THE RECORDED LEGACY OF ENRICO CARUSO AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE ITALIAN VOCAL TRADITION

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This dissertation presents evidence for the influence which tenor Enrico Caruso had on the Italian Vocal Tradition. This impact was clearly boosted by the revolution realized in the fledgling recording industry, and the recordable disc. In the years of 1902-1920, gramophones became commonplace, and collecting recordings became a growing interest for many. This new technology required specialized skills, and was especially suited to certain qualities of voice. Caruso enjoyed immense success in this medium, in recording over 250 records.

Italian vocal style at the turn of the century was changing, and Caruso employed a new “modern” style in his singing. His interpretive decisions, vocal method, and repertoire which he championed had an impact on the vocal tradition of future generations. Comparison of his recordings with tenors Fernando De Lucia, Giuseppe Anselmi, and Alessandro Bonci shows a marked contrast in styles of “the old school” and Caruso’s “more straightforward” approach. A collection of historical documents for those who succeeded him include many biographies, reviews, and quotes to demonstrate the extent of his influence. Recordings also show a movement toward “the Caruso Sound.” Jussi Björling, Franco Corelli, Richard Tucker, Mario Lanza, and Luciano Pavarotti were all influenced by the great Caruso. Almost 100 years have passed since he sang his last performance. He continues to inspire singers to this day, through his recordings and legacy passed on by many generations. He is the ideal, the measuring stick for all tenors to follow, and continues even to today.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Looking at seventy years of singing from 1900-1970 in *The Grand Tradition*, J.B. Steane states: “in 1900 the gramophone was a toy, in 1902 a musical instrument, in 1904 an established medium … for nearly half a century, Adeline Patti (1843-1919) had reigned, as the record catalogue would claim, ‘undisputed queen of song’: a few years more and the famous voice would be stilled forever. But now, through the workings of the new machine, it could be heard by the twentieth century as by the nineteenth, and indeed for all time to come. A new vista had opened.”¹

Steane further elaborates, “at the turn of the century, the greatest names in opera were still Patti and the de Reszkes. Melba, Sembrich, and Calvé held the stage, and more than the stage; for the diva of the opera house was in those days fêted and acclaimed as a very grand and glamorous creature indeed. Distinguished elders like Lehmann and Maurel could lay down the law in regal style, and Battistini, the king of baritones, travelled round Europe like a prince … But the future did not lie with them.”² He also points out that these artists all recorded at the end of their careers. Caruso was one of the first artists to record in the prime of his career.

The recorded legacy of Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) is extensive, and reveals a great deal concerning the tenor’s artistry and style over his short career. “He was able to combine the emotionalism of verismo with the roots and traditions of bel canto, and

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he continued to grow and develop with changing musical tastes. The evolution of his interpretations is well documented by his recordings. The earliest, which date from 1902, already show a degree of individuality. Remarkably, his delivery sounds fresh and musically valid today, while the same selections recorded by many of his contemporaries seem stylistically dated. Most authorities concur that a handful of his many records rank as the all-time best renditions of the given operatic selections."

In describing vocal ornamentation in late Verdi, Will Crutchfield suggests that “it became popular for singers in the late nineteenth century to replace the normally florid cadenzas with more declamatory versions.” His explanation of vocal elaboration and cadenzas shows the different types of cadenzas and melodic variants employed by composers and singers in that time. In addition, he points to recorded evidence which contrasts the vocal styles of some earlier singers such as Fernando De Lucia (1860-1925), and Giuseppe Anselmi (1876-1929) to Caruso. Crutchfield typifies Caruso’s approach as more “straightforward and modern” which was the accepted trend documented in the tenor’s recordings.

In 1902, while distinguishing himself in performances at La Scala, Enrico’s first recording that included ten selections in one session was made for the Gramophone & Typewriter Company in Milan. The records were such a resounding success that the next recording session was quickly negotiated for ten more selections. Later, in 1904, after his Metropolitan Opera debut, The Victor Talking Machine Company signed him to

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a contact which stipulated that he record a minimum number of selections per year. This contract lasted until his untimely death in 1921.

Will Crutchfield compares Caruso to his contemporaries, and highlights a movement in style “from the florid to the declamatory.” In addition to Fernando de Lucia, Giuseppe Anselmi, Alessandro Bonci (1870-1940) specialized in bel canto roles and stylistically belonged to the florid style of the nineteenth century. Caruso presented a new standard which contrasted their approach in style and vocal method.

In observing Caruso’s training, experience, style, and special qualities, he was an artist who was uniquely gifted to benefit and flourish in light of the new technology. As his son, Enrico Caruso, Jr. with Andrew Farkas commented, “It has sometimes been claimed that the gramophone made Caruso, but historical perspective shows the reverse to be the case; it was Caruso who made the gramophone, or, at the very least, accelerated its coming of age.”

Recordings of Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957), Giovanni Martinelli (1885-1969), and Aureliano Pertile (1885-1952) indicate a shift in style and vocal method from those singers at the turn of the century. The “Caruso sound” appears to have made an indelible imprint on new standards of tenor timbre and method. In influencing repertoire, recordings of Neapolitan songs became hugely popular, and has continued until even to today. By looking at historical records that followed those of Caruso, we can see clearly his influence into style, vocal method, and repertoire which continued decades later with world-renown tenors Jussi Björling (1911-1960), Franco Corelli (1921-2003), Richard

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7 Caruso, Jr., *Enrico Caruso*, 357-58.
Tucker (1913-1975), Luciano Pavarotti (1935-2007), and Mario Lanza (1921-1959).

Numerous albums and recordings of Neapolitan songs have been made by tenors of all nationalities. This influence, and the wave of verismo style owe much of its continued interest to Caruso, who became the embodiment of what the audience and composers of the time expected, and requested. Comparison to Caruso and his sound has been the ultimate measuring stick for tenors aspiring to greatness, and continues even today.
CHAPTER 2
THE INFLUENCE OF RECORDINGS

2.1 NEW TRENDS IN LISTENING

Before the availability of recordings, music-lovers’ opportunities to hear music was limited to attending concerts, and was, therefore, most important. This was due to the fact that the audience might only be able to hear a certain composition once in their lifetime. Robert Philip in *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* commented that in the nineteenth century, encores were granted often in concerts and recitals. However, with the availability of recordings, the trend against giving encores became more established at the turn of the century. This was due in part to pressure from conductors, such as Toscanini, who detested encores and eventually walked away from La Scala in protest to playing them. Playing music in the home became popular in the nineteenth century, as well. Before the invention of recordings, revolutionary socialist Karl Marx (1818-1883) stated what seemed to be an immutable truth about music: “the service a singer performs for me satisfies my aesthetic need, and as soon as the singing is over, so too is my consumption.” Portability of technology is tied to music’s tangibility, or the ability to handle recorded sound with your very own hands.

Invisibility of the performer was an issue for many in the beginning with recordings. The human voice coming from a box was most strange to early listeners.

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10 Katz, *Capturing Sound*, 27.
Various approaches were invented by the recording industry to overcome this problem, such as including photos, or providing directions for concentration of the hearer’s attention. In our modern time, we have grown up hearing music without seeing the person performing, and this is no longer an issue for us. Portability is also an advantage of recordings, where one can listen when or wherever they want, as long as they have a device to replay it.

Another limitation of sound reproduction is the loss of the original setting, and its unique spatial and temporal setting, according to Mark Katz.\footnote{Katz, \textit{Capturing Sound}, 17.} He goes on to argue that this portability and freedom is not always negative, but can often create new realities which are beneficial. The ability to replay recorded sound as often as the listener desires affords many advantages over live listening. It allows comparison, criticism, and isolation of portions of a performance, depending on the desire and need of the hearer. Also, repeatability allows the listener to examine recordings of the same piece for study and practice. Live performances are, by definition, unique. Katz suggests that the ability to hear recorded performances “raises expectations for listeners.”\footnote{Ibid., 30.} Particularly in this modern era where recordings are mixed and remastered to an almost perfect sound reproduction, the listener expects to hear the same perfection in a live performance. Expectations are heightened by this created standard of performance.

Repeatability affects performers as well. New standards are set by recorded orchestras and performers. Recorded rehearsals and performances can also be put to use by the artist as a learning and study tool. If something felt right, did it also sound

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{Katz, \textit{Capturing Sound}, 17.}
  \item \footnote{Ibid., 30.}
\end{itemize}
good? In trying out new approaches, it gives an accurate record of what the resulting sound was. In his book, *Enrico Caruso: My Father and My Family*¹³, Enrico Caruso Jr. (1904-1987) related how his father seldom performed for his guests, but preferred to put a disc on the gramophone and have them listen to it. He could, then, determine how good it was by their reaction to it. Sometimes, he even put on a different tenor to check their sincerity, and the validity of their opinion.

Before the revolution of recorded sound, concerts and performances were something which was experienced in a group dynamic. If a musical moment pleased, it was greeted with sighs, clapping, or shouts of approval from the audience. However, with recorded music, a new reality of experience was possible. The individual could listen to the reproduction which they owned alone. This was a radical change from the ways of the past. Katz states, "solitary listening contradicted centuries of tradition."¹⁴ It eventually became accepted practice. This was a strange, new reality which was much written about early in this century.

Today, it has become extreme in many proportions. Katz describes it. "There is... something strange about seeing people in public places, earphones practically implanted into their brains, nodding or singing along to their own private music."¹⁵ Journalist Paul Fahri suggested a familiar image from the horror movie *Night of the Living Dead*: "It is so familiar now that we don’t see or hear it anymore. It is the look and sound of the 'walkman dead': the head cocked at a slight angle, the mouth gently lolling.

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¹³ Caruso Jr., *Enrico Caruso*, 354.
¹⁵ Ibid.
From about the skull comes a tinny low buzzing sound, like metallic bees. The eyes flicker with consciousness, but they don’t see. They’re somewhere else."\textsuperscript{16}

Mark Katz argues in his article from 1998 that the phonograph made “good music” available to Americans, which in turn awakened a new interest in music, and a general optimism in its ambition toward pursuing training and excellence in musical endeavors.\textsuperscript{17} The affordability of the recorded disc also made access to classical music and opera easier for those who could not afford to buy tickets, nor travel to hear artists they admired.

\textsuperscript{16} Katz, Capturing Sound, 21.
2.2. NEW TRENDS IN PERFORMING

In the early stages of recording, the studio was a very different place from what it is today. Robert Philip describes it. “First, before 1925, there was not electrical amplification. Therefore, sound was mechanically collected through use of a horn, or horns. The sound was transmitted to a machine, which cut the wave-form into soft wax on a cylinder or disc. Because there was no electricity, all the musicians had to be contained in a small room and within close range of the recording horn to be heard.” 18

One major limitation in early recordings was the range of frequency and dynamics. This restriction required the performer to be extremely sensitive to the ability of the recording equipment in recording loud sounds. This did not allow performers to always sing with normal volume, but accommodation was made not to overpower the capability of the recording device. In acoustic recording studios, particularly in the production of vocal recordings, the best position was reserved for the singer; this put the orchestra at a disadvantage. Philip explains that to compensate for this, “string sections were often adapted into a strange hybrid creation which would have sounded dreadful in the concert hall (and frequently does on the record) but could at least be heard. This included the ‘Stroh Violin’, a specially devised instrument amplified by a horn.” 19

Another issue in the recording studio was the fact of invisibility. Many artists found the recording process challenging, even frustrating, due to the absence of an audience and with that, immediate feedback. J.B. Steane suggests, “perhaps de Reszke (Jean, 1850-1925) felt inhibited by the strange business of recording: no

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18 Philip, Performing Music, 26-27.
19 Ibid., 27-28.
audience, but only this impersonal or possibly hostile-looking horn put there to sing into. Certainly the accounts of vivid characterization on the stage forbid any belief that the stolidity of his Martha record is representative.”20 Besides several live performances where the voice is very difficult to hear, there is surprisingly little recorded by this fine tenor.

Mark Katz adds, “the stories related by early recording artists and engineers make us wonder how anything of value ever made it into wax. Some seasoned performers froze in front of the horn in ‘phonograph fright’.21 Other recordings were wrecked by clumsiness, indiscretion, or bad luck. Take Nellie Melba’s (1861-1931) tale of an ill-uttered expletive. “I shall never forget,” the Australian soprano wrote of a 1906 session, “that once after making what I believed would have been the most beautiful record, I stumbled backwards over a chair, and said ‘Damn’ in an all too audible voice. That ‘damn’ when the record was played over, came out with a terrible clarity, making me feel much as a sinner must on the Day of Judgment.”22 Recordings could not be altered or changed after they were made. Also, in the process of making the recording, it could not be replayed or heard. Therefore, the artist could only guess if their impression of the take completed was a reality.

Recording technology at the time of Caruso was in its infancy, and required special skills in producing these historical records. Caruso was able to deal with the above mentioned conditions, and seemed to thrive in this new element.

21 Katz, Capturing Sound, 42.
22 Ibid.
Another of the limitations in this new technology was the constraint of its length. Before the invention of LPs in the late 1940s the 12-inch 78 rpm record had a time-limit of four to five minutes. Philip remarks that if the composition being performed did not fit onto one side, then it was either split between two or more sides, or shortened by making cuts. Due to the time constraint, shorter pieces were chosen to record which fit onto one side of a disc. For example, Caruso recorded many Neapolitan songs, which were from his native city, and which usually fit conveniently onto one side of a recordable disc.

Composers of Caruso's era began to take this limitation to heart in their work. Their compositions were made with this constraint in mind. Shorter works became more popular, because they could be more easily recorded onto the phonograph. In fact, some of the most famous opera conductors were contracted to compose Italian songs for the designed purpose of being recorded by Caruso. His own son remembered that “Mattinata,” by Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919), was one of the first songs written “expressly for the purpose of being recorded on phonograph.” Nigel Douglas also comments on this in his book Legendary Voices.

With the greater availability of recordings, comparison of performances and interpretations led to higher standards in performance. The audience was more likely to be familiar with what they heard, and therefore, expectations were higher for technical and musical accuracy.

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23 Philip, Performing Music, 35.
24 Caruso Jr, My Father, 361.
Robert Philip makes the point in his book *Early Recordings and Musical Style* that early recordings can shed valuable light on issues of tempi, vibrato, and stylistic values which were influenced by the nineteenth century style.\textsuperscript{26} These recordings can have important ramifications for historically informed performance (HIP), and the debate surrounding performance practice. He asserts, “In the history of performance, the early twentieth century has an importance which has never applied to any period before it, and which will never occur again.”\textsuperscript{27}

Particularly, as recording technology has developed, the standard of performance has been raised even higher. With studio remastering, the modern recordings are closer than ever to perfection.

\textsuperscript{27} Philip, *Early Recordings*, 2.
CHAPTER THREE

THE INFLUENCE OF CARUSO

3.1 CARUSO’S TRAINING

Many tenors of the twentieth century have idolized the vocal technique of Caruso as ideal. In fact, one of the highest compliments paid to Franco Corelli was that his voice “was compared to Caruso.” However, when he was questioned, Caruso often described himself as “self-taught.” He insisted that his technique was learned on his own while performing. The following details are a few highlights of his education.

While attending a school for boys in Naples at age ten, he received training in rudimentary subjects and choral singing. Maestro Alessandro Fasanaro discovered his voice and gifts hearing him in class and was his first singing teacher. Through hard work he eventually became the choir soloist for Father Bronzetti’s chorus, and received some minimal financial compensation for it. By age 11, his love for singing had become extremely strong. Giovanni Gatto, who was a tutor for the boy, gave him the nickname “Carusiello”; Gatto related some interesting anecdotes from this period of his life.

To augment his studies at Bronzetti’s school, he was sent in the evenings to study music with Amelia Tibaldi Niola, a lady of considerable culture and a fine musician. She taught him music, solfeggio, piano, and proper Italian pronunciation. She abhorred the Neapolitan dialect and was determined to purify the boy’s language and to teach him pure Italian pronunciation as opposed to the local dialect. One evening he

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arrived for his lesson and absent-mindedly answered her first question in Neapolitan. “With a word of rebuke she struck me with the flat of her hand across the face, a blow so vigorous that it made my ears ring; but the resentment it aroused in me stung far more than the physical hurt I received.”\(^{30}\) The boy felt humiliated and never returned.

He elaborated on this. “I had a contralto, not a soprano voice, but I do not recall that it was regarded as exceptional. There was, however, the desire to sing and an indescribable enjoyment attending the singing itself. I had no education in music beyond that given me by Signorina Niola during the brief time I benefited by her instruction: still there was very strong within me the musical instinct, a natural feeling for what was in good taste.”\(^{31}\)

Enrico had no support from his father, who believed that singing and music could not support a family and was a waste of time. He pushed the young man toward other avenues in this time of his life. However, he continued to sing with choirs and love singing. Pierre Key recounts how the tenor was singing at a café, and a patron praised his voice, but said, “You do not sing correctly” and suggested that he study. When he replied that he had no money, the patron suggested that they go to his brother, who was a teacher.\(^{32}\) For a while he studied with him, until he became discouraged.

In the summer of 1891, he sang for bathers in the Risorgimento Baths in Naples. His income depended on tips from patrons there. That summer, he met a baritone, who was preparing for a singing career. His name was Eduardo Missiano, and he wanted to

\(^{30}\) Caruso Jr., *My Father*, 24.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 25.
\(^{32}\) Key, *Enrico Caruso*, 27.
introduce him to his teacher, though Caruso insisted that he had no money for lessons.

“Never mind,” he insisted, “you have a fine voice: I will take you to my maestro Guglielmo Vergine, and somehow arrange for him to teach you.”33 However, Vergine was not enthusiastic about Caruso. He felt his was a small voice which sounded “like the wind whistling through a window.”34 Missiano argued with the teacher, and upon hearing him again a week later, Vergine reluctantly accepted him as a pupil, warning, “don’t expect too much of yourself!”35 A contract was drawn up, which entitled the teacher to twenty-five percent of his earnings over five years of singing.

His lessons with Vergine consisted of attending classes with other pupils who attempted arias, and received critique from the maestro. Jackson tells us, “when he did venture a few phrases, the Maestro would scoff at his backstreet style, and demand more restraint.”36 Vergine roughly informed Missiano that his young friend’s voice was “like gold at the bottom of the Tiber and hardly worth digging for.”37

However, Caruso’s patience was rewarded. “It was Vergine,” he later explained, “who emphasized the necessity of singing as nature intended, and who constantly warned-’don’t let the public know that you work,’”38 His approach in this time was characterized by vocal restraint, and admittedly young Caruso had great difficulties singing high notes full-voiced with ease.

33 Key, Enrico Caruso, 28.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
37 Jackson, Caruso, 14.
38 Key, Enrico Caruso, 30.
During his military service, he attracted the notice of one of his superiors, who kindly arranged for him to meet a music-loving patron nearby. During those weeks, he learned the entire role of Turridu, from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. For whatever reason, his commanding officer arranged for his brother, Giovanni, to replace him, and he was released from his military service.

Returning to Naples with renewed ambition, he continued singing and vocal studies with Vergine. In the fall of 1894, a new opportunity presented itself. Vergine arranged for Caruso to sing for the directors of the Theater Mercadante. His auditions went well and he was engaged to sing Ambrose Thomas’ *Mignon* in matinee performance. Unfortunately, however, Caruso was nervous and unprepared for the piano rehearsal, and was sent home in defeat and tears. Undeterred, he appeared in a new opera by Mario Morelli, by the name of *L’amico Francesco*. This experience was a moderate success, and he developed some good contacts which helped secure him more opportunities to perform.

A number of agents and impresarios also had influence on Caruso, and have shed light on his human, as well as professional qualities. Guglielmo Vergine, was his teacher and manager in his early years, but many others helped him manage his singing and career. The contract signed with Vergine resulted in a dispute in later years, as it proved to be unreasonable, and was settled in court. Vergine influenced his development of style and repertoire, which was characterized as “restrained.”
Francesco Zucci and Carlo Ferrara\textsuperscript{39} were two contacts made during \textit{L’amico Francesco}. Zucci was a retired singer, advanced in years, who worked as a theatrical agent for Caruso at the beginning of his career. He was of Sicilian birth, aggressive and loyal, and warily protective of his artists from the “claws of the Milanese agents.”\textsuperscript{40} The impresario Ferrara first engaged the tenor for a festival in Caserta, the contract being negotiated between acts of \textit{L’amico Francesco}. He was engaged to sing Turridu in \textit{Cavalleria Rusticana}, which was not a financial success. \textit{Faust} was also added to his repertoire, which he repeated at Theater Bellini in Naples at the suggestion of a baritone colleague. Caruso returned many times to Caserta to sing over the next four or five years.

Impresario Enrico Santini invited him to Cairo to sing Puccini’s \textit{Manon Lescaut}, \textit{Cavalleria Rusticana}, \textit{Rigoletto}, and \textit{La Gioconda}. Given a short rehearsal time for \textit{Manon Lescaut}, it is said that he set up the score for the final act against the soprano’s back\textsuperscript{41} to help with memory problems.

An eventful tour in Sicily was negotiated by Signor Cavallaro, where he sang \textit{Lucia di Lammermoor}. A memorable anecdote recounts how Caruso enjoyed some wine with his colleague over lunch, as was his habit; however, the Sicilian wine was much stronger, and had an unfavorable effect on that night’s performance. In the performance of Act one, instead of the words “the fate of Scotland”, he sang “the wolves

\textsuperscript{39} Key, \textit{Enrico Caruso}, 48.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 54.
of Scotland’, causing a tumultuous uproar during the performance. From this, incredible stories about him began to spread.

In making his La Scala debut in the fall of 1900, he worked with the impresario Giulio Gatti-Casazza (1869-1941), who established Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957) as his primary conductor. In preparing for his debut in La Bohème, Toscanini had some difficulties with Caruso. In rehearsals, he would not give a full voiced high C in the romanza, which irritated Toscanini, and produced fears that Caruso did not have the note. However, he enjoyed a great success, followed by a famous L’elisir d’amore in 1901, which had long been out of the repertory there. Numerous encores were demanded, to the chagrin of Toscanini. It was during the curtain call for this performance, that Toscanini remarked, “My Heavens! If this Neapolitan continues to sing like this, he will make the world talk about him.” On the heels of this success, Mefistofele of Arrigo Boito (1842-1918) was to be performed, with Russian bass Feodor Chaliapin (1873-1938) in the title role. Caruso and Chaliapin enjoyed enormous success. This fruitful collaboration with Gatti-Casazza and Toscanini was resumed in 1908, as they took over direction at the Metropolitan Opera.

Another important impresario for Caruso was Nicola Daspuro, who was affiliated with the publishing company of Sonzogno, and San Carlo Theater. For his debut at San Carlo in 1901, his highly political hometown of Naples received him with less than open arms. As a result, he swore never to return to sing in Naples again, but instead vowed

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42 Key, Enrico Caruso, 61-62.
43 Ibid., 131.
44 Ibid., 140.
to return to his hometown “only to eat a plate of spaghetti.” This “injustice” was felt very keenly by the tenor as he made his way onward in his career.

Maurice Grau negotiated the contract for the Metropolitan Opera, after his most successful debut in London in 1902. In contract negotiations, Caruso clearly communicated that he did not wish to involve agents in the contract. However, the contract proved problematic, as Mr. Grau presented it through an Italian agent. Caruso responded by throwing out the agent, but was persuaded to sign by a cable from Grau. The contract had to be taken over by Heinrich Conried, his successor at the Metropolitan Opera in 1904, who enlisted the assistance of Pasquale Simonelli, president of the Italian Savings Bank of New York to help in negotiations with Caruso. The contract was signed for Caruso to sing at the Metropolitan Opera in the fall. Correspondence with Simonelli continued as Caruso kept in contact, and shared with him his successes around the world. Many letters sent to such contacts are still being discovered in various locations around the world. In fact, Andrew Farkas points to this as a possible source of information about Caruso, which is still largely unknown.

Following his move to New York, an important relationship with long-time European agent Emil Ledner was forged. Ledner made all arrangements for engagements in Europe until the outbreak of the First World War. He traveled with him and made some most interesting observations and commentary about his nature, and habits, which he recorded in his memoirs.

45 Key, Enrico Caruso, 153.
46 Ibid., 155.
47 Andrew Farkas, “Researching Caruso” The Opera Quarterly 20, No.3 (Summer 2004), 362.
Upon closer examination, some details of his childhood and early successes can give insight into the influences which made his success. He recalled of his childhood, “I was very noisy and lively. I sang constantly and my voice was very piercing. I remember well how Father would pound in the mornings on the bathroom door and shout to me to stop making so much noise. Still, I continued to exercise my voice.”

The Caruso family lived next to Santa Anna Church, and the organist often would hear him. He must have been impressed with what he heard, for he asked young Enrico to fill in for him once, as he had a sore throat. He received ten centesimi (about 2 cents) for singing in the Sunday service.

Caruso was unable to afford to study voice consistently until he was introduced to maestro Vergine. In that time, Caruso’s voice was often characterized as small and restrained, given to breaking on high notes. After mixed reviews in his first few debuts, he began to develop a more solid technique. Some authors have suggested that this may have preserved his vocal instrument until he was ready to develop it.

However, his contact with Maestro Vincenzo Lombardi was to prove very influential. He met Caruso during a most ambitious project of singing Bellini’s *I Puritani*, a very challenging role which requires incredible control in the highest vocal registers. When asked by Lombardi if he had previously sung the role, he explained, “that I had

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48 Caruso Jr., *My Father*, 23.
49 Ibid.
never attempted to sing the tenor role in ‘Puritani’ because my voice was too short. The manner of Lombardi was not altered by what I had said. “If you accept for the money we can pay, I will make ‘longer’ the voice- because you do not know how to sing.”51 As a result of his success in this, an offer came from La Scala (which he could not accept), and Fernando de Lucia, who was idolized in Italy at that time, came to visit him in his dressing room.

According to the tenor himself, the “evolution” of his voice began in St. Petersburg at the Conservatory, where “very much against the will of my teacher… I first sang Radames in Aida. I attribute much of the help I got at this time to the singing of Radames. It was a great help because it developed and consolidated my voice, and really was responsible for making secure my high C, which I had been previously afraid to “put”.52 Caruso learned to put more power behind his tones, which helped his upper register to develop further.

Commenting on the development of his voice in correspondence with Pasquale Simonelli in 1903, Caruso stated, “I can well understand that you did not recognize me in the phonograph, because my voice has undergone an extraordinary development, and everyone who heard me in the early days of my career marvels how my voice could have gone through such an evolution.”53 Simonelli knew Caruso and was familiar with him from hearing performances in Italy, but did not recognize his voice on recordings made by the Gramophone & Typewriter Co. in 1902.

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51 Key, Enrico Caruso, 66-68.
52 Caruso Jr., My Father, 83-84.
53 Caruso Jr., My Father, 83.
His son Enrico Caruso Jr. shared this: “He was determined to become a singer, and a good one. In later years, he never attributed his acclaim to the vocal equipment he was born with, but rather to what he did to and with the inborn voice, which he tried to improve from year to year, just as he tried to improve his delivery from performance to performance. He attributed his success to hard work, and accordingly, he practiced for hours daily to keep his instrument in good working order and to improve his art.”\(^{54}\)

In the words of Emil Ledner, “At Livorno, the woman who laid the cornerstone of his career entered his life—the woman to whom he owed a great deal and who was his great happiness, perhaps the only woman whom he ever truly loved…Ada Giachetti was…probably unconsciously, and excellent and very energetic teacher. Under her instruction and wise guidance Caruso evolved from a chorister into a true opera singer. She studied his parts with him, trained his voice, and gave him dramatic instruction…Ada Giachetti! Caruso’s great fortune and misfortune!”\(^{55}\)

At many points in his career, Enrico Caruso proclaimed himself as “self-taught” in many interviews. In this, he explained that he learned to support his voice by himself, setting aside the teaching of Vergine. His passion and drive in his technique was evident to those who worked with him. He was always learning and improving his skill and technique throughout his life. His concept of being “self-taught” is explained in the following conversation.

In 1902, Caruso created the role of Maurizo in Cilea’s *Adriana de Lecouvreur* for the Lirico Theater in Milan. Between acts, the impresario Nicola Daspuro spoke with the

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 338.
\(^{55}\) Ibid., 338-39.
tenor. Daspuro remembered, “After we had talked for a few minutes, I reminded him of his early days.” “Do you remember the time when you could not reach a high A-natural without breaking the note in pieces?” “How well I do remember,” replied the tenor. “What did you do?” inquired Daspuro, “to find an impostation (support) which has made so secure and formidable your high notes?” “Do you want the truth?” demanded Caruso. “Well, I will give it to you. Instead of following all the suggestions of my teachers, I did just the opposite. I found the impostation of the whole voice all by myself.”

In examining this, biographer Pierre Key suggests “The tenor was given to taking to himself whatever credit was due for his advancement. He probably did not wish to deprive any one of the just recognition for service rendered him, yet it is a fact that he was generally loath to concede that others had been of substantial aid to him.”

Pierre Key comments, “The vocal restraint which was taught by Vergine in his lessons kept Caruso’s voice light. It was not until some six years later after those first lessons, when he came under the influence of Vincenzo Lombardi, that Caruso really allowed his voice to come free, with the natural power back of it which was necessary for the disclosure of its fullest beauty and potential.”

Caruso says of his talent, “I wish people generally might know how hard I have worked to gain such vocal abilities as I possess. They say that I sing as I do because I have the voice; they think for me that is easy. It may appear so, I hope it does, for the

56 Key, Enrico Caruso, 166.
57 Ibid.
58 Key, Enrico Caruso, 30.
artist should always conceal from his audience all evidence of physical effort. To gain such technique demands the constant effort; the exercise of the muscles, day after day for many years, until that point where sudden and very great effort never imposes a strain that cannot be met. If people only could be close enough to see my hands tremble during the delivery of some very physically exacting phrase, they wouldn’t say I sing easily.”

In his book, *How to Sing* Caruso includes sufficient rest between performances, and strict dietary guidelines, which he followed religiously, on days before a performance. He also made suggestions on how much to sing on such days. Dorothy Caruso also relates how he maintained a rigid control on the amount of speaking and conversation on days of a performance.

His son, Enrico Jr., shares this about the tenor’s approach. “Father had an uncanny ability to color his voice. He vocalized according to the role he was about to sing next, giving it a shading and texture appropriate for the part. He could lighten or darken his voice at will. If he was preparing to sing Eléazar or Samson, as he was about to leave for the theater, his standing joke was to ask Mario: “Nel terzo tiretto del casettone, prendimi la voce pesante.” (“From the third drawer of the chest, bring me my heavy voice.”) Or, if he was to sing Nemorino, he would ask for “la mia voce leggera dal primo tiretto di sopra.” (“my light voice from the top drawer.”)
In his preparation to go onstage at the Met, his son remembered how he always warmed up, singing some scales and a few phrases mezza voce. Then, just before leaving the dressing room, he would let out a phrase with the top note at full voice—“A ventitre ore!” or “Un trono vicino al sol!” or “Dalila! Je t’aime” to test “the instrument” and to remove any phlegm that might remain after the ritual gargling. The power of his voice in the confined space of a small dressing room was painful to hear.62

Part of what made Caruso different was his way of thinking. He worked hard at his craft, and was always grateful for those who supported him. He was quoted as saying that he never considered a life without singing. From the moment he discovered the beauty and pleasure of singing, he never had any doubt that he would become a professional singer, whatever the extent of his eventual success. He confessed having had dreams of a singing career, but “it was probably hope rather than a determination,” he said. After he went to real school, and became soloist for the school chorus, he never gave serious thought to any other profession.63

Caruso was not an avid reader. Some have attributed this to his lack of education, such as his European agent Emil Ledner, who offered, “His education was scanty. During all the years that I have spent with him I never saw a book in his hand. I never was able to persuade him to visit a museum or a picture gallery, and rarely a theater. The notable sights that strangers cross the ocean to see had not the slightest interest for him. Yet he possessed a keen, though narrowly defined mind. He had the polish and manners of a great, popular, admired artist; but he never posed … He

62 Ibid., 349-50.
63 Ibid., 338.
combined a certain worldly wisdom with being domineering and stubborn, and was immovable once his mind was made up." 64 A telling Caruso quote by Pierre Key on the topic of why he did not read was, "I learn from life, not from books."65

Caruso took his calling seriously and worked in every way he could to perfect his craft. One Friday afternoon in Hamburg, for example, he asked Ledner to go with him to a Jewish synagogue. They took a cab to the temple on Grindelallee, and after the service, he explained: "I have discovered that the Jewish cantors employ a peculiar art and method of singing in their delivery. They are unexcelled in the art of covering the voice, picking up a new key, in the treatment of the ritual chant, and overcoming vocal difficulties that lie in the words rather than in the music. For this reason I visit the Jewish synagogues whenever I have the opportunity and the time."66

He was a dedicated professional to the core. He took care of himself, his health, and his voice, as an athlete takes care of his body: it was an obligation to his public. He felt that if the audience paid to hear Caruso, he had better be the Caruso they paid to hear. He was aware that his way of life and his self-esteem depended on his public: It was they who gave him glory, success, and wealth. He felt an indebtedness which he repaid in installments each time he stepped to the footlights and sang, giving his all.67

Pierre Key once posed the question to Caruso: Which is more difficult, getting to the top, or staying there? "Staying on top," he replied. Before one gets there, one wonders if he will ever make it, and once that objective is reached, you wonder, "When

64 Caruso Jr., My Father, 163.
65 Key, Enrico Caruso, 145.
66 Caruso Jr., 339.
67 Caruso Jr., 341.
shall I fall?” Never do I prepare for a performance that I am not moved to ask myself:

“Will I get through all right?” The best must eventually slip. Until the audience is before you and you are before the audience one can never be sure. The people constitute the fourth dimension of the theatre. And they are quick to approve or condemn.”68

He explained further, “When I was unknown I sang like a bird, careless, without thought of nerves. But now my reputation is made, my audiences are more exacting. Here I am today bending beneath the weight of a renown which cannot increase, but which the least vocal mishap may compromise.”69

Enrico Caruso Jr. claimed, “The magic of my father’s singing was inseparable from his person and personality. The combination of man and artist gave him the communicative powers that held his listeners spellbound; past and beyond the wondrous voice, this combination was the key to his enormous appeal.”70

In preparation of his roles, he was very fastidious. When asked, “What is your favorite role?” he would always reply that he did not have one. “Every role is hard work. Of course, I like everything that I sing. I cannot sing it if I do not like it, and what I don’t like, I don’t sing.”71 Dorothy Caruso (1893-1955) insisted that he enjoyed singing La Juive for it gave him opportunity to prove himself as an actor as well as a singer.72 She is quick to point to Pagliacci as his most popular role.

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 342.
70 Ibid., 346.
71 Dorothy Caruso, Enrico Caruso: His Life and Death (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 78.
72 Ibid.
Caruso’s son recounts daily sessions where he father would work in preparation for the next performances. Daily, his pianist would come to his home in Italy. There were morning sessions, which were interrupted for the midday meal. After a short rest, the afternoon session would resume where they had left off before. In different periods of his life, he always employed a pianist to rehearse and help him prepare. Salvatore Fucito (1875-1929) was his long-time accompanist during the last years of his life, who traveled with him everywhere, and who wrote a biography about his employer, entitled *Caruso and the Art of Singing*.

Caruso’s reviews at the beginning of his career generally agree that his acting in the early years was primitive or nonexistent. However, he was always most critical of himself, and admitted that he was clumsy onstage:

“When I read now, what some critics write of my singing and acting in performance ... at the Metropolitan I sometimes wish they knew how hard I worked to be able to do those things they like. Some of these men say: “Caruso improves in his acting; once he did not act well.” What do they expect? A great artist of the young Caruso when he first came to this country?”

In speaking of projecting a character onstage, he impressed to Pierre Key, “I try really to impersonate the character I am representing in an opera. One is always acting, of course, but the reality is suggested in proportion to the degree of feeling that is in the artist’s heart.”

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In looking back on his life, Enrico Caruso Jr. made the following statement:

“Father had three distinct personalities: one for his public, one for his friends, and one for his family.”

Though these groups many times overlapped, they were clearly divided … Dorothy also noticed this division of personalities.” The impression of Caruso in public was taken from remembrances and writings which portray him as an easily likable overgrown child, full of fun, and always enjoying a joke or prank. Yes, he was often fun-loving and cheerful. But in private, he was mostly serious. He would confirm this in interviews. His focus on his career, and the many demands which are required of such a famous personality forced him to be this way.

Dorothy, his American wife, noted that he was a private person, and commented on it. “He never inflicted his low spirits upon us; he simply went quietly away by himself and let no one come close to him. I do not think that anyone ever came close to Caruso. He had a way of retreating into a world of his own, from which he would look upon even those dearest to him as though they did not exist.”

His sense of humor was different, depending on his audience. He made quips and teased his children and family, but when he had guests or fans, he would tell jokes, clown around, make funny faces, and draw caricatures. He would often remember his prank when he slipped an egg onstage into the hand of baritone Eugenio Giraldoni (1871-1924) in a production of La Gioconda. He loved to play jokes, but deeply resented when he was the butt of such a prank.

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75 Ibid., 370-71.
76 Ibid., 371.
77 Caruso Jr, My Father, 371.
He would occasionally entertain his audience with an impersonation of one of his fellow artists, over-exaggerating their mannerisms, but without malice. This was the same with the spirit his caricatures. One favorite subject, was Alessandro Bonci, who Caruso called “il nuotare”\(^{78}\) ("the swimmer"). When Bonci sang, he made motions like a man doing the American Crawl (Allegedly, this was to aid in breathing). Pierre Key commented on his experience with Enrico saying, “throughout my long acquaintance with the great tenor, I have never heard him speak unkindly of any other person.”\(^{79}\) Tenor John McCormack added to that, “For the fourteen years I have known him I never knew him to say an unkind word of or to a colleague.”\(^{80}\)

\(^{78}\) Ibid.

\(^{79}\) Ibid.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 372.
3.3 CARUSO’S UNIQUENESS

Looking at the development of his approach to vocal method and the suitability of his voice for the recording studio, some points can be made about several areas where he was unique in his approach and talents. In his Opera News article from 2013\textsuperscript{81}, Conrad I. Osborne speaks about his own gramophone listening, “I understood from the start, that captivating though the others were, Caruso was the greatest of the tenors. This was in part because I was told so, and in part because of books.” Osborne shares, “Not long into my collecting career, the LP made its debut … Just at stereo’s dawn, I began reviewing records. Caruso collections came my way from the reissue labels … I came closer to placing Caruso in the perspective of all the singing we have known for 110 years now. He was human. He couldn’t always do everything better than everyone else. But he remains the reference point.”\textsuperscript{82}

An accomplished baritone and friend of Caruso, Antonio Scotti (1866-1936) explained his unique place in history, “As Caruso succeeded no one, there can be no successor to him. He is and always will be supreme, the greatest tenor.”\textsuperscript{83} Yet, the line of second Carusos seemed endless. There was Tom Burke (1890-1969), the “Lancashire Caruso”; Jussi Björling, the “Swedish Caruso”; Miklós Gafni (1923-1981), the “Hungarian Caruso”; Mario Lanza, the “American Caruso”; and Richard Tucker, who Dorothy Caruso considered to be closest to his voice. These are all outstanding singers

\textsuperscript{82} Osborne, “The Great Caruso”.
\textsuperscript{83} Caruso Jr, My Father, 345.
with beautiful voices and solid techniques; yet the fact remains that there has never been another Caruso.”

In looking at his physical uniqueness, Dr. William Lloyd, Caruso’s throat specialist and the London caretaker of many singers’ vocal apparatus, gave an interview on the Caruso voice, entitled “The Perfect Singing Machine.” He said, among other things, “I have made several examinations of Signor Caruso’s throat. Perhaps the most striking single feature is the abnormal length of his vocal tube. For example, the distance from his front teeth to the vocal cords is at least half an inch longer than that of any other great tenor I know. Another point is the extreme length of his vocal cords, which are at least an eighth of an inch longer than those of any other tenor I have ever examined. His phenomenal chest capacity is another physical attribute which goes towards the production of a unique singing machine. The other day the great tenor stood up in my drawing room with his back against the wall, and when he emptied his lungs of air, we pushed my large Steinway concert grand piano close up against his chest. He drew in a deep breath, expanding his chest, and pushed the piano some inches along over the carpet. This tremendous power accounts for his ability to sustain a note for forty seconds or more.”

In his book Enrico Jr. states, “it is a fact that in the more than six decades after his death, my father’s fame and appeal have remained undiminished. Each decade seems to have belonged to a succession of favorite tenors… But none has eclipsed Enrico Caruso, who somehow belongs to all decades of the twentieth century. It may

84 Caruso Jr, My Father, 345.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
have been trite publicity that dubbed him “King of Tenors” and “Voice of the Century.”

But it is true that he had an artistic intuition and a style that left its mark on operatic singing. He had no successors among operatic tenors, only descendants.  

Dr. P. Mario Marafioti wrote Caruso’s Method of Voice Production based on his experience as physician for him. He argues that Caruso was gifted with a unique understanding of vocal technique, but not unique physical attributes.

It is a fact Enrico Caruso benefited from the developments of the recording industry, and was uniquely positioned in his vocal development to take advantage of the income and notoriety offered in it. But there are other factors that may have played a pivotal role in his success with the gramophone. In considering his vocal qualities, we can consider if his vocal timbre or vocal register breaks and their qualities made him more easily recordable.

J.B. Steane suggests that “Caruso and the gramophone were almost twin institutions in the early twentieth century and each increased the popularity of the other. His voice and temperament suited the new machine admirably, and, more important, suited the new music too.” In addressing the tenor’s vocal qualities, he pointed out that, “the exciting ring of such full-bodied tone and the uninhibited involvement of a passionate nature produced an ideal instrument for the Italian style of music-drama now being created by Puccini and his contemporaries. Moreover, as his tones darkened,

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87 Caruso Jr, My Father, 345.
88 Ibid.
90 Steane, The Grand Tradition, 42.
especially in the lower part of the voice, he came to have just the kind of weight and authority to give Verdi and the other nineteenth century composers the dramatic reinterpretation that the new century wanted from them.”

In consideration of his contribution in the recording industry, it was his unique sound and technique which made Caruso’s first recordings such a sensation. In 1900, two recording technologies were competing for public acceptance. The phonographic cylinder and the new gramophone disc which both inscribed wax impressions of sound. The boom in sales of the gramophone machine was in great response to the tenor’s first recordings. Roddam suggests that it was Caruso who made the phonograph a vehicle for “serious music.”

Susan Schmidt Horning claims that Caruso made recording “more respectable, and financially attractive.” It was his influence in the acoustic recording studio which encouraged other singers of his time to look into this new profitable way to expand their careers.

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91 Steane, The Grand Tradition, 42.
93 Susan Schmidt-Horning, Chasing Sound: Technology, Culture, and the Art of Studio Recording from Edison to the LP (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
3.4 CARUSO’S STYLE

The nineteenth-century vocal style focused on the florid style of Bellini and Rossini. This had been passed down with great reverence from teachers, composers, and artists of the Romantic period. The vocal style of this era focused on beauty of tone, inflection, and flexibility in singing. The majority of the best recorded tenors in the time of Caruso embodied this florid style. These include Fernando de Lucia, Giuseppe Anselmi, and Alessandro Bonci.

Fernando de Lucia (1860-1925) was a tenor of great renown during Enrico’s development in Italy. Like Caruso, he was Neapolitan, but was considered a *tenore di grazia*. He often sang the role of Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and created the title role in Mascagni’s *L’amico Fritz* (1891) for both Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera. Will Crutchfield identifies him as belonging to a school of vocal approach which espoused “the outdated values of Bellini’s, or even Rossini’s era.” He describes this antiquated approach as, “highly nuanced style, with some remaining link to the age of florid vocalism.”

Other contemporary tenors who belonged to this old school include Giuseppe Anselmi (1876-1929), and Alessandro Bonci (1870-1940). These contemporaries of

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95 Crutchfield, *Verdi Ornamentation*, 13.
96 Ibid.
Caruso, especially de Lucia, are all part of this nineteenth century vocal style, which at the beginning of the twentieth century was firmly established.

Traditions which were learned from baritone Antonio Cotogni were published by Luigi Ricci in his *Variazione-Cadenze-Tradizione per Canto*\(^\text{97}\) in the 1930’s. Although Ricci had a close relationship with Gigli, many of the cadenzas notated are the same style as those of Caruso, if not identical.

The tenor with whom Caruso was most compared upon his arrival in New York was Jean de Reszke (1850-1925). De Reszke studied with baritone Antonio Cotogni (1931-1918), and sang many of the same roles as Caruso at Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera. Enrico stated “I had to fight with both the critics and the public, because in 1903 there was a memory of ‘another.’ Every time I sang, some of the critics would write: ‘Yes… a beautiful voice, wonderful quality, velvet, everything which is required in an Italian tenor voice, but Jean!’ But I went on just the same, because I could not forget that some years before, this ‘Jean’ had said something in Salsomaggiore which made me very happy. It was in the presence of his brother [Edouard] that Jean said: “This is the boy who will someday turn the world upside down with his voice.”\(^\text{98}\) Unfortunately, there is little historically recorded to compare Jean de Reszke with Caruso. Steane calls the 1890’s the “Age of de Reszke, and groups him with Adelina Patti (1843-1919) as “The Old Order.”\(^\text{99}\) His vocal style, as we can only

\(^{97}\) Luigi Ricci, *Variazione-Cadenze-Tradizione per Canto*. (Ricordi: Milan, 1945).


very faintly discern on some live recordings shows that he was an artist associated the
traditional florid style.

Caruso’s approach to style was defined by Crutchfield as “a more straight-
forward, and louder one, with only incidental interest in coloratura.”\textsuperscript{100} It was this style
with had great effect in his generation, and especially in those to come. His vocal style
is demonstrated in this following musical examples from \textit{L’elisir d’amore}. First, below is
the original cadenza by Gaetano Donizetti from the aria “Una furtiva lagrima.”\textsuperscript{101}

Example 1\textsuperscript{102}

\begin{align*}
\text{Example 1.1}\textsuperscript{103}
\end{align*}

The following is De Lucia’s version of this same cadenza.

Then, the version by Giuseppe Anselmi is much more florid in style.

\begin{align*}
\text{100} & \text{Crutchfield,} & \textit{Verdi Ornamentation,} & 13. \\
\text{101} & \text{Donizetti, Gaetano.} & \textit{L’Elisir d’amore.} & \text{(Milan: Ricordi, 1916).} \\
\text{102} & \text{Will Crutchfield,} & \text{“What is tradition?”} & \text{?} \text{ in} \textit{Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth Century Italian Opera,} \\
& & \text{Roberta Montemorra Martin, and Hilary Poriss ed.} & \text{(Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010),} \\
& & & \text{245.} \\
\text{103} & \text{Crutchfield.} & \textit{What is tradition?} & 247
\end{align*}
Example 1.2

Now, compare the version offered by Alessandro Bonci.

Example 1.3

Finally, in comparison, Caruso’s cadenza is observed. His approach is different from the other three tenors. It does include the initial florid display on the word “chiedo.”

Example 1.4

Crutchfield comments on this cadenza from “Una furtiva lagrima” in L’elisir d’amore are revealing: “Caruso’s cadenza (…from the first of his four recordings, and repeated almost identically in all of them) was, at the time, just one of many… No one else seemed to have used it before he became a best-selling Victor Records artist. Among over two hundred tenors who have recorded the aria since his death, all but four

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104 Crutchfield. What is tradition? 247.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
use it.”107 This is what most people today would call the “traditional cadenza” for “Una furtiva lagrima.”108 Also, in G. Schirmer’s “Arias for Tenor” it is listed as the “traditional cadenza” for “Una furtiva lagrima.”109 Caruso influenced many tenors who followed him in that he led the movement away from the florid style and towards the new “modern” style.

Following are a number of excerpts from Verdi’s opera Rigoletto. First, is the Duke’s initial aria, “Questa, o quella,”110 from the middle of the first verse. Beginning with Verdi’s notated score:

Example 2111

\[\text{Example 2.1}^{112}\]

The recorded version by De Lucia is seen in Example 2.1.

\[\text{Example 2.1}^{112}\]

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108 Ibid.
111 Crutchfield, *Vocal Ornamentation.* 39.
112 Ibid.
This portion of the aria is very often performed as written, or with a small, mocking laugh. The conclusion of the first verse in this aria, however, is a common place for some variation. Initially, the notated score is presented as a reference.

Example 3\textsuperscript{113}

De Lucia presents this phrase in 3.1 with ornamentation similar to Caruso, but the vocal style is much more nuanced, and “old school” in approach vocally.

Example 3.1\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{113} Crutchfield, \textit{Vocal Ornamentation}, 30. 
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
Caruso’s cadenza is similar, but not as extensive as De Lucia. However, this vocal style is direct and without my affectation.

Example 3.2

In the middle of the second verse, comes the text “degli amanti le smanie derido” (“I mock the suffering of lovers”), which often includes interpretive choices. Example 4 is the score notation.

Example 4

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115 Crutchfield, *Vocal Ornamentation*, 40.
116 Ibid., 34.
The version employed by De Lucia is somewhat florid, but again, his vocal approach is much different to Caruso's. He pulls back the volume and affects the voice in a way which is reminiscent of the older style.

Example 4.1\textsuperscript{117}

Anselmi uses an embellishment on his recording, which is more florid, especially on the word “deride”. This is seen in the following version.

Example 4.2\textsuperscript{118}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Crutchfield, \textit{Vocal Ornamentation}, 34.
\end{itemize}
In the same opera, *Rigoletto*, the Act Two aria, “Parmi veder le lagrime” provides more good examples of contrasting styles. Example 5 shows, first, the notation from the final cadenza.

Example 5\(^{119}\)

Example 5.1\(^{120}\)

\(^{119}\) Ibid., 24.
\(^{120}\) Crutchfield, *Vocal Ornamentation*, 24.
Example 5.1 is De Lucia’s recording which breaks up the cadenza into sections, and on the penultimate phrase, reaching up to B flat. Anselmi’s version of the cadenza follows in 5.2, which is very similar to De Lucia.

Example 5.2

\[\text{le sfera-gi'angi-li, le sfera-gi'angi-li,}\]

\[\text{non in-vi-diò per te}\]

Caruso’s cadenza (Example 5.3) is distinctly different compared to the preceding two versions. The style used in this is excerpt demonstrates a more modern approach.

Example 5.3

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Crutchfield, Vocal Ornamentation, 24.}\]
From the same opera, the final aria is one of the most well-known arias in the vocal repertoire in any voice: “La donna è mobile”. (Woman is fickle) The selection as it appears in the score is seen in the next example.

Example 6\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{music}
\begin{musicnotes}
\addlyric{ah - - - si, le sfe-re-a-gli-an-ge-li}
\addlyric{no, non in-vi-diò per-te}
\end{musicnotes}
\end{music}

Alessandro Bonci performs the following version of the cadenza.

Example 6.1\textsuperscript{124}

\begin{music}
\begin{musicnotes}
\addlyric{e___ di__ pen-sier}
\end{musicnotes}
\end{music}

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{124} Crutchfield, \textit{Vocal Ornamentation}, 30.
The next two are two versions of Caruso’s cadenza in this aria.

Example 6.2

Example 6.3

Example 6.2 demonstrates an approach which closely follows the notation, but 6.3 uses a version which is commonly accepted as “traditional” in performance of this aria. This version is also very close to the cadenza in Ricci’s publication of variations.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{127} Ricci, Variazioni, 34.}\]
Continuing in the first part of the twentieth century, the “old-school” style from the nineteenth century continued to be popular. Crutchfield remarks how the shift in musical style was neither sudden nor uniform.\textsuperscript{128} J.B. Steane confirms this in stating, “Caruso came to stand for the opera singer in the new century as no other single artist could have done. Moreover, as time went by, his own style changed, leaving the nineteenth century further behind …”\textsuperscript{129}

Interestingly, in recordings of the aria “Una furtiva lagrima” (Caruso made four), one would reasonably expect that his first version for the Gramaphone & Typewriter Co. (1902) would be the lightest, and the latest one on Victor (1911) would prove to be the most dramatic. However, this is not the case as the earlier recording contains vivid dramatic power, yet the 1911 record is surprisingly gentle and lyrical. Notably, his style was not universally praised, for W.J. Henderson was quoted in Kolodin’s \textit{Story of the Metropolitan Opera House}.\textsuperscript{130} “The urge to make a big sound (Caruso and Titta Ruffo) had made for ‘hurried preparations for short careers.’” Nevertheless, the world did recognize Caruso as a world star, and his fellow singers were outspoken in their respect for him. He was considered by most everyone to be the greatest tenor of all time. His vocal style influenced others in the future, who idolized his voice and his vocal technique.

Caruso was an icon. Many great artists since him, have admired his recordings. Although he was greatly admired for his method, timbre, heart, and “soul,” his influence

\textsuperscript{128} Crutchfield, \textit{Verdi Ornamentation}, 13.
\textsuperscript{129} Steane, \textit{The Grand Tradition}, 43.
\textsuperscript{130} Irving Kolodin, \textit{The Story of the Metropolitan Opera House1883-1950, a Candid History} (New York: Knopf, 1953), 110.
in the area of style can be seen in those who imitated, and adopted his stylistic choices in vocal style. For example, in Chapter 3.4, the cadenza used in “Una furtiva lagrima” became the unofficial “traditional cadenza”\textsuperscript{131} which was adopted by the majority of tenors who followed him. In his biography, Jussi Björling speaks of performing the cadenza of Caruso in “La donna é mobile” from \textit{Rigoletto}.\textsuperscript{132} John McCormick was also struck by the interpretive style of Caruso in a performance he attended in London, which he described as “one of the most memorable moments of my life.”\textsuperscript{133} His vocal style which was facilitated by his solid technique had an influence on many who heard him perform, and those who later knew him through his extensive recordings.

\textsuperscript{131} Crutchfield, \textit{What is Tradition}? 248.
\textsuperscript{133} McCormack, John, Pierre V. R. Key, and John Scarry. \textit{John McCormack; His Own Life Story}. (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 102-03.
CHAPTER 4. HIS INFLUENCE ON THE ITALIAN VOCAL TRADITION

4.1. RECORDINGS

The remarkable productivity of Caruso in the recording studio, left a legacy of historical evidence, which made a profound impact on those who followed him. Singers of the late nineteenth century were influenced by the stars of that era. With his great success on stage, his untimely tragic death, and his widespread productivity in the recording industry: now younger singers could imitate Enrico Caruso.134

“Italian singing was changing during these early years of the century,” shares Steane. “The development of Caruso’s style illustrates it.”135 “More power, more passion, more excitement, and more realism: these were the trends, both in taste of the public, and in the type of opera composers were writing.”136

After Caruso, in the 1920’s, the revolution of electronic recording replaced the original acoustic technology. The main vocal composers of the time required more excitement and energy in singing, by their composing style. Caruso embodied the new expectation. Italian tenor Aureliano Pertile (1885-1952) has been described as employing an “over-strenuous style.” However, excitement, warmth, and lyricism were qualities which made him a favorite of Toscanini, and admired by conductor Tulio Serafin. He was considered the supreme tenor of his time. Though his vocal style was at times overpowering, he had the ability to spin a beautiful vocal line. Although Italy

134 Steane, The Grand Tradition, 43.
135 Ibid., 134.
136 Ibid.
and its singers experienced a time of decline, it is recognized that much excellent singing was still going on.

With tenor Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957), expressiveness of the voice was in full force. The lightness of his tone colored the moods of the characters he portrayed with a joyful buoyancy. Jacques Chuilon, in his article from *The Opera Quarterly* argues, “it is widely acknowledged that… Gigli possessed one of the most beautiful voices of all time.” In his memoirs, he recalls the 1898 premier of Giordano’s *Fedora*, after which he wrote, “his name was on everyone’s lips- Enrico Caruso.” Reviews in European papers very often compared Gigli to Caruso. In fact, the majority of reviews mentioned this in performances of roles which Caruso had sung.

Gigli himself penned this. “To speak of Caruso’s successor is a sacrilege, profanation of his memory, violation of a tomb sacred to Italy and the entire world!” He battled against those forces who sought to crown Caruso’s successor, saying “I don’t want to be another Caruso; I just want to be Gigli.” Opening night at the Met had been Caruso’s domain every year since joining the Met in 1903 except one. Gigli was chosen to sing the opening night for the Metropolitan Opera season in 1921 with *La Traviata*, and he admits that he was apprehensive, and that the audience was in a “air of mourning” that night. He also performed in Caruso’s memorial concert shortly afterward, and remembers, “almost everyone, both on the stage and in the audience,

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141 Ibid.
had tears in their eyes, and as was only fitting on such an occasion, there was no applause."\textsuperscript{142}

Giovanni Martinelli (1885-1969) was another Italian tenor with a more dramatic voice than Gigli. He performed many of the same roles that Caruso did, which sparked inevitable comparisons. His Metropolitan Opera debut was in \textit{La Boheme} in 1913, and he sang for 32 seasons at the Met. Martinelli’s voice quality was powerful, exciting, at times, beautiful. Geraldine Farrar admired “his easy vocalism.”\textsuperscript{143} A telling story is one which Martinelli related. At a party in Palo Alto, California, on February 8, 1967, prodded by a close friend Eddie Smith, the tenor Giovanni Martinelli recalled a time when some said to him that Caruso’s greatness rested not on his voice but on the enormous publicity he generated in the press. “I grabbed the man by the lapel,” recalled Martinelli, “looked him straight in the eye, and said: ‘You can take Gigli, Pertile, Lauri-Volpi, and me, roll us all into one, and we would still be unfit to tie Caruso’s shoelaces!’”\textsuperscript{144}

Giacomo Lauri-Volpi (1892-1979) was much admired in his time, and enjoyed a long career, including 1922-1933 at the Metropolitan Opera. He also wrote a book, “\textit{Voci parallele}”\textsuperscript{145} which is often cited by historians. One distinction of his was that he sang Calaf in the American premier of Puccini’s \textit{Turandot} in 1926, at the Metropolitan Opera. He was viewed by many as a competitor with Martinelli as successor of Caruso, and accused that tenor of being a Caruso imitator.

\textsuperscript{142} Gigli, \textit{Memoirs}, 124. 
\textsuperscript{143} Steane, \textit{The Grand Tradition}, 299. 
\textsuperscript{144} Caruso Jr., \textit{My Father}, 344. 
The tenors Pertile, Gigli, Martinelli, and Lauri-Volpi were all constantly compared with the “great Caruso”. In fact, there was a great discussion at the Metropolitan opera following Caruso’s death to crown “his successor.” Supporters of each artist were eager to have their tenor receive this designation as the next star. Gigli, was resistant and insisted on being appreciated on his own merits.146

Irish tenor John McCormack (1884-1945) recalls hearing Caruso at Covent Garden, and what an impact that made on him. He remembered, “it was the best lesson… that I had ever received.”147 The “Caruso sound” made a lasting impression on him. Famous French tenor George Thill (1897-1984) recalled listening to Caruso records as a child.148 Later, he studied with Caruso’s contemporary, Fernando de Lucia.

Jussi Björling clearly stated in interviews that Caruso was his idol,149 and that his aspiration was to sound like him. Further written evidence reveals that he owned many of Caruso’s records, and would play them over and over seeking to “emulate the sound” of his idol.150 He was chastised by those who were close to him for singing too darkly at times, in effort to sound like Caruso. He admired the legato and phrasing of Caruso, and his “masculine” timbre.151

Plácido Domingo (1941-present) wrote, “Every profession has a paragon…there is one giant who had everything and who is a god for every tenor. He is, of course,

146 Gigli, Memoirs, 121.
147 McCormack, His Own Life Story,103.
149 Björling, Jussi, 115.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
Enrico Caruso.”  

He goes on to elaborate that though he had been dead for sixty-five years (at the publishing of this book) and very few remain alive who actually heard him, and challenged the reader to listen to one of Caruso’s records to hear his magnificent voice. Domingo also recorded an album, “Domingo sings Caruso.” The influence of Caruso is still strong for modern tenors who look to him as the model of a tenor.

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153 Domingo, The Metropolitan Opera, 78.
4.2 REPERTOIRE

Caruso exerted a great influence on the performance and composition of certain repertoire as seen in recordings of those who succeeded him. Caruso was a son of Naples, and therefore, grew up with the music of that city, which was the Neapolitan song. This song form had the advantage that it was short enough to fit on one record side. Gigli, Tito Schipa (1888-1965), Björling, Giuseppe Di Stefano (1921-2008), Lanza, Corelli, Carlo Bergonzi (1924-2014), Pavarotti, Domingo, and Jonas Kaufmann (b. 1969) among many others have made extensive recordings of Neapolitan Songs. This gives some indication of how Caruso’s recordings and performances of this art form have influenced repertoire even to this day. Andrea Bocelli (b. 1958) also contributed an album of these songs. Heldentenor Ben Heppner (b. 1956) did an album of Tosti songs, which have become quite popular. Caruso’s recordings of these songs seem to have made a lasting impression, in that tenors of all nationalities perform these songs all over the world now. Even Lauritz Melchior (1890-1973), renowned Wagnerian tenor, performed several of these songs.

In addition, Caruso was the embodiment of the ideal voice for most of the composers of the time, who wrote for a more declamatory vocal style. Puccini’s last two operas, *La Fanciulla del West*, and *Turandot* were meant for a more exciting, dramatic tenor. The lyrical style of the nineteenth century was becoming a trend of the past. The movement toward verismo repertoire was a definite shift in the 1920’s and 30’s.

Also, certain operas were associated with Enrico Caruso, in which he scored great success, or created the roles. One such opera was *Fedora* by Umberto Giordano.
(1867-1948), the opera which launched Caruso into the public attention in 1898. He created the role of Loris, and a production was mounted for him later at the Metropolitan Opera in 1906, and again in 1920. “Amor ti vieta” is the most recognizable piece from this composition, and it was recorded by Caruso, as well as Gigli, Bonci, and Ed. Johnson (1878-1959). Hermann Klein compares the recordings side by side finding Caruso’s version much superior.\(^\text{154}\) The opera seems linked to Caruso and his success.

Giordano’s *Andrea Chenier* is better known, and became more associated with other tenors, such as Franco Corelli and Mario Del Monaco (1915-1982). Interestingly, though Caruso only sang the title role a few times in London, he recorded excerpts of the opera for RCA Victor.

Another such piece associated with Caruso is *L’elisir d’amore* by Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848). In 1902, a production at La Scala in Milan conducted by Toscanini was hugely popular, and again, reproduced at the Met. In fact, Patrick Dillon asserts that Caruso turned the piece, normally featuring women’s voices into a tenor showpiece.\(^\text{155}\) Although popular in Italy from 1832-1848, it declined in popularity, until suggested by Toscanini at La Scala in 1902. After several productions at the Met, this became a regular part of the American opera repertory, and continues to this day. The influence of Caruso on this role is evident in ornamentation and role casting, with bigger voices singing it.


\(^{155}\) Patrick Dillon, “Ladies’ Night” *Opera News* 77, No. 3 (September 2012) www.operanews.com
However, the part which became his signature role was Canio, in *Pagliacci*, by Leoncavallo. Scholars consider some of the recordings of Caruso in this role to be some of the finest records ever produced. This opera premiered in 1892, three years before his debut in *Fedora*. The iconic picture of him as Canio with a bass drum is famous, and parodied on the album cover of *Pavarotti’s Greatest Hits*. His emotional connection with this role brought out some of his most memorable performances. Rosa Ponselle who worked with him onstage remarked, “If you ever saw his Canio, it would break your heart and scare you to death all at the same time. I can still see him as he finished ‘Vesti la giubba’- that wild, terrified look in his eyes…”\textsuperscript{156} Other eyewitnesses of his intensity in this part confirm that his performances in *Pagliacci* were some of his best.

\textsuperscript{156} Farkas, *Researching Caruso*, 370.
CONCLUSION

Enrico Caruso possessed a technique and qualities which uniquely granted him success in recording and performing. Due to his success his influence in the recording industry was great. His recordings made a fledgling industry suddenly respectable, drawing in composers Giordano, Cilea, and Leoncavallo, who accompanied some of his first recordings. The financial reward made recording attractive for other stars who followed his example. Recorded discs and phonographs players experienced a new popularity, which led to new recording companies.

In Italian musical style, Caruso became the ideal of what audiences and composers of that time expected. Verismo music was the perfect vehicle for his heroic, dark, and passionate voice. He embodied the new ideals of style, which was a movement away from the “old school.” His portrayal in such roles as Canio in *Pagliacci* are immortal, and have created an influence on many singers who followed him. In addition, his cadenzas and recorded stylistic choices were used by many tenors, who heard his records. His recordings continue to be a benchmark for singers of our generation, including the operatic and song repertoire of many generations of singers.
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