

# THE VOICE OF THE CENTURY

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

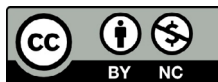


MASSIMO ZICARI



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## 4. Bellini and the New Declamatory Style

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In the course of her career Tetrizzini sang Bellini's operas on many an occasion, but only two titles feature in her repertoire: *La sonnambula* (1831) and *I puritani* (1835). However, before considering her recorded interpretations, it is imperative to remind ourselves of the role Bellini is assumed to have played in pushing the so-called bel canto style towards a more dramatic type of singing, in what was often described as the constant decline of Italian opera. As has been suggested, the collection of songs by Nicola Vaccai entitled *Dodici ariette per camera per l'insegnamento del bel-canto italiano*, which was published around 1838, may have been the first bearing the expression bel canto understood in this particular usage.<sup>1</sup> This expression came to be associated with the idea of a glorious past in which singers could keep their audience spellbound thanks to the beauty of their voices, as opposed to the much discussed dramatic style that prevailed among the younger generation. According to Rodolfo Celletti, terms like 'bel canto' and 'belcantismo' were unknown until the beginning of the nineteenth century. As he notes,

they spread, in Italy and abroad, between 1820 and 1830, precisely at a time when bel canto opera was on the wane, giving way to other operatic trends and other styles more directly bound up with dramatic expression and at variance with the ancient concept of singing understood as beauty of sound and technical mastery.<sup>2</sup>

Celletti refers to those literary trends that accompanied the rise of Romantic opera and whose motto was the search for dramatic truth. Understood as the triumph of the free expression of feeling and passion over the canons of neo-classic tragedy, the idea of dramatic truth spread among authors like Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas père to exert a strong influence on both Italian Romantic composers and librettists. Among other things, Romantic opera was characterised by the portrayal of violent situations and the unrestrained expression of extreme feelings. This predilection for strong situations can be found also in Bellini, as testified by an undated letter to his librettist Carlo Pepoli: 'Carve in your head in adamantine letters: the "dramma per musica" [i.e., opera] must draw tears, terrify people, make them die, through song'.<sup>3</sup>

In composers like Bellini, Verdi, and to a limited extent Donizetti, this was accompanied by a gradually stronger preference for declamatory singing at the expense of florid vocalisation.<sup>4</sup> Many sources suggest how much concern Bellini's preference for declamatory singing generated among contemporary critics and commentators, some of whom mourned the passing of the bel canto. On 16 February 1829 the critic of the Milanese journal *L'eco* thus commented on the new turn taken by Bellini:

He [Bellini] has taken up a method which we do not know whether it should be called sung declamation or declaimed singing. The goal of this method seems to be to combine the strength of declamation with the gentleness of singing; its danger could be that it confuses declamation and singing, and it causes monotony, slowness, interruptions and hesitation in the melody, and lack of motifs that please and stick to the ear.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Philip Duey, *Bel Canto in Its Golden Age* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1951), p. 5. See also Martha Elliott, *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practices* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 126.

2 Rodolfo Celletti, *A History of Bel Canto* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 13.

3 Undated letter to Pepoli (but from May 1834); see Bellini, *Epistolario*, p. 400, cited in Pierluigi Petrobelli and Roger Parker, 'Notes on Bellini's Poetics', in *Music in the Theater, Essays on Verdi and Other Composers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 162–75.

4 Celletti, *A History of Bel Canto*, pp. 188–92.

5 'Egli ha preso un metodo, che non ben sappiamo se debba dirsi declamazione cantata o canto declamato. Lo scopo di questo metodo sembra essere di riunire la forza della declamazione alla gentilezza del canto; il suo pericolo potrebbe essere quello di confondere

However, not every critic was against canto declamato and some even lauded it as a kind of antidote to Rossini's over-flourished vocalisation. Thanks to Bellini's new style, operatic music was given the opportunity to become more philosophical, that is to say more rationally connected to the dramatic text.<sup>6</sup>

In a letter that appeared in the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* on 6 February 1842 (one month before *Nabucco* was premiered) François-Joseph Fétis described the reasons why Italian opera lay in such a state of decadence: 'The exaggeration of declamatory style, the screams of the actors (for I do not dare to call them singers) and the din of the instrumentation have become a true necessity for the Italians; they do not understand dramatic music but under these forms'.<sup>7</sup> Twenty years later, when writing the entry on Bellini in his *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, Fétis confirmed his opinion, and condemned Bellini and his operas as the beginning of the fall of Italian dramatic music from the position it had gloriously held until the start of the century. This fall led to the deplorable situation in which musical Italy still remained, also owing to the manner in which Giuseppe Verdi had taken up Bellini's bad example.

If one examines with attention the transformation of Italian dramatic music operated by Bellini's style, a transformation continued by Donizetti with less originality but with a much superior talent, one should not underestimate the tendencies which, while manifesting themselves more and more, have destroyed the beautiful art of Italian singing and replaced them with the production of forced voices thus leading fatally to the deplorable system of Verdi and his imitators.<sup>8</sup>

Back in 1842—only a couple of months after the appearance of Fétis' letter—Alberto Mazzucato reviewed Manuel García's *Method*, which he had translated into Italian, in the columns of the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*.<sup>9</sup> In commenting on the change that occurred between 1820 and 1840 in the Italian singing style he suggested that this was well illustrated by two star singers, Domenico Donzelli (1790–1873) who represented 'the school of twenty years ago' and Napoleone Moriani (1808–1878), who embodied the 'modern singer'. Among others, Donzelli's vocal style was characterised by the use of the so-called *voix sombrée*, a technique traditionally associated with the French tenor Gilbert-Louis Duprez (1806–1896), who is assumed to have been the first to use the chest register to reach the high C when singing the role of Arnold in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* in 1837.<sup>10</sup> According to Mazzucato, Donzelli also used the *voix sombre* in 1839, when singing the *aria di sortita* in Saverio Mercadante's *Il bravo*. A second component of the so-called old style as represented by Donzelli was the constant use he made of

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declamazione e canto, e produrre monotonia, lentezza, spezzatura, e titubanza nella cantilena, e mancanza di motivi che allettino, e rimangano nell'orecchio.' *L'eco*, 16 February 1829, n. 20, cited in Maria Rosaria Adamo and Friederich Lippmann, *Vincenzo Bellini* (Turin: ERI, 1981), p. 466.

6 Melina Esse, 'Speaking and Sighing: Bellini's *canto declamato* and the Poetics of Restraint', *Current Musicology*, 87 (2009), 7–45, <https://openmusiclibrary.org/article/49112/>.

7 'L'esagerazione dello stile declamatorio, i gridi degli attori, (chè non oso chiamarli cantanti) e lo strepito dell'istromentazione sono diventate vere necessità per gli Italiani; essi più non comprendono la musica drammatica se non se sotto queste forme'. François-Joseph Fétis, 'Discussioni Musicali, Seconda lettera del signor Fétis, intorno allo stato presente delle arti musicali in Italia', *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, 6 February 1842, p. 22. It is worth noting that the same complaints had accompanied the rise of Rossini about thirty years earlier.

8 'Si l'on examine avec attention la transformation opérée dans la musique dramatique de l'Italie par le style de Bellini, transformation continue par Donizetti avec moins d'originalité, mais avec un talent de facture très-supérieur, on ne peut méconnaître les tendances qui, se prononçant de plus en plus, ont anéanti le bel art du chant italien, lui ont substitué les émissions de voix forcées, et ont conduit fatalement au déplorable système de Verdi et de ses imitateurs' [my translation]. François-Joseph Fétis, 'Bellini, Vincent', in *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique* (Paris: Didot, 1860–1865), vol. I, p. 328, cited in Jean Littlejohn, 'France Meets Bellini, the Critical Reaction of François-Joseph Fétis', in *Vincenzo Bellini et la France: Histoire, création et réception de l'œuvre*, ed. by Maria Rosa De Luca, Salvatore Enrico Failla, Giuseppe Montenagno (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2007), p. 744.

9 Alberto Mazzucato, 'Il vecchio ed il moderno metodo di canto. Preliminari ad un esame critico sul *Metodo di Canto* di Garcia', *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, 3 April 1842, p. 55. The first volume of García's method had appeared in January that year: *Scuola di Garcia. Trattato completo dell'arte del canto, di Emanuele Garcia figlio, tradotto dal francese da Alberto Mazzucato* (Milan: R. Stabilimento Musicale Tito di Gio. Ricordi, 1842). The year of publication can be derived from the catalogue of publications of Casa Ricordi: <http://www.archivioricordi.com/assets/img/clippy.svg>.

10 Mazzucato, 'Il vecchio ed il moderno', p. 56. On concluding his article, however, Mazzucato, who was then only twenty-nine, confessed to be too young to have been able to witness this change. Manuel García also claims to have been the father of the *voix sombre*. See James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 41.

portamentos, which often covered large intervals, up to ten or even twelve notes.<sup>11</sup> One last feature was the fancy combination of a portamento and a gruppetto, with which Donzelli used to enrich the execution of recitatives, especially at the end of a plain verse.<sup>12</sup> All this, in addition to the customary repertoire of ornaments, passages, roulades, trills, and arpeggios, whether written by the composer or substituted by the interpreter. Unfortunately, the article concerning the characteristics of the modern voice published in the *Gazzetta di Milano* in the years 1842 and 1843 cannot be found. Nevertheless, it is clear that Mazzucato shared with Fétis the opinion that a dramatic change had occurred in the recent development of the so-called *bel canto*. What is not as clear is whether he considered this change an improvement or, like Fétis, a drawback. Most importantly, Mazzucato describes the use of expressive devices that, even though they were associated with the past tradition, were still used by singers of the younger generations, as was the case with portamento.

In the 1860s Francesco Lamperti opened his singing method with an introductory chapter entitled 'On the Decadence of the Art of Singing', where he reviewed the reasons why this ancient and illustrious art lay in such a deplorable state of decadence. One of them was the declamatory character which now prevailed over florid singing:

Vocal music, in order to assume a more dramatic character, is almost entirely despoiled of agility of every kind; this is carried to such an extent that by degrees it will become little else than musical declamation, to the total exclusion of melody. Without entering here into the question whether or not any advantage may accrue to musical science through these innovations, I shall only briefly observe that as the singing of melodies, though not absolutely true to nature, is yet productive of much pleasure to the audience; it seems to me a pity that the melodramatic system should be exchanged for one perhaps more realistic, but which tends to the exclusion of melody, and is hence detrimental to the art of singing.<sup>13</sup>

Lamperti longed for that long-gone epoch in which castratos still dominated the operatic firmament, and regretted that a gradual shift in the use of the voice had accompanied the recent development of vocal composition: 'To these reasons may be added what I shall term the *spostamento della voce*, by which I mean the present habit of considering as mezzo-soprano the dramatic soprano of the past, and of making mezzo-sopranos sing also the parts written for contraltos, hence the almost total disappearance of music written for the true contralto voice in the modern repertoire'.<sup>14</sup> All in all, it was Bellini who had initiated this regrettable change.

Bellini was the first to write parts of an exceptional range, and what was more, he introduced the system of putting a syllable to every note, thus rendering his music more fatiguing to the voice. His successors exaggerated his mannerism, as much in respect to range as in the arrangement of the words. Much of this displacement may be attributed to these reasons, coupled with the fact that syllabication in this music had in a great part to be executed by the head notes, which in men's voices, on account of their limited compass, was impracticable, and in women's, productive of much harm.<sup>15</sup>

A case in point in this regard was Sophie Löwe, whom Lamperti took as a perfect example of the dramatic consequences caused by such a change: having embraced the modern repertoire, at some point she was no longer able to replicate the wonders with which she had made her initial appearance in Donizetti's *Maria Padilla* in 1841.<sup>16</sup> Lamperti went as far as to recommend young singers to stay away from Donizetti and Bellini; their works, he claimed, were harmful to the female voice, and for this reason songstresses should confine themselves to Rossini's masterpieces.<sup>17</sup>

11 In the same article Mazzucato describes these *portamentos* as 'certe solenni stiracchiature o portamenti di voce ascendenti adoperati all'attacco delle note, i quali senza esagerazione, avevano l'estensione ascendente della decima, e spesso anche della duodecima, e talora anche molto più', *ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 Francesco Lamperti, *The Art of Singing* (New York: Schirmer, 1890), p. 2, originally published in Italian as *Guida Teorico-Pratica-Elementare per lo studio del canto dettata dal Prof. Francesco Lamperti per le sue Allieve del R. Conservatorio di musica di Milano* (Milan: Ricordi [1864]), p. vi.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

16 Lamperti, *Guida Teorico-Pratica-Elementare*, p. vii.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 49. Surprisingly, Lamperti does not mention the name of Verdi, whose operas had long been considered by contemporary critics as harmful to both male and female singers.

In spite of Lamperti's recommendations, by the 1860s the works of Bellini and Verdi had come to hold a prominent position alongside the traditional bel canto repertoire represented by Rossini and, to some extent, Donizetti; singers from the younger generations were now expected to excel in works belonging to either repertoire. Adelina Patti (1843–1919) is a case in point: during a life-long career she won the admiration of the most severe international critics and was soon recognised as an interpreter endowed with the intelligence necessary to extend her repertoire, assume new dramatic roles and still make a clear distinction between different compositional styles. In 1863 she proved that a properly trained and highly-talented singer could master Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, a model of classical composure, Rossini's *Barbiere*, a benchmark for the florid bel canto style, and Verdi's new dramatised style with equal success.<sup>18</sup> On reviewing her Rosina in 1884 at Covent Garden, the critic of *The Times* commented on how, thanks to her enormous talent and 'by dint of study and perseverance', she had been able to excel in this role as well as in *Aida* and *Semiramide*.

Rosina belongs to a class of parts to which the famous *prima donna* owes her earliest successes among us, and in which she still is most at home. By dint of study and perseverance she has in the course of years acquired a touch of the majestic qualities which go to the making of Nubian princesses and Assyrian queens, and her *Aida* and *Semiramide* are in their way triumphs of art over natural bias. Where, however, as in the lighter characters above referred to, art and nature can go hand in hand, the result is, of course, still more harmonious, and in the case we are speaking of is not likely to be surpassed by any artist now on the lyrical stage.<sup>19</sup>

Contrary to what Lamperti claimed when talking of Sophie Löwe, it was possible to embrace both the modern and the old repertoire without harming one's voice on condition that the singer in question be endowed not only with a wonderful voice, but also with great intelligence and strong determination. Furthermore, exceptionally talented singers continued to represent an incredibly rich source of inspiration for those accomplished composers who, like Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi after Rossini and Mozart, often moulded their melodies with a specific voice in mind. It is well-known that Bellini wrote the roles of Norma and Amina for Giuditta Pasta, whose wonderful vocal and dramatic skills Stendhal praised in his monograph on Rossini's life and career. Stendhal described how she enchanted the audiences and held them spellbound thanks to 'a voice whose compelling inflections can subdue the most recalcitrant and obdurate of hearts, and oblige them to share in the emotions which radiate from some great aria'.<sup>20</sup> As Pleasants argues, 'here [in Bellini's *Norma* and *La sonnambula*] was vocal writing that provided the long, plastic line required for the ultimate unfolding of Pasta's interpretative genius, the sustained cantilena that she could mould and bend and embellish to her high artistic purpose'.<sup>21</sup> Or, as Susan Rutherford suggests, it was on Pasta's vocal qualities and dramatic skills that Bellini and Romani shaped their musical drama, not only in the spinning melody we find in the main arias, but also in the dramatic recitatives.<sup>22</sup> Considering the manner in which Bellini and, as we will see, Verdi entertained close relations with their interpreters and chose to work with those individual singers whose voice and talent they treasured, it is difficult to think of these composers as a threat to singers. Furthermore, whether singers accommodated themselves to composers' new demands or vice versa, the change towards a more dramatic vocal style about which many complained did not prevent *prima donnas* from persisting in the much-contested practice of modifying the melodic line and adding or substituting coloraturas and ornaments whenever the occasion presented itself. In fact, most of the interpretative features that were typically associated with the so-called bel canto are to be found also in the works of Bellini.

Evidence of the extent of this practice is provided, again, by Manuel García, whose method includes a number of examples taken from *La sonnambula* and *Norma*, together with lesser-known works like *Beatrice di Tenda* and

18 Massimo Zicari, 'Expressive Tempo Modifications in Adelina Patti's Recordings: An Integrated Approach', *Empirical Musicology Review*, 12.1–2 (2017), 42–56.

19 *The Times*, 25 June 1884, p. 12.

20 See Henry Pleasants, *The Great Singers from the Dawn of Opera to Our Own Time* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), p. 141.

21 *Ibid.*

22 One has been detected in Act II, Scene 1, bars 83–87 where Norma is determined to put an end to her children's life. Susan Rutherford, "'La Cantante Delle Passioni': Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 19.2 (2007), 107–38, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586707002303>.

*Il pirata*; these examples can be found also in sections where the author does not deal with the use of textual modifications and vocal ornamentation. For instance, in the chapter entitled ‘Dell’articolazione nel canto’ where Garc a focuses on the accentuation and distribution of the words, he suggests that in specific situations it is possible to add further syllables into the lyrics, or substitute for the written ones, if their meaning allows it. Two examples are then discussed, the first taken from Rossini’s *Tancredi*, and the second from Amina’s cavatina ‘Come per me sereno’ in Bellini’s *La sonnambula*.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, Garc a does not draw attention to the modifications present in the melody, which, one may speculate, are to be taken for granted, but to the exclamation ‘ah’ added twice in order to adapt the lyrics to the predictably modified melodic line. The passage, reproduced in Figure 50, shows how the insertion of the first ‘ah’, should help the singer to attack the top A with a more sonorous voice before the modified descending passage. The second insertion shows how the same simple stratagem can be used to vocalise a newly-inserted cadential passage; similar, although less demanding, solutions to the cadenza are suggested in Marchesi’s *Variantes et points d’orgue*.<sup>24</sup> None of the solutions suggested by Garc a and Marchesi can be found in Tetrazzini’s 1912 recording, which, instead, features a sustained accented trill (Figure 50).

Figure 50 displays five different vocal line treatments for the same passage from Bellini's *La sonnambula*. The score includes the following elements:

- Tetrazzini (1912):** Shows a sustained accented trill on the final 'a'.
- Marchesi 1:** Shows a trill on the 'Ah!' exclamation.
- Marchesi 2:** Shows a trill on the 'Ah!' exclamation.
- Garc a:** Shows 'Ah!' exclamations at two points.
- Ricordi:** Shows a trill on the final 'a'.

The lyrics are: 'tu-ra non non bril-l , non bril-l ; a'.

Figure 50 shows an example from Garc a, Volume II, p. 16, regarding ‘Come per me sereno’ from Bellini’s *La sonnambula*.

A second example taken from the same aria, this time the Moderato section, shows a similar situation, with Garc a using an ornamented passage to illustrate how to commence a melody after a pause or a suspension. The author indicates the position in which the breath should be placed after a fermata or a pause and suggests that, when approaching the reprise, the interpreter should resume the same sound, intensity, tempo and expressive quality as before the interruption. Garc a offers three examples, the first comes from Rossini’s *Tancredi*, the second from Meyerbeer’s *Il crociato*, the third from Bellini’s *La sonnambula*. On discussing this last example, it seems to be unnecessary for Garc a to highlight that the passage in the cadenza differs from the original. Instead, he indicates where an almost inaudible *mezza respirazione* (half-breath) should be taken after the descending scale that leads to the reprise in pianissimo.<sup>25</sup>

23 Garc a, vol. II, p. 16. The same example can be found in the English translation edited by Albert Garcia in 1924, *Treatise on the Art of Singing* (London: Leonard, 1924), p. 47.

24 Marchesi, *Variantes et points d’orgue*, p. 77.

25 Garc a, *Scuola di Garc a*, p. 36. The 1926 English edition does not include the examples we can find in the Ricordi edition from 1842.

Figure 51 shows an example from García, vol. II, p. 36, regarding the use of a half-breath before the reprise in *La sonnambula*.

Figure 51 shows an example from García, vol. II, p. 36, regarding the use of a half-breath before the reprise in *La sonnambula*.

García uses the same passage again when elucidating the manner in which a fermata should be dealt with, this time in the chapter dedicated to the changes a singer can introduce to make the music more expressive. In García's opinion, and consistently with Pier Francesco Tosi as well as other authors from the eighteenth century, the ornamented figure inserted into a fermata should be sung in one single breath. If the change involves more words or the repetition of the same word, García continues, it is permitted to take one or two extra breaths.<sup>26</sup> This is the case with the passage discussed above, which is now presented in a slightly different form (Figure 52). A gruppetto is now inserted immediately after the fermata, above the C, and the repetition of 'ah' justifies the breaths we now find introduced. Despite the negligible differences, García seems to be informing us that it was common practice to insert a passage in fermatas of this kind.

Figure 52 shows the same example as that in Figure 51 from García (p. 36). Now the half-breath can be found placed on the 'ah' (penultimate measure).

Figure 52 shows the same example as that in Figure 51 from García (p. 36). Now the half-breath can be found placed on the 'ah' (penultimate measure).

It is also worth noting that the passage in the example appears transposed to F major while the key signature we find in the Ricordi printed edition is A flat major. One may speculate that García was referring to the version sung by his sister Maria Malibran at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane,<sup>27</sup> a supposition that finds further confirmation in another example, this time transposed to B flat major, from 'Ah! Non credea mirarti', where García writes

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> See Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, p. 355.



‘variante della Malibran’ and concludes the passage with an incredibly challenging two-octave descending leap to the lower B (Figure 53).<sup>28</sup>

Figure 53 shows an example from ‘Ah! Non credea mirarti’ on which García writes ‘variante della Malibran’ (vol. II, p. 39).

Transpositions were common among singers whenever the melody did not fit their voice compass and may have become more frequent, one may argue, as a consequence of what Lamperti called the *spostamento della voce*. Less frequently singers transposed their favourite bravura piece higher than they had been originally notated, to show off the upper register of their voice.<sup>29</sup> However, as has been suggested by Gossett, ‘the problem of transpositions in the opera of Bellini becomes intense whenever *La sonnambula* is mentioned’<sup>30</sup> The Royal Drury Lane and Covent Garden transposed version sung by Malibran should be attributed to Henry Bishop, while other changes to the score were made by Giovanni Battista Rubini, because Bellini’s music was too high for voice.

One last example, again taken from Amina’s cavatina ‘Come per me sereno’, is discussed by García to show how it is possible to prevent an excess of ornament in a cadenza: in fact, he writes, by dropping the fermata between the two dominant chords, one could also suppress the relevant passage.<sup>31</sup> The first part of the example shows how the music is written (the example differs slightly from the Ricordi edition), while the second offers an instance of how it could be modified, with the two chords now following each other and a long cadenza ‘con brio’ following the seventh dominant chord (Figure 54).

28 García, *Scuola di Garcia*, p. 39. On this topic see also Emanuele Senici, ‘Per una biografia musicale di Amina’, in *Vincenzo Bellini: verso l’edizione critica. Atti del convegno internazionale, Siena, 1–3 giugno 2000*, ed. by Fabrizio Della Seta and Simonetta Ricciardi (Florence: Olschki, 2004), pp. 297–314.

29 Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, p. 332.

30 Ibid., p. 352.

31 ‘Spesso, onde evitare una soverchia lunghezza di abbellimenti, si riuniscono i due accordi, di quarta e sesta, e di settima. Così si ottiene di sopprimere il punto coronato che apparterebbe al primo accordo’, García, p. 51. The English translation reads as follows: ‘To prevent excess of ornament, the two chords of 6/4 and seventh are sometimes united, and the passage which corresponds with the first chord is suppressed’. García, *Treatise on the Art of Singing* [1924], p. 63. The same cadenza can be found reproduced in Ricci, but without the necessary piano accompaniment. Ricci, vol. I, p. 78. See also Ott, *Handbuch*, pp. 368–85.

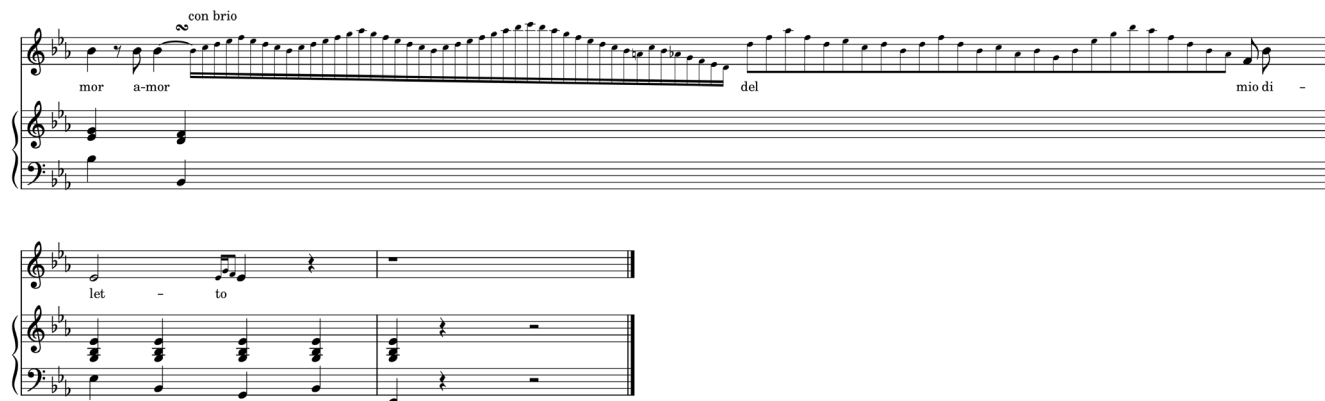


Figure 54 shows García's suggestion as to how to prevent excess of ornament in a cadenza by dropping the fermata between the two dominant chords (vol. II, p. 51).

According to García, one may assume, the original notation would have led to a first arguably too long passage starting from the top B, in addition to the second one from the F (third bar in Figure 54), thus making an over-flourished cadenza. If García considered a cadenza that is likely to appear excessively long to many of us today entirely appropriate, how much more complex would the solution he did not consider have been?

Other sources concerning the contemporary performance practice of *La sonnambula* date back to Maria Malibran, whose successful appearance in the title role in 1835 in Venice received generous coverage in the local press. References to her changes in the cavatina 'Come per me sereno' can be found in the 'Gazzetta privilegiata' of the 9 April:

She repeated the cavatina ['Come per me sereno'] and in the repeat she varied, and almost always with advantage and style, the most difficult and graceful passages, to which she added new difficulty and grace. She replicated and after the encore she repeated again for the third time the aria at the end of the opera ['Ah! non credea mirarti'] in which she also changed many phrases in the music [...].<sup>32</sup>

We can glean only a rough idea of these changes from the *Memoirs of Maria Malibran*, published in 1840 by her friend Maria Merlin.<sup>33</sup> Here, as Merlin suggests, Malibran transposed the original key to G major, and descended with her voice down to the tenor register to leap up to the high G (Figure 55). The rapid transition produced a sensation or, to use her own words, an 'electrifying effect'.<sup>34</sup>



Figure 55 presents the variants sung by Maria Malibran as reported by Maria Merlin in 1840.

32 'Ella replicò la cavatina ['Come per me sereno'] e nella replica variò e quasi sempre con convenienza di stile i passi più leggiadri e difficili, a cui ella aggiunse nuove difficoltà e leggiadria. Ella replicò e dopo la replica ripeté ancora per la terza volta l'aria alla fine dell'opera ['Ah! non credea mirarti'] in cui pure mutò molte frasi della musica [...].'*La gazzetta privilegiata*, 9 April 1835, reported in Michele Girardi, "'Il mio soggiorno a Venezia forma per me un'epoca faustissima di mia vita": Maria Malibran a Venezia nel 1835', in *La sonnambula* (La Fenice avanti l'opera), 2012, n. 2, p. 40.

33 Maria de las Mercedes Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1840, 2 vols), vol. I, p. 180. Vincenzo Bellini, *La sonnambula. Melodramma in due atti di Felice Romani*, ed. by Alessandro Roccatagliati e Luca Zoppelli (Milan: Ricordi, 2009), pp. 448–49 (Edizione critica delle opere di Vincenzo Bellini, 7).

34 Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran*, vol. I, p. 179.

However strenuously one may argue that composers like Bellini were not happy with the idea that divas intervened in their compositions with changes and substitutions, a letter written by the composer from London to his friend Francesco Florimo in 1833 suggests how much he appreciated Malibran's rendition of Amina in London, and how enthusiastic he was about her vocal and interpretative qualities. Malibran was singing *La sonnambula* at Drury Lane, in the English translation, and Bellini even promised her that he would write an opera on a subject of her choice.<sup>35</sup> Other variants from the nineteenth century belong to Cinti-Damoreau and Barbara Marchisio and can be found reported in Caswell's *Embellished Arias*<sup>36</sup> and in Karin and Eugen Ott's *Handbuch*,<sup>37</sup> in addition to the well-known volume by Ricci.<sup>38</sup> All these examples indicate the extent to which nineteenth-century singers approached this opera in a manner that was consistent with the bel canto tradition, no matter how strenuously music critics opposed the new declamatory style of which Bellini was said to have been the initiator.

Unfortunately, evidence of how contemporary singers approached *I puritani* is scarce.<sup>39</sup> Although pieces like Elvira's polacca 'Son vergin vezzosa' and the cabaletta to the Scena N. 7, 'Vien, diletto, è in ciel la luna' soon became the object of textual manipulations that were typical of this epoch, we do not know much about the extent of these changes, unless we move forwards to the second half of the century. One instance can be found in Jenny Lind (182087):

Bellini's *I Puritani* Act II. Scena N. 7. Andante: Elvira, 'Qui In voce'.

Madame Goldschmidt, more particularly in later years, when singing the Andante only—without the Allegro which follows—repeated the 17 bars at the end of this movement, substituting the second time instead of Bellini's bars 15 and 16 (in the voice part) the following two.<sup>40</sup>

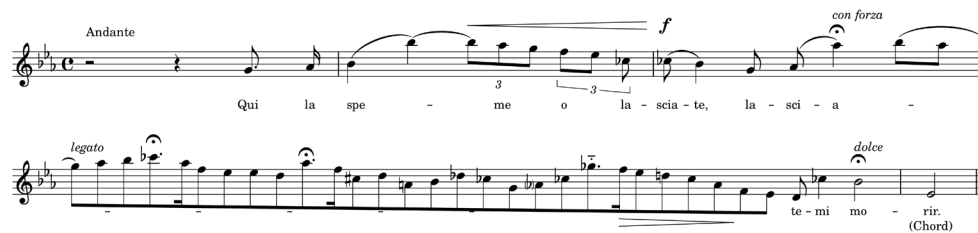


Figure 56 shows the modifications sung by Jenny Lind in Bellini's 'Vien diletto'

This single instance is interesting for the number of C flat and A flat that give the passage a particularly sad and doleful connotation, which was typically associated, as this case illustrates, with feelings of despair. Further evidence concerning singers from the younger generations can be found in Ricci, who reproduced some passages belonging to Regina Pacini<sup>41</sup> (1871–1965), a pupil of Mathilde Marchesi, while Karin and Eugen Ott include the ornamentation sung by the Austrian soprano Selma Kurz<sup>42</sup> (1874–1933). Mathilde Marchesi herself includes a few passages in her 1900 volume.<sup>43</sup>

All in all, even though many contemporary commentators lamented that Bellini had pushed singers towards a declamato style which was even harmful to the voice, the evidence considered so far suggests that divas like Malibran and Lind approached *La sonnambula* in a manner that was not different from any other 'bel canto'

35 Luisa Cambi, *Vincenzo Bellini. Epistolario* (Milan: Mondadori, 1943), pp. 363–66, cited in Adamo and Lippmann, *Vincenzo Bellini*, pp. 225–26.

36 Caswell, *Embellished Arias*, pp. 15–29.

37 Karin and Eugen Ott, *Handbuch*, pp. 368–85.

38 Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, pp. 78–82.

39 Mention of this is made also in the critical edition of the opera. See Vincenzo Bellini, *I puritani*, edizione critica a cura di Fabrizio Della Seta (Milan: Ricordi, 2013), p. XL.

40 William Smyth Rockstro, *Jenny Lind: A Record and Analysis of the 'Method' of the Late Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, ed. by Otto Goldschmidt (London: Novello 1894), p. IV.

41 Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, pp. 63–68.

42 Ott, *Handbuch*, pp. 422–26.

43 Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, pp. 68–71.

work. As has been suggested by Melina Esse, in this very opera the composer shows himself to have ‘abandoned his resolutely sparse melodies of the late 1820s to embrace a more florid Rossinian idiom’,<sup>44</sup> a circumstance that might account for the interpretative approach we have seen also in García’s *Scuola*. Instead, with ‘Vien diletto’ we are confronted with showpieces whose popularity had little or nothing to do with the limited success of the operas to which they originally belonged, whether or not they fell into the new or the old singing style.

### Bellini in Tetrizzini’s Recorded Interpretations

In the course of her career Tetrizzini sang Bellini’s operas on many an occasion. She made her first appearance as Amina on 8 February 1893 at the Teatro San Martin, Buenos Aires, and was Elvira for the first time in 1894 at Buenos Aires again, in the same theatre. As we have seen, in those years, Tetrizzini was regularly touring South America together with Pietro Cesari in the troupe Raffaele Tomba had recruited in 1891.<sup>45</sup> She continued to sing both operas regularly, scoring success after success. When she sang Amina at the Tivoli in 1905 in San Francisco, the critic of *The San Francisco Call* wrote that the diva and her colleagues, the tenor Giorgio Bazelli and the bass Giovanni Gravina, had worked wonders.

The soprano was Tetrizzini, scintillating staccato upper notes ad lib.; making long skips with dazzling ease and certainty; warbling like a robin at sunrise on an old apple tree, whenever there was a warbling mood in the score—which was often; hitting so far up among the ledger line notes that the admirers of sheer vocalism went daft over what she did with so little show of exertion. There was Bazelli, for tenor, whose voice was in the best shape that it has been since the season opened; who made musical sounds about all the time with his vocal apparatus and whose supply of sentiment met all demands, so that he was a success. For basso Gravina figured, and he was amply able to do all that was needed without imparting any thrills, but careful and conscientious.<sup>46</sup>

The critic referred also to the condition in which this repertoire lay; however, he did not address the triteness of the old repertoire, especially when compared to the modern works by the younger generations of composers, but rather the poor quality of the past interpreters.

The end of the second act, with the triply sweet languishing duet between Tetrizzini and Bazelli, naturally made the most impression upon an audience that quickly came into sympathy with the music that our grandmothers and grandfathers loved. From this time on the standing of the old opera, so often abused by incompetent conductors and slurred by indifferent singers, gained steadily in current estimation.<sup>47</sup>

Similar comments appeared in the columns of *The Times* in 1909, when Tetrizzini was Amina at Covent Garden, with John McCormack as Elvino and Ettore Panizza conducted the orchestra. As the critic observed, *La sonnambula* had not been mounted for nearly thirty years at Covent Garden—except for the single appearance of Etelka Gerster in 1890—and the part admirably suited Tetrizzini’s voice, which reached the highest notes so easily: ‘There are such a multitude of high E flat in the music of Amina that the success of Mme. Tetrizzini in the part is a foregone conclusion and in fact she did better in it than in any part she has sung this year’.<sup>48</sup> In 1910 the same journal reviewed Tetrizzini’s rendition of Amina, again with McCormack in the role of Elvino, this time with Cleofonte Campanini holding the baton. The trope of observing the triteness of bel canto operas was revived but, the critic commented ironically, the pleasure of hearing some high E flats beautifully sung could make up for the lack of dramatic strength. An improvement in Tetrizzini’s vocal technique was also noticeable.

The days are long past when the saccharine allurements of works like *La sonnambula* were supposed to endanger the success of works of greater dramatic force; and there is no longer any conceivable reason why they should not be

44 Melina Esse, ‘Speaking and Sighing: Bellini’s Canto Declamato and the Poetics of Restraint’, *Current Musicology*, 87 (2009), 7–45 (p. 9).

45 Gattey, *Luisa Tetrizzini*, pp. 11–18.

46 ‘*Sonnambula* Moves Crowd to Cry “Brava”’, *The San Francisco Call*, 12 October 1905, p. 7.

47 Ibid.

48 ‘Royal Opera’, *The Times*, 31 May 1909, p. 9.

given as long as there are sopranos with high E flats available and opera-goers who like to renew the pleasures of their youth, or to realize what it was that charmed their grandparents. Mme. Tetrassini is heard perhaps to greater advantage in the part of Annina [sic] than in any other; she now phrases more carefully than when she first sang here, and gives us fewer than formerly of those strangely-produced middle notes which lessened the environment of what she sang. 'Ah, non credea' was given with genuine expression.<sup>49</sup>

In raising the question of the distance between the so-called palmy days of operas and modern drama, the critic was drawing attention not only to the dramatic and musical quality of these different repertoires, but also to the vocal skills and talent necessary to interpret them.

More detailed descriptions of her interpretations of Bellini's operas are difficult to find in the reviews that accompanied her appearances; often, critical remarks concerning the distance between the modern repertoire and those old operas that were so dear to the earlier generations seem to have impinged on the value judgement expressed by some contemporary commentators.

In Tetrassini's interpretations of Bellini's operas, all recorded with orchestra, *La sonnambula*<sup>50</sup> holds a prominent position, with four discs realised between 1909 and 1912; *I puritani*<sup>51</sup> is present with one recording only, made in 1912. A first recording of 'Ah, non credea mirarti' was realised in London on 2 June 1909, with Percy Pitt conducting the orchestra (matrix 3101f, Gramophone 053227; Victor 92069); 'Ah, non credea mirarti' and 'Ah, non giunge' were recorded on 16 and 18 March 1911, conducted by Walter B. Rogers (the former matrix C10064-1, Victor 88305, 6396; HMV 2-053049, DB 533; the latter, with flute obbligato by Clement Barone, matrix C10076-1, Victor 88313, 6345; HMV2-053041, DB 533). 'Come per me sereno... Sovra il sen' (Act I n. 2) were recorded on 9 July 1912 at Hayes, Middlesex (matrix HO188ac, HMV 2-053070), while the following day, 10 July 1912, it was the turn of 'Vien diletto' from *I puritani* (Atto II, n. 7), which was recorded also with orchestra (matrix HO193ac, HMV 2-053072). As we will see, with these arias the recording studio was transformed into an experimental lab, in which new and unprecedented cadenzas with obbligato instruments were developed.

### *La sonnambula*

#### 'Ah! Non credea mirarti... Ah non giunge'

We are now in the final scene of the opera, 'Scena ed Aria Finale [di] Amina', where the mystery that surrounds the woman is clarified and the happy ending is approaching. The scene follows the *solita forma* conventional structure and Elvino's recitativo opens the scene in which we see Amina sleepwalking on a high, dangerously unstable mill bridge; all the peasants can see that she has not betrayed her fiancé. In the Andante cantabile Amina mourns her lost love, but her tears cannot revive it. A kinetic section follows, in which the chorus rejoices at the unexpected turn of events; As soon as Amina wakes up she realises that her destiny has changed for the better, at which point she sings the cabaletta 'Ah! Non giunge' (Allegretto moderato).

#### **Elvino, Rodolfo et al.**

Si Signor?... che creder deggio?

...

#### **Amina**

Ah! Non credea mirarti

Yes Sir? What should I believe?

Ah! I did not think to see thee

#### **Recitativo**

(tempo d'attacco)

#### **Andante cantabile**

<sup>49</sup> 'Royal Opera', *The Times*, 27 May 1910, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Vincenzo Bellini, *La sonnambula*, Melodramma in due atti di Felice Romani, Riduzione per canto e pianoforte condotta sull'edizione critica della partitura a cura di Alessandro Roccatagliati e Luca Zoppelli (Milan: Ricordi, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Vincenzo Bellini, *I puritani*, Opera seria in tre atti di Carlo Pepoli. Riduzione per canto e pianoforte condotta sull'edizione critica della partitura a cura di Fabrizio Della Seta (Milan: Ricordi, 2015).

Si preso estinto, o fiore.  
 Passato al par d'amore,  
 che un giorno sol durò.  
 Potria novel vigore  
 Il pianto mio donarti...  
 Ma ravvivar l'amore  
 Il pianto mio non può.

**Elvino et al.**

No, più non reggo.

**Amina**

Ah! Non giunge uman pensiero  
 Al contento ond'io son piena:  
 a'miei sensi io credo appena;  
 tu mi affida, o mio tesoro.  
 Ah! Mi abbraccia, e sempre insieme,  
 Sempre uniti in una speme,  
 della terra in cui viviamo  
 ci formiamo—un ciel d'amor.

**Tutti**

Innocente, e a noi più cara,  
 bella più del tuo soffrir.  
 Vieni al tempio, e a piè dell'ara  
 Incominci il tuo gioir.

**Amina**

Ah! Non giunge uman pensiero

So soon extinct, O flower.  
 Passed in the manner of love,  
 Which one day only lasted.  
 Could my tears  
 Give you new strength  
 But to revive love  
 My tears cannot

No, I no longer bear.

Ah! No human thought understands  
 The happiness with which I am full:  
 I hardly believe my senses;  
 entrust me to you, my treasure.  
 Ah, he embraces me, and always together,  
 Always united in one hope,  
 of the earth in which we live  
 we form—a heaven of love.

Innocent, and dearest to us,  
 More beautiful than your suffering.  
 Come to the temple, and at the altar  
 Begin your joy.

Ah! No human thought understands

**Recitativo**

(tempo di mezzo)

**Allegretto moderato**

(cabaletta)

Pertichini

Reprise

The cantabile defies the conventional structure of the Italian lyric form, where a first pair of four-bar phrases ( $a_4$   $a_4^1$ ) is followed by a contrasting medial four-bar phrase ( $b_4$ ), which either leads back to the initial melodic material ( $a_4$ ) or to a new, closing four-bar phrase ( $c_4$ ).<sup>52</sup> Instead, Amina's aria combines phrases of different lengths that move from A minor to C Major.<sup>53</sup> The first stanza is set to a four-bar phrase followed by a five-bar phrase that is prolonged by two more bars. In the second stanza a four-bar phrase in C Major is followed by a contracted three-bar phrase leading to the final cadenza through six more bars, which set to music the opening lines ('Ah, non credea'). In the bridge section a shift from A minor to C Major occurs which, according to contemporary conventions, should find its justification in a distinct change in the emotional content of the text, for example from sadness to joyfulness. But Amina is not any happier; rather, she expresses resignation, since her sorrowful tears (at least apparently) can do nothing to change her destiny. However, while she expresses her grief in a state of unconsciousness, all the villagers are watching her. Amina's sleepwalking in front of the passers-by proves her innocence, and her words testify to her immaculate love. Therefore, the key change in the music may find its justification in the external conditions of the scene. Since the nature of Amina's disease is now made known to everybody and her virginal virtue is no longer in question, Elvino will marry her.

52 See Steven Huebner, 'Lyric Form in Ottocento Opera', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 117.1 (1992), 123–47. Adamo and Lippmann, *Vincenzo Bellini*, pp. 428–29.

53 Luca Zoppelli, 'L'Idillio Borghese', in *La Sonnambula*, ed. by C. Chiarot (Venice: Teatro La Fenice, 1996), pp. 49–62; Adamo and Lippmann, *Vincenzo Bellini*, 1981, p. 484.

Tetrazzini recorded ‘Ah! Non credea mirarti’ in 1909 and 1911 and her interpretations bear a resemblance to that of her senior colleague, Adelina Patti.<sup>54</sup> This continuity between the two divas is suggested by some small details in the ornamentation like, for instance, the small grace at bar 119 (p. 314 in the new critical edition), which seems to be reminiscent of the version sung by Jenny Lind published in 1894 (Figure 57).<sup>55</sup>

Figure 57 shows Tetrazzini’s modifications in *La sonnambula*, ‘Ah! non credea mirarti’ (measures 119–20, p. 314, Ricordi, 2010) compared to Patti and Lind.

Another similarity between Patti and Tetrazzini can be noted in the chromatic ascending passage in coincidence with the word ‘recarti’ at measure 133 (Figure 58) which, apparently, neither Maria Malibran nor Jenny Lind used to sing. It is also worth noting how differently the four repeated notes pronouncing ‘pianto mio’ are treated by Tetrazzini. These choked sobs for which Bellini adopts a syllabic figure become an opportunity for Tetrazzini to insert an appoggiatura and a small grace, which seem to defy the dramatic, almost mimetic quality of this passage, in favour of a more Rossinian, flourished singing.

Despite these similarities, the idea of a direct connection between Tetrazzini, Patti and Lind remains confined to the realm of speculation. Tetrazzini could not possibly have met Jenny Lind in person—she died in 1887—and her method, ‘together with a selection of cadence, solfeggio, abbellimenti [sic] &c. in illustration of her vocal art’, was published posthumously in 1891 and 1894. On the other hand, Adelina was present when Luisa sang Violetta at Covent Garden in April 1908, one year after her London triumph in 1907. The two women became close friends, as some letters suggest,<sup>56</sup> and it is entirely possible that they may have exchanged opinions about how to interpret the bel canto arias they both sang. But, if we remember that Tetrazzini’s first appearance in this role dates back to 1893, we realise how unlikely it must have been for her to have taken reference from either colleague when first developing her interpretation of this role. Furthermore, it is unlikely that a star like Tetrazzini would refer to other artists, given the strenuous routine that characterised her professional life and the difficulty of hearing other singers, at least until the gramophone was invented. An indication on the matter is provided by Tetrazzini herself who, one month before what we assume may have been her first meeting with Patti in 1908, was interviewed by *The Sun*.

54 For an analysis of Patti’s rendition of this aria see Massimo Zicari, ‘Expressive Tempo Modifications in Adelina Patti’s Recordings: An Integrated Approach’, *Empirical Musicology Review*, 12.1–2 (2017), 42–56.

55 William Smyth Rockstro, *Jenny Lind: A Record and Analysis of the ‘Method’ of the Late Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt*, ed. by Otto Goldschmidt (London: Novello 1894), p. xiv.

56 Gattey, *Luisa Tetrazzini*, pp. 100–01.

Figure 58 shows a comparison of six musical recordings of the aria 'Ah! non credea mirarti' from *La sonnambula*. The recordings are by Tetrizzini (1911), Tetrizzini (1909), Patti (1906), Ricci (Malibran), Lind (1894), and Ricordi. Each staff displays the vocal line with lyrics in Italian: 'il pian - to, il pian - to mio re - car - ti...'. The score includes various musical notations such as trills, triplets, and dynamic markings like 'poco rit.' and 'rit.'.

Figure 58 *La sonnambula*, 'Ah! non credea mirarti' (Ricordi, 2010, bb. 132–33, p. 315).

Have I ever heard Patti? Melba? Not until quite recently except through a gramophone, which I listen to frequently. Curiously enough, when I sang for the first time in America, at the Tivoli in San Francisco, Melba was singing then at the Alhambra. I was crazy to hear her, but how could I when we sang the same nights? It has often been so in my travels about the world. That is why I so often go to the Manhattan, the evenings I am not singing; for the delight of hearing my musical friends.<sup>57</sup>

While Melba was still an active performer in the first decade of the century—between December 1908 and January 1909 she was in New York, singing *La Bohème*, *Rigoletto*, and *Otello* at the Manhattan Opera<sup>58</sup>—Patti was well past her prime and even her recordings were realised in a moment when her voice no longer was what it once had been. Since 1902 contemporary critics, although showing much delicacy and consideration, could not avoid touching on Patti's flaws: 'an extra breath here and there; a transposition of a semitone down or maybe two, fewer excursions—and those very "carefully" managed—above the top line of the treble stave'.<sup>59</sup>

It is fair to assume that Tetrizzini may have heard Patti's recordings not long before she could meet her in person, and we can also reasonably argue that, among them, 'Ah! Non credea mirarti', which Patti realised in 1906, held a prominent position on Tetrizzini's disc shelf. But, at the time when she met Patti, Tetrizzini had long developed a strong musical personality, and her interpretative choices are likely to have stemmed from the same vibrant tradition of which Adelina had been a major representative, rather than from Adelina's discs. In the rest of the aria Tetrizzini seems to have made her own interpretative decisions, as is suggested by the trill on 'amore' at measure 135 which, according to Blanche Roosevelt, Erminia Frezzolini's parrot used to sing.<sup>60</sup> Her suspension on the top B is rather distant from the vocal arabesque Jenny Lind seems to have sung, as well as from what we find in Patti's recording (Figure 59).

Of extreme interest is, instead, the cadenza with the cello that we find in Tetrizzini's recordings (Figure 60), which was first transcribed by Ricci in 1939 and more recently by Emanuele Senici.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> 'Making of a Great Singer', *The Sun*, 8 March 1908, p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> See Radic, *Melba*, p. 191.

<sup>59</sup> See Herman Klein, *The Reign of Patti* (New York: The Century, 1920), pp. 354–55.

<sup>60</sup> Emanuele Senici, 'Per una biografia musicale di Amina', in *Vincenzo Bellini: verso l'edizione critica. Atti del convegno internazionale, Siena, 1–3 giugno 2000* (Florence: Olschki, 2004), pp. 297–314.

<sup>61</sup> Ricci, *Appendice*, 1939, p. 55. Senici, 'Per una biografia', pp. 297–314.



Figure 59 shows the vocal parts for the aria 'Ah! non credea mirarti' from *La sonnambula*. The score includes the following parts and lyrics:

- Tetrizzini (1911):** ma rav - vi - var l'a - mo - re il <sup>3</sup> pian - to
- Tetrizzini (1909):** ma rav - vi - var l'a - mo - re il <sup>3</sup> pian - to
- Patti (1906):** ma rav - vi - var l'a - mo - re il pian - to
- Ricci:** mo - re il pian - to
- Lind (1894):** ma rav - vi - var l'a - mo - re il pian - to
- Ricordi:** ma rav - vi - var l'a - mo - re il pian - to

The score includes various musical markings such as *rit.*, *tr.*, *a piacere*, and *Cadenza*.

Figure 59 *La sonnambula*, 'Ah! non credea mirarti' (Ricordi, 2010, measures 134–135, pp. 315–16).

Figure 60 shows the vocal parts for the closing cadenza of the aria 'Ah! non credea mirarti' from *La sonnambula*. The score includes the following parts and lyrics:

- Tetrizzini (1911):** d'a - ah d'a-mo - re ah ah
- Tetrizzini (1909):** d'a - ah d'a-mo - re ah ah
- Patti (1906):** sti ah ah d'a - mor.
- Lind (1894):** mor, du rò.
- Ricordi:** mor, d'a - mor

The score includes various musical markings such as *p*, *tr.*, *Cadenza tranquilla*, and *accel.*

Figure 60 shows Tetrizzini's rendition of the closing cadenza with cello obbligato in *La sonnambula*, 'Ah! non credea mirarti' (measures 144–145, p. 316 in Ricordi, 2010).

We do not know where this cadenza comes from, nor do we have any information regarding the cadenza with the flute that Tetrazzini sings in the following cabaletta. The habit of inserting an obbligato instrument in a cadenza, which we will pursue in the next section, was not widespread among contemporary singers.

Tetrazzini's rendition of the cabaletta 'Ah non giunge' does not diverge significantly from the picture presented so far. If, on the one hand, we can observe some analogies with Marchesi and Ricci, on the other she presents some more original interpretative choices. As previously mentioned, much more fascinating is the flute cadenza, which, although echoing that of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, seems to be unprecedented in this aria.

We know that the first incontrovertible evidence of the origins of the famous apocryphal cadenza for Lucia's mad scene dates back to 1889, when *Lucie de Lammermoor* was produced in French at the Opera Garnier after an absence of twenty years, with Nellie Melba in the title role.<sup>62</sup> As already discussed, the cadenza was written by her teacher Mathilde Marchesi who included it in the variants she published in 1900. Ten years later, we find Luisa Tetrazzini recording Marchesi's flute cadenza, the cello cadenza discussed apropos 'Ah! non credea mirarti', and one more flute cadenza for the cabaletta 'Ah! non giunge'. Tetrazzini recorded this last piece twice, once in 1904 and again in 1911. In 1904 she recorded a final passage that is close to what we find written by Bellini, while in 1911 we find a flute playing along in a cadenza that reminds us of the one Marchesi wrote for Melba, with its nice passages in sixths and thirds. Ricci transcribed this cadenza (Figure 61) in the appendix for mixed voice published in 1939<sup>63</sup> but, as in other cases, did not mention Tetrazzini's name.<sup>64</sup>

Figure 61 *La sonnambula*, 'Ah non giunge', Ricordi, 2010, b. 272, p. 334.

A glance at the recording sessions which took place between 15 and 18 March 1911 may help us understand the reason behind the addition of an obbligato flute cadenza to 'Ah! non giunge'. During a three-day recording session in Camden in March 1911, Tetrazzini recorded sixteen arias, with Walter Rogers conducting; among them we find:

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

63 Ricci, *Appendice*, 1939, p. 55.

64 To my knowledge, there are no similar flute cadenzas in other contemporary recordings, such as the one Marcella Sembrich realised in 1904.

- 16 March,
  - *La sonnambula*: ‘Ah, non credea’ with an unprecedented cello cadenza (unknown cellist)
  - *Lucia di Lammermoor*: ‘Splendon le sacre faci’ with the flute cadenza played by Walter Oesterreicher (from Marchesi)
- 17 March,
  - *La Perle du Brésil*: ‘Charmant oiseau’ with the ‘Nevada’ flute cadenza played by Walter Oesterreicher
- 18 March
  - *La sonnambula*: ‘Ah, non giunge’ with flute cadenza played by Clement Barone
  - Proch: *Variations* with an extended flute cadenza played by Clement Barone

What these recordings have in common is the presence of an obbligato instrument to play either a newly-written or an extended cadenza, should the composer have provided one already. We do not know who played the cello on 16 March 1911, but we see that Walter Oesterreicher played the flute when recording ‘Splendon le sacre faci’ and ‘Charmant oiseau’ from Félicien David’s *La Perle du Brésil* while Clement Barone recorded ‘Ah, non giunge’ and Proch’s *Variations* ‘Deh! Torna mio bene’.

The score of Proch’s *Air and Variation* ‘Ah Whence Comes this Longing’ published in Boston by White, Smith & Co. in 1887 presents, in the piano reduction, a short cadenza with the flute, which eventually became the incipit of other artists’ more flourished vocal-instrumental arabesques (Figure 62).<sup>65</sup>

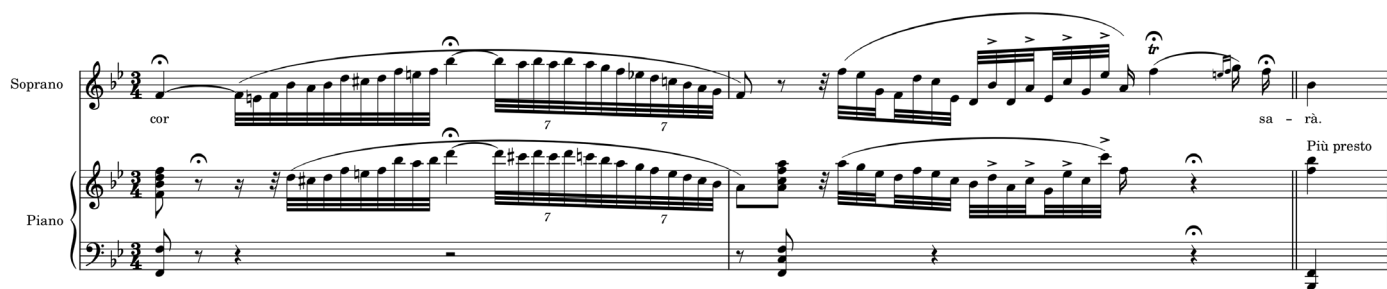


Figure 62 shows the closing measure of Heinrich Proch’s *Variations* ‘Deh torna mio bene’.

In 1940 Estelle Liebling edited the vocal score of the *Variations* published by Schirmer, which included some traditional flute cadenzas and, among them, those recorded by Tetrzzini and Galli-Curci.<sup>66</sup>

Something similar can be said of ‘Charmant oiseau’ from Félicien David’s *La Perle du Brésil*, *opéra comique en trois actes* first performed in 1851, and set to a libretto by Gabriel de Lurieu and Sylvain Saint-Étienne. In Act III Zora sings the ‘Couplets du Mysoli’ with obbligato flute that presents a cadenza where the voice responds to the short arpeggio figure ‘in echo’ played by the flute, which is repeated, unchanged, for a second time upon conclusion of the piece (Figure 63).<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Heinrich Proch, ‘Air and Variations’, in *Artists’ Vocal Album* (Boston: White, Smith & Co., 1887), pp. 70–79. In Europe these variations must have been published much earlier than this. This version is in B flat, but this is transposed down from the key of D flat, which Tetrzzini, Pacini, Galli-Curci etc. all use (see Chapter Two).

<sup>66</sup> Heinrich Proch, *Theme and Variations*, op. 164, ed. by Estelle Liebling (New York: Schirmer, 1940), p. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Félicien David, *La Perle du Brésil*, *opéra comique en trois actes* (Paris: Launer, [n.d.]), p. 263.

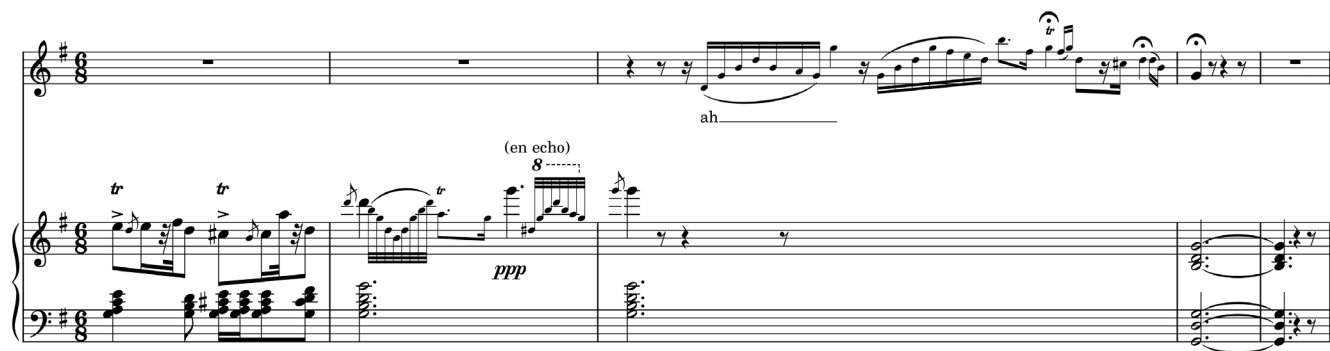


Figure 63 shows the final cadenza of 'Charmant Oiseau' from David's *La perle du Brésil* (Paris: Launer, [n.d.]), p. 263.

In 1883 Emma Nevada made her Paris début at the Opéra-Comique singing Zora in David's *La Perle du Brésil* of which in 1885 Henry Heugel published a *nouvelle édition*; this new edition features the 'Variante de M.lle Nevada' possibly the variant Emma Nevada introduced on the occasion of her Paris début.<sup>68</sup>

This time we observe two different cadenzas: the first is more closely based on the original arpeggio figure (Figure 64) while the second expands on the same melodic material, thus leading to a more elaborate vocal arabesque (Figure 65).



Figure 64 shows the first variant sung by Emma Nevada in Paris, as was published by Heugel in 1885 (p. 311).

**41**

Tetrazzini (1912)

Vien, di - let - to, e in ciel la lu - na: tut-to ta - ce in-tor-no in tor - no: fin-che

con estasi con abbandono

Ricordi

Vien, di - let - to, è in ciel la lu - na: tut-to ta - ce in-tor-no in - tor - no: fin-che

Tetrazzini (1912)

spun - ti in cie - lo il gior - no: vien, vien, ti

Ricordi

spun - ti in cie - lo il gior - no vien, < > vien, ti

<sup>68</sup> Félicien David, *La perle du Brésil*, opera en trois actes, paroles de J. Gabriel et Sylvain Saint-Étienne, partition piano et chant complète (Paris: Heugel, 1885), p. 311.

The image shows a musical score for two versions of an aria. The top staff is labeled 'Tetrazzini (1912)' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Ricordi'. Both staves are in B-flat major (two flats) and 2/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The Tetrazzini version has lyrics: 'po - sa, vien ti po - sa sul mio cor! Deh! t'af - fret - ta,... o Ar-tu - ro mi - o, rie-di, o'. The Ricordi version has lyrics: 'po - sa, vien ti po - sa sul mio cor! Deh! t'af - fret - ta,... o Ar-tu - ro mi - o, rie-di, o'. Both versions feature a final cadenza with triplets and a 'sotto voce' marking.

Figure 65 shows the second variant sung by Emma Nevada in Paris, as was published by Heugel in 1885 (p. 313–14).

Tetrazzini recorded the aria twice in 1911: at the Victor Studios in Camden on the 17 March (matrix C10072-1, 88318, 6343) and for His Master's Voice on the 11 July (matrix ac5161f, HMV 2-033027).

Tetrazzini's recordings feature Nevada's variant, where the voice chases the flute and responds in echo to its chirping calls, to proceed in thirds and sixths in the following passages and conclude with a final series of trills. We find the Nevada version in many other early discs. Clement Barone would record the aria with Amelita Galli-Curci on 14 September 1917 in Camden, with the same final cadenza (matrix C20664-4, Victor 74552, 6124; HMV 2-033062, DB 255). The same cadenza had already been recorded in 1902 by Maria Michailova (1866–1943) in St. Petersburg, with A. N. Semenov playing the flute (matrix 313z, G&T 23170);<sup>69</sup> Emma Calvé recorded it with the flautist Darius Lyons in 1907 (matrix C-4425, Victor 88087; G&T 033060) and in 1908 (matrix C-6024, Victor 88087, 6054; Gramophone 033056, DB 161).<sup>70</sup> In 1917 Maria Barrientos would record the cadenza with Marshall P. Lufsky playing the flute, in Italian as 'Gentil augel' (Columbia, matrix 49112).<sup>71</sup>

Given the evidence I have collected, it could be fairly argued that the reasons that lie behind the recording of a new flute cadenza to 'Ah! non giunge' may have been entirely circumstantial. I suspect that during the recording session that took place on 18 March 1911 the conversation between Luisa Tetrazzini, Walter Rogers and Clement Barone may have led to the idea of putting together a new version of the cadenza for the Proch *Variations* and a completely new and unprecedented cadenza for Amina's cabaletta to be recorded alongside those songs that already included a similar cadenza, and in addition to a cello cadenza for the cantabile 'Ah! Non credea mirarti', first recorded in 1909. This decision could be understood as a response to the habit, emerging at the end of the century, of having an additional obbligato instrument playing along with the voice in the cadenza, as many other contemporary discs show. In this regard, the recording studio might have been turned into a creative lab where the prima donna, together with the conductor and the other instrumentalists involved, may have explored new interpretative possibilities, well beyond the constraints imposed by the tradition.

### 'Come per me sereno'

If we turn our attention to Tetrazzini's recorded interpretation of 'Come per me sereno' we see that some of the changes resulted from the limitations imposed by early recording technologies. This is particularly so for the cuts, which were most probably made due to the limited length of early discs. The curtain has just risen on the opening scene which sees the Swiss peasants gathering in the main piazza of the village, to celebrate Amina's wedding to Elvino. Amina expresses her gratitude to her mother and her boundless happiness to her friends: the day could not be brighter.

69 'Gramophone matrix 313L. Charmant oiseau / M. A. Michailova', *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, [https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/1000003468/313L-Charmant\\_oiseau](https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/1000003468/313L-Charmant_oiseau).

70 'Victor matrix C-4425. Charmant oiseau / Emma Calvé.' *Discography of American Historical Recordings*. UC Santa Barbara Library, 2021, [https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/200006151/C-4425-Charmant\\_oiseau](https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/200006151/C-4425-Charmant_oiseau).

71 *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, s.v., 'Columbia matrix 49112. Gentil augel / Maria Barrientos; Marshall P. Lufsky', [https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/2000143465/49112-Gentil\\_augel](https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/2000143465/49112-Gentil_augel).

The Recitativo [e] Cavatina d'Amina 'Come per me sereno' (Atto I, Scena 3) is set in four main sections, and adheres to the compositional convention that contemporary musicians and commentators refer to as the *solita forma*, the usual form.<sup>72</sup> The first and the third sections are dialogic, are set in recitativo style and frame the melodic section, the central cantabile, to conclude with the customary cabaletta. This last involves two sections (A-A<sup>1</sup>) with a choral pertichini concluding with a cadenza before approaching the reprise.

		<b>Recitativo</b>
<b>Amina, Teresa e detti</b>		
Care compagne, e voi...	Dear comrades, and you...	
		<b>Cantabile sost. assai</b>
<b>Amina</b>	<b>Amina</b>	
Come per me sereno	How serene for me	a <sub>(2+2)</sub>
Oggi rinacque il dì!	Today the day was reborn!	
Come il terren fiorì	How the land flourished	a <sup>1</sup> <sub>(2+2)</sub>
Più bello e ameno!	More beautiful and pleasant!	
Mai di più lieto aspetto	Never of a happier aspect	b <sub>(2+2)</sub>
Natura non brillò:	Nature ever shone:	
Amor la colorò	Love coloured her	c <sub>(4+4)</sub>
Del mio diletto	Of my beloved	
		<b>All.o brillante</b>
<b>Tutti</b>	<b>Tutti</b>	
Sempre, o felice Amina,	Always, O happy Amina,	
Sempre per te così	Always for you so	
Infiori il Cielo i dì	Heaven blooms the days	
Che ti destina...	Which has destined for you...	
		<b>Moderato</b>
<b>Amina</b>	<b>Amina</b>	<b>A</b>
Sovra il sen la man mi posa,	Over my breast the hand rests,	a <sub>(2+2)</sub>
Palpitar, balzar lo senti:	Feel it throb and leap:	
Egli è il cor che i suoi contenti	It is the heart that has no strength	a <sup>1</sup> <sub>(2+2)</sub>
Non ha forza a sostener.	No strength to sustain the bliss.	b <sub>(2+2)</sub>
		c <sub>(6+2)</sub>
Sovra il sen la man mi posa...	Over my breast the hand rests...	a <sub>(2+2)</sub>
<b>Tutti</b>	<b>Tutti</b>	
Di tua sorte avventurosa	Of your adventurous fate	
Teco esulta il cor materno...	My mother's heart rejoices...	<b>Amina's cadenza</b>
<b>Amina</b>	<b>Amina</b>	<b>A<sup>1</sup></b>
Sovra il sen la man mi posa... <sup>73</sup>	Over my breast the hand rests...	a(2+2)

The recording Tetrizzini made in 1912 is 3'57'' long, the recitativo is not present and the disc opens with the orchestral introduction of the cantabile, which is complete. The Allegro brillante is missing and the recording continues with the orchestra playing the four measures that introduce the vocal part in the Moderato (cabaletta).

<sup>72</sup> We do not know which edition Tetrizzini used of the many which circulated at the time. Ricci's volume refers to the Ricordi printed edition, plate number 41686 [1869], reprinted in 1971.

<sup>73</sup> *Tutti i libretti di Bellini*, ed. by Olimpio Cescatti (Turin: UTET, 1995), p. 173.

This last section is not complete: the central cadenza and the reprise are missing; with the vocal part moving immediately to the coda: 'balzar, balzar lo sento' (Figure 66).

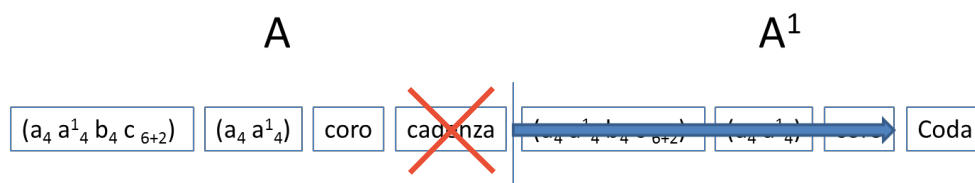


Figure 66 shows the cuts present in Tetrazzini's 1912 recording of 'Sovra il sen'.

It is clear that the recitativo-like sections could be sacrificed in order to make room for the sections of greater musical interest; it should also be remembered that the reasons as to why the cabaletta was cut are not exclusively owing to the rudimentary recording technologies of the time, since the habit of cutting the repeat in the cabaletta, or even dropping it, became increasingly common towards the end of nineteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Tetrazzini's ornamentation and cadenzas do not seem to follow on from or adhere to any of those we find in Marchesi's 1900 volume.<sup>75</sup> For instance, in the fermata that precedes the cadenza of the cantabile, Tetrazzini concludes the trill with a descending arpeggio figure, while Marchesi suggests a richer solution (Figure 67) and the passages by Manuel García and Laure Cinti-Damoreau are far more flourished.<sup>76</sup>

74 A glance at more recent recordings shows that the same cut can be found, among others, in the disc recorded by Anna Moffo and Bruno Bartoletti with the Orchestra di Milano della Rai in 1956 and in that of Maria Callas with the La Scala Orchestra in 1955.

75 Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, pp. 76–91.

76 See Caswell, *Embellished Arias*, pp. 15–29, and Ott, *Handbuch*, pp. 370–71.

Figure 67 shows the fermata of 'Come per me sereno' as was sung by Tetrzzini, compared to those of García and Marchesi.

Figure 67 shows the fermata of 'Come per me sereno' as was sung by Tetrzzini, compared to those of García and Marchesi.

The same can be said of the cadenza that closes the cantabile, which does not bear a resemblance to any of those belonging to her predecessors, Marchesi<sup>77</sup> and Cinti-Damoreau,<sup>78</sup> or any other diva from the past, whose passages have been transcribed by Ricci: Albani, Pasta, Patti, Regina Pinkert, Malibran, Mancinelli and Regina Pacini.<sup>79</sup>

Figure 68 shows Tetrzzini's rendition of the cadenza preceding the Allegretto brillante in *La sonnambula*, 'Come per me sereno', Ricordi, [1869], reprint 1971, p. 24, measure 11 after rehearsal mark number 21. For this example, the earlier edition was preferable, since the critical edition includes a different passage for the cadenza (Ricordi, 2010, b. 58, p. 29).

Figure 68 shows Tetrzzini's rendition of the cadenza preceding the Allegretto brillante in *La sonnambula*, 'Come per me sereno', Ricordi, [1869], reprint 1971, p. 24, measure 11 after rehearsal mark number 21. For this example, the earlier edition was preferable, since the critical edition includes a different passage for the cadenza (Ricordi, 2010, b. 58, p. 29).

Since the reprise in the Moderato is missing, we do not know how Tetrzzini intervened in the central cadential suspension written by Bellini, for which Marchesi (Figure 69), Ricci and Cinti-Damoreau (as reported by Ott) offer a number of possibilities.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, p. 77.

<sup>78</sup> Ott, *Handbuch*, pp. 372–73.

<sup>79</sup> Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup> Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, p. 79, Ricci, vol. I, p. 79. Ott, *Handbuch*, p. 377.



Figure 69 shows the different rendition of the central cadenza in *La sonnambula*, 'Sovra il sen la man si posa' (measures 119–20, pp. 35–36 in the Ricordi 2010 edition).

Figure 69 shows the different rendition of the central cadenza in *La sonnambula*, 'Sovra il sen la man si posa' (measures 119–20, pp. 35–36 in the Ricordi 2010 edition).

The distance between Tetrizzini's recorded interpretation and the variants sung by Laure Cinti-Damoreau and Barbara Marchisio, which we find collected in the volume edited by Austin B. Caswell in 1989, could not be more striking.<sup>81</sup> When compared to the richness that characterises Cinti-Damoreau, Tetrizzini's approach to this aria seems very discreet, if not inconspicuous.

In the cabaletta (Moderato) we see a first group of variants to the original melodic figure, which Tetrizzini sings as soon as this presents itself a second time already in the first section (Figure 70).

Figure 70 shows the different rendition of the cabaletta (Moderato) in *La sonnambula*, 'So - vra il sen la man mi po - sa, pal - pi - tar, bal - zar, lo [sen] ti: e - gli è il'.

<sup>81</sup> Caswell, *Embellished Arias*, pp. 15–29.

Figure 70 shows the modifications sung by Tetrizzini in *La sonnambula*, 'Sovra il sen la man mi posa', Ricordi, [1869], reprint 1971, p. 27, measure nine before rehearsal mark number 25. The critical edition differs from the one then published by Ricordi (Ricordi, 2010, bb. 98–106, pp. 33–34).

Figure 70 shows the modifications sung by Tetrizzini in *La sonnambula*, 'Sovra il sen la man mi posa', Ricordi, [1869], reprint 1971, p. 27, measure nine before rehearsal mark number 25. The critical edition differs from the one then published by Ricordi (Ricordi, 2010, bb. 98–106, pp. 33–34).

As we have seen in García's method, this kind of manipulation was desirable whenever the change would make the repeated melody more interesting. Although the distance between Tetrizzini and her forerunners is remarkable, it is difficult to understand from these examples whether, in consideration of his declamato style, she was approaching Bellini in a new manner, or whether her personal sense of Amina's drama prevailed over questions of vocal and compositional style.

### *I puritani*

#### 'Vien diletto'

With 'Vien diletto' from the second act of *I puritani*, which she recorded in 1912, Tetrizzini is consistent with what we have observed when talking of *La sonnambula*.<sup>82</sup> It is the cabaletta which concludes the 'Scena d'Elvira' for which Marchesi wrote some variants and cadenzas.<sup>83</sup> Tetrizzini does not seem to take Marchesi's suggestions into consideration; instead, she develops her own variants to the final cadenza (Figures 71 and 72), and makes her own melodic changes in the repeat (Figure 73).

Figure 71 shows Tetrizzini's variant in *I puritani*, 'Vien diletto' (Ricordi, 2015, vol. I, measures 222–23, pp. 420–21).

<sup>82</sup> The examples from *I puritani* refer to the Ricordi edition, plate number 41685 [1870].

<sup>83</sup> Marchesi, *Variantes et points d'orgue*, pp. 65–68.



Figure 72 *I puritani*, 'Vien diletto', Ricordi, 2015, measures 276–77, p. 427.

Figure 73 shows Tetrizzini's variants in the reprise of *I puritani*, 'Vien diletto' (Ricordi, measures 252–65, pp. 425–26).

Some of the passages sung by Tetrizzini can be found, again, transcribed by Ricci,<sup>84</sup> but it is not clear where these come from, since Ricci mentions the names of Grisi, Patti and Regina Pinkert at the beginning of the entire section dedicated to *I puritani*.<sup>85</sup> Two hypotheses seem to be plausible at this point: the first is that Tetrizzini derived her melodic material from the tradition of which Grisi, Patti and Pinkert had been among the most authoritative representatives; the second is that Ricci, as already suggested, transcribed Tetrizzini's coloraturas from her discs without making any explicit reference to them.

In spite of the discussion occasioned by Bellini's new declamatory style and the negative critical responses we find in the contemporary press, it can be reasonably argued that *La sonnambula* soon came to be associated with the so-called bel canto tradition. Thanks to its saccharine allurements, it entered the same repertoire of stock operas to which *Lucia* and *Barbiere* belonged, which appealed to large audiences and were regularly mounted by touring companies and large theatres. Evidence from early discs suggests that divas like Tetrizzini approached *La sonnambula* in a manner that was not different from earlier works. Even the occasionally less flourished treatment of Bellini's beautiful melodies that can be observed in Tetrizzini's recorded interpretations does not necessarily suggest a substantially different understanding of the new compositional style. Furthermore, when Tetrizzini recorded these arias, the time was ripe to experiment with new and more courageous interpretative solutions which found an unprecedented opportunity in the new medium—the disc and the recording studio.

<sup>84</sup> Ricci, *Variazioni*, vol. I, p. 67.

<sup>85</sup> Although Ricci (p. 63) refers to Grisi, no variants to this cabaletta likely to have belonged to her have been included in the critical edition. See Vincenzo Bellini, *I puritani*, critical edition edited by Fabrizio Della Seta (Milan: Ricordi, 2013), Appendice 4, pp. 1303–305.

