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CONCISE TREATISE

ON  
Italian Singing,

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ELUCIDATED BY

RULES, OBSERVATIONS AND EXAMPLES;

SUCCEEDED BY

A NEW METHOD,

OF

INSTRUCTION,

COMPRISING

SCALES, EXERCISES, INTERVALS AND  
SOLFEGGIOS,

*Peculiarly arranged and harmonized.*

—  
DEDICATED TO

THOMAS BROADWOOD, ESQ.

BY

G. G. FERRARI.

—  
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BY

GILES OBSERVATIONS AND EXAMPLES

THOMAS WILKINSON

A NEW EDITION

WITH ADDITIONAL

INSTRUCTIONS

AND A NEW METHOD

Entered at Stationers' Hall.



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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TO

THOMAS BROADWOOD, ESQ.



MOST ESTEEMED FRIEND,

HAVING been encouraged by the favourable opinion expressed by some of my friends, on the composition and importance of this little Work, as well as flattered by the hope of obtaining the kind suffrage of the Public, I have been induced to commit it to the Press; and am bound, no less by duty than inclination, to dedicate it to you. The Work took its rise in your country mansion, where you favoured me by judicious remarks, worthy of your powers of discernment. I owe likewise to your suggestion and friendly mediation, the assistance of an able and generous



translator,\* who has embellished the original, and converted my concise manuscript, and literal, imperfect translation, into a perspicuous, original, and interesting performance.

I am, besides, infinitely indebted to you for your unwearied zeal and exertions:—they are deeply impressed on my heart, nor will they ever be effaced from my memory.

Whatever be the fate of my labours, I hope this friendly tribute will not be unacceptable to you; and rest assured that it is offered only with an earnest desire to shew some small testimony of the gratitude, regard, and friendship which is felt by your

Most devoted and obliged Servant  
and Friend,

GIACOMO GOTIFREDO FERRARI,  
DI ROVEREDO.

London, May 15, 1818.

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\* W. Shield, Esq. Composer to His Majesty.



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE English System of teaching Music, is to begin by instructing the pupils to play on some instrument, when they are only five or six years old, pronouncing the time with numerals.

In Italy they are first taught solfeggios at the age of nine or ten years, beating time with the hand.

The latter System is the easiest, but, in some instances, the former may be more prudent, for if children, with tender constitutions, only five or six years old, were to practise solfeggios intensely, they might create a danger of injuring their voices and their health.

The publications of the Elements of Music are so numerous, that I did not think it necessary to swell the size of this small volume with superfluous matter, the omission



of which affords me more space for its avowed object, which is to form the voice for that mode of Italian Singing the most admired, and cultivated in all the polished nations in Europe.

### OF THE VOICE.

THE organ of the voice, or the instrument of Nature, possesses in its compass three principal registres, the Grave, the Medium and the Acute. Two of its qualities are distinguished by the appellations, *voce di petto*, *voce di testa*, chest and head voice, although both are generated in the throat by the impulsion of the lungs.

The Falsetto is an acute artificial voice, which seldom unites with the chest voice.

The acute natural voices are those of females and children of both sexes. The grave are those of men, consequently they have



different compasses, which are expressed by various cliffs. The first by the Soprano and Contr'alto cliffs.

The second by those of Tenor and Bass.

The violin, or treble cliff, is often substituted, particularly in England, for that of Soprano, and even for all the others; but then the real tones of the Tenor and Bass voices are an octave lower than the notation.—

*Example 1st.*

By much study and practice the voice may acquire more extent towards its extremities, than it naturally possesses. But great care must be taken never to force it on the acute notes, but to strengthen and exercise it on the grave ones.



UNIONE DI VOCE, *Union of the Voice.*

It is difficult to unite the chest with the head voice, and maintain equality and mellowness, to attain which, I recommend the student to vocalize and *solfa* the scales in major and minor keys, likewise scales of semitones.

It will be the easiest to vocalize on the letters, A E, and to *solfa* on the syllables, *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si*, pronouncing the vowels in the Italian manner, as will be seen in the article Pronunciation.

Should the student's voice have a propensity to be guttural or nasal, he must endeavour to sing with his mouth forcibly open; and if he feels a difficulty in uniting the chest and head voice, he must, by art, strengthen the extremity of that which happens to be the weakest. The chest voice of children, from ten to fourteen years of age, seldom extends beyond an octave.



When the student prepares to sing, he should prefer a standing posture, open his mouth and teeth easily and gracefully, draw his breath slowly, attack the note readily, beginning *piano*, increasing its loudness, until he reaches its middle, and decreasing it as gradually, until he arrives at its end, which is technically called, in Italy, *filare la voce*, *filare i suoni*.—*Example 2nd.*

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### ON RESPIRATION.

IMMEDIATELY before the commencement of singing, the breath must be drawn in. Breathing after a long note is easier than after a short one; but, to avoid dividing the word, it is better to breathe after a phrase, a cadence, or during a pause.

Should the learners feel exhausted in the middle of a long phrase, they may respire rapidly after a member of it.

The capital letter R points out those places where natural, accommodating, long respiration may be effectively taken, and the small letter (r) denotes where it is necessary to respire artificially and rapidly.—*Example 3rd. & 4th.*

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#### MESSA DI VOCE, E PORTAMENTO.

To produce what the Italians term *messa di voce*, the singer must attack the note readily, and sustain it firmly. *Portamento* means the carriage of the voice with dignified expression. In carrying the voice from one note to another, the second must receive a slight intonation, previous to its being articulated; when ascending, the second note must receive the most strength; but in descending, more stress should be laid on the first, taking care however not to produce harsh shrieks instead of mellifluous tones.—*Example 5th.*



## ON INTONATION.

INTONATION is one of the most important objects to be attended to by those who wish to sing accurately, for the attainment of which I recommend again the practice of the Scales, the Intervals, Solfeggios, the *Messa di voce*, the management of the breath, &c., all of which I have already treated of and exemplified. These guides and the following warnings will, I hope, lead the pupil to a good intonation, of which the ear being the supreme judge, it must listen with the utmost attention, to discover truth, and correct error.

Should the scholar feel his voice weak and prone to flatness, he must draw his breath slowly and throw it out suddenly, that he may attack the notes with strength. But if his voice should have a tendency to sharpness, both the respiration and its emission ought to be gentle.

When progressions of melody are gradual, that is, when they proceed by degrees, viz: tones and semitones, more strength should be given to the whole tones than to the half tones. But when the notes succeed each other by skips, great attention is necessary to ascertain whether the distances be major, minor, perfect, imperfect, flat or sharp intervals, as those which are major, perfect or sharp ought to be sung with more force than those which are minor, imperfect and flat.

The ascent from F to B is a sharp 4th., and from B to F a flat 5th.

It will also be a proof of taste and judgment to strengthen the voice on notes elevated by an accidental sharp, and to soften it on those which are depressed by a flat. The natural ought to be reinforced, when it elevates a flat note, and mollified, when it depresses a sharp one.



## ON PRONUNCIATION.

A CLEAR pronunciation constitutes the beauty, the delight, nay, the very perfection of singing, particularly of Italian singing. Much might be said on this subject, but I shall confine myself to the most necessary observations. It must be remarked that the vowels in Italian never change their sound, excepting E and O which are sometimes long, and sometimes short; the others are invariably sounded as in the following examples:

A	E	I	O	U
Father	Reign	Ink	Tone	Bull
	E		O	
Where		Lord		

*Ci*, in Italian, must be pronounced like *chee* in the English word *cheese*, *ce* like *che* in the word *chest*, *gi* like the English letter *g*, *ge* like *j*, *sci* like the English word *she*, *sce* like these four letters combined *shay*.

The double consonants, as *rr*, *ss*, &c. &c.



ought to be heard clearly, and the liquid L, M, N, R, S to be well articulated, especially in the middle of a word. In poetry, distinguished by the appellation of *Sdruccioli* lines, the accents fall on the antepenultima syllable, as in the words *pèrfido*, *amàbile*, *bàrbaro*, *sensibile*, &c. In *piani* or running verses, it falls on the penultimate or last syllable but one, as *amòre*, *feròce*, *tradìto*. And in *tronchi* verses on the last, as *virtù*, *desìr*, *furòr*.

It must be observed that diphthongs, at the end of a line, or a phrase, are always long, as for example : *Parte dell' alma mìa*, *Il mio desìo*, *Come faceva Enèa*. In the beginning and the middle of words the diphthongs vary, and we say, *A-urora*, *ma-usoleo*, *pietà*, *questo*, *Sa-ule*, *Babbuì-no*, *mio bène*, *ben mìo*, *Io sono*, *son òo*, &c.

If in elision two equal vowels follow, the first must be pronounced without being detached from the second, as for example:



*Boschi inospiti, or Boschjospiti,*  
*Tirsi infedele, Tirsi infedele, Tirsjinfedele,*  
*Sposa amata, Sposa amata, &c.*

Nay, even when three vowels immediately succeed each other, they must be united with a slur, as for example:

*Ma e il rio; E gli arboscelli e i fior.*

Yet an elegant singer contrives to let them all be heard.

## ON THE APPOGGIATURA.

AMONG the ornaments of singing, the appoggiatura is most frequently employed, and ought to be much more used in Italian vocal music than in any other, as it aids the pronunciation of the melodious prosody of the Italian language and soothingly expresses the tender passions of its divine poetry. It is true that some singers use it when the language, as well as its harmonious accompaniment is injured by its offensive intrusion. I therefore hope that those who are too partial to embellishments will not introduce it unnecessarily.

Even the declamation of Italian poetry approaches so nearly to singing that its natural accents become musical appoggiaturas, when expressed by notation.

The appoggiaturas are various, likewise the inflections which they are liable to re-



ceive, these generally depending on the sentiment expressed by the words. The appoggiatura oftener ascends by a semitone, than by a whole tone. It also frequently descends a semitone or a tone; its note is of smaller size than that of the principal note, to which it is generally tied with a slur.

In careless notation, taste must direct the length of the appoggiatura; but whatever time the performer dwells upon it must be deducted from the principal note, that both, when counted together, may not occupy more of the bar than the measure of the said principal note.—*Example 6th.*

In recitatives and Italian melodies, when two or three notes, in the same space or on the same line, terminate a period, the first note should be changed into an appoggiatura, a tone or a semitone higher than the composer's note.—*Example 7th.*

However in solfeggios, the appoggiatura

is not articulated, but blended, by a style of singing, technically called *legato*, with the syllable which is placed under the principal note.—*Example 8th.*

The appoggiatura may be freely used on the accented syllables of the words in verses, *sdrucchioli* and *piani*; but never on *tronchi* lines, unless they be *tronchi sforzati*, and peculiarly expressive.—*Example 9th.*

It may be used on long diphthongs when they terminate a verse or a phrase.—*Example 10th.*

When the long diphthongs are found in the beginning, or in the middle of a word, the appoggiatura must not be used upon them, unless the accent falls on the second vowel.—*Example 11th.*

Let it be observed that if two equal vowels, such as (*aa*) (*ee*) immediately succeed each other, they must be blended into one, and where three vowels of different de-



scription occur, such as (*a e i*) &c. they must be all heard, but so as to appear but one syllable.—*Example 12th.*

It requires much judgment to employ the appoggiatura in sacred and ancient music, also in modern compositions for many voices: the introduction of the appoggiatura, particularly in the intermediate parts, or in the Bass, might produce two consecutive fifths or octaves by a similar motion, or some other unpleasant combination.

The different passions, expressed by the poetry, ought to prompt the singer where to employ the appoggiatura with softness or emphasis, and the natural prosody of the language will be the best regulator of its length.

GRUPPETTI E VOLATINE, *Turns, Runnings or Slidings.*

ANCIENT singers did not fritter their melodies with those decorations which are so profusely used by the moderns; yet the former produced marvellous effects. For the truth of this fact we have the testimony of their historians; however, I must not abolish what the present age authorizes; but I recommend to pupils, who are partial to fashionable ornaments, to use them with the utmost discretion, lest they should exhibit corruptions, instead of evidences of real taste.

A turn of two or three appoggiaturas, or a running of a few notes produce a good effect, provided they do not oppose the meaning of the word with which they are articulated; for to metamorphose a simple air with superfluous ornaments is a reprehensible inconsistency.



nè da ridere nè da piangere, almeno che non sia in una circostanza burlesca o fatta apposta. S'apriranno i denti e la bocca un po' più che non si fa parlando, ma senza contorsioni di testa o di braccia, e soprattutto senza nessuna sorte d'affettazione, giacchè il cantante non comparirà mai con più vantaggio che quando potrà soddisfar l'occhio e l'orecchio di chi lo vede e sente.

Gli scolari che sono limitati a un certo numero di lezioni, e che desiderano di far dei progressi rapidi, faran meglio di prenderle frequentemente e di seguito, che ad una lunga distanza; che se il principiante si fida d'istruirsi da sè stesso, ei si troverà dissappuntato alla fine. L'esperienza mi fa asserire con confidenza ch'uno scolaro profitterà più prendendo dodici lezioni in un mese, che diciotto in tre mesi.

La conoscenza del basso continuo è di grande importanza a chi s'accompagna da sè



stesso, giacchè l'armonia degli accordi è il fondamento il più sicuro pel sostegno della voce e per assistere l'orecchio, particolarmente in modulazioni bizzarre, e in transizioni improvvise. Sino quelli che sono al fatto d'accompagnar dalla partitura, o con accompagnamenti ridotti, saranno sempre accompagnatori incompleti, giacchè vi sono una quantità di composizioni classiche che non hanno altro accompagnamento ch' un basso figurato.

Sarà ben fatto di sospender l'esercizio del canto quand' uno è raffreddato o rauco, giacchè un tale incomodo potria far male alla voce ed al petto, come pure sarà pregiudicevole il cantar subito dopo d' aver preso del cibo, o dopo un esercizio violento.

La voce di petto della gioventù ha raramente molte note; perciò gli scolari d' età tenera non dovrebbero solfeggiar negli acuti, ma esercitarsi e gorgheggiar con moderazione in tutta l'estensione naturale della loro voce,



## IL TEMPO.

*Time.*

THE correctness of Time is of such vast importance to a musical performance, that those who beat the aliquot parts of the *measure-note*, endeavour to convey their proportions as exactly as the oscillations of a clock's pendulum ascertain the length of seconds.

And whenever the scholar is instructed, and accompanied with a Piano-Forte, or any other instrument, it will always be of service to him if he beat the time with his hand.

## TEMPO RUBATO.

HAVING in the preceding article been an advocate for the exactness of time, it may appear extraordinary that I should immediately afterwards encourage the student to be occasionally irregular in his division of it; but when a performer steals a composer's time, in proper places, he will not be condemned for the theft, by the indulging laws of Music, because what he takes from one note, he gives to another. The *Tempo Rubato* likewise produces effective accelerations and retardations particularly when they heighten the expression of emphatic words.



PER CANTARE ALL' IMPROVISO,  
O A PRIMA VISTA.

*To sing at first Sight.*

To acquire this desirable object, the singer should practise without an instrument; but such a mode of study may prove tedious to the generality of amateurs: I have therefore thought it right to harmonize the scales, the intervals, &c. &c., and to place the voice part independently above them; to accustom the scholar to read, attack and sustain the notes under various harmonies, and the scales being in different keys, will familiarize the ear with what theorists term Temperament.

Those who expect to sing readily, at first sight, should, previous to the attempt, acquire a command of voice, a perfect intonation, and a facility of measuring intervals and time.

## ESPRESSIONE, STILE, GUSTO.

*Expression, Style, Taste.*

TASTE and Genius are inborn qualities; therefore an attempt to give rules for their acquirement would be presumption. But as it is generally allowed, that the former may be improved, I will enumerate a few evidences of it in vocal discrimination.

Indubitable proofs of Expression, Style and Taste in singing are displayed

I. When more strength is given to ascending than to descending progressions;

II. When the voice is reinforced on the Appoggiaturas, on the Syncopes, on the accented syllables and on words that express strong feeling;

III. When accidental sharps are sung with greater emphasis than accidental flats.



Those scholars who patiently peruse the precepts, and diligently practise the exercises in this little Study, will, I trust, become familiar with that Style and Taste which may enable them to attain perfection, with the assistance of an able master.

Attentive and retentive auditors of distinguished singers, should be careful to imitate their beauties, and shun their defects. The applause of the public is too often a dangerous criterion to judge by, as it is frequently the loudest when art is endeavouring to raise nature, when it wants no help. Partiality likewise often bestows it on quackery, and prejudice withholds it from desert.

## OBSERVATIONS AND RECAPITULATIONS.

Should the scholar possess a voice strong enough to fill a theatre, he ought to moderate it when he sings in a room, likewise when he takes a part in a Duo, Terzetto, or Quartetto; for if the voices of his associates be more sweet than powerful, and he were to sing with all his might, the impropriety would totally destroy the harmony by rendering part of it inaudible.

An indiscretion which is too often injurious to young ladies, calls loudly for animadversion, for I have heard some, even with a very limited compass of voice, endeavouring to sing the tenor parts of vocal compositions which not only exhausts its powers of expression, but also perverts the harmony, and



renders what was intended to be pleasing, offensive.

To facilitate the reading of music, and singing at first sight, the scholar ought to copy frequently sections of the best sacred and ancient compositions, likewise modern canons, &c. For, if he inserts the notes of different value in their measured situations, the exercise will greatly promote his acquiring a perfect knowledge of time.

Young practitioners are apt to strike the note upon a Piano-Forte before they sing it, which is a pernicious habit; to cure which, they should frequently practise without instrumental assistance. When the voice becomes fatigued they may support it with a simple or harmonized accompaniment.

It must be observed that, when singing, the teeth and the mouth must be opened a little more than for speaking, carefully avoiding distortion and affectation; for the counte-



nance ought to be the index of the mind. Therefore, it should never look woeful in comic performances, nor risible while the voice is uttering tones of anguish; for the singer never appears to such advantage as when an elegant and graceful attitude is charming the eye, while the ear is delighted with an expressive manner of singing.

Scholars who are limited to a small quantity of teaching should prefer taking it speedily, to the receiving it at distant periods, for beginners will be disappointed if they rely upon self-instruction to effect a rapid progress. Experience has taught me to assert, with confidence, that a pupil will acquire more of the art of singing, by twelve regular lessons given in a month, than by eighteen in three months.

A knowledge of thorough bass is of the greatest importance to singers, who accompany themselves, as the harmony of chords is the surest foundation for the support of the voice,



and a powerful assistant to the ear, particularly in extraneous modulations and sudden transitions. Even those who have acquired a readiness of playing the parts of scores or arrangements of them, if they be strangers to this branch of the art, they are still incomplete accompanists; for many of the most classical compositions have no other notation to direct their accompaniment but a figured bass.

Vocal performers should suspend their practice, while they are afflicted with a cold, for the exertion to produce intonation with such an obstruction is so injurious to the chest, that dancing during an accidental lameness, is not a greater imprudence than singing with a hoarseness.

Singing after a full meal, or any violent exercise, is another injurious indiscretion.

The chest voice of youth seldom comprises many notes. Therefore, scholars of a



tender age should not attempt to solfa the acute sounds, if even they should be able to reach them with facility. It is better to vocalize gradually, that the voice may be conducted by steps, or degrees, from the lowest note of its compass to its highest natural tone, both of which may be extended by judicious practice.

This concluding observation will, I hope, deserve particular attention.

The voices of youth generally change between the age of twelve and fifteen. Therefore, the greatest care is necessary at this period, to ascertain when such change is approaching: the symptoms are hoarseness, difficulty of breathing, while singing, and an incapability of sustaining long notes. These impediments sometimes last many months, during which, the most diligent student must cease to practise, nay, he ought not to sing for many weeks after they are entirely re-



moved; for, should impatience urge him to be repeatedly forcing nature to perform impossibilities, he may, at last, feel the mortification of terminating his practice with an irrecoverable loss of voice and health.

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If teachers and students of the vocal art should find in this little Treatise a sufficiency of matter for the attainment and preservation of good singing, I hope that the candid critic will instruct me how to amend its faults, and that the hypercritic will not magnify their number, but remember, that works which approach the nearest to perfection, still want correction.

