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# Research of the Most Well-Known Tenor Roles in Mozart's Operas

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## Research of the most well-known tenor roles in Mozart's operas

### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### Dictionary / Encyclopedia Articles

Eisen, Cliff. "Adamberger, Johann Valentin." In *The Cambridge Mozart Encyclopedia*. Edited by Cliff Eisen and Simon Keefe: 1-2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Johan Valentin Adamberger (Bavaria, 1740 – Vienna, 1804) was a German tenor. The article specifically points the high appreciation Mozart had for the singer, for whom he created the role of Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Monsieur Volgesang (*Der Schauspieldirektor*), as well as the aria *Per pietà, non ricercate* K420, and some of the now most well-known concert arias of the composer. The article also provides information about the description of him from the dramatis Gebler as combining "great artistry with a marvelous voice".

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. "Idomeneo, Re di Creta" In *The Cambridge Mozart Encyclopedia*.

Edited by Cliff Eisen and Simon Keefe: 220-229. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

The article provides concise information including dates, origin, composition process, etc., of the opera, and mentions the tenor Anton Raaff, who took the title role. One paragraph explains how Raaff's participation caused stress in the production because of the tenor's advanced age and his lacking of acting skills. It is mentioned that for the opera's premiere in

Vienna, the composer planned to adapt Idamante's role for tenor (Valentin Adamberger) and Idomeneo for bass. The Genre, Music and Characterization section, points how Mozart accommodated Idomeneo's arias to the capacities of the elderly principal tenor.

### **Secondary or Tertiary Monographs**

Potter, John. "Handel Mozart and the Tenor – Castrato Connection." In *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 22-43. Yale University Press, 2009.

<http://www.jstor.org/du.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctt5vkqks.6>.

A brief explanation about the evolution of the tenor voice through the history of vocal music is provided (from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century). The article stops for a moment in the late baroque period, where *castrati* dominated the opera productions, and specifically how G. F. Händel utilized the tenor voice in his creations. The author mentions the tenors: Friberth, d'Ettore, Raaff, and Adamberger. Mozart did not like to write above B flat for tenor, although some of them demonstrated a large vocal range and good agility when singing works from other composers like Haydn. Critical information about Anton Raaff's capabilities is provided: Mozart heard Raaff sing a concert aria by J. C. Bach and was moved by the singer's interpretation. The piece seems to have been excessively ornamented to Mozart's taste but Raaff demonstrated "bravura singing, long passages and roulades". However, through the study of the composer's comments about the singer in his correspondence, Mozart appreciate more the drama and expression over the vocal display. Another section is devoted to Valentin Adamberger and his relationship with Mozart and how well they worked together: Adamberger also performed concert arias by the composer written for a soprano in a transposed version.

## Essays in Collections

Corneilson, Paul. "Mozart as a Vocal Composer." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe, 118–30. Cambridge Companions to Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

The article studies, through different examples how Mozart composed his vocal works putting the singers' capabilities first. The experiences he had with different performers (some of them the most important of those days) can be found, as well as specific details of how he always aimed to please them and to obtain the best musical results by pleasing the singers and truly "tailoring" the pieces for each one.

Rohringer, Stefan. "Don Ottavio and the History of the Tenor Voice." In *Drama Giocoso: Four Contemporary Perspectives on the Mozart/Da Ponte operas*, edited by Julian Rushton, Stefan Rohringer, Sergio Durante and James Webster, 33-58. Collected Writings of the Orpheus Institute. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012.  
<http://www.jstor.org/du.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctt9qdwt6.5>.

The article largely discusses the dramatic content and contradictions of the tenor role in the famous opera Don Giovanni. In the second part, the author develops important ideas about how was the tenor voice used by different composers and cite research done about this topic: it seems to be a distinction between the roles assigned to castrati (passionate male lover) and tenors (hero, emperor, father, general, etc.), finding a place as the lover only in Mozart's singspiel and *opera buffa*.

Schroeder, David. "Mozart and Late Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe, 48–58. Cambridge Companions to Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

In "Aesthetic approaches", information about correspondence between Mozart and his father is explained in order to figure out the influences that Mozart had in his works. His father was really engaged with the composer's career and used every opportunity he had to make recommendations to his son, asking him to always listen what is the music taste of the country or city for which he will compose, to discuss the text in advance, to make other people hear excerpts of his music and have their opinion, to make revisions, etc., in other words, motivating his son to really understand the audience. The influence of Enlightenment period on the arts is discussed, as the cultivation of the best human qualities or refinement of taste, and how Mozart knew those principles, as well as aesthetic, political and philosophical views of the past well through his father and some other influential people during his days. This analysis can help to understand the context in which the composer created his operas and other works not for his own or the performer's exhibition but for a higher purpose.

Woodfield, Ian. "Mozart's Compositional Methods: Writing for His Singers." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe, 35–47. Cambridge Companions to Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

A critical passage in Mozart's correspondence is quoted about an aria he was composing for the tenor Anton Raaff in the opera *Idomeneo*: "...I assured him that I would arrange the aria in such a way that it would give him pleasure to sing it. For I like an aria to fit a singer as perfectly as a well-made suit of clothes." The composer usually started to work on his creations

with the music and ensemble numbers, leaving the arias and the most important passages on standby until really knowing their capabilities (with no conclusive evidence that an actual meeting took place). The article studies the evidence in the original version of *Così fan Tutte* and how the singers had a significant influence on the composition of their arias. When an aria had been well discussed and accepted, Mozart could make final adjustments and set it aside to be orchestrated, but that final result was achieved only after a process of self-revision and dialogue with the singers in order to meet their requirements.

### **Dissertations and Theses**

Reed, Vernon. "The Development and Use of the Tenor Voice 1600 to the Present." Doctor of Education Diss., Columbia University, 1983. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

The document discusses different aspects of the tenor voice from the basic definitions to the importance of its role in today's opera. An entire chapter is dedicated to studying the tenor role in the Classical era (42-65), including the study of Mozart's tenors, in which section the author shows a very interesting speculation that Mozart was a tenor himself, based on the score of a trio for soprano, tenor and bass in which the composer wrote his own name next to the tenor line. By comparing works from composers like Bach, a contemporary of Mozart, a description is proposed about the features required from the tenor voice at that era: high *tessitura*, *coloratura*, cadenzas and large vocal ranges, sustained high notes, and *messa di voce*. The author also takes the example of Belmonte's role in *The Abduction of the Seraglio*, where the tenor has become a "flesh and blood lover", capable of transmitting a dramatic language, requiring great flexibility and stamina.

## Journal Articles

Jenkins, John. "Mozart and the Castrati" *The Musical Times* 151, no. 1913 (Winter 2010): 55-68.

<https://www-jstor-org.du.idm.oclc.org/stable/25759517>.

In this article, the author discusses the important role that castrati still had during Mozart's life and how he appreciated their capabilities, creating many roles in his operas for those voices. One of the most important features of the article is that through many evidences, it explains how Mozart really wanted to compose the parts based on the singer's capabilities, knowing the singers well and even establishing friendship relationships with most of them. Some of the characteristics of the baroque era seem to be still present in Mozart's days: he composed arias which include difficult agilities, coloraturas and a large vocal range.

Russel, Robert. "The Best Voice for Mozart." *The Choral Journal* 23, no. 5 (January 1983): 5-8.

<https://www-jstor-org.du.idm.oclc.org/stable/23546143>.

After a wide study of different schools of voice technique, the article's conclusions clearly describe the required features of the music in the Classical period: clarity of expression, so huge voices with wide vibratos obscure rather than clarify the music. Based on the sources studied at the beginning of the article, the author identifies the characteristics of a *Mozartian* voice: freely produced, well-centered quality, focused tone and not spread, warm sound with a narrow medium speed vibrato, body and substance.

Vincent, Lawrence. "A Performer's Reflections on Die Zauberflöte." *Brigham Young University*

*Studies* 43, no. 3 (2004): 36-40. <http://www.jstor.org.du.idm.oclc.org/stable/43044394>.

The performer's point of view in singing the tenor roles in Mozart's operas is showed, specially in the first part, describing the experience as rewarding but challenging at the same time. The author mentions the masterful vocal technique required and how the composer exposes the strengths and weaknesses of the human voice. The importance of acting skills and knowledge of Mozart's music in order to understand the "musical" stage direction that the composer gave to the singer in the score. The role of *Tamino* in "The Magic Flute" is discussed in a musical as well as drama aspect.

## **Music Scores**

Link, Dorothea, ed. *Arias for Vincenzo Calvesi: Mozart's First Ferrando*. Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era 84. Middleton: A-R Editions, 2011.

A collection of aria from different classical composers that Vincenzo Calvesi performed. Some arias are highlighted which means that they were written specifically for Calvesi. The works are from Salieri, Martin y Soler, Righini and Storace, and the editor of the collection included comments about the form and vocal requirements for each piece like the *tesitura*, vocal range, which in general, had a full lyric passages with legato singing. One of the works requires demanding vocal agility and virtuosity, but the comments clarify that it was probably composed for a young and in fine vocal shape Calvesi.

## **Critical Score Editions**

Link, Dorothea, ed. "Introduction." In *Arias for Vincenzo Calvesi: Mozart's First Ferrando*, ix-xxiv. Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era 84. Middleton: A-R Editions, 2011.

The author approaches the construction of Ferrando's role in Mozart's *Così fan Tutte*, through different evidence that shows how the composer adapted the score passages to the capabilities of the singer in order to achieve a satisfactory performance for both parties. The introduction discusses in detail Calvesi's career as one of the most requested singers of the classical period by composers such as Salieri, Martín y Soler, Righini, Storace and of course, Mozart. It mentions also the competition between tenors and castrati, and how the tenors of that time developed large vocal ranges, good *messa di voce*, and vocal agility to match the castrati's capabilities. As a result, composers began to write higher notes for the tenors. As an example, Bellini wrote a high soprano F in *I puritani* for the tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini. Regarding Calvesi's description, the evidence in Ferrando's role suggests that he was not excellent at ornamenting melodies (there is a near absence of coloratura), but demonstrated skills for a continuous and intense singing that never ends, clear resolution of the *passaggio*, and secure high notes. Calvesi's main strengths are exemplified by his lyrical singing and his "sweet-energetic" voice. The works written for him reveal a singer capable of wide-ranging melodies, ease of motion through the registers, and a smooth *passaggio*.

## **Sound and Video Recordings**

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. "Die Entführung aus dem Serail." Edita Gruveroba (Konstanze),

Francisco Araiza (Belmonte), Reri Grist (Blonde), Norbert Orth (Pedrillo), Martti Talvela (Osmin). Filmed in 1980 in Munich, Germany. Video, 2:26.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7cPp8jrzcw>.

Francisco Araiza takes the role of Belmonte in the production of the Bavarian State Opera. Araiza, who has sung in the major opera houses and concert halls of America and Europe, made an international reputation singing Mozart and Rossini operas, being described as a *tenore di grazia* with a full and lyric sound but at the same time delicate and able to meet the stylistic requirements of Mozart's operas. His renditions of the biggest tenor roles in Mozart's operas have a special place in the memories of the most finest and technically perfect singers.