

**HISTORY AND UNDERSTANDING OF OPERA TRADITION IN RELATION
TO THE VOCAL PERFORMER (AVT-7014)**

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**DISCUSS APPROACHES IN THE VOCAL PERFORMANCE OF MOZART'S
'DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE' AND THE ROLE OF PAMINA, IN COMPARISON TO
VERDI'S 'IL TROVATORE' AND THE ROLE OF LEONORA.**

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i. Introduction

Die Zauberflöte and Il Trovatore are two famous operas premiered over 50 years apart. When Die Zauberflöte was first performed this was during the Classical period, whereas Il Trovatore was premiered during the Romantic period. There are important differences in these operas, particularly in the way that they were originally performed. The differences are key to the modern day performer and how the musician interprets the score for effective performance. This essay will compare and contrast the similarities and differences in the two operas, specifically the two soprano roles: Pamina (Die Zauberflöte) and Leonora (Il Trovatore), as well as the historical performance changes, in both vocal and operatic tradition between the two operas. The essay will take a closer look at issues such as words and use of libretto; vocal style and use of ornamentation; the orchestras and the theatres; as well as voice types and singers.

The operas were composed by arguably two of the most admired and well-loved writers of opera in the history of music. Die Zauberflöte was composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, with a libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder. It was premiered in 1791 with Mozart himself as the conductor, and in Schikaneder's 'Freihaus- Theater auf der Wieden' in Vienna. Il Trovatore is part of a trilogy of operas by Giuseppe Verdi (Rigoletto, Il Trovatore and La Traviata). Verdi's Opera was premiered in 1853 at the Teatro Apollo in Rome. The principal librettist was Salvatore Cammarano, and after his death, the libretto was completed with the help of Leone Emmanuele Bardare.

ii. Synopsis of the Operas

In Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, the opera opens with the Three Ladies rescuing Prince Tamino from a serpent. This leads to Prince Tamino meeting the Queen of the Night who persuades him to rescue her daughter Pamina. Pamina is in captivity and under the control of the high priest Sarastro. Tamino accepts the task, and is sent on his journey accompanied by Papageno. During Tamino's quest he enters Sarastro's world and begins to learn of their ideals, and seeks to join them. Along the way, Tamino and Pamina undergo an initiation and are made to complete difficult trials. They successfully complete their challenges and this leads to the defeat of the Queen of the Night and the Three Ladies. In the meantime, Papageno has so far failed all of his trials but is still rewarded and meets his companion Papagena.

Il Trovatore is a complex story based around the themes of love, war and revenge. 'In the works of Verdi, as in those of other Romantic composers, the nucleus of the operatic plot is almost always a love story' (Celletti, 1980, p. 216) In a very brief summary, Count di Luna is obsessed with Leonora (a noble lady- in- waiting to the Queen of Aragon) but she does not return his love. The Count has heard that someone is serenading her, and has his guards on watch outside the palace. The captain, Ferrando, tells his guards a story about a gypsy woman who was burned at the stake for casting a spell on the Count's baby brother. The gypsy's daughter took revenge by

kidnapping the boy and throwing him on to the same fire where her mother died. The Count's father died with grief, and the gypsy's daughter disappeared, but di Luna set out to find her.

It is in the gardens of the palace that Leonora confides in her maid Ines, that she is in love with the man who serenades her each night. Count di Luna appears, and Leonora mistakingly rushes to greet her beloved but embraces the Count instead. Realising what has happened, Manrico, leader of the rebel forces reveals who he is and the count challenges him to fight. Manrico overpowers the count, but does not kill him. The war continues and Manrico is badly wounded, he returns to the mountains where his mother, the gypsy Azucena, nurses him back to health. Azucena reveals that she is the woman Count di Luna is searching, and tells Manrico what happened. It is at this point that Manrico discovers that Manrico accidentally killed her own child.

The fighting continues and further plot twists and turns take place, but eventually Azucena is discovered and Manrico is sent to his execution. Leonora in a bid to secure Manrico's freedom, poisons and kills herself. And as Manrico is killed, Azucena cries out that it is her mother who is avenged, and that the Count di Luna has killed his own brother.

Il Trovatore's extensive plot is based on historical events, but the narrative is fictitious. Several stories run side by side throughout the opera and high emotions run through the main themes of war, love and revenge. Whereas Die Zauberflöte is based on a number of sources and is thought to be an

elaborate display of a masonic initiation ceremony, intertwined with the mysteries of Isis, all staged to form a detailed operatic plot. *Die Zauberflöte* was different from Mozart's other operas, in that instead of listening to a comedy full of farcical plot lines (eg. *Così fan tutte* or *Le Nozze di Figaro*) *Die Zauberflöte* introduces 'comedy with machines' (*Machinenkomödie*), leading the audience to watch spectacular stage effects.

Die Zauberflöte was essentially a 'singspiel', and the theatre where it premiered was known for featuring mostly plays with songs and incidental music. The opera was the last in a series of fairy-tale productions in the Theater auf der Wieden. 'Mozart's setting of *Die Zauberflöte* emerges as a more ambitious musical project than any of its forerunners, with more substantial through-composed scenes, a greater use of marvellous devices, more ensembles of varied kinds (which tend to be more complex), greater variety and counterpoint in the texture, and a more colourful orchestra. In this regard Schikaneder's designation of the work as a 'große Oper' seems most apt.' (Buch, 1997, p. 231)

It is important to understand the differences in the opera synopsis, because it forms an important consideration when performing these two operas. It gives the modern day singer information about audience expectation and the trends in the operas of that time. Mozart's audience in Vienna were expecting not just good music, but an all round visual spectacle in the theatre. The singers in *Die Zauberflöte* were re-enacting a story already set out for them by their

librettist and composer. Whereas an audience watching *Il Trovatore*, had different expectations: emotion and realism from both the music and the plot.

ii. Mozart and Verdi: The Orchestras

Telling a story was not all down to the singers, how the operas were set to orchestra is also an important feature. Mozart's orchestra for *Die Zauberflöte* was scored for two flutes (one on piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets (one bass horn), two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, glockenspiel, and strings (two violins, viola and cello). The opera also includes a chorus of Priests, Slaves and Attendants. Another interesting feature is that this opera contains a substantial amount of spoken dialogue between characters. The opera is in two acts, but each aria or piece of music, is preceded with or followed by spoken dialogue.

In contrast, *Il Trovatore* has a much larger orchestra: Piccolo, Flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two offstage horns, two trumpets, three trombones, cimbasso, timpani, cassa, offstage snare drums, triangle, hammers on anvils, bell, harp, offstage organ, and strings (violins, violas and cellos). Verdi's orchestra has nearly doubled in size and includes more percussion. The opera is without overture, set in four acts, includes chorus and is continuous music without spoken dialogue.

Mozart's operas were intended for smaller theatres and usually for theatres that seat no more than one thousand people. In the case of Theater auf der

Wieden, only floor plans still exist that show that the building was thirty by fifteen metres. The theatre had a large stage, and was believed to have been designed for opulent scenic designs to include movable backdrops and flying sets. Whereas Verdi's Teatro Apollo was a much larger theatre, originally built as a prison, had a much larger auditorium. Neither theatres still stand today, and the differences in the size of orchestra was not all down to the building they performed in. However it is important to realise that the instruments being used were significantly different, in that those in Mozart's orchestras were of an earlier period than that of Verdi's time. The sound that the instruments produced in Mozart's time would not fill some of the larger theatres that Verdi used. Therefore it makes sense for these instruments to form a smaller orchestra in a smaller theatre. These instruments also produced a clear, pure sound that would be lost in a Verdi opera where the emphasis was on an emotional experience.

However, Mozart's orchestras were not always small (certainly in the case of *Die Zauberflöte*), but many factors dictated how he formed his ensembles such as whether it was a performance in a theatre or hall: 'Three factors were paramount: (1) the desire for clarity and flexibility; (2) the need for correct balance among the strings and between the strings and winds; and (3) the need for amplification of sound in proportion to the size and character of the performance venue.' (Zaslaw, 1992, p. 204) These were important considerations for Mozart's orchestra, as his music was full of fast passages, ornamented phrases and runs. Take for example the overture of *Die Zauberflöte*, with the exception of the introductory adagio and one other short

adagio section, the music is marked allegro, with contrasting dynamics and textures from the full orchestra. This fast pace continues right up to the start of the second aria and Papageno's entry. Whereas in *Il Trovatore*, Verdi's opera is without overture, and gives a short orchestral introduction starting with percussion, setting the scene of soldiers with Ferrando in the Palace, slowly building up the orchestra as the drama unfolds.

Zaslaw sums up Mozart's approach in writing music for his operas 'he was willing to work on the instrumental music, choruses and recitatives before he was familiar with the voices of his leading singers, but not the arias because he wanted to calculate them for the individual voices.' Mozart even said himself in a letter of 27 December 1780 'I like an aria to fit a singer as perfectly as a well- made suit of clothes'. In stark contrast, Verdi wanted his story first, he needed the librettist to provide him with substance for his works 'the urgency with which Verdi reacted to the stimulus of the scenic effect above all led him to disregard the form and the substance of these traditions, to forge ahead and to combine various styles.' (Celletti, 1980, p. 233) In a letter to an anonymous recipient, Verdi wrote in April 1878 'Art is universal; no one believes that more than I do. But it is created by individuals, and, since the Germans have different methods from us, their art is intrinsically different. We cannot, indeed I say we must not, write like the Germans, nor the Germans like us. Even though the Germans assimilate something of our quality, as Haydn and Mozart did in their time, they nevertheless remain composers of quartets. And though Rossini appropriated certain formal elements from Mozart, he is nevertheless still a melodist'.

Whilst there are clearly significant differences in the way the orchestras were formed in both operas, it is important to remember that in the case of Mozart's music, orchestral practice varied across Europe, and Mozart himself was aware of this. 'Orchestras varied in size according to the location and occasion of the performance and the genre of the work performed. Since virtually all of the Mozart's works were composed with specific performances and ensembles in mind, information about a particular orchestra used for a particular performance of a work is not necessarily applicable to another work, or even to another performance of the same work in another location.' (Edge, 1992, p. 65) However, for the modern day singer understanding the size of the orchestra, the instruments used and the sound that they produce, is a key factor in understanding historical vocal practice and applying it to the two operas.

iii. Singing Pamina and Leonora: Vocal Requirements

Characters in Mozart's operas were often portrayed much younger than the singers used in Verdi's operas. For example, Pamina, the Queen of the Night's daughter, at the start of the opera she is a young girl. During the opera she is faces emotional and challenges in order to prove moral integrity. As Pamina grows in to a young woman, she learns to understand herself and the world around her. At the end of Act One, Pamina sings 'Die Wahrheit, Die Wahrheit, sei sie auch Verbrechen!' (The truth, the truth, even if it be a crime!)

A noble declaration for Pamina who is growing in to a young woman. The core of Pamina and her character is truth and honesty.

Leonora, on the other hand, is a young woman of nobility. She is the romantic heroine of the opera. Leonora is introduced to the audience late at night in the gardens in the palace, walking with her friend Ines. Before the entry of her first cavatina 'Tacea la notte placida', she sings the line 'Un'altra notte ancora senza vederlo' (Another night gone by and I haven't seen him!) and from there she reveals herself to be a young lady full of love, who lives for the love of Manrico, but as the drama unfolds, she poisons herself and dies for love. If there is one thing that Pamina and Leonora have in common, it is selflessness. However, Leonora's love for Manrico is so strong that she is willing to lose her integrity as a woman, give herself to the Count di Luna in return for Manrico's freedom, but unknowingly deceives the Count, as she will do so only as a corpse and kills herself.

Both roles portray strong female characters, but in a different set of circumstances, and it would suggest that different soprano voices are needed to successfully sing Pamina and Leonora. In order to sing these roles, often is the case that sopranos of different vocal fachs would be considered.

Pamina needs a lighter approach and a lighter timbre to allow the voice to move quickly through shorter phrases, and is often portrayed by a lyric soprano. Whereas Leonora, also a soprano, needs a voice with more dramatic agility that can move through longer phrases and over a larger orchestra, the timbre of the voice is darker but still needs to be able to do

some ornamentation. Leonora is often characterized as a dramatic coloratura.

‘The dramatic- coloratura soprano, as the term itself indicates, is called upon to alternate vehement, occasionally violent vocal passages with others which are of elegiac or virtuoso character.’ (Celletti, 1980, p. 221) This is very true of Leonora who gives a full display of lyrical emotion and ecstasy, whilst at the same time her male counterparts are singing of their feelings, and the chorus re- stating the story in the background. Whereas in *Die Zauberflöte*, the structure of the opera can be likened to a play, the characters come on stage, scene by scene, to capture a single sentiment at any moment in time. It is only at the end of Act 1 and Act 2 that the scene becomes busier with more characters on stage, but largely each character is afforded their opportunity to relay their sentiment, one after the other.

The range of notes needed to sing Pamina is not as wide as that of Leonora, but fundamentally if you are singing Pamina, the voice will probably still have the ability to sing as high (and low) as Leonora (up to D flat 6) What is different is the tessitura of the voice. Tessitura is not the same as the range of notes, in that tessitura is to do with the way in which the voice produces a sound with a feeling of effortlessness. For instance, the range of Pamina’s notes do not sit as high as Leonora’s notes, but the tessitura of Pamina sits higher than Leonora. Take for example, Pamina’s aria ‘Ach ich fühl’s’ and Leonora’s first aria ‘Tacea la notte placida’. Pamina is required to sing for a prolonged period in the area of the Passaggi, repeatedly singing on these

notes (D5, E- flats 5 and F5), and moving upwards in to the higher ranges for most of the aria. Arguably, the dramatic coloratura soprano would still be able to sing Pamina's aria, but even with good vocal technique, these pitches can become tiring. The audience might not realise that the dramatic coloratura is in too much difficulty, but the singer will feel uncomfortable, and although the audience won't necessarily hear bad singing, they won't be hearing the performer's best singing.

Leonora's aria starts much lower and slowly builds up through the passaggio and up in to the higher ranges. When Leonora reaches climax points in the aria (figure 1.1) the extreme high notes form part of an embellishment or a fast run, keeping weight out of the voice but the melody always moves quickly back down the range again.

39

103
Leo
-brò, la ter - ra un ciel, un ciel sem - brò! Al cor al
know, a joy that on - ly an - gels know! With in my

f *a piacere* *pp*

104
Leo
guar - do e - sta - ti - co la ter - ra un ciel sem -
heart I felt a joy that on - ly an - gels
p *cresc.*
incominciare pianissimo
pp [Tutti] *cresc.*

107
Leo
-brò, la ter - ra un ciel sem -
know, a joy, a joy the an - gels
f *con entusiasmo* *Adagio ed eguale*
estremely

Figure 1.1 Page 39 from Il Trovatore, Ricordi Vocal Score, 1992

The idea of the vocal fach is a relatively new idea, a soprano and even a mezzo- soprano could sing both Pamina and Leonora (the female voice regardless of category has the same range) but it is how comfortable for the singer to sustain over a period of time and without strain. How the singer moves between registers (passaggio) is to do with the length and thickness of the vocal chords and how they produce sound. A leading pedagogue Doscher, defines tessitura as 'a certain compass in which the voice performs with special ease of production and sound' (Doscher, 1994 p. 196). Fundamentally, both of the sopranos, Leonora and Pamina, are lyrical and can most likely interchange and sing either role, but to what degree of comfort is down to the individual singer.

One vocal characteristic that does separate Pamina and Leonora is the timbre of the voice. Timbre brings a tone or colour to the voice, and is usually brought about by the singer's own physical characteristics (Doscher, 1994. p. 125). It is this tone quality that Verdi was looking for in his singers 'Verdi endeavoured, above all, to make his words a springboard for a dramatic situation... what mattered was that the syllables should be singable' (Chusid & Weaver, 1980, p. 195). Timbre is something that the singer can modify through the placements of vowels, consonants, dynamics and use of emotion to deliver the drama. Verdi invites Leonora to do this, again in her first cavatina, she lovingly tells her story of love in the first two stanzas, as the tempo picks up, the emotion steadily increases throughout the aria, and at the end through repeating soaring melodic lines of 'It is for him I live or die'.

However, Pamina is not without emotion 'It has to be so controlled, yet you have to be free to let the emotions through. That's the hardest thing in Mozart. You have to be transparent. It's very, very true and honest.' (Röschmann, 2003). Timbre of the voice is still important in Mozart's music, however it does give an indication of the type of orchestra over which the voice might be able to sing. For example, it would be unreasonable to expect the lighter lyrical timbre of Pamina to be able to sing over Verdi's full orchestras, in ensembles including full chorus and the male characters (who similarly have a dramatic quality to their voices). And likewise, a full voiced Leonora over Mozart's smaller ensembles performed with period/older instruments in a smaller theatre/concert hall would drown out musical effects written in the orchestration.

Despite differences a singer needs to master Mozart in order to understand Verdi's vocal writing. In the romantic style, the singer requires flexibility in the voice as well as control and the ability to play around with vibrato, portamento and accents. In order to do this, air- flow and phrasing must be mastered first. 'Good singing consists, essentially, in taking in a certain quantity of breath and letting it out, transformed in to sound, not all at once, but gradually, continuously, reinforcing the flow- to intensify the sound- or diminishing it- to attenuate the sound- smoothly without breaths. Otherwise the timbre of the voice becomes harsh or strident, the high notes require an enormous effort and emerge hard- sounding, the pronunciation of piano or pianissimo sounds become problematical, the pitch of the tone wavers and the entire vocal mechanism tends to deteriorate' (Celletti, 1980, p. 237) In other words, to

maintain singing in full voice, using full range of notes and often in unison with a full orchestra and other singers, requires vocal stamina. Verdi's music was not prescribed, he was setting a scene and his reaction would take any form and combine all sorts of styles to achieve the desired emotional effect. Verdi's singers were subjected to longer phrasing and the breathing not always in a logical or rhythmical pattern. The singer still needs to breathe, and it was not always in a natural place, but still the lyrical line must be maintained and delivered with emotional intent. This is not easy if solid vocal technique has not yet been achieved.

However, singing Mozart's music was far more methodical and easier for the singer to understand phrasing and take regular breaths. Many singing teachers are often heard warning their students of singing operatic repertoire that is too big, too soon. Learn the basics and allow vocal methods to become instinctive, and help to maintain healthy singing. Of course not all voices are dramatic voices, and many singers learn to sing well but don't have the physical characteristics to progress beyond the repertoire of a lyric soprano. But without the basic understanding, singers aspiring to the dramatic roles who are vocally under-prepared, run the risk of losing their voices if they sing the wrong repertoire.

Going back to the earlier idea of singing 'Ach, ich fühls' and singing on and around the passaggi notes. For many singers, singing in this area of the voice is nearly always uncomfortable. Putting issues of tessitura to one side, assuming that the voice is inexperienced and learning vocal technique is still

underway, 'Ach. ich fühls' presents itself as a vocal exercise in itself. One of the real benefits of learning to sing Mozart, is understanding the space a singer needs and allowing the body to register the placement of notes and vowels on any given note and interval. Singing Mozart allows the student singer to explore all the different sounds and sensations produced when travelling through the passaggio. Take for example the German Opera singer Lilli Lehmann's scientific point of view of singing and diagram illustrating this theory (figure 1.2):

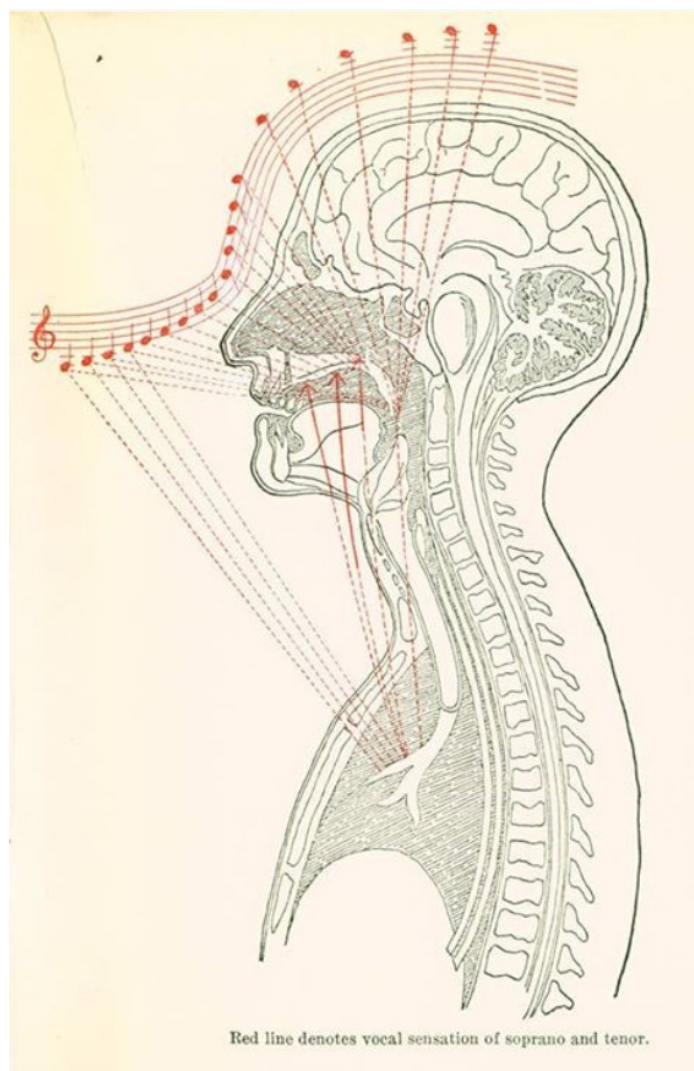


Figure 1.2 from Lilli Lehmann's 'How to Sing', 1902, p. 121,

In Lehmann's book 'How to Sing' she gives many recommendations for singing and technical examples. Lehmann gives instructions on tone, breathing, soft palate, and even as specific as tongue position, as well as the importance of practicing daily and mastering singing scales. Mozart requires this sort of persistence in vocal training in preparation for his own music. The phrase 'meinem Herzen, meinem Herzen' (figure 1.3), leads the singer in to singing semi-quavers and demi-semi quavers quickly, with a clarity that ensures that every note is projected clearly. This is a long phrase to get through and requires mastering of the position of the vowel and placement of the notes as Pamina travels up through the phrase towards the B flat. The classic place in the aria where the young singer falls flat and can't successfully get to the end of the phrase without tension of the larynx creeping in and losing control of air flow. A good example of where a singer needs to take time to understand the placement of each note and the sensations that they create when travelling quickly through passaggio.



Figure 1.3 bars 12 – 16 from Ach, ich fühls, from Bärenreiter vocal score, 2007, p. 159

Much later in Die Zauberflöte, in the scene with the Armed Men and Tamino, Pamina singing the phrase 'Wir wandeln durch des Tones Macht froh durch

des Todes duster nacht' (Figure 1.4), requires great flexibility of the voice and breath control to get through this phrase, keeping the voice free so as not to get stuck on repeated passagi notes F5, when moving between syllables on 'Macht froh'.

Figure 1.4 bars 340 – 346, from the Act 2 finale of Die Zauberflöte, from Bärenreiter score, 2007, p. 205

Manuel Garcia in his 'Traité complet de l'art du chant', echoes this idea that good vocal technique must first be achieved and understood 'Unchangeable firmness, purity of sound, and perfect harmony of timbres, constitute steadiness of the voice. This important quality, which forms the foundation of a good style of singing, is as rare as it is valuable. All those who force their voice out by sudden starts, or allow it to die away, and those who unnecessarily change the timbre, and break up into fragments the melody they execute, are deficient in steadiness of sound.' (García, 1975) A singer who then does go on to sing Leonora, should already be singing with steadiness of the voice and the mechanisms of such are able to move freely and independently.

Il Trovatore was one of Verdi's earlier operas, and ornamentation still appeared in his music (figure 1.5). Leonora on one hand needed clarity in the voice to achieve a trill just like that of a singer in Mozart's time.



Figure 1.5 bars 147 – 149, from Il Trovatore, Ricordi, 1992, p. 42

However, vocal styles and trends in ornamentation were changing during this early part of Verdi's career. Singers were expected to do so much more with their voices. Even Verdi himself had an opinion on the rigorous training that he expected his singers to have completed. In a letter to Giuseppe Piroli in 1871, Verdi writes 'I should like the students to have a wide knowledge of music; exercise in voice production; very long courses in solfeggio (i.e. agility exercises), as in the past' (Freitas, 2002, p. 231) Verdi was not averse to the idea of singers undertaking old- fashioned studies, but expected them to combine this with modern methods and ideas. In another letter sent in 1875, Verdi complains about the German singers of his time 'They take no trouble to get fine light and shade in to their singing; all their efforts are directed to bringing this or that note with the utmost force. Hence their singing is not the poetic expression of their souls, but the physical conflict of their bodies.' (Freitas, 2002) Manuel Garcíá talks of common vocal techniques of that period, in his treatise on the art of singing that was first published as early as

1842 (just over ten years before *Il Trovatore* was premiered), and offers various technical exercises to develop vocal ornamentation such as trills and final cadenzas. He suggests way to achieve vocal colour, how to sustain long notes and singing such notes frequently, as well as tackling increasingly large intervals.

Verdi wrote Leonora for the celebrated singer Rosina Penco. Despite Verdi's strong opinion of singers and the training they should undergo before singing his music, he knew himself that Penco had her vocal imperfections, but she was known for her trill, passionate dramatic temperament and vocal agility. She was already famous for singing bel canto roles by Donizetti and Bellini, the style in Verdi's opinion already out of date, but nonetheless she had the vocal ability to sing Leonora (Rosselli, 2001). Penco premiered Leonora and there is no real evidence to suggest that Verdi was displeased with her performance

Mozart's first Pamina, Anna Gottlieb was still alive in the early part of Verdi's career, dying a few years after the premiere of *Il Trovatore*. Gottlieb received praise for her singing in 1813 'if ever an artist in this theatre has the feeling and predisposition for parody, it is she. Her acting and singing are calculated to be precisely the opposite of the original character. Thus are her pathos, carriage and behaviour humorous through, and she parodies all the prima donnas superbly and with especial felicity sings bravura arias and difficult passages with an indistinctness exactly like the Italian florid singing no- one ever understands anyway.' (Raeburn, 2001) High praise indeed, and this

review of Gottlieb's singing, suggests that she was in fact an experienced singer with a good understanding of vocal technique. However, considering Verdi's thoughts on vocal training, it can be assumed that in Verdi's opinion, this singer's style was out of date and old fashioned. But what it does tell us is that Gottlieb, in 1813 was a good actor and had the ability to sing technical and brilliant arias- there is no real reason why she could not sing Leonora. More importantly it gives clues to the modern day singer making preparations to sing Pamina or Leonora. Whilst it is clear that both sopranos require different vocal qualities, ultimately both need to have good healthy singing technique and have the ability to sing lyrically and stylistically.

The reason for understanding the vocal qualities of Pamina and Leonora, goes further than vocal technique. Identifying what type of soprano will sing each role best will ensure that the libretto, the words and story are effectively told, especially in the case of Verdi. In a letter to Cesare de Sanctis dated 1853, Verdi wrote on the subject of libretti and *Il Trovatore* 'I want subjects that are new, great, beautiful, varied, strong... and really strong, with new forms etc. etc. and at the same time suitable for music. If someone says 'I have done it like this, because is how Romani Cammarano, etc, did it' then we no longer understand each other. It is precisely because those great men did that way that I want it done differently.' Verdi's singers needed to be as new and fresh as the music he was creating. Whereas, in *Die Zauberflöte*, Mozart's music was already in existence, he was just formatting it to fit the idea of the 'Singspiel' for Schikaneder's theatre in Vienna. 'Mozart remembered that in former times he had plundered his youth to create, with

juvenile prodigality, songs of such marvellous freshness and grace... as were never again to be equalled. Particularly at the age of twenty, during the entire year of 1776, a veritable flood of beauty had poured forth from his hear and this treasure now rested in the bottom of a desk drawer, in the unused manuscripts of his serenades, divertimentos, and all his instrumental works of this period. An incomparable treasure of melodies and rhythms, astonishingly adapted to the lyric atmosphere of his new opera (ie Die Zauberflöte' (Wyzewa, 1910, via Hyatt King, 1950, p. 247). Any lyric soprano at Mozart's disposal, could easily have stepped up to sing Pamina. However, Mozart was not writing to create something new, he had been tasked to create a 'Singspiel' and that is what he did. Gottlieb had already worked with Mozart before, singing operatic roles in his earlier operas. Mozart knew Gottlieb could sing his music, and she knew what to do with his music to relay the story. The rules and form of Mozart's music had already been set, and by sticking to them, the story could be told. Whereas with Verdi, he was constantly evolving and creating new form: his singers needed to be adaptable and have a mutual desire for the new and passionate dramas.

iv. 20th Century Performances And Beyond

After all the considerations of vocal tradition, the requirements of sopranos singing these roles is still evolving and changing with the modern audience and opera houses. Even to an audience's preference in a UK theatre can present a vastly different Pamina or Leonora, to that of what is heard in opera houses across the rest of Europe. Currently English National Opera have Die Zauberflöte in their main season, with Lucy Crowe as Pamina. In a review of

her performance at the Coliseum, her Pamina was applauded with 'phrases which bloomed, clean ventures into the higher register, purity of tone- made her performance a delight. She's a consummate vocal actress too, who injected her aria 'Ach, ich fühl's' with so much feeling that it became the highlight of the second half.' (Lowe, 2019) Crowe's repertoire includes typically lighter soprano repertoire such as Euridice, Susanna and Adina, with many of her debuts in major opera houses, her voice is by no means small if it can fill large theatres. But in comparison with the singer Olga Bezsmertna, at the time of her Pamina, in the Wiener Staatsoper theatre in 2017, she had already tackled bigger roles such as Donna Elvira, Desdemona and even a Blumenmädchen in a Wagner opera, and continues to sing full lyric/spinto soprano roles.

Even Sopranos singing Leonora, can vary in voice, and also come up against opposing reviews of their performances. For example, the soprano Katia Pellegrino, her website biography details many performances of *Il Trovatore* across Italy (Busseto, Vigoleno, Sassari, Naples, Rome, and so on). An already experienced Leonora, she was met with mixed reviews when she came to the Welsh National Opera 2011 'Katia Pellegrino has the potential to be an outstanding Leonora. She has real brilliance in her top register and a beautiful sound throughout the range, needing perhaps a touch more weight in the chest voice. Above all, though, she needs to liven up her stage presence, acquire some spontaneity of movement and gesture, catch her lover's eye more often, get some exercise around the set' (Walsh, 2011)

There are not many celebrated singers who have performed the roles of Pamina and Leonora in their entirety. However one such singer is Joan Sutherland. Joan Sutherland made her Royal Opera House debut singing First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* (1952). It was four years later that she went on to sing Pamina, and in the 1960s her only appearance of *The Queen of the Night*. And in 1981 she gave a performance of Leonora at Covent Garden. Singing all three soprano roles in *Die Zauberflöte* is no mean feat, and maybe not necessarily her finest singing, as was the case with the *Queen of the Night* 'both her arias are transposed down (by a semitone and a tone respectively), and in the first she and Klemperer (the conductor) seem unable to agree on the tempo.' (Clements, 2015)

Arguably one of the best Leonora's on record is Maria Callas, who has sung in around twenty productions of *Il Trovatore*. In all of her recordings she can be heard to take extra care and attention to the nuances of the music and text, and she really shows us the young lady in love. In a CD review of a 1956 recording of *Il Trovatore*, Göran Forsling writes 'Rarely has 'Tacea la notte' been sung with such concentrated tone and such superbly-shaped long Verdian phrases. The cabaletta 'Di tale amor' is light and springy, as though a soubrette had suddenly popped into the studio. She (Callas) is just as great in the fourth act where 'D'amor sull'ali rosee' has rarely been sung with such hushed intensity, exemplary phrasing and that peculiar beauty of tone; the latter possibly an acquired taste. Even those who are more or less allergic to the Callas sound have to admit that she for once manages almost all the high notes without the tone spreading unduly. In the last act she is also regal at 'Tu

vedrai che amore in terra' and the dialogue with Luna that leads up to 'Mira, d'acerbe lagrime' has tremendous drive.' And in another review of the same performance, Ewan McCormick writes 'Unlike Amelia in Ballo or the Forza del Destino Leonora, Callas had sung the Trovatore Leonora several times in her career and did so to great acclaim. Notwithstanding her greatness in the recordings of the other operas, the benefit of stage experience allows Callas to add an extra dimension. That, coupled with a rare vocal security, creates a portrayal that is deeply affecting both in its dramatic and musical aspects. Those who prefer voices with the spinto qualities of a Tebaldi or Milanov may feel Callas's tone production is something of an acquired taste but her dramatic involvement is never in doubt.'

Whereas Joan Sutherland, who has also performed Leonora, received mixed reviews: Robert Hugill writes 'Sutherland's concern is less with the firm line than with the shaping of the notes and their relationship to each other. A key to this is her attitude to the ornamentation, which is far less than incidental in contrast to some of the more dramatic sopranos who have sung the role. For better or worse, Sutherland shapes and caresses the vocal line as if it were Bellini or Donizetti.' His review is in contrast to a much earlier Gramophone review from 1987 in which their reviewer said 'Sutherland's arrival raises doubts for even by the date her tone had loosened so that the firmness of one note did not guarantee the next. Each E flat in 'Tacea la notte' needs a twist of the screwdriver to tighten it up and, though the trills and scales in 'Di tale amor' are beyond reproach, the tone quality itself lacks sparkle'. She sings it well but whether this is would be satisfactory for Verdi is unknown. However,

Hugill makes a good point in his review, in that Rosina Penco, just like Joan Sutherland, was known for her performances of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti and both known for their trills.

Singing different soprano roles within *Die Zauberflöte*, or moving between singing Mozart or Verdi is not uncommon throughout 20th century and modern day performances. One additional factor to consider is the size of the voice singing over modern instruments, full orchestra in modern day opera houses, with larger audiences. However, many post World War 2 singers who took to the stage to perform *Die Zauberflöte*, such as Lucia Popp and Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, were not only exceptionally Mozart singers, but they were already notable singers. A generation of recording opera singers emerged, alongside the superstar opera singer, such as Joan Sutherland. Opera houses were booking famous singers not only for their vocal prowess but to sell tickets and attract a large audience into the theatre. This may go some way to explain why during the twentieth century many singers were crossing vocal fachs and styles.

vi. Conclusion

This essay has set out to explore the differences in vocal practice in performing two soprano roles: Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Leonora (*Il Trovatore*). The main difference is that of vocal fach, in that Pamina is a lyric soprano and Leonora is a Dramatic Coloratura. Verdi abandoned the rules that a singer in Mozart's time would expect to do. The form was different, and the emotion of the music and scenic effect was considerably more intense

and passionate than that of Mozart's 'Singspiel'. Audience expectations were also different: Pamina in the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte*, was singing to an audience who were used to a visual spectacle, plays, and story- telling accompanied by music. Whereas Leonora's audience experienced a sound world of emotion, and a visual of characters fully committed to the story. The demands of Verdi and the audience placed a huge amount of pressure on the singers to physically exert themselves and realistically act out complex plots.

However, regardless of the differences in opera tradition, one thing that underpins the roles of Pamina and Leonora, is secure vocal technique. Whether the singer is faced with Verdi's long phrases and irregular markings, or Mozart's prescribed, repetitive phrases, both approaches require a shared sense of understanding how to sing. To sing Leonora, lyrical singing must first be mastered. If Leonora can sing lyrically, then singing Pamina is still possible. Leonora can also still reasonably be performed by the lyric soprano, who will have the same range of notes as any other soprano, or female voice. In this case, the lyric soprano and the dramatic coloratura soprano might find the work of one another more challenging and less comfortable than the roles set within their fachs. However, from an audience perspective, and particularly when considering singers in post- war performances, the success of these performances is really down to individual taste. If too light a soprano sings Leonora, we lose colour and timbre of the voice, but in the same token, the dramatic singer might lose the flexibility to articulate the trills. If Pamina is sung by an older singer who has excellent vocal technique the character might come across as too mature. However, a younger, less experienced

singer might struggle with the vocal demands of Mozart's technical phrasing. It really is a matter of taste, but for the singer exploring the roles of Pamina and Leonora, it is important to acknowledge all of these issues, and to sing with good vocal technique and commitment to the text. Tune in to the tessitura of the music, and if it feels 'right', then you have found your voice and your opera role.

vii. Bibliography

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