstruct its musical content; the reference to the chromatic flights sung alongside the flute does not reveal much, although one may still wonder whether what she was singing in San Francisco was the same as what she would eventually record in 1907 and 1911. Instead, the review highlights a second issue of great import: the use of *voce bianca*, the 'white voice' which, as Tetrazzini would explain a few years later, consisted of a special use of head resonance for expressive purposes.<sup>23</sup>

In February 1905, Blanche Partington, music critic of *The San Francisco Call*, was also among the audience of the Tivoli where Tetrazzini was singing *Lucia*. The same night she attended a concert recital given by Nellie Melba at the Alhambra: both artists were in San Francisco for the season. Melba made her appearance surrounded by a small orchestra and a group of soloists, which included 'Gilibert, who develops as a thoroughly delightful concert singer; Sassoli, a young girl harpist who is a phenomenal sort of person; Ellison Van Hoose, an effective tenor, and Mr. North, a flutist worthy of his duties as obbligato maker to her majesty, Melba'.<sup>24</sup> The critic did not

<sup>21</sup> Gattey, *Luisa Tetrazzini*, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> *The Argonaut*, 30 January, 1905, p. 72, also cited in Gattey, *Luisa Tetrazzini*, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>24</sup> Blanche Partington, 'Melba Bewitches at the Alhambra. Queen of Song Charms Thousands in World's Greatest Music, Is not Tetrazzini's Equal in Tone', *The San Francisco Call*, 8 February 1905, p. 16.



miss the opportunity to draw a comparison between the two divas and highlight a few differences in the quality of their voices. While Melba, who was well past her prime, skipped a few notes in the high register, and even a 'cadenza or two' in the mad scene, Tetrizzini was in very good shape and could sing them all, including the by now 'immortal duel of sweets' with the flute.

It is four years since Melba was here, singing the 'Mad Scene' from *Lucia* as she sang it last night. Of it and her I wrote then—in my young and enthusiastic days—'Her voice suggests as no other voice the word "perfect". It is the voice of which one has dreamed, dropping the "silver chain of sound without a break." It is as the lark's that at heaven's gate sings, crystal clear, each note pure as a pearl, from the merest silken thread of a sound to a round, full, victorious note of an infinite deliciousness of satisfaction. The suggestion of technique in the connection seems a fallacy and a superstition, yet it must be remembered that here to nature has been added perfect art, that highest art that conceals art. She has a wonderful staccato, drip—dripping its light and liquid note into the harmonious chalice of the orchestra below, or flying sheerly heavenward—where the angels probably make it over for home consumption.'

I could not quite set my name to all of that now, that is as to last night's concert. There is still the same marvellous, absolute ease of method; still the wonderful liquid, fluty quality of voice, yet the voice had not last night the brilliant, sheer purity it had then. One got husky threads now and again, particularly in the upper range, which is possibly why the singer saved herself more than one top note—not to mention a cadenza or two—in the 'mad scene.' But it is a glorious voice, natheless [sic], so round and rich. Tetrizzini? Of course. Well, I dropped in for half of the 'mad scene' at the Tivoli last night—wading through six deep standing to get near to it. Little Tetrizzini and the flute were engaged in their immortal duel of sweets, and I had just heard the other. One may still be very glad of Tetrizzini. Of course, Melba's voice is larger, as I have before said, and it is sweeter, richer—richer now than when she was here before to my ear—yet the Tivoli prima donna distinctly has it in purity and freshness. And you got all the cadenzas. The curtain, too, fell on a clean, dazzling high note that Melba herself might have owned. We may be very glad of Tetrizzini.<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, Blanche Partington offers no detailed description of the cadenza. Two years later Tetrizzini would make her first appearance in London for the Covent Garden autumn season. She was Violetta in *La traviata* on 2 November, Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* on 15 November, and Gilda in *Rigoletto* on 23 November, singing with Fernando Carpi, Giuseppe Mario Sammarco, Giuseppe De Luca, Edoardo Thos and Oreste Luppi; Ettore Panizza was the conductor. *The Musical Times* had words of praise and the critic emphasised that Tetrizzini's singing was testament to a long and still vibrant tradition in which, the critic reminded his readers, fioriture were not a pointless embellishment used by singers to show off the voice; instead, coloratura played a pivotal role in the dramatic scheme.

The striking success of Madame Tetrizzini in *La Traviata* and *Lucia* at Covent Garden is a reminder that *il bel canto* is not as dead as many of the younger generation of opera-goers had supposed. Nothing in art that has ever been really alive—alive, that is, with true human feeling—can die; and the application of this truism to the present case is that the old and honourable art of *il bel canto* has been, and to all appearances will be again, the vitalising factor in opera. It has been charged with being a weakness and a snare; performances of the old Italian masterpieces have been sneered at as 'concerts in costume', and such mistresses of *agilità* as Jenny Lind and Patti have been disparaged as mere vocal gymnasts; but their triumphs have demonstrated, as Madame Tetrizzini's are doing, that even *fioriture* are more than decorative—that they have an essential place in the dramatic scheme of which they are part.<sup>26</sup>

After Tetrizzini's appearance as Lucia at Covent Garden, *The Times* commented on her interpretation and again a comparison was drawn between her and Melba.

Her execution of scales and ornaments is almost comparable to that of Mme. Melba, and she has the power of putting a great deal of warmth into her voice. She has all the advantages of long stage experience, and is a very capable actress. Only in one respect is there a conspicuous defect in her singing, and that is that she does not hesitate to break any phrase in order to breathe quite comfortably. Of course this cannot make it very easy to accompany her, but Signor Panizza anticipated her every wish, and the music and action of the piece were kept waiting frequently while the new *diva* inhaled. Such a peculiarity is, of course, nothing very unusual with singers of all classes, and it would

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> 'Occasional Notes', *The Musical Times*, vol. 48, no. 778, 1 December 1907, p. 787.

pass without remarks if foolish *comparisons* had not been made with such artists as Patti and Melba, so that none but the highest standard can justly be used. Mme. Tetrazzini's singing is a true example of the *bel canto*, and it is most gratifying that the traditions of that art will be handed on for a few years longer. It is also probable that when the singer has recovered from a cold which affected the top note of one of her runs, she may prove to deserve to the full the triumph she has won. It is greatly to her credit that, in spite of her indisposition, she did not even have her music transposed. The 'Mad song' was admirably sung and the end had to be repeated.<sup>27</sup>

Not much can be gleaned from these notes about the manner in which Tetrazzini may have sung the cadenza, nor do we learn much about the presence of a flute. Instead, the critic found fault with Tetrazzini's way of breathing which, in his opinion, was at odds with the musical phrasing. Tetrazzini also gave four gala concerts on 3, 7, 10 and 12 December. Initially only two concerts had been planned, but the audience thronged the theatre to such an extent that it was impossible not to add two more nights.

In 1908 Tetrazzini was in New York, singing *La traviata* (on 15 January) and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (on 20 January); again she made a *furor*, again opera-goers thronged the Manhattan Opera House in their thousands. *The San Francisco Call* had the event fully covered by Reginald De Koven, its music critic.

Never was verdict of an audience more spontaneous or unanimous, never was artistic success more complete and unqualified. Had Tetrazzini elected to appear first as Lucia I imagine that critical opinion might have been less varied and various, for there is no doubt that the role from every point of view suits her better than Violetta.<sup>28</sup>

De Koven argued that Tetrazzini was more remarkable as a coloratura singer than as a purely lyric artist, and Donizetti's music and vocal acrobatics offered her wider opportunities to exhibit her talent than Verdi's dramatic style.<sup>29</sup> Even Lucia's cavatina was said to be problematic: 'the opening air "Regnava nel silenzio" was indifferently, even carelessly sung, with several lapses from pitch and a striking lack of color and resonance in the medium register, the music lying in the worst part of the voice'.<sup>30</sup> What De Koven was describing is consistent with what had been noted in 1905 about Tetrazzini's use of the white voice; the critic's remark about a surprising lack of colour and resonance in the medium register may be explained as a consequence of her using the 'voce bianca'. For the second time, doubtless, her expressive intentions had been misunderstood.

Things changed for the better with the cabaletta 'Quando rapito' when 'enthusiasm began and grew apace for in the singing of this number the great artist stood revealed'. The wonderful, birdlike facility with which Tetrazzini could sing trills and roulades was striking, and so were her intonation and evenness of sound. The cabaletta ended with 'another of those marvellous high notes, a D this time, whose effect was electrical in its intensity and power and the astonishing facility of it'.<sup>31</sup>

The D in the high register the critic referred to can also be found in Tetrazzini's 1909 recording, where in fact she sings her own variants and concludes with an ascending scale that rests on a fermata on the top D (Figure 36). Not one mention was made of the mad scene and the flute-cadenza.

In May of the same year Tetrazzini was Lucia in London, and the critic of *The Times* had to acknowledge her popular success; her feats of vocalisation were such that she was certain to be applauded. However, the critic was more hesitant when it came to drawing a line between popularity and refined artistry: while Tetrazzini's brilliant technique brought her popular success, one could search in vain for those details that would qualify her as a real artist.

For the sake of hearing her reiterate a high note or execute a brilliant shake at the top of her register, all the various details in which refinement is vainly sought for are forgotten by most of her hearers, and the 'mad scene' was heartily applauded on Saturday as though it had never been sung so finely before.<sup>32</sup>

27 'Lucia di Lammermoor' (Royal Opera), *The Times*, 16 November 1907, p. 6

28 'Tetrazzini Is Triumphant in Score of Lucia', *The San Francisco Call*, 21 January 1908, front page.

29 Not every critic agreed with De Koven on this point; on the contrary, some of them pronounced Tetrazzini's Violetta one of her best achievements.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 'Royal Opera', *The Times*, 4 May 1908, p. 14

The image shows two staves of a musical score. The top staff is labeled 'Tetrzzini (1909)' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Ricordi'. Both staves are in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, culminating in a high D note. The lyrics 'a schiu da il ciel per me' are written below the notes. The Ricordi staff includes dynamic markings 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'Poco più' (a little more).

Figure 36 shows the last bars of 'Quando rapito', where Tetrzzini reaches the high D, as also noted by De Koven in 1908.

One year later Tetrzzini sang *Lucia* again in London, together with Sammarco as Enrico and John McCormack as Edgardo. *The Times* reviewed her performance suggesting only a moderate success and presenting the same line of argument. Again, from Tetrzzini and this class of operatic works one could expect nothing more than a few coloratura passages nicely sung.

Those who go to the opera in order to rejoice in the vocalization of the *prima donna*—and it is hard to imagine any other reason for going to *Lucia*—must surely have been satisfied last night, for Mme. Tetrzzini was in excellent voice and throughout nearly the whole opera gave her best singing, and its beauty was irresistible. But there was no crowd, and, at first, comparatively little enthusiasm. Even her prolonged high D at the end of 'Quando rapita' in her first scene (one of the few notes which were not absolutely pure in tone) only produced a moderate round of applause, and her delicately finished cadences, which a year ago were listened to with bated breath, seemed to cause very little sensation. Her admirers, who filled the upper parts of the house, waited for the celebrated cadenza in the mad scene, and contented themselves with calling for a repetition of this and cheering her heartily at the end of the scene. Mr. John McCormack and Signor Sammarco were as usual thoroughly efficient. Mr. McCormack's voice blended delightfully with Mme. Tetrzzini's in the first act, and he mourned her loss afterwards among the tombstones with proper intensity of feeling.<sup>33</sup>

It is fair to assume that Tetrzzini was singing the same coloratura and cadenzas she had sung a year before, as the reference to the top D suggests, even though this time her vocal technique did not appear to be entirely impeccable.

Not much can be gleaned from later reviews, possibly also because *Lucia* had definitively established itself as a classic in the twentieth-century operatic firmament, and the flute cadenza in the mad scene had been firmly incorporated into the performing version, if not into its notated score. Instead, here and there music critics observed an improvement in the manner in which she now blended the different voice registers; Tetrzzini's use of the *voce bianca* may have undergone a development resulting not only in a smoother transition from one register to the other but also in a more uniform and even voice quality. In this regard, when she made her appearance as *Lucia* in New York on 27 December 1911, music critics expressed different opinions. The *Musical Courier* of 3 January 1912 approved of the diva's performance of *Lucia*:

Mme Tetrzzini comes back to us in the full height of her powers, and while her marvellous facility in runs, passages, trills and all the other dazzling requisites of coloratura singing are undiminished in the slightest degree. Lovers of pure bel canto were delighted to find that she had added to her equipment a smoother joining of registers and a more liquid flow of tone production in sustained cantilena than she exhibited at the time she was one of the stars of the Manhattan Opera House.<sup>34</sup>

Again, we can argue that, over the years, Tetrzzini had come to gain better control of her voice, thus mastering a smoother transition from one register to the other.

<sup>33</sup> 'Royal Opera', *The Times*, 4 May 1909, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Gattey, *Luisa Tetrzzini*, p. 168.

In general, by reading the reviews that accompanied her appearances as Lucia, we understand not only how contemporary music critics reviewed and often appreciated the manner in which Tetrizzini sang, but also how bel canto was conceptualised in a moment in which Italian verismo seemed to prevail over the traditional repertoire and Wagner's works had pushed music drama in a completely new and different direction. If, on the one hand, many commentators still considered bel canto a vibrant tradition that continued into the twentieth century thanks to a group of highly-talented interpreters, on the other hand some critics tended to understand it as an anachronistic form of musical entertainment of limited artistic value. While the first cherished the coloratura tradition and understood it as an important expressive device at the service of the dramatic situation, the second insisted that it was instrumental in showing off the voice at the expense of dramatic consistency.

### Lucia's 'Scena e Cavatina'

Much scholarly attention has been paid to *Lucia di Lammermoor* and to those moments in the opera where the drama reaches its climax wonderfully supported by the music composed by Donizetti: Lucia's cavatina and cabaletta and the mad scene. Many an interpretation of their dramatic and musical contents has been offered, including discussions of gender issues prompted by the association of madness with women in the nineteenth century. In our case, suffice it to say that the lyrics of the 'Scena e Cavatina' 'Regnava nel silenzio' are set in two stanzas alternating description and action. The first quatrain sets the scene and describes the gloomy atmosphere at the fountain; then the ghost appears, communicating with Lucia by moving its lips (second quatrain); finally, on its disappearance, the water becomes red with blood, thus casting a bad omen on Lucia's destiny.<sup>35</sup> After an orchestral introduction (Maestoso) a first recitativo features the exchange between Lucia and Alisa that leads to the Larghetto 'Regnava nel silenzio'; a second short intervention of Alisa in the following Allegro serves as a preparation for the concluding Moderato. This four-section segmentation adheres to the conventions of the period, where typically a tempo d'attacco precedes a central cantabile and a tempo di mezzo leads to the final cabaletta.<sup>36</sup>

The Larghetto features the conventional structure of the Italian lyric form and presents a first pair of four-bar phrases in D minor ( $a_{2+2}$  -  $a^1_{2+2}$ ) followed by a contrasting medial four-bar phrase ( $b_{2+2}$ ) that hesitates on the dominant chord, to shift unexpectedly to F major.<sup>37</sup> This leads to a new four-bar phrase ( $c_4$ ) featuring an ornamented cadential figure that rests on a typical subdominant-dominant chordal structure in F major. The second stanza presents different melodic material, mostly in F major, a key that seems to defy the sense of gloominess suggested by the lyrics.

		Recitativo	
LUCIA	LUCIA		
Ancor non giunse!...	Has not yet come!...		
...	...		
LUCIA	LUCIA		
Ascolta.	Listen.		
Regnava nel silenzio	It reigned in the silence	D minor	$a_{(2+2)}$
Alta la notte e bruna...	High the night and brown...		
Colpia la fonte un pallido	The fountain was struck by a pale	D minor - F major	$a^1_{(2+2)}$
Raggio di tetra luna...	Dark moonbeam...		

35 Mary Ann Smart, 'The Silencing of Lucia', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4.2 (1992), 119–41 (p. 133).

36 See Philip Gossett, 'Verdi, Ghislanzoni, and *Aida*: The Uses of Convention', *Critical Inquiry*, 1.2 (1974), 291–334, and Harold S. Powers, "'La solita forma" and "The Uses of Convention"', *Acta Musicologica*, 59 (1987), 65–90.

37 In the original manuscript, the aria is in E flat. See Ashbrook, *Donizetti*, pp. 146–47.

Quando somnesso un gemito Fra l'aure udir si fe', Ed ecco su quel margine L'ombra mostrarsi a me!	When softly a groaning Among the airs was heard, And behold, on that edge The shadow showed itself to me!	D minor/F major F major	$b_{(2+2)}$ $c_{(2+2)}$ (cadenza)
Qual di chi parla muoversi Il labbro suo vedea, E con la mano esanime Chiamarmi a sé pareva.	Moving like one who speaks I saw his lips And with his lifeless hand He seemed to call me to himself.	<b>Larghetto</b> F major	$d_{(2+2)}$ $e_{(2+2)}$
Stette un momento immobile Poi rapida sgombrò, E l'onda pria sì limpida, Di sangue rosseggiò!	It stood still for a moment Then swiftly it cleared away, And the wave so clear before, With blood reddened!	dominant pedal D major	$f_{(2+2)}$ cadenza $a_{(3+4)}$ cadenza

In the following Allegro Alisa comments on Lucia's words and on how they bode ill for her future. The final Moderato is a cabaletta and follows the nineteenth-century operatic conventions, with the first section repeated a second time, thus offering the singer the opportunity to add her coloratura and make her substitutions. The music is in G major, moving shortly to B flat major, expressing the feeling of blissful happiness in which Lucia is momentarily indulging.

ALISA Chiari, oh ciel! ben chiari e tristi Nel tuo dir presagi intendo! Ah! Lucia, Lucia desisti ...	ALISA Clear, oh heaven, clear and sad In your words I mean omens! Ah! Lucia, Lucia desist ...		
LUCIA Quando rapito in estasi Del più cocente amore, Col favellar del core Mi giura eterna fé;	LUCIA When enraptured in ecstasy Of the most burning love, With the speaking of the heart He swears to me eternal faith;	<b>Allegro</b> $a_{(2+2+2+2)}$ $a_{(2+2+2+2)}$	G major
Gli affanni miei dimentico,	I forget my worries,	$b_{(2+2)}$	B flat major
Gioia diviene il pianto... Parmi che a lui d'accanto Si schiuda il ciel per me!	Joy becomes the weeping... It seems to me that next to him Heaven opens up for me!	$c_{(2+2+3+3)}$	G major
Quando rapito in estasi Del più cocente amore, Col favellar del core Mi giura eterna fé;	When enraptured in ecstasy Of the most burning love, With the speaking of the heart He swears to me eternal faith;	<b>Moderato</b> $a_{(2+2+2+2)}$	G major
Gli affanni miei dimentico, Gioia diviene il pianto... Parmi che a lui d'accanto Si schiuda il ciel per me!	I forget my worries, Joy becomes the weeping... It seems to me that next to him Heaven opens up for me!	$b_{(2+2)}$ $c_{(2+2+3+3)}$	B flat major G major
		coda	

## Tetrazzini's Recording

Tetrazzini recorded the 'Scena e Cavatina' only once, on 25 May 1909, but two takes were necessary to have the entire aria recorded.<sup>38</sup> The first take (matrix 3077f), corresponding to the Larghetto, lasts 3'18'' ca. while the second (matrix 3078f) is 4'02'' long. The Larghetto opens with the orchestral introduction (in 6/8) and closes with the chord on which the vocal cadenza rests. The first eight measures from Alice's short pertichini intervention in the tempo di mezzo have been cut and the second take starts five bars before Lucia sings 'Egli è luce'. The coda of 'Quando rapito in estasi' is also cut. Interestingly, the third bar of the orchestral introduction to the cantabile features a change in the articulation: although the score indicates pizzicato, the strings play legato and add a first, remarkably audible, ascending portamento between A and E and a second, descending portamento between C and B (Figure 37).

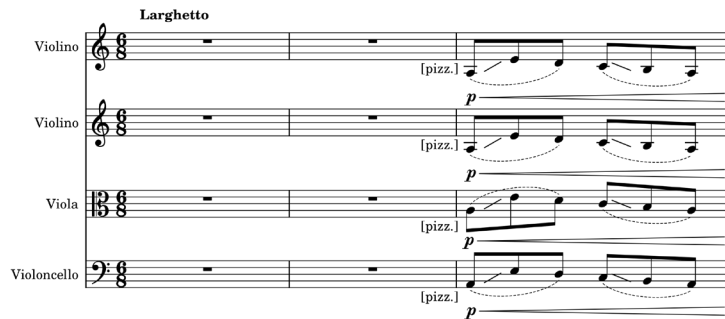


Figure 37 shows the change from pizzicato to legato with portamento in the strings at bar 3 in the Larghetto.

The legato in the strings anticipates the one in the voice and the portamento is strongly suggestive of the extent to which this expressive device was used not only by singers and soloists, but also by nineteenth-century orchestras. Evidence suggests that when playing in the orchestra, string instruments were expected to make portamento shifts audible as a means of tender expression, and not to hide them.<sup>39</sup> Tetrazzini's interpretation features some small rhythmic modifications and the addition of a number of portamentos, either to connect two distant notes or to emphasise the pathetic quality of a given melodic passage; she achieves this by taking the written note from below, even in a descending melodic contour, as is the case at bar 11 (Figure 38).

The first textual manipulation occurs at bar 15, where Tetrazzini seems to follow, at least in part, what Marchesi suggests in her *Variantes et points d'orgue*.<sup>40</sup> Her passages can be found reproduced also in Ricci's volume, along with two more solutions, all leading up to the top B flat.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, in the following measures Tetrazzini does not include the short closing passages that can be found suggested in Marchesi<sup>42</sup> and Ricci.<sup>43</sup> Even the final cadenza is less conspicuous in Tetrazzini (Figure 39) than in both Ricci<sup>44</sup> and Marchesi.<sup>45</sup>

Something similar can be observed in the last measures before the Moderato, where Marchesi's four suggestions<sup>46</sup> seem to be more audacious than Tetrazzini's interpretative solution (Figure 40).

38 In 1992 EMI Classics published these two takes merged into one single audio track (7'22''), included in the CD-box *Luisa Tetrazzini: The London Recordings*.

39 See Raymond Monelle, 'The Orchestral String Portamento as Expressive Topic', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 31.2-3 (2012), 138-46. For the use of *portamento* in nineteenth-century vocal music see Deborah Kauffman, 'Portamento in Romantic Opera', *Performance Practice Review*, 5.2 (1992), 139-58.

40 Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, p. 45.

41 Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, p. 42.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 43

45 Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, p. 46.

46 Ibid.

10  
Tetrizzini (1909)  
quan-do un som-mes-so ge-mi-to fra l'au-re u-dir si fè ed ec-co, ec-co su quel

Ricordi  
quan-do un som-mes-so ge-mi-to fra l'au-re u-dir si fè ed ec-co, ec-co su quel

15  
Tetrizzini (1909)  
mar-gi-ne l'om-bra ah! l'om-bra mo-strar-si a me, ah!

Marchesi  
mar-gi, ah! l'om-bra, l'om-bra mo-strar-si a me, Ah!

Ricordi  
mar-gi-ne l'om-bra mo-strar-si, l'om-bra mo-strar-si a me, ah!

Figure 38 shows Tetrizzini's small rhythmic modifications and portamentos in 'Regnava nel silenzio'.

37  
Tetrizzini (1909)  
pria-si pria ah di san-gue-ros-seg-giò

Ricordi  
lim-pi-da ah i! ros-seg-giò

42  
Tetrizzini (1909)  
pria-si pria ah di san-gue-ros-seg-giò

Ricordi  
lim-pi-da ah i! ros-seg-giò

Figure 39 shows Tetrizzini's rendition of the cadenza that concludes the Larghetto of 'Regnava nel silenzio'.

52  
Tetrizzini (1909)  
E-gli è lu-ce a gior-ni mie-i, è con-for-to, è con-for-to al mi-o, al mi-o pe-nar.

Ricordi  
E-gli è lu-ce a gior-ni mie-i, è con-for-to, è con-for-to al mi-o, al mi-o pe-nar.

57  
Tetrizzini (1909)  
E-gli è lu-ce a gior-ni mie-i, è con-for-to, è con-for-to al mi-o, al mi-o pe-nar.

Ricordi  
E-gli è lu-ce a gior-ni mie-i, è con-for-to, è con-for-to al mi-o, al mi-o pe-nar.

Figure 40 shows Tetrizzini's changes in the Moderato.

Tetrizzini sings the first part of the cabaletta as written, while some modifications are present in the reprise; these are similar to what is suggested by both Ricci<sup>47</sup> and Marchesi.<sup>48</sup> Instead, Tetrizzini's variants to the concluding virtuoso passages are slightly different from either written source and are instrumental in showing off her voice by means of brilliant staccato figures in the upper register (Figure 41).

<sup>47</sup> Ricci, *Variazioni*, p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, p. 47.

125 *tempo primo*

Tetrazzini (1909) par - mi che a lui d'ac - can - to si schiu - da il ciel per me a <sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup> sì

Marchesi *A tempo* par - mi che a lui d'ac - can - to si schiu - da il ciel per me *p* sì

Ricordi *Rit.* par - mi che a lui d'ac - can - to si schiu - da il ciel per me, *p* sì

130

Tetrazzini (1909) schiu - da il ciel per me, a schiu - da il ciel per me

Marchesi schiu - da il ciel per me, Ah! schiu - da il ciel per me

Ricordi schiu - da il ciel per me, *pp* sì schiu - da il ciel per me, *Poco più*

Figure 41 shows Tetrazzini's coloratura in the closing measures of 'Regnava nel silenzio'.

As already anticipated, Tetrazzini concludes the scene with a sustained top D, which some critics had already found worthy of notice in their reviews a few years before. This is consistent with what we have seen apropos Rossini's operas: once she had learned a role, which may have included a body of coloraturas, ornaments and passages, it was unlikely that a singer like Tetrazzini considered further extempore modifications. Unfortunately, Tetrazzini recorded this aria only once while neither Melba nor Sembrich ever recorded it, a circumstance that deprives us of a means of comparison.

## The Mad Scene

As all opera lovers know well, in Part II–Act II the mad scene sees Lucia entering the stage dressed in a bloodstained, white night-gown after stabbing Arturo to death. Having murdered her husband, she is in a delirious state and while uttering the words 'presso la fonte meco t'assidi alquanto' her thoughts go back to her meeting with Edgardo near the fountain in Act I. Donizetti uses some previously heard melodic material, and while the motifs from 'Regnava nel silenzio' and from Lucia's wedding are barely recognisable in the orchestra, a clear citation from her love duet with Edgardo is to be found in the flute part, as already discussed.<sup>49</sup>

The aria follows the so-called customary form and the initial dramatic kinetic section is characterised by a frequent change of meter and by the indication *recitativo* in the score, which is used twice.

Coro:  
(Oh giusto cielo!  
Par dalla tomba uscita!)

Chorus:  
(Oh, fair heavens,  
she seems to have come out of the grave)

<sup>49</sup> See again Mary Ann Smart, 'The Silencing of Lucia', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4.2 (1992), 137–38.



Lucia:  
 Il dolce suono  
 mi colpì di sua voce!... Ah! quella voce  
 m'è qui nel cor discesa!...  
 Edgardo! Io ti son resa:  
 fuggita io son da' tuoi nemici... Un gelo  
 mi serpeggia nel sen!... trema ogni fibra!...  
 vacilla il piè!... Presso la fonte, meco  
 t'assidi alquanto... Ahimè!... sorge il tremendo  
 fantasma e ne separa!...  
 Qui ricovriamo, Edgardo, a piè dell'ara...  
 sparsa è di rose!... un'armonia celeste  
 di', non ascolti? Ah, l'inno  
 suona di nozze!... il rito  
 per noi, per noi s'appresta!... Oh me felice!  
 Oh gioia che si sente, e non si dice!

Lucia:  
 The sweet sound  
 Of his voice struck me!... Ah that voice  
 Has descended upon my heart!  
 Edgardo! I surrender myself to you:  
 I have fled from your enemies... A chill  
 Creeps into my heart!... every fibre trembles!  
 My feet falter! Near the fountain, with me  
 You sit... Alas, the dreadful ghost rises!  
 and separates us!  
 Let us take refuge here, Edgardo, at the foot of the altar...  
 scattered with roses! ... a celestial harmony  
 say, do you not hear?... Ah, the hymn  
 sounds of a wedding!... the rite  
 is preparing for us, for us!... Oh happy me!  
 Oh joy that one feels, and does not say!

After the initial dialogic moment, the lyric session starts with the Larghetto 'Ardon gl'incensi'; an eight-bar melody is first heard in the orchestra (and the voice responds in declamato style) then is sung by Lucia ('Al fin son tua'), this time enriched by the insertion of short vocal passaggi with the chorus and the voices of Normanno and Raimondo in the background. Then the same melody is presented again in a varied form ('Del ciel clemente') to unfold into a vocal-instrumental arabesque with the flute. As already mentioned, a dominant-seventh arpeggio before the fermata serves as an invitation to introduce the cadenza.

Lucia:	Lucia:	
Ardon gl'incensi... splendono	The incense burns... around	a <sub>(4+4)</sub> (E flat major)
le sacre faci intorno!...	the sacred torches shine	
Ecco il ministro! Porgimi	Here is the minister! Give me	
la destra... Oh lieto giorno!	your right hand... Oh, happy day!	<i>fermata</i>
Alfin son tua, sei mio!	At last I am yours, you are mine!	a <sub>(4)</sub>
A me ti dona un dio...	A god gives you to me...	b <sub>(4)</sub>
ogni piacer più grato	every most grateful pleasure	c <sub>(4)</sub> (B flat major)
mi fia con te diviso	will be shared with you	c <sub>(4)</sub> <i>fermata</i>
del ciel clemente un riso	from the merciful heavens a smile	a <sub>(4+4+4+4)</sub> (E flat major)
la vita a noi sarà!	life will be for us!	cadenza

A tempo di mezzo follows ('S'avanza Enrico'—Allegro, Allegro mosso) that leads up to the customary cabaletta 'Spargi d'amaro pianto' (Moderato); after Enrico and Raimondo's pertichini, together with the intervention of the chorus, the same motivic material (which adheres to the lyric form) is repeated a second time, to give the singer the opportunity to make her changes and add new passages. These two sections are not present in Tetrzzini's recordings.

### Tetrzzini's Recordings of the Mad Scene

Tetrzzini recorded 'Ardon gl'incensi' twice. The first recording was made in London, in December 1907: Percy Pitt conducted the orchestra and the Dutch-born English flutist Albert Fransella, a prominent figure in

the London scene of woodwind instruments, played the flute<sup>50</sup> (matrix no. 2176f, Gramophone 053144, Victor 92018). The recording is not complete, possibly because of the constraints imposed by the recording technologies: the opening phrase 'Ardon gli'incensi' is skipped and the orchestra starts with the Larghetto (6/8); the theme sung by Lucia ('Alfin son tua') is cut and Tetrzzini moves immediately to the following embellished phrase ('Del ciel clemente'). The take is 3'15" long. Interestingly, a letter written on 22 April 1908 by Calvin G. Child from the Victor Talking Machine to Sydney W. Dixon<sup>51</sup> of the Gramophone Company makes reference to some of the difficulties incurred when working with Tetrzzini and suggests how hard it must have been to level the flute with the voice in the mad scene.

April 22, 1908. Camden, NJ, USA

However, I am indeed glad to know that you are going to make over some of the Tetrzzini numbers, as the records show plainly that she did not take quite all the care in singing some of the numbers that she should have, and may I suggest, if you do the Lucia Aria again, that the flute obligato should be suppressed just a little. In spots it is so loud as to interfere with the voice quite unpleasantly. Not with a view of praising our own work, but merely as an indication of the quality that appeals to me for a flute obligato, I wish you would try to hear our Gounod's Serenade by Calvé.<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly, the problem highlighted by Child can still be heard in the recording realised in 1907. In a previous letter Child had expressed himself in similar terms and had drawn a comparison with Melba. Even though Tetrzzini excelled in the higher compass of the voice, she could never cast a shadow on Melba's wonderful singing.

March 9, 1908

The records themselves are a great disappointment to me. While some of them show most marvellous technique in execution, great vocal agility and extreme ease in the very high notes, the voice seems to me lacking in sympathetic quality, and I believe that Melba's Lucia Mad Scene, even though she did not sing the 'D' or is it 'E' that Tetrzzini sings at the end, will be sought for and requested long after Tetrzzini's record is forgotten. With the possible exception of the last note, there is no comparison in my humble opinion in the two records, Melba's trill being far superior to that of Tetrzzini. Tetrzzini's 'Caro nome' I cannot understand ever having created a furore.

I am not making these comparisons from a recording standpoint at all, but simply from the voice impressions, and I do not think that Tetrzzini's 'Caro nome' can be mentioned with Melba's, or even with that of Bessie Abott. The 'Voi che sapere' is not in the same class for a single moment with Madame Melba's. My admiration for Madame Melba is so very great that I must own up to a little personal satisfaction that the actual vocal comparison is decidedly in Melba's favour, at least so it seems to me, and I believe that it will not be long before the comparative sale of the records substantiates this.<sup>53</sup>

Child was not very appreciative towards Tetrzzini and in drawing a comparison with the American soprano Bessie Abott,<sup>54</sup> who enjoyed a moderately successful career at the Metropolitan, he did not intend to pay her a compliment.

Tetrzzini recorded the Larghetto again on 16 March 1911, this time at Camden (in New Jersey, US) with Walter Rogers conducting the Victor Orchestra and Walter Oesterreicher playing the flute (matrix C10068-1, Victor 88299, 6337; HMV 2-053047, DB 535). The Larghetto is complete and this time the take is 4'50" long. Tetrzzini makes small changes in the rhythm and, contrary to the conventions of the time and to Donizetti's compositional idea, she also introduces some important changes into the initial melody, as can be seen in Figure 42.

50 See Robert Bigio, 'Albert Fransella: The Paganini of the Flute', *Pan*, 12 (1994), 19–25, and Jessica Ann Raposo, *Defining the British Flute School: A Study of the British Flute Performance Practice, 1890–1940*, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Columbia, July 2007.

51 Calvin Child was Victor Recording Manager, while Sydney Wentworth Dixon (1868–1921) who had joined the Gramophone Company in 1902 as Assistant Manager and Company Secretary, between 1904 and 1909 was British Branch Manager of the company. From 1909 to 1912 he was joint Managing Director, with a seat on the board; in 1912, he became Sales Director. See Peter Martland, *Recording History: The British Record Industry, 1888–1931* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2013).

52 Document preserved in the EMI archive at Dawley Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 1HH (UK).

53 Ibid.

54 The American soprano Bessie Abott (1878–1919) was a pupil of Mathilde Marchesi and made a moderately successful career at the Metropolitan. See J. B. Steane, 'Abott [née Pickens], Bessie', *Grove Music Online*, 2002, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000900277>.

Figure 42 shows the changes made by Tetrizzini in the initial measures of 'Ardon gl'incensi'.

The score includes the following lyrics:

**Tetrizzini (1911):** Splen - don le sa - cre fa - ci splen - don in - tor - no. Ec - co il mi - ni - stro! por - gi - mi la de - stra, Oh lie - to

**ER 41689 Rep. 1969:** Ar - don gl'in - cen - si... splen - don le sa - cre fa - ci, splen - don in - tor - no. Ec - co il mi - ni - stro! por - gi - mi la de - stra, Oh lie - to

**Tetrizzini (1911):** gior - no! oh lie - to! Al fin al fin son tu - a, al - fin sei mi - o, a me ti do - na, a me ti do - na un

**Ricordi:** gior - no! oh lie - to! Al - fin son tu - a, al - fin sei mi - o, a me ti do - na, a me ti do - na un

**Tetrizzini (1911):** Di - o. O - gni pia - cer più gra to, sì, o - gni pia - ce - re mi fi - a con te di vi - so, con te con

**Ricordi:** Di - o. O - gni pia - cer più gra - to, sì, o - gni pia - ce - re mi fia con te di vi - so, con te con

Figure 42 shows the changes made by Tetrizzini in the initial measures of 'Ardon gl'incensi'.

Her interventions are typical of the time: the elongation of the final syllable at bar 15, the addition of some small graces at bars 12, 14, and 16, and the substitution of the written passages in bar 18. The same happens when the main motif presents itself again: despite the additional passages written by Donizetti, Tetrizzini makes her own changes, as can be observed in bars 29–35 in Figure 43. Some of the small graces and passaggi sung by Tetrizzini can also be found in both Marchesi<sup>55</sup> and Ricci,<sup>56</sup> who says that they had belonged to Albani, Melba and Patti.

Figure 43 shows Tetrizzini's own changes in 'Ardon gl'incensi'.

The score includes the following lyrics:

**Tetrizzini (1911):** cie - lo cle - men - te, del ciel cle - men - te un ri - so la vi - ta a noi sa -

**Tetrizzini (1907):** cie - lo cle - men - te, del ciel cle - men - te un ri - so la vi - ta a noi sa -

**Ricordi:** ciel cle - men - te, del ciel cle - men - te un ri - so la vi - ta a noi sa -

Figure 43 shows Tetrizzini's own changes in 'Ardon gl'incensi'.

As for the famous cadenza, Tetrizzini opens it with an arpeggio and a four-note figure echoed by the flute (Figure 44) that are not to be found in Marchesi's *Variantes et points d'orgue*.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, p. 50.

<sup>56</sup> Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. 1, p. 47

<sup>57</sup> Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, pp. 51–53.

Figure 44 shows the arpeggio and the four-note figure echoed by the flute with which Tetrazzini opens the cadenza.

Figure 44 shows the arpeggio and the four-note figure echoed by the flute with which Tetrazzini opens the cadenza.

Instead, the following passages, where the voice and the flute proceed together in thirds, are in Marchesi's volume;<sup>58</sup> the cadenza concludes with a long trill in the voice supported by an arpeggio in the flute part. The versions played by Fransella and Oesterreicher differ slightly in the concluding passage, with the latter repeating the arpeggio three times before joining the voice in the final trill (Figure 45).

Figure 45 shows the closing cadenza sung by Tetrazzini: in 1911 Walter Oesterreicher plays a longer arpeggio.

Figure 45 shows the closing cadenza sung by Tetrazzini: in 1911 Walter Oesterreicher plays a longer arpeggio.

A similar cadenza can be found in Ricci but the anonymous transcription he includes in his 1937 volume also features the so-called 'fountain' reminiscence motif alongside an additional passage; these are not to be heard in Tetrazzini's recorded interpretations.<sup>59</sup> Again, although it is clear that Tetrazzini was drawing from Marchesi's 1900 *Variantes et points d'orgue*, Ricci's volumes do not help us to understand to whom his transcriptions really belonged. In this case, one may wonder whether the extended cadenza transcribed by Ricci should be understood as the full version of what Tetrazzini used to sing on stage, and that had to be cut in order to fit into a studio

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. 1, pp. 50–51.

recording. One may also wonder whether both Tetrazzini's and Marchesi's variants belong to a larger body of traditional modifications that, as we have seen, were shared by singers from earlier generations.

### *Linda di Chamounix*, 'O luce di quest'anima'

When *Linda* was premiered in Vienna on 19 May 1842 with Eugenia Tadolini in the title role, it did not include the *cavatina di Linda* 'O luce di quest'anima'. Donizetti inserted the well-known bravura piece (without the customary cantabile) expressly for Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani when she premiered it in Paris the same year.<sup>60</sup> In the recitativo (Moderato) Linda expresses her disappointment at not having met with her beloved Carlo but rejoices in the bouquet of flowers that he has left for her as a token of love. They are both poor but will marry as soon as he becomes a famous artist. The recitativo closes with a fermata where the composer writes two graces, thus suggesting that the singer could do the rest (Figure 47). This leads to a two-part cavatina (Allegretto), whose lyrics express Linda's happiness at the cheerful idea that they will soon be happy together. These consist of two stanzas,<sup>61</sup> with the first one repeated at the end of the second to accommodate the verses to the music. The cabaletta follows the typical two-part structure and consists of a main section which is repeated twice; the reprise is followed by a 22-bar coda. Both sections conclude with a short, written cadenza: at the end of the first section (A) Donizetti writes a simple arpeggio on the dominant chord, thus offering the singer the opportunity to consider inserting some additional passages; at the end of the repeat (A<sub>1</sub>), before the coda, the composer writes a proper short cadenza. As we have seen with *Lucia*, Donizetti's written arpeggios are to be understood as a starting point, a springboard for further and possibly more adventurous additions. A third opportunity for vocal display is to be found in the last three bars of the coda, where two fermatas are strongly suggestive of a third opportunity for the singer to insert a vocal arabesque.

#### Lyrics

Ah! tardai troppo, e al nostro  
 favorito convegno io non trovai  
 il mio diletto Carlo; e chi sa mai  
 quanto egli avrà sofferto!  
 Ma non al par di me! Pegno d'amore  
 questi fior mi lasciò! tenero core!  
 E per quel core io l'amo,  
 unico di lui bene.  
 Poveri entrambi siamo,  
 viviam d'amor, di speme;  
 pittore ignoto ancora  
 egli s'innalzerà coi suoi talenti!  
 Sarà mio sposo allora. Oh noi contenti!

Ah! too long I have delayed, and yet I  
 have not found my dear Carlo at our  
 favorite place; and who knows how  
 much he must have suffered!  
 But not as much as I have! Token of love  
 he left me these posies! tender heart!  
 And for that heart I do love him, his  
 only treasure.  
 We are both but poor,  
 living only on of love, of hope;  
 Yet unknown painter,  
 he will rise with his talents!  
 He shall be my husband then. Oh, how  
 happy we will be!!

#### Moderato

O luce di quest'anima,

O light of this soul,

#### Allegretto (A-A<sub>1</sub>)

A (C major) a<sub>4</sub>

delizia, amore e vita,  
 la nostra sorte unita,  
 in terra, in ciel sarà.  
 Deh, vieni a me, riposati

delight, love and life,  
 our fate united,  
 on earth, in heaven shall be.  
 Come unto me, rest

B (progression on a  
 dominant pedal) c<sub>(2+2+2+2)</sub>

<sup>60</sup> Ashbrook, *Donizetti, Le opere*, p. 227.

<sup>61</sup> See *Tutti i libretti di Donizetti*, ed. by Egidio Saracino (Turin: UTET, 1996), p. 1217.

su questo cor che t'ama,  
che te sospira e brama,  
che per te sol vivrà.  
O luce di quest'anima,  
delizia, amore e vita,  
la nostra sorte unita,  
in terra, in ciel sarà.

on this heart that loves thee,  
that sighs and longs for you,  
that for you alone will live.  
O light of this soul,  
delight, love and life,  
our fate united,  
on earth, in heaven shall be

A<sub>1</sub> (C major)

a<sub>4</sub>

d<sub>6</sub>

Tetrazzini sang Linda mostly in her early years. In 1893 she scored a tremendous success in this role during the winter-spring season in São Paulo and the summer season in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil); some critics wrote that her singing of 'O luce di quest'anima' was reminiscent of Patti's and her style was pronounced 'most persuasive'.<sup>62</sup> In 1894 she was Linda at the Teatro San Martin in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and at the Politeama in Montevideo (Uruguay). After a few more performances in South America in 1894 and 1895 she would appear as Linda on stage only twice, once in 1898 in Bologna (Italy) and once again in 1902 in Tbilisi (Georgia). On occasion, Tetrazzini continued to include 'O luce di quest'anima' in concert programs: for instance, on 26 March 1924 *The Times* published a short review of a concert recital she gave at the Albert Hall, where she sang Linda's cavatina alongside some other favourites from the old repertoire. The critic simply noted that these pieces 'were treated merely as a vehicle for her vocalization, and for that, one was as good as another'.<sup>63</sup>

Given the marginal role this opera played in her repertoire, and due to the lack of contemporary reviews describing the manner in which she may have interpreted the cavatina on stage, the analysis of her interpretative decisions has to rely uniquely on her recordings. She recorded Linda's cavatina three times, the first on 2 November 1910 with Percy Pitt conducting the orchestra (matrix 4576f, HMV 2-053035), the second on 14 July 1911 (matrix ai5179f, HMV 2-053061), the third on 13 May 1914 (matrix 14817-2, Victor 88506; HMV 2-053115, DB 543). While the earlier ones include only the aria (each ca. 2'54" long), the last one is complete and features both the recitativo and the aria (4'30" long). As already mentioned, little or no information can be gleaned from Tetrazzini's colleagues and predecessors with regard to the past performance practice of this aria, but a few comparisons can be drawn between her recordings, Marchesi's 1900 volume and the transcriptions collected by Karin and Eugen Ott.<sup>64</sup>

The recitativo is sung as written, with the customary appoggiaturas whenever the accented syllable falls on the downbeat (Figure 46).

Figure 46 shows Tetrazzini's use of appoggiaturas in the opening recitativo 'Ah! Tardai troppo'.

On concluding the recitativo Tetrazzini sings a long passage that closes with two more graces. Marchesi provides three cadenzas, which differ only slightly in the final passage: the first concludes ascending to the top C, the second presents an arpeggio between the two Cs, the third concludes descending from the top C (Figure 47).

<sup>62</sup> Gattey, *Luisa Tetrazzini*, p. 15.

<sup>63</sup> 'Albert Hall Concert', *The Times*, 26 March 1925, p. 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ott, *Handbuch*, pp. 338–46.

Figure 47 shows the musical score for a vocal passage. The score is arranged in five staves, each representing a different performer or edition: Tetrazzini (1914), Marchesi, Ricci, Patti (Ricci), and Ricordi. The lyrics are: "lo - ra... Oh no - i - con - ten - ti!". The musical notation includes various ornaments, fermatas, and dynamic markings such as "Rall." and "ppp". The Tetrazzini (1914) and Patti (Ricci) versions show more elaborate ornamentation and fermatas compared to the other versions.

Figure 47 shows the fermata with which the *recitativo* closes, as sung by Tetrazzini and her senior colleagues.

Interestingly, Ricci offers solutions similar to those we find in Marchesi, but he refers to Patti in one specific case and more generally to Boccabadati, Brambilla and Tadolini in another.<sup>65</sup> Should we understand that Eugenia Tadolini, at some point, considered singing the passage we find transcribed by Ricci? And whose cadenza was the one he attributes to Brambilla? Marietta (1807–1875), Giuseppina (1819–1903) or, more likely, Teresa (1845–1921)? One may ask the same question when exploring the reference to Boccabadati, since Luigia (1800–1850) and her two daughters, Augusta (1821?–75) and Virginia (1828–1922), were all well-known sopranos. The aria presents a limited number of modifications, mostly in the use of articulation, tempo flexibility and small graces. Tetrazzini does not seem to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Donizetti himself as much as other singers have done. For instance, she does not insert a cadenza at the end of the first section when the fermatas written by the composer are to be understood as an invitation to insert a passage or two. Cadenzas for this bar can be found in Marchesi<sup>66</sup> and Ricci<sup>67</sup> (Figure 48).

Nor does she add a cadenza where the chord written by the composer before the reprise could be understood as a similar invitation (rehearsal mark number 58 in the score). Smaller interventions can be found in the reprise, where she modifies the melodic contour, although many more modifications and additions that can be found in other sources are not to be found in any of Tetrazzini's recordings. These sources include Marchesi, Patti, Boccabadati, Brambilla, Tadolini, Etelka Gerster, Marcella Sembrich and Amelita Galli-Curci. One can only speculate on why she decided not to adhere more strictly to an interpretative tradition that could count on many exemplary models; suffice it to say that this work did not remain among her favourites (see Figure 49).

As can be seen, the difference between how Tetrazzini approached Lucia and Linda is remarkable. In Linda she adheres more strictly to the text and even when the tradition offers a few models for inspiration, she does not seem to take them into consideration. Instead, in Lucia she takes all those liberties that the tradition had already incorporated into the performing tradition, and especially in the cadenza of the mad scene, her strong personality emerges clearly. This is audible in the overall interpretation and not only in the coloratura and the cadenza; in

<sup>65</sup> Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, p. 40.

<sup>66</sup> Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, p. 40.

<sup>67</sup> Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, p. 40.

Figure 48 shows the musical score for the first section of the aria. It includes staves for Tetrizzini (1910, 1911, 1914), Marchesi, and Ricordi. The lyrics are in Italian. The score shows a fermata at the end of the first section, with Marchesi suggesting two possible cadenzas.

65 57

Tetrizzini (1910) — in ciel, in 5 ciel sa - rà.

Tetrizzini (1911) — in ciel, in 5 ciel sa - rà.

Tetrizzini (1914) — in ciel, [in] ciel sa - rà.

Marchesi Ah! il ciel sa - rà.

Marchesi (ossia 1) Ah! sa - rà.

Ricordi — in ciel, in ciel sa - rà.

Poco più

Figure 48 shows the fermata that concludes the first section: while Marchesi suggests two possible cadenzas, Tetrizzini does not sing any.

Figure 49 shows the musical score for the reprise of the aria. It includes staves for Tetrizzini (1910, 1911, 1914) and Ricordi. The score includes various musical markings such as 'rall.', 'a tempo', and 'pp'.

88 58 bis

Tetrizzini (1910) *rall.* *rall.* *a tempo* che per te sol vi - vrà O lu - ce di quest' a - ni - ma, de - li - zia, a - mo - re e vi - ta,

Tetrizzini (1911) *rall.* *a tempo* che per te sol vi - vrà O lu - ce di quest' a - ni - ma, de - li - zia, a - mo - re e vi - ta,

Tetrizzini (1914) *rall.* *a tempo* che per te sol vi - vrà O lu - ce di quest' a - ni - ma, de - li - zia, a - mo - re e vi - ta,

Ricordi *pp* che per te sol vi - vrà O lu - ce di quest' a - ni - ma, de - li - zia, a - mo - re e vi - ta,

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Tetrizzini (1910) *rall.* *a tempo* u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in ter - ra, in ciel sa - rà, u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in cie - lo in ciel sa -

Tetrizzini (1911) *rall.* *a tempo* u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in ter - ra, in ciel sa - rà, u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in cie - lo in ciel sa -

Tetrizzini (1914) *rall.* *a tempo* u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in ter - ra, in ciel sa - rà, u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in cie - lo in ciel sa -

Ricordi *legato* *f* u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in ter - ra, in ciel sa - rà, u - ni - ta no - stra sor - te in cie - lo in ciel sa -

Figure 49 shows Tetrizzini's small modifications in the reprise of the aria.



this regard the difference between her and Melba's rendition is also worth noting. Melba's proverbial aplomb can be easily recognised in the homogeneous quality of the voice throughout the different registers and in the lack of large tempo modifications. Instead, Tetrizzini's means of expression translates into a number of inflections that affect every interpretative parameter. Tempo modifications and suspensions are comparatively large, the lower notes in the chest register are sometimes guttural—as opposed to the pearly quality she exhibits in the higher compass—and the use of portamento is more markedly audible. By comparing Melba and Tetrizzini it is possible to understand how differently such personalities as they, each with a different background and music training, could understand and embody the same tradition.

