THE *BEL CANTO* REVIVAL IN PEDAGOGY AND PERFORMANCE: PRESENTING MADNESS AND THE GREAT LUCIAS

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine the Mad Scene from Donizetti's *bel canto* opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* by utilising perspectives from opera studies, pedagogy, and performance studies. *Bel canto* means "beautiful singing," but there is much more to this term than meets the eye. Beginning with the character of Lucia, I offer insights into how she is viewed in the original source material in contrast to both composer and librettist's intentions when adapting this story. Next, nineteenth-century *bel canto* pedagogy is summarised and contrasted with revival-era pedagogy, while implementing elements from the teaching of Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland. Lastly, Callas and Sutherland's performances of the Mad Scene by are analysed using auditory, timbral, and visual elements to show their impact on perceived madness.

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Lastly, I would like to thank the marvellous sopranos whom I honour in this thesis. The late Maria Callas, *La Divina,* and Dame Joan Sutherland, *La Stupenda* deserve to be remembered as the great Lucias and cherished by all who happen to come across their powerful voices. Their voices have inspired and influenced generations of singers and will surely continue to do so for many years to come.

Chapter One: Introduction: *Bel Canto* and Lucia Situated in Opera and Performance Studies

> It is not a discipline that ensures, as the term implies, 'beautiful singing' only in Italian opera… *bel canto* is not only a discipline of vocal training. *Bel canto* allows singers to use their technique in order to transport the listener to a psychological state in which the understanding of the drama is communicated more or less subliminally.[1]

From the beginning of my studies in classical voice, my teachers have always thrown around the term *bel canto*. Statements such as, "*bel canto* is the only way to sing classically" and "the *bel canto* tradition has been passed through generations of teachers, and now on to you," were not uncommon to hear in a voice lesson. This always had me thinking about what exactly *bel canto* is and why it is vital to classical singing. I knew the words literally translated to "beautiful singing," but that couldn't possibly be all that *bel canto* had to offer. One composition from the so-called "*bel canto* era" (eighteenth to early nineteenth century) stood out to me: the Mad Scene within Gaetano Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*. It is curious that one of the most famous *bel canto* scenes is the Mad Scene, as it, within the diegesis of the scene, does not encapsulate purely beautiful singing. Rather, this scene of distress and desperation is the moment in which Lucia is undone; her pain is exhibited as a sight to behold, as anything but beautiful. It is my intention to investigate this scene and its implications for Lucia at the intersections of opera studies, performance studies, and pedagogy.

To inform the discussion that follows, I will draw on Roland Barthes' work *The Rustle of Language*, in which he differentiates Work and Text.[2] Here, Barthes begins by defining the Work as a physical and unchanging entity, whereas the Text is made up of the discourse and language surrounding the Work. The Work occupies space and is read with the author's intention in mind; in the case of this thesis, the Work is Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The Text, however, is read without the author's inscription and is

[1] Paul Du Plessis, "Bel Canto: The Phantom of the Opera," *Musicology Australia* 39, no. 2 (2017): 130.
[2] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *The Rustle of Language*, translated by Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 56-68.

constantly evolving, as is the performance practice of this opera. In a similar vein, Carolyn Abbate[3] has used Jankelevitch's definitions of drastic and gnostic as a means to uncover in which category music is best placed. Abbate observes that performance is a fleeting artform, and therefore is more easily disregarded than tangible evidence by musicologists.

Further acknowledging the separation of opera studies from performance studies, Mary Ann Smart[4] proposes some differentiating points of view. Performance studies is centred around the making of an individual performance, the unique and meaningful potential contained within one solitary experience. In this area, one expresses an analysis within the context which includes audience, place, and time, taking into account that performances are in and of themselves political, including bodies and voices. Opera is a genre whose innate elitism and non-evolving canon has slowed its incorporation into the discipline of performance studies.[5]

Despite this valid observation from Smart on behalf of performance studies, I believe that the connection between opera and performance is undeniable and must be considered. As David Levin[6] examines in his book *Unsettling Opera*, the way in which an opera is interpreted can be drastically shifted based on staging and choices made by the creative team. To this end, I would emphasise the constant change that is made possible within a single opera when considering Levin's perspective. Performance studies has a lot to contribute to opera and vice versa. This symbiotic relationship has begun to develop but still has a huge area to that has yet to be uncovered.

Certain musicologists have ventured into this realm of possibilities, one of which is Melina Esse[7] in her recent book *Singing Sappho*. As she explores the crucial role of the

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[3] Carolyn Abbate, "Music- Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 505-536.
[4] Mary Ann Smart, "Defrosting Instructions: A Response," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (2004): 311-18.
[5] Ibid.
[6] David J. Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).
[7] Melina Esse, *Singing Sappho: Improvisation and Authority in Nineteenth Century Italian Opera* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2020).

performer in the nineteenth century, she also addresses the feminine improvisatory art as a vital point of authorship in Italian opera. Prior to Esse, Hilary Poriss[8] offered a similar perspective to validate the role and ultimate authority of the performer in an operatic setting. Karen Henson[9] highlights the significance of visual aspects used in operatic performance and the ways in which they can demean a singer and render them inanimate or supernatural. Similarly, Sean Parr[10] outlines the use of technology and the visual impact it had on the viewers of the nineteenth-century French mad scene. These scholars unpack and interpret the historical role of the performer and the performance of madness.

Opera scholars such as Mary Ann Smart[11] and Susan McClary[12] offer a feminist perspective on performative madness within the Mad Scene in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Although it has been thought about similarly by musicologists like Smart and McClary, there seems to be one aspect in which they disagree. There seems to be a disconnect in the mutual understanding of what madness means for the character of Lucia herself. McClary uses textual and musical elements to argue for the liberation of Lucia via the Mad Scene. Smart, on the other hand, uses a similar approach but concludes that the scene imposes more restrictions to the character. By using the same score and libretto, these prolific scholars contradict each other, and this is precisely why a performance studies approach could be beneficial, to offer another angle from which to view and hear Lucia.

The character of Lucia owns her voice in the opera, but she cannot be separated from the body's voice. In Martha Feldman's[13] introduction to voice studies, she notes that

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[8] Hilary Poriss, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[9] Karen Henson, *Opera Acts: Singers and Performance in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge Studies in Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[10] Sean M. Parr, "Coloratura and Technology in the Nineteenth Century Mad Scene," in *Technology and the Diva*, edited by Karen Henson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 37-48.
[11] Mary Ann Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 4, no. 2 (1992): 119-41.
[12] Susan McClary, "Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen," in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 80-111.
[13] Martha Feldman, "Why Voice Now?" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 653-85.

one's voice naturally "emerges from the body, inhabits it, invades it, overshoots it."[14] Beyond the body from which the voice emerges from are the ones who hear and interpret it, and in opera, the voice of the performer adds an extra layer of depth. Of course, there may also be the initial layer, in opera, of the composer and librettist's voice. As proven in Robert Polito's[15] chapter, voice is found in poetry and literary arts, though the words that the writer uses. Extending Polito's thesis further, one may also choose to find the composer's and the librettist's voice in the operatic art form. Since the possibilities of discussion when it comes to voice in opera seems like an endless scope, for the purposes of this discussion, "voice" will refer to the voice of Lucia as a character and to the performer's voice.

How the voice can be used to convey meaning and emotion, controlled by a performer, continues to be a subject of interest for musicologists. Laurie Stras[16] has alluded to this by covering the listener's perception of a voice that is damaged as a representation of traumatic life events. More than this, the voice can use timbre to colour pitches in a light or dark fashion, presenting meaning that cannot be inferred by a notated score alone. Orchestral music has received coverage of timbre as a musical element with meaning by scholars such as Emily Dolan,[17] but historic examinations of timbre and the singing voice have yet to gain this recognition in opera or performance studies.

Consequently, Chapter Two will begin the discussion in the discipline of opera studies by using Barthes' definition of Work, in this case Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. This chapter uses an approach informed by opera studies, assessing the character of Lucia in a musical, dramatic, and historical context. Through these

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[14] Ibid., 656.
[15] Robert Polito, "It's all by Someone Else," in *The Voice as Something More: Essays Towards Materiality*, edited by Martha Feldman and Judith T. Zeitlin, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 115-27.
[16] Laurie Stras, "The Organ of the Soul: Voice, Damage and Affect," in *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music, edited by Joseph Straus and Neil Lerner, (*New York: Routledge, 2006), 173-84.
[17] Emily Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
Emily Dolan and Alexander Rehding, *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

observations, I argue for the Work entrapping the heroine in the Mad Scene by restricting her and displaying her as an exhibit, primed for a vulnerable state. In addition to using the score and libretto like McClary and Smart, I will use the historical context of the glass harmonica and the improvisatory cadential tradition in the Mad Scene to further my argument.

In contrast to Chapter Two, Chapter Four will critically examine the Mad Scene from a performance studies viewpoint. Whereas the second chapter uses the Work, the fourth chapter uses the Text to inform the discussion of performative madness on the part of the performer. The performers I will be utilising for this chapter are Maria Callas and Dame Joan Sutherland, the sopranos who contributed to the *bel canto* revival in the mid-twentieth century. When focusing on live performance analysis, Abbate's drastic side of music comes through. As such, Chapter Four will analyse actions and experiences within performance to show the impact that choices made by the performer or creative team can have on the audience.

Now that the foundations of Chapters Two and Four have been established, the middle can be filled in. Chapter Three exists neither in the field of opera studies nor in performance studies; it is situated in the discipline of pedagogy which has yet to come close to opera or performance studies. In the pages to follow, I facilitate this connection. Pedagogy is the foundation of performance, simply because no one becomes a great performer on their own. Not all performers are pedagogues, but they will certainly have worked and studied with quite a few. By relating the significant, nineteenth-century *bel canto* pedagogical documents to modern takes on *bel canto* singing, I will draw connections between the two and how they are implemented into performance. Of course, performance studies would not exist without the performer themselves, and that is precisely the reason I chose to focus on the pioneers of the *bel canto* revival—Callas and Sutherland. These star sopranos dusted off once buried Italian operas and made their names as performers forever associated with the role of Lucia. By uncovering their pedagogical understanding of the *bel canto* technique as well as their insights into the role of Lucia and how they performed it, I will bring my thesis full circle. The sources I

have utilised for Chapter Three range from nineteenth-century pedagogical writing to revival-era pedagogical works as well as Callas' master classes at Juilliard, dictated by John Ardoin.[18] Placing these documents and more side by side will be instrumental for understanding the *bel canto* approach to singing and performance.

My main research question addresses the fashion in which modern singers perform the historical canonical works in terms of technique and performance practice. In Chapter Two, I discuss the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* in order to contextualise Lucia's existence within the Mad Scene. Chapter Three explores the nineteenth-century pedagogical documents and compares them directly to modern instructions with the intention to bring their similarities to light within *bel canto* tradition. This chapter will also use the pedagogical perspectives of Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland to take the performer's perspective into account. Chapter Four uses the modern performances of Callas and Sutherland to put all the pieces together in terms of performance practice and pedagogy. Analysing visual and auditory elements that insinuate madness in these performances bring into question the decisions made by the performer and creative team, alike.

[18] John Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard: The Master Classes*, (1987; repr., Maryland: Amadeus Publishing, 2003).

Chapter Two: Recovering the Historical Lucia

> Lucia and Edgardo seemed to have rivalled such star-crossed lovers as Romeo and Juliet...The virtues of *Lucia* lie in its stylistic blend: a plausible plot that engages an audience's sympathies, combined with music that can be accepted as the inevitable expression of that particular sequence of dramatic causes and results...The tragic irony comes not from showing the murder onstage, but from presenting Lucia in her blood-stained bridal gown, convinced that she is about to marry Edgardo. Her coloratura flights are no abstract embellishments but genuine expressions of her fantasies.[1]

In 1835, Gaetano Donizetti's (1797-1848) opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* was premiered at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples. This opera was a quick success, receiving six different productions within its first fifteen months.[2] It was described as marvel to behold, something that had not been seen before.[3] Within four years of the premiere, the opera had a French translation and was performed regularly in Paris. Popularity continued to rise; in 1867, "goddess" Adelina Patti came to Paris to sing the title role, and the "theatre [was] crammed nightly, the receipts averaging 15,000 francs."[4] To this day, *Lucia di Lammermoor* is one of Donizetti's most frequently performed operas, along with *La fille du régiment*, *L'elisir d'amore*, and *Don Pasquale*. *Lucia*, set in the Scottish Highlands, follows the heroine Lucia, as she struggles with an arranged marriage, as the daughter of a Lord and Lady. She falls in love with Edgardo but is still forced into marrying Arturo by her brother. In Act III, after she reluctantly signs the marriage certificate, Lucia descends into madness and sings the most famous scene in the opera, appropriately titled the Mad Scene. The scene progresses from Lucia hallucinating a ghostly voice in "Il dolce suono" (A sweet sound) into a joyful sounding, yet morbid cabaletta, "Spargi d'amaro pianto" (Sprinkle with bitter tears).

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[1] William Ashbrook, "Popular Success, the Critics and Fame: The Early Careers of 'Lucia di Lammermoor' and 'Belisario'," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 1 (1990), 76.
[2] Ibid., 68.
[3] "Gazzetta teatrale," *Il Pirata giornale* (August 6, 1841): 44.
"Fin qui è arrivato questo stupendo lavoro di Donizetti: non vi diciamo che piacque, perchè la è cosa da antivedersi."
[4] "Paris," *Watson's Art Journal* 7, no. 26 (1867): 400.

In this chapter, the character of Lucia and her madness will be contextualised within the source material and in her representation through libretto and music. Both in the nineteenth century and presently, the Mad Scene was/is viewed as the climax of the opera, requiring the most dramatic interpretation of madness. The premier was received extremely well, regarded as a "(translated from Italian) true triumph for Donizetti," containing "new ideas and so much dramatic expression."[5] Singers Duprez and Cosselli (Edgardo and Enrico, respectively) were both applauded for their acting and singing, showing the public that both are possible. Yet not all the singers were lauded for their genius; Tacchinardi (Lucia) was acknowledged for singing with a "singular skill,"[6] demonstrating her vocal prowess, but she ultimately lacked in her acting. She was advised to approach her dramatic interpretation in a "more casual, more animated, [and] more active" fashion.[7] As similarly recounted by a reviewer in 1857, the soprano who sang the part of Lucia that evening was "(translated from Italian) superior in acting to all the singers who had preceded her," yet "only in the famous Mad Scene of the second act did she lack strength and passion."[8] Demanding more from the performer, the singers were missing the potential drama that the scene could yield and as a result, warranted this criticism. Both sopranos mentioned were criticised for not fully realising the character of Lucia, and intriguingly, they are called to be stronger and freer in their interpretation.

Since opera so often calls for an intense acting style, it is not surprising that the reviewers expected an over-the-top performance of Lucia's madness. It is possible, however, that the singers themselves or the directors chose to go with a more graceful approach to acting madness. The nineteenth century was a time of special interest in and

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[5] Francesco Regli, "Teatri: Napoli, Teatro San Carlo. *Lucia di Lammermoor*, nuova Opera di Donizetti," *Il Pirata giornale* (October 9, 1835): 116.
"la *Lucia* fu un vero trionfo per Donizetti. Si rinvengono in essa tanta novità di pensieri e tanta espressione drammatica."
[6] Ibid., 116.
"Tacchinardi ha cantato con singolare perizia"
[7] Ibid., 116.
"solo le si raccomanda (sovente l'abbiamo detto e scritto!) un'azione più disinvolta, più animata, più mossa."
[8] "Cronaca straniera," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* (May 24, 1857): 168.
"superiore nell'azione a tutte le cantanti che l'avevano preceduta. Giugilini ha cantato bene: solamente nella famosa maledizione dell'atto secondo ha mancato di forza e di passione."

exploitation of mentally unstable people, and especially the picture of the poised madwoman to be seen but not heard. By uncovering the reactions to Lucia's underacted insanity, it can be inferred that in these early performances, the singers were interpreting Donizetti's Work with a layer of Text that gives the heroine a certain level of dignity. Contemporarily, *Lucia* is often seen as an empowering and female-centred opera, but as will be explored further, quite the opposite is true. Roland Barthes[9] defines the Work as an immovable entity, and in this case, *Lucia di Lammermoor* as created by Donizetti is the stagnant Work that, though investigation, shall be proven to be patriarchal and constricting.

To begin this thorough survey, one must start with the genesis of Lucia and her tragic tale. Considering the source material of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* brings us back to *The Bride of Lammermoor*, written by Sir Walter Scott in 1819. Being the librettist, Salvadore Cammarano's use of plot and characters not only changes the story but also the power dynamics from the original novel. Cammarano was the rewriter of the story, but it is also vital to consider how Donizetti portrays the character of Lucia through music and the way she is viewed in contrast to the source material.

Firstly, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Lucy does not kill her bridegroom, but rather, she injures him. She then hides in the chimney and is shocked when she is discovered, "seated,...[with] her head-gear dishevelled, her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood, [and] her eyes glazed."[10] She is even momentarily compared to a lying down "hare upon its form."[11] This outright allusion to Lucy being more animal than human conveys to the reader that, perhaps, she acted out of instinct or even in a fight or flight response. She utters her last words in the novel: "so, you have ta'en up your bonny bridegroom?"[12] Asking those who found her if they will take him away seems like a response of someone who feels remorse for their actions and realises the severity of such

[9] Barthes, "From Work to Text," 56-68.
[10] Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, (Project Gutenberg, 1996), Chapter 34, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/471/471-h/471-h.htm#chap34.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

actions. Lucy's limited speech throughout the novel and in this scene, shows the reader that her English is that of a lower-class woman, although she is the daughter of a Lord and Lady; this is yet another demonstration of her alienation from those around her. Overall, this depiction of a young lady forced into marriage is relatively rooted in reality.

Because Lucia is given a much bigger part than Lucy in the original novel, it has been speculated by Susan McClary (2002) that Lucia gains more power and therefore is freed by having a voice.[13] Cammarano and Donizetti give Lucia a chance to speak for herself, something Lucy did not have the privilege of experiencing. Such an interpretation leads one to believe that the opera creators had respect for the character of Lucia, and therefore fully fleshed her out. I, on the other hand, am not altogether convinced that this is the case. Given that madwomen in the nineteenth century did not have a voice and they were silent and existed for the (male) audience's viewing pleasure, leads me to believe that this is more of a case of exploitation than anything else. Much like paintings of madwomen, they are to be seen and not heard.[14] They are seen as entertainment and do not have an opinion of their own; they are not allowed to give accounts of their own experiences, and they freeze as mere objects.

Lucia, in contrast to Lucy, is given a voice, although this voice does not free her from the control of powerful men. She is more subject to the control of the men in the operatic plot and therefore more susceptible to the male gaze. Such a gaze casts Lucia in a light that glorifies her madness, depicting a stylised version of what a realistic reaction to this situation might be. Lucia, after killing her bridegroom, is detached from reality and seems to have "broken;" she hallucinates and is made a spectacle of, thanks to Cammarano and Donizetti. The opera being written by men and including influential male characters draws power away from Lucia. Although this may be true, the presence of music could possibly endow Lucia not just with voice, but also with emotional merit. Communicating musically may allow Lucia to rise above the men that surround and

[13] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 80-111.
[14] Jane E. Kromm, "The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation," *Feminist Studies* 20, no. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 507-535

control her. Music, and especially operatic expression, is different from visual or literary arts because she is given words *and* music to express herself. To further explore these factors, I will compile evidence to demonstrate that despite the potential for words and music to be freeing, Lucia's character remains trapped.

Lucia's words lead me to question what Cammarano's intention was with presenting her as a spectacle to entertain an audience. In fact, this spectacle has become the pinnacle of the opera itself, to the point where audience members will stand up and leave after experiencing the Mad Scene or directors will cut the rest of the opera that follows the scene.[15] Coming across Monzingo and Shanahan's[16] study on the use of personal pronouns in nineteenth-century literature led me to use a similar approach when studying the libretto of the Mad Scene. Monzingo and Shanahan concluded that with the increase of personal pronouns used to express grief in nineteenth-century texts, the expression of self also became clearer and more intimate. In comparison to Lucy in Scott's novel in which she seldom utters a word, Lucia has many more opportunities to use words to express herself. Lucy does not have the luxury of using personal pronouns in her speech, and therefore her grief is not fully accepted or realised by the reader. Lucia in the Mad Scene, on the other hand, uses personal pronouns in the original Italian libretto a total of eighteen times, not counting the repetition of text. Using the logic of Monzingo and Shanahan (2021), anyone could understand that Lucia is allowed more space and agency to relay her grief to the audience than her counterpart, Lucy. Given this conclusion, it is still possible that this scene could be interpreted as Cammarano's intention to bestow Lucia with the power to express herself. This is where the idea of exploitation comes into focus.

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[15] Hilary Poriss, "A Madwoman's Choice: Aria Substitution in 'Lucia Di Lammermoor'," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 13, no. 1 (2001): 2.
Raymond Sokolov, "Opera: While the Diva Writhes, Audience Puts on Mad Scene," *Wall Street Journal*, November 24, 1992, Eastern edition.
Peter Clark, "From the Archives: *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Met," *The Metropolitan Opera*, https://www.metopera.org/discover/archives/notes-from-the-archives/from-the-archives-lucia-di-lammermoor-at-the-met/.

[16] Elizabeth Monzingo and Daniel Shanahan,"The Expression of Self and Grief in the Nineteenth Century: An Analysis through Distant Readings," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 18, no. 1 (2021): 83-107.

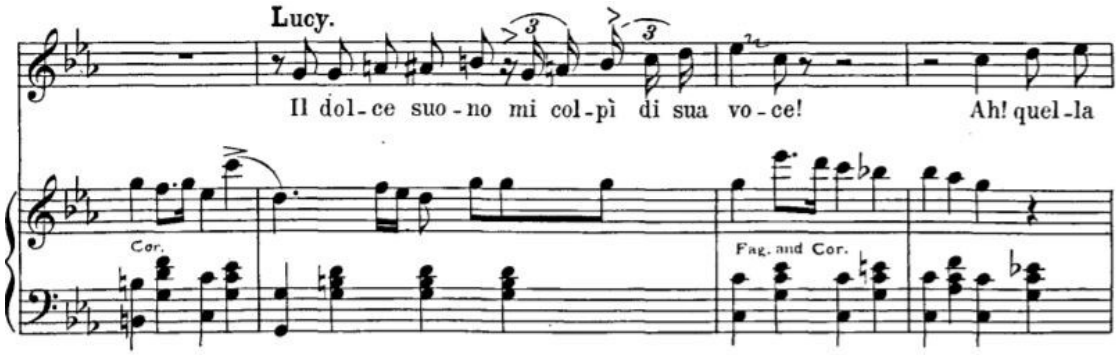
The character of Lucia is blown out of proportion by both Cammarano and Donizetti. The fascination with madness in the nineteenth century ultimately leads to the destruction of Lucia's self. This madness, induced by librettist and composer alike, can be interpreted as Lucia escaping and finally being released from her bonds, or as McClary puts it, in the Mad Scene "Lucia has broken free into her world of unfettered imagination."[17] As lovely and fantastical as this may sound, her madness is simply there for show. Are we, the audience, expected to sit and take in the surprisingly tragic events of this opera and not ask why it had to be forced on this young woman? This predetermined insanity is isolating and showcases Lucia's suffering as an exhibition. Such prescribed madness is restricting instead of freeing for the character of Lucia; she is doomed from the start of the opera. Her madness was predetermined by Cammarano and Donizetti, and by extension, Scott. Although the obvious character change from Lucy to Lucia, is part of her imminent destruction, the music in the scene also serves to dehumanise her and to constantly return her to the structure in which she is trapped.

Lucia's characterisation in her madness culminates as and because of the musical elements that are used by Donizetti in the entire opera but especially in the Mad Scene. The orchestral accompaniment in the Mad Scene, while unnoticeable and discreet at times, moves at its own pace with its own melody and harmonies. Lucia, on the other hand, appears to be singing her words in her own world, out of sync with the floaty orchestral sound. (Example 2.1)[18] Mary Ann Smart (1992) suggests that a rejection of musical expectations can be interpreted as Lucia's inability to understand the situation around her or as a deliberate resistance of the conventional; she resists the musical expectations that are put on her, resulting in what can be considered liberation.[19] Be this as it may, Lucia has her momentary sense of freedom, but just as we feel that Lucia may be freed, the cabaletta "Spargi d'amaro pianto" begins, strapping her down into an extremely structured form. (Example 2.2)[20] In addition to the orchestra and formal structure insinuating Lucia's mental state, the chromaticism in her vocal line also

[17] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 98.
[18] Gaetano Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, (New York: G. Schirmer, 1926), 190.
[19] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 131.
[20] Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 206.

displays her madness. Tonality was expected in opera of this time, but with her chromatic passages, Lucia defies what is expected of her. Although considered to be innovative and sought after in instrumental music of the time, chromaticism in vocal music sometimes serves as a representation of something that is not quite right—in this case, insanity.

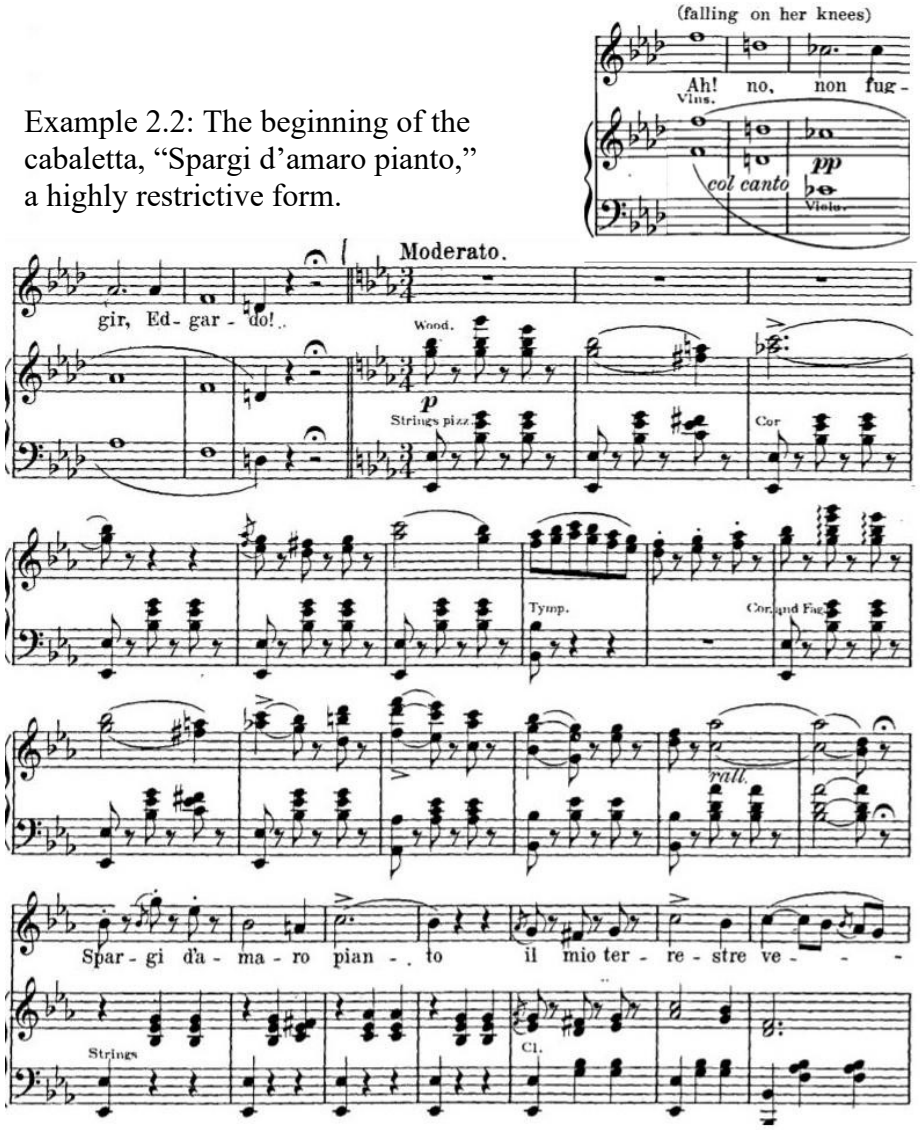
Example 2.1: Lucia sings her line out of sync with the orchestra, which has its own melody and pace.



Much like chromaticism, ornamentation is so often a symptom of genius in instrumental music. McClary outlines that, when placed (in excess) on a woman, however, it marks her as mad.[21] Like many Italian operas of this time, *Lucia di Lammermoor* contains so much ornamentation and melismatic writing that it can be hard to think of it as a representation of madness. Lucia sings coloratura ornamentation throughout the opera and even the male characters, Edgardo and Enrico, have their moments. The elements of coloratura that contribute to the perception of madness are the length, the frequency and the elaborateness of the passages that contrast with the more contained moments earlier on. The listener can accept a certain amount of coloratura, but once it reaches that threshold of the uncanny, we associate it with madness. As Smart suggests, "the construction of the cadenza and its continuing popularity suggest that it is indeed the *degree* of coloratura that matters [italics added]."[22] The perception of madness is all a question of the degree of intensity that the audience expects. According to Smart, there is also a correlation "between madness and coloratura: trills, melismas and high notes suggest hysteria, an unbearable pitch of emotion."[23] Given the extreme coloratura

[21] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 82.
[22] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 130.
[23] Ibid., 128.

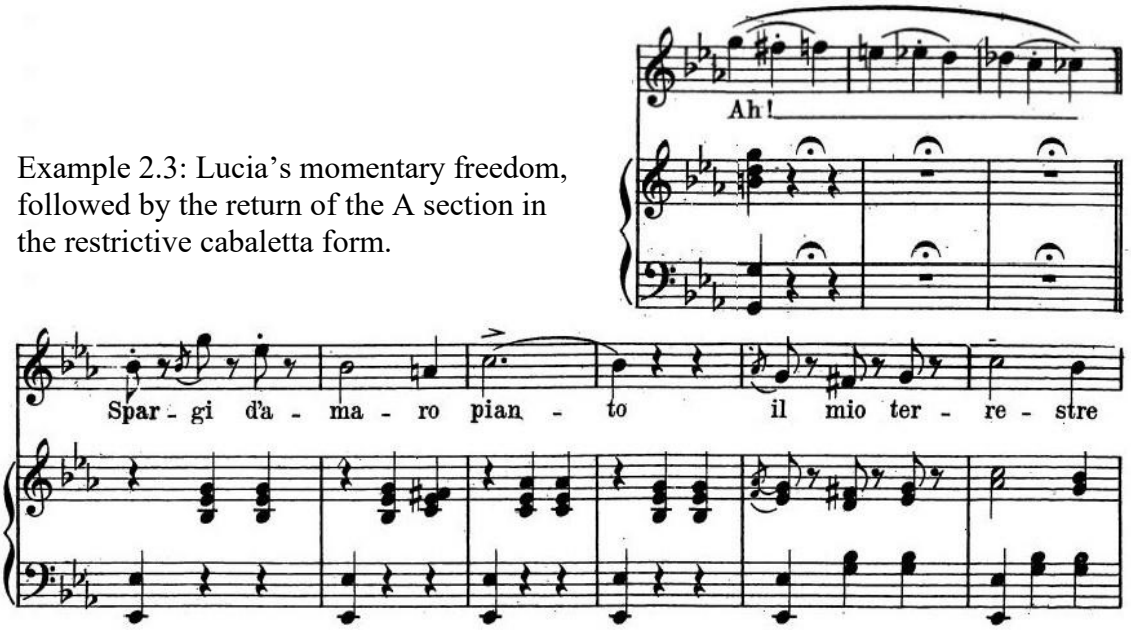
in this scene and the correlation between ornamentation and a height of emotion suggested by Smart, the heroine is no doubt subject to the control of the composer. In addition to these conclusions, the absence of text in such cases exaggerates the departure from rationality. The words that could have previously been seen as an opportunity for independent expression lose their meaning, as the text is so drawn out that any hint of authenticity or meaning is obscured. Even though coloratura makes us understand that the character is going through an irrational stage, the ornamentation is still subject to the restrictions of the period in which it was composed and of the period in which it is being performed. There is no freedom to be found in the elaborate writing, and even within the irrational singing, there is not much space for personal expression.



Example 2.2: The beginning of the cabaletta, “Spargi d’amaro pianto,” a highly restrictive form.

The function of displaying madness through coloratura can be related to form, in the sense of nonconformity. Coloratura rarely disrupts the imposed formal structure of the music and textual setting, but here in the Mad Scene, the disruption is clear. Although many long passages delay the cadence, they never truly stop it from happening which tells us that Lucia is still confined to the structure she finds herself in. Once a passage of coloratura is sung and stretched out so that the word is no longer recognisable, the audience gets the sense of irrationality and therefore leads them to believe that the character has gone mad. When the traditional formal regularity of the music does not fit how Lucia is feeling, she bursts into the only place that she can: up into the stratosphere to perform her coloratura. Smart states that form happens to be "the musical dimension most commonly manipulated and distorted for expressive effect."[24] In the Mad Scene, Donizetti conveys the expressive effect through the distortion of form by allowing Lucia to rise in her coloratura, but ultimately, Lucia is returned to her confines and formal prison. For example, Example 2.3[25] shows Lucia lingering in her state before she is forced back into the return of the A section, just as she may have had hope of being freed.

Example 2.3: Lucia's momentary freedom, followed by the return of the A section in the restrictive cabaletta form.



[24] Ibid., 131.
[25] Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 210.

The entire Mad Scene contains barely any formal conformity except for the final cabaletta. Otherwise, it is a blend of forms that are not predictable, and it becomes, as McClary puts it, "a collaged fantasia."[26] Just when it seems that Lucia has completely lost her head and all is lost, the scene nears its end with "Spargi d'amaro pianto." Lucia returns to a structured section with dance music which has a clearer form; maybe she has come to her senses? Unfortunately not. The contrast of the morbid text, "Sprinkle with bitter tears my earthly grave," with the upbeat dance music, signals that she's been transported to another realm of consciousness and that something is wrong; she has moved beyond normal consciousness to land of unreason.[27] Although it appears that she has returned to reason or rational thinking with this shift in diatonic setting and form, the audience can remember the horrific murder scene that was referred to a moment ago. They may also notice that she is still in a gown covered with blood. The listener may have had hope for Lucia when this section began, but a few seconds later they realise that they may have been wrong. Donizetti does not allow Lucia to stay in her land of liberty, nor does he bring her back to a sane existence—a cruel limbo indeed.

Even though form and coloratura affect our interpretation of madness, this straying from convention only lasts so long before the character is pulled back to the reasonable world. This phenomenon is made possible through the compositional styles in the music, but also through the environment that the character is a part of. The way that the composer integrated a madwoman was done carefully and consciously. To distance the audience from Lucia, it is key that the composer keeps the voice of reason omnipresent. The presence of a chorus is one of these elements that assures the audience that what Lucia is experiencing is indeed madness. The chorus breaks through Lucia's raving with their refrain, "Più raffrenare il pianto possibile non è!" (it is no longer possible to refrain from weeping). The chorus expresses grief in their libretto, which they deem appropriate for what they see as a devastating series of events. These words that are sung by the chorus occur directly prior to Example 2.3, in which Lucia reaches for one more moment of liberation. The return to formal regularity also serves as a reminder that

[26] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 92.
[27] Ibid., 93.

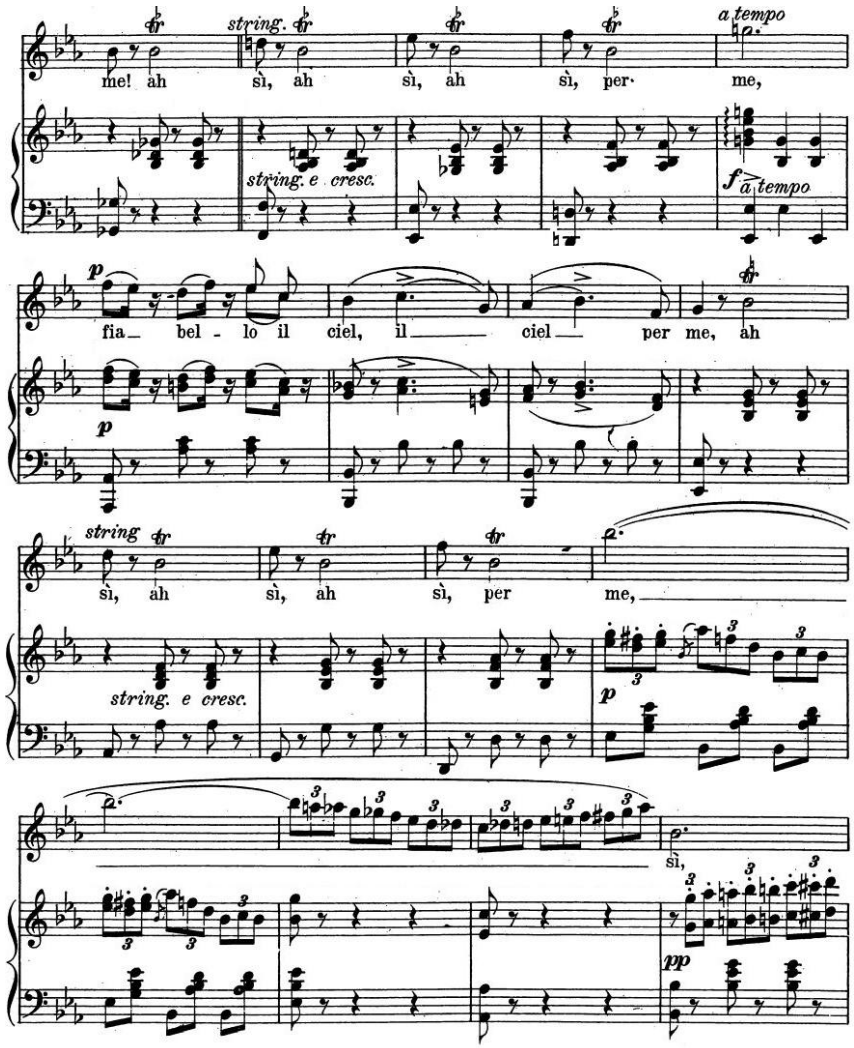
Lucia is mad, and her rambling is in fact to be interpreted as such. All of this gives the audience a sense of security in their listening and reassures them that they will not be following in the same footsteps as the heroine.

At the very end of the Mad Scene, Lucia's coloratura returns in full force and seems to defy form once again. The text repetitions (Example 2.4)[28] are so frequent that they seem to distort the actual meaning. She repeats "Ah sì" numerous times, begging for Edgardo to meet her in heaven. As she longs for her former lover, over the next few pages, the chorus joins her once again to repeat the same words as before, expressing their grief.

Finally, when the hallucinated partner enters her mind, mirroring her in parallel thirds or sixths, we feel a ghostly presence with Lucia. Smart suggests that this voice in her head may be the ghost of Edgardo, her former lover, coming back to sing with her.[29] As a companion, Lucia is joined by a flute in most productions despite it not being in the original score by Donizetti. The glass harmonica was Lucia's initial companion in the nineteenth century. Although the flute is "widely associated with love magic,"[30] and seems to fit the transcendent scene based on this definition, the glass harmonica has a rich history of associations.

[28] Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 210-11.
[29] Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," 129.
[30] Eugene J. Enrico, "Social Aspects of Wind Instruments," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1999), https://www.britannica.com/art/wind-instrument/Social-aspects-of-wind-instruments.

Example 2.4: Lucia's text repetitions insinuating her mental state, as she begs to be reunited with Edgardo.



Although rarely used in the opera, the glass harmonica's associations with the otherworldly and the feminine offer new perspectives on Lucia's companion. The detachment from reality that is prescribed to Lucia is only emphasised by this instrument's presence. Karl Leopold Röllig, avid performer and composer for the glass harmonica, offers his perspective in the treatise *Über die Harmonika, ein Fragment*.[31] Although highly stylised, this perspective draws out the essence of the glass harmonica,

[31] Karl Leopold Röllig, *Über die Harmonika, ein Fragment*, Berlin, 1787.

and expanded upon by Heather Hadlock (2000), these insights are magnified. As a supernatural instrument, the "[h]armonica touches human consciousness on a subrational...level, the rational mind has no defense against it."[32] Since the rational mind is powerless against the tones of the instrument, it turns the listener into a fragile being, subject to its power. If such an association was present at the end of the eighteenth century, surely Donizetti was not blind to it, when *Lucia di Lammermoor* was premiered only forty-eight years later. With this in mind, Lucia's character seems even more subject to the composer's will. It was also assumed that if a young lady, such as Lucia, were "sickly, fatigued, distressed, or suffering nervous disturbance, the [h]armonica would exacerbate those conditions."[33] Surely any of the above conditions could apply to Lucia as the audience sees her in the Mad Scene. If the glass harmonica could indeed aggravate these conditions, why would Donizetti intentionally include it, if not to further torture Lucia in her state? This intentional placement of instrument with voice only intensifies the brutal exhibitionism of the scene.

Despite this seemingly perfect placement of the glass harmonica with Lucia, there is yet another possible intention that arises. The instrument started to gain a spurious reputation; scepticism arose when the inauthentic and manufactured effect that the glass harmonica had on women was brought into question. It was "once said to bear transcendent truth, [but] became by 1800 a sign of fakery, a tension between musical truth and illusion."[34] A dishonest representation of the supernatural became an association that many began to recognise in the instrument. Whether or not Donizetti intended for a correlation between Lucia and a dishonest expression of otherworldly emotion is peripheral. What is relevant, however, is the potential for Lucia's grief to be dismissed. Hadlock (2000) claims Donizetti's use of the instrument to be a "genuine evocation of the uncanny."[35] I am not accusing the composer of a sarcastic use of the

[32] Heather Hadlock, "Sonorous Bodies: Women and the Glass Harmonica," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53, no. 3 (2000): 524.
[33] Ibid., 525.
[34] Ibid., 527.
[35] Ibid., 534.

glass harmonica, but rather suggesting the potential for Lucia to simply be overlooked as a victim due to the nature of the orchestration.

Lucia's human existence, as a fictional character, can easily discredit her unheeded distress call. This is not the only way in which Lucia is controlled. Perhaps the only indication of Lucia's freedom that remains is her cadenza. As a cadenza is thought to be an improvisatory choice on the part of the performer, it is logical to assume that through it, Lucia might find her freedom. Unfortunately, our heroine is not so lucky. Although some, including renowned conductor Charles Mackerras,[36] advocate for the original score to be performed, there is truly no original cadenza. The first notated cadenza was found to be from 1889,[37] more than fifty years after the 1835 premier and more than forty years after Donizetti's death in 1848. Before this, the cadenza may have been truly improvised, without notation. The expectation that the singer would improvise her way through this scene was continued until it was first notated by Mathilde Marchesi and sung by her student, Nellie Melba.[38] The cadenza was subsequently notated in different ways by various singers and their teachers, resulting in a performance of a prepared cadenza by the singers who came after Melba. Although cadenzas are intended to be improvised, it can be presumed that notating it was a practical move and a method to control the performer. As Naomi Matsumoto (2011) suggests, "the spontaneity we hear...may be a learned effect rather than a creative cause."[39] Matsumoto also goes on to claim that the "clichéd implications of an equation between psychological abandon and improvisational liberty hardly do justice to the complex [cadential] traditions."[40] Such an association between mental undoing and freedom of expression had their roots long before Lucia, as Melina Esse (2020) has recently observed.[41] In actuality, the obsession of madwomen creating beautiful music or poetry dates back to the ancient poet Sappho.

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[36] Charles Mackerras, "Will the Real Lucia Please Stand Up?" *Opera News*, 10 (1999): 54-5.
[37] Romana Margherita Pugliese, "The Origins of *Lucia Di Lammermoor*'s Cadenza," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 1 (2004): 23-42.
[38] Ibid., 23.
[39] Naomi Matsumoto, "Manacled Freedom: 19th-Century Vocal Improvisation and the Flute Accompanied Cadenza in Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor," in *Beyond Notes: Improvisation in Western Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, edited by Rudolf Rasch, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 296.
[40] Ibid., 296.
[41] Esse, *Singing Sappho*, 100-27.

Despite Sappho being an accomplished poet and improviser, history favours remembering her for her "tragic fate more than her poetic abilities,"[42] especially in the literary tradition.

This literary tradition is proven through the many plays and operas based on Sappho's life. These, of course, being centred around her male relationships more than her creative prowess; one such opera is Pacini's *Saffo* (1840). Similarly to the representation of Lucia's mental state, in the final scene of *Saffo* that ends in her death, her improvisation "gets its initial emotional force not from lyricism or elaborate ornament, but from the contrast between joyful, celebratory music and the tragic situation."[43] Although Lucia's madness is accentuated further by her ornamentation, the character of Saffo also sings jubilant melodies in the most desperate of circumstances. This brilliant and historic poet's talents are reduced to "on stage as anti-rational excess"[44] and a glorified exploitation. Our two operatic heroines become subject to a stylised version of their true selves. Though it may seem that the characters may find solace in their improvisatory cadenzas, Lucia becomes restricted in 1889 through notation. The restriction that pressures Lucia into conformity is not only a result of notation but also of her musical companion.

Originally, the glass harmonica or flute simply played along, but not in sync, with Lucia during her cadenza. However, in 1868 the first performance to use an obbligato instrument during the cadenza was mounted in London.[45] This performance featured a notated cadenza with the flute as, not only a companion, but a duet partner. It can be inferred that since the two were singing/playing in sync, they would have prepared and rehearsed together—leaving no room for vocal freedom. The instrument and voice moving together in thirds or sixths as well as echoing one another was the standard for this type of interaction. This tradition did not catch on immediately, but as of 1900, recordings began to appear with the two true duet partners making music

[42] Ibid., 103.
[43] Ibid., 110.
[44] Ibid., 115.
[45] "Mdlle Nilsson as Lucia," *The Pall Mall Gazette*, June 6, 1868.

synchronously.[46] This newer way of presenting a cadenza became the norm by the time of the *bel canto* revival, in the time of Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland. A partnership between the instrumentalist and the singer must have been well rehearsed, and although that restricted the soprano performing, it allowed the cadenza to take on a more elaborate form and include call-back music from earlier in the opera.

As becomes clear when dissecting this scene and cadenza, there is no true freedom to be found. Cammarano altered and elaborated on the character of Lucy, allowing Donizetti to continue on this path and further dehumanise Lucia. Not only these two men contribute to her undoing; the vocal traditions of the time, including the view on cadenzas and improvisation, contribute to her imprisonment.

[46] Matsumoto, "Manacled Freedom," 304.

Chapter Three: Pedagogy, History Repeats Itself

> Beginning first with slow scales and arpeggios, then gradually building up speed and flexibility. These are the things which cannot be learned once you are on stage; it is too late then. These so-called 'tricks' are not tricks at all but exercises...It is a lifetime's work. Not only does it never stop, but the more you learn, the more you realize how little you know. There are always new problems, new difficulties; more passion and love are needed for what you are doing.[1]
>
> -Maria Callas

Given the confining structure of Donizetti's *bel canto* Work highlighted in the previous chapter, it is now crucial to frame *Lucia di Lammermoor* within the context of *bel canto* in the discipline of pedagogy. The technique that was established to best approach, sing, and perform Italian opera of this period is referred to as *bel canto* by numerous teachers and pedagogues, past and present. By tracing the development of the *bel canto* technique and uncovering its roots, I will determine the effect and outcome of preparing the role of Lucia, as well as the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*, based on the salient principles brought forth in the next section. The evolution of the *bel canto* technique was triggered by its revival in the 1950s, and for this reason, it is key that the revival-era pedagogues and performers are both represented here, as they both had unique perspectives on the technique itself.

As such, this chapter will present an overview of four prominent pedagogues in the nineteenth century, two twentieth-century vocal teachers, and the two *prima donnas* who brought *Lucia* back into the spotlight through the *bel canto* revival of the 1950s. By comparing the material being taught by this selection of singers, I will determine how consistent the ideals of the *bel canto* revival were with the original movement, beginning in the late eighteenth century. Setting the stage are Giovanni Battista Mancini (1714-1800), Domenico Corri (1746-1825), Manuel García (1775-1832), and Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839-1910), the pedagogues that will be the focus of this first section. Although all four of the original pedagogues focused on *bel canto* technique, they all honed in on specific aspects of singing. By examining their individual works, I will

[1] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 5.

determine which concepts are present throughout and in turn, which are the most crucial. The concepts that I draw out will be compared with the revival-era pedagogy to establish the congruence of the principles.

Giovanni Battista Mancini was a castrato himself and was friends with Farinelli—perhaps the most famous castrato—but instead of performance, Mancini turned to pedagogy. In *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing* (1774) he writes about many types of ornaments such as the *appoggiatura*, the *messa di voce*, and trills. Throughout the sections about ornamentations, there is a common theme: beauty. *Appoggiaturas* are to be used in serious music only, and "without them [serious music] becomes insipid and imperfect."[2] The *messa di voce* is a swelling on sustained pitches that "lends great excellence to singing, as it renders it pleasing to the ear."[3] Finally, there is no "embellishment sweeter than that which is commonly called the trill,"[4] and without it "every cadenza remains imperfect and languishes."[5] For Mancini, the beauty of the voice is in the forefront when it comes to ornaments. Following the section on ornamentation, Mancini provides the reader with a deceivingly short chapter on cadenzas, and within this chapter, the complex issue is addressed with many examples and details. The cadenza in an aria should be "free and secure in modulation," and the singer should "know how to rule and measure the breath."[6] The breath and its regulation are essential to any type of singing, but especially here in the technique of *bel canto*, it should be common practice; this also alludes to the famous *bel canto* legato which can be achieved with the regulation of breath. Mancini emphasises that it is "a great advantage to be gifted with a creative mind" and traits of "unexpected genius...suddenly distinguish a man and carry him to the stars with acclaim."[7] The reference to the performer as a genius by Mancini accentuates the importance of the performer in eighteenth and nineteenth-century opera, as suggested

[2] Giovanni Battista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, trans. Edward Foreman, (Champaign, Illinois: Pro musica press, 1967), 43.
[3] Ibid., 44.
[4] Ibid., 48.
[5] Ibid., 52.
[6] Ibid., 54.
[7] Ibid., 54.

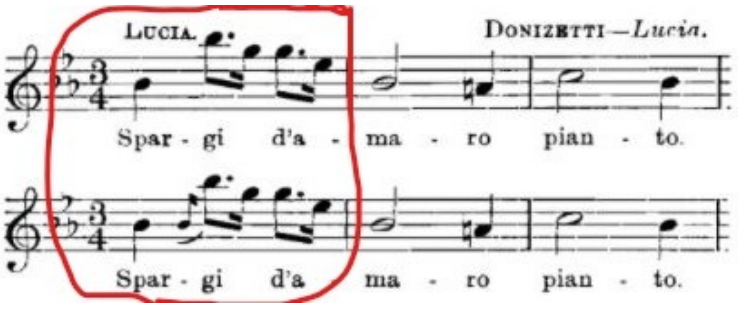
by Hilary Poriss.[8] Usually a term reserved for the "great composers" of the time, genius can indicate the collaborative and singer-oriented nature of opera. Thus far in the description of cadenzas, elements of creativity as well as technique are brought forward. Mancini mentions that a singer's ability to execute their skills and inventiveness will bring them a long way. He also writes that a singer should "choose a motive from the cantilena of the music of the aria, and words which are in the same style of tenderness, love, or whatever they should be."[9] The cadenza should have the same mood, style, and subject matter as the rest of the aria.

Domenico Corri, like Mancini, had a connection to the castrato Farinelli. Corri was a singer under the instruction of Nicola Porpora, who was also Farinelli's instructor, and Corri himself became a notable voice teacher in the nineteenth century. In his published singing manual, *The Singer's Preceptor* (1810), he successfully offers an alternative to voice instruction when a teacher is not present. *The Singer's Preceptor* is complete with musical examples as well as written instruction. In this example, before anything such as intonation or solfeggio, Corri brings the student's attention to the importance of the *messa di voce*, an element that Mancini also accentuated. Corri describes it as "the swelling and dying of the voice," and goes even further to call it "the soul of music."[10] He instructs the scholar to use the *messa di voce* "on every note of any duration."[11] In addition to the *messa di voce*, the author adds some notes on phrasing; he states that in ascending passages the voice should crescendo towards the last note of the phrase, and the opposite in descending passages. Expanding upon this, he indicates that "every note ought to have...a different degree of light and shade according to its position."[12] Here, Corri alludes to the concept of light and shade within a note, which brings about the principle of *chiaroscuro* (light-dark), a term originally used for a technique in painting to play with shadows and shading. *Chiaroscuro* became an

[8] Poriss, *Changing the Score*, 13-36.
[9] Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, 55.
[10] Domenico Corri, *The Singer's Preceptor*, translated by Edward Foreman, Corri's Treatise on Vocal Music, (Champaign, Illinois: Pro Musica Press, 1968), 14.
[11] Ibid., 52.
[12] Ibid., 52.

increasingly popular term to use in vocal pedagogy, given its implication of a balance in timbre.

The third treatise on vocal music, *The Art of Singing* (1841) written by Manuel García, focuses on different aspects of singing then the previous two: the timbre of the voice, vowels, and legato. In the chapter on vocal timbre, García identifies five common mistakes that lead to distortion of the natural timbre and offers solutions to each. García's main techniques to preserve the natural timbre are to (1) keep the tongue flat, (2) raise the soft palate when breathing, and (3) contracting the glottis or, in other words, the emergence of a smaller stream of air from the lungs. To maintain a balanced timbre, the singer should round the vowel as the voice ascends and brighten it as the voice descends. On the subject of vowels, García states that they should be elongated as much as possible, therefore delaying the consonants. It is also important that singers "avoid preceding [vowels] with an *h*, or aspiration;" vowels should start with "the stroke of the glottis, and with power suitable to the phrase."[13] The *bel canto* legato is a defining characteristic of the technique; "each vowel should be distinctly formed, and yet not separated from the preceding one with a jerk."[14] Clarity, yet smoothness in a phrase is key. García also gives an example of a technique that can be used to smooth out large intervals (Example 3.1).[15] Starting the syllable early, on the bottom pitch and using that to create a link between notes.



Example 3.1: Example of altering a passage to render it as legato as possible.

[13] Manuel García, *Garcia's Treatise on The Art of Singing*, ed. and trans. Albert García, Compendious Treatise on The Art of Singing, (St. John's Wood, London, 1924), 43.
[14] Ibid., 45.
[15] Ibid., 46.

Bringing the key elements of nineteenth-century *bel canto* technique full circle is Giovanni Battista Lamperti. He was the son of Francesco Lamperti, a well-known voice teacher, from whom he inherited his vocal ideals. Giovanni Battista was trained in his father's techniques and went on to teach voice in Milan and later in Dresden and Berlin. In *The Technics of Bel Canto* (1905), Lamperti offers in depth observations about each voice type and their ideal path of training. Along with these descriptions he outlines the major principles of *bel canto*: legato, breath control and breathing, vowel modification, and timbre as a tool in expression. As a simple principle, he compares legato to piano playing; "the following tone must be bound closely to the first...the first finger must not be lifted till the second one strikes."[16] This comparison of a visual example allows teachers to successfully convey the idea to their students of all levels. Lamperti then discusses breath in two ways, to optimise pitches of various ranges and to achieve the *messa di voce*. Using the concept of "contrary motion," he describes "that in passing from low tones to higher ones the breathing must proceed in a contrary sense."[17] Simply, the higher the pitch in the singer's range, the deeper the corresponding breath should be. The second way in which breath is addressed is more of a specific example—*messa di voce*. Both Mancini and Corri write about the importance of this type of vocal effect, but here Lamperti gives a more detailed instruction: "the *messa di voce* is produced solely by breath-control."[18] By "letting the air stream out gently," the singer can produce this prized technique, although it is warned that this difficult effect "must be managed with the utmost circumspection."[19] Surprisingly, Lamperti's next key concept was not addressed in the three previous works; vowel modification is a technique used by many singers and is an art itself. He uses [i] (vowel in the English word "heed") and [y] (vowel in the French word "tu") as prime examples of vowels that "are hard to sing on the high notes."[20] To make these vowels easier to sing in the higher register, Lamperti suggests substituting these "with more euphonious vowels."[21] This would involve, for example,

[16] Giovanni Battista Lamperti, *The Technics of Bel Canto*, translated by Theodore Baker (New York: G. Schirmer, 1905), 11.
[17] Ibid., 12.
[18] Ibid., 21.
[19] Ibid., 21.
[20] Ibid., 29.
[21] Ibid., 29.

changing [i] to [ɪ] (vowel in the English word "hid"), allowing for a more open vowel in the upper register while still maintaining a similar sounding vowel. Lamperti's final element of *bel canto* technique is timbre, similarly to García. Although, unlike García, Lamperti highlights how timbre can be used to convey meaning and character. He insists that "the shading, or musical nuances, of a phrase will depend on tempo and general character of the composition."[22] Instead of using timbre simply technically, Lamperti suggests that it can also be used for expressive purposes. Purely technical singing is correct, but the singer using colours to their advantage adds an extra layer of depth to a performance.

Nineteenth-century audiences seem to have been aware of the importance of vocal timbre as a means of expression, as indicated by a review in *Glissons, n'appuyons pas Giornale* from 1839. Reviewing a performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Milan, the author especially notes the contrast of colour in "(translated from Italian) the sad tale of Raimondo" which is "followed by the sudden upbeat section lead by the choir maestro in 3/4, happily coloured."[23] The author felt that it was noteworthy to mention the shift in colour in the scene, changing from the solemn story of Raimondo to a bright and happily coloured choral interjection. This excerpt exemplifies the dramatic effect that a change of timbre may have on an audience member. Further, an 1879 report from UK based *The Musical Times* acknowledges the importance of using contrasting vocal colours in *Lucia*. Singing the title role, Adelina Patti is described as one of Lucia's "most brilliant representatives," as the soprano "chang[ed] the character of her voice which…with true musical instinct, modelled her general style," providing "sufficient proof of the genius of the artist."[24]

A culmination of these four pedagogues brings forth many elements of *bel canto* technique. Although these manuals' publication dates range from 1774-1905, they are

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[22] Ibid., 31.

[23] "Cronaca teatrale," *Glissons, n'appuyons pas Giornale* (April 3, 1839): 107-8.
"si lodo il mesto racconto di Raimondo, susseguito dall'imponente stretta con cor maestro 3/4 felicemente colorito a grandi proporzioni"

[24] "Foreign Notes," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 20, no. 442 (1879): 39.

unified by a common thread; they all agree on the importance of beautiful sound and legato. With some variety in vocal concentrations, the four of them are all on the same page. In addition to these fundamental principles, instruction on producing proper ornaments, cadenzas, timbre, and vowels is provided by the notable teachers. The technique known as *bel canto* has been in its development since the late eighteenth century, and it matured in the nineteenth century until it was no longer the best way to approach the current operatic tradition. When German composers such as Richard Wagner began to present a contrasting approach to opera and gained traction, the Italian style of composition lost its position at the forefront of operatic performance. This factor, along with the invention of the laryngoscope in 1854 by Manuel García II,[25] led to a more scientific study of voice pedagogy. As knowledge of science increased, this fact-based interest gave way to a focus on the vocal apparatus itself and anatomy studies.[26]

Revival-Era Pedagogy

As Helen Alberti (1874-1962) writes in *The National Association of Teachers of Singing* (NATS) *Bulletin*, "the old masters knew little of the physiological and anatomical form of the tongue, larynx and breath, but they did understand the law which operated them."[27] Here, in the beginning stages of the *bel canto* revival, Alberti acknowledges the nineteenth-century pedagogues. She brings up the law that she referred to by summarising the scientific discoveries of vocal production; "in the theory of vibrations, the volume and the velocity of the energy producing the vibration determin[es] the intensity of the sound produced and its pitch."[28] There is a simple equation that can be inferred by this explanation: quantity of air + speed of air = timbre + pitch. By changing the first two variables, the resulting sound can be changed and manipulated.

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[25] James A. Stark, "On the Role of Vocal Idioms in Singing," *Canadian University Music Review/Revue de musique des universités canadiennes* 15, (1995): 72.
[26] Matthew Hoch, "Historical Landmarks in Singing Voice Pedagogy," *Voice and Speech Review* 13, no. 1 (2019): 51.
[27] Helen Alberti, "Facts Concerning the Art of Bel Canto or the Basis of Bel Canto," *The NATS Bulletin* 4 (December 1947): 4.
[28] Alberti, "Facts Concerning the Art of Bel Canto," 4.

This simplified equation was alluded to by Lamperti (1905) when he suggested that the higher the pitch, the deeper the breath needs to be, or in other words, the more air the singer will need. In Lamperti's second comment about breath, he states that the *messa di voce* should be executed with a gentle and controlled release of the air.[29] The speed of the air is the alterable variable here, and it will bring about the desired result in the colour of the sound. The resemblance of Alberti's law, based in science, to Lamperti's principle, based on intuition, is an undeniable correlation. Although this correlation is so apparent, Alberti mentions elements that the nineteenth-century pedagogues did not. She has more thoughts on the physicality of singing than them; using the placement of the tongue and larynx as focal points, she draws some attention to the anatomy of the vocal tract. When addressing what she calls the "one position scale," it is suggested that "the tongue and the larynx remain in their natural habitat, and do not rise in an ascending scale."[30] Tongue positioning harkens back to García's (1841) suggestion to keep the tongue flat, as an approach to keeping the voice's natural timbre.

Timbre, as addressed by Alberti, is a concept that can be viewed from an anatomical standpoint. "In its excessive form, [brightness] tends to narrow the oral cavity and point the resonance and [darkness] to open the pharynx, and round, deepen and mellow the resonance."[31] This balance that Alberti values is the *chiaroscuro* which was referred to by Mancini in passing as "so necessary in every style for singing."[32] Additionally by Corri, it could have easily been missed because he did not refer to it by name; he specifies that each note should have a "degree of light and shade"[33] to it, indicating the need for a balance. Lamperti, as well, seemed to use this term in passing: "the resonance of your tones becomes round and rich, *chiaroscuro*...The 'dark-light' tone should always be present."[34] Nineteenth-century pedagogues used this term without

[29] Lamperti, *The Technics of Bel Canto*, 21.
[30] Alberti, "Facts Concerning the Art of Bel Canto," 4.
[31] Ibid., 6.
[32] Mancini, *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing*, 42.
[33] Corri, *The Singer's Preceptor*, 52.
[34] William Earl Brown, *Vocal Wisdom: Maxims of Giovanni Battista Lamperti*, (2010; repr., Mansfield Centre: Martino Publishing, 1957), 38-9.

feeling the need to define it; this leads me to believe that its meaning was common knowledge. Clearly having its roots before Mancini, Corri, and Lamperti, *chiaroscuro* is a term that, to this day, has not been forgotten. Yet, as Alberti states, it has physical implications, proving further that she encourages the old Italian way of singing but including a modern physiological lens. By the end of her brief article, Alberti concludes, "let singing be guided to beauty...a correlating factor between the scientific and the natural school of thought."[35]

A few years after Alberti was writing, Ida Franca wrote a thorough report in the form of a book about her take on the old Italian school: *Manual of Bel Canto*.[36] While reporting on the principles of *bel canto*, Franca clearly states that "the old Italian school recognized only legato singing as true art."[37] Legato was the foremost principle for Franca, as shown throughout her book. She takes the time to outline that "to sing legato means to pass from one note to another cleanly, readily, and naturally. There should be neither the slightest voice irregularity nor voice interruption between two notes."[38] Following the line *bel canto* pedagogues, nearly all of them mention the importance of legato, but no one takes as much time as Franca to highlight it; mentioning it throughout her book, it is not confined to only one section.

Just as with legato, Franca brings timbre to the forefront in most sections of her book. For her, timbre is related to vowels, character interpretation, and vocal production. It is logical that *chiaroscuro* plays a role in the search for the ideal timbre, referred to here by Franca as bright and round. When timbre is first introduced in *Manual of Bel Canto*, Franca mentions, "the old Italian school teaches that a well-timbred (colored) voice will be produced if the student learns to sing in rounded and bright tones."[39] This contrast of round and bright tones relates directly to the concept of *chiaroscuro* which combines the light and dark colours in the voice. She deduces that a "voice timbred in

[35] Alberti, "Facts Concerning the Art of Bel Canto," 6.
[36] Ida Franca, *Manual of Bel Canto*, (New York: Coward-McCann, 1959).
[37] Ibid., 68.
[38] Ibid., 38.
[39] Ibid., 21.

such a manner will penetrate because it is bright, and will be sweet because it is round."[40] The advantage of singing in this prescribed way is made plain; the voice will carry over the orchestra and will be neither too shrill (bright) nor too dark (round). What stands out here is Franca's insinuation that there is a practical side to this method. Instead of simply laying out the rules of *bel canto* without reasoning, she explicitly states the advantage that these principles will provide to the singer.

Furthering the practicality of this text is the discussion of character development and text interpretation. Franca outlines the ways in which a singer may use timbre to their advantage when portraying a character. Once the singer has mastered the "control of his entire vocal apparatus, [he will] never [fail] to be master of all timbres needed to give life to a character."[41] By emphasising the importance of creating an operatic character "according to the character of the musical phrase, and not according to [the singer's] personal temperament,"[42] Franca encourages the singers to use all the tools they have at their disposal. Timbre is, of course, one such tool that can be used to emphasise a character's thoughts and feelings, allowing the singer to "give each word its proper shade."[43] By making observations such as these and offering pragmatic advice to singers, Franca not only succeeds at her goal of providing the reader with *bel canto* principles, but also gives the reader practical applications of the mastery of the technique.

Franca seems to be more concerned with the nineteenth-century school of thought rather than the scientific approach of the modern era. She acknowledges the scientific method of vocology that was prevalent in the years that she was writing; "there is not and never has been any doubt by serious scientists that…[the] vocal cords do not change shape- either in length, thickness, or tension- but that they always assume the shape necessary."[44] Insinuating that the anatomical apparatus of the voice will adopt the proper positioning in order to create the pitch that is needed, "yet," she points out, "no singer

[40] Ibid., 21.
[41] Ibid., 87.
[42] Ibid., 55.
[43] Ibid., 87.
[44] Ibid., 57.

ever bothered about all this."[45] Whereas the modern approach Franca may have been used to seeing focused on theoretical anatomical movements, she thought it to be inapplicable to the singers themselves. She emphasised the relative unimportance of such scientific approaches to the artist performing the movements. As addressed in the section of *Manual of Bel Canto* on the *messa di voce*, it is only possible to perform the technique "after the muscles of the throat and neck have become strong and elastic… and if the lower jaw…has been *trained to obey the will* [italics added]."[46] Although the muscles and joints involved are mentioned, success ultimately depends on the will of the singer. It is near impossible for a singer to control each and every muscle and joint movement, so rather than encouraging this type of thinking, Franca gestures toward the original *bel canto* pedagogues, who, despite a lack of advanced scientific knowledge, trained successful singers.

Both Franca and Alberti, as teachers at the beginning of the *bel canto* revival, sought to summarise the principles of the nineteenth-century pedagogues while offering some modern takes as well. As they brought forward in their writing, the original *bel canto* movement valued legato, use of timbre for the balance found in *chiaroscuro* as well as for expressive purposes, and the approach to and use of ornamentation, specifically the importance of the *messa di voce*. Alberti embraces a more modern approach to pedagogy by implementing recent scientific discoveries, and by referencing the anatomical function of parts of the vocal tract, the focus of *bel canto* is brought into the twentieth century while still remaining faithful to its roots. On the other hand, Franca acknowledges these physiological functions, but all the while, she remains certain that the modern vein of vocal technique is not helpful to the singer; she is in favour of anything that will directly give an advantage to the singer.

Much like the balance found in *chiaroscuro* that all of the aforementioned pedagogues advocated for, so too must a vocal technique be—balanced in favour of the best possible result. Since the nineteenth-century pedagogues did not have access to

[45] Ibid., 57.
[46] Ibid., 66.

modern vocology discoveries, is it not our duty as carriers of this knowledge to implement it where possible? Alas, this is another project altogether, but as an advocate for the preservation of the *bel canto* technique, I would urge all present-day pedagogues to, like Alberti, avoid a puritan viewpoint when it comes to a teaching method. In terms of an applicable approach, perhaps it is vital to, like Franca, consider what has worked for singers in the past to give them an advantage.

Callas & Sutherland in the Revival

It is no coincidence that Alberti and Franca were writing around the time that the *bel canto* repertoire was becoming popular again. With more singers learning the repertoire and more opera houses mounting *bel canto* productions, it was inevitable for the technique to make a comeback along with it. At the time, Richard Bonynge was coaching singers at Australian opera houses. In a 1994 interview with *Opera News*, he thought back on the *bel canto* revival of the 1950s when it was "in the baby stage, because no one wanted to hear those old pieces...they thought it was too frivolous, too simple."[47] Yet, the technique that went along with these seemingly simple pieces uses the principle of effortless breath energy, which "sounds very simple…[but] it is not so easy to do."[48] Even Bonynge admits that technique isn't everything, and he emphasises that "in *bel canto*, the end is expression...the drama is in the music."[49] Bonynge's viewpoint seems to echo that of Franca; a focus on practicality of singing the repertoire, rather than all the technical elements, is preferred. In this revival-era of *bel canto* music and technique, there seems to be a lean towards the best way to sing the repertoire in terms of drama and expression. Who better to reflect on such elements than the singers who lived through the revival?

Some of the singers who emerged from this revival were the legendary Beverly Sills, Marilyn Horne, and Montserrat Caballé, chief among them were Maria Callas and

[47] Stephanie Von Buchau, "Bonynge on Bel Canto, (opera Conductor Richard Bonynge's Views on the Art of Song)," *Opera News* 58, no. 9 (1994): 15.
[48] Ibid., 16.
[49] Ibid., 16.

Joan Sutherland. For the purpose of this analysis, Callas and Sutherland will represent the front of singers, sopranos in particular, that the revival brought forth. Despite their deaths (in 1977 and 2010, respectively), these two singers left behind a plethora of resources that allows anyone to peek into their lives, careers, and approaches to performance and technique.

Firstly, the technique described by Maria Callas herself in the masterclasses she gave at Juilliard, transcribed by the prolific Callas scholar, John Ardoin, represents her personal technical priorities. Mancini, Corri, García, and Lamperti highlighted certain technical elements of *bel canto* singing, and an analysis of Maria Callas' teaching can be read as being centred around those same elements. From a purely technical standpoint, a line can be drawn from the nineteenth-century pedagogues to Callas, but as highlighted above, the technical elements are not the only important factor in *bel canto* singing. The technical elements that can be found within the masterclasses are: (1, as described by Mancini) beauty of tone, ornaments, and cadenzas, (2, as described by Corri) *messa di voce* and phrasing, (3, as described by García) timbre of voice, vowels, and legato, and finally (4, as described by Lamperti) breathing and vowel modification. Most singers will teach the way they themselves sing; this is precisely why *Callas at Juilliard* (1987) is such an important resource to understand her technique and her approach to performance. Despite there being no evidence that Callas herself read the work of the aforementioned pedagogues, the ideas remain almost identical; much like the aural traditions of folk songs, these principles were passed on through generations from teacher to student. Through her words, the reader can see that, while she values the technical aspects of the nineteenth century, they are a means to an end and not the end itself.

Callas admits many times in the masterclasses that ornaments are essential to making the piece of music expressive and beautiful. With this she also includes an aspect that Mancini did not mention when describing ornaments: "remember, there must always be a reason for an embellishment, or don't use one."[50] She also adds that ornaments are to be used for a dramatic purpose, to accentuate the meaning of the scene: "there has been a

[50] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 15.

trend recently to overornament music of the *bel canto* school, and particularly that of *Lucia*. This I condemn, because the less you ornament this music, the closer you will come to realizing its drama."[51] While Mancini accentuated ornamentation for the purpose of beauty, there is also the aspect of theatricality in opera that Callas adds to this. Mancini and Callas would both agree that embellishments are used for beauty, and Callas extends this by bringing in the dramatic side of opera. Since Callas was a prominent performer before she taught, she is very aware of the necessity of expression, while Mancini, on the other hand, may be more concerned with technical aspects. Callas most certainly felt that beauty was not the only aspect of good singing, and as she put it so elegantly in her masterclass introduction: "Above all, bel canto is expression. A beautiful sound alone is not enough."[52]

In terms of cadenzas, Mancini and Callas are very much in agreement. Callas brings up voice coach Luigi Ricci, and his books of notated cadenzas[53] that she did not always agree with:

> The cadenza is a matter of your choice. You will find a number given by Ricci which many singers have used. I do not particularly care for these, because I feel they are not written in the mood of the aria. Once, singers were very free with cadenzas; they used them for vocal fireworks. But if you care enough for the composer and you are willing to take the time, you can create a cadenza that is within his style. The one I used recalls the aria, because it is built on a phrase that occurs early in the piece.[54]

Callas speaks what Mancini wrote, cadenzas should be in the style of the composer and the mood of the aria. "One word of caution," says Callas, "whichever cadenzas you use, keep them simple and in the right spirit."[55] Simplicity and creativity are key when singing cadenzas. Creativity is important; otherwise, the audience will know what to expect. By using the cadenzas written in the score, a singer is losing one of their creative opportunities. Callas insists that singers take the chance to explore, and if

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[51] Ibid., 99.
[52] Ibid., 3.
[53] Luigi Ricci, *Variazioni-Cadenze Tradizioni per Canto Vol. I: Voci Femminili*, (Milan: Ricordi, 1961). Luigi Ricci, *Variazioni-Cadenze Tradizioni per Canto. Vol. II: Voci Maschili*, (Milan: Ricordi, 1984).
[54] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 80.
[55] Ibid., 53.

"the [cadenza] in the score has already been heard, and in the exact same form," it takes away from a singer's imaginative potential.[56] Mancini wrote that having a creative mind is an advantage, and Callas clearly concurs. By developing Mancini's ideas, Callas brings these principles into the twentieth century and offers them to the future generation of singers taking part in the masterclasses.

The *messa di voce* that both Mancini and Corri discuss is present in the teaching of Callas, again to be used for expressive purposes: "take time to make the re-entry of Lucia...very expressive- [with] a nice *messa di voce*."[57] Corri and Callas agree that the *messa di voce* adds to and gives soul to the music. The phrases of a piece should be shaped according to the height of the pitches and drama; beginning an ascending phrase "with a crescendo...and then gradually become less and less intense as you go down."[58] Callas, perfectly summarising what Corri wrote in *The Singer's Preceptor* about the shaping of phrases. Callas also believed that both long lines and fast lines must be delivered with conviction; they are only empty if left empty by singers who do not fulfil their dramatic purpose.

García identifies the importance of keeping a consistent timbre throughout a piece of music, but as time went on, timbre started to be used for a dramatic purpose as well as for a consistent sound. Callas knew that some could get carried away with the drama, so she specified that "the note is round; it has a center. No matter what passion or emotion you are dealing with...you must sing purely, in the middle of the note."[59] She advocated for a balance within singing; no matter how dramatic the opera gets, the beauty of tone and purity will be important. She also warned that a singer should be wary of "chang[ing] the color of your voice when singing the ornaments; they should be a single sound."[60]

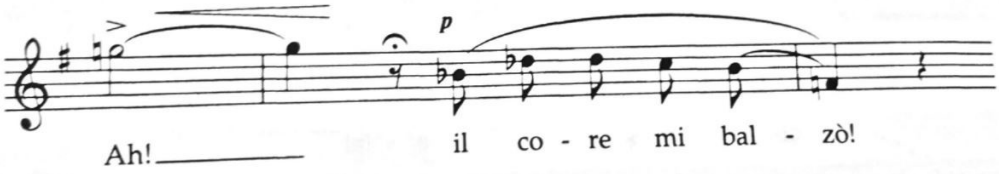
[56] Ibid., 52.
[57] Ibid., 104.
[58] Ibid., 169.
[59] Ibid., 100.
[60] Ibid., 82.

Interestingly, Emily Dolan[61] writes about timbre in orchestral music, as she claims that many eighteenth-century composers attempted to attain a timbre that was similar to the human voice. A sought-after effect in orchestral music, timbre as a consideration for instrumentation became an increasingly crucial consideration. Yet, the gap here seems to be the absence of scholarship on timbre as means of expression. The vocal dimension of timbre has yet to be covered in the field of musicology, but it is no stranger in the realm of performance, as Callas demonstrated in the Juilliard masterclasses.

Callas refers to several points in an Act II duet from *Lucia di Lammermoor* ("Il pallor funesto") as key expressive moments; she outlines the emotion and how to achieve it within the musical phrase. Within only one scene, Callas describes the ways in which one can use rhythm, breaths, silence, dialogue, and intensity to add timbre to a line, further portraying its meaning. By using the context of the opera and emotions of the characters, Callas describes that in this scene "[Lucia] must begin her part of the duet defiantly. Keep the rhythm very steady here, and sing on the words with good accents,"[62] and "Enrico is like a snake here…there must be a hardness to the line, very rhythmic."[63] Two instances are presented here in which the singer can use a rhythmic approach to the line to accentuate its direct and aggressive nature. In contrast to the aggressive lines, she provides an example of using breath to convey suffering; "breathe well before 'dolor' to accent Lucia's anguish."[64] By taking a breath or simply pausing, the singer can bring out the vital word "dolor" (pain). Similarly, silence can also be used to insert an emotive quality and timbre to a line as described here: "Lucia's G must be desperate. Hold it, and wait after releasing this note."[65] The pleading and desperate nature of this passage can be furthered by extending one note and pausing immediately afterwards (Example 3.2).[66]

[61] Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution*.
[62] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 107.
[63] Ibid., 108.
[64] Ibid., 108.
[65] Ibid., 109.
[66] Ibid., 110.

Example 3.2: Held G followed by a rest with a fermata, accentuating the desperate nature of this line.



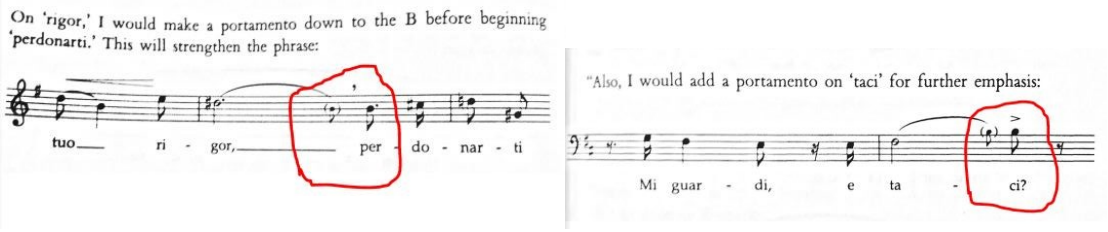
Changing timbral elements can also be implemented to further the dialogue of the scene. For example, "when [Enrico] begins to speak…Lucia interrupts him; and 'Cessa, cessa' must be nearly frantic."[67] Enrico begins to insult Lucia's relationship with Edgardo, her true love, and as a result she interrupts him with "cessa, cessa" (stop, stop). A frantic nature befits a reaction such as this, so the interruption must be sudden as well as desperate; a dialogue between these characters can be further dramatised by implementing the frantic nature suggested by Callas. As the duet progresses, "Enrico answers her with increasing anger…almost shouted, it is like an order."[68] As Enrico unleashes his wrath upon his sister, the level of intensity rises; he begins to shout at her. Although this shouting described by Callas is not indicated in the score, it corresponds with Enrico's character arc and his desire to control Lucia in every possible way. Within one scene, Callas provides the singers in the masterclass with at least six concrete ways to implement timbre in order to further the drama of the scene. By valuing timbre to this extent, Callas advocated for the height of the drama to be omnipresent.

In addition to timbre, Maria Callas placed an emphasis on the importance of legato; she believed the audience should be virtually unaware of the consonants within the phrases, except when they had dramatic purpose. This concept is thoroughly clear in her own singing and performance practice. The legato line was of the utmost importance, and the audience should always be able to hear the line. To accomplish this, the "vowels must always dominate your diction...the purer the vowel, the more supported the rest of the voice remains."[69] The legato compliments the rest of the vocal technique according to

[67] Ibid., 109.
[68] Ibid., 109.
[69] Ibid., 22.

Callas, and vowels are the foundation of legato. In any aria, the singing "must be kept very smooth, very clean, with all the pitches exact and covered with good legato."[70] In the Juilliard masterclasses, Callas brings up legato with almost every student, oftentimes telling them quite matter of factly: "do not peck at the notes...sing very legato."[71] García, in his treatise, warns that singers should be careful of adding any aspirations that may sound like an extra "h" in the line. Maria Callas suggests to a student that they should "do [their] vocalizing on 'ah,' not 'ha'- no aspirates, ever!"[72] She reminds the singer that a pure vowel is always important. Callas notes that "there is a great difference in connecting notes by a legato and by a slide. We use the latter, but sparingly and only for drama's sake."[73] With a shocking resemblance to García, Callas shows the students a few instances where portamentos work and should be used (Example 3.3 & 3.4).[74] Callas emphasises the usage of these for dramatic purposes only.

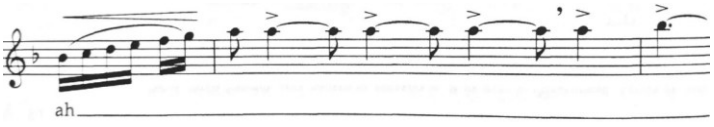
Example 3.3 & 3.4: Callas exemplifying, with a strong resemblance to García, the ideal way to make a phrase as legato as possible; portamentos should be used sparingly, at moments of heightened drama.



Callas continues her advice in the masterclasses in a constructive and applicable way. She shows her knowledge of Lamperti's principles of breath preparation and vowel modification. Time and time again, the students in the masterclasses heard Callas address breath preparation and the effect it has on one given phrase; "breathe well and think [about] what you must do next, where you are going."[75] The common occurrence of ideas

[70] Ibid., 82.
[71] Ibid., 103.
[72] Ibid., 23.
[73] Ibid., 121.
[74] Ibid., 108, 107.
[75] Ibid., 61.

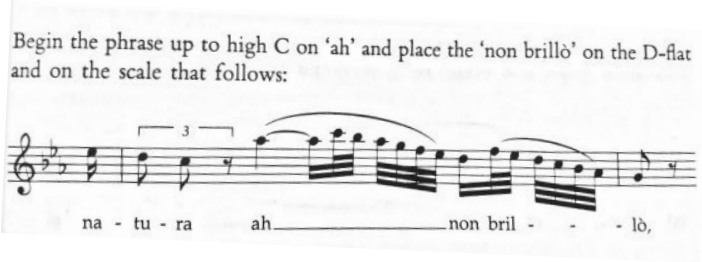
such as these emphasise that planning ahead is vital. By mapping out the phrases and breaths, Callas insists that it will help the students "always know just where [they] are heading, where a phrase will end and just how much breath it will take. Never leave any of this to chance."[76] Of course, Callas also agrees with Lamperti that one must use more breath, the higher the passage is. In the aria "Casta diva" from *Norma*, which Callas is undoubtedly familiar with, she addresses the climax of the aria (Example 3.5)[77]; "When you reach the [high] A's…take a deep breath before the last to carry you over to the B-flat. Remember always to take advantage of such a breath for the sake of expression. In this instance, it [also]…gives you a good B-flat."[78] By encouraging the student to take advantage of the breath, Callas provides a benefit which is twofold—furthering the dramatic intent of the scene and allowing for a solid foundation in the upper register.



Example 3.5: The climax of "Casta diva" from *Norma*; Callas instructs the student to take advantage of the breath before the last high A.

In the example of "Casta diva," the singer is lucky that the notes in the upper register are sung on the vowel [a] (vowel in the Italian word "ma"), one of the most open vowels. Recalling Lamperti's principle of vowel modification in which he suggests changing [i] (heed) to [ɪ] (hid), notes in the upper register are ideally sung on an open vowel.[79] Callas encourages the same principle when necessary; in the following example, she instructs the student to replace an entire word with "ah" [a]. The word placement in the original score is different from what Callas had suggested in Example 3.6.[80] In the score, the replacement "ah" is in fact the word "non," but seeing as it is in a high register, Callas suggested a vowel change in order to provide an open vowel [a] instead of the closed [o] of "non."

[76] Ibid., 25.
[77] Ibid., 82.
[78] Ibid., 82.
[79] Lamperti, *The Technics of Bel Canto*, 29.
[80] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 79.



Example 3.6: Callas suggests a word substitution ("non" to "ah") to provide the singer with an open vowel in the high range.

From all these examples drawn from Maria Callas' teaching, it can be observed that she and the four *bel canto* masters agreed upon many technical practises. Callas seems to follow in the footsteps of Ida Franca by using concrete examples and giving the reason for her decision making when it came to technique. This is not unexpected seeing as Callas was a singer first, not a teacher. After having many years of performance under her belt, she felt that she was able to pass on the technique she developed over the years. Callas hardly used any anatomical terms other than the odd comment about a relaxed or open throat.[81] With this in mind, Callas' approach to technique has more in common with the nineteenth-century pedagogues than with the era in which she lived. The technological advancements of this time allowed some to delve into the scientific aspects of singing, although not all involved in the craft had followed this trend. Alberti and those interested in the fact-based approach differ from Callas; they wanted to know why, but Callas spent her time perfecting this abstract side of the art. This demonstrates that it is not necessary to be fluent in physiology in order to deliver the quality results that are expected. Callas defines a performance-centred approach to technique in these masterclasses.

Undoubtedly, Joan Sutherland, who came into the spotlight some ten years after Callas, was another participant in the *bel canto* revival. Contrary to Callas, Sutherland had a magnificently long career that spanned over forty years. She did not start hosting masterclasses until after she retired in 1990, but even those that she did participate in were not in her comfort zone. In an interview before a 1993 masterclass in Sydney, Australia, Sutherland admitted that she "said no [to the opportunity] at the outset

[81] Ibid., 130, 161.

because" she "didn't have any qualification to actually…teach."[82] As a famously humble and private woman, Sutherland never considered herself a teacher; Lotfi Mansouri, a conductor who considered her a friend, recalls that "her modesty was astounding…[she was] a warm and down-to-earth person."[83] There is little documentation of her masterclasses, although Mansouri also admits to asking her for favours like "leading master classes for young artists."[84] It was through these masterclasses, which were few and far between, that one can appreciate and learn from Sutherland.

In a 1998 post-masterclass interview with James Keller of *Opera News*, Sutherland answered questions pertaining to her technique and specifically breathing. When asked why the breath is important, Sutherland answered, "without the support of the voice on the breath, all the breath is going to escape with the voice and you're going to end up with a 'breathy' emission, uncertain pitch, and probably a wobble. Breathing is the whole basis of singing."[85] In her view, breath is everything; it will solidify the timbre in the ideal *chiaroscuro* and will keep the notes in the centre of the pitch. This is a contrast to Callas, who used the drama and context of the piece to inform her technique. Sutherland then goes on to use anatomy to describe the movements involved in breathing; "I heard the theory of breathing as…a quick intake of breath…some say you thrust the tummy forward, but I think it's a bit of a tuck in."[86] Already admitting that there are different opinions pertaining to the mechanism within the body, she continues, "you feel the pressure of that breath against the ribs and in the back…You feel that sustaining support right down into the pelvis."[87] She then continues to describe how the vocal cords work alongside the mouth and the cheekbones, finally coming to the hard palate and the lips. By bringing in anatomy, it may seem as if Sutherland has a completely different approach to Callas. In reality, Sutherland concludes simply, "it's a reflex."[88]

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[82] "What if Dame Joan Sutherland was your singing teacher?" interviewed by Bernard Bowen, *ABC News Sydney*, 1993, https://www.abc.net.au/classic/read-and-watch/videos/dame-joan-teaching/11435262.
[83] Lotfi Mansouri, "Working with Joan Sutherland," *Opera Canada* 53, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 32.
[84] Ibid., 33.
[85] James M. Keller, "Voice Talk: Breathing Lessons," *Opera News* 63, no. 5 (Nov 1998): 19.
[86] Ibid., 19.
[87] Ibid., 19.
[88] Ibid., 19.

Joan Sutherland tells interviewer James Keller that a concentration on anatomy leads singers to over-think the movements. She recalls that "people start talking about the false cords, and the pharynx and the larynx and the glottis…but I don't want to hear about it when people are studying roles."[89] After studying physiology in school, Sutherland was sure that she knew everything, but a lifetime of experience can easily override what one learns in school. Here, Sutherland explicitly defines what an anatomical study of technique could be, but then again, she turns it around and emphasises that "it's so simple."[90] Overcomplicating technique with anatomical terms and movements, according to these two *prima donnas* can only take a singer so far. At a certain point, one must leave the uber-technical thoughts and turn towards the end goal—performance.

It is worth noting that a singer is not always required to use each and every detail that a teacher, even one of great stature such as the nineteenth-century pedagogues, provides. *Bel canto* is a multi-faceted system, which provides a certain freedom to the singer. Of course, the main principles such as breath, legato, and timbre are vital to consider, but *how* they are used is perhaps even more essential. When Maria Callas suggested changes to the previously described *Lucia* scene, she did not intend the recommendations to be black and white. Rather, it should be highlighted that the performer has the freedom to choose their own dramatic interpretation and use timbre and other expressive elements to further their personal agenda. Certainly, opinions can be difficult to separate from fact, and as such, one should be especially wary of opinions presented as non-negotiable. In the end, dramatic interpretation is a choice on the part of the performer and creative team when producing an opera. This implied freedom that a performer possesses can be key when unpacking characters, namely Lucia, who have previously had their agency revoked as a result of their imposed narrative.

[89] Ibid., 21.
[90] Ibid., 21.

An evolution of this magnitude is difficult to track, especially when such a change is occurring on different levels and when each participant is adding their own opinions and biases. Although this chapter is simply a sliver of a much larger and more complicated system, the evolution is beginning to come into focus. Starting with a selection of nineteenth-century pedagogues allowed this analysis to gather a vast amount of data and moving into the modern era certainly showed these insights in a new light. Scientific progression was not something that seemed to be pertinent at first glance, but as the analysis progressed, it became a vital defining factor that differentiated the approaches to vocal technique and pedagogy. Because *bel canto* technique has always been a means to an end instead of an end itself, there will be a constant progression of this approach throughout time. *Bel canto* meaning literally "beautiful singing" is deceptive when there are so many cogs in the machine; it can never truly be attained or perfected. Even experts in the field would have conflicting thoughts, so by compiling all the above information, I trace what may be one of several evolutions of the elusive *bel canto*.

When considering the performance practice of an opera, particularly one as restricting as *Lucia*, a focus on *bel canto* technique can be beneficial, as one sees the ray of sunlight coming through the oppressive clouds. As previously covered, *Lucia di Lammermoor* as a whole, as well as the title character, have been reduced to a harsh, confined spectacle. However, *bel canto*'s principles of freedom and expression on the performer's terms reveals that Lucia may not be a lost cause, as suggested by (Barthes'[91] definition of) the Work. When moving away from the Work, towards the Text, the performative Lucia becomes a beacon of hope within the opera for both the singer and audience.

[91] Barthes, "From Work to Text," 56-68.

Chapter Four: Performance, Defined in the Revival

In the world of bel canto, hope springs eternal.[1]

In this fourth and final content chapter, I will bring the discussion thus far full circle to a performance studies approach. Now that Lucia's existence and adaptation has been approached and the principles of *bel canto* throughout its existence have been established, performance practice can be covered. By beginning with Cammarano's staging notes and moving to Parr[2] and Henson's[3] arguments on the presentation of visual madness, I will tie these concepts to Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland's performances in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Despite the entrapped character that Donizetti has crafted for this opera, Callas and Sutherland find the ultimate freedom for her, thanks to their background in *bel canto*. Lastly, I shall conclude with these sopranos' impacts on present day performers in general and when approaching the role of Lucia specifically.

Salvadore Cammarano, *Lucia di Lammermoor*'s librettist, was employed by the San Carlo theatre in Naples, the same theatre at which *Lucia* was premiered, as "poeta e concertatore" for the last twenty years of his life.[4] Although "poeta e concertatore" literally translates to poet and conductor, it can be inferred that his duties included writing and editing librettos as well as taking on the role of what would be described in a modern theatre as a stage director or producer. For this reason, Cammarano was tasked with documenting and communicating his staging decisions to the next *concertatore* who was to mount a production of *Lucia*. In his presumably draft notes, translated by John Black, Cammarano notes some specific staging directions that are not in the score or libretto.

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[1] Laurence Scherer Barrymore, "On Disk: Bellissima Bel Canto Opera," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov 10, 1998, Eastern edition.
[2] Parr, "Coloratura and Technology," 37-48.
[3] Karen Henson, *Opera Acts*, 88-121.
[4] John N. Black, "Cammarano's Notes for the Staging of Lucia di Lammermoor," *Donizetti Society Journal* 4, no. 3 (1980): 29.

Some of the most notable stage directions are those that accompany the Mad Scene. The scene begins with Lucia's teacher and priest, Raimondo, gathering the chorus made up of servants and wedding guests. He tells the joyful chorus of the tragic events he had just witnessed, finding a blood-covered Lucia holding a knife over her dead bridegroom. In Cammarano's notes, he instructs that after "everybody gathers closely around [Raimondo]," the chorus should "form up diagonally and thus see Lucia" as she enters the stage.[5] According to John Black's commentary on these instructions, this staging is "well thought out, to give Lucia's entrance the greatest possible impact."[6] By highlighting Lucia's entrance, the stage director will further indicate to the audience that her mental state is not altogether normal. Cammarano continues his notes for the Mad Scene by indicating that "the chorus be sure to show themselves full of pity and terror over Lucia's ordeal."[7] Black agrees with this statement by adding that it is "imaginative and…adds to the effectiveness of Lucia's entry."[8] I would add that the environment that the character is a part of can emphasise their madness, and here Cammarano emphasises Lucia's state by using performance elements that are not included in the score or libretto. A diagonal formation highlights and literally frames Lucia's entrance as the focal point of the scene. The way that the staging integrates a madwoman has to be done carefully, as suggested by McClary, "ensur[ing] that the listener experiences and *yet does not identify with* the discourse of madness"[9] is essential. To do this for the audience, it is key that the voice of reason remains omnipresent. The presence of a chorus that reacts as such is an element that assures the audience of Lucia's state and separates them from her.

A slightly different approach to the staging can occur when Enrico finally barges in before the Mad Scene's cabaletta. Cammarano suggests that Enrico can point one of the servants to go look for the unfortunate bridegroom, Arturo.[10] Despite this direction not existing in the score or original libretto, Cammarano includes it to heighten the drama, and considering that Arturo was a friend of Enrico, it is only logical that he would

[5] Ibid., 37.
[6] Ibid., 42.
[7] Ibid., 38.
[8] Ibid., 43.
[9] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 86.
[10] Black, "Cammarano's Notes," 38.

want to find his deceased confidante. Instead of using the staging to emphasise Lucia's position, as in the previous examples, Cammarano includes this subplot for the purpose of continuity and realism. Verisimilitude seems to be a valued aspect of performance from a nineteenth-century point of view, as in 1841, the singer who portrayed Enrico was praised for "(translated from Italian) frank and reasonable acting, gay without affectation."[11]

The visual elements of a performance which may not be indicated in the score can, as with the above examples, change the audiences' interpretation of the work or certain characters. It is possible for the composer to erect these visual elements in their scores by being involved in the production. Massenet, as an example, combined "high notes and the 'hyper-visual' in his writing"[12] to, according to Henson, create a collage of visual and aural exhibition. This was, of course, more than fifty years after *Lucia* was premiered in 1835, but by Massenet's time, it was "used to evoke not flesh-and-blood women at all, but rather a range of extraordinary, superhuman, and even troublingly inanimate figures."[13] Famous examples of such images include the "Bell Song" from *Lakmé* and the "Doll Song" from *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, sung by the mechanical Olympia.

Parr (2016) illustrates the visual ways in which madness can be simulated in two productions: Meyerbeer's *L'Étoile du Nord* and *Le Pardon de Ploërmel*. Intriguingly, one of Parr's first examples from *L'Étoile du Nord* is one of absence; to depict madness, the audience is brought into reality and let in on the secret, as "an offstage chorus of workmen [sing] the same music they had sung at the beginning of the opera."[14] This invisible repetition of music and later re-enactments of scenes that the heroine hears and sees create "a false but reassuring visual reality"[15] for the character. The invisible chorus indicates hallucinations that, like Lucia, show the character's regression, and the familiar

[11] "Gazzetta teatrale," *Il Pirata giornale* (August 6, 1841): 43.
"azione franca e ragionata, gaio senza affettazione."
[12] Henson, *Opera Acts*, 116.
[13] Ibid., 116.
[14] Parr, "Coloratura and Technology," 40.
[15] Ibid., 42.

images and sounds "seem to be mere shadows, figments of [the heroine's] imagination that she does not trust."[16] By incorporating visual elements (or lack thereof that *should* exist), a production can depict a shift of sanity, perhaps inducing an uneasy feeling in those who are viewing it.

Yet, these choices made by individuals at the production level can be accompanied by decisions made by the performers themselves. Parr provides an example of Elisa Masson, soprano, preparing the title role in Clapisson's 1848 opera *Jeanne la Folle*. She visited the Hospice de la Salpêtrière asylum in Paris for acting inspiration and received an unpleasant and startling welcome. In the reviews, however, "she was described as having chosen a stylized and even graceful portrayal of madness."[17] Masson seemed to have ignored the uncomfortable reality of what representing madness may have looked like, so she presented a dignified version. It is the combination of decisions made by stage directors (and others on the production level) and the performer themselves that dictates how the audience may perceive the implied or outwardly obvious madness. Within nineteenth-century performances of *Lucia*, a delicate approach to madness was favoured as well. As described in an 1840 review from a Venetian performance, the Mad Scene was praised as containing "(translated from Italian) unspeakable sung grace" which reflected the "supreme truth" of Lucia's actions; it was greeted with the "greatest demonstration of satisfaction from the public" that season.[18]

This tradition of portraying Lucia's madness as a graceful state was carried on, as more than one hundred years later, "the epoch-making"[19] Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland would present madness in their own performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Callas' 1952 premier as the title character in *Lucia di Lammermoor* took place in Mexico City at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Within the next eight years, she would go on to sing

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[16] Ibid., 40.
[17] Ibid., 39.
[18] "Cronaca teatrale," *Glissons, n'appuyons pas Giornale* (August 19, 1840): 268.
"ricevute le maggiori dimostrazioni del pubblico," "espressa con indicibile grazia di canto con somma verità."
[19] David J. Baker, "Mad about the Girl," *Opera News* 9 (2007): 19.

the role forty more times in thirteen cities and record it twice with EMI.[20] At the premier, "she received a twenty-minute ovation and sixteen curtain calls—a record for the Palacio de Bellas Artes."[21] The crowd was so loud, in fact, that the radio announcer had to shout to be heard over the cheers. Callas was "applauded by the musicians in the pit and by the chorus backstage," and after her 1953 Italian premier of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, EMI "committed her dramatic characterization to disc."[22] These lauding comments lead me to question what exactly in her performance the audience found particularly exceptional. There are some observations from the premier and onwards that seem to point towards what audiences perceived as truly special about Callas.

Her voice in the premier performance was hailed as "enormous" with a "rich tone."[23] Callas often admitted, as in a 1967 interview with Edward Downes, that Lucia "is not a light role" and that the range sits "very low [for] light sopranos."[24] Historically, however, Lucia was sung by what can be described in modern terms as a *coloratura soprano*;[25] Callas, on the other hand, was considered to be a *dramatic soprano*, with a slightly heavier tone. According to David Baker of *Opera News*, "she opened the way for heavier voices to undertake the role."[26] In 1960, while Callas was active, it was proclaimed that she added more depth to the role of Lucia; "Callas made Lucia not the usual display for the coloratura soprano but a rare study of human emotions…she created a memorable character."[27] Perhaps the Lucia that audiences had come to expect lacked drama and was not fully realised, and Callas changed the way the role was viewed.

The differentiating terms *coloratura* and *dramatic soprano* come from a highly constructed yet subjective system— Rudolf Kloiber's (1899-1973) *fach* system described

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[20] Henry Wisneski, "Lucia di Lammermoor," in *Maria Callas: the Art Behind the Legend*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 119.
[21] Ibid., 120.
[22] Ibid., 120.
[23] Ibid., 120.
[24] Maria Callas, *Maria Callas: In Conversations with Edward Downes*, recorded December 1967, EMI Classics, 1997, CD.
[25] Baker, "Mad about the Girl," 22
[26] Ibid., 22.
[27] George Leslie, "Dallas Hails Metropolitan," *Musical America* 80, no. 8 (1960): 10.

in *Handbuch die Oper*.[28] This system for categorising voices and operatic roles would have been unknown to any composer before the twentieth century, including Donizetti, but it became common knowledge in the operatic community later on. The main differences between *coloratura* and *dramatic sopranos* are the style of singing, timbre, and range. Since the music in *Lucia* did not change, the contributing element that Callas brought in order to shift the perceived voice type must have been the timbre. As covered in the previous chapter, Callas believed in the use of timbre for dramatic intent, but she also had a naturally heavier tone when singing than most who came before her in this role. Recalling Callas' premier performance, Baker offered an effective summary; "the timbre was not the slender instrument bred for lightness and speed but that of a dramatic soprano in both senses of the word."[29] Callas transformed the role in two ways; this version of Lucia now had more dramatic credibility as well as a fuller timbre. Although Callas' premier rendition of the Mad Scene used standard and fairly traditional ornamentations, she modified it by "produc[ing] an emotional thrill that few other living singers [were] capable of."[30] She was often compared to her male counterparts in *Lucia*; time and time again, reviewers insist that they did not hold a candle to her vocal ability nor to her dramatic interpretation.[31]

In the 1953 EMI recording,[32] George Jellinek described the sound of the Mad Scene as possessing a "demented aura…creat[ing] an unforgettable effect."[33] As Parr and Henson suggest, there are highly visual ways in which to represent madness, but on the 1953 recording, there are no visual cues to speak of since it is only an audio recording. How then, did Maria Callas represent the instability of Lucia's character? In the above-

[28] Rudolf Kloiber, *Handbuch der Oper*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973).
[29] Baker, "Mad about the Girl," 22.
[30] Wisneski, *Maria Callas*, 122.
[31] Wisneski, *Maria Callas*, 120 [1952, Mexico City premier] "Almost all the singers, with the exception of Callas, were at odds with the accompaniment and each other."
David Hamilton, "A Callas Triumvirate," *Musical America* 111, no. 4 (1991): 50. [1955, Berlin] "Callas is right here, deploying a range of expression that these men [Di Stefano and Panerai] rarely touch upon." and "Of course Enrico should contrast, but Penerai gives us a one-note villain, without suavity."
[32] Gaetano Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Act III Scene 1: "Mad Scene: Il dolce suono," Maria Callas, soprano with Tullio Serafin, conductor, recorded by the Fiorentino Maggio Musicale Orchestra, *Her Greatest Arias and Scenes*, Vol. 9: 1953, CD.
[33] George Jellinek, "Callas--again?" *The Opera Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 187.

mentioned recording, Callas' entry is marked by the words "Il dolce suono," and from the beginning of her sound, the timbre is not entirely in the balance of the *chiaroscuro* tone discussed in the previous chapter. *Chiaroscuro* is, of course, difficult to measure, but nonetheless, Callas' voice settles into the darker—that is to say more *scuro* than *chiaro*—side of her voice. "Il dolce suono mi colpì di sua voce!" (The sweet sound of his voice has struck me!)[34] has a tentative and nervous quality to it, indicating that Callas has assigned these feelings to Lucia at this moment. Rather than Lucia rejoicing at the possibility of Edgardo returning to her, Callas has chosen the darker colour to reflect that Lucia may even be scared at this instant. As Callas progresses through the aria, so too do Lucia's feelings change; "Ah! quella voce m'è qui nel cor discesa!" (Ah! that voice has penetrated into my heart!) serves a turning point. In this line, Callas moves through the dark into the balance of *chiaroscuro*, and by the word "cor" (heart) her tone has centred. Perhaps indicating Lucia's realisation that Edgardo is truly with her, this shift is complete by the time she cries his name in the next line. The clarity of the name "Edgardo!" is exclaimed with an outburst of desperate excitement, leaning towards a brighter sound as she believes he has returned to be with her.

This is simply the context of one track in the entire recorded opera, and within the sixteen-minute track for the Mad Scene, the previous paragraph covers only the first minute and thirty seconds. The complete shift of vocal timbre exhibited by Callas in this short time not only perfectly exemplifies the range of emotion that can be covered by a change of timbre, but also the *bel canto* principle of *chiaroscuro*. David Hamilton writes here about the 1955 performance in Berlin:

> Callas paints Lucia's misery in continually shifting colors, the tone now lighter, now darker, as if searching for hope and not finding it; rather than illustrating a single affect, the creature traverses a volatile range of feelings.[35]

[34] Bard Suverkrop, "Literal translation and IPA transcription: Il dolce suono…Spargi d'amaro pianto," *IPA Source*, 2007. https://www-ipasource-com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/product/il-dolce-suono-spargi-damaro-pianto/.
[35] Hamilton, "A Callas Triumvirate," 50.

London Green agrees with Hamilton when considering the Berlin *Lucia*, recalling that Callas had "a voice filled with colors and shadows,"[36] and that she used "not a sigh, not a tear, and no appeal to sentiment. It is all done with vocal color."[37] From these accounts it becomes apparent that Callas' dramatic intuition spoke to many who heard her, accounting for her immediate success in such roles.

Controversially, Callas admitted to never having read *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the original source material by Scott. She supported her decision to disregard the novel in a 1956 interview, saying, "it is not important…literary works are the springboard, but what matters is what the composer does with them," concluding that "there is nothing Scottish about the way Donizetti interprets [Lucia]."[38] Callas was "not the kind of diva who [would] pore over antique scores."[39] Having studied the opera and libretto, Callas always insisted that Lucia is ill from the beginning of the opera. "You cannot go by [the story]; you must make your decisions about her from the music...Lucia's music tells us she is doomed from the start."[40] Callas tells her students at the Juilliard masterclasses that the way to convey that illness is to colour Lucia's fearful and impatient words from the start, using a delicate or full timbre for a dramatic purpose. These observations are clear in Callas' recordings of *Lucia*.

With the change that Callas made to the role of Lucia, in terms of timbre as a means of expression as well as a heavier tone throughout as a *dramatic soprano*, she allowed for the evolution of this character and opera. An opera that was once "regarded as essentially decorative or, at most, comfortably touching, *Lucia* was revealed—with controversy—as profoundly expressive of the densities of human feeling."[41] Similarly to Elisa Masson in 1848 (setting aside the visit to an asylum), Callas executed the role in a dignified fashion with subtleties in her voice and acting that had not been typical on the

[36] London Green, "Callas and Lucia," *The Opera Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1998), 66.
[37] Ibid., 70.
[38] Lanfranco Rasponi, *The Last Pima Donnas*, (New York: Limelight Editions, 1985), 579.
[39] Baker, "Mad about the Girl," 20.
[40] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 93.
[41] Green, "Callas and Lucia," 65.

operatic stage. She paved the way for many singers after her, one of which is none other than Dame Joan Sutherland.

Joan Sutherland, an Australian soprano, made her debut as Lucia in 1959 at the Royal Opera House in London. *Lucia di Lammermoor* was not (yet) a staple in the repertoire at Covent Garden, as it "suddenly disappeared from the repertory in 1909; apart from a single performance in 1925."[42] Sutherland's performance was acclaimed critically, so much so that a review in *The Musical Times* stated that when Sutherland writes her autobiography, "she will probably devote a whole chapter to the performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Covent Garden."[43] This same review was keen to compare her to Callas, as the audience adored her and "rightly acclaimed her in a manner usually reserved…for Maria Callas."[44] Yet, not all reviews agreed that this reception was justified; a review in *The Observer* claimed that Sutherland had "yet to acquire something of that alchemy whereby Callas infuses the most ordinary phrase with pregnant meaning and emotion."[45] Although this review acknowledged that a singer should "[act] in the first place with her voice," it maintained that Sutherland was "touching rather than truly moving."[46] Callas' level of acting that earned her the title of *La Divina* (the divine one) was and still is a high bar for any young singer, including Joan Sutherland.

Despite this criticism of Sutherland's premier as Lucia, the response was overwhelmingly positive, further described as "a tour de force,"[47] and *The Observer* article complimented Sutherland by saying that she had "not achieved agility at the expense of colour."[48] Even seven years after Callas had made her debut, the public was still discussing the value of transforming this opera from "merely a virtuoso feat" to "a natural expression" of Lucia's grief.[49] Sutherland, like Callas, had helped shape the

[42] Harold Rutland, "Music in London," *The Musical Times* 100, no. 1394, (1959): 211.
[43] Ibid., 211.
[44] Ibid., 211.
[45] Peter Hayworth, "Music and Musicians: A Triumphant Lucia," *The Observer*, February 22, 1959.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Rutland, "Music in London," 211.
[48] Hayworth, "Music and Musicians."
[49] Rutland, "Music in London," 211.

public's view of this opera. In an interview with Jon Tolansky, Sutherland shared her interpretation of Lucia, suggesting that one can "think in terms of [Lucia] being…frail even when the opera begins," and the challenge point when performing this role is to keep the character consistent "in and out of her flights of fancy and terror and dreams."[50] These insights seem to resonate with Callas' own observations about Lucia, so there is no doubt that these two illustrious sopranos would have agreed on some points regarding interpretation of this role.

To observe Sutherland in action, this next section will focus on the 1962 *Bell Telephone Hour*[51] and the 1982 Metropolitan Opera[52] recordings; these video recordings will be examined to draw out where they deviate from one another and the effect that such choices can have on a performance. Here, I will also be alluding to the observations made earlier on the visual aspect of exploitation that implies madness. By comparing the two performances of Joan Sutherland's Lucia, one in 1962 for film and the other in 1982 on stage, I will analyse the major differences in performance style and interpretation, drawing out the visual and vocal aspects that highlight the soprano's state of mind. Beginning with the *Bell Telephone Hour* recording which captures only the Mad Scene, Susan McClary (2002) offers an idea of why isolated recordings like this exist; the "specialized commercial recordings that contain nothing but Mad Scenes, [are] all conveniently excerpted and packaged together so that the listener doesn't have to endure any of the boring stuff between the 'good parts.'"[53] As McClary suggests, the Mad Scene is often taken out of context and presented as an isolated event in order to capture the main attraction of the entire opera.

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[50] Joan Sutherland, "Joan Sutherland discusses 'Lucia di Lammermoor'," from *Joan Sutherland discusses her life and career with Jon Tolansky*, Decca Music Group Limited, 2011. https://open.spotify.com/album/6ClpP0xDJijCBTcYCJmDyW.

[51] *Bell Telephone Hour*, "Joan Sutherland. Donizetti: Il dolce suono mi colpì di sua voce! … Spargi d'amaro pianto (from Lucia di Lammermoor)," Directed by Donald Voorhees, Aired February 2, 1962, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTpzjEBUqng.

[52] Joan Sutherland, "Dame Joan Lucia's 'Mad Scene' (NY, 1982)," Filmed November 1982 in New York, Metropolitan Opera Company, 25:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVHLzFKA9NI&t=1282s.

[53] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 80.

The music in the two recordings is very similar, with small cuts made to the televised 1962 performance, and since the singer is the same, it could be presumed that the two performances would be almost identical. Yet, this is not at all the case. Despite the two performances occurring at very different times in Sutherland's career, twenty years apart in fact, this is the least of their differences. Since the rest of the highly structured opera is absent in the 1962 recording, the viewer has no metaphorical yardstick to compare with the Mad Scene. So far in the opera, the music has adhered to the confines of form, tonality, and is altogether fairly standard. This lack of context may confuse the viewer slightly and therefore dampen the impact that the Mad Scene is intended to have.

Perhaps the most important part of convincing the audience that the star soprano has in fact gone mad is the outside commentary from the chorus. In the 1962 recording, these voices of reason are not present. The refrain that the chorus sings to Lucia: "più raffrenare il pianto possibile non è," (it is no longer possible to refrain from weeping) and therefore, her connection to the rational voices outside of herself, is lost. Along with the lack of singing from the chorus, the audience also misses their presence. The reactions that would be coming from the chorus are entirely lost. This forces the audience to think that Lucia is the only voice here and that, perhaps, she is the voice of reason. Donizetti kept the chorus present in this scene in order to help the audience observe how comparably insane Lucia is becoming, and Cammarano was also in favour of the bystanders being in the scene. Even in his notes, Cammarano advises the chorus to look pitifully upon Lucia,[54] but without the chorus, that comparison is gone, and Lucia may seem slightly more rational.

The musical elements are central to the complete understanding of this scene, but the visual components of the scene are perhaps even more essential. The visual elements in the 1962 recording condemn this version and lose meaning. In the majority of staged versions, including the 1982 recording, Lucia is clothed in a beautiful white wedding gown, but the disturbing element is the splatter of blood on her garment and face that she

[54] Black, "Cammarano's Notes," 38.

seems to wear with delusional ecstasy (Figure 4.1).[55] In the 1962 television broadcast, Joan Sutherland as Lucia was destined to have less of an impact. Given the televisional medium, the directors used visual elements to make the broadcast accessible for more audiences. Instead of wearing a blood splattered white gown, the director had Sutherland wear a pristine, pale blue gown and carry a red scarf (Figure 4.2).[56] The scarf, no doubt, represents the blood that should have been on her dress, but it makes the scene slightly more family friendly. Despite this intention, without the blood stains the viewer is completely disconnected from the dramatic context of this scene. One could even assume, without any context, that she is simply a madwoman carrying around and dancing with a red scarf when in reality the situation is quite dire at this point in the opera.

Figure 4.1: Joan Sutherland's 1982 Metropolitan Opera performance of the Mad Scene

Figure 4.2: Joan Sutherland's 1962 *Bell Telephone Hour* performance of the Mad Scene

As Parr indicates, the presence and absence of certain elements can impact the audience's perception of a performance, but I would add that too much absence takes away from the context, leading to an incomplete picture of the plot. Perhaps, if the 1962 performance had included an off-stage chorus, the point of having the voice of reason would have remained intact. The removal of the chorus altogether was, in my humble

[55] Matteo Sarti, *As Lucia di Lammermoor, by Donizetti*, photograph, The Lujon Magazine, June 3, 2015, https://thelujonmagazine.wordpress.com/2015/06/03/lets-take-a-moment-joan-sutherland/.
[56] Screenshot of: *Bell Telephone Hour*, "Joan Sutherland," 3:21, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTpzjEBUqng.

opinion, detrimental to this presentation. Understandably, the blood splattered gown that has been associated with this role was removed for a public medium such as television. I cannot personally speak to the restrictions of such a medium and the confines that Donald Voorhees, director, was obliged to adhere to. Dressing Sutherland in a white gown, resembling that of a bride, would have given more context to the scene, yet the decision to include a red scarf cannot be faulted. It is the best compromise here to keep the Mad Scene relatively family friendly.

Another visual cue that makes the *Bell Telephone Hour* broadcast less effective is the direction in which Sutherland is singing. This may seem like an inconsequential detail, but it is impossible to ignore. The director made a questionable choice when it came to where the singing should be aimed. Sutherland is facing the camera most of the time, and she quite often looks directly into the camera lens as if she is gazing into the face of the viewer. To the viewer, this is not a desirable effect at all. By directing the singing towards the audience in such an intense way, the dramatic introspection of the whole scene seems to fade. Lucia's emotions are stewing in her mind which gives the impression that it would be best directed inwards, or even towards the invisible Edgardo. Instead, the energy is directed outward and seems to be addressed towards the viewer which can be uncomfortable at times.

With all of that said, there is no way that an opera fan could be convinced that the *Bell Telephone Hour* performance was substandard. With the broadcast of any operatic performance comes new experiences for those that may not usually buy a ticket to a show that their local opera company is putting on or make a trip to the Met. By putting on this performance in 1962, Donald Voorhees opened the world of opera to a plethora of first-time listeners and new opera fans. When researching this iconic Sutherland performance, one finds a plethora of articles and newspapers praising the production from the time it was released until the 2010s.

"Barely two months after her Metropolitan Opera debut,"[57] Sutherland has been applauded for this recording ever since. Rishoi, watching the 1962 broadcast on DVD, compliments "Sutherland's technique and vocal amplitude rank [as] the twentieth century's greatest."[58] To visualise this recording, Rishoi comments again:

> Sutherland is showcased in a marvelous, Disney-castle interior of a set, replete with the inevitable staircase, and she enacts a melodramatic but gripping account of poor Lucia's imaginings. Costumed in a diaphanous light blue gown superbly setting off her loose auburn mane and alabaster complexion, the soprano exudes supreme confidence as she gives a fully realized performance while with seeming nonchalance she etches the vocal line with matchless ease — nowhere more so than in her sparkling cadenza with flute...capped by a voluminous E-flat, the soprano does her famous 'death tumble' to the floor. Yearning desire to see Sutherland's essential Lucia completely satisfied.[59]

The Mad Scene, filmed in 1962 is a constant reminder of Sutherland's launch into international stardom. Her voice was "like a fresh, effervescent Alpine waterfall" which would eventually evolve into "warm, molten gold."[60] It became the booming and full voice that is heard in the 1982 Metropolitan Opera performance on stage in New York. This recording is the classic staging of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, complete with the blood-stained dress, the chorus, and all the context the audience would miss if the scene was taken out of context. The 1982 stage recording is so legendary that, at the Met's Centennial Celebration in 1983, it was chosen as one of the few (out of hundreds of recordings) to display on screen.[61]

The 1982 Met recording[62] boasts a live orchestral sound and a stage filled with wedding guests and servants. Upon Lucia's entrance, the entire chorus turns their backs to the audience as she walks down the staircase. When they realise she does not see them, they begin to mutter to one another while watching her intently. Not too far into the

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[57] Neil Rishoi, "Joan Sutherland: The Complete 'Bell Telephone Hour' Performances Volumes One and Two," *The Opera Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (2001): 296.
[58] Ibid., 295.
[59] Ibid., 296.
[60] Paul Thomason, "Video: Joan Sutherland: The Complete Bell Telephone Hour Performances," *Opera News* 65, no. 6 (2000): 107.
[61] John Rockwell, "The MET Plans Its Centenary," *The New York Times*, June 19, 1983.
[62] Sutherland, "Dame Joan Lucia's 'Mad Scene' (NY, 1982)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVHLzFKA9NI&t=1282s.

scene, she comes out of her trance-like state and sees them watching her, at which point they all turn away sheepishly. She promptly returns to her daydream, and it is only when she repeats the word "fantasma" (spectre) that she seems to become progressively more frightened. Her reaction is mirrored by the chorus behind her who seem to have more fear in their eyes than pity. Sutherland colours the word "fantasma" so effectively that it sounds like a guttural cry. She then directs her line of sight upwards, as if there were actually a ghost in her presence. Nearly all of these dramatic elements that set the mood are missing in the *Bell Telephone Hour* recording, of course not the fault of Sutherland, but rather the production itself.

There is no doubt, the talent and influence of Dame Joan Sutherland was remarkable. She managed to execute the role of Lucia flawlessly no matter the setting or year. Even when isolated from the rest of the opera in 1962, the Mad Scene was sung with as much energy and poise as the 1982 staged rendition. Although seeing the Mad Scene alone, separated from the rest of the opera, disconnects the audience from the context and the bigger picture, it makes opera infinitely more accessible to a wide audience. After all, opera and any drama in general were written with the viewer in mind. Joan Sutherland framed the madness of Lucia in a tasteful and timeless fashion. Thomason put it so simply: "how wonderful to be able to see young Sutherland giving what can only be described as a great performance of the role that first made her famous."[63] She certainly deserved the fame that Lucia brought her.

Throughout Sutherland's career, she evolved and so did her voice. Often criticised for her "poor diction"[64] and lack of acting skills, she was also "uncertain of her abilities when she first began her major career."[65] Certainly singers' voices evolve over their careers, but their other pertinent skills will evolve as well. Even the 1962 recording "is definite proof of how hard she must have worked to overcome those deficiencies"[66]

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[63] Thomason, "Video: Joan Sutherland," 108.
[64] Susan Heller Anderson, "Joan Sutherland Returns to the Met in 'Lucia': Joan Sutherland Returns in 'Lucia'," *The New York Times,* Oct 31, 1982: 19.
[65] Rishoi, "Joan Sutherland," 295.
[66] Ibid., 295.

compared to where she started in her development. Sutherland also defended herself in a 1982 interview by stating, "if you want to see a wonderful actress, you go to see a straight play."[67] Sutherland recognised the demands of her craft and commented that "you can't be as emotionally involved when you sing as when you're acting."[68] Music critic Thomas Glasow declared in 1997 that "if doubt should ever cast its shadow on the legend, let this [1962] video serve as proof enough to set the record straight."[69] It is rare to come across a review of *Lucia di Lammermoor* without the soprano being compared to the legendary Callas and Sutherland. They, no doubt, had an enormous impact on the performance practice of this opera and the interpretation of Lucia's character. Influencing countless singers in the present day, these ladies will be remembered for their commitment to excellence. The following section documents the impact these sopranos had on singers who admired them.

Aprile Millo (b. 1958), American born soprano, advocated that "Callas gave [Lucia] a humanity that had never been explored before."[70] So much so that Millo added, "you're always going to be knocked senseless by some incredible insight into humanity."[71] Martina Arroyo (b. 1937) was born fourteen years after Callas, and seeing her as a role model, she remembers that Callas' acting abilities were "extremely new and…very different from what we had been used to."[72] Italian tenor Carlo Bergonzi (1924-2014) also commented on Callas' outstanding acting, noting that she did not create characters on her own; she was always informed by the text. "Callas studied the text, the meaning of the words…because she studied the character, she entered the mind of the character."[73] Ewa Podleś (b. 1952), contralto, credits her upbringing in communist Poland with introducing her to Callas. Podleś's mother had one record, and it happened to be Callas in *Tosca*. She recalls that "[Callas] could say everything *only* with her voice,"

[67] Heller Anderson, "Joan Sutherland Returns," 19.
[68] Ibid., 19.
[69] Thomas Glasow, "Joan Sutherland: The Age of Bel Canto," *The Opera Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1997): 130.
[70] Ibid., 20.
[71] James C. Whitson, "The Callas Legacy," *Opera News* 10 (October 2005): 19.
[72] Ibid., 20.
[73] Ibid., 21.

concluding that "it's enough to hear her."[74] Others with more fortunate upbringings such as Evelyn Lear (1926-2012) and Jon Vickers (1926-2015), however, cite the importance of seeing Callas while she sang. Lear insisted that "seeing her was far more important than hearing her,"[75] and Vickers agreed, "I'm not interested in listening to her recordings. Callas cannot be contained on a recording!"[76] Concluding, Renée Fleming (b. 1959) observes, "there is something intrinsic in her sound that is sad. She's the epitome of a chiaroscuro voice—the light and the darkness, but more darkness."[77] Fleming brings out the role of *chiaroscuro* in singing, especially when it comes to expressing contrasting emotions.

Not all, however, agree that Callas and Sutherland were the iconic Lucias. Charles Mackerras (1925-2010), conductor, recounts that "many great divas have sung [Lucia] at the Met...Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland. In recent seasons this tradition has continued...yet I daresay none of these illustrious ladies sang Lucia as Donizatti wrote it."[78] While Mackerras insisted upon the opera containing no cuts and using the exact music Donizetti wrote, Maria Callas would have something else to say:

> There are...certain changes you can make to the music, and certain notes you can add that are of good tradition and which will heighten the drama. I have heard people say that tradition is last night's bad performance. But tradition does exist, ways of performing that are passed from one generation to another. Tradition is good or bad depending on who has had good taste and who has not; good taste is that which respects the spirit of the composer and his music.[79]

Mackerras and Callas may disagree on these issues, but nevertheless they both remain undeniably influential musicians of their time. Sutherland was as well; after singing the title role in *Lucia* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, she skyrocketed into her

[74] Ibid., 24.
[75] Ibid., 22.
[76] Ibid., 22.
[77] Ibid., 24.
[78] Mackerras, "Will the Real Lucia Please Stand Up?," 54.
[79] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 99.

well-deserved fame. *Lucia di Lammermoor* will always be associated with her name, and there is no way one can talk about the history of *Lucia* without mentioning Sutherland.[80]

Martin Kettle, writing for *The Guardian*, interviewed and wrote two articles on Sutherland.[81] In the 2002 interview, the two of them met at The Royal Opera House, where Sutherland was sure no one would remember her. As described by Kettle, the employees "go on noticing her as we make our way through the Opera House…ask[ing] for her autograph."[82] Kettle goes on to mark her as "the vocal phenomenon of the postwar era" in his 2010 article, one day after her death.[83] Sutherland's performances of Lucia have been hailed as her "diva-making act,"[84] a "thrill,"[85] displaying "greater vocal beauty"[86] than Callas. This chapter hardly functions as a method to pit Callas against Sutherland— in fact, that would be counterintuitive. Simply demonstrating the breadth of these two sopranos' expertise and their influence on a constantly evolving field is enough. Irrefutably, *Lucia di Lammermoor* would not be in the same position that it is today if it were not for Callas and Sutherland. There are certainly not enough positive words one can use to describe the legends presented in this chapter.

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[80] Thomason, "Video: Joan Sutherland," 108.
[81] Martin Kettle, "Joan Sutherland: the greatest soprano ever?" *The Guardian*, October 11, 2010. Martin Kettle, "'I didn't want to be a diva,'" *The Guardian*, May 8, 2002.
[82] Kettle, "'I didn't want to be a diva.'"
[83] Kettle, "Joan Sutherland: the greatest soprano ever?"
[84] Clive Barnes, "New York Opera: Lucia di Lammermoor," *Musical Opinion*, (March-April 2008): 44.
[85] Anonymous, "Quarter Notes," *The Opera Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 1.
[86] William Littler, "Opera Fans can Choose from Strong Selection of Lammermoor CDs," *Toronto Star,* April 8, 1995.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Bel canto has been defined as a compositional style, a period of time, a technical approach to singing, and method of acting with the voice and body. Despite the conflicting definitions, *bel canto* is united as beautiful singing with the purpose of conveying emotion to an operatic audience. In opera studies, *bel canto* is regarded as the compositional style and period. Pedagogy regards it as a method to teach singers legato, purity of vowels, and the use of timbre. For performance studies and defined by performers themselves, *bel canto* combines the two previous definitions and uses shades of the voice as well as visual aspects to tell the story. Considering these dissimilar interpretations, it is no wonder that *bel canto*'s definition has been contested for so long.

A question that seemed so simple at first, "how does *bel canto* manifest itself in a mad scene such as Lucia's," has unveiled itself with anything but a simple answer. The observations made throughout these past chapters have approached this question from a variety of angles. The character of Lucia has been discussed critically in the past, yet there has been a clear separation between opera studies and performance studies. Since my focus was on the Mad Scene, it seemed only logical that I offer my take on her character as well. Donizetti has used musical elements in order to insinuate Lucia's mental state in the Mad Scene and throughout the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*. His librettist counterpart, Cammarano, used character adaption, textual setting, and staging notes to further this trend of highlighting madness in an exhibitionist fashion. By contextualising Lucia within her historical perception, her transformation has divulged that she has been manipulated in order to present a stylised version of her suffering and madness.

The nineteenth-century practice of *bel canto* technique, as described by pedagogues of the time, was relatively consistent with the principles of the revival-era technique. Acknowledging scientific advances, the revival-era pedagogues offered new takes on the technique by applying the established technical elements to practical singing practises. These traditions are further perpetuated by the singers who perform using the

technique or are inspired by principles of the nineteenth-century pedagogues. Singers such as Maria Callas taught publicly in masterclasses in order to pass down the concepts to the next generation. In contrast, some singers like Joan Sutherland were private and preferred to keep to themselves, yet tidbits can still be drawn out from interviews or masterclass snippets. By drawing a distinct line through these periods, the development of *bel canto* technique can clearly be traced and along with it, the meaningful changes. At its core *bel canto* can be simplified as beautiful singing, but to echo the words of the great soprano, Maria Callas: "above all, bel canto is expression. A beautiful sound alone is not enough."[1] Both Callas and Sutherland, through their instruction to others and their personal technique, advocate for an expressive *bel canto* to be paramount. From the nineteenth-century pedagogues to modern day performers, it is clear that the value of artistic interpretation remains intact. Through this principle of vocal freedom and usage of timbre for expressive purposes, Lucia gains a voice, and therefore is freed from the chains of the Work.

When defining *bel canto* in performance, Lucia triumphantly returns, unleashed with her autonomy embodied by the singer who portrays her. Notably, Callas advocates for Lucia's independence by using timbre as a defining performative factor. By changing timbral qualities, the singer, and therefore Lucia, gains the freedom to make her own dramatic choices, emphasising further the expressive power of timbre. Analysing Sutherland's performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor*'s Mad Scene has led to the conclusion that differing auditory and visual aspects can further the story or hinder the development of the narrative. By using varying techniques in performances, the scene can be fully formed, as in the 1982 performance or adapted into an isolated event, as in the 1962 film version. Both renditions have their advantages, but as I argued, the fully staged version hits the core of the scene and is fleshed out to its fullest potential.

Bel canto can have divergent meanings, often distinct from individual to individual, dependent on their background and field of study. Nevertheless, *bel canto* harmoniously cements itself as a tree with many branches whose roots come from the

[1] Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard*, 3.

same soil. From here, we can see how Callas and Sutherland used the principles of *bel canto* in their performances to ultimately give Lucia her well deserved freedom. Subsequently, these sopranos gave Lucia new life, and by using their voices, they bestowed upon Lucia a voice of her own.

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