

REVISITING BAROQUE GESTURE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

An exploration of the effects, benefits and limitations of the application of baroque gesture and historical acting to contemporary performances.

BY

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ABSTRACT

In my opera training in Australia in the 2000s, my acting coaches instilled in me the principle of finding the motivation for the stage movement for my character through studying the text (the words) and its subtext (underlying meanings). The aim as I understood it was to react “honestly”, so that a relevant movement would follow. Now, as an opera singer who for many years has performed in baroque operas with historically informed music and yet contemporary staging, I see recurring problems during the rehearsal period and in performance: what is seen must suit the director’s contemporary intentions and taste for realism, while what is heard must exhibit the conductor’s knowledge of historical performance and the singer’s world-class singing ability, ideally showcasing great agility. My primary focus is to sing well, with ease and agility. To sing with ease, I must also focus on my stage craft (acting), planning movements which positively influence my breath flow and vocalisations. Throughout my career I have noticed that my training in stage craft has not completely given me all the tools I require to perform, in particular, eighteenth-century opera with contemporary staging. For me, the question remains of how to act convincingly while singing my best.

How can singers find a better balance between the old and the new? Are there ways of successfully uniting the musical gestures of historical practice embraced within these performances with physical gestures advised in earlier periods for expressive acting? Could this unification be beneficial to me as a singer when expressing intensely dramatic moments in pre-romantic opera, or when the text of an aria is repeated due to musical convention and I feel the need to vary and develop the expression? In this research project I investigate the use of physical historical gestures as a way to address issues I have encountered, such as when I move in ways that respond passionately to the drama, but find it is compromising my vocal ability, or when multiple repeats of the words do not seem to follow natural patterns of thought and are therefore difficult to align with a director’s request for “realistic” communication and “realistic” staging.

In this exegesis and in my recital, I explore the possibilities for incorporating the principles of baroque gesture and acting styles within contemporary stagings of pre-romantic operas. I examine the limitations and specific benefits of these gestural styles to the singer as a physical performer, using as my guide the published works of Dene Barnett, *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of 18th Century Acting* (Barnett 1987), John Bulwer, *Chirologia, or the Natural Language of the Hand* (Bulwer 1644), and Johannes Jelgerhuis, *Theoretische Lessen over de Gesticulatie en Mimiek* (Jelgerhuis 1827). I chose to focus on these sources after discussing the topic and my study materials with baroque specialist performers in Australia and New Zealand who recommended the Barnett and Jelgerhuis

texts. In addition to these works I included John Bulwer's treatise from the seventeenth century, because I found his many images of gestures, particularly hand gestures, particularly compelling. My research approach is one of critical self-observation and self-reflection, with case studies discussing my process and reflections as I attempted to apply physical gestures selected from the sources expressively while singing the arias. I demonstrate this practically through the recital and discuss the findings in this written exegesis, providing a seasoned performer's perspective on the effects, benefits and limitations of the use of such gestures. I argue that certain gestures are universally-understood and enhance the performance by not only conserving the singer's voice and improving breath control, but by increasing communication with the audience, no matter how close or distant they are, through the combination of persuasive sonic and visual gesture.

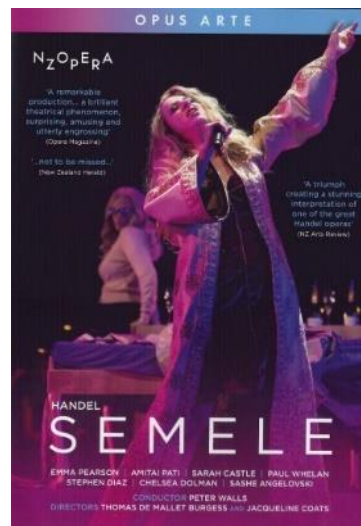


Figure 1. Performing the role of Semele in NZ Opera's contemporary production of Handel's Semele (1744)¹

¹ Emma Pearson, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

As an opera singer who has for many years performed in operas with historically informed music and contemporary staging, I see the same problems recurring during the rehearsal period and in performance: What is seen must suit the director's contemporary intentions (and budget), while what is heard must exhibit the conductor's knowledge of historical performance practices and the singer's flawless vocal technique. When singing, I notice that standing still gives me the best chance to project my voice in the loudest moments, but how do I create compelling drama while I am still for an extended period? How could gesture help me avoid the tendency of some opera singers, to "Park and bark"²? Are there universal truths discovered by historical actors that can still be applied in contemporary staging? How might looking back to the past for historical physical as well as sonic gestures benefit my singing overall?

Rationale

My personal purpose of this study of gesture³ and historical acting is to acquire knowledge to help myself cope in the rehearsal room particularly when directors and singers have problems with the staging of repeats of texts⁴ in arias, as well as to refine my stage craft further and master my vocal technique. In the past I have experienced problems when a director has required me to self-choreograph and self-direct my scenes. At times, when a solution for matching the historically informed music to the modern staging could not be found, the music was cut or compromised in some way. I have found this is a common occurrence except where the musical decisions are made with sensitivity by a baroque specialist. I am excited to learn how aspects of this historical acting style could help me solve some staging problems while also mastering greater vocal delivery and presentation of vocally challenging music.

² "Park and bark" is a commonly used phrase to describe singers who drop their character, face forward and concentrate solely on their singing technique. My acting coaches' least desired attitude on stage.

³ Throughout this exegesis, unless otherwise noted, I use the term 'gesture' to mean physical gestures.

⁴ Throughout this exegesis, unless otherwise noted, I use the term 'text' to mean the words in the libretto.

Desired Outcomes of Study

I hope to pass on my discoveries to singers who may be interested in improving their stage craft, their vocal ability or their self-direction in contemporary staging of baroque opera. The many benefits of applying universally-understood gestures include drawing in audiences who may feel disconnected by opera's foreign languages. With less dependency on surtitles, this would also create a more immersive experience for everyone.



Figure 2. In full costume, learning the gesture "Aversion". Emma Pearson, 2024

METHOD

If they move and animate your Passions, to raise you above yourself, be assured that they have achieved the goal of Eloquence.

Aristotle, Rhetoric 4 AD (Burgess and Haynes 2016)

My method begins with a review of the primary and secondary sources in the principles of gesture as described by Dene Barnett's *Art of Gesture* (Barnett 1987), an online copy of John Bulwer in *Chirologia: The Natural Language of the Hand* (Bulwer 1644), a printed copy of Johannes Jelgerhuis' *Theoretische Lessen over de Gesticulatie en Mimiek* [Lessons on the Principles of Gesticulation and Mimic Expression] (Amsterdam, 1827) and includes guidance from Andrew Lawrence-King's research in baroque gesture and historical action (Lawrence-King, *Start Here! How to Study Baroque Gesture and Historical Action* 2015). Using primary and secondary sources I then delve into the history of gesture,

discussing how it has been vital in our communication with one another from the earliest humans to the persuasive speeches of political leaders today. In my research into these sources, I will focus on the reasons why baroque gesture became a necessary component of performing eighteenth-century works from Handel to Mozart, including background information on the conventions of baroque opera. I then consider how understanding such conventions may help directors to stage operas in any setting and singers to sing their best while creating compelling drama.

I will explain categories of gesture as defined by Dene Barnett in his work, *The Art of Gesture*⁵ in particular the importance of the right hand; noble posture (or contrapposto), decorum, visualization, and explore how these aspects align with the skills I have learnt in my previous studies. I will focus on how this may benefit my vocal technique and how the application of each performative aspect could help or hinder my performances. Taking as a case study my experience of staging Handel's musical drama from 1744, *Semele* (HWV 58) in 2020, I explain the challenges that occurred when the stage direction and the music direction collided, with a view to exploring different ways this could be handled. Then I will test out my ideas for the application of historical gestures and styles of acting through working on my chosen recital repertoire.

In this process I experimented with gesture while studying the role of Elettra in Mozart's *Idomeneo or The King of Crete* K. 366, first performed in 1781, using selected chirograms (drawings) from John Bulwer⁶ and Johannes Jelgerhuis⁷, to apply in my study of the aria "Tutte nel cor vi sento". Using a self-reflective approach to consider what is more and less effective in these experiments, I include here some visual records of myself exploring some of the essential aspects of baroque gesture in this aria. I have divided the results into sections, separating out performative aspects of baroque gesture and historical acting which could be applied to modern staging, and aspects which I have determined would not be as useful. There are limitations in my interpretive method, in that the research, analysis and interpretation of the results are from my perspective alone. Being an award-winning opera singer of considerable stage experience (a career spanning over twenty years primarily in Germany, Australia and New Zealand) however, I feel I have sufficient expertise to evaluate those aspects which work and those which do not, by examining my recordings. In conclusion I find that some but not all aspects of baroque gesture and historical acting can support singers to bridge the disjunct between the style of the music performance and singing and the style of the acting and staging.

⁵ (Barnett 1987)

⁶ (Bulwer 1644)

⁷ (Jelgerhuis 1827)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The actor must never forget grace, even in moments of greatest abandon.

*(Geoffroy 1822)*⁸

As an undergraduate music student at the University of Western Australia, I went to a lecture on the work of Gilbert Austin, an Irish public speaker and educator, who wrote the treatise *Chironomia; or A Treatise On Rhetorical Delivery* (Austin, Robb and Thonssen 1966) in 1806. At the time I was not singing difficult music and perceived this style of acting to be unnecessary. Now that I am a seasoned performer in this field and seeking to resolve some recurring issues related to staging pre-romantic opera, the memory of this lecture, however, has led me to research other gesture and historical acting treatises.

I commenced my research by examining Andrew Lawrence-King's guidance from his website, *Il Corago* (www.ilcorago.com). I studied the language of not only the hands (gesture), but also what is communicated through the movement of the eyes, the concept of *energeia* (visualization), *contrapposto* (asymmetrical arrangement of the human figure) and text analysis of the libretto. Lawrence-King explains, "Historical acting is more than just 'baroque gesture. It is full body acting, focusing on the face and eyes, supported by a strong, relaxed posture, and powered by the spirit of the actor's intention. The efficacy of the gesture depends crucially on good timing, and on the actor's intention. If your focus is on moving your hand beautifully, the audience might enjoy the hand-ballet, but they will not share your passion." From Lawrence-King's research, I then reviewed the characteristics of the baroque period, to give reasons for the origins of these formalised understandings of baroque gesture.

Operatic Compositional Structure in the Baroque Period

The term baroque (*barrocco*) meaning "misshapen pearl" in Portuguese, was applied to the style of music composed from 1580 to 1650 (early baroque), 1630 to 1700 (mid baroque), and 1680 to 1750

⁸ (Barnett 1987, 222)

(late baroque)⁹. During this time also named the Age of Eloquence¹⁰, particularly from the mid-baroque period on, composers employed the operatic style of opera seria (serious opera). Opera seria is defined as a large-scale operatic work based on mythology or historical themes¹¹. It was performed exclusively for the aristocracy throughout Europe, designed to ennoble the mind and to ignite philosophical discussion amongst its listeners. "Poets were expected to portray what, according to an orderly moral system, should have happened rather than what actually did happen. Death, if unavoidable, should be handled with dignity, and preferably off stage. Suicides and deaths in battle could be tolerated but murder could not."¹²

Opera Seria is composed of arias and choruses connected by recitatives. The recitatives compel the action forward after or before introspective arias. The aria was most often formed around ABA' structure, known as the da capo aria, (literally meaning, from the head, or, from the top)¹³. In ABA' form, the singer would sing through two verses of poetry, the A section modulated to a relative key in the B section, and then the initial theme, or A' section, would be repeated with dazzling, improvised ornamentation from both the singer and solo instrumentalists. Metastasio codified several emerging conventions for the da capo aria, including its role as some kind of emotional climax to a scene (usually followed by the exit of the character delivering the aria) and the principle of presenting contrasted affective types in successive arias.¹⁴

Focusing on harmony and beautiful ornamentation meant the text became less important in the repeated A section. The text was repeated word for word in the repeated section. By the 1720s, the music was extended so much that the first strophe (or verse) could be heard up to eight times before

⁹ (Mackay 2024)

¹⁰ (Burgess and Haynes 2016)

¹¹ (Randel 2003)

¹² (Heartz 2001)

¹³ A term normally signifying any closed lyrical piece for solo voice with or without instrumental accompaniment, either independent or forming part of an opera, oratorio, cantata or other large work....In its mature form, the aria begins with an instrumental introduction... usually self-contained with a full close in the tonic, then a statement of the first stanza of the poem moving from tonic to dominant (or, in a minor key, to the relative major); the voice usually enters with the material heard at the beginning of the ritornello. A further ritornello in the secondary key... leads to the second setting (A') of the first stanza. As in instrumental binary forms, this might begin with the opening vocal phrase transposed to the new key, or a transformation of it. A' moves sooner or later back to the tonic; ...The second stanza (set in the B section) is usually stated only once, with or without internal repetitions, and it is often in a contrasting key and/or style. The music usually develops material from the A section. This section commonly moves through several related keys, often ending in the minor or on a phrygian cadence preparing for a return to the tonic key and the introductory ritornello. The first section is then repeated. Fioriture often appeared in both statements of the final line of the first stanza; cadenzas could be inserted at the ends of both sections, and the da capo provided an opportunity for the singer to add ornamentation. (Jack Westrup 2001)

¹⁴ (Jack Westrup 2001)

the lyrics changed to the second verse.¹⁵ With each repetition, the composer is showing another layer of sophistication, moving the passions in the listener in line with the principles of the Age of Eloquence: to be more eloquent than nature.

When the text is repeated, this means no further new information is available to the audience, resulting in what can seem like a halt in the journey of the plot, or the action. While this might seem a contradictive move in an opera, I feel this affords time for the audience to empathize with the character. It is important to remember that in opera seria, audiences were encouraged to ruminate on a character's validity of their deeds. This halt in the action, I feel, is vital in allowing the audience time to think.

Previously, in the seventeenth century, before the invention of the da capo aria, singers would ornament the music so heavily that the words and meaning were less prominent. Early music performance specialist, Martha Elliot writes, "Singers also added dazzling ornamental passaggi to the already complex texture, obscuring the words even further."¹⁶ In this way the da capo aria form brought about a compromise, allowing singers to showcase their musicianship after the text or poetry had been delivered once. The narrative of the opera is maintained.

As compositional trends progressed into the middle eighteenth century, the da capo aria became criticized for its unnecessary return to the A section. The length to which the A section had grown musically also came under scrutiny. "In some instances, it became merely a virtuoso singer's plaything—not only undramatic but antidramatic. The impossibility of dramatic progress in a form that returned to the words with which it began was also criticized." (Randel 2003). To resolve this need to keep the dramatic pace through an aria in opera seria, the dal segno aria (literally meaning, "From the sign") developed and took over from the da capo aria. In the dal segno structure, the composer placed a sign (segno) to show the singer from where to repeat the A section. Only a small section was sung with ornamentation, making it a much shorter, more exciting version of ABA' form.

After Christoph Willibald Gluck's reform of opera in the 1760s (Croll 2024), composers sought to create greater excitement throughout the aria. New aria forms emerged, following the structure of symphonic composition, such as Binary Form (AB), Sonata Form (Exposition, Development and Recapitulation)¹⁷ and Rondo Form (ABA'CA"). In his opera seria revival of *Idomeneo* K. 366, Mozart

¹⁵ (Jack Westrup 2001)

¹⁶ (Elliot 2006)

¹⁷ (Jacobson 2023)

included forms which normally were only used in opera buffa, such as the (ABB' A'B'B" CC') compound binary involving a further C "stretta" section which increased the speed towards the end of the aria, for example, in Elettra's exciting invocation aria, "Tutte nel cor vi sento". In this reworking of *Idomeneo*, he explored different ways to move between recitative, aria, and choral scenes, building greater suspense and excitement throughout the work.

As well as their structure, arias followed several conventions in theme. Opera seria employed conventional arias, such as the peaceful sleep aria, the emotional lament, the exciting and dramatic invocation aria, the pastoral aria (mimicking sounds of nature), the mad scene, and many more. These conventions continued to be used into the Romantic era. A great example is the mad scene in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, composed in 1835, nearly one hundred years after Handel composed for example, Dejanira's mad aria "Where Shall I Fly" in *Hercules* HWV 60, in 1744, and Mozart's "D'Oreste d'Aiace" in *Idomeneo* K.366, in 1781.

While Donizetti's mad scene, "Il dolce suono... Spargi d'amaro pianto" is twice as long in length as Mozart's "D'Oreste d'Aiace" and far more developed in musical complexity, the lyrics and the emotions, that is, the effort I have as a singer in imagining staging for the aria, is the same. Through this exegesis and my recital, I hope to find out how the baroque gestures used in Handel's time could also benefit the same style of aria in the later eras of Mozart and Donizetti.

Understanding Baroque Gesture and Historical Acting

Gestures: the oldest of all means of communication, shared by mankind with primates, yet also one of the most complex.

(Aldrete 2017)

Gesture

If the words spoken to us are not communicable for reasons such as language differences, hearing impairment, speech impediments, long distances between the orator and the listener, or sung speech, then visual cues can help us understand what is being communicated. Aldrete suggests that "A gesture could be static or dynamic; it could be intentional or unintentional; it could last for an instant or

embody a near permanent state of being. The common thread is that it functions as a visual medium of communication in which information is conveyed nonverbally by the human body.”¹⁸

Humans can read body language without scholarship; we know most gestures such as pointing and the expressions of the passions such as surprise, terror, joy and welcome, simply by being alive.

In Dene Barnett’s treatise¹⁹, he categorizes gestures into those which are indicative, imitative, expressive, gestures of address, gestures of emphasis, those which commence, those which terminate, and his final subsection for complex gestures. Barnett believes that gestures were rational rather than impressionistic, and linked specifically to each phrase, rather than the emotion pervading a full verse.

Rather than build a dictionary of gestural language as John Bulwer recorded, Barnett explained:

“The function of gestures was to indicate or to describe the objects... which were referred to by the words; to express by face and hands and posture the passion which moved the character; to emphasize important words; to announce the beginning, and the ending of the passage or speech.”²⁰

Barnett’s study of historical acting scoped techniques in many different countries, and he says they were commonly used, in the same manner, in each country. “The basic gestures were for some centuries common to all the countries from which sources are drawn and, with on small exception, to both acting and oratory.” (Barnett 1987, 19).

Barnett mentions the publications of two well-known scholars, Charles Batteux and Edme Mallet, from 1753, which categorize gestures into three main groups, “Gestes Indicatives, Gestes Imitatives and Gestes Affectives, the latter being our expressive gestures.” Barnett writes these categories were used into the early twentieth century²¹. Barnett also refers to the writing of Gilbert Austin and his commencing and terminating gestures, as well as the ancient Roman authority on gesture and eloquence, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (b. 35- d. 100AD). In this Age of Enlightenment, scholars referred to the teachings of Quintilian and Cicero for rational guidance in eloquence.

¹⁸ (Aldrete 2017)

¹⁹ (Barnett 1987)

²⁰ (Barnett 1987) P 19

²¹ (Barnett 1987) P 20

The Right Hand

Possibly the most effective change I have found to my performance since beginning this study, is through following the instructions of teachers from Quintillian to this century's Andrew Lawrence-King, all of whom agree that gesture should be made principally with the right hand. The left hand should not be motionless, but the right hand takes the role of leading the communication. In Barnett's work, he references many written sources about this, including one from Gildon in 1710, intended for English actors, "If an Action comes to be used by only one Hand, that must be the Right, it being indecent to make a Gesture with the Left alone..."²²

Recently I have found this particularly effective while performing with my music, in an opera by Richard Mills; *Galileo*. I held my score with my left hand, so that my right was free to express and indicate the meaning of my text. I also realise that for oratorios, traditionally performed with the score, using the left hand to hold the music, while the right was free to make gestures, would open my body more to the audience, and allow for a more expressive performance.

If I were to take this concept into performing opera, too, I would consciously "speak" with my right hand, while my left hand would hold my props such as garments, knives or letters in the same way that my left would hold my score, in oratorio. For those who are left-handed, Barnett has some helpful advice from the writing of Knox in 1797, "Let all their actions be with both hands together, for then they will not offend the eye of the spectator with the left-hand alone."²³

Indicative Gestures

These gestures are uniformly important throughout acting treatises in the eighteenth century. While it seems that the hand is simply pointing, the fall of the fingers and the curve of the palm facing up or down was also very important for elegance, while it creates the visual meaning of personal pronouns and nouns, and the act of inviting someone to come closer or sending them away, opening or closing the body.

²² (Barnett 1987, 22)

²³ (Barnett 1987)

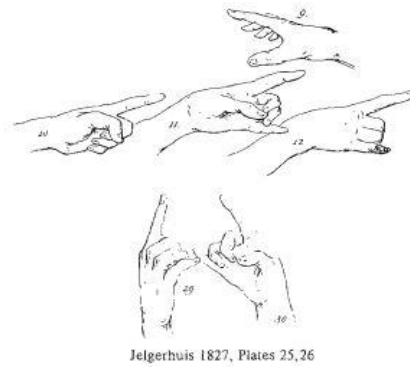


Figure 3. Indicative Gestures (Barnett 1987, 27)

Imitative Gestures

This gesture helps an orator describe size or speed of the object being discussed. Dean Barnett cites the work of the German scholar of practical rhetoric, Christophe Arnold, *De Arte Dicendi* (1658), mentions the idea of using this gesture not only for describing multitudes, but how the left hand can be used to redouble the meaning, increasing the passion in the repeat of a word. “You show moderation or abundance with your hands either a little or a long way apart... the orator very seldom displays a gesture with the left hand alone; often he moves the left hand with the right: as when he reveals the multitude of things...or when he asks again in redoubled tones.”²⁴ In this way, I believe the use of the left hand could be more prominent in the repeated section in the da capo aria, when the words have already been spoken, but the passion²⁵ needs to be redoubled with the development of the musical theme.



Figure 4. Doubling my hands (In a modern staging as Lucia di Lammermoor). Image by Martin Kaufhold, Staatstheater Wiesbaden (2012)

²⁴ (Barnett 1987, 34)

²⁵ *The Passions of the Soul* (1649) written by seventeenth century mathematician and philosopher, René Descartes, described such emotions as surprise, grief, terror, anger, contempt, jealousy, aversion or refusal, disparagement, shame and welcome. Descartes is best known for his dictum, ‘I think, therefore I am’, or, ‘Cogito, ergo sum’. (Watson 2023)

Expressive Gestures

Dene Barnett describes the expressive gesture as an attitude or movement used to present a passion of the character portrayed, for example, surprise, grief, terror, anger, contempt, jealousy, aversion or refusal, disparagement, shame or welcome. Expressive gestures involve the face, as well as the hands. In Lang's *De Actione Scenica*, he writes, "The eyes moreover contribute most to this, so that they may truly be called the seat of the feelings, and they are as outstanding as the hand proves on a clock, without which the hours cannot be distinguished, even though the rest is most excellently fashioned and painted with colours." (Barnett 1987).

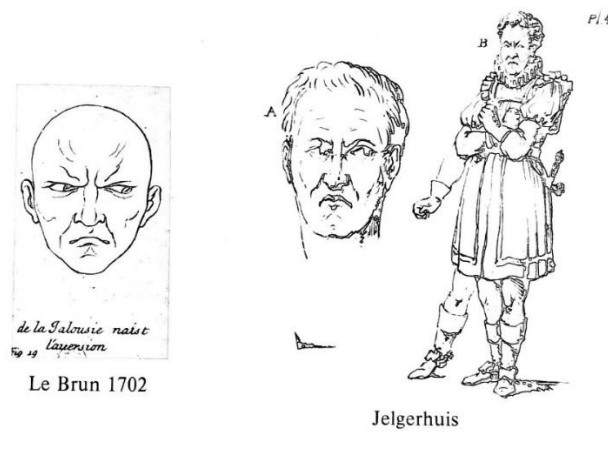


Figure 5. Barnett compares two expressive gestures of 'Jealousy'. (Barnett 1987, 57)

In an acting treatise from England in 1710, Charles Gildon discusses how the height of the arms compared to the eyes are of great importance, as it is necessary to keep order around the body while these gestures are made. "In lifting up the hands to preserve the Grace, you ought not to raise them above the eyes; to stretch them farther might disorder and distort the body; nor must it be very little lower, because that Position gives beauty to the figure."²⁶ I find it interesting to note that when arms are held lower, this makes a "beautiful" position. Knowing this helps me give the most accurate posture for the passion I hope to express.

Gestures of Address

In some libretti, the character being addressed is not named. In this case, to make it clear to the audience who is being spoken to, we must look towards that person. If it is not a person but rather the gods in heaven, or furies in hell, we must look in that direction. I also find it useful if I am referring

²⁶ (Barnett 1987)

to a character no longer on stage with me, to refer to them by looking in the direction of the door or place they last exited the stage, allowing my mind to revisit how they treated me before they left.

While it is mostly mentioned in these eighteenth-century notes that an actor should turn to face whomever they are addressing, I have found in revealing a character's higher or lower status, how much eye contact to give the conversation. Giving another character your full attention is a great honour. If a character has higher status than the other character, they should not maintain eye contact. If a couple love each other, literally see eye to eye, then eye contact should be long and sustained.

Gestures of Emphasis

The emphasis or stroke of gesture can be the movement of the hand and arm that can be dramatic or delicate or just a nod or inclination of the head, to emphasise a word in the same way our voice would emphasise a word or syllable. Gilbert Austin describes striking, "When the whole forearm and the hand along with it descend from a higher elevation rapidly, and with a degree of force like a stroke which is arrested when it has struck what it is aimed against." (Austin p. 344) (Barnett 1987). With the idea of gestures which emphasise the foot of poetry or certain words, we start to cross into the realm of conducting music.

Commencing Gestures

Barnett describes this gesture as one that is the raising of the eyes or the hand upwards, towards the audience before the actor begins their speech. In Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia* (Austin, Robb and Thonssen 1966), he quotes Karl Boettinger's statement from 1796, "Among the fine French actors who have certainly reached high perfection in ordered gesture-language, there is general acceptance of the rule; as often as possible, the gesture precedes the speech."²⁷

Terminating Gestures

This gesture is the opposing action of the commencement, the arms and eyes fall downwards, to show the end of the speech. When performing arias with fantastically exciting endings though, singers sometimes end with their arms up in the air. I personally find this too cliché, or lacking decorum, but a quote from German 1803 treatise by Michaelis mentions its purpose, "The horizontal termination is suitable for decision and instruction; the downward direction suits disapprobation and condemnation;

²⁷ (Barnett 1987, 80)

elevation expresses pride, high passion and devotion.”²⁸ It is a common sight when gymnasts have finished their routine at the Olympics, with their arms athletically high above their extended bodies.

Complex Gestures

Some gestures may be used in a more complex way and may be able to indicate both a command and the direction or multitude of people it refers to at the same time, for example, describing thousands or just a scattering of people. The movement of the arm and the way a hand is pointing can happen simultaneously.



Figure 5. The complex gesture shows both the scale and magnitude of expression as well as the intended meaning²⁹

Contrapposto

Contrapposto or the asymmetrical positioning of the body while performing speech or drama is described in detail in the eighteenth century to ensure “transcendence of nature”³⁰. The goal is to create the most beautiful shape for the body on a stage which speaks to the principles of the age of enlightenment. “The resulting art of gesture thus matched the style of verse which it accompanied, and the requirements of decorum were satisfied.”³¹

Decorum is in line with the principles of the Age of Enlightenment because of its association with deportment, and of controlling the mind to think rationally. Barnett adds, “In posture and gesture, decorum meant harmonious proportions and graceful contrasts between the various parts of the body: between arm and leg, between the two hands, between the head and shoulder, forearm and upper arm, and including the smallest details of fingers and eye movements.”³² As a singer, the idea of maintaining a relaxed body while singing extremely passionate music is vital for vocal health and

²⁸ (Barnett 1987, 82)

²⁹ (Barnett 1987, 72)

³⁰ (Barnett 1987, 90)

³¹ (Barnett 1987, 90)

³² (Barnett 1987, 90)

compliments the classical principle well. “We must therefore take care not to surrender entirely to emotion and passion.”³³

Examples of contrapposto can be found in statues from the Ancient Egyptians to posing supermodels today. It generally exhibits the human body in its most flattering angle. It requires one leg to take the weight of the body, and the other leg to come forward, bending at the knee. The shoulders and the hips are positioned in opposite directions. In this way, with one hip lower than the other, asymmetrical proportions result while the body leans backwards.

Here are several examples:



*Figure 6. King Menkaura (Mycerinus) and Queen 2490-2472 BC*³⁴

³³ (Barnett 1987, 90)

³⁴ <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/230>



Figure 7. David by Michelangelo, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia, 1501-1504 (Tikkanen 2024)



Figure 8. An orator leans with weight on one leg. (Barnett 1987, 199)



Figure 9. Opera Singer, Dame Joan Sutherland, leaning backwards on her leg for the final note of the duet with Luciano Pavarotti. (ABC Classic 2019)

To maintain one's balance while creating this posture requires the feet to be in positions that will provide stability, such as those illustrated by Johann Jelgerhuis here:

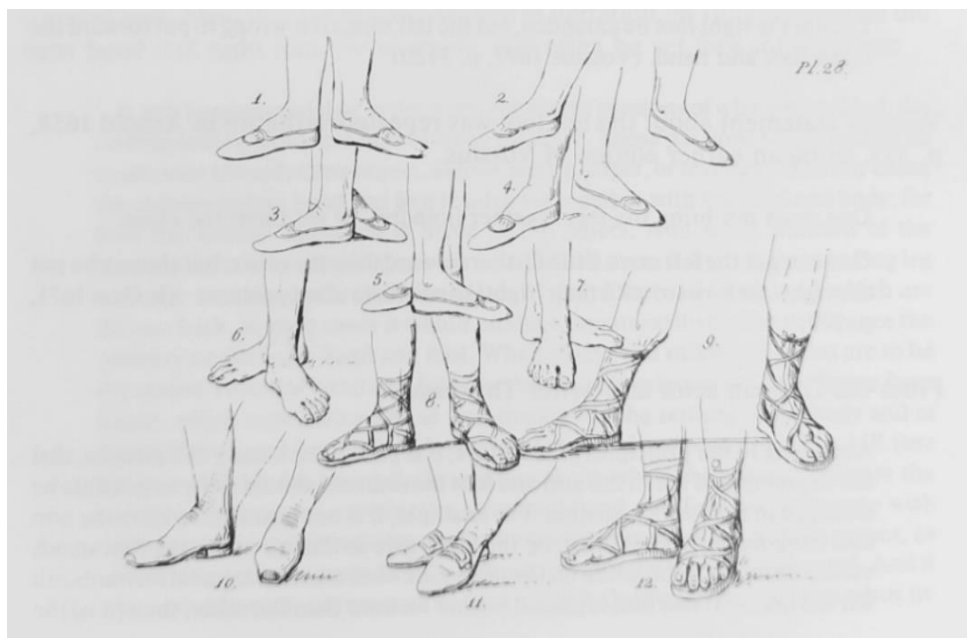


Figure 10. Jelgerhuis comparing ballet positions 9 (above) to noble posture for feet (below) (Barnett 1987, 117)

Appoggio literally means “I lean” in Italian, but in singing, it describes the feeling of balancing the breath pressure inside the body. By leaning backwards onto support muscles, such as the psoas muscle that can be felt in the lumbar region (lower back), greater control can be found over the rate at which the diaphragm rises and pushes air out of the lungs. In her article *Appoggio Demystified* (Robbin 2013), Catherine Robbin describes appoggio as “delaying the rise of the diaphragm to accomplish the role of pressurized breath for singing.” In my experience, the act of leaning backwards butterflies out my rib cage, which prevents collapsing of the sternum as air leaves the lungs (See Fig. 10). As the diaphragm is connected to the rib cage, the diaphragm’s natural rise is slower if the rib cage is expanded. In this way, air remains in my lungs for a longer time. I imagine I am still in a posture of inspiration, rather than expiration. The air flow is balanced between my lungs and the vocal folds. As well as leaning backwards on to my rear leg, I find it particularly helpful to tuck my pelvis under to help engage the lumbar muscles, in particular the psoas, which also resists the rise of the diaphragm.

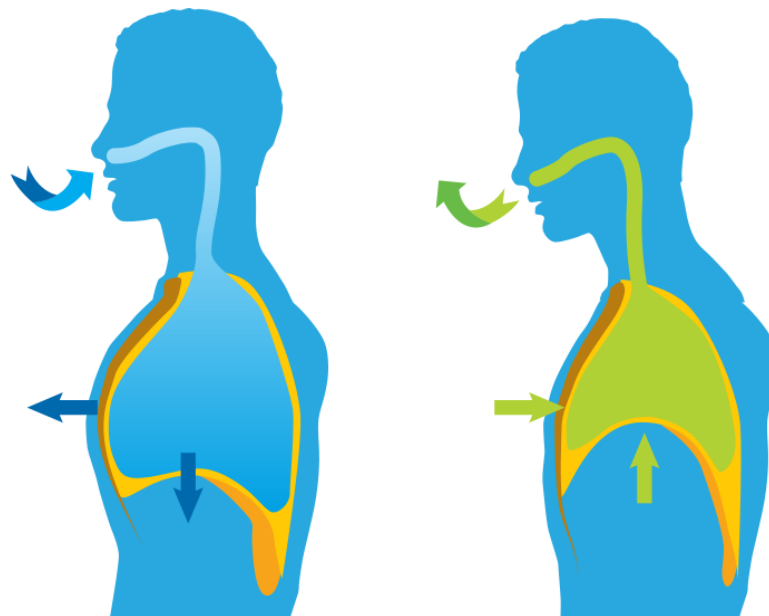


Figure 11. Diaphragmatic Breathing: Left image shows inhalation, i.e. the lungs full, the diaphragm low, the ribs and sternum inflated. Right image shows exhalation, i.e. empty lungs, the diaphragm high, the ribs and sternum collapsed. The trained singer can slow the rate of expulsion of air using appoggio. (Nelson 2015)

Robbin also writes, “...the appropriate posture for singing is one that will permit interplay among the muscles of the torso and the abdominal wall. Properly aligned posture is not just so that we can look good. It is required in order that our muscles can accomplish that exquisite control of breathing for singing.”³⁵

³⁵ (Robbin 2013) P 201

A simple exercise of shifting weight first from your back foot to the front foot proves how the muscles in the lower lumbar region of the thicken and engage when we lean backwards and disengage when we lean forward. Looking back to Figure 9., Jelgerhuis' illustrations of feet show the ideal position is one foot behind the other, as in the balletic term "second position". From this I suggest it is possible to see the eighteenth-century singer's ability to send their weight backwards and lean with assured balance. As Melba suggests, for a sound to be made in a way that is full of beauty, it must have ease³⁶. I believe the ease comes from a strength in the support muscles and a relaxation in the throat, jaw and tongue. The postural muscles of eighteenth-century performers would have been much stronger as well, to maintain noble posture while carrying the weight of their clothing and enormous wigs for long periods of time.

Energeia

In the anonymously written work *Il Corago* (ca 1630), "Energeia" is a term used to describe the singer's ability to visualise the images about which they are singing in vivid detail. Since technique can sometimes preoccupy the singer's mind, removing them from the fantasy the opera is trying to create for the audience, it is therefore vital for a thoroughly convincing performance that the singer visualizes with great detail as they sing. Andrew Lawrence-King discusses this in his website, "Text, Rhythm and Action"³⁷. "Energeia presents emotions as if in passionate storytelling, reminding us of the importance of narration and messenger-scenes in early opera, and of the original designation of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* as *favola in musica*: a story in music."

Dene Barnett also refers to the importance of the direction of the eyes. "Most of the professional sources state that the eyes are the most important part of acting... Roger Pickering states, for example, that the eyes must always discover the passion first, before the word, and Austin and the French and German sources all make it clear that the eyes or face moved, then the hand and then the voice. This is an expressive routine which can be very powerful." (Barnett 1987) In my own experience I have heard Italian colleagues describe this same technique as "Cantare come una statua" (to sing like a statue), where the body is still, but the mind is alive with images. Audiences are drawn in when they can see the singer or speaker's eyes alive with energy, visualizing the event or subject they are singing about.

³⁶ (Melba 1926)

³⁷ (Lawrence-King, Start Here! How to Study Baroque Gesture and Historical Action 2015)

WHY BAROQUE GESTURE WAS VITAL IN ITS TIME

Our need will be the real creator

Plato – The Republic

Art Versus Nature

The eighteenth-century is often referred to as the Age of Eloquence. It was not enough to speak a language, one desired to speak it with decorum, elevating natural speech to poetic rhetoric, imitating the skills of the Ancient Roman orators. Art and rational thought therefore also brought eloquence to the gestures we innately know. In a way, the repeated section of the da capo aria was also a form of elevation, another impressive layer of sophistication to an original theme. While approaching this eloquence and highly ornate singing repeat of the da capo aria, the singer kept still, in their noble posture, to save air and accomplish the very difficult passages of coloratura³⁸, while they held their audience's attentions with flashes of gesture.

Performance Venues Grow in Size

Originally operatic music belonged only to the court of the nobility, but the slow collapse of the patronage system meant nobility were no longer able to pay the wages of musicians and dancers. By opening the performances to the public, many seats were required to afford the costs. The first massive theatre, Teatro San Cassiano in Venice, was built in 1637³⁹, soon followed by many others. It also created a new division between audience and performers and gave us the architectural style of opera houses and theatres that we're familiar with today, with a raised stage at the front of the auditorium, the orchestra in the pit and then seating arranged around this in a horseshoe shape.

³⁸ Coloratura (or fioritura) is a style of singing composed of music that rapidly moves from note to note, often with leaps from one range to another, and staccato rhythms that give the impression of vocal pyrotechnics. Coloratura was most often heard in eighteenth and nineteenth century opera.

³⁹ (Paolo 2020)

Their design involved a stage at the front of the theatre and as many seats as possible in front of it. The flat, two-dimensional stage changed the way in which singers and dancers were seen by the audience, resulting in a shift in ballet technique as well as how the instruments and singers now were required to project over greater distances to fill the large halls.



Figure 12. Opening in 1637, Teatro San Cassiano was the world's first dedicated opera house (Paolo 2020)

Habitus

“Habitus” as a term, was popularized by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and one aspect of its meaning can be taken as “the neutral stance”. This concept has been explored by Matthew Roller using societal records of Ancient Rome. “The postures assumed by Roman men, women, and children at formal dinners reflected attitudes towards gender and status. Furthermore, stereotypes such as adult, free males reclining at dinner could be manipulated, particularly in painting, sculpture, and other media, to assert status or sometimes even in an attempt to co-opt a desired status.”⁴⁰

Andrew Lawrence-King mentions how our lifestyles today use a lot less effort and make our bodies less trained in the way someone who lived in Handel’s time might have lived. Driving cars, using escalators and lifts, sitting down at computers, all weaken our postural muscles. In the Baroque era, singers could be assumed to have had a lot more strength in their legs from their horse riding, poised dancing, swordsmanship, poised sitting and standing at court and conducting themselves with decorum in public. “They had better balance; they were more centred. Courtiers spent many hours every day dancing and practising swordsmanship.” (Lawrence King, 2015). In the twenty-first century we rarely train our bodies in the discipline of classical dance, horse riding or fencing, and we spend many hours sitting in cars and sofas, weakening our psoas and abdominal muscles.

⁴⁰ (Aldrete 2017, 149)

Limitations Due to Costume Requirements

It is important to keep in mind that women wore very ornate, heavy skirts that would cover them down to their legs in this time, restricting active movements such as sitting, bending, climbing stairs which made it very difficult when the audience was seated below them, and corsets and the tightly sewn structure of the sleeves restricted the movement of their arms so that they could not lift them high above their heads. Wigs were also ornate and incredibly heavy, requiring slower, deliberate movement and greater strength in their necks and backs to maintain upright posture.

French philosopher Denis Diderot wrote in 1758 of the fashions then current in the French theatre, “Ostentation spoils everything.... Wealth has too many caprices: it can dazzle the eye, but not touch⁴¹the heart. Beneath the garment that is overloaded with gilding, I never see more than a rich man, and it is a man I look for....”⁴² On a very still body, relying on the arms only to convey drama to communicate over great distance would be beneficial to opera singers today. Strengthening the muscles which support the noble posture, controlled movement and breathing would also be a boon to singers’ stage craft.

RATIONALE

Stanislavsky System and Opera

To discuss the details of why modern acting does not complement singing baroque opera, I would like to first explain my education, and subsequent professional experience of acting and movement in opera. As mentioned at the beginning in my abstract, my acting tuition as an emerging artist at the Australian Opera Studio was to react authentically to the circumstances around me, imagining a history, or a back story for our characters. By knowing them well, we could react honestly to the action on stage, faithfully bringing the characters back to life. Our education was based on Stanislavski system:

“The Stanislavsky system requires that an actor utilize, among other things, his emotional memory (i.e., his recall of past experiences and emotions). The actor’s entrance onto the stage is considered to be not a beginning of the action or of his life as the character but a continuation of the set of preceding circumstances. The actor has trained his

⁴¹ (Niklaus 2024)

⁴² (Dufford 2024)

concentration and his senses so that he may respond freely to the total stage environment. Through empathic observation of people in many different situations, he attempts to develop a wide emotional range so that his onstage actions and reactions appear as if they were a part of the real world rather than a make-believe one.” (Luebering 2024)

Applying this system for actors to my opera studies in the early 2000s meant I would firstly look for every detail available to us about our characters in the libretto and then to other literature about the character (if it exists). A complete image is not always possible, so I would make informed guesses about my character’s childhood, what physical environment they might have lived in and how society shaped them to be the person they were in those times. Following this process, actors then spend time imagining how their character would move. They consider where they might hold tension, whether they see themselves as higher or lower status to each character in the story.⁴³ The task for singers then, is to combine this mental image and embodiment of the character with the singing technique they require.

As a student, when I gave too much to the emotion of my character in staging rehearsals, acting more than singing, my concerned singing teacher took me aside and told me, “It’s important to keep one half of your brain cool”. By this she meant, not to sacrifice my vocal tone for the emotion, to keep one part of my concentration on singing technique. Not to feel the emotion too realistically, or the operatic technique will suffer. Sometimes, the singing must take precedence over the acting, for example, when a singer is performing a difficult passage of music that requires stillness and focus, or when the singer is performing a da capo aria with many repeats of the text. I feel there needs to be another layer of preparation in this embodiment of the music, to allow singers the posture and ease to sing well, without dropping their character.

When we perform in a large auditorium, such as one with two thousand seats, the spotlights and distance from the stage, over the orchestra, to the auditorium, tended to wash out the expression on our faces. Under bright lights and at this distance the audience relies on the body language of our arms and posture to help them comprehend our character’s story. The movements must still be believable, and yet larger than in reality and uninterrupted by an actor’s personal habits (for example

⁴³ Many baritones who play the role of title role in Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, a hunchback, often say the hardest part is not allowing the tension they hold in their body to limp like a hunchback into their voice. When I sang the Queen of the Night, in Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, the fury I felt as the queen was often throughout my whole body and my voice. It was not ideal.

fidgiting or only keeping one arm active while the other hangs by their side) which can interrupt the fantasy or the emotional journey for the audience.

I was fortunate to be trained by a movement coach who showed me how to move my body elegantly from my fingertips to my feet, always standing at angles to the proscenium arch to create the most dynamic shape for the audience. She taught me that a body standing flat to the audience, loses the interest of the audience quickly. My movement coach also taught me to hold my hands as though each nail has wet nail polish on it, (creating space between each finger), and to keep my mouth open and relaxed when I enter from the side of the stage, exhaling as I walk. I now understand these lessons stem from historical acting treatises. My education in movement echoed the conventions of contrapposto, in that I should not stand square to the audience.

This training only gave me a basic understanding of these elements but it has been very useful. For example, while I was not aware of the importance of the right hand, I knew that both arms could only be involved asymmetrically, as in contrapposto, never mirror each other in the story telling. I learnt that the breath flow began before my character enters a scene, before the visible movement begins, as in the historical acting style. The Stanislavsky System has commonalities with historical acting's "Energeia", but there are many more aspects to cover when it comes to stage craft for opera singers.

Challenges Surrounding Rehearsing and Performing Handel's *Semele* with Modern Staging

In 2020, I was involved in a production of Handel's *Semele* for New Zealand Opera. The budget for the production was small and did not include funds for a choreographer, even though dancing was required of my character, Semele. It was this production and the issues I experienced rehearsing and performing the role that has sparked the topic for my research project and thesis.

In the aria, "Endless Pleasure", I performed a conventional pastoral aria, but instead of a choir of nymphs and shepherds, I perform the aria in the style of gospel, with a gospel choir dancing behind me (See Fig. 11). The instruction from the director was to perform the number with the tropes we recognize today as "pop" performative aspects. Audiences today are very accustomed to the sights and sounds of gospel choirs clapping on beats 2 and 4, while joyously dancing as they sing. Pastoral dances though require a weighted third beat of the bar.

Without a historical dance instructor to guide me, I spent many hours outside of the rehearsals, studying the provocative and dynamic choreography of pop singers like Britney Spears, Amy Winehouse and Christina Aguilera, imitating their movements, selecting those which I thought I could manage to dance confidently, and I then mixed the melismatic singing style with my coloratura in the aria “Endless Pleasure”, as best I could. The text of the aria was very similar to a pop song we might hear today. I was able to apply the same gestures and movements a pop singer might give these lyrics:

Endless pleasure, endless love
Semele enjoys above.
On her bosom Jove reclining, useless now his thunder lies.
To her arms his bolts resigning
And his lightning to her eyes
To her eyes
To her arms
His bolts resigning
Endless Pleasure endless love,
Semele enjoys above.⁴⁴

While rehearsing my choreography with piano in the rehearsal room, I felt confident that I had found a good balance between singing the ornaments within baroque discipline. However, when the orchestra’s limitations meant that my pop-style dancing could only be accompanied by just a bassoon and recorder, as is convention in a pastoral aria, I felt that my movements suddenly looked comical. The sharp bursts of low notes from the bassoon did not work with the suggestive choreography I had rehearsed. The work I had put in, late at night -long after the rehearsal calls, had been a waste of time.

The musical director kindly discussed a compromise, where the bassoon was left out and string instruments were squeezed in next to the gospel choir behind me, then the music was closer to the style of my choreography. The gospel choir and I pretended to lightly clap on the second and fourth beat in the gospel style while the music emphasized the third beat of the bar. Singing, “EndLESS pleasURE”, meant that the staging and music misaligned, and my performance required even more suspension of belief from the audience.

⁴⁴ “Endless Pleasure” from Handel’s *Semele* HWV 58, lyrics by William Congreve



Figure 13. As Semele in front of gospel choir singing the pastoral 'Endless Pleasure' from Handel's *Semele*. NZ Opera, 2020

While watching myself on the cinema screen in *Semele*, (subsequently released on film), it also became clear that while I might have been internalising a lot of emotion, the message I was sending as the character Semele did not reach me as an audience member watching the film. While I thought I felt the emotion deeply, my body was not engaged in it. It was engaged in singing well. If the camera was close by, the tiniest mismanaged movement of my hands was too much. If the camera was far away, and that emotional outpouring I was giving was only shown on my face, which the spotlights washed out anyway, it left a very lifeless looking body for the audience in the back row. This emphasised to me the fact that in the concert hall, where paying audience members are sitting far away from the performers under bright lights, it is extremely important for the whole body to communicate to the audience.

Self-direction in *Idomeneo* K. 366

Recently I have been rehearsing and performing the role of Elettra in Mozart's *Idomeneo* K. 366. A friend recorded some of my performance, so I was able to analyse what I felt compared to what came across to the audience. In moments when my character was very angry, I believed my entire body was involved, but in fact, my left hand seized up in an open gesture, like a claw, while my right hand carried out the staging, which was to aggressively drag the character, Ilia, to the ground by her hair (using a safe, stage fighting technique). Watching this video, I saw that the simple incorrect hand gesture upset the fantasy for the audience, who can see the difficulty I was experiencing as singer in coordinating my music and my violent action, instead fearing the character's rage or passion. Pacing around the stage with the muscles in my right arm flexed and my left hand like a claw, gave my character a masculine energy, which I do not think was appropriate for the character.

With this knowledge of how disconnected my left hand is to my body, I know now that I can intensify my passion as was done in the eighteenth century, by supporting my right hand with my left hand together. The gesture can be intensified without packing so much tension into the right arm. The tension will hurt the body and the labour the voice. For this reason, it is helpful to be more exact with hand gestures and to have a focus on decorum. Rather than leave my left hand in a generally stressed position, in future I will work more closely watching my hands in the mirror as I decide on actions, referring to chirograms from John Bulwer and Johann Jelgerhuis to find out how my hands can help me perform passionately, without adding tension in my body.

Repeated Repeats

When the text is repeated, no further psychological change is possible for the character at this time. In this case the director and the performer work together to imagine meanings in the repeated section, as we cannot refer to the text to decide our actions. In the convention of an invocation aria, the same text is repeated many times with swirling harmonic changes to evoke ethereal magic or a frenzied state of mind. In Elettra's "Tutte nel cor vi sento", Elettra is stuck in a swirling labyrinth of music and text which spirals around itself, capturing the feeling of a person losing their mind, or a wild storm at sea. As the saying goes, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." The aria has one over-arching emotion, which grows in intensity to the final phrase. Elettra's aria seamlessly moves into Idomeneo's shipwreck, as though she is the one responsible for it, conjuring the furies with her passion for revenge. Her text repeats, though each phrase is only slightly different in melody and there is very little help to remember which phrase to sing.

In performance, I found gesture was the only way I could remember the correct repeat to sing. The gestures I used included the chirogram image in John Bulwer's "Pugno" (I fight), "Trionfo" (Triumph) and "Avverso" (Aversion) as well as indicative gestures pointing to the places where the audience last saw Ilia, and last saw Idamante (opposite sides of the stage), pleading the furies from below, and watching for lightning above. There are moments when her aggression is replaced by sadness, but in general, the aria intensifies one passion, one thought, to the end.

I was grateful for my study in gesture during this aria because I often felt lost in a labyrinth of repeats, and having a vocabulary of gestures meant less decisions needed to be made in rehearsals, just as a person who is fluent in any language can work at a quicker pace than one who is starting from scratch.

Other problems in modern staging within the da capo aria occur because when we move too much, with modern physicality, in modern, comfortable costume, our breathing and consequent embellishments are compromised.

In the role of Semele, the aria, “Myself I Shall Adore” was performed with the tropes a drug-addled pop star might use when performing on stage. I used a slovenly posture, slurred speech and fits of aggression. The stress of delivering the performance in a way that was convincing for the audience, visually as well as audibly, was obvious in my shortness of breath in the extended fioritura passages and pressed tone of voice. If I could perform this again, I would avoid the collapsed posture I held before the longest phrases and the amount of action when the breath control was being challenged. I would let the actions and gestures be aggressive, not my voice.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Self-reflective Critical Analysis and Interpretation

In researching the art form of baroque gesture, I first studied the detailed images of John Bulwer, Dene Barnett, and Johannes Jelgerhuis. I began by translating the chirograms in John Bulwer’s *The Rhetoric of the Hand*⁴⁵, from Latin to English (see Figure 33 to 36 in appendix.) Then using these translations as a visual dictionary, I assigned certain gestures to moments where I instinctually felt the need to move or emphasise my singing. To blend in with my colleagues and the aesthetic of a production, I feel it is necessary to use the gesture sparingly. Believing in the idea that “less is more”, a more powerful impression can be made if the hand gestures are used at the height of the emotion.

Once I chose the gestures, it was then necessary to decide how to make these drawings project the meaning to which they were ascribed. While practising these gestures in a mirror, I noticed that the height of my hand added layers of meaning, whether a gesture high or low gave a surreptitious or brazen character to the gesture in way that needed consideration. I found that the expression on my face was also vital to communicate the full meaning of the word. The manner and length of time that my hand held the gesture also showed my character’s personality and intention, requiring me to make decisions about how to move from one gesture to the next.

⁴⁵ John Bulwer (1606 – 1656), an English doctor and philosopher, attempted to record the vocabulary contained in hand gestures and bodily motions and, in 1644, published *Chirologia, or the Naturall Language of the Hand* alongside a companion text *Chironomia, or the Art of Manual Rhetoric*, an illustrated collection of hand and finger gestures that were intended for an orator to memorise and perform whilst speaking.

As an example of my process and self-critical approach, below is my visual examination of the gesture “Pugno” (I fight) from John Bulwer’s chirograms (See Appendix Fig. 36)



Figure 14. Self-Image of “Pugno” with Noble Posture

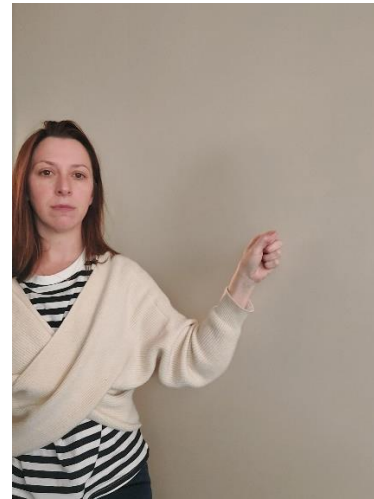


Figure 15. Self-Image of “Pugno” with Resting Posture

In the first picture (See Fig. 9) you can see that a higher fist, a lifted chin and defiantly looking at the audience (or camera), I have created a wilful expression of the words “I fight”, more so than in the second picture (See Fig. 10) with an under energized facial expression, even though my hand is still demonstrating “I fight” from John Bulwer’s chirograms. Instructions are not given in great detail, so the performer must decide on the more subtle changes. For example, if the knuckles are turned towards the audience, it looks more like a convincing fist than when the knuckles are turned away from the observer, and the angle of my wrist is softer. In a heroic moment, I would aim to use the gesture in Figure 12 more than Figure 13. The side light casts a useful shadow on my hand when the knuckles are facing forward. It is important for performers to understand how their body is being lit on stage for greater character and convincing expression.

Translating “Tutte nel cor vi sento” from Mozart’s *Idomeneo* K. 366 with Gesture

In order to practice the art form of baroque gesture, I will apply these gestural translations to the Invocation aria in Mozart’s *Idomeneo*, “Tutte nel cor vi sento” sung by the character, Elettra, in Act 1. In this scene, Elettra has been bombarded with bad news. In just one scene she sees that her betrothed, Idamante, has released her enemies from prison, Idomeneo, her King and protector, is missing, presumed dead at sea, and with the news of his missing father, Idamante seeks comfort from

Ilia, her enemy. In a whirlwind of anxiety and desperation, she appeals to the furies of hell, to take vengeance on Idamante and Ilia who have wronged her.⁴⁶

Aria “Tutte nel cor” Act 1 *Idomeneo* K.366

A section (First Iteration)

Tutte nel cor vi sento, vi sento, vi sento

Everything in my heart, I feel you, I feel you,

The Immensity Opens Up.....

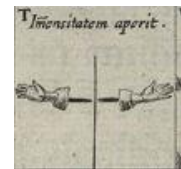


Figure 16. *Imensitatem aperit.* (Bulwer 1644)

Furie del crudo averno

Furies of the cruel underworld

Indicative Gesture/Eyes towards hell

Furie del crudo averno

Furies of the cruel underworld

I need you /Beg



Figure 17. *Supplicio.* (Bulwer 1644)

Lungi sì gran tormento, amor mercé pietà, amor mercé pietà.

Far from me such great torments, love, mercy pity, love mercy pity.

Reject/ Aversion



Figure 18. *Aversion.* (Barnett 1987)

B section (First Iteration)

Chi mi rubò quel core, quel che tradito hai il mio

She who stole my heart, that which betrayed mine

Expressive, indicative gesture of jealousy with just eyes to the place where Ilia stood, Indicative gesture to the place where Idamante stood

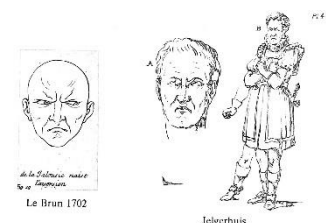


Figure 19. *Jealousy.* (Barnett 1987)

⁴⁶ Furies were powerful divinities that personified conscience and punished crimes against kindred blood, especially matricide.

Quel che tradito, tradito ha il mio.

That which betrayed, has betrayed mine

Expressive Gesture: I have nothing



Figure 20. Demonstratio non habere (Bulwer 1644)

Provin dal mio furore, vendetta e il crudeltà

Feel my fury, vengeance and cruelty

Expressive Gesture: I will fight.....



Figure 21. Pugno, (Bulwer 1644)

Vendetta e il crudeltà.

Vengeance and cruelty.

Expressive Gesture: Triumph



Figure 18. Trionfo, (Bulwer 1644)

B' section (First Repeat)

Chi mi rubò quel core, quel che tradito ha il mio, quel che tradito ha il mio

She who has stolen the heart, which has betrayed me, which has betrayed me

Indicative gesture: Pointing to Ilia and Idamante now with the right hand

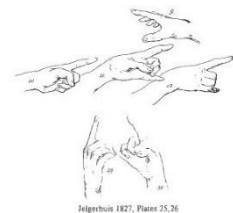


Figure 19. Indicative Gesture, (Barnett 1987)

Provin dal mio furore, vendetta ha il crudeltà (p), ven- de- tta ha il crude-ltà

Feel my fury, vengeance and cruelty, vengeance and cruelty

Expressive Gesture: I fight



Figure 20. Pugno (Bulwer 1644)

Vendetta ha il crudeltà, e crudeltà

Vengeance and cruelty, and cruelty.

Expressive Gesture: Triumph



Figure 21 Trionfo (Bulwer 1644)

A' section (first repeat)

Expressive Gesture: Fall to knees



Figure 22. Jelgerhuis' Supplication (Barnett 1987)

Tutte nel cor vi sento, vi sento, vi sento

I am winning, you power gives me life

Imitative Gesture (adding immensity with arms higher)

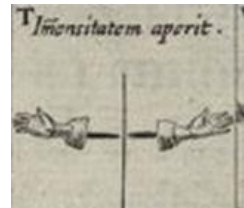


Figure 23. Imensitatem aperit (Bulwer 1644)

Furie del crudo averno, Furie del crudo averno, del crudo averno

I see you, I see you, Can you hear me?

Indicative Gesture: Both arms indicate to the world beneath me

Lungi sì gran tormento, amor mercé pietà, amor mercé pietà.

Take away my weakness, love have mercy

Expressive Gesture : Aversion



Figure 24. Aversion (Barnett 1987)

B'' Section (Second Repeat)

Chi mi rubò quel core, quel che tradito ha il mio, quel che tradito, tradito ha il mio.

She who stole my heart, that heart that betrayed me, I do not deserve this!

Indicative gesture: with both arms/ eyes in the direction of Ilia and Idamante



Figure 25. Double handed gesture (Barnett 1987)

Provin dal mio furore, vendetta e crudeltà, vendetta e crudeltà, vendetta e crudeltà.

Feel my fury vengeance and cruelty, vengeance and cruelty, vengeance and cruelty.

Expressive Gesture: I will fight



Figure 26. Pugno (Bulwer 1644)

B''' Section (Third Repeat)

Chi mi rubò, quel core, quel che tradito ha il mio, quel che tradito ha il mio,

Who from me stolen, this heart which betrayed mine, which betrayed mine,

Indicative Gesture towards my heart with right hand pointing

Provin dal mio furore, vendetta e crudeltà,

Feel my fury, vengeance and cruelty,

Expressive Gesture: I will fight



Figure 27. Pugno (Bulwer 1644)

Vendetta e crudeltà, vendetta e crudeltà, vendetta e crudeltà.

Welcome furies ! Thank you ! Thank you!

Addressing Gesture: Invite



Figure 28. Invito (Bulwer 1644)

Vendetta e crudeltà, vendetta e crudeltà!

Come with me

Addressing Gesture: Invite (with both arms for intensity)



Figure 29. Invito (Bulwer 1644)

After practising these gestures in modern day clothes, I felt it was necessary to experiment with costume from the era. I felt that the restrictions made by corsets, bodices and wigs would give me more information about the way Mozart expected singers to move and master their acting, and therefore breath control, too. In this [Video Link](#)⁴⁷ I wore a costume provided to me very kindly by New Zealand Opera. It was a classical period dress, to match those worn by singers in Mozart's operas. The dress required a corset and a hooped, oval petticoat which restricted movement. The wig was inspired by those worn by aristocracy, just before the French Revolution.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Self-Criticism After Watching the Recording of "Tutte nel cor vi sento"

0:03 – Immensitat apertit (Immensity opens) Showing the growing size of the immensity worked well for each repeat (Subtext is the flood gates are opening)

⁴⁷ Should this YouTube link not work in this pdf, the following URL may be copied and pasted to search for it: https://youtu.be/kFwP1hH662c?si=yOh9d8P_SnRRhvW2

0:07 - Indicative Gesture to the Furie below me, turning and using left hand to give emphasis for the repeated text. With my head on an angle this movement looks petulant, I would try to keep my head stronger and more determined next time.

0:17 – Supplico (I beg) Pleading with two hands works well for this subtext. I find it interesting that pleading is not gripping two hands together but holding them slightly apart. It does seem more elegant.

0:22 – Adoro (I adore) with just right hand (Subtext "I still love Idamante") This move would work better if I tucked my thumb away. The chirogram shows the eyes upwards, but I think this is too close to melodrama. The hand on its own is more subtle.

0:29 – Energeia, thinking of the direction of Ilia's exit, indicative gesture to the Furies demanding action from them

0:39 - Indicating Ilia's direction, including left hand for repeat works well for emphasis.

0:42 – Pugno (I will fight) (Right hand)

0:53 - Open palms, respectful for the furies

0:58 - Moving from right to left hand does not work, the left hand was unnecessary

1:04 – Pugno (I will fight) (right hand, and then left moves to support the action) This needed more variety in angle, perhaps a slower wind up to the most intense part of the phrase when a gesture would feel necessary. It is starting to feel arbitrary.

1:16 - Triumph (Right hand opens and finished high, but only as high as the sleeve permits)

1:20 – Energeia was useful here to see lightning bolts in the sky, giving me a need to feel closer to the earth, to fall and be near the Furies below. I could experiment here with a softer vocal dynamic in future, as I am now closer to the Furies.

1:24 – Immensitat apertit (Opening up) I feel this gesture can be used again as it is now in a different position in the lighting and closer to the ground.

1:30 - Indicative gesture. I would change this next time, I feel this should be pleading, while on my knees, with up turned palms, not pointing which is accusatory.

1:44 - Aversion (Subtext would be to keep love and mercy away from me)

1:50 - My head movements here look comical because the wig exaggerates all movements. I cannot move with the jerks of the music as I usually do. Slow and deliberate movements are important with this size of wig.

1:57 - Betrayal (Subtext would be I am desperate to survive) I feel like the closed fists here make the move look too close to a musical theatre/pop music trope. Next time I would keep my palms open.

2:07 – Pugno (I will fight) I like that the gesture is further from my body in this repeat. I would just take longer to get there, and only clench the hand at "Furore".

2:17 – Trionfo (Triumph) (Subtext is triumph will come out of my battle) I looked upwards in a way to imagine a positive future

2:28 - Standing and finding contrapposto to connect with my body, and find appoggio in the hardest part of the aria

2:39 – I would change this gesture next time, this gesture is stuck, it should not have remained a fist and needed another subtext such as "I am frightened" to contrast with the aggression.

2:51 - The open hand is not elegant; it should have the thumb tucked away and counterbalanced by the left arm. The open hand would be best saved for the most dramatic moment of Triumph on the final "Crudeltà", not used so soon.

2:53 - After finishing singing, I should have remained forward, imagining my hopeful future, breathing through my mouth. Then in a bigger space, I would walk in a large arc towards the exit, to manage a sideways exit with the hoops of the skirt.

How Does Baroque Gesture Affect My Stage Craft?

Memorisation

This aria has a very complex maze of repeated sections and musical developments within the repeated complex binary form (ABB'A'B''B'''). Therefore, the greatest benefit of using gesture in this aria is distinguishing which repeat I am up to in the music. According to Dene Barnett, the gesture must be made before singing or speaking⁴⁸. If I have rehearsed my gestures well, then my words will easily follow. While that could be any type of movement, I can trust that using baroque gesture will mean

⁴⁸ (Barnett 1987)

the movement will be conducive to excellent singing technique as well. If the movement occurs before I sing, I can trust myself to remember the next entry in the music correctly.

Contrapposto and Appoggio

By leaning backwards and putting my weight on my upstage leg as in the tradition of contrapposto, I create a dynamic, artful posture under the light, one that maintains the audience's attention. With my weight on one leg, it feels easier for my movements to flow, that I can shift my weight back and forward without losing balance. Another positive side to contrapposto is that I feel I have greater flexibility in my lower back to achieve appoggio inside my body. Personally, in my lazy, everyday posture, my pelvis tilts backwards instead of forwards, and I have to pay attention to this when I am singing, particularly long phrases which challenge my breath control. I must be conscious of rocking my pelvis under to allow my abdominal wall to relax and my rib cage to remain in a posture of inspiration for as long as can. Wearing high heels or standing on a raked stage exacerbates this problem in me. With more muscle training in classical dance and focusing on my habitus in everyday life, my singing will improve as well.

Richard Miller discusses breath control in a way that aligns with Dene Barnett's studies around noble posture. "A number of early nineteenth-century treatises on singing stress the need to assume a noble position in advance of the inhalatory gesture, and to continue that posture throughout the phrase being sung. The breath is then renewed in the same noble posture. This position ensures that the sternum finds itself in a relatively elevated position, with the shoulders comfortably back and down while avoiding an exaggerated military stance."⁴⁹ When I can trust that my air flow is plentiful and does not require any tension around my throat, my sound becomes full of resonance, and projects much further than if I force it to be louder.

Eloquence

Knowing that the da capo aria was composed to elaborate on a topic that has already been stated, I can plan a better arc for my character from start of the aria to the finish. I would leave room to grow. To enhance the repeat, I can make my gestures larger, doubled with both hands. I can begin with the character seeming to be proud, and then the repeat might be a loss of that self-confidence, so that the words remain the same, but the character is more fearful. Or the opposite, begin fearful at first, but in the end, the character is more composed or optimistic. Returning to the A section allows

⁴⁹ (Miller 2014)

audiences to enjoy the exposition of the musical themes, and the singer is allowed to make a fresh impression on the audience with their personalised fioriture. In an operatic composition that is centuries old, it is wonderful that this music can still surprise its listeners with new improvisations.

Decorum

When performing a character such as a princess or countess who would be groomed to carry themselves with great deportment, decorum is vital. From the positioning of my feet to the deliberate turn of my head, my entire body, in fact, must tell the story of my character's pedigree no matter what time in history they lived or live in. Now that I know how to intensify my passion within the discipline of gesture, I can create artful versions of the rawer emotion the character should realistically feel. The raw version, will make me choke up with tears, shout or cry out, which will tire out and stress my body too much over time. In my drama classes, I was taught to recreate these emotions while keeping one part of the mind "cool", but now I can communicate the passion more intensely with gestural techniques. Planning the reaction in my rehearsals protects me from giving too much to the passion or stressful situation. This idea is fitting with the Age of Enlightenment, to remain rational even in moments of great emotional duress.

Costume

It has been enlightening to see how large wigs exaggerate all my movements. I found it necessary to move very carefully, or the movements would appear comical. In some roles such as La Folie in Rameau's *Platée*, I would hope to make the audience laugh with the jerky head movements a slightly eccentric character would make. But in general, I would keep the head movements very deliberate and slow, always allowing the eyes to move first, then following with the head.

In my experience of performing in historically accurate costumes, I often found that in the first costume dress rehearsals, I could not move my arms as I had planned while rehearsing in my everyday clothes. Often, we are supplied with rehearsal skirts to inform us how to move before the costumes are added, but our arms are free. In my video recording, I felt how the sleeves restricted the arms from lifting, and how this pins the elbows to the body. I noticed then that my wrists and the curve of my hand became so much more of the focus. I am to learn this in both of my hands, so that they do not lock and look like a claw in future.

Singing in the corset and boned over-dress was fantastic for leaning backwards. I felt like the boning of the bodice was a spring I could either lightly bounce on or lean back on with some strength. I

enjoyed the support the material corset gave me. I have noticed in the past that modern corsets are sometimes elasticated, which has the opposite effect on my rib cage. It contracts quickly when I lean on it, and in the past, I have been surprised by the lack of breath control I had while wearing it. The extraordinary hoops under the dress were oblong shaped, and governed how I could move. It was easy to sit and fall to the ground, but walking forward through door frames and narrow spaces was not possible without turning and walking sideways, which speaks to the idea of never standing square on to the audience, and never walking squarely through a room. It was always necessary to turn sideways and lead with one hip or shoulder forward.

Directional Lighting and Make-up

Another aspect that became apparent as I was filming in costume was the type of lighting in Mozart's time, and the direction of the shadows it cast on the singer. In Mozart's time, lighting came from footlights beneath the singers along the front of the stage, and candles burning in chandeliers in the auditorium. (The length of an act of an opera was governed by the length of a candle wick.) The candlelight was quite yellow and removed most shadows on the face. In this era, men and women powdered their faces white, which would not look so ghoulish if the lighting was from candles. In modern opera, we prefer to contour our faces with shading and wear bold eye make-up, so that our faces do not become a blur of white under the powerful spotlights.

When I first filmed myself with the ceiling lights in the room, the lighting from above cast a shadow from my wig, brow bone and cheekbones over my eyes and mouth, hiding my expression. When I changed the lighting to lamps at floor level, I noticed how effective the white powder became and how the light from beneath put a focus on my mouth and eyes with little need for makeup on them to be visible. Details on the wig also came to life, as the shadow from above was gone.

How Do These Gestures Affect My Singing Technique?

Ease

When the body is singing with ease, as Nellie Melba wrote in her *Melba Method* (Melba 1926) the voice is capable of greater flexibility and technical challenges in coloratura. By planning my emotional responses in rehearsal with the gesture so that I do not overuse my voice or add tensions when trying not to choke with tears or anger, my voice can feel at ease. The smallest start of a note (glottal stroke) in the highest register is not possible if the throat is tense, or if I feel like I am choking because my

larynx has risen too high, attempting to make me swallow when I am trying to keep my throat open for a resonant sound that is heard above the largest orchestras.

Fitness

Strengthening my legs and the muscles around my knees and training my hips to tuck under in a balletic, second position is great for my overall health but also stage craft, stamina and breath control (appoggio). Over the years of my career, I have noticed the benefits of taking ballet classes as it helps my deportment on stage, as well as improving flexibility, especially in my hips and the psoas muscle. When my hips are tight, my feet tend to stick straight out, or even turn inwards (pigeon toe) in front of the body. By training my body in ballet, it forces me to think about engaging my entire body in the process of communicating.

I feel that the benefits from training the body in classical dance and fencing or swordsmanship would be beneficial for opera singers in general. It would strengthen the legs and the centre of balance, elongate the body for greater stage presence and aid their fitness and stamina for greater breath control. I particularly notice my intake of breath sounds laboured when my body has reached the end of its stamina. Keeping the body upright and the throat open at the end of a phrase allows air to come back into my lungs unobstructed, eliminating the audible breath. For me, I feel my strength to maintain this posture deteriorates when I spend a lot of time driving in the car, and my day-to-day fitness drops. If I can involve more of these disciplines in my life, this balletic, noble posture can give me greater stamina in every genre of opera.

Overacting

In order to feel as though I am giving the audience an unashamed, immersive experience at the opera, I often work too hard on the stage. I have a natural tendency to over-act. I find the over-acting comes from being under prepared for the scene and having an anxious disposition. I overreact to stimulus in a way that some might describe as “Being a flibberty-gibbert”, which is fine for comedy, but not appropriate for opera seria. A German director often cried out from the auditorium as she was watching me, “Keine private Geste, Emma!” (No personal gestures, Emma!). This director showed me that when I can reign in the extra flaps or unplanned fidgeting which my hands or head might give away when I am excited or stressed, then I can give a powerful performance. I have had the good fortune of being filmed several times in my operatic career, and each time I learn to slow down my movement for close ups, and to be more deliberate with my action. When I have the time to prepare for a new role with gesture, I can use this experience to reign in my energy and give my best.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Are There Aspects Which Cannot Fit with Modern Staging?

John Bulwer's Gestures

When performing a baroque opera with modern staging, I would not apply the more artful gestures of John Bulwer, which in some cases require the audience to study their meaning before they could understand them. My goal is to create better communication with contemporary audiences, to make them feel more welcome in the opera house if they have never seen an opera before. Therefore, gestures which require chirograms and translations are not helpful to the future of opera. Some of Bulwer's gestures can be universally understood, and I would just apply those in my performances.

Melodrama

I feel that the descriptions from Johann Jelgerhuis and even some from Dene Barnett are somewhat stating the obvious, as though teaching someone who is not familiar with human nature. If it verges on melodrama, it must be avoided. There needs to be a compromise between these gestures and twenty-first century taste. In my opinion, I believe acting needs to be closer to nature, closer to realism for modern day audiences to believe the fantasy. I think it is still possible to involve gesture if the gesture is motivated by authentic feeling and imagination, never a static, hand ballet when another option closer to reality is possible.

Contrapposto

While leaning backwards is great for the position of inspiration, the other aspect to contrapposto involves the shoulders being angled in the opposite direction to the hips, which can feel like I am slouching. While I am singing, I prefer to keep my hips parallel to the ground, with my spine as elongated as possible, so that my torso is as wide and tall as it can be. In this way I think only parts of the principle of contrapposto should be used by singers when singing.

Awareness of the Purpose of the Da Capo Aria

Being aware of the purpose and the history of arias in da capo, dal segno, binary, sonata, and rondo form, I feel it is possible to create greater coherence between what is seen and what is heard when staging these mid to late eighteenth century arias. As a result, it is important to allow singers to be less active in the heavily ornamented A section, to look inwards, serving just the music. The action should not continue at this point. This does not mean the opera becomes visually boring. When we

understand the conventions of baroque gesture and historical acting, we can maintain visual interest for the audience, while singing superbly projected vocal pyrotechnics from a body in its optimized posture for technically difficult singing. Irrespective of whether the staging is situated in the composition's actual era or reimagined to another time. In the end, the focus of that repeated A section, must be the music, or the work is not achieving all it was designed to do.

APPLICATION OF RESEARCH TO THE RECITAL PROGRAM

In my recital program I selected arias which could be described in the conventions of the opera seria from the eighteenth century, but also the nineteenth century, i.e. the sleep aria, where a character sings to their lover who is asleep, or they themselves are waking up from sleep; the incantation aria, often a harmonically surprising aria, the unusual dissident tonality gives the character an unearthly quality as they sing to conjure spirits or magic; the lament, a tragic, slow aria that is often anthemic, drawing great emotional responses from the audience; the comic scene within a scene, where a character steps out of the plot and sings directly at the audience in a satirical way; and the trumpet aria, often the singer is accompanied by trumpets, but can just be a triumphant, virtuous aria that is written in a way that the singer's voice imitates a trumpet.

I explored the way composers Handel, Rameau, Mozart and Rossini employed these conventional forms to their operas from different times of history. I would like to know if the gesture that suits a convention in Handel's time, can also be applied to the same convention in the following century. For example, a very famous lament from Handel's *Rinaldo*, "Lascia ch'io pianga", compared to Rossini's lament in *Tancredi*, "Di mia vita infelice, eccomi dunque alfin". In both arias, the protagonists are in prison, lamenting their fate. Their characters both seem to push away those who might help them in a virtuous, stoic manner. They are accepting of their fate. When they refuse to cry, then audiences feel sympathetic towards them and cry for them. I have learnt from my time on stage that audiences will only cry when they can see the character on stage is trying very hard not to cry. It's important to try to fight the tears. With the subtext being so similar across the centuries, I feel that I could use the same gesture, subtly, to describe their stoic mind sets.

The Recital Program

George Frideric Haendel (1685-1759)

The Sleep Aria "Oh sleep, why dost thou leave me" *Semele* (Semele)

The Invocation Aria "Ombre pallide" *Alcina* (Alcina)

The Lament Aria "Lascia ch'io pianga" *Rinaldo* (Almerina)

Jean Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

The Comic Scene within a Scene : "Aux langueurs d'Apollon" *Platée* (La Folie)

The Trumpet Aria: "Regnez" *Les Indes Galantes* (Zima)

-Intermission-

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

The Invocation Aria "O Smania! O furie... D'Oreste d'Aiace" *Idomeneo* K. 366 (Elettra)

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

The Lament Aria "Di mia vita infelice" *Tancredi* (Amenaide)

The Comic Aria "En proie à la tristesse" *Le comte Ory* (Comtesse Adèle)

~

In the lead up to the recital, I realised I had given myself an enormous workload to achieve on my own. My goal was to learn to direct myself, but in this case, there was too much to do on my own. In future, I would like to work with a dance specialist to choreograph the moves with greater detail and polish.

I feel that I do have the vocabulary now to build gestural language into my arias, subtly. But in a large program I need a director or choreographer to add the finishing polish.

At times I noticed that my gesture was too arbitrary. I needed to spend more time balancing the movements from right to left hands. I could also work on being more deliberate with shifting weight from right to left. It was necessary to improvise some of the gesture in performance, when some of what I had prepared did not feel correct in front of the audience. I was satisfied with my efforts in slower arias such as the laments, when I felt like my movements had greater meaning and helped convey the feeling of stoicism across the centuries. I enjoyed the flippant nature of La Folie in Rameau's "Aux lancements d'Apollon". Using gesture was incredibly helpful for memorising the da capo and dal segno arias such as this. I performed the first part of the recital in the classical period dress, and the second part in a modern, comfortable dress. I maintained the principles of contrapposto and matched gestures to their conventions in the first part and then the second.

When I perform recitals, the audience often look down to read the translations in the program notes. But in this case, because the gesture was helping with communication, I saw the audience's faces for most of the program. Only in the slightly deranged La Folie aria, heads started looking down to read exactly what was going on. This "Scene within a scene" was hard to understand because it was a narrator acting out the actions of two other lively characters (while playing a harp).

From this experience I learnt that it takes many hours to perform a convincing gestural recital. The gestures must have intention, deliberate length and balanced transitions from hand to hand. The gestures did help with retaining the audience's attention for most of the program and helped very much with my memorisation of the music. I was also able to guide my accompanist with some of the gesture, as we made a funny moment together with physical comedy. I feel that the gestures which are universally understood, indicative gestures, palms facing up or down, and gestures that describe "No" or "Welcome" were very useful. I found that by the end of the recital my legs felt as tired as they would have been if I had been fencing or doing a lot of quadriceps exercises. I enjoyed the feeling of using my entire body to communicate the story and support my singing, especially in the last stages of this very challenging program.

IN CONCLUSION

The greatest composers in the history of opera composed masterpieces that can still be fresh and relevant to audiences today. The more we learn about the history of opera in the time these

masterpieces were composed, the closer we may come to producing great, coherent works of art. I believe that understanding the gestural language from this time will improve my ability to navigate any role with greater breath control and ease in the sound.

Through this research I can now see how to bring about a better balance of modern acting in staging a baroque opera. I have learnt that the idea of eloquence and refreshing improvisation is the reason for the repeated section in the da capo and dal segno arias. This will help me to stage arias with respect to the composer's music, in future. Using the historical ideas of *energeia*, gesturing with the eyes, the right hand, the left hand and then all three, helps me memorise my music and communicate with audiences. To effect this, I would incorporate gestures as described by Dene Barnett which give greater universal meaning to the audience, which encourage my body to be relaxed in even the most passion filled moments, and which emerge from authentic emotional reasons that avoid melodrama. The singing of the highly decorative repeated A section can be mastered with a relaxed, noble posture, thanks to *contrapposto* and understanding and improving my *habitus*, and the principles of *decorum*.

In this way the work expected of singers can be in tune with the style of historically-informed eighteenth-century music and give singers and directors many tools to stage impressive, purposeful baroque operas in any time period.



Figure 30. The Recital Poster, Emma Pearson 2024

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JOHN BULWER'S CHIROGRAMS AND TRANSLATIONS



Figure 31. Bulwer Chiogram pp 51 Part A

- A. Pacifiat (Pacifies), B. Auditores mitigabit (Softens your audiences), C. Neotericis orditur (It began from Neoterics (recently)), D. Ad monstrandum valet (To show worth), E. Modus agenda (Mode of action), F. Admiratur (He admires), G. Hortatur (Encourages), H. Rationes profert (Brings forth reasons), I. Floccifacit (Makes a fig), K. Deprecatur (Depraved), L. Sic ostendebit seipsum (Thus he shows himself), M. Negabit (He will deny)



Figure 32. Bulwer Chirogram pp 51 Part B

- B. N. Psipicuitatem illustrat (Clarity), O. Exclamationem aptat (Exclamation), P. Antithesin exornat (Decorate contrast), Q. Argumenta digerit (Digests the contents), R. Benevolentiam ostendit (Show goodwill), S. Comiserationem denotata (Shouting), T. Imensitatem aperit (The immensity opens up), V. Valde aversatur (Strongly averse to), W. Execratione repellit (Cursing), X. Addubitabit (Will hesitate), Y. Dolobit (Sorry), Z. Benedictione dimittit (Forgives the blessing).



Figure 33. Bulwer Chirogram pp 151 Part A

- C. A. Supplico (I beg), B. Oro (I pray), C. Ploro (I cry), D. Admiror (Wonder), E. Applaudo (Applaud), F. Indignor (I am indignant), G. Explodo (Explode), H. Despero (Hope), I. Otio indulgeo (Indulge in leisure), K. Tristitia animi signo (a sign of sadness), L. Innocentia ostendo (to show innocence), M. Lucri apprehensione plaudo (I applaud the taking of profit)



Figure 34. Bulwer Chirogram pp 151 Part B

D. N. Libertatem resigno (To resign freedom), O. Protego (Protect), P. Triumpho (Triumph), Q. Silentium postulo (I need silence), R. Iuro (I swear), S. Assevero (I assert), T. Suffragor (To Vote), V. Respuo (To reject), W. Invito (Invite), X. Dimitto (To let go), Y. Minor (To diminish), Z. Mendico (Beggar)

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