

Analysis of the Singing Version of the Aria Cruda sorte by Berganza and Bartoli

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ABSTRACT

The aria Cruda sorte is selected from Italian composer Rossini's opera Italian Girl in Algier, which is a representative work with mezzo-soprano as the protagonist, and the protagonist Isabella sings Cruda sorte, which is a famous mezzo-soprano coloratura aria. Through the in-depth analysis and comparison of Berganza's and Bartoli's singing versions, the author can learn the extraordinary and unique features of the two singers in handling songs.

KEYWORDS

Rossini; Bel canto; Cruda sorte; Singing version; Comparative analysis

1 Introduction

The aria Cruda sorte is selected from Rossini's three-act comic opera L 'Italiana in Algier. It tells the story of Isabella, a witty Italian woman, who went to Algier to find her fiancée who was kidnapped by pirates. Mustafà à, the ruler of Algier, fell in love with her at first sight and tried to abandon his wife and pursue Isabella. In the first act of Cruda Fate Appears, Isabella has just arrived in Algier and learned that her fiancé Lindoro may be forced to marry Mustafa's wife. Angry and determined, she decided to save herself and her lover with wisdom and charm. The aria means that Isabella lamented the cruelty of fate and complained that she was caught in such a difficult situation, but she did not give in, but showed strength and wit, and vowed to control the situation and make those arrogant men pay the price.

1.1 Teresa berganza version

Teresa Berganza, a famous mezzo-soprano in Spain, is famous all over the world for her operas by Rossini, Mozart and Bizet. Berganza can show the diverse skills and keen musical characteristics to the fullest. In particular, her ability to polish the cadenza and control the phrases is excellent.

This paper selects the singing version of the Berganza record Unavoce Pocofa-a Portrait of Teresa Berganza, which was released by Universal Records on January 1st, 2004, hereinafter referred to as Bei's.

1.2 Cecilia bartoli version

Cecilia Bartoli is a famous Italian mezzo-soprano. Bartoli has a very stable atmosphere, penetrating and dramatic timbre. Her excellent mastery of coloratura skills is an excellent example for scholars to study in depth.

This paper selects and analyzes the singing version of Cruda sorte in the album Rossini:Arias released by Universal Records on January 1, 1989, which is called Bartoli's.

2 Comparative analysis of singing versions

2.1 Commonality analysis

2.1.1 Cadenza treatment

Rossini's opera has a lot of coloratura cadenza, and the appearance of coloratura cadenza enhances the drama of the opera. Therefore, the singer's mastery of coloratura has become the standard for judging singers. The mezzo-soprano singers' mastery of a large number of coloraturas in their songs has also become an important criterion for the quality of mezzo-soprano voices in singing^[1].

Berganza and Bartoli sang every note roundly, clearly and grainy in the singing of cadenza.



Figure 1 Premio di mia fè Cadenza treatment

"Questo è il premio di mia fè." The lyrics are to the effect that this is a way to repay a loyal heart. The two small cadenzas in the fourth bar of the song consist of two groups of dotted quarter notes plus a thirty-two note. Berganza and Bartoli treat it in the same way here, and the ups and downs of the sound extend and develop with the direction of the notes. At the same time, each 32-minute note is coherent and bouncing, just like a string connected in series with uniform and full pearls. This string is a uniform and coherent breath, and these pearls are notes. Each dotted quarter note is stressed, which requires even and long breath support to push the note out, and then the lingering sound gradually fades into the light coloratura of forty-six. The singing feeling of dotted quarter notes here should be like throwing a yo-yo, thrown out quickly and then slowly recovered, with a certain sense of stretching but not forgetting the root, giving the audience a little feeling of touching the heart, but not throwing it out completely, leaving the audience with a room for aftertaste, followed by an unexpected sense of playfulness. The beauty of music is a brand-new one that is just right when the meaning is still unfinished.

2.1.2 Rossini crescendo treatment

Rossini crescendo is to strengthen a phrase to the strongest sound repeatedly, and repeat the phrase repeatedly, getting stronger and stronger every time, pushing the mood of the song to the commanding heights and gradually reaching the climax that is overwhelming. This gradual enhancement of musical atmosphere is the usual way in Rossini's opera aria, and the development of this phrase fuels the momentum to create a dynamic beauty that rolls forward ^[2].

The obvious Rossini crescendo appears at the end of the song, with Rossini repeatedly repeating the same phrase *fe-li-ci-tà*, accompanied by a continuous tremolo in the accompaniment that drives the crescendo, supporting the continuous ornamentation of the vocals and pushing the emotion to a dazzling climax. Both singers altered the final phrase to an ascending melody, concluding on F2. This adaptation aligns with Rossini's crescendo pattern, enhancing the dazzling and glorious effect. The beauty of music lies in the emotional impact it creates after building to a climax.

When singing, the vocal cavity should remain in an active state, and the breath should become more solid as the notes rise. In terms of singing awareness, the direction of breath retention should be inversely proportional to the direction of pitch. When singing this section, I tend to become increasingly excited as I follow the melody, leading to faster singing and poor breath control, rushing into the next phrase. Under the teacher's guidance, I practiced breaking down the piece into sections and slowing down the tempo, focusing on the breath connections between each phrase, ensuring each note is solid and full, and following the rhythm while reading the lyrics. This is a process of transforming quality into quantity. After repeated slow practice, I reassembled the piece and accelerated the tempo. At this point, my rhythmic movement became more stable, and when the accompaniment was added, the song was performed with ease and confidence.

2.2 Personality analysis

Due to the differing personal experiences, upbringing, and educational backgrounds of Berganza and Bartoli, they each have their own unique interpretations and renditions of the song's details. This paper will compare and analyze the versions recorded by the two singers from two aspects: vocal details and the portrayal of character emotions and imagery.

2.2.1 Comparison of singing speed

Although the score indicates that the first half is marked as *Andante* with a leisurely melody, and the second half as *Allegro* with a lively and joyful melody, Berganza's version lasts 4 minutes and 15 seconds, while Bartoli's version lasts 4 minutes and 57 seconds. This shows that their singing speeds are slightly different. Although Berganza's version is shorter and faster, the song does not feel rushed when listened to. Instead, each phrase is delivered with precision, and the technical mastery on display leaves the listener wanting more. In comparison, while the two versions have different tempos, they both remain within the *Andante* tempo range. Bartoli places greater emphasis on expanding the ornamental passages, using techniques such as gradual slowing, prolongation, added notes, and repeated phrases to enhance the song at certain ornamental sections and key words. These detailed expansions and extensions extend the duration of the piece (see the detailed analysis below for specifics). This demonstrates that the tempo can be reasonably adjusted to enhance the emotional expression of the song.

"chi conforto mi dara" means "Comfort me, guide me". This section of Bartoli's singing seems to be a bit of a drag on



Figure 2 Tempo treatment of "chi conforto mi dara" in the original score

the ears, in order to show the heroine's thoughts and worries about her lover "Lindoro", intentionally slowed down, wanting to express more of the love of the heart, from the heart to pray to God to give her the guidance of the spirit of the feelings, but this section of the treatment is not pleasant to the ear, in the slowing down of the music does not let the flow of the words too resonant, not enough to use the softness. However, this section is not pleasant to the ear, slowing down the tempo and not allowing the music to flow, and the articulation is too forceful and not soft enough. The treatment of this section of Bei's better, she did not deliberately slow down, but with the breath to drive with the state of the entire hexameter florid part of the smooth movement, the same each tone is sung very clearly, but more like running water like a very soft flow through, did not add other strength to it. The beauty of music is a natural flow of emotion.

2.2.2 Comparison of cadenza treatment

Cadenza, also known as coloratura, is one of the important scoring items to test the singer's ability to control the singing function. The author summarizes the florid appearing in the aria *Cruda Fate* as two kinds of presentation forms - legato group and appoggiatura cluster, which appears at the end of the song and also in Rossini's crescendo part.

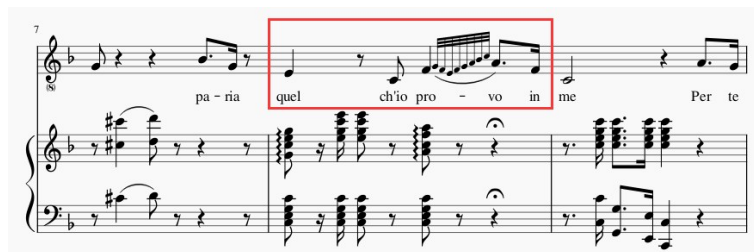


Figure 3 Bei's Legato Cadenza Treatment

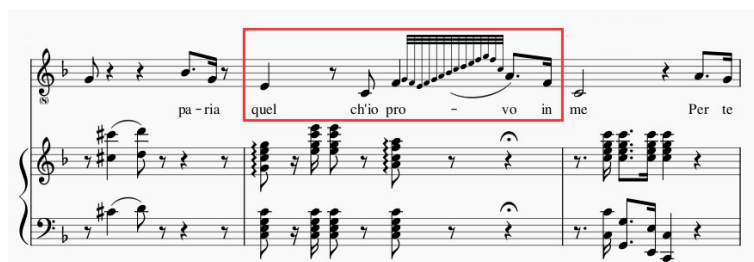


Figure 4 Bartoli's legato cadenza treatment

(1) Legato group

The general meaning of this line of lyrics "ch'io provo in me" is "able to prove me". The eighth bar in the score, here Berganza is still sung according to the original score. Bartoli, however, added embellishments to it. Coloratura can be extended on the basis of the original score of their own expansion, Bartoli will be the original eight continuous tone into a fourteen continuous tone, in the highest tone g2 at the standing extension and then slowly downward, so that the processing of the singing difficulty, but also better show the singer's excellent singing skills. But all innovations have to take certain risks, if we can't master the difficult skills with ease, we can learn from Berganza and sing directly according to the original score, the flawed showmanship will give the singing as a whole minus the points, the most basic and perfect presentation will also make people's eyes shine.

The two singers have different vocal strengths that create differences in the treatment of the songs. Bartoli's strength is her mastery of Coloratura, and Berganza's strength is her ability to hold the emotional delicacy of the song. That is why the best singers focus on their own "vocal strengths" in their treatment of the songs.

(2) Group of appoggiaturas

Appoggiaturas are divided into anticipatory appoggiaturas, subsequent appoggiaturas, long appoggiaturas, and short appoggiaturas. In an anticipatory appoggiatura, the ornamental note(s) precede the principal note; in a subsequent appoggiatura, the ornamental note(s) follow the principal note. A long appoggiatura consists of a single note, primarily preceding the principal note, and is a second interval away from the principal note, generally always carrying an accent. A short appoggiatura consists of one or several notes; the relationship between these notes and the principal note can be either a stepwise motion or a leap, and they can primarily be before or after the principal note.^[3] All appoggiaturas appearing in this song are short and anticipatory, which are divided into the following two types: One type is an anticipatory appoggiatura followed by a quarter - note principal note (as shown in the box below). The other type is an anticipatory appoggiatura followed by a "preceding eighth note and subsequent sixteenth note" figure, with the eighth note serving as the principal note (as shown in the circle below).



Figure 5 Original score of appoggiatura cadenza

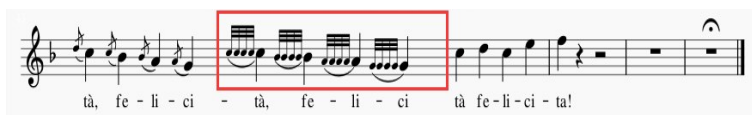


Figure 6 Bartoli's appoggiatura cadenza treatment



Figure 7 Bei's appoggiatura cadenza treatment

This part is selected from the end of the song. Composer Rossini employed his customary Rossini crescendo technique at the conclusion, bringing the song to a brilliant and dramatic close. Both singers' interpretations are consistent with the composer's original positioning of the piece. A shared characteristic is that they transposed the final two measures up an octave, building through successive layers to a climactic and splendid finale, which intensifies the effect of Rossini's crescendo. The difference lies in Bartoli's interpretation: she altered the vocal part in the third-to-last measure to a sequence of consecutive same-note legato mini-coloraturas, increasing the vocal difficulty and dramatic impact while highlighting the singer's flexible command of different types of coloratura. This approach demonstrates a higher degree of vocal technical difficulty compared to the Bei's treatment. In terms of musical expression, the two singers are equally matched.

2.2.3 Treatment of the fermata

There are numerous fermata markings in the piece. Typically, in vocal scores, the fermatas in the vocal part mark either the climax of the song's emotional expression or a node of emotional transition. The stasis of a single note on the score does not imply the stasis of breath, sound, or emotion; thus, the treatment of fermatas in the song is of vital importance.

Generally speaking, a fermata indicates that the corresponding note should be prolonged, but the specific duration of the prolongation is not fixed. This requires the singer to handle the fermata appropriately based on their own interpretation of the work. For instance, if the ending of a song intends to create an ethereal and otherworldly atmosphere, the note may be held extremely long, even with a gradual diminuendo, evoking a sense that the sound, carried by the breath, fades into the distance while still lingering like a reverberating melody. In some songs, where a fermata appears at the end of a musical phrase, singers may add their own embellishments. A common approach is to sustain a high note in a steady manner for an extended period—this serves, on one hand, to release emotions and drive the song to a climax, and on the other hand, to better showcase the singer's vocal mechanism. For another example, if a fermata appears in a piece with a cheerful and joyful mood, the prolonged note should not be held excessively long, as this would make the song feel disjointed. Here, the fermata generally functions to enhance the dramatic effect of the song and create a brief stretch for breathing between phrases. Therefore, the presence of fermatas in a work leaves ample room for performers' personal expression, meaning there is no single "correct" way for performers to appropriately utilize fermatas. This is worthy of our in-depth analysis and study.

"Chi conforto mi dara" means "Comfort me, guide me". This fermata appears at the end of the first section, and both



Figure 8 Original score of Fermata 1

Berganza and Bartoli have incorporated their own original approaches to handling it.

Figure 9 Bartoli's performance version

Bartoli repeats "chi conforto" (comfort me) once. When she sings this line without coloratura for the second time, the accompaniment falls completely silent and directly connects to the subsequent clause "mi darà" (guide me). The vocal part delivers this line with a sincere and earnest tone, and when combined with the immediately following descending progression, it resembles a sigh over the predicament of fate—further embodying her yearning and the helplessness of self-sorrow. Such a treatment of repetition serves to emphasize the emotion, expressing the heroine's extreme eagerness for God to grant her guidance.

Figure 10 Bei's performance version

Berganza, however, added an ascending tenlet at the first fermata in this section, and sang the portion following the fermata an octave higher, driving the emotional expression to a climax. Both singers' treatments are excellent recreated interpretations, grounded in the emotional framework inherent to the song itself.

Figure 11 Original score of Fermata 2

In light of the contextual meaning of the lyrics (both preceding and following), the female protagonist in this section harbors the resolve to conquer men, recounting her skills in enticing them. The composer conceived this section as portraying a charming, confident, and coquettish female image, which stands in stark contrast to the emotional state of the heroine in the first section, who is trapped in suffering.

"d'un sospiretto" menas one more sigh. Bartoli incorporates a descending sevenlet mini-coloratura into the fermata section here. After a brief pause on the "la" note corresponding to the fermata, she swiftly executes a coloratura descent to connect to the subsequent "fa" note. This adaptation lends the "sigh" in the original score a hint of playful teasing and provocation.

Berganza, however, did not observe the fermata. She sang "ret" for two beats, using a glissando to transition naturally to the next quarter note. On the note "to", she made a brief pause with breath support, took a deep inhale, and then



Figure 12 Bartoli's performance version

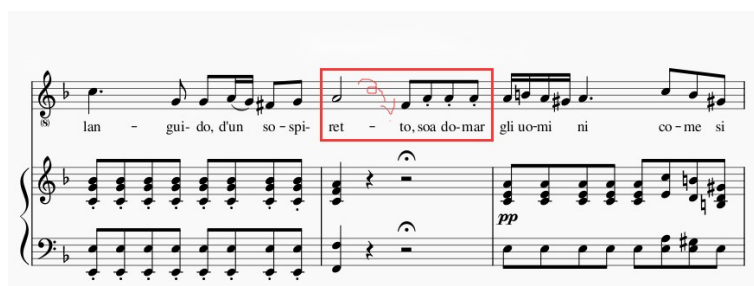


Figure 13 Bei's performance version

proceeded to sing the next phrase. At the staccato, she applied a *ritardando*, and quickly returned to the original tempo at the sixteenth notes in measure 48. This approach, while not as technically demanding as Bartoli's, still conveys a sense of charm and provocation.

2.2.4 The shaping of character emotions and images

Rossini portrayed a woman who is brave, intelligent, and beautiful. Both singers' characterizations are generally consistent with the composer's original conception of the character, though there are subtle differences. This is related to the individual performance styles of the singers.

Berganza's portrayal of Isabella, while rooted in the original character, adds a touch of tenderness and sensuality. Compared to Bartoli's interpretation of the role, Berganza's is more serene and restrained yet brimming with vitality, and it carries a hint of the unique charm of a Spanish lady—likely due to the singer's country of origin. In contrast to Bartoli's performance, Berganza employs fewer dynamic contrasts and less prominent prolongation of high notes. Her transitions between phrases are smoother, yet she fully conveys the emotional shifts of the heroine.

Bartoli's portrayal of Isabella, building on the original character, emphasizes the heroic aspect more strongly. The character's traits are more marked by calm courage, resolution, and fortitude; in the *allegro* sections, Bartoli's singing is more firm and powerful. Firstly, compared to Berganza, Bartoli's articulation is more forceful, and her vocal phrasing carries greater weight. Secondly, Bartoli not only embodies the character's calmness, composure, and confident resolve in times of adversity but also reflects the brave spirit of the Italian people in resisting foreign enemies.

3 Conclusion

Through comparative analysis, it is evident that both singers' performances perfectly depict the image of a brave, resolute, and intelligent woman. Therefore, singers must first gain a clear understanding of the song's background and the information presented in the score. Within the rational framework outlined by the score, they should carry out appropriate re-creation based on their own vocal capabilities and the "strengths and weaknesses" of their personal traits. Only after solid training in vocal mechanism can they achieve more splendid interpretations. Singing is the emotional expression through the inertial movement of a vocalist's own physiological mechanisms. While mastering vocal techniques, we must preserve the innate human instinct for singing and return to the genuine expression of heartfelt emotions. Only then can we produce truly compelling and unforgettable performances.

About the Author

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