IRON SHARPENS IRON: DUETS FOR TWO WOMEN IN THE TEACHING/INSTRUCTION OF UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN

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Duet literature remains largely untapped as a pedagogical tool in the undergraduate voice studio. This dissertation examines the ways in which eight duets for female voices, although not written primarily for pedagogical use, may be used to teach four main areas of voice technique: intonation, vocal agility, legato singing, and dramatic skills. Duets are chosen primarily from the standard repertoire and are in English, German, French, Italian and Latin. The compositional styles range from the Baroque period through the 20th century. Genres include art song, oratorio, and opera.

Each chapter focuses on one of the four vocal skills listed above, and includes examinations of two duets whose vocal writing (rhythm, tessitura, intervals, tempi, and text) make them appropriate candidates for pedagogical use in the improvement of that specific skill. Both male and female teachers of singing may utilize this project as a practical resource and model in how to use other duets, including those for other voice types, for similar purposes in their teaching studio. This project also demonstrates how the experience of singing duets helps students develop ensemble singing as they listen and respond to each other. Finally, this project offers voice teachers an additional pedagogical tool to help each student improve select skills, resulting in a more confident performer.
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 CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Composers have written vocal duets in the genres of oratorio, opera, and art song throughout the history of the Western art tradition. Hungarian composer and educator Zoltán Kodály unequivocally stated his opinion on the value of adding a second voice when he wrote, “…singing alone isn’t worth much. How much nicer when two are singing together…”¹ The diversity of available material, in conjunction with the opportunity to collaborate with another singer, makes duet literature both relevant to the aspiring singer and useful to the teacher of voice.

In my experience as a studio voice teacher, singers at the start of their undergraduate music studies often enter the voice studio with little or no solo experience. These young singers have performed in choir settings, either in high school or in church, and, while some have had solo opportunities within these groups, there are a large number who have never performed alone. One method for helping students take this crucial step is to provide studio classes during which the students perform individually for each other. Most students do, in fact, gain awareness and understanding of their own voices through the experience of singing alone before their peers, in conjunction with observing others’ performances, listening analytically, and providing positive feedback. One of the goals of the class, along with gaining valuable performance experience and learning from each other, is to promote a spirit of healthy competition, enabling each student to improve with each performance.

However, I believe an additional avenue can offer students a way to alleviate potential doubts regarding their abilities as solo performers. By learning duets, a student collaborates with

¹ Miklós Forrai, Forward to Duets for Two Female Voices with Piano Accompaniment (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó Vállalat, 1959).
another, and internal thoughts such as “What are they thinking of my voice?” or “Oh no, that sounded terrible!” may be reduced because each now listens to the other to create a unified whole. The singer has clear goals as a duet partner:

1) Am I blending with my partner by singing unified pitches and accurate intervals?

2) Does my vocal line balance with my partner’s by singing the same vowel with equal or greater resonance and space?

3) Am I creating phrases using legato lines that match my partner’s?

4) Are my rhythmic passages sung with equal or greater precision as my partner’s?

5) Am I responding to her textual phrases with emotional depth?

These goals enable individual students to make greater use of their vocal technical abilities while also fostering a sense of trust in their own and their partner’s capabilities as effective performers as they strive to make ensemble music.

I have performed duets with partners with a wide range of vocal abilities, and I have learned valuable skills from some singers and, in turn, other singers have learned from me. “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

Recently, I sang Pergolesi’s *Stabat Mater* at a local church’s Lenten concert series. I had had more vocal training and performance experience than my duet partner, a member of the church’s choir, and at the beginning of our rehearsals, her intonation was either sharp or flat in sustained sections. However, her listening abilities grew as she heard my steady intonation, a result of breath support and pure vowels, working against her notes to create accurate intervals. A few weeks after this experience, I sang the first movement of this same work with a different partner in a chamber music concert. Her ability to sing with good resonance encouraged me to sing with

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2 Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)
brighter vowels and a more focused placement. The result was a well-balanced and moving performance.

Numerous authors have discussed the benefits of collaborative music making. Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag encourage greater use of duets in their book *The Art of the Song Recital*:

Doubtless there will come a time in your singing career when the pleasures of collaboration with another singer will entice you. Our advice is: succumb immediately! Using your voice with another voice or two is truly enjoyable; ensemble between voices, as compared to voice with instruments, presents new skills to be explored. They add, “Most especially, a young singer will find duets and trios...an admirable way of trying his wings before an audience with somewhat less personal responsibility.” In discussing the value of playing with other musicians in an ensemble or duet setting, authors Barry Green and W. Timothy Gallwey assert “You can share a sense of energy with them that is not possible when you’re playing solo.” It may be difficult for some undergraduate students to maintain a high energy level in their solo work during the course of a semester. Singing duets may refresh these levels and provide an enjoyable way to learn vocal technique in conjunction with solo literature. In addition, Green and Gallwey encourage teachers and conductors to use verbal instructions that foster musicians’ and students’ listening skills when playing with others:

Another “do” and “try” instruction might be “Flute section, you are playing flat. Let’s try to keep this in tune.” An equivalent awareness instruction might be “Flute, listen to the pitch of the clarinet in the preceding measure and notice if you’re in tune with it.” This contains no value judgment, doesn’t suggest trying, and focuses the flutist’s awareness simply and directly on the pitch of another instrument.

Though this example is drawn from an instrumental ensemble’s rehearsal, a voice teacher could use this same technique when working on a duet with his or her voice students in a lesson.

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4 Ibid.
6 Ibid, 199.
Some universities have found that small group voice lessons have increased students’ understanding of vocal concepts through “observation, demonstration, listening, and participation with peers.” Professors who utilized this method reported that students were also more motivated as a result of the “competition created in small group instruction.” Although the singing of duets adds only one voice to another, the same type of cooperative learning may challenge each singer to perform better than she would if she were singing a solo, either in a lesson or in a performance situation.

Finally, the world of neuroscience has produced evidence that collaborating with others activates “mirror neurons” in the brain when “a person performs a certain action or has a certain experience and also when the person observes someone else performing the same action or having the same experience.” Research into the implications of these activated neurons, and their corresponding mirror neuron system, or MNS, has been undertaken recently in numerous fields, including music education. In an article for the interdisciplinary journal Music Perception, Katie Overy and Istvan Molnar-Szakacs state, “Music is clearly not just a passive, auditory stimulus, it is an engaging, multisensory, social activity…Such physical, social, synchronized interactions involve imitation, learning, shared understanding, and prediction, and can encourage eye contact, smiling, laughter, and relationship building, while also allowing for leadership, competition, and individual expression…” One study sheds light on why individuals are “hard-wired” for empathic responses to others, and why, in the performing arts, this is especially true. Daniel Glaser, a neuroscientist at University College London, monitored

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8 Ibid.
brain waves of two groups of dancers: members of the Royal Ballet and performers of a Brazilian dance called *capoeira*. When dancers of both groups watched other dancers perform the same type of dance they were trained to perform, their MNS registered more activity via magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).\(^{11}\) Glaser elaborated in an interview for the PBS series *Nova scienceNOW*:

> We think that this is a form of resonance if you like, that your own motor control cortex, the bit that would control your own movements, is more excited, it turns out, when you see other people doing moves that you can do. And that’s probably because it’s resonating with those movements better. It can interpret them in its own terms in a way that it can’t when it’s seeing a movement style which it doesn’t know how to perform.\(^{12}\)

We may assume, then, that the mirror neurons in singers are similarly “excited” when watching and singing with another singer, especially in the same style of music. When the brains of student singers are deeply engaged in this way, they may learn and retain more knowledge and skills than when singing alone.

The wealth of duet literature from the Baroque through the modern eras remains largely untapped as a pedagogical tool in the undergraduate voice studio. Given that most of my former and current students are women, this dissertation examines the ways in which eight duets for female voices, although not written primarily for pedagogical use, may be used to teach four main areas of voice technique: intonation, vocal agility, legato singing, and dramatic skills. Because this project focuses on undergraduate vocal study, I have chosen duets primarily from the standard repertoire. Duets in English, German, French, Italian and Latin are examined. The compositional styles range from the Baroque period through the 20\(^{th}\) century. Genres include art song, oratorio, and opera. Each duet may be used to focus on one of the vocal techniques listed above, through the rhythm, intervals, tempi, and text of the vocal lines. Both male and female


\(^{12}\) Ibid.
teachers of singing may utilize this project as a practical resource and model in how to use other duets, including those for male voices, for similar purposes in their teaching studio. This project also demonstrates how the experience of singing duets helps students develop ensemble singing as they listen and respond to each other. Furthermore, this project offers voice teachers an additional pedagogical tool to help each student improve select skills, resulting in a more confident performer.
In the Renaissance and early Baroque periods, composers living primarily in German-speaking areas often wrote vocal and instrumental duets called *bicinia* (singular *bicinium*) for pedagogical purposes, usually to teach the rules of counterpoint.¹³ Swiss humanist and music theorist Heinrich Loris, known as Glareanus (1488-1563), included vocal and instrumental *bicinia* by composers such as Gregor Meyer, Jacob Obrecht, and Josquin Desprez in his *Dodecachordon* (1519-1539). In the preface to a modern edition of this source, Walter Frei asserts *bicinia’s* “prominent role in the humanist school”.¹⁴ Soon after, Georg Rhau (Rhaw) compiled French, Latin, and German *bicinia* in his two-volume *Bicina gallica, lattina et germanica* (1545) in Wittenberg. Bernard Thomas, editor of a modern edition, points out the high quality of Rhau’s *bicinia*.¹⁵ Furthermore, in a *NATS Bulletin* article, vocal pedagogue and academic Corre Berry (Brusse) affirms that the original prefaces to these collections encouraged the use of *bicinia* in homes and schools for instructional purposes.¹⁶

The Italian terms of *duetto* and *duo* began to be used to describe the numerous vocal compositions for two equal voices by Baroque composers in the 18th century. Music dictionaries by prominent theorists such as Brossard, Mattheson, and Rousseau define one or both of these terms by describing its various elements such as textual aspects, musical style and performing forces.¹⁷ Greer’s translation of Brossard’s definition of *duo* from 1703 states:

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Duo. Italian and French term, for the Latin Duo, two; a composition for two solo voices; or for two parts one of which is sung and the other played on an instrument. The name Duo is also applied even when the two solo voices sing different parts accompanied by a 3rd part which is the basso continuo.18

Interestingly, Brossard’s definition includes pieces which today would commonly be termed aria or solo. In 1722, Mattheson differentiates between these previously interchangeable terms:

Arias with one voice are usually called Solo in musical parlance, regardless of the fact that a fundamental- or bass-part is nearly always present. Because this bass part is not a singing part it is not counted. Two vocal parts and a bass part which plays along are nothing more than a Duetto. Three vocal parts with their particular instrumental bass and other accompanying instruments are called a Trio. However two or three instrumental parts have the name Duo and Trio, and here the bass is counted in because it is among equals.19

By 1768, Rousseau’s definition of Duet reflects what had become the norm during the late-Baroque era:

…to constitute a duet, it is necessary to have two principal parts between which the melody is distributed equally…We may view the duet in two ways, namely simply as a song for two parts, such as, for example, the first verse of the Stabat of Pergolesi, the most perfect and moving duet that has come from the pen of any musician, or as a part of imitative and theatrical music, such as the duets in operatic scenes…20

These definitions indicate the duet’s significant contribution to Baroque music.

Additionally, the sheer numbers of vocal duets written by major composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel reveal its importance at that time. Bach wrote ninety-five sacred duets and twenty-seven secular duets that may be heard in his cantatas and passions.21 Handel wrote twenty duets with continuo; he also wrote numerous duets of various voice combinations for his oratorios and operas.22 Richard Boldrey notes that in Italian operas of the mid-18th century, duets served as the finale movement in each act, and were often the only

18 Ibid, 34.
19 Ibid, 36.
20 Ibid, 38.
21 Ibid, 6-8.
ensemble in the entire opera. Duets with pedagogical vocal objectives during the late Baroque include those by Giovanni Carlo Maria Clari (1677-1754), which were sung by many contemporaneous students.

Giambattista Mancini (1716-1800) offers support for duet singing in his influential Classical-era treatise *Practical Reflections on Figured Singing* (1774):

> The study of duets is also necessary to accustom the ear to rule intonation with perfection, and to possess oneself of the voice, so that it is perfectly united to that of his colleague. Of these madrigals and duets written by worthy masters, solely to the end of producing this good effect, there is an endless number, known to the whole profession. The only difficulty is that they should be esteemed by the masters of our day; and so it is to be hoped that they be permitted and exercised upon with the just rules.

Berry notes that, despite Mancini’s encouragement, the quality of duets for student use began to decline at the end of the 18th and into the 19th centuries. She cites those by Beethoven and Haydn, which were based on folk songs, and, though many are “charming pieces,” the lower voice is “clearly subordinate in interest.” Similarly, the duets of singing teacher Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916) contained in his *Canti popolari abruzzesi* comprise of folk poetry and melodies; however, many of the vocal lines progress mainly in thirds to result in a rather uninteresting harmonic palate.

Schubert and Bizet both wrote duets without text in the style of a vocalise, allowing students to use a single vowel or solfege syllables to improve vocal technique. More often during the Romantic time period, however, composers wrote duets for singers to perform on the stage, (e.g. bel canto composers Rossini and Donizetti) or in a salon (e.g. Johannes Brahms and Robert Schumann), rather than during a voice lesson. Schumann’s thirty-five duets were

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24 Berry, 9.
26 Berry, 10.
27 Berry, 11.
28 Berry, 8.

In discussing the quality and technical level of Mendelssohn’s art song duets, vocal pedagogue Serdar Ilban encourages teachers to utilize this literature for undergraduate recitals. He adds that these duets provide young singers a form of healthy competition as they work together to make music.

Two duets from the Romantic period show how partners may interact with each other to humorous results. Rossini’s “Comic duet for two cats” features a soprano and mezzo-soprano singing “meow” throughout. Each section provides the singers numerous ways in which to experiment, both vocally and emotively, with the feline utterance. Brahms’ popular setting of Mörike’s “Die Schwestern” (Op. 61, No. 1) tells of two sisters who look and act alike, and even fall in love with the same man, yet neither seems ready to surrender to the other. Student singers may enjoy beginning the duet with one primary emotion and concluding with its opposite. Both of these duets could easily be used in a voice studio for students who may need some prompting in releasing their inhibitions.

Duets figured prominently in operas of the Romantic era. Although “grand duets” usually feature two lovers, duets between characters who were not lovers were also common, for example “Sous le dôme épais” for soprano and mezzo-soprano from Delibes’s Lakmé (1883).

31 Boldrey, 1.
Operatic duets since the late 19th century have tended to be more dialogue-oriented. Examples of this type include Richard Strauss’s “Mir ist die Ehre widerfahren” (soprano/mezzo-soprano) from Der Rosenkavalier (1909-10) and “You love him, seek to set him right” (soprano/mezzo-soprano) from The Rake’s Progress (1947-51). In the genre of musical theater, duets between two women often figure prominently in a musical’s story arc. Historian Stacy Wolf discusses “pedagogical duets” in which one character teaches the other a lesson, which results in a change of heart by the latter character. A prime example of this is “A Boy Like That/I Have a Love” from Leonard Bernstein’s West Side Story (1957). Anita’s complicated and rhythmic music underscores her urgency, while Maria’s lyrical melody eventually invites Anita to sing with her in musical harmony and emotional agreement.

Several composers and music educators in the 20th century have revived the term bicinia in their works for two or more voices. The most notable example is Zoltán Kodály’s collection of 180 two-part songs, some of which were arrangements of folk songs, titled Bicinia Hungarica (1937-1942). Student singers (either one per part or more than one) may improve their sight reading skills by first singing with solfege syllables, then with the text. In the introduction to the English edition, Percy M. Young invites singers to “study… the relation of one part to the other, especially at points of entry.” A 1959 Hungarian publication of duets for two women’s voices includes those suitable for beginning singers by Romantic composers in tribute to Kodály’s passion for music education. Inspired by Kodály’s collection, two separate publications of two-part American folk songs endeavor to instill similar musicianship skills, such as developing

32 Ibid, 3.
35 Forrai, Forward.
pitch perception and rhythmic singing as they relate to another part, to older children and teenagers, either in group-singing or one per part.\textsuperscript{36}

In the past forty years, several articles and publications have sought to aid performers and teachers of classical singing in the programming of duets for recitals. Berry’s dissertation “A Study of the Vocal Chamber Duet through the Nineteenth Century”\textsuperscript{37} provides the basis for subsequent articles on the history of duets published in \textit{The NATS Bulletin} and \textit{Music Review}.\textsuperscript{38} Additionally, her resource books pertaining to specific genres of duet literature, including \textit{Sacred Vocal Duets: An Annotated Bibliography} and \textit{Vocal Chamber Duets: An Annotated Bibliography} lists anthologies, single composer collections, and individual duets by numerous composers. She also provides an index to various voice combinations. Richard Boldrey’s \textit{Guide to Operatic Duets} enables singers and teachers to search for appropriate operatic duets by voice combination, role, or composer.

Marilyn Newman’s \textit{The Comprehensive Catalogue of Duet Literature for Female Voices: Vocal Chamber Duets with Keyboard Accompaniment Composed between 1820-1995} (2000) lists 8,800 duets by over two thousand composers. These duets fall into two categories: a cappella or accompanied by piano or organ. Most of the duets would fall under the genre of the “art song,” however sacred duets suitable for worship are also listed. Opera and oratorio duets are notably absent. This resource also lists the contents of twenty-one duet anthologies. In


\textsuperscript{37} Corre Berry, “A Study of the Vocal Chamber Duet Through the Nineteenth Century” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, 1974).

addition to the catalogue proper, Newman devotes a chapter to the pedagogical benefits of studying duets. She begins by discussing the history of duet singing, including those written for instructional purposes. She then focuses on previous research devoted to class voice settings as opposed to individual instruction, which help students develop their ears as they listen to various tone colors. The chapter then considers the research of Green and Gallwey in which they state in their book *The Inner Game of Music* (1986), “As a member of a larger group, we may feel freer to express our musicianship without self-consciousness than we would if our individual playing was spotlighted.”

Finally, Newman references psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who wrote “when what they [participants in an ensemble] do becomes worth doing for its own sake – it’s so enjoyable that you get caught up in it, you want to keep doing it. I call this state of mind ‘Flow Experience.’” Csikszentmihalyi supports ensemble music (specifically choral) to produce nine components of the Flow Experience, including clear goals, immediate feedback, and the disappearance of self-consciousness. While Newman’s book offers performers and teachers valuable resources for programming duets in a recital or religious setting, as well as giving support to the general pedagogical advantages of duet literature, she does not discuss how duets enable students to improve specific vocal techniques.

The numerous resource books and articles on duet literature enable singers and teachers to make use of these compositions to enrich their vocal growth and recital programming. Because duets range in language, style, genre, theme, and voicing, professors could conceivably establish a series of duet programs for their students to perform at the university, and possibly in the greater community. Students will gain significant skills in collaborative music making while

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40 Ibid, 8.
also discovering the variety and quality of duets to deepen their musical experience both within and beyond the university.
CHAPTER 3

INTONATION:
“HERBSTLIED” BY FELIX MENDELSSOHN AND “PUISQU’ICI BAS TOUTE ÂME” BY GABRIEL FAURÉ

Zoltán Kodály, one of the twentieth century’s greatest advocates of part-singing for music education purposes, wrote numerous exercises in his *Choral Method* with the objective of improving students’ intonation:

Most singing teachers and chorus masters believe in controlling the pitch of the voices by the piano. But singing depends on the acoustically correct “natural” intervals, and not on the tempered system…The beginners’ first steps in the endless realm of notes should be supported not by any instrument of tempered tuning and dissimilar tone-colour, but by another voice.41

Kodály’s assertion led him to further state that “the proof and reward of correct singing is beauty of sound, caused by the appearance of combination tones, and, in the higher registers, by the increased brightness of the overtones.”42 Vocal pedagogues in a university setting may likewise incorporate appropriate duets into their voice studios for similar purposes. The two duets discussed in this chapter are written for two sopranos with piano accompaniment. However, a teacher and student can isolate select passages during a voice lesson to be sung *a capella*, giving each singer the ability to listen and adjust their pitch accordingly. This chapter addresses this type of pedagogical technique as it relates to female teachers working with female students only, given the connections between intonation, range, and timbre. Both Felix Mendelssohn’s “Herbstlied” and Gabriel Fauré’s “Puisqu’ici bas toute âme” have vocal lines with identical text sung in harmony and rhythmic unison, making them ideal candidates for enabling singers to produce accurate intervals, primarily through vowel matching. Furthermore, these duets were

42 Ibid, 3.
performed originally by young or amateur musicians,\textsuperscript{43} which makes them appropriate for undergraduate singers.

“Herbstlied” is from Felix Mendelssohn’s Op. 63, a collection of six vocal duets published in 1844. Mendelssohn’s \textit{allegro agitato} setting of Karl Klingeman’s text highlights the recurring theme of how soon (“wie bald”) the season of spring and its merriness turns into winter and its resulting silence. The poem may also be an allegory of how quickly one’s life passes by. The range of both parts is not wide, making the song accessible to younger undergraduates; the first soprano line ranges from F-sharp\textsubscript{4} to F-sharp\textsubscript{5}, and the second soprano is from D\textsubscript{4} to D\textsubscript{5}. The form is ABACA’.

The animated song begins with a one-measure introduction by the piano which leads directly to the entrance of the vocal lines with the text, “Ach, wie so bald verhallet der Reigen, wandelt sich Frühling in Winterzeit! Ach, wie so bald in trauerndes Schweigen wandelt sich alle die Fröhlichkeit!;” ("Oh, how soon the cycle ends, Spring turns into wintertime! Oh how soon all happiness turns to sad silence!"). The two sopranos sing in parallel thirds within a range of about an octave for the whole of this 17-measure passage (A section), with the exception of the last note, on which they sustain a unison F-sharp\textsubscript{4}; see Example 3.1.

\textsuperscript{43} Refer to articles by Serdar Ilban (\textit{Journal of Singing}, Nov/Dec 2012) and Grove’s online article, \textit{Gabriel Fauré}. 
In a voice lesson, a soprano teacher may sing one of the parts while the student sings the other. If the student usually sings the first soprano part in a choir setting, it may be helpful for her to sing the second soprano line in addition to the first soprano, giving her the opportunity to sing the harmony in an appropriate range. A singer who is not accustomed to singing the harmony may need to practice the second soprano line multiple times while the teacher sings the first soprano part, so that her ear will become more comfortable with singing underneath another part. The intonation of some singers may tend to gradually rise and eventually join the teacher in unison on the first soprano part. This inclination can be cured with repetition and patience.

The first few lines should be practiced separately and under tempo. The teacher should focus on the sustained notes by listening with particular attention to vowel purity. For

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Example 3.1: Felix Mendelssohn, “Herbstlied,” mm. 1-9

example, the words “ach,” “bald,” “Reigen,” “wandelt,” “Winterzeit,” “alle,” “Schweigen,” and “Fröhlichkeit” all contain the [a] vowel. By singing a pure and open [a] vowel, the student is better able to sing in tune the ascending harmonic minor and major thirds. On the first syllable of both “Reigen” and “Schweigen,” the interval is a major third. The teacher should listen for a pure [a] on the beginning syllable of “Reigen” and “Schweigen.” Both should be sung as the diphthong [aI], however, it is the [a] vowel within this diphthong that should be extended before closing to [I]. As the student sings these passages with her teacher, she will learn to sustain the principal vowel to result in a unified blend.

After working on each line separately and at a slow tempo, the two parts of the entire refrain (mm. 1-17) may be sung together, still under tempo, with teacher and student alternating each part. They share equal responsibility in producing the pure major and minor thirds; the teacher may bring this to the attention of the student by encouraging her to listen to these intervals as they both sing. If the student hears inaccurate intervals, she should not hesitate to pinpoint the errors, regardless of who is responsible; this fosters critical listening and thinking on the part of the student. In time, the refrain may be sung at the allegro agitato tempo with vowel purity and intonation remaining intact.

The B (mm. 18-45) and C sections (mm. 54-77) of “Herbstlied” contain solo lines for both parts as well as lines of imitation during which both sopranos cross over into each other’s ranges. These imitative lines illustrate Klingeman’s text: “Eines, nur eines will nimmer wanken: Es ist das Sehnen, das nimmer vergeht;” (“Only one thing will never wane: the longing that never goes”); see Example 3.2.

45 The teacher may demonstrate these measures by singing with an open, resonant space in the vocal tract. The student may then imitate her teacher by singing each of the soprano lines with similar vocal technique.
Example 3.2: Felix Mendelssohn, “Herbstlied,” mm. 66-77

Mendelssohn begins with only the second soprano on the words “Eines, nur eines.” Because she alone introduces this melancholy mood, the voice teacher should urge the student to sing with an appropriate vocal timbre that may be matched by the first soprano when she enters with a nearly identical phrase in measures 68-71. The second soprano repeats the same phrase in measures 70-73. The cyclical nature of these lines captures the endless longing of the text, and accordingly should be sung by the two sopranos with similar tone color so as to create a seamless blend.

Neither soprano should sing with an overly bright timbre, nor should one dominate the other in dynamic level. In listening to each other’s timbre and dynamic, good intonation will likely follow. These measures lead directly to the climax of the piece, in which the two sopranos sing a line in unison for the first time (measures 74-76). If the two singers continue to match each other’s vocal color and character, this line will undoubtedly be striking in its complete unity on G-sharp before the two sopranos suddenly split on the word “geht” to create a minor 7th (the second soprano remains on the G#4 as the first soprano sings F#5). The teacher should use this point in the song to address the dynamic level of the two singers. Because the second soprano is

46 Duette für Singstimmen und Klavier, 15.
singing in the middle of her range while the first soprano is singing in her upper range, the second soprano may not be heard as clearly, which could negatively affect the potency of the dissonant minor 7th. The teacher should work with the student to ensure that she sings a resonant [e] vowel without placing undue pressure on the larynx in order to prevent the possibility of singing sharp.

The return of the A section ends the duet, though in modified form. Each soprano sings a descending “sigh” motive with a quarter note and eighth note on the word “Ach.” The final “Ach, wie so bald!” expands the “sigh” motive (a dotted half note followed by two dotted quarter notes). Both sopranos sing in a piano dynamic a third apart. They seem to have resigned themselves to the inevitability of winter’s approach. Each singer should strive to demonstrate the sorrowful mood in their voices and facial expressions while preserving the accuracy of the intonation.

Gabriel Fauré’s “Puisqu’ici bas toute âme” features ascending and descending arpeggios in the piano, coupled with a flowing melody in the vocal lines to capture the passionate verse by Victor Hugo. This duet is slightly more difficult than “Herbstlied” because of the higher range for both parts. In addition, the highest note for the first soprano is A5 and she must sustain G5 for two measures with a decrescendo at one point during the duet, whereas the second soprano sings one G5 on an eighth note. The first line of text reads “Puisqu’ici bas toute âme donne à quelqu’un sa musique sa flamme, ou son parfum;” (“Since here [on earth] each soul gives someone its music, its ardour, or its perfume”). Fauré introduces the first theme with a solo by the first soprano; see Example 3.3.
The following solo by the second soprano is nearly identical in music but with new text. The next two lines are similar in that the first soprano sings a second melodic line that is closely echoed by the second soprano. The solo lines allow both sopranos to establish a separate yet

equal identity before they musically and textually sing simultaneously. Each soprano should sing legato, taking note of Fauré’s *dolce* and dynamic markings in both parts.

In the following section, both sopranos sing another melodic line with new text in harmony. Within these measures lie opportunities for the second soprano in particular to practice singing accurate intervals such as whole and half steps; see Examples 3.4a and 3.4b.

Example 3.4a of Gabriel Fauré’s “Puisqu’ici bas toute âme,” mm. 28-29

Example 3.4b of Gabriel Fauré’s “Puisqu’ici bas toute âme,” mm. 32-33

As can be seen above, the motive is similar in both measures, however in the first example, the second soprano sings F-naturals and an E-sharp while in the second example, she sings F-sharps and an E-sharp. A female voice teacher could isolate these measures in a voice lesson; both would sing together *a capella* while they listen for correct intonation. Additionally, because these measures lie in a soprano’s middle range, the teacher should ensure that she sings with a focused placement to penetrate the arpeggiated piano accompaniment.

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48 Ibid, 2.
49 Ibid.
50 A male teacher would be unable to sing with his student, however, he could require the students singing this duet to attend each other’s lessons so he could work with them together.
Both sopranos sing the next six measures in harmonic thirds throughout. The melodic vocal lines feature ascending and descending leaps followed by an ascending semi-chromatic pattern; see Example 3.5.

Example 3.5 of Gabriel Fauré’s “Puisqu’ici bas toute âme,” mm. 34-39

The descending leaps in both parts could easily be sung inaccurately, so care should be taken to sing matching vowels. The first soprano’s initial B-flat could also be sung without vibrato to highlight the sudden shift in harmony and the intimate text: (“I give you, at this hour,...”).

The next several measures return each singer to solo lines of ascending and descending arpeggios. Various intervals are included within these lines, such as minor 2nds and minor 3rds, and for the first soprano, a major 6th and an octave; see Example 3.6.

Example 3.6 of Gabriel Fauré’s “Puisqu’ici bas toute âme,” mm. 41-45

Achieving accuracy of pitches without sacrificing legato line requires the sopranos to connect each vowel to the next. Rehearsing at a slower tempo will assist in this goal. The first soprano should sing the upward octave leap with a bright [a] vowel that remains open throughout the gradual decrescendo.

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51 Ibid, 2-3.
52 Ibid, 3.
In the second half of the duet, Fauré repeats the same sequence of alternating solo and duet lines with identical music, yet new text. The more contrapuntal writing in the final measures allows the sopranos to sing as soloists and with unique musical phrasing while neither singer becomes more important than the other. Ensemble and musicality is achieved when each singer listens to the other’s moving lines and sings less fully during them. The final measures are sung in rhythmic and textual unity an interval of a 6th apart. The piano’s arpeggios continue upward to illustrate the poem’s blissful ending.

The improvement of a student’s intonation through collaborative singing requires patience and guidance on the part of the voice teacher. The duets discussed in this chapter were chosen for their challenges as well as their suitability for undergraduates. Furthermore, these duets may be sung with teacher and student together, provided the teacher is a woman. As the teacher sings one of the vocal lines with good vocal technique, the teacher instructs by demonstration, rather than by verbal explanation; this method, to whatever extent she deems appropriate in a given lesson, can be a more effective approach to instill vocal concepts. This approach also invites a conversation between teacher and student; the teacher may ask what the student heard and observed as she sang her part. These questions are crucial for creating a unified ensemble.
Richard Miller, a prominent vocal pedagogue of the latter half of the twentieth-century, stated in his book *The Structure of Singing*,

It is essential to any vocal category, whether or not the literature of that vocal type demands it, that agility be part of the singer’s daily practice. A basso profundo is as much in need of the technical facility of agility as is the coloratura soprano. Unless the singer, regardless of vocal classification, is able to negotiate running passages and melismas cleanly, sostenuto passages will lack ease of production.\(^{53}\)

Miller’s directive seems especially necessary in the undergraduate vocal studio, in which young sopranos are predominant. Vocal literature featuring melismatic passages for women’s voices can be found in many compositional periods, from the Baroque to the neo-Classical. Baroque composers regularly required singers of all voice types to navigate this type of passage, and as discussed in Chapter 2, composers of the Baroque period frequently wrote duets. Voice teachers have numerous options, therefore, when assigning duet literature to their students with the goal of improving agility. Henry Purcell’s “Sound the Trumpet” and Antonio Vivaldi’s “Laudamus Te” from *Gloria* contain varying melismatic passages during which the duet partners sing both in rhythmic unison and juxtaposition. When one student sings with accurate rhythms and intonation, the other is more likely to follow in her footsteps, so that the two voices become as one.

“Sound the Trumpet” is from *Come Ye Sons of Art*, a birthday ode written for Queen Mary in 1694. The duet was originally performed by two countertenors in the key of D. It also appeared in the key of G in Purcell’s *Orpheus Britannicus* (third version, published in 1721).

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The edition discussed below is largely based on the version from *Orpheus Britannicus*, though transposed into the key of F. The duet’s form is AABB in 2/2 and with *moderato* tempo. It begins with a short piano introduction followed by the first soprano’s entrance. She sings a rhythmic motive of four sixteenth notes preceded by a longer note; see Example 4.1.

Example 4.1: Henry Purcell, “Sound the Trumpet,” mm. 1-5

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55 About 96 beats per minute.
Purcell utilizes this motive as a foundation to highlight the repeated running sixteenth notes throughout the piece. The first soprano should sing the theme above with a bright timbre, with special attention to the [a] vowel of the word “sound,” and with rhythmic energy. She should also avoid singing each note with equal weight, but rather lighten her voice for the sixteenth notes, enabling her to keep them in time and in tune. The second soprano echoes the first soprano by singing with less vocal weight for the sixteenth notes.

The two sing the motive together in thirds; see Example 4.2.

Example 4.2: Henry Purcell, “Sound the Trumpet,” mm. 8-9

It may be wise to reduce the tempo and practice with a metronome to ensure that the intonation of the sixteenth notes remains accurate. The quarter rests should also stay in time. Purcell expands the number of sixteenth notes in the following measures; in fact, he requires the sopranos to sing thirty-second notes as well; see Example 4.3.

Example 4.3: Henry Purcell, “Sound the Trumpet,” ms. 10

57 Ibid, 21.
58 Ibid, 21.
Again, a reduction of tempo is necessary when practicing to enable the singers to listen to their ensemble.

The conclusion of the A section presents a new theme sung by the second soprano; see Example 4.4.

Example 4.4: Henry Purcell, “Sound the Trumpet,” mm. 10-12

The first soprano responds by singing the theme a fourth higher. Each soprano’s [a] vowel of the word “rebound” should remain bright so as to maintain the cheerful character of the text and music. The A section should repeat with some ornamentation, which is appropriate to maintain Baroque style.60

The B section is characterized by melismas of quickly alternating sixteenth notes. Each soprano sings them first separately and then together; see Example 4.5.

Example 4.5: Henry Purcell, “Sound the Trumpet,” mm. 19-20

59 Ibid, 22.
60 The version used here (Ten Duets, Book One by Henry Purcell, Timothy Roberts, editor) includes suggested ornamentation, including additional notes and rhythmic variations.
When practicing, the singers should take care to maintain the accuracy of the major or minor 3\textsuperscript{rd}s as they sing together. As stated previously, the two should maintain the Baroque vocal style by singing the faster notes without a complete vocal fold adduction,\textsuperscript{62} however they should also resist the temptation to achieve the lighter sound by reducing the appropriate breath support. A healthy balance will enable them to keep their voices flexible.

The finale of the piece features the singers in a musical “conversation.” The first soprano initiates with a motive of alternating and descending sixteenth and eighth notes on the words “the glories,” which the second soprano then repeats, although the first soprano enters again before the second has finished. Likewise, the second soprano interrupts and joins the first soprano in rhythmic unison and a third below; see Example 4.6.

Example 4.6: Henry Purcell, “Sound the Trumpet,” mm. 30-31\textsuperscript{63}

The singers should strive for a \textit{legato} production, which they will achieve by singing with more breath support and with fuller tone. However, they should continue singing with precise rhythms and intonation by not sliding between the pitches. Additionally, the first vowel of the word “glories” should maintain its openness by not allowing the tongue to curl up too soon for the articulation of the “r” consonant. The B section should be repeated with modest ornamentation and the singers should relax the tempo for the final few measures, making sure to listen to each

\textsuperscript{62} Singing with the edges of the vocal folds assists in singing melismatic passages.

other so that one singer does not finish before the other. In this way, they maintain the joyful yet stately nature of the piece.

Vivaldi’s *Gloria* was likely written sometime between 1713 and 1716. Most scholars believe it was first composed for and performed by female orphans at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, whose musical education was of the highest quality. Modern performances of this work can likewise be heard in educational settings such as high schools and universities. The “Laudamus Te” is a good vehicle for underclasswomen. The more manageable melismas are comprised of eighth notes as compared to sixteenth notes. Vivaldi also includes several sections of syllabic text setting, which is less technically difficult for younger singers. However, the piece is not without its challenges; a few longer passages provide opportunities for the singers to manage their breath without losing vibrancy of tone.

The duet is in five sections with orchestral interludes and in 2/4 with an *allegro* tempo. The vocal introduction is similar to “Sound the Trumpet” in that the first soprano sings a phrase heard initially in the opening measures of the orchestra, a phrase which is repeated by the second soprano; see Examples 4.7a and 4.7b.

Example 4.7a: Antonio Vivaldi, “Laudamus Te” from *Gloria*, mm. 1-2

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Example 4.7b: Antonio Vivaldi, “Laudamus Te” from Gloria, mm. 17-21

Whereas Purcell introduced a melismatic passage immediately in “Sound the Trumpet,” Vivaldi’s text setting is syllabic for the first several measures with the words “laudamus te” (“we praise you”) and “benedicimus te” (“we bless you”). At the words “adoramus te” (“we adore you”), Vivaldi adds one note per syllable for the first soprano. Finally, the words “glorificamus te” (“we glorify you”) are set in a melismatic passage of several measures for both sopranos; see Example 4.8.

Example 4.8: Antonio Vivaldi, “Laudamus Te” from Gloria, mm. 27-36

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.

31
The passages are nearly identical in rhythm, however the first soprano sings a third above the second soprano. The sopranos should listen to each other to maintain accurate rhythms. Moreover, they should articulate each slurred couplet in the Baroque manner, in that the first note receives more weight than the second.68

In the following section, an extended melisma includes two rhythmic motives. The first is the same as the couplets above, and the second is a dotted quarter note (or a quarter note tied to an eighth) followed by two sixteenth notes; see Example 4.9.

Example 4.9: Antonio Vivaldi, “Laudamus Te” from Gloria, mm. 52-5969

Both singers should highlight the dissonances created by the rhythmic juxtaposition by singing without vibrato. When working with his or her students, the voice teacher should ensure that the singers produce these notes by increasing the air pressure, allowing them to keep the resonating space of their pharynx open.

The third section includes opportunities for young singers to improve their vocal agility by adding standard Baroque elements such as appoggiaturas and trills. An appoggiatura is “an auxiliary note, usually dissonant, always stressed, on the beat, and slurred to its declining resolution on the main note.”70 A trill is “a more or less rapid alternation of a main note with an

upper auxiliary one degree (i.e. a tone or a semitone) above.”\textsuperscript{71} An \textit{appoggiatura} (D\textsubscript{5}) and trill should be added to the second and fourth measures of the first soprano’s line; see Example 4.10.

Example 4.10: Antonio Vivaldi, “Laudamus Te” from \textit{Gloria}, mm. 66-70\textsuperscript{72}

\begin{music}
\begin{musicnotation}
\begin{musicsegment}
\begin{music}SOPRANO 1\end{music}
\begin{musicnote}\begin{musicnote}\textsf{\large mf}\end{musicnote}\end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote}\textsf{\large a - d - o - r - a - m u s - t e, a - d - o - r - a - m u s - t e,}\end{musicnote}
\end{musicsegment}
\end{musicnotation}
\end{music}

Likewise, an \textit{appoggiatura} (C\textsubscript{5}) and trill should be added to the fourth measure of the second soprano’s line; see Example 4.11.

Example 4.11: Antonio Vivaldi, “Laudamus Te” from \textit{Gloria}, mm. 70-74\textsuperscript{73}

\begin{music}
\begin{musicnotation}
\begin{musicsegment}
\begin{music}SOPRANO 2\end{music}
\begin{musicnote}\begin{musicnote}\textsf{\large mf}\end{musicnote}\end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote}\textsf{\large g l o - r i - f i - c a - m u s - t e,}\end{musicnote}
\end{musicsegment}
\end{musicnotation}
\end{music}

Both \textit{appoggiaturas} should be stressed while the faster notes of the trill should have less vocal weight.

In the fourth section, Vivaldi sets nearly all of the text syllabically and with both sopranos singing identical rhythms in intervals of a third apart. Each phrase should be separated by a slight space. In the fifth and final section, a return of the rhythmic motive comprised of a dotted quarter note and two sixteenth notes can be heard. The first soprano begins on a D\textsubscript{5} followed by the second soprano on an E\textsubscript{5}. The resulting dissonances should be sung with similar technique and style as before. Vivaldi repeats this same phrase, however the second soprano now sings a D\textsubscript{5} followed by the first soprano on an E\textsubscript{5}. The words “glorificamus te” are used for these passages, with the [a] vowel providing the melisma. Each soprano should listen to each

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 124.
\textsuperscript{72} Example based on “Laudamus Te” from \textit{Gloria, RV 589} by Antonio Vivaldi (London: Novello Publishing Limited, 2002), 17.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
other’s timbre, especially on the sustained notes. They may also add trills to the penultimate measure of each phrase. These extended melismatic passages deftly paint the words “glorificamus te,” and both singers should echo the triumphant conclusion by staying in time and with a gradual crescendo.

The duets discussed in this chapter are merely two of the numerous duets written in the Baroque period. As students become more familiar with the period’s vocal technique and the art of creating an ensemble, more advanced duets may be added. For example, George Frideric Handel’s “Quel fior che all’alba ride” (HWV 192) for two sopranos and Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Christe eleison” from Mass in B-Minor (BWV 232) for soprano and alto offer greater challenges than those discussed above. Other duets for two women to improve agility in undergraduates include “Wir eilen mit schwachen, doch emsigen Schritten” from Cantata 78 by J. S. Bach and “Fac ut ardeat cor meum” from Stabat Mater by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. Students will therefore improve the flexibility of their voices, while also increasing their collaborative skills, to result in a valuable learning experience.
CHAPTER 5

LEGATO: “SULL’ARIA” FROM LE NOZZE DI FIGARO BY W. A. MOZART AND “BELLE NUIT” (BARCAROLLE) FROM LES CONTES D’HOFFMANN BY JACQUES OFFENBACH

Many voice teachers maintain that the bel canto style is essential for teaching a legato vocal line. Grove Music discusses the stylistic and historical aspects of bel canto:

Generally understood, the term bel canto refers to the Italian vocal style of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the qualities of which include perfect legato production throughout the range, the use of a light tone in the higher registers and agile and flexible delivery. More narrowly, it is sometimes applied exclusively to Italian opera of the time of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti.74

Late twentieth-century editor John Glenn Paton describes bel canto as having “smooth, flowing melodies, supported by simple, harmonious accompaniments, [which] flatter the voice and help it to become even, flexible, and expressive.”75 A methodical approach to learning bel canto was advocated by Nicola Vaccai (1790-1848), an Italian singing teacher and composer, whose Practical Method of Italian Singing76 was published in 1833 for his amateur students in London. His simple melodies paired with Italian text helped students to sing freely with the support of their breath.

Two duets discussed in this chapter may work in tandem with Vaccai’s and other bel canto methods77 to reinforce singing concepts such as breath management and sustained vowels. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s duet “Sull’aria” from Le nozze di Figaro and Jacques Offenbach’s barcarolle78 duet from Les Contes d’Hoffmann feature long vocal lines in both voices with

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76 Ibid.
77 Such as method books by Manuel Garcia (1805-1906) and Mathilde Marchesi (1821-1913).
78 Grove defines the barcarolle as a “title given to pieces that imitate or suggest the songs sung by Venetian gondoliers as they propel their boats through the water…A basic feature of the barcarolle is the time signature, 6/8, with a marked lilting rhythm depicting the movement of the boat.” Maurice J.E. Brown and Kenneth L. Hamilton,
simple accompaniments. The duets are most effective when each singer sings with equal freedom and line. When students are paired together in an undergraduate vocal studio, the teacher should encourage them to listen to each other’s phrasing and line.

In Le nozze di Figaro, the characters Susanna and the Countess sing “Sull’aria.” The vocal range for the Countess in this duet is from D₄ to G₅, and Susanna’s is from F₄ to B-flat₅. Lyric sopranos often sing the role of the Countess; these voices can successfully highlight the role’s long melodies in both the arias and duets. Though the role of Susanna has been performed by sopranos of varying vocal weight and color⁷⁹, she is often sung by a soubrette.⁸⁰ Though Susanna’s arias are generally less sustained than the Countess’s, this duet requires both sopranos to sing in complete unison in phrasing and line at its climax and conclusion. Mozart’s music reflects the interaction between the characters. In the scene, Susanna, the Countess’ maid, writes down the Countess’ spoken dictation of a letter to the Count, with details of their imminent meeting. The Count has fallen out of love with the Countess and now favors Susanna, who has just married Figaro, the Count’s manservant. Susanna and the Countess devise a plan to trap the Count as he attempts to woo Susanna, which will result in the Countess’ forgiveness of him:

Susanna: Sull’aria  On the breeze…
Countess: Che soave zeffiretto… What a gentle little Zephyr…
Susanna: Zeffiretto… A little Zephyr…
Countess: Questa sera spirerà… This evening will sigh…
Susanna: Questa sera spirerà… This evening will sigh…

⁷⁹ Mirella Freni, a soprano known for singing the heavier role of Mimi in La Bohème, sang the role of Susanna in a film version of Le Nozze di Figaro in her 40’s.
⁸⁰ Soubrette may refer to the character of the clever servant girl or a soprano with a lighter voice. In Le Nozze di Figaro, she is often both.
Countess: Sotto i pini del boschetto.  Under the pines in the little grove.

Susanna: Sotto i pini…  Under the pines…

Countess: Sotto i pini del boschetto.  Under the pines in the little grove.

Susanna: Sotto i pini…del boschetto…  Under the pines…in the little grove.

Countess: Ei già il resto capirà.  He of course, rest will understand.

Susanna/Countess: Certo, certo il capirà.  Certainly, certainly he’ll understand.\(^\text{81}\)

The Countess’s vocal lines are generally longer and require more sustained singing, as she is dictating more complete sentence phrases. Susanna echoes with shorter sentence fragments and musical material; see Example 5.1.

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Example 5.1: W. A. Mozart, “Sull’aria” from *Le nozze di Figaro*, mm.1-10

Because the Countess has a more technically demanding vocal line, the role should be sung by a more advanced student who has had a few years of training in *bel canto* style. Susanna could be sung by a younger student with a lighter voice, enabling her to listen for a supported yet free vocal production from the advanced student before producing a similar technique. The voice teacher should also ensure that the older student creates resonance by keeping her soft palate lifted through energized breath, especially for the notes at the top of the staff. This same technique should also be applied to Susanna’s even higher vocal lines at the end of the duet.

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Susanna’s vocal lines mirror the Countess’s as the duet reaches its climax; see Example 5.2.

Example 5.2: W. A. Mozart, “Sull’aria” from Le nozze di Figaro, mm. 45-50\(^3\)

Both singers may create an ensemble as they listen to each other’s phrasing and sustained vowels in these vocal lines of equal length and musical material. When the singers’ vocal production is supported with efficient and free air flow, their individual vibratos will likely become more even as well. This is especially important as the characters sing in unison thirds; see Example 5.3.

Example 5.3: W. A. Mozart, “Sull’aria” from Le nozze di Figaro, mm. 50-56\(^4\)

\(^3\) Ibid, 345-346.
\(^4\) Ibid, 346.
The vocal lines above have several dotted-quarter notes, giving the two sopranos an opportunity to create broad lines through connected and sustained vowels in the upper part of their range. Mozart’s vocal writing successfully indicates that the two characters are in agreement regarding the plan they have just concocted.

Jacques Offenbach’s *Barcarolle* partners well with Mozart’s “Sull’aria” when teaching legato technique. The two duets have memorable melodies, similar rhythms (both are in 6/8 with mostly syllabic writing on quarter and eighth notes), and tempi. Although the *barcarolle* is usually sung in French, a *bel canto* style is easily applied. However, the *Barcarolle* differs from “Sull’aria” in the voice types required. The character of Nicklausse, a pants role, is sung by a mezzo-soprano (her vocal line ranges from A₃ to B₄) while the character of Giulietta is sung by a soprano (her vocal line ranges from D₄ to F-sharp₅). The tessitura of this duet also differs from the Mozart; both singers make greater use of their middle range. For this reason, and because the soprano line does not lie especially high, this duet could be sung by two singers of equal ability. Moreover, *Les Contes d’Hoffmann* is romantic in style with heavier orchestration; the voice teacher may consider pairing a soprano and mezzo-soprano with somewhat weightier voices.

In this scene, Giulietta, a courtesan, is giving a party and sings of love with Hoffmann’s friend, Nicklausse:

尼克劳斯: belle nuit, o nuit d’amour, souris à nos ivresses! nuit plus douce que le jour, ô belle nuit d’amour!

吉里埃塔: emporte nos tendresses, loin de cet heureux séjour, le temps fuit sans retour.

泽菲尔斯：Zéphirs embrasés, versez-nous

洛丽夜，o night of love, smile on our pleasures!

夜更甜于白昼，O lovely night of love!

时飞逝而无返，time flies without return.

泽菲尔斯：Zephyrs burning, breathe on us

85 Many voice teachers agree that *bel canto* technique should be used when singing various languages.
vos caresses,  
Versez-nous vos baisers!  
Breathe on us your kisses,\textsuperscript{86}

Nicklausse introduces the first theme of the duet as a solo. The theme begins and ends on F-sharp\textsuperscript{4} with movements up to G\textsubscript{4} and down to E\textsubscript{4}. This “pivot” note of F-sharp (the 3\textsuperscript{rd} scale degree of D Major), rather than the tonic note of D, is used to produce a vocal line of expectation. The rocking gentleness of the rhythm contributes to the romantic mood; see Example 5.4.

Example 5.4: Jacques Offenbach, \textit{Barcarolle} from \textit{Les Contes d'Hoffmann}, mm. 1-6\textsuperscript{87}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example54.png}
\caption{Example 5.4: Jacques Offenbach, \textit{Barcarolle} from \textit{Les Contes d'Hoffmann}, mm. 1-6.}
\end{figure}

The limited range allows the student to create a seamless line through connected vowels and long phrases in one breath, without the added pressure of singing in the outer reaches of her range. The teacher should ensure that the student feels confident in her legato technique within this section before singing further.

A second theme expands from the first; Giulietta now sings the melody while Nicklausse sings the harmony. Similarly, the ranges are relatively small; Giulietta’s is from A\textsubscript{4} to D\textsubscript{5} and Nicklausse’s is from F-sharp\textsuperscript{4} to B\textsubscript{4}; see Example 5.5.


\textsuperscript{87} Example based on \textit{Les Contes d'Hoffmann: a structurally revised edition of the Choudens' 1907 Vocal score, restoring the central acts to their original order} (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001), 247.
Giulietta and Nicklausse sing the same words with the same rhythm, giving them ample opportunities to listen to each other’s open and connected vowels. The more unified in technique and timbre they can employ, the more explicitly the singers will paint the nighttime scene of love.

Giulietta and Nicklausse then sing alternately, with Giulietta in melody and Nicklausse in harmony, all the while continuing to explore the upper and lower parts of the vocal range. Giulietta sings a sustained E5 while Nicklausse sings underneath; see Example 5.6.

The teacher should encourage the soprano to continue listening to the mezzo-soprano, so as not to overpower her. Perhaps a gradual crescendo in both parts should be added.

The main theme returns with both characters singing in complete unison. The climax of the piece then begins with an ascending scalar line from Nicklausse, which Giulietta continues.

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88 Ibid, 247.
89 Ibid, 248.
up to F-sharp5. Each part then gradually returns to the tonic, with Nicklausse on D₄ and Giulietta on D₅. Giulietta and Nicklausse sing a series of upward leaps on “Ah!” to conclude the duet; see Example 5.7.

Example 5.7: Jacques Offenbach, Barcarolle from Les Contes d’Hoffmann, mm. 39–43⁹⁰

The pianissimo marking in both parts gives the students a chance to practice singing quietly, but not at the expense of freely moving air. Richard Miller states the following:

Sustained piano singing should cause neither a higher mixture of breath in the tone nor an increase in glottal pressure as a device for diminishing volume. Dynamic variation should not be dependent on sudden shifts in vocal timbre caused by a series of static adjustments.⁹¹

Duet partners could potentially practice exercises aimed at improving messa di voce together, as they listen for a clear and free tone in the piano dynamic. Subsequently, they should be equal duet partners in dynamic, resonance, and phrasing. If one partner has greater abilities in one area than the other, she can help the other by giving suggestions. There are times when a student understands a technical concept better when working with a fellow student than with the teacher.

The two singers return to a unison “Ah” on D₄ which they sustain for five measures. Ideally, both singers should sing for the full time, but in performance, one may not have quite enough breath to hold the note. Each singer should be aware of each other’s breath support and

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⁹⁰ Ibid, 251.
be ready to cut off early if necessary. As a result, the duet ends with both singers maintaining an ensemble, with neither singer sustaining the note alone.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, a teacher may utilize these duets along with legato exercises championed by *bel canto* pedagogues such as Nicola Vaccai. Similarly, they can prepare student singers for more advanced *bel canto* solo repertoire such as songs by Bellini, for example “Ma rendi pur contento,” which has a tempo and meter that echoes those of the duets discussed. In addition, the *Barcarolle* works well as the initial step to learning the complete, yet smaller roles of Nicklausse and Giulietta in *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, both of which could be learned by an advanced undergraduate singer. The practice of learning a role by starting with a duet may give them the confidence they need to continue a potentially overwhelming task.
CHAPTER 6

DRAMATIC SKILLS: “LONG YEARS AGO, FOURTEEN MAYBE” FROM *PATIENCE* BY GILBERT AND SULLIVAN AND LETTER DUET FROM *THE TURN OF THE SCREW* BY BENJAMIN BRITTEN

When teaching undergraduate singers, it can be tempting to concentrate solely on good vocal technique while somewhat overlooking the equally important skill of emotional connection to the text. Many worthy books on this topic have been useful in helping a student become more expressive on the stage as soloists. However, students may also improve their dramatic abilities by singing duets from operas in which two characters are in dialogue with each other. By doing so, the students act and react according to the text as sung by their partner. This interplay may help a less experienced singer/actor to more clearly embody her character. The two duets discussed in this chapter, “Long Years Ago, Fourteen Maybe,” from Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Patience*, and Letter Duet from Benjamin Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw*, have one character informing the other of pertinent information to further the plot. They also include a section of music in which the two sing in harmony and with the same text. Consequently, these duets may be easily extracted from the full opera and performed in a recital or opera scenes program. Furthermore, both duets have English libretti, enabling native English-speaking students to more easily listen and respond instinctively to each other.

*Patience; or, Bunthorne’s Bride* was written in 1881 with music by Arthur Sullivan and libretto by W. S. Gilbert. The two-act comic opera tells the story of the milkmaid Patience and

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the two poets in love with her. The opera is a satire on the aesthetic movement\textsuperscript{93} of the late-19\textsuperscript{th} century in Europe. The poet Bunthorne may represent Dante Gabriel Rossetti, while the rival poet Grosvenor may have been based on Oscar Wilde. Both Rossetti and Wilde were influential writers leading up to and within the aesthetic movement.\textsuperscript{94} In the opera, the simplicity of Patience, who has never been in love, contrasts with the idle rich lifestyle of the Lovesick Maidens, all of whom are jealous of Bunthorne’s love for her. His attempts to woo her have been rejected by Patience, and she informs him that she could never love him and furthermore, she dislikes his poetry. Bunthorne leaves and Lady Angela, one of the Lovesick Maidens, asks why Patience is crying. Patience is curious about the meaning of love, and Angela explains, “It is the one unselfish emotion in this whirlpool of grasping greed…” Angela inquires if it is possible that Patience has never loved anyone, and Patience reveals that there was one person, a childhood playmate in the duet “Long Years Ago, Fourteen Maybe.” This little boy turns out to be Grosvenor himself.

In performances of Gilbert and Sullivan operas, the clever libretti of W. S. Gilbert should be sung and spoken clearly and with true emotional intent. The libretto includes spoken dialogue between Patience and Angela, which is then followed by the duet. If the voice teacher chooses to have the students perform the spoken text, continuity of dialogue into music should be seamless, and performers should sing with “sincerity and imagination.”\textsuperscript{95} Peter Kline gives further directive in his book \textit{Gilbert and Sullivan Production}:

This scene has a genuineness that should not be played for comedy. Although Angela is meant to be a caricature, Patience’s reactions to her are sincere and lead eventually to emotions that transcend those of the other characters. The simple joy with which

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} defines aestheticism as “the pursuit of, or devotion to, what is beautiful or attractive to the senses, esp. as opposed to an ethically or rationally based outlook,” “Aestheticism,” \textit{OED Online}, Oxford University Press, \url{http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/3241?redirectedFrom=aestheticism\&} (accessed June 26, 2013).
Patience recalls the little boy that she once loved should lend the sparkle of childhood to her eyes and cheeks. Students performing the duet, either with or without the dialogue, should be encouraged to follow Kline’s advice in order to portray their characters without affectation.

The duet between Patience, sung by a light soprano, and Angela, a mezzo-soprano, begins with a description of Patience’s childhood love. Sullivan typically sets Gilbert’s text in syllabic phrases and this duet is no exception. The singer’s diction should be crisp so the audience can understand each word. The phrase “How true our love – and, by the bye, *He* was a little boy!” incorporates necessary italicization; see Example 6.1.

Example 6.1: Gilbert and Sullivan, “Long Years Ago, Fourteen Maybe” from *Patience*, mm. 21-25

Gilbert italicizes the word “he,” and with each repetition of this phrase, a different word is italicized. The italics provide clues for the singer in how to convey underlying emotions. William Cox-Ife notes that Patience reveals the baby’s sex almost as an afterthought. Angela, however, repeats the phrase thus: “He *was* a little boy!” Perhaps her emphasis on “was” can be acted for some comic effect to remind Patience that he is no longer a little boy. An embarrassed Patience responds with “He was a *little* boy!” She may turn aside and avert her eyes from the

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97 Example based on *Patience; or Bunthorne’s Bride* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1982), 62.
older Angela to show her discomfort in this new feeling. Angela reiterates: “No doubt! Yet, spite of all your pains, The interesting fact remains – He was a little boy!” Angela cannot help but prolong Patience’s uneasy state. Finally, the two sing together, with Patience agreeing that indeed, “He was a little boy!”; see Example 6.2.

Example 6.2: Gilbert and Sullivan, “Long Years Ago, Fourteen Maybe” from Patience, mm. 46-50

The repetition of the final phrase includes a fermata on the second syllable of “little,” which gives the singers a chance to underscore Patience’s newfound love.

Students performing these roles may enjoy developing Patience’s escalating emotion of lovesickness. Patience moves from one emotion to another, including annoyance, perplexity, joy, embarrassment, and acceptance. The singer playing Angela has numerous lines that fuel the fire of Patience’s dramatic arc. The voice teacher should encourage them to use the space of the stage with large hand gestures. Gilbert includes a few stage directions throughout the duet that should be observed. The words of this duet also provide undergraduate singers with simple

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Example based on Patience; or Bunthorne’s Bride (New York: G. Schirmer, 1982), 64.
opportunities to portray the drama on their faces. The resulting performance is ideally one in which each singer matches the other in expressivity.

Benjamin Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), with libretto by Myfanwy Piper, is based on Henry James’s novel of the same title, published in 1898. Both the novel and the opera explore the character of the Governess through a series of events involving her young charges, Miles and Flora. The Governess has been hired by their uncle, who lives in London, and when she arrives at his country estate, she relieves Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, from her temporary duty of caring for the children. Mrs. Grose informs the Governess that she is not to communicate with the uncle, but to handle any problems on her own. After some time, the Governess and possibly the children see two ghosts at different times and in various settings. However, it is unclear whether the ghosts actually exist. Vivien Jones explains further:

James’s tale is in fact two tales in one; it is consistently and irresolvably ambiguous, permitting two interpretations and refusing to let the reader settle for either. Do the children ‘see’ the ghosts or are they the product of the governess’s imagination? Are Miles and Flora preyed upon by the ghosts – or by the governess? We have no certain evidence, for we have only her version of what happened.100

Myfanwy Piper’s libretto likewise retains the ambiguous nature of the ghosts and the Governess’s motivations for protecting the children. For example, a stage direction places one of the ghosts, Quint, off-stage in Act II scene 4; the audience can interpret his voice as being either in the Governess’s head or in Miles’s.101

In the *Letter Duet* (Act I scene 3), Miles has just returned from boarding school for the summer. Mrs. Grose (a mezzo-soprano) gives a letter to the Governess (soprano). While she

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101 Patricia Howard, “*The Turn of the Screw* in the theatre” in Benjamin Britten: *The Turn of the Screw*, ed. Patricia Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 140.
reads, Mrs. Grose comments how glad she is the Governess has come. Her contented mood is quickly interrupted by the following sung exchange:

Governess: Mrs. Grose! He’s dismissed his school.

Mrs. Grose: Who?

Governess: Little Miles.

Mrs. Grose: Miles!

Governess: What can it mean – never go back?

Mrs. Grose: Never?

Governess: Never! O, but for that he must be bad –

Mrs. Grose: Him bad?

Governess: An injury to his friends –

Mrs. Grose: Him an injury - … I won’t believe it!

Governess: Tell me, Mrs. Grose, have you known Miles to be bad?

Mrs. Grose: A boy is no boy for me who’s never wild…But bad, no! No!

Governess: I cannot think him really bad, not really bad, not Miles! Never!

Mrs. Grose: He can be wild but not bad!

This section provides opportunities for students to interact with the other. Furthermore, the score’s markings assist them in making dramatic choices. For example, the score gives the marking “agitated, short” for the Governess’s first line, whereas Mrs. Grose sings “A boy is no boy for me who’s never wild…” with “marked” articulation and a *forte* dynamic. Britten also gives accent marks above certain phrases; see Example 6.3.
Example 6.3: Benjamin Britten, *Letter Duet* from *The Turn of the Screw*, mm. 19-20

The accents encourage clear diction from the singers as they communicate the seriousness of the situation. The voice teacher should urge each singer to take note of all the diacritical markings in the score, not only those for her own character.

In the next section, the children sing a simple tune while the Governess and Mrs. Grose observe them:

Governess: See how sweetly he plays,
Mrs. Grose: And with how gentle a look
             He turns to his sister.
             Yes! The child is an angel!
             It is nonsense, never a word of truth.
             It is all a wicked lie.

Britten’s music is more melodic than in the previous section; however, certain dissonances of musical intervals reveal the troubled state of the Governess and Mrs. Grose. One example can be seen in the major second on the word how; see Example 6.4.

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102 Example based on *The Turn of the Screw: an opera in a prologue and 2 acts, op. 54* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1966), 25.
Example 6.4: Benjamin Britten, *Letter Duet* from *The Turn of the Screw*, mm. 43-46\textsuperscript{103}

The intertwining lines create an unusual aural quality because of the different timbres of each voice. Pitch accuracy in both singers is essential for contributing to the overall atmosphere of this scene. If one singer is out of tune, dissonances and consonances will lose potency.

The scene’s final dialogue allows both singers to arrive to a similar conclusion:

Mrs. Grose: What shall you do then?

Governess: I shall do nothing.

Mrs. Grose: And what shall you say to him?

Governess: I shall say nothing.

Mrs. Grose: Bravo! And I’ll stand by you. O Miss, may I take the liberty? (*Mrs. Grose kisses her*)

Though the characters are in agreement, the singers should not portray them as being altogether satisfied with the decision. Underlying tensions remain, and the opera’s unfolding will make this fact ever clearer.

These duets aid voice teachers in teaching the necessity of understanding the motivations of a student’s character, as well as her scene partner’s. Operatic duets in the English language can be an initial step for many students to respond more easily to new plot developments with clear dramatic intent. Subsequently, these same concepts can be transferred to operatic duets in

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, 28.
languages other than English. Students should translate the entire scene’s text into their native language and memorize the translations. Singers taking these necessary steps, as well as studying the relationship between music, text and characters, will create a more compelling performance in which they communicate with each other and with the audience.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

Voice teachers often encourage their students to collaborate with others in their studio to enhance the musical and dramatic possibilities of recital programs. However, the pedagogical benefits of singing duets, regardless of performance, are sometimes overlooked. When singing duets, students will more likely meet together to practice, which is in itself a positive result. These practice sessions can also motivate students to sing with better technique as a way to stoke the fires of friendly competition. Moreover, utilizing duets in an undergraduate studio can improve specific areas of vocal technique. This document examines ways that duets can improve intonation, vocal agility, legato, and dramatic skills, however, the study and performances of duets may improve additional technical areas. For example, further research may demonstrate that singers can extend their breath management as a result of singing a particular duet. This document focuses on the pedagogical benefits of duets appropriate for study by undergraduate women. Yet further research could include other voice combinations, such as duets for two men, or one man and one woman.

Numerous duet albums featuring two women may assist singers and voice teachers in finding both standard and less well-known literature. Some suggestions include the following:

- *Bellezza Vocale* with soprano Hei-Kyung Hong and mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore performing operatic duets;\(^ {104} \)
- *Amor e gelosia: Handel Operatic Duets* with soprano Patrizia Ciofi and mezzo-soprano Joyce Di Donato;\(^ {105} \)
- *Duets, arias, scenes & songs, Vol. 1* with mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade and soprano Judith Blegen performing various composers;\(^ {106} \)
- *Baroque Duets* with works by Monteverdi, Vivaldi and Handel performed by Sara Macliver and Sally-Anne Russell;\(^ {107} \)


• *Soprano Duets* with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Irmgard Seefried performing duets by Dvořák, Carissimi, and Richard Strauss;\(^{108}\)
• *Elisabeth Söderström & Kerstin Meyer* with duets by Kodály, Tchaikovsky, Purcell, and Rossini.\(^{109}\)

The resource books and articles discussed in Chapter 2 may also be consulted when seeking duets for use in the undergraduate studio.

Duets provide performers of numerous vocal genres ways to enrich their musical experience. Voice teachers should regularly introduce their students to this realm of vocal literature. This pedagogical method also offers variety to voice teachers seeking another approach in the instruction of singing technique. When singers act as a team, their knowledge and understanding of vocal technique can increase. Singers of duets become stronger musicians as they join forces to create music that is both gratifying to sing and appealing to the audience.

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