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Male Zwischenfächer Voices and the Baritenor Conundrum

Thaddaeus Bourne

University of Connecticut - Storrs, thaddaeusbourne@gmail.com

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Male Zwischenfächer Voices and the Baritenor Conundrum

Thaddaeus James Bourne, DMA

University of Connecticut, 2018

This study will examine the Zwischenfach colloquially referred to as the baritenor. A large body of published research exists regarding the physiology of breathing, the acoustics of singing, and solutions for specific vocal faults. There is similarly a growing body of research into the system of voice classification and repertoire assignment. This paper shall reexamine this research in light of baritenor voices. After establishing the general parameters of healthy vocal technique through appoggio, the various tenor, baritone, and bass Fächer will be studied to establish norms of vocal criteria such as range, timbre, tessitura, and registration for each Fach. The study of these Fächer includes examinations of the historical singers for whom the repertoire was created and how those roles are cast by opera companies in modern times. The specific examination of baritenors follows the same format by examining current and historical Zwischenfächer voices. Additionally, existing research on vocal faults is examined from the perspective of how the flaws in vocal technique may obscure the criteria of timbre, range, tessitura, and registration, thereby rendering voice classification impossible.
Male Zwischenfächer Voices and the Baritenor Conundrum

Thaddaeus James Bourne

B.A., Butler University, 2002

M.M., Butler University, 2005

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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2018

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Musical Arts Dissertation

Male Zwischenfächer Voices & the Baritenor Conundrum

Presented by
Thaddaeus James Bourne B.A., M.M.

Major Advisor

Dr. Alain Frogley

Associate Advisor

Dr. Constance Rock

Associate Advisor

Dr. Peter Kaminsky

University of Connecticut
2018
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Introduction

Singing, much like psychology and dieting, is a subject where everyone is a self-proclaimed expert. The various traditions of vocal music-making all use the same instrument, the human voice. The voice is created when air in the lungs is moved passed the adducted vocal folds in the larynx. When the pressure of the breath is balanced with the tension of the adducted folds, the desired pitch is created. The desired power, timbre, and words are created by modifying the space and articulators of the vocal tract. This is the instrument of the human voice. It has been used since the evolution of the human body. Various traditions of aesthetics for particular sounds, language, architecture and venues, clothing that may affect movement, etc., shape the vocal traditions of a culture. Before the rise of artificial amplification, all of these factors were the responsibility of the artist. They had to project their voice in the venue over the accompaniment with sufficient power to be understood while making the required sounds. In western music the rise of music drama, largely opera, coupled with changes from marble cathedrals and stone castles to concert halls and theatres, along with a growing orchestra of instruments that evolved to create more powerful sounds, created a demand for powerful voices that could sing for hours at a time and be understood across great distances. As roles written for these vocal athletes were eventually performed by other singers, roles of similar athletic requirements were grouped into repertoires for which singers who matched those abilities could be hired.
The German basis for voice classification, the *Fach System* has since become the international foundation for labelling singers. Although there are many labels, or *Fächer*, human voices contain as many variations as the human body. Like the human body these voices are in a continuous state of change as they age. Because of these variations some voices can experience an identity crisis when they fail to align with a label. This is a problem for men who cannot determine whether tenor or baritone is a better fit and women who cannot decide between soprano and mezzo soprano. This study will examine these ambiguous voices focusing on the baritenor. The first chapter shall establish a foundation of basic physiology and acoustic principles related to singing. Chapter 2 will examine the *Fächer* associated with the tenor and Chapter 3 will do the same for baritone and bass *Fächer*. Chapter 4 will focus specifically on baritenor voices building on the research of healthy vocal technique, correcting vocal flaws, and repertoire as it relates to Zwischenfächer men.
Chapter 1

FUNDAMENTALS: the Physiology of Singing

There are very possibly as many opinions regarding the management of breath in singing as there are teachers of singing!

Dr. Constance Rock’s statement applies not only to breath management but indeed to every aspect of singing. A brief survey of vocal literature sufficiently proves that each treatise comes with its own unique definition to even the most “standard” concepts of vocal pedagogy. It is not the purpose of this study to prove the validity of the appoggio technique or establish its maximal effectiveness at producing vocal efficiency as compared to other methods of singing. These facts have been amply explored and proven by pedagogues such as Richard Miller in *The Structure of Singing* and *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited*, Barbara Doscher in *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, Constance Rock in her dissertation *The Application of Literature for the Correction of Vocal Faults*, James McKinney in *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults*, Scott McCoy in *Your Voice: An Inside View*, Lilli Lehmann in *How to Sing*, and numerous others. Instead this chapter on fundamentals of singing will serve as a foundation of healthy vocal production, not a comparative study. Because of widely varied views on posture, breath management, registration, and “standard” terminology used in singing, it is necessary to define these concepts as they are used in this text. Subsequent chapters exploring the classification of the voice, particularly male voices, and vocal faults that impair ideal vocal function rely heavily on the concepts and

terminology discussed here. In addition to the afore mentioned concepts, basic anatomy and physiology is discussed as needed to provide necessary context for ideal posture, the natural functions of muscles and body systems, etc.

**Posture**

In discussing the mechanics of singing, the foundational element on which many, though not all, pedagogues agree is the need for proper posture. Barbara Doscher highlights the importance of posture for healthy singing in *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*.

The singing voice is the only musical instrument that has its home inside the body, which makes how one holds that body of primary importance. While posture, breathing, and phonation form a complex system of balancing mechanisms, it is posture that determines the efficiency of the muscles that power the system. Posture is the common denominator.²

Put simply, proper alignment is necessary for maximal efficiency and maximal efficiency is the goal of healthy vocal technique. Coordinating the complex network of muscle systems, tissues, organs, etc. involved in singing requires good posture. A singer’s posture can serve as a warning to improper technique and often, though not always, plays an integral role in the solution to those technical issues.

For the sake of brevity in this dissertation, the discussion of posture will begin at the torso, or human trunk. Although it is acknowledged that the feet and legs are an essential part of human posture in general, their effect on singing is more indirect. The lower body affects singing

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through its effect on the posture and muscular response of the upper body. If the upper body is in proper alignment, good technique is possible.

**The Pelvis**

At the base of the torso is the pelvic girdle. This is the foundational platform of the body, the base of the spine and place where the legs attach to the upper body. “Anatomically, the pelvis (meaning basin) is the bony ring of the sacrum, ilium, pubic bone, and ischium (or *sit bone*). It supports and protects the internal organs; however, its most important mechanical function is supporting the head, upper body, and trunk. Powerful muscles connect the pelvis with these areas.”

Supporting the pelvic viscera (internal organs of the pelvis) is the "pelvic diaphragm" or pelvic floor. Unlike the thoracic diaphragm (discussed later), the pelvic floor is not one muscle, but a combination of muscles and connective tissues that bear the weight of the abdominal viscera and control the urethral and anal sphincters.

**Spinal Column (back bone, vertebral column)**

The spinal column is one of the most fundamental structures in the discussion of posture. When discussing proper alignment, the structure of primary importance is the spinal column. “The central pillar of bodily support that is centered beneath the skull. It is made up of twenty-four separate vertebrae, the fused sacrum, the tailbone, and the cushioning intervertebral discs.

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series of exquisitely lined up holes in the stacked vertebrae provide a protected passageway for
the spinal cord, spinal nerves and the vertebral arteries.” Rising from the foundation of the
pelvic girdle the spinal column serves as the main structural support for the axial skeleton and
therefore the upper body. The skull and ribcage are directly supported by the spinal column.

Many important muscles involved in the process of breathing are directly or indirectly dependent
upon the spinal column. The diaphragm, for example, attaches to the ribcage and anchors to the
spinal column. The lungs, because they are housed in the ribcage and subject to movements of
the diaphragm, are equally dependent on a properly aligned spinal column. Because the larynx
itself is suspended between the head and the chest, misalignment of the spinal column, skull,
and/or ribcage impairs the function of the larynx and surrounding laryngeal muscles. Alissa
Walters Deeter notes that “the vocal mechanism is so sensitive to alignment that even a small
deviation in posture could hinder technique.” This alignment is the singer’s primary concern
regarding the spinal column.

Attempting to “straighten” the spine or back for better posture is a misconception. The
backbone is not a straight pillar, but instead has overlapping curves in alternating directions that
make a continuous “S” or wave pattern. The top seven vertebrae, or cervical vertebrae (C1-C7),
form an anterior curving arc (toward the front of the neck). This flows continuously into the

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4 Jane Ruby Heirich, *Voice and the Alexander Technique: Active Explorations for Speaking and

5 Alissa Walters Deeter, "Overlooked and Undermining: A Look into some of the Causes, Effects,
and Preventatives to the Dysfunctions Generated by Excessive Tension." *Journal of Singing: the
docview/1403110?accountid=9807.
dorsal curving arch of the twelve thoracic vertebrae (T1-T12) that reaches its apex at T7. The lumbar curve arches from T7 through the five lumbar vertebrae (L1-L5), reaching its prominence at L4. Finally, the spinal column finishes with one final arch in the opposite direction from L5 that continues through the five fused vertebrae of the sacrum (S1-S5) and the coccyx. The properly aligned vertebral column will show these curvatures.

**Thorax (chest & back, upper torso)**

Important components of the thorax include the ribcage, sternum, clavicles, diaphragm, lungs, and heart. The structural support of the thorax or upper torso comes from the twelve aforementioned thoracic vertebrae and the ribcage. The twelve ribs, generally variations of a crescent shape, are traditionally divided into three categories based on their anterior attachment, or lack thereof. The costae verae or true ribs are the first seven (upper seven, R1-R7). These ribs are attached to the sternum in the anterior through the costal cartilages and the thoracic vertebrae in the posterior. The eighth, ninth, and tenth ribs make up the costae spuriae or false ribs (R8-R10). These ribs attach to the thoracic vertebrae in the posterior but do not attach to the sternum. Instead they attach, by costal cartilage (see below), to the upper adjacent rib. These ribs show a greater degree of flexibility than the costae verae. The final two ribs, eleven and twelve, are the costae fluitantes or floating ribs (R11-12). These ribs attach in the posterior to the thoracic

---

vertebrae but lack an attachment in anterior.\textsuperscript{7} In fact they do not reach around the thoracic cavity to the anterior side of the body. The costal cartilage is responsible for much of the flexibility of the ribcage. It connects the costae verae to breastbone and the costae spuriae to their upper neighbors. The costal cartilages of the floating ribs terminate in the abdominal wall.\textsuperscript{8,9,10}

The sternum or breastbone is divided into three parts. The bottom cartilage, known as the xiphoid process or xiphisternum “is a small and variable piece of hyaline cartilage that contains a bony core.”\textsuperscript{11} The long flat portion of the middle, also known as the gladiolus, serves as the


\textsuperscript{9} Schwartz, \textit{Skeleton Keys}, 113-116.

\textsuperscript{10} In some of the population these 3 divisions will vary. Although the tenth rib (R-10) is normally attached in the anterior as the lowest of the false ribs, it “may be free in 35–70% (depending on ancestry), in which case it is pointed like the eleventh and twelfth ribs.” See “Ribs,” \textit{Gray's Anatomy: The Anatomical Basis of Clinical Practice}. Forty-first Edition. ed. Gray's Anatomy. (New York: Elsevier Limited, 2016), ebook Accessed December 8, 2017 https://www-clinicalkey-com.ezproxy.butler.edu/#!/content/book/3-s2.0-B9780702052309000534?scrollTo=%23hl0000314.

anterior anchor for the ribs. The top or manubrium anchors the first ribs as well as the clavicles (collar bones).12

The finale structural element of the thorax is the pectoral girdle. It is made up of the clavicle and the scapula on the right and left sides. The clavicles run transverse from the top of the sternum to each shoulder. The scapulae, or shoulder blades, are triangular shaped bones at the upper posterior area of the thoracic cage (one on each side). These bones serve to connect the clavicle with the upper arm and provide added protection to the posterior thoracic cavity.13,14

The major organs of the thorax include the lungs, which take up the bulk of the thoracic cavity, and the heart, which sits posterior to the breastbone. In the upper chest the trachea or windpipe divides into the bronchial tubes which further divide in the lungs until terminating at the alveoli or air sacs. The alveoli are heavily lined with capillaries. It is here that blood from the heart relinquishes carbon dioxide and other toxins while exchanging these waste products for oxygen before returning to the heart for transport to the remainder of the body. Carbon dioxide, water vapor, and other waste materials are removed from the body through exhalation.15

12 Schwartz, Skeleton Keys, 111-113.
13 Cohen, Memmler’s Human Body, 137, 140.
14 Schwartz, Skeleton Keys, 117-122.
The thoracic cavity is separated from the abdominal cavity by the thoracic diaphragm (or simply the diaphragm).\textsuperscript{16,17} This thin muscle has long “tails” or cura that anchor it to the spinal column. The rim of the diaphragm connects to the ribcage, and the diaphragm, in its relaxed position, domes up into the thoracic cavity. The diaphragm is pierced with several openings to allow for nerves, major blood vessels, and the esophagus. A central ligament runs into the middle of the diaphragm. When the diaphragm contracts, the dome lowers and viscera are shifted to allow for inhalation. In exhalation the diaphragm relaxes back to its resting position. The diaphragm and lungs are discussed in more detail as needed in the later section regarding breath management.

Major muscles of the thorax include the muscles of the chest (pectorals), muscles of the back (latissimus dorsi, rhomboids, and trapezius), and muscles of the ribcage (intercostals and seratus). The muscles of greatest pertinence are the intercostal muscles; they participate in the breathing process through the expansion and contraction of the ribcage. The inner intercostal muscles are used to pull the ribcage inward for expiration and the external intercostal muscles are used to pull the ribcage outward for inspiration.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} Although this muscle is commonly referred to as the “diaphragm” its technical name, “thoracic diaphragm,” distinguishes it from the pelvic diaphragm (pelvic floor) and urogenital diaphragm (the existence of this structure has been disproved by modern medical science).


The latissimi dorsi, rhomboids, trapezius, and pectorals are primarily involved in movement of the arms and neck but originate in the thorax. These muscles can have a negative impact on the breathing mechanism if poor alignment brings undue tension to these muscles.

The Head and Neck

The neck is perhaps one of the most complex areas of the human body. It has numerous overlapping (and intersecting) muscles, major blood vessels, endocrine glands, and the cervical vertebrae of the spinal column, as well as the entrance tracts of the respiratory system and the digestive system all in a relatively small area. Important components of the neck to singing include the larynx, pharynx, trachea, and an intricate network of muscles. The head and neck are grouped together because many of these intricate structures and muscles, such as the pharynx and suprathyroid muscles, run between the neck and head.

The larynx or voice box is the origin of phonation for the human voice. It sits on the top of the trachea. Its structure comes from two major cartilages: the thyroid cartilage, and the cricoid cartilage. The lower cartilage, the cricoid, is shaped like a signet ring with the widest portion facing the posterior wall of the neck. At the top of the larynx are the prominent horns of the thyroid cartilage. This cartilage forms a prominent anterior notch known colloquially as the Adam’s apple. The thyroid membrane runs from the thyroid cartilage up to the hyoid bone. This bone serves as an anchor for the larynx and tongue. The epiglottis, another structure of the

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larynx, rises vertically above the thyroid cartilage when the larynx in its relaxed position, but closes over the top of the larynx when the larynx is raised, such as in swallowing. The epiglottis prevents food and water from entering the trachea and instead directs this matter to the esophagus (posterior to the larynx). The two vocal folds (vocal cords) anchor to the anterior notch of the thyroid cartilage and attach on each side to a pyramid-shaped arytenoid cartilage in the posterior. Muscles of the larynx work to adduct and abduct the arytenoid cartilages, thereby moving the vocal folds. The folds or vocal cords, as otolaryngologist Yolanda D. Heman-Ackah describes, are muscles covered in layers of varied tissues.

The vocal folds themselves are made of five layers of tissue. The deepest layer is the muscle of the vocal fold, termed the vocalis or thyroarytenoid muscle. Next to the vocalis are the deep and intermediate layers of the lamina propria, which form the vocal ligament. Overlying the middle layer is the superficial layer of lamina propria, which is a gelatinous matrix that permits the last layer, the epithelium, to glide over the vocal ligament (the intermediate and deep layers) during phonation. When the folds are adducted, air exhaled from the lungs pushes past the epithelium, causing the gliding action described by Heman-Ackah. When the cords are close to each other and air passes through the opening the epithelia are pulled together through the Bernoulli Effect as noted by Paul Kiesgen. “Air rushes between the closing vocal bands and pulls them together as the pressure is reduced…When the bands close, the air bursts through and the Bernoulli Effect begins again.” When the epithelia close together they make a sound. The rapid oscillating action of the epithelia, or vibration of the vocal cords, is the germ of the human voice.

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Although sound is initiated in the larynx, much of the resulting timbre is determined by the combined shape of the pharynx, mouth, lips and tongue. The pharynx rises from the larynx to the nasal cavity and is divided into the laryngopharynx (lower portion), oropharynx (middle portion connecting to the mouth), and the nasopharynx (upper portion).\(^{23}\) The nasopharynx and oropharynx are divided by the palate (roof of mouth). The palate consists of the anterior of the palate or hard palate and the velum or soft palate (posterior to the hard palate). The velum “consists of a complicated, interwoven system of muscles, that are directed posteriorly.”\(^{24}\) When the velum hangs in its resting position there is an opening between the nasopharynx and oropharynx (velopharyngeal opening). When the velum is maximally raised, it creates an airtight seal between nasopharynx and oropharynx (such as in the act of swallowing). The laryngopharynx and oropharynx are divided by the epiglottis which can lower to divide the two (much like the velum above it). Barbara Doscher advises that the pharynx in general be treated as a whole as opposed to three separate parts. “Arbitrary boundaries of these three sections are not intended as rigid dividing lines. What one person thinks of as the oral pharynx, another may consider part of the laryngeal pharynx. The entire space is a single functional unit and should be so treated.”\(^{25}\) For the purposes of singing, the pharynx is generally discussed as Doscher prescribes — one functional unit. The many muscles involved in the actions of the various mechanisms in the pharynx are largely intertwined so that the movement of one will often have

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\(^{24}\) Doscher, *Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 118.

reciprocal effects on the others. Although medical science would need a more specific approach, the singer cannot consciously control each individual muscle of the pharynx and still have the conscious facility to manage all the other actions of phonation, not to mention performing.

In terms of posture, there are two significant concerns: (1) undue tension in the muscles of the neck resulting from imbalances in the lower body and/or torso and (2) misalignment of the neck which affects the function of the larynx and pharynx. The pharynx opens into both the oral and nasal passages. Although the singer may feel sympathetic vibrations in the hard palate or have similar sensations of resonance in the sinuses, there is little evidence that these areas play a significant role in resonance.26 By contrast the mouth is a primary source of resonance, timbre, and articulation. The mouth (also buccal cavity or oral cavity) is the most malleable of the resonators in the vocal tract due to the tongue, lips, and jaw (as well as the velum at the back of oropharynx). The jaw connects to the skull at the mandible joint. The tongue is anchored to the hyoid bone and mandible. The so called “yawning” muscles run between the sternum and hyoid bone and serve to depress the larynx.

Proper alignment allows for natural distribution of the weight of the body. Finding this alignment, however, can be difficult. The body works to balance itself naturally. It is an instinctive action. When one part of the body is out of alignment the rest of the body will adjust (or contort) as necessary to maintain balance. Contortion often impairs proper function. When the shoulders, not an essential part of the breathing mechanism, are allowed to sag forward, the vertebrae are pulled out of their normal S-curve and into a C-curve as the thoracic vertebrae are

arched backwards and the pelvis is thrust forward as needed to balance the shoulders. This new position obstructs the expansion of the ribs and movement of the diaphragm. Because breathing is an essential function for singing, this postural imbalance becomes a major obstacle for the singer. Repeated imbalances, such as slouching, begin to feel natural and therefore normal. In correcting posture, one may find that initially proper alignment feels less comfortable than the bad habit because the correct muscles that assist load bearing are unaccustomed to performing that task. No one likes the end of vacation; our muscles are no exception.

Proper posture is not a fixed position but rather a dynamic state. This is especially true for opera. The body must account for the movement of breathing as well as any stage movement necessitated by a given production. Constance Rock describes the ideal posture for singing and notes the need for flexibility in operatic performance.

Balanced posture is achieved by standing with the feet slightly apart, the knees unlocked, the shoulders back and released, the spine erect without rigidity, the chest comfortably high, the neck relaxed and free and the head aligned with the body. Of course, the act of singing is one of constant motion, and singers are regularly required to move energetically while singing. For example, a singer in an operatic role may be required to cross the stage quickly, embrace another singer or lie down while singing any number of difficult passages. This basic concept of a free and balanced posture allows the singer to remain flexible enough to permit any of these activities while executing a beautiful tone.\(^{27}\)

Rock describes a dynamic balance in which the body is both relaxed and poised for movement. The spinal column, ribcage, head, neck, larynx, diaphragm, lungs, abdominal viscera and lower body are all in proper alignment so that the muscles participating in breathing and phonation can work at maximal efficiency.

Breath Management (Breath Support, Support)

With a better understanding of correct posture and its effect on all facets of sound production, the next issue at hand is breath management. Jan Eric Douglas describes proper breath management as “the simultaneous, balanced engagement of muscles of respiration to provide a stream of air of sufficient volume and pressure for the varying requirements of singing.” In studying various pedagogical theories on breath management one will often find oneself confronted with the concept of appoggio. The term appoggio comes from the Italian verb appoggiare meaning “to lean.” It was first used in the Italian school of singing to describe their method of breath support for bel canto singing. In the article “Teaching Breathing” published by the Journal of Singing, Joan Patenaude-Yarnell names 7 benefits of the appoggio technique.

The use of this technique allows:
1) the entire range of the voice to be freely produced and register blending to be more easily achieved;
2) the voice to have a clear focus and ring, eliminating any breathiness or throat tension;
3) the laryngeal mechanism to be well stabilized, and the vocal tract (resonators and larynx) to be coordinated
4) more control over expressive coloring and modulated tone;
5) articulators easily to produce clear diction (vowels and consonants)
6) the ends of the phrases to be sung with firmness and ease, with no sense of being “out of breath”; and
7) the ensuing inhalation to be noiseless and immediate

It was this method of singing that inspired Rossini and other Italian bel canto composers as this new technique allowed for more efficient use of the breath that resulted in greater agility, clarity, intonation, and resonance, as well as longer phrasing. The tenor Manuel García and his


30 Richard Miller, National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited (The Scarecrow Press, Inc.: London, 1997), 44.

16
children, the baritone Manuel García II and mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot, often regarded as the “first-family” of appoggio, were largely responsible for making this school of singing the new international standard.\footnote{James Radomski, \textit{Manuel Garcia (1755-1832): A Chronicle of the Life of a Bel Canto Tenor at the Dawn of Romanticism} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also see Richard Miller, \textit{National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited} (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1997), 2-9, 105, 123-124.}

In her DMA dissertation “The Assignment of Repertoire for the Correction of Vocal Faults in the Soprano Voice,” Dr. Constance Rock, herself an advocate of the appoggio technique, notes that it is the one school of vocal pedagogy in which factors of breathing and resonance are united as parts of a single technique.

\textit{Appoggio}, unlike other pedagogies, does not separate factors of breath and resonance. This method, as explained by Miller, is based on the idea that these two components of vocal production must work together. An advantageous aspect of the blending of these two elements is that inhalation not only fills the lungs but can also prepare the space necessary for proper resonance.\footnote{Rock, “The Application of Vocal Literature,” 7.}

Rock explains the concept of appoggio as a four-step process of Inhalation, Suspension, Initiation and Exhalation. These phases are summarized in Figure 1.1 and explored in depth below.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Inhalation
  \item Suspension
  \item Initiation
  \item Exhalation
\end{itemize}
The first step, Inhalation, involves allowing air to fill the lungs. The important term is *allowing.* This is a more passive idea instead of forcing or in some other way controlling the incoming air. Barbara Doscher notes that the lungs themselves do not play an active role during inspiration. “Lung tissue is passive and does not exert any force other than that provided by the elasticity of tissue itself. The elasticity is great, however, and the tissue is so thin-walled and porous that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Inhalation</td>
<td>Abdominal muscles relax, diaphragm contracts, lungs are stretched, air fills the lungs.</td>
<td>Depends on the time to breath between musical phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Passive stage between inhalation and exhalation</td>
<td>Almost imperceptible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>Exhalation (expiration) begins, chords adduct, phonation begins.</td>
<td>First moment of expiration. Phases 3 and 4 should function like 1 continuous step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Phonation</td>
<td>Expiration muscles contract as muscles of inspiration release. This muscular opposition lasts until phonation is complete.</td>
<td>Longest phase of the cycle. It lasts the length of the musical phrase and ends with Phase 1 of the next cycle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.1 The 4 Phases of Appoggio
oxygen filters through it into the bloodstream and is carried throughout the body.”33 The basic premise of inhalation in *appoggio* rests upon the anatomical fact that there are no muscles within the lungs; they are instead organs at the mercy of surrounding muscles. These muscles work to raise and lower the air pressure in the lungs to expel the lungs of carbon dioxide and other toxins, then allow the lungs to refill with oxygen-rich air. “When dealing with the aerodynamic events of breathing, in either speaking or singing, it is important to recognize that, unless restricted in some fashion, air will flow from a region of higher pressure to one of lower pressure.”34 Creating this area of lower pressure means expanding the lungs. Under the lungs, the diaphragm contracts downward and flattens, displacing the abdominal viscera. The abdominal muscles simultaneously relax to allow the abdominal viscera to drop into a lower space to allow for the movement of the diaphragm. The muscles of the pelvic floor also respond to this adjustment. Around the sides of the lungs, the external intercostal muscles contract to expand the rib cage. The ribs swing outward from the center of the body. These actions lower the air pressure within the lungs to a level below that of the surrounding atmosphere.

The base of the lungs is concave and conforms to the thoracic surface of the diaphragm. The diaphragm separates the base of the right lung from the liver and base of the left lung from the stomach and the spleen. A delicate membranous sac (the pleura) encloses the right and left sides of the lungs and makes the air pressure within the lungs particularly responsive to forces exerted by the chest cage and the diaphragm. A watery fluid produced by the pleura causes a negative pressure which bonds the lungs to the walls of the thorax.35


This bonding to the walls of the thorax is extremely important because the lungs would otherwise never fill with air. As passive tissues they will not fill with air until outside forces (in this case the thoracic walls and diaphragm) pull them to a larger volume, thereby lowering the air pressure within the lungs.\textsuperscript{36} As an involuntary response to the muscular action of the thorax, the muscles around the trachea relax, allowing the larynx to drop. This drop, discussed later, is the result of a dynamic equilibrium between muscles above and below the larynx coupled with the movement of structures in the chest (ribs) and head (jaw). The drop is not the result of depressing the larynx — forcibly pushing the larynx down beyond this dynamic equilibrium. (These actions are further described in Chapter 4.) Simultaneously the soft palate lifts and cool air quickly rushes in through the mouth and nose to fill the new chasm of low pressure. The raising of the velum as part of the inhalation step is important, as Rock notes, because it sets the buccal (oral), pharyngeal, and nasal resonators for singing.

An advantageous aspect of the blending of these two elements [breathing and resonance] is that inhalation not only fills the lungs but can also prepare the space necessary for proper resonance. Ideally, the singer should breathe through both the nose and the mouth. There are a number of ideas used by teachers of voice to help the singer understand the feeling needed to access the resonance space. The most common is to have the student pretend to begin a yawn. If this method is used it is important to stress to the student that they must only feel the \textit{beginning} of the yawn.\textsuperscript{37}

The initial “beginning of a yawn space” gives the singer a natural reference point for the raised velum, open pharynx, relaxed tongue, neck and jaw, and raised zygomatic arch. This position describes the ideal posture for singing as the resonators are set for a balanced \textit{chiaroscuro} sound.


-20-
Rock and Vennard both warn that the singer must only use the beginning of yawn, as a full yawn involves a depressed larynx and jaw, an overly elevated position of the velum which closes off all nasal resonance, and muscular tensions in the head and neck. These tensions are anathema to the ideal posture for the vocal resonators that are described above by Rock as an essential part of the appoggio technique (and by extension of effective healthy singing).

Once air finishes entering the lungs the singer finds himself in the second stage of appoggio – Suspension. This point in the action of breathing is a passive stage, resulting from the correctly performed inhalation without attempting to force air into the lungs or force the body into a desired position. The actual feeling of suspension is felt throughout the intercostal muscles, which, at this time, are neither pushing the ribs inward nor pulling them away from the center of the body. The muscles in the throat remain relaxed as does the tongue so that the velum and larynx remain in their elevated and relaxed positions respectively (as they will for the remainder of the breathing process). This stage lasts for an almost imperceptibly short fragment of a second. In reality there should be neither conscious stopping in the breathing process nor a holding of the breath. Instead the process of appoggio should flow as one continuous cycle. The importance of suspension is two-fold: (1) it is the end goal of inhalation, and (2) it is a sensation


39 Richard Miller also warns about the “full-blown yawn.” He notes “The yawn is a beneficial momentary action, but its function is not intended for extended phonation. Even in speech, the distortion audible during the act of yawning is apparent. In singing, a Knödel (throaty sound) is the result.” In National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited (Lahnham, MD & London: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1997), xxiii-xxiv.
and posture the singer maintains through the remaining cycle of appoggio breathing until a subsequent inspiration begins a new cycle. Richard Miller explains the importance of this suspended posture as a defining characteristic of appoggio singing.

It is not unusual for singers who are not trained in the appoggio technique to ask each other if they are “in and up” or “down and out” breath-management adherents. In fact, those who are most successful with breath management continue to be neither “in and uppers” nor “down and outers” but singers who retain the inspiratory position as long as possible (appoggiato). The termination of the sung phrase (the release) becomes the new silent inspiration, resulting in a continuously evolving cycle of breath management.40

As Miller notes, the release that ends one cycle simultaneously serves as the release that initiates inhalation for the subsequent cycle. Barbara Doscher advocates for the cyclical approach as well.

Breathing for singing is a cyclical process. The inspiratory tendency must be present to some extent during expiration. As a result, breathing in and singing out should not feel like opposing actions. The Italian appoggio approach is dependent upon ‘singing on the gesture of inhalation,’ another way of expressing the cyclical idea.41

It is for this reason that Rock simplifies the appoggio model to a 4-step process since there is no ending release without a subsequent inspiration of air. Even when singing finishes, the final release initiates another intake of air.

As the singer reaches the stage of Suspension the lungs are filled with air and everything is in position for phonation. The final two steps of the appoggio deal with expiration. The third step, Initiation of Breath, occurs nearly simultaneously with the fourth step – Exhalation. Initiation of Breath is directly related to the onset of sound. Miller refers to the balanced onset as

40 Miller, National Schools of Singing, xxi.

the “germ of all good vocalism.” The danger at the Initiation of Sound is to collapse the
suspended posture or to over-work the abdominal muscles in an attempt to “support” the sound.

The coordinated onset, which results from dynamic equilibrium of the participating
musculature and of subglottic pressure, produces healthy vocalism. The
electromyographic (EMG) techniques developed in 1950 at the Phonetic Institute of
Zurich (Switzerland) University, make clear that the balanced onset avoids the irregular
wave patterns associated with the breathy onset and is free of the erratic initial waves that
indicate the explosive character of the hard attack.

The coordinated or balanced onset involves the coordination of the glottis, the opening between
the vocal folds, and the breathing mechanism to supply the necessary subglottic pressure.
Miller explains the laryngeal action of the balanced onset as a fully open glottis during correct
inspiration that is brought to nearly a closed position, but with a slight opening. Full closure prior
to phonation results in a glottal attack or grunt. Too large of an aperture creates an aspirated
attack or whispered [h] at the beginning of the sound. In the balanced onset the laryngeal
muscles are in the proper position at the moment that subglottic pressure moves breath over the
folds.

42 Miller, The Structure of Singing, 5.
43 Miller, Structure of Singing, 8.
44 Glottis may be used to refer to the middle area the of the larynx, where the vocal folds are
located but more specifically refers to the rima glottidis, the hole created when the folds are
abducted. Subglottic pressure refers to the air pressure (breath pressure) beneath the vocal folds.
For additional information see Rishis Vashishta, “Larynx Anatomy: Gross Anatomy” Medscape
overview#aw2aab6b2
45 Summarized from Richard Miller, Solutions for Singers: Tools for Performers and Teachers
The complimentary component to the mechanism of the larynx, in the coordinated onset, is the breathing mechanism. This is often the breeding ground of dissent amongst vocal pedagogues as well as confusion amongst singers. The issue arises from the complex network of muscles which are carefully coordinated to complete all of the tasks necessary to supplying the larynx with sufficient subglottic pressure. The muscles most prominently debated are the four groups of abdominal muscles: the Rectus Abdominis, External Obliques, Internal Obliques, and Transverse Abdominis.

The Rectus Abdominis, also known as the six-pack, originates in the pubic bone and inserts in the costal cartilages of the fifth, sixth, and seventh ribs (R5-R7). These fibers run vertically between the ribs and the pelvis. Though often divided into upper, middle, and lower abs by exercise enthusiasts, insufficiently skilled personal trainers, singers, late-night infomercials, etc., this division is a myth. Whether intending to target the upper or lower abdominals the resulting targeted muscle is the same — the rectus abdominis. This is the most prominent and most popular of the abdominal muscles. While they may help the singer with visual appeal and difficult stage movements, the rectus abdominis is the least helpful in the act of breathing. The oblique muscles run along the lateral sides of the body between the ribs and the pelvis. Ironically, the obliques, which are often considered one muscle by the aforementioned group of self-proclaimed experts, are actually two separate pairs of muscles: external obliques and internal obliques. The external obliques move downward from the ribs and inward toward the center of the anterior where they connect with the linea semilunaris. They can be felt along

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46The following paragraph describing the basic anatomy and function of the abdominal muscles is summarized from Barbara Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 13-17.
the lateral sides of the body. Underneath the external obliques, the internal obliques run in the opposite direction (upwards from the side toward center of the anterior to the linea semilunaris). Eric Armstrong states the external obliques are the “largest and strongest abdominal muscles.”

The rectus abdominis and obliques play an important role in stabilization and posture. The fibers of the fourth abdominal muscles, the transverse abdominis, run horizontally around the body. This deep layer muscle lies beneath the others and cannot be felt externally. The transverse abdominis is the targeted muscle of the stomach vacuum (an exercise that pulls the abdomen upwards and inwards). Armstrong explains, “unlike the other abdominal muscles the transverse abdominis are not postural muscles. They are, however, very important in respiration.”

Fibers of the transverse abdominals interlock with fibers of the diaphragm. In addition to the abdominal muscles, many auxiliary muscles of the chest and back play a role in breath management, stabilization, and posture. One which must be mentioned is the quadratus lumborum. As the name suggest this pair of quadrangular muscles lie deep in the lumbar region and run, roughly, from the iliac crest to last rib (R12) and the traverse processes of the lumbar vertebrae. Some texts list this as a muscle of the back and others as the deepest abdominal muscle. Scott McCoy includes the quadratus lumborum as a primary muscle of expiration that helps guide abdominal viscera upward during exhalation, may assist with abdominal stability against the downward contraction of the diaphragm during inhalation, and also provides postural stability in the lumbar region.


region. The back and thorax are more important for stability and movement than specifically respiration. This is equally important to note because engaging muscles that are not necessary for respiration may interfere with vocal technique. In order for the respiratory process to occur at maximal efficiency the active muscles must not be hindered by engaging muscles that are supposed to be relaxing.

Understanding the physiological reality of the abdominal muscles and diaphragm allows us to dispel a common piece of respiratory mythology. Many choral directors and uninformed voice teachers instruct students to “breath from the diaphragm,” “sing from the diaphragm,” or “support from the diaphragm.” This misleading phraseology has perhaps become the single most notorious fallacy of vocal pedagogy. Anatomically it is impossible to breath without using the diaphragm. All breathing engages the diaphragm. As discussed previously, the diaphragm connects to the ribcage, and anchors to the spinal column, but domes up into the ribcage when relaxed. It is often mistaken for the upper portions of the rectus abdominis which students tend to squeeze as they try to “sing from their diaphragm.” Doscher cautions that attempting to directly manipulate or isolate the diaphragm as a means of enhancing breath management is absurd.

Contrary to popular belief, we have little or no voluntary control over diaphragmatic action. The diaphragm has no proprioceptive (stimuli arising within an organism) nerve endings, and therefore it is impossible to experience any sensation of its position or movement. There is no physiological basis for teaching someone to speak or sing with his/her diaphragm. If breathing habits need to be altered, the interaction of the entire breathing complex must be considered.


Guiding singers towards active direct manipulation of the diaphragm is misleading. The singer will only latch onto movements or other sensations perceived as coming from the diaphragm that may or may not have any relation to diaphragmatic action. Due to the lack of proprioceptive nerve endings, attempts to find sufficient diaphragmatic sensations are ultimately futile. More useful, as Doscher advises, is consideration of the entire breathing mechanism.

Miller concurs in his warning against muscular isolation as a means of breath support.

When control of the breath emission is given over almost entirely to the muscles of the flank and lower abdomen, the chest tends to collapse because the ribs are not able to maintain sufficient distention in the presence of misplaced abdominal pressures. When the pectoral musculature is assigned the task of controlling the breath, the lack of abdominal muscle interaction with the diaphragm results in the diaphragm’s rapid ascent. Any system of breath management that permits the sternum to lower will invite collapse of the thoracic cage. Sternum and rib cage elevation are closely wedded to abdominal action.51

Respiration, and therefore singing, results from the careful coordination of many different muscle groups. Attempting to control the entire action from one muscle limits the body’s ability to function. The human body is an extremely efficient piece of biological machinery. Processes that need to occur simultaneously have evolved symbiotic relationships. The acts of moving (walking, running, standing up, climbing, balancing, etc) that we use every day also help to move food through our digestive system. People with a more sedentary lifestyle put undo strain on the process of digestion. In the case of singing, many muscles must coordinate to create the lower pressure of the lungs, then empty them with sufficient subglottic pressure all while maintaining stability and achieving whatever movements are needed for the production. The muscles of the chest, back, and abdomen must work to provide breath support as well as postural stability.

51 Miller, *Structure of Singing*, 278.
These muscles must be constantly involved in small adjustments necessary for balance. Barbara Doscher echoes the need for synergy between the muscles of the thorax and abdomen.

One thing has become clear already: within the breathing mechanism alone, interdependence and equilibrium among the muscle groups is a physiological necessity. The diaphragm and the abdominals are natural antagonists, as are the external and internal intercostals. Some of the fibers of the transverse abdominals (expiratory muscles) interlock with the costal fibers of the diaphragm (an inspiratory muscle). This muscular gestalt or unit underlines the importance of the function unity of this “motor” of the singing voice.52

Better than isolating the muscles are pedagogical concepts that work with the breathing mechanism as a whole, uniting, as Doscher and Miller advise, the muscular actions of breathing and posture.

These muscular actions are further coordinated with the muscles of the head and neck, particularly those of the larynx, pharynx, mouth, and face to create the balanced onset and maintain that balance throughout the sung phrase. Miller cites the work of Sears and Newsom Davis on the numerous coordinations necessary for phonation.

In phonation the production of a note at constant pitch and intensity requires a constant airflow through the glottis, and this can be achieved for up to 90% of the vital capacity. Yet over this range the driving force for the airflow, the subglottal pressure, is influenced profoundly by the changing, combined recoil force of the lungs and chest wall. …These recoil forces assist expiratory airflow at high lung volumes and actually oppose it at low lung volumes. The relaxation pressure is zero with respect to atmospheric pressure at the mechanical mid-point of the system when the individual recoil forces of the lungs and chest wall exert pressures on the pleural cavity. …Thus, for a constant subglottal pressure to be generated at different lung volumes, these passive forces must be controlled by an appropriately graded activation of inspiratory and expiratory muscles. In order to achieve the demand for a constant airflow, the central nervous system has to take into account not

only the magnitude of the load provided by the phonating larynx… but also the changing value of the internal load as lung volume diminishes.53

Various muscle groups must interact in order to maintain the dynamic equilibrium necessary to create consistent breath pressure and balance for proper posture. Attempting to consciously control all of the muscular contractions and releases necessary to maintain balance with an upright posture that is buoyant and free of unnecessary tension, while initiating then maintaining ideal air pressures for the phonation of various pitches, phonemes, articulations, dynamic levels, etc., is a task far too overwhelming for one human brain (and this is without the added complications of stage movement, sincere engagement with other characters, and dramatic vulnerability).

Rock simplifies this process of coordination for the singer by focusing on sensations as opposed to muscular movements.54 For the initiation of sound, Rock notes the sensation of a tuck or some sort of active energy in the epigastrium. This coordinated muscular action gives a “kick-start” to the sound so that the needed breath pressure is attained at the moment of phonation for the balanced onset. In the course of the exhalation phase, muscles in the pelvic floor, lower back, and abdominal region begin moving the abdominal viscera back to its original position. This movement supports the doming action of the diaphragm as it relaxes back to a resting position. Simultaneously the intercostal muscles slowly allow the ribs to return to their original position.


The abdominal muscles assist in this motion as well. The main support for this action is often felt, as Rock notes, in the hypogastrium. Rock describes the sensation as a stretch in the lower abdomen towards the pelvic floor.\textsuperscript{55} By focusing on the sensations, Rock allows for the activation and coordination of numerous muscles and tissues but without the complication of conscious manipulation or the obstructive practice of muscular isolation. Instead the singer is guided towards sensations that result from the unobstructed natural response.

**Registration**

As one moves from anatomy to artistry controversy increases. Even amongst the teachers who employ appoggio there exists vast disagreement on registration. Registers of the voice can be divided in a number of ways depending on muscular function, laryngeal posture, feeling/sensation, acoustics, timbre, desired timbral effects, etc. The issue arises due to differences between the physical and aural perceptions of the singer and the scientific realities of the voice. Both approaches, rely on some principle or perception of resonance.

Although sound is produced in the larynx, “the primary resonators of the vocal tract are the pharynx and the oral cavity.”\textsuperscript{56} Doscher notes that from a scientific point of view there is insufficient evidence for significant resonance outside the larynx, pharynx, and mouth. Singers may feel sympathetic resonance in the chest or sternum while singing in the lower register and similar sensations in the upper sinuses, zygomatic arch, etc., while singing high-notes. There is lack of sufficient evidence to support that any of these areas actually work as a resonating

\textsuperscript{55} Rock, “Breathing and Appoggio Technique.”

\textsuperscript{56} Deeter, “Overlooked and Undermining,” 29.
chamber. Furthermore, our modern understanding of acoustics has shown that while many singers may feel sympathetic vibrations in their hard palate, the palatal bone would need to be 6ft-22ft long (depending on the voice) to function a significant sound board. Also, the vibrations of these conductive resonators are muffled by the soft tissues surrounding them. Outside of the body, they provide no significant contribution to the sound as far as the ears of the audience are concerned.

Whereas the subglottic mechanisms of the singer largely control breath pressure, and the larynx itself governs pitch, it is the pharynx and buccal cavity that determine resonance and timbre. The size and shape of these supraglottic resonators strengthen specific partials of the vibrating vocal folds. These reinforced partials, or formants, create the different vowel sounds as well as the color of those sounds. “The lower two formants determine the character of the vowel; the upper ones give the tone its timbre.”

It is here that the singer meets both his greatest advantage and his greatest burden. The resonators must be constantly adjusted in order to produce the series of vowels of the text. The creation of consonants by the tongue and lips to articulate these vowels affect the shape of the oral cavity — necessitating minor adjustments to maintain the integrity of the tone. These forces must be further balanced with the ideal size and shape of the resonator for each of the pitches in the phrase and the subglottic pressure needed for those pitches. Unfortunately, the ideal size and


shape of the resonator for clarity of diction, beauty of timbre, and ease of production are not always perfectly aligned. A wind player must similarly balance air pressure and a vibration source with the size of the resonator (operated by their hands), and various timbres for the overriding phrase often governed by the shape of the oral and pharyngeal cavities. The singer must do all of this as well as handle the additional problem of language. Clear diction requires distinct vowels, but clear intent requires an overriding inflection or tone color to the phrase which matches the meaning of the text. The singer must artistically balance all of these factors when producing sound.

Much as with breathing, there are simply too many competing factors and too many muscular coordinations to accomplish by means of conscious mechanical manipulation. Fortunately, appoggio comes to the rescue by balancing resonating factors with breathing in one combined action. Rock expounds on this concept by the combined use of imagery and physical sensations to activate natural instincts so that the mind is free to worry over the many musical and dramatic concerns of performance.60

Although each note has its own specific needs for maximal resonance, there are general similarities between neighboring pitches. A range of pitches with such shared qualities is known as a register. The question of which qualities serve as criteria for a register is source of much debate and a reason for the widely varying methodologies concerning registration. For the Italian school, now the widely accepted international standard and the originator of the appoggio technique, there are primarily three registers: the low or chest register, the middle or mixed

register, and the upper or head register.61 These registers are summarized in Figure 1.2 and
examined in further detail below.

It is essential to note that in classical singing, a homogenous sound is desired, or more
accurately, demanded. While pop-artist counterparts can flip from belted chest tones to
screeching falsetto pitches, opera singers are expected to maintain a unified sound from top to
bottom. Operatic singing requires a greater athleticism, because the voice must accomplish great
power, agility, and musicality with clear diction but without the aid of a microphone.
Additionally, opera singers are judged by their ability to accomplish this feat with a beautiful
sound and without showing any signs of fatigue. The necessary adjustments and considerations
required to create and maintain this homogenous sound are included in the discussions of the
three major registers.

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61 Miller, *National Schools of Singing*, 123.
Figure 1.2 Basic Registration of the Human Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register</th>
<th>Physiology</th>
<th>Timbre</th>
<th>Internal Sensations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low (Chest)</strong></td>
<td>Mode 1, TA dominance, vocal folds at their thickest (longest vertical edge), slowest vibrations of the vocal folds</td>
<td>Closest to speaking voice, usually the darkest part of the range</td>
<td>Vibrations in Sternum and hard palate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle (Mixed)</strong></td>
<td>Mode 1 (B, Bar, T), Mode 2 (S, M, A, C), CT becomes more engaged, Cords are pulled thinner than in Chest but not to the extreme of upper register</td>
<td>B, Bar., T - squillo takes on increased prominence may also have more of a controlled yelling quality but related to chest sound. S,M,A,C, the voice takes on a more flute-like timbre</td>
<td>Voice takes on a narrow focus, may have less sensation in sternum and more in cheeks, nose, hard palate, or between the eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High (Head)</strong></td>
<td>Mode 1 for B, Bar., T. Mode 2 for S, M, A, C. CT dominance, vocal folds are at their thinnest (shortest vertical edge), fastest vibrations of the vocal folds</td>
<td>Usually the brightest register for all voices</td>
<td>Voice may feel as if it's outside of the singer or exiting out of the top of the skull, with sensations in the hard palate, between the eyes, and even in forehead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations**

CT = Cricothyroid, TA=thyroarytenoid, B = Bass, Bar = Baritone, T=Tenor, C=Countertenor, A=Contralto, M=Mezzo Soprano, S=Soprano

**Low Register (Chest Register, voce di petto)**

The voce di petto receives its name from the sympathetic vibrations felt in the thorax — namely the region of the sternum. The male chest register is the register of normal speech. It extends up to the primo passaggio (first break or first passage). Carrying the heavier timbre of the low register beyond the passaggio results in excessive vocal strain.62 Although tenors have a higher

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voice than baritones, they still use their chest register, just as baritones and basses must use their head voice for navigating the upper tones effectively.

**Middle Register (Mixed Register, Zone of Passage, *zona di passaggio*, *voce mista*)**

The middle or mixed register, *zona di passaggio*, is defined on either side by the *passaggi* (passages) or breaks in the voice. Some pedagogues define these breaks as the points by which head voice cannot be carried any lower and chest voice cannot be carried any higher; however, it is more accurate to say that these are the points at which a singer needs to begin mixing head and chest mechanisms to maintain uniform sound and healthy production. Without mixing in this area of the voice there are jarring shifts in the timbre.\(^{63}\) For women and Countertenors this is a mixed register; for men it may be more accurately described as a tight rope.

In many ways, all voices are very similar. Like instruments of the same family, they all work in a similar way. Also like instruments of the same family, they possess their own unique issues. Professional flutists, for example, often complain that the tendencies of a flute to ride sharp in the upper register are the opposite of a piccolo which has a tendency to be flat for its higher tones. Although men and women employ the same breathing and often share many of the same physical sensations, their glottal posture with relation to head voice is different. Scott McCoy describes two different postures for the glottis: Mode 1 is the origin of chest voice in men and women. In Mode 1 the thyroarytenoid (TA) muscles are dominant. In Mode 2 the cricothyroid (CT) muscles contract to tip the thyroid cartilage forward and down. As a soprano,

\(^{63}\) Miller, *National Schools of Singing*, 102-104.
mezzo soprano, or contralto enters her mixed voice, she moves to this posture. The forward tip of the thyroid cartilage pulls the vocal folds tighter and thinner. That thinner state makes for a shorter vibrating edge, allowing for higher pitches. If she stays in Mode 1, aka belting, then she effectively lowers the ceiling of her singing range. Men do not enter Mode 2 until they mix or flip into falsetto. The head voice for tenors, baritones, and basses is merely an upper extension of Mode 1 created from the increased subglottic pressure. McCoy adds that currently medical science does not fully understand how the human body accomplishes this.64

Although physiologically there are only two modes for the larynx and men rarely utilize Mode 2, the sensations for all voices are still aligned with the three register model presented earlier of chest voice, mixed voice, and head voice. McCoy notes that these sensations are the results of conductive resonance — resonance that comes from direct contact with the vibrator producing the sound. Although these resonance sensations provide important feedback to the singer, they are attenuated from the projected sound by soft tissues. The sound heard by the audience is the result of the sympathetic resonance in the vocal tract.65 Men and women may experience similar sensations in the “head” register but they are not, in fact, identical physiologically. This is one important area of singing in which sensations and imagery can be misleading. The physiology is important for understanding that falsetto is not male head voice. Exercises utilizing the falsetto are practicing singing in a completely different laryngeal posture. They are a different physiology and a completely different timbre. Although there are benefits to using these exercises, tenors and baritones must practice the difficult balance of high subglottic

pressure against a larynx in Mode 1 if they are to master singing through the middle and upper registers.

The use of names such as voce mista, voix mix, and mixed voice specifically for this register can be somewhat misleading. In order to make a truly gradual transition, the concept of mixing the voices is often extended well beyond the bounds of the middle register. In the middle register, however, this concept of mixing becomes the primary concern of vocal production. The middle register is the careful balancing point at which chest dominance gives way to head dominance. Mismanaging the middle can result in a shortened range, gross shifts in timbre, and loss of agility. If the head voice is carried too low without the necessary connection to the lower mechanism, then the tones of the lower register will diminish in power and color. Additionally, the lowest tones may be inaudible or even unreachable. Carrying the heavy mechanism of the chest too high results in unnecessary vocal strain, loss of ping and beauty in the tone, and decreased vocal agility. The highest pitches may similarly be unreachable without proper mixing in the middle register. When discussing tenor, baritone, and bass voices, terms such as voce mista and voix mix are better utilized to describe vocal colors used for specific effects (see discussion on falsetto).

High Register (Upper Register, Head Voice, voce di testa)

The voce di testa describes the brilliant ringing upper tones of the male and female voice, not to be confused with the falsetto or whistle register. The sympathetic resonance for this register is

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66 Miller, Structure of Singing, 118.
often in the facial structures including the upper bridge of the nose, hard palate, and zygomatic arch. Many singers describe sensations of “hooking the sound” or “flipping over” when moving into the upper register.\(^{67}\) Other sensations include feeling as if the sound resonance is out in front of the face, that the throat is a wide open tube, that the sound makes a “C” curve from the mouth to the eyeballs, or that the soft palate pushes over on top of the hard palate. Alderson notes that the high register is physically as easy as the low register when sung correctly but accomplishing this task takes not only training in technique but also a tremendous psychological adjustment.\(^{68}\) Singers will often feel less control as they release the weight of the chest voice. Although the sound may feel freer, have great ring, and allow more control, the singer often feels the opposite. For the singer the head register often sounds ugly or uglier than the chest and can take on a muted quality (perceived by the singer not the audience).\(^{69}\) Learning to trust these sensations is often one of the great difficulties of singing.

The use of sensations, although highly effective, is not an exact science. Different singers may have very different sensations when singing correctly. Oren Brown directs singers and voice teachers to finding the sensations that arise naturally to each specific singer when the voice is used correctly, instead of trying to mimic the correct sensations of another singer.\(^{70}\)

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\(^{68}\) Alderson, *Handbook of Vocal Training*, 159-160.


**Falsetto**

The term *falsetto* is a diminutive form of the Italian word *falso* meaning false. Today *falsetto* most often refers to the “imitative female voice” of which men are capable, as Miller describes it. When reading a vocal treatise it is important to know the express intent of this term as its historical definition has varied greatly. Vocal pedagogue Manuel García II places the *falsetto* in the middle of the vocal range. Some early Italian pedagogues used *falsetto* as a term for male head voice. The term has been used for head voice of both male and female singers for pedagogues such as Cornelius Reid who divide the voice into the modal register and falsetto (now more commonly Mode 1 and Mode 2 to avoid confusion).

From a physiological standpoint, *falsetto* is very different from the other registers for tenors, baritones, and basses. Unlike the chest, mixed, and head registers, the *falsetto* utilizes Mode 2 and can lack full glottal closure. A *glottal chink* or opening may also be present during phonation. Ascending from chest through head voice the subglottic pressure increases. The thyroarytenoid muscles becomes less dominant as the action of the cricothyroid maximizes. Conversely the incomplete closure of the glottis in *falsetto* reduces the subglottic pressure by allowing greater airflow past the cords. Even with the many technological advances in voice

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71 Miller, *Structure of Singing*, 119-123.

72 Stephen Austin, “‘There’s a hole in the middle, the middle, the middle.’ In Defense of Garcia’s Placement of the Falsetto in the Middle of the Singing Range in Both Men and Women,” *Journal of Singing: the Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing*, Volume 62, No. 3 (January/February 2006): 329-334.

73 The evolution of the tenor and development male head voice is further discussed in Chapter 2.

74 Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 144.
science there is still great deal of uncertainty concerning the nature of falsetto singing. Doscher notes that “in some falsettos, vibration takes place only along a spindle-shaped opening in the front portion of the cords, while other falsettos exhibit a soft, incomplete closure along the total length of the cords. Reasons for this difference in behavior are unknown.”

For the Countertenor the falsetto is the primary register to which other parts of the voice are matched as much as possible. Countertenors will often omit the term falsetto and simply refer to head voice because they are not trying to match their entire instrument to a false sound. For other male voices, however, the pure falsetto is a markedly different tone color. Although this may be desirable for certain tender or comedic effects, or for select pianissimo passages, falsetto is not a useable register for tenor and baritone voices in the same sense as the voce di petto, zona di passaggio, and voce di testa. It is instead a timbral effect used for specific moments of coloration. This is similar to the brassy raw chest or even Stroh Bass which is generally avoided by women except for moments of artistic affect. For example, such an effect may be used by the mezzo soprano for Cherubino’s C₄ on the text “l’alma avvampar” in the aria “Voi che sapete” from Mozart’s Le nozze di Figaro to show Cherubino trying, and failing, to manufacture extra machismo to impress La Contessa Almaviva. The soprano may also employ this coloration for Blondchen’s A-flat₃ on the text “wenn du der Grosmogul wärst” in her duet with Osmin “Ich gehe doch rathe ich dir” from Die Entführung aus dem Serail because it vocally highlights

75 Doscher, Function Unity of the Singing Voice, 186.

76 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. Le nozze di Figaro, KV. 492, vocal score (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag 2001), 149.
Blondchen’s lack of respect for Osmin’s authority by imitating the growling low bass sound. Baritones may employ a similar idea with the coloration of *voce finta* or *voix mix* in “Dies nox et omnia” from Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana* with its notorious iterations of A₄ and B₄ at a pianissimo dynamic. The more tender coloration of mixing toward a *falsetto* sound fits the musical and dramatic intention of the work while allowing the singer to accomplish the pitches with less subglottic pressure and often greater ease. The diminished orchestral textures for these passages are also conducive for this color. Some tenors chose to employ this same effect in Tamino’s aria “Dies Bildnis its bezaubernd schön” to highlight the tender feelings Tamino feels when he first beholds the image of Pamina. None of the higher notes in this aria are considered extreme for the tenor in the same way that the A₄ and B₄ of *Carmina Burana* are for the baritone. These effects are purely artistic choices. Because of the orchestral swells in the aria, the tenor wishing to employ this coloration must be judicious about which colors will still allow his voice to be heard over the orchestra. Other tenors, choose a more vibrant head voice to highlight the amorous virility and heroism that Pamina’s picture inspires in Tamino.

Our discussion of physiology has already unearthed many controversial topics in the field of vocal pedagogy. When opera began, medical science lacked sufficient technology to explain the physiology of how the body works naturally to sing. (Even in the twenty-first century certain processes are not fully understood.) Singers had to rely purely on physical sensations that varied


between individuals for the same physical task. This led to many fallacies as incorrect body maps were combined with seemingly contradictory directions for the same processes. Singers also dealt with fashion (namely corsets) that could inhibit the natural breathing of *appoggio* by preventing release and expansion in the abdominal and thoracic regions necessary for a good inhalation. Historically there have been preferences for more clavicular-focused inhalations for this reason, even though this method ultimately deprives the singer of much of the muscular opposition necessary for effective phonation.\textsuperscript{80} The rise of voice science with advancing medical technology has helped to shed light on how the physiological mechanisms actually work, the acoustics of singing, and the real consequences of vocal health and longevity. Unfortunately, because the human body lacks the sensory nerves necessary for direct manipulation of these muscles and tissues, the knowledge of how things work does not equate to skill as a singer. The artist must combine this knowledge with hours of work in the practice room to discover the sensations that work best for them and establish the consistent coordination of healthy singing (much like learning to walk). The matter is further complicated by a history of aesthetics, by those in power, that were not based on natural healthy singing. The desire for the sound of boy sopranos from grown adults forced men to mutilate their bodies for the “good of the art form” and continues to body-shame women into diminishing their voices to match the tone of a child. The voice can be manipulated in many ways but each comes with costs to resonance, power, tone, range, and ultimately vocal health.

\textsuperscript{80} McCoy, *Inside View*, 89.
As the art form evolved and people rediscovered the natural process of phonation, they were able to maximize the potential of the human voice. As the field grew, similarities were observed in the athletic abilities of individual voices giving rise to the practice of voice classification. When singing in an acoustic situation all factors of sound production are the responsibility of the artist. Voices are considered for timbre, power, range, and agility. In following chapters these categories, the repertoire, and the singers who created them are examined.
Chapter 2

TENORS

It is well known that there are fewer tenors than other male vocal categories. The baritone is the norm of the male voice. Tenor and bass voices are aberrations from that norm, and are therefore highly prized in the vocal performance world. Although all singers perform best when they use their vocal instruments efficiently, the tenor requires an even higher level of precise function than do other singers, a fact often overlooked or misunderstood by teachers accustomed to the typical medium-low-voiced male, the baritone. 81

These words from Richard Miller in the preface to his treatise *Training Tenor Voices*, explain several key points of vocal pedagogy for male voices: (1) most male voices are baritones, (2) tenors and basses are prized voices in opera, (3) tenor voices are potentially complex. The first two observations will receive more attention in later chapters, but the third deserves immediate consideration in a chapter on tenor voices. Why should the tenor voice be any more or less complicated than any of the others? The answer lies in vocal technique, vocal operatic writing, and quantity of singers.

High notes are more dangerous, invigorating, and exciting than low notes. As discussed in the previous chapter the vocal folds are pulled tighter, making the vertical vibrating edge thinner in the upper register. The increase in vibrations per second needed to accomplish these frequencies requires greater subglottic pressure. 82 Higher pitches have great energy and thus generate more excitement for us, the audience. All operatic voices are required to sing high notes, but sopranos and tenors are required to produce upper range acrobatics much more than

their mezzo soprano or baritone colleagues. Ensemble vocal writing tends to be polarizing. Lower voices spend greater time in the basement of their range and higher voices tend to get locked in the attack with only momentary escapes in solo passages. Both tenors and sopranos are forced to live in the physiologically riskiest area of their voice. They also received much less rest time in the operatic repertoire. Tenors and sopranos often take the male and female lead respectively with the baritone and mezzo singing supporting roles of friends, parents, and villains. The result is a singer running the longest marathon with the tiniest part of their instrument.

Why is this especially precarious for tenors? The answer lies in laryngeal posture. Remember that the soprano moves into Mode 2 for her head tones. This laryngeal posture moves the notch of the thyroid cartilage further from the arytenoids resulting in vocal folds pulled tighter and thinner. The thinner folds make a different sound that results in an entirely different timbre to the voice. Women work to match this Mode 2 timbre as homogeneously as possible throughout their range to eliminate harsh register breaks. The tenor, if he wants a homogenous sound, must remain in Mode 1 and coordinate the subglottic pressure to attain that extra extension to his upper rage.\textsuperscript{83} His high tessitura lies at the physical limits of his laryngeal posture. The baritone and bass must perform the same feat for their high notes but are usually not required to remain in that tessitura beyond a few climactic high notes, an impressive aria, or occasionally a rogue ensemble piece with a higher tessitura for the low voices. After such pieces the lower voices are often allowed some sort of rest in the form of leaving the stage for the

\textsuperscript{83} McCoy, \textit{Inside View}, 143-157.
following scene. The tenor knows his upper passaggio and high register will be exploited for most of his singing in the opera. Mezzo sopranos experience a similar problem in their lower register. As a lower voice ensemble music pushes them toward the basement where they must try to maintain their homogenous timbre while moving back and forth between Mode 2 and Mode 1. From the standpoint of technique this is an equally difficult feat. Unfortunately, acoustics work against the mezzo soprano. Lower tones have lower frequencies and therefore less energy — less excitement. Because lower pitches are naturally less loud than higher pitches, the orchestration must be adjusted to give the singer a fighting chance or the singer becomes lost in the harmony — both are the plight of the mezzo soprano. Unlike the climactic tenor, her battles are often fought and won with much less fanfare.

The development of the modern tenor voice was a long evolutionary process as singers gradually learned the proper balance of subglottic pressure and were able to extend the upper portions of their ranges to the captivating high B’s, C’s, and D’s demanded today. Prior to this development, tenors were not the prized voice of musical drama. Unlike their leading colleagues in later centuries, tenors in the early evolution of opera were far from center stage. David Fallows notes that tenors were overlooked as leads for more exciting voices. Tenors were used for smaller comedic roles or used interchangeably with the contralto as old women. The roles of young lovers and/or conquering heroes were allotted to the castrato voice. This description of


tenors primarily as comprimario characters, especially in skirt roles as a contralto alternative, is a far cry from the leading operatic hero of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.

Fallows et al. point out that the French, who would later be great developers of the tenor voice, initially preferred instead the Haute Contre as the leading lover.

With the development of French Opera under Lully, however, the solo tenor voice was little valued. Nor did the French ever favour the castrato; they developed instead the HAUTE-CONTRE, a very high tenor voice similar in range to the English COUNTERTENOR or the alto castrato. Although Rousseau (Dictionnaire, 1768) states that the tenor voice (‘taille’) ‘is most convenient to the common voice of man,’ he allows that ‘we hardly make use of any tenor in French operas’. The contrary assertion of Le Cerf de la Viéville (Comparison de la musique italienne et de la musique française, 1704-6), that ‘a third of the leading roles in the Operas of Lully are those of ordinary tenors’ [simple ‘tailles’], is not supported by examination of the scores themselves (unless he includes the haute-contre as a subspecies of tenor).86

They observe that the Italians, similarly, were not impressed by the tenor voice.87 Instead these composers were more enamored by the castrato voices of singers such as Farinelli, “a legend during his lifetime.”88 For the tenor, the use of falsetto for the upper register necessitated various adjustments to the middle voice to accommodate an easier transition between chest voice and falsetto (the switching between Modes 1 and 2). The result was a weaker sounding instrument of somewhat limited range in comparison to his operatic colleagues. Potter notes that “the increasing tendency to think of the tenor as a high voice was partly the result of a number of individual singers who were judged to be particularly charismatic, with unique abilities to move


87 Ibid

their listeners.”89 The Germans gave tenors a more prominent place as soloists in sacred repertoire such as oratorio and cantatas.90 It should be no surprise then that Mozart, the Austrian composer heavily influenced by Italian opera, but equally rooted in the Germanic tradition, would help form the eventual bridge from old woman to center-stage lover for the tenor voice.91

David Fallows et al. observe that in each of the Singspiele Mozart actually uses the tenor voice for both comedic relief and the gallant hero.92 In Die Entführung as dem Serail Belmonte serves as both the hero and dashing love interest of Konstanze. Pedrillo, Belmonte’s servant, serves as comedic relief as well as the somewhat less gallant lover of Blonde. In Die Zauberflöte, Tamino takes the role of leading man while Monastatos, a conniving servant of Sarastro, fills the roll more typical of tenors up to that time. The Da Ponte operas show more of an evolution. In Le nozze di Figaro, the tenor roles follow the traditional Italian model described above. Although there are no castrati or countertenors, the tenors themselves are relegated to comprimario roles. In Don Giovanni, however, Ottavio is the exemplary gentleman and a prominent character — though overshadowed by his baritone and bass colleagues. Later in Cosi fan tutte, the tenor is placed undisputedly in a leading role in an Italian opera. 93

Italy eventually gave tenors greater attention with the rise of the bel canto movement.

The bel canto period in opera represents a time of great evolution in operatic male voices. Tenors

not only became prominent members of the opera community, but often took center stage. *Bel canto*, or beautiful singing, was a musical movement inspired by advances in vocal technique.\(^{94}\) The development of the Italian *appoggio* discussed in the previous chapter led to greater agility, power, and endurance for the singer. The tenor benefitted especially from this growth as he was able to reach higher notes with a brilliant ringing tone. Jason Vest describes the changing technique of tenors during this time in his examination of Adolphe Nourrit and Gilbert-Louis Duprez. Vest notes that when tenors took over leading roles in Italian and French repertoire the aesthetics for leading characters where still based on the castrato voice. The heavy use of falsetto for the upper tones reflected this aesthetic as did the enhanced flexibility of using a lighter tone production. Vest further explains the desire for a more dramatic sound that could portray the emotionally intense roles demanded in Romanticism contributed to the shift towards *voix sombrée*.\(^{95}\)

The development of all operatic voices has been an evolutionary process. Much like Olympic sports, the push for greater feats reveals the limits of the human body. As singers worked for greater extremes of range, powers, and stamina the realities of biology became apparent. No singer could sing all of the soprano or tenor repertoire. There were roles that fit and roles that did not. Eventually these roles were grouped to identity voices of similar athletic ability. These types or *Fächer* encompass roles that require similar power, flexibility, agility, range, tessitura, etc. Because every voice is different, it is rare for a single voice to fit perfectly

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into one *Fach*. Instead it is normal to find the *Fach* that most closely aligns with the voice and take individual role opportunities on a case by case basis. Because this study examines male voices that present difficulty in finding the appropriate *Fach*, it will be first necessary to identify the *Fächer* as they will be used later. In the following pages the tenor *Fächer* are defined.

Because singing and operatic repertoire are often intertwined with national taste, the alternative names commonly used in pedagogy texts, concert reviews, etc., are included. Repertoire examples and registration parameters are based on current casting decisions published by opera companies as well as Mark Ross Clark’s *Guide to the Aria Repertoire*,<sup>96</sup> Kloiber’s *Handbuch der Oper*,<sup>97</sup> Richard Boldrey’s *Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*,<sup>98</sup> and Richard Miller’s *The Structure of Singing*,<sup>99</sup> *Training Tenor Voices*,<sup>100</sup> and *Securing Baritone, Bass Baritone, and Bass Voices*.<sup>101</sup> Most singers of the same voice type will exhibit registration events in the same places, usually varying by no more than a half-step in either direction. For this reason, vocal treatises normally give specific pitches for the registration events when discussing voice classification.

Because there can be variation and vocal technique can further affect where these registration events occur, vocal treatises normally give specific pitches for the registration events when discussing voice classification.

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events are perceived, a general range is given for the *primo passaggio* and *secondo passaggio*.

These same sources and practices will be used in Chapter 3 describing lower male voice types.

For reference and comparison, a chart displaying the tenor *Fächer* is provided in Figure 2.1.
## Figure 2.1 The Tenor Fächer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fach</th>
<th>Primo Passaggio</th>
<th>Secondo Passaggio</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenore Leggiero</strong></td>
<td>D♯4 - F4</td>
<td>G♯4 - A♯4</td>
<td>Lightest tenor voice capable of impressive agility for extended periods, must have a sustainable E♭5 but ideally an F5 or higher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Character Tenor</strong></td>
<td>C4 - D4</td>
<td>F4 - G4</td>
<td>Tremendous Actor, limited upper range facility, size and timbre can vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lyric Tenor</strong></td>
<td>C♯4 - D♯4</td>
<td>F♯4 - G♯4</td>
<td>Beauty of tone is highly important. The voice has a bright timbre and can accomplish power for dramatic moments but is not heavy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spinto Tenor</strong></td>
<td>C♯4 - D♯4</td>
<td>F♯4 - G♯4</td>
<td>Robust sound with darker colors than a lyric and more power but with a high degree of beauty. Must have sustainable power to balance the Verdi baritone, Verdi mezzo soprano, and spinto soprano in ensemble passages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dramatic Tenor</strong></td>
<td>C4 - D4</td>
<td>F4 - G4</td>
<td>Baritonal timbre, capable of immense power. Vocal power is more important than beauty of tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heldentenor</strong></td>
<td>C4 - D4</td>
<td>F4 - G4</td>
<td>Most powerful tenor voice with high degree of cut to slice through the heaviest orchestrations. Timbre can be very similar to a baritone but able to maintain a tenor tessitura. Capable of almost superhuman vocal endurance for upper register and power to survive Wagnerian roles without showing vocal fatigue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tenore Leggiero (Coloratura Tenor, Tenore di Grazia, Light-Lyric Tenor)

The tenore leggiero, or light-lyric tenor, stands as the lightest member of the tenor family with a voice that is still useable for operatic performance. This particular voice is characterized by immense flexibility, a requisite trait for the impressive gymnastics that often characterize vocal writing in his Fach. The agility required of this Fach has also garnered the name tenore di grazia.

He is also called (less frequently than formerly) tenore di grazia because composers often assigned to him florid writing rich in coloratura passages and vocal embellishments. His timbre is generally characterized by sweetness (morbidezza), and he must possess considerable control over musical dynamics. In the non operatic literature he may excel at early Baroque music or the works of Bach. If the voice is fair and if the performance hall is not too large, he may be useful in lighter Mozart, Donizetti, Bellini, and Rossini roles. Vocal grace and flexibility are required of him more than any other type of tenor.  

The tenore leggiero serves as the equivalent of a lyric-coloratura soprano. He is expected to maintain the highest tessitura with ease and beauty. Miller lists registration events for this voice as $E_b^4$ for the primo passaggio and $A_b^4$ for the secondo passaggio.  

The change-over to full-voiced upper-register singing began with the tenor Gilbert Duprez. Corti describes the mixed reviews the tenor received when he began his career as a tenore di grazia making his 1825 professional debut in Rossini’s Il barber di Siviglia at the Odéon. Years later Duprez achieved greater success as a dramatic tenor with the help of

102 Richard Miller, Training Tenor Voices, 9-10.  
103 Richard Miller, Training Tenor Voices, 9.
impresario Alessandro Lanari. Duprez is historically credited as the first tenor to sing a full-voiced C₅ (the notorious tenor “High C”) in the 1831 Italian premiere of *Guillaume Tell*.\(^{104}\)

Returning to France, he was engaged at the Opéra, where he made his début in *Guillaume Tell* (1837), achieving immediate and overwhelming success with Paris audiences. His ‘chest’ C, in spite of the disappointment of Rossini, who compared it to ‘the squawk of a capon with its throat cut’, aroused wild enthusiasm and affected the taste of the public, who would listen to *Guillaume Tell* only when Duprez was singing.\(^{105}\)

In spite of Rossini’s distaste for the full-voiced upper register, the new tenorial sound became the international standard for tenors of all types. Budden notes that this change may be due to the aesthetic shift from artificial in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries towards more real and natural in the nineteenth century.\(^{106}\) The full-voiced upper register more closely matches the chest voice, and therefore the speaking voice. The timbre is closer to what the listener hears as a man’s voice as opposed to the falsetto approach which more closely matches the speaking timbre of a woman or young boy. Duprez became a favorite of Donizetti, and the composer created a number of roles for him, most notably Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.\(^{107}\)

Duprez marks the beginning of the modern tenor; his singing changed expectations for the entire tenor repertoire. Potter describes Duprez’s introduction of the full chest high C as a “point of no return for tenors, a change in the very nature of the voice and a defining


characteristic of the best (and worst) tenor singing ever since.” Duprez was not alone in changing the tenor voice. The reign of the castrati and castrati teachers had waned. Other tenors such as Domenico Donzelli and Giovanni David where already pushing the bounds of full chest singing in the tenor repertoire. Duprez was the tipping point of this change. Afterwards the acclaimed tenor Nourrit went to Italy in an attempt to retrain his voice to match the Italianate singing of Duprez, leaving behind his wife and six children. Unable to reconcile his voice and artistry to the new technique, Nourrit ended his life at the age of thirty-seven. Today’s tenore leggero must exercise all the same agility and stamina required by daunting bel canto roles, but with the visceral homogenous sound throughout the voice expected of all tenors post-Duprez. Amazingly, a number of tenors are able to answer this task. Gregory Kunde and William Mattuezzi, for example, are known for their remarkable Fs. Both men have performed this pitch voce piena in testa internationally in live performances and on numerous recordings.

108 Potter Tenor, 51.

109 Potter, Tenor, 46-55.
Roles for Tenore Leggiero (Light-Lyric Tenor, Coloratura Tenor, Tenor di Grazia)

Bizet: Nadir in *Les pêcheurs de perles*

Bellini: Elvino in *La Sonnambula*, Arturo in *I Puritani*

Donizetti: Tonio in *La fille du regiment*, Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*,

Mozart: Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*,

Rossini: Lindoro in *L’Italiana in Algeri*, Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*,

Ory in *Le Comte Ory*, Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*

Light-Lyric Tenors: Benjamin Boskoff, Lawrence Brownlee, Juan Diego Flórez,

Gregory Kunde, William Mattuezzi

Character Tenor (Charaktertenor, Spieltenor, Tenore Buffo, Operetta Tenor)

Singers known as *character tenors* today were once subject to more specialization. In historical periods and geographical locations where opera was a bustling industry there was more of a divide between operetta, musical theatre, and opera. Furthermore, as is discussed below, some of these *Fächer* were more a matter of a tenor with unresolved technical issues that precluded his work in leading roles.

In Richard Miller’s *Training Tenor Voices*, character tenors are treated as a family of distinct *Fächer*. In practice, a character tenor will have to tackle all of this repertoire — assuming he can still make a career as a comprimario specialist. The unfortunate reality of opera in the modern era is an increasing list of closing houses and shrinking budgets. Barry Singer
describes the closing of sizable companies such as Baltimore Opera, Connecticut Opera, Opera Orlando, and Opera Pacific as well as the shrinking budgets of companies like New York City Opera. Since that time New York City Opera closed in 2013, followed by Gotham Opera in 2015. Anchorage Opera, Indianapolis Opera, and San Diego Opera have survived by reducing their annual operating budgets. New York City Opera and Opera Orlando have since reformed but on drastically reduced budgets. Cost cutting is everywhere in the modern world of opera production. As a result, many houses rely on young artists, talented chorus members, and/or gifted students at local conservatory/university programs for the secondary and comprimario roles which once comprised the character tenor’s career. With fewer companies, shorter seasons, and lower pay tenors who sing leading roles are also supplementing their own performing calendars with comprimario roles.


As Miller describes the spieltenor was essentially a light-lyric tenor or lyric tenor with a good acting ability.\textsuperscript{116} For whatever reason, such as “slight physical build,” he made his career chiefly on secondary tenor roles. The tenore buffo was essentially a light tenor with a swallowed sound and somewhat limited range. “This distinctive sound is largely the result of techniques that assume the throat is best opened for singing by excessive spreading of the pharyngeal wall. A number of light tenor voices exhibit this throaty quality, partly in response to the desire for a larger sound.”\textsuperscript{117} Miller attests limited range and comedic sound were generally the result of faulty technique. Because it is the standpoint of this study that a voice must be aligned with proper technique (defined in the previous chapter and characterized by the international school of singing), roles typically set aside for the tenore buffo will not be treated as a separate Fach. Finally, Miller discusses the operetta tenor. As the name suggests, this voice would sing operetta and/or musical theatre. Most houses now incorporate both operetta and musical theatre into their mainstage repertoire and certainly into their outreach efforts as a means of drawing a great audience.\textsuperscript{118} Furthermore, as Miller himself notes “many roles of ‘classic’ operetta make demands equal to those of the lyric tenor.”\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{116} The following description of character tenors is summarized from Richard Miller, \textit{Training Tenor Voices}, 10-11.

\textsuperscript{117} Miller, \textit{Training Tenor Voices}, 10.


\textsuperscript{119} Miller, \textit{Training Tenor Voices}, 11.
Pedrillo in Mozart’s *Die Entführung dem Serail* sits chiefly in the baritone’s tessitura, but the aria “Frisch zum Kampfe,” requires repeated *fortissimo* A₄’s and one B₄. Tenors who sing this role often complain of the baritonal tessitura, although the tessitura of the main aria and some of the ensembles are too exhausting, if not too high, for baritone voices. In the aria especially, the high notes require a strong clarion ring. Although it is a secondary Mozart role, it can be good starting place for larger dramatic and *Heldentenors* early in their careers due its lower tessitura with tenorial high notes. Historically, however, there have been many lighter comedic tenors such as Anthony Laciura and Nico Castel, who have succeeded in this role.¹²⁰,¹²¹

Monastatos from Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, as well as Don Curzio and Don Basilio from *Le nozze di Figaro* are examples of *comprimario* tenor roles which do not require especially high notes, nor do they demand the physically attractive stature often preferred for leading men. On the heavier end of the spectrum lie roles such as the scheming Norse fire god Loge from Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* and Mime from the same composer’s *Siegfried*. Though these roles were once the property of larger-voiced *comprimario* tenors, they are now often performed by “legitimate” *Heldentenors*. In the Metropolitan Opera’s recent broadcast of *Siegfried*, Gerhard Siegle portrayed the role of Mime.¹²² Siegle himself has performed internationally in the title

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role of Siegfried. His repertoire also includes roles such as Herod in Richard Strauss’s Salome, Siegmund in Wagner’s Die Walküre, and Florestan in Beethoven’s Fidelio, among others.¹²³ Similarly Heldentenor Adam Klein has received praise for his portrayals of the titular role in Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde and Loge in Das Rheingold (roles which he actively performs today).¹²⁴

Listed below are roles that have traditionally been considered property of the various comprimario tenor Fächer. As this repertoire is increasingly absorbed by other members of the tenor family, the roles should be carefully examined to ensure that they are appropriate to the given voice. A lyric tenor perfectly equipped to sing Remendado in Bizet’s Carmen is not ideally suited to Mime in Wagner’s Siegfried. Similarly, a Heldentenor may do well as Pedrillo in Mozart’s Die Entführung aus dem Serail but his voice may have too much girth for the nimble quintet of Carmen.


Roles for Character Tenor

Beethoven: Jaquino in *Fidelio*

Bizet: Remendado in *Carmen*

Donizetti: Arturo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*,

Lehár: Danilo Danilovitsch in *Die Lustige Witwe*

Leoncavallo: Beppe in *I Pagliacci*

Mozart: Monastatos in *Die Zauberflöte*, Don Basilio & Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Pedrillo in *Die Enführung aus dem Serail*, Bastien in *Bastien und Bastienne*

Offenbach: Prince Paul in *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, John Styx from *Orphée aux Enfers*, Andrès, Cochenille, Pitichinaccio, Spalanzani, and Frantz in *Les contes d’Hoffman*

Puccini: Goro in *Madama Butterfly*, Parpignol in *La Bohéme*,

Spoletta from *Tosca*

J. Strauss II: Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus*

Wagner: Mime in *Siegfried*, Loge in *Das Rheingold*

Character Tenors: David Cangelosi, Nico Castel, Brian Frutiger, Anthony Laciura, Max Zander

**Lyric Tenor (Lyrischer Tenor, Tenore Lirico)**

The rise of *voce piena in testa* brought with it the rise of the true lyric tenor. Since the time of Duprez, the lyric tenor has claimed the bulk of leading tenor roles from the time of Mozart.
through the early *verismo* and continued to thrive in the twentieth-century. Lyric tenors require voices that are capable of a noble ring but that are equally beautiful. They must reach B\(_4\) and C\(_5\) with ease and brilliance, possess great stamina for a tessitura in the upper *passaggio*, and have enough weight and warmth in the middle and bottom registers to be heard when singing duets or trios below soprano and mezzo soprano colleagues.

His timbre must be warm, romantic, exciting, and vital. He must have the ability to sustain a high *tessitura* and to negotiate the upper range with beauty and vigor. His *Fach*, although varying with the precise weight of the individual lyric tenor instrument...Much of the oratorio literature, especially that of Handel lies conveniently for the *tenore lirico*, as does a major part of the *Lied* and *mélodie* genres. The lyric tenor is a highly useful vocal category because of the wide range of appropriate literature.\(^{125}\)

Lyric tenors, as Miller notes, have the widest ranging repertoire of any member of the tenor family. Much like the lyric baritone, discussed in the next chapter, the beauty and ease that characterize this voice make it an ideal timbre for art song recitals especially in the song cycles of Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms. This *Fach* presents a particular danger, as lyric *Fächer* tend to do, in that it’s wider repertoire under one banner implies that one singer can accomplish all of it.\(^{126}\)

The young lover Alfredo from Verdi’s *La Traviata*, for example, is often the property of the lyric tenor today. By contrast the original Alfredo was likely a heavier voice of the spinto or dramatic variety. Lodovico Graziani made his operatic debut as Elvino in Bellini’s *La Sonnambula* but later went on to success in the heavy Verdi roles of Manrico in *Il Trovatore* and

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\(^{125}\) Miller, *Training Tenor Voices*, 11.

\(^{126}\) As discussed in Chapter 3 on Baritones this is an even greater problem in lower voices where the lyric *Fach* includes coloratura roles, light-lyric roles, full-lyric roles, and even encroaches on the *verismo* repertoire.
Riccardo in *Un ballo in maschera*.\(^{127}\) Conversely Matthew Polenzani, renowned internationally as a leading interpreter of Mozart’s tenor repertoire, has also performed internationally as Alfredo. The lyric tenor must be especially judicious in identifying the segment of the repertoire that best suits his voice. Typically, the lyric tenor has a *primo passaggio* at D\(^4\) and a *secondo passaggio* at G\(^4\).\(^{128}\) A slightly lower passaggio may be an indicator that the tenor will eventually grow into roles from the heavier end of the spectrum. This is especially true when coupled with a darker color and/or greater power.


\(^{128}\) Miller, *Training Tenor Voices*, 11.
Roles for Lyric Tenor (Lyrischer Tenor, Tenore Lirico)

Adams: Ghandhi in Satyagraha,

Britten: Lysander and Flute in A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Donizetti: Nemorino in L’elisir d’amore, Edgardo in Lucia di Lammermoor

Gounod: Romeo from Romeo et Juliette

Massenet: Nicias from Thaïs

Mozart: Belmonte in Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Tamino in Die Zauberflöte,

Ferrando in Così fan tutte, Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni, title roles of Idomeneo, La Clemenza di Tito.

Puccini: Rodolfo in La Bohéme,

Rossini: Almaviva in Il barbiere di Siviglia,

R. Strauss: Flamand in Capriccio, Sänger in Der Rosenkavalier

J. Strauss II: Alfredo in Die Fledermaus

Stravinsky: Tom Rakewell in The Rake’s Progress

Sullivan: Frederick in The Pirates of Penzance

Verdi: Alfredo in La Traviata, Fenton in Falstaff

Wagner: David in Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Ward: Judge Danforth in The Crucible

Lyric Tenors: Richard Croft, Spencer Hamlin, Paul Han, Matthew Plenk, Matthew Polenzani, Fritz Wunderlich
**Tenore Lirico Spinto (Heavy Lyric, Tenore Lirico Abbondanza)**

Bizet: Don José in *Carmen*

Britten: Male Chorus from *The Rape of Lucretia*

Gounod: Faust in *Faust*

Massenet: Des Grieux from *Manon*,

Puccini: B. F. Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*

Verdi: Il Duco in *Rigoletto*

Tenore lirico spinto: Luciano Pavarotti

**Spinto Tenor**

*Spinto* in Italian literally means “pushed” or “forced.” It refers to the heavier sound of this tenor as compared to the lyric tenor. It does not mean the tenor forces his voice beyond a healthy amount of support to make it bigger (although there are many lyric tenors willing to do so). The spinto tenor sings some of the most coveted roles in opera and, along with the spinto soprano and the Verdi baritone, is one of the great champions of the *verismo* repertoire. These larger tenors came to prominence with this rise of verismo opera.

Important to Verdi’s work and the development of the verismo repertoire was Italian tenor Francesco Tamagno. Elizabeth Forbes describes: “Tamagno’s heroic voice, with its brazen, trumpet-like top notes, was heard to best advantage in Verdi roles, especially Otello, which displayed the magnificent strength and security of its upper register. He was a forceful,
convincing actor, and though not a subtle artist, he brought great vocal and dramatic excitement
to all his performances.” Tamagno’s voice demonstrated exactly what a spinto should: power
and stamina but with control and flexibility. The same instrument which carried the weight and
force needed for Verdi roles such as Radamès in Aïda, was accompanied by the agility needed
for repertoire such as Donizetti’s Edgardo in Lucia di Lammermoor. Miller notes that “the true
spinto, especially as he matures, may cautiously attempt a few of the robusto roles, although this
has proved unwise for many singers.” Tamagno’s great success as Otello provides convincing
evidence of his success with more dramatic roles. It is possible that Tamagno was actually a
dramatic tenor, or that he eventually grew into this Fach. Unfortunately, even with recordings of
Tamagno’s voice, we cannot reproduce the actual live sound to judge for ourselves. Potter notes
this problematic situation of early recordings. “Many singers are old and possibly past their
prime, the recording process, although a technological marvel for those experiencing it for the
first time, was unable to capture a sufficiently wide frequency spectrum to do justice to the
singing voice. The acoustic horn was a blunt instrument and left little room for subtlety, favoring
louder voices and a lack of nuance at best.”

Further complications come from the fact that the spinto and dramatic repertoire were
developing in Tamagno’s own time. For singers in this position, it is not always a matter of

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article/grove/music/27429.


131 Richard Miller, Training Tenor Voices, 12.

132 Potter, Tenor, 60.
singing in the correct Fach as it is waiting for the correct Fach to materialize. His repertoire included a number of now dramatic roles.\textsuperscript{133}

The spinto tenor may have register breaks similar to a lyric tenor or closer to those of a dramatic tenor. Miller splits the difference with a primo passaggio at $C^\#_4$ and secondo passaggio at $F^\#_4$. As with all voices, however, these may differ in either direction by half-step (or so). Similar to the lyric tenor, however, particular attention should be paid to the weight, color, and registration of the voice. If the spinto tenor appears closer to the lyric in passaggi and color, then he would do well to avoid the dramatic repertoire. In fact, he may wish to focus on the lyric repertoire where his voice will give more sound than normally expected. By contrast, if he leans more towards the dramatic tenor, then the lyrical roles may prove too high for his voice and encourage technical issues such as a raised larynx. In this case some of the more robust characters might be realistic possibilities that allow the tenor to sing with greater freedom.

\textbf{Roles for Spinto Tenor}

\begin{itemize}
\item Gounod: Faust in \textit{Faust}
\item Offenbach: Hoffman in \textit{Les contes d’Hoffman}
\item Puccini: B. F. Pinkerton in \textit{Madama Butterfly}, Cavaradossi in \textit{Tosca}
\item Verdi: Manrico in \textit{Il Trovatore}, Don Carlo in \textit{Don Carlo},
\item \indent Riccardo in \textit{Un ballo in maschera},
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{133} Potter, \textit{Tenor}, 60-62.
Dramatic Tenor (Jugendlicher Dramatischer Tenor, Tenore Drammatico, Tenore Robusto)

This Fach includes some of the heaviest roles for tenors. As Richard Miller notes, tenors of this weight share vocal characteristics in timbre and registration with baritones. The major difference is the dramatic tenor’s stamina for a high tessitura coupled with high notes that ring with sizable volume.

The tenore robusto is the heaviest of all non-Wagnerian tenors. His passaggi are typically C₄ and F₄ and parallel those of some lyric baritones. He is frequently a large person of compact build, and although he may be tall, he usually is short necked and barrel chested. He must have the stamina and the power to portray Radames (Aïda), Canio (I Pagliacci), Otello (Otello), Calaf (Turandot), Tito (La Clemenza di Tito), Florestan (Fidelio), Samson (Samon et Dalila), and Bacchus (Ariadne auf Naxos). He may also sing some spinto roles. ¹³⁵

Here again Miller notes the possibility for some overlap between the Fächer. It may be possible for some dramatic tenors to take on certain roles from the spinto repertoire while others may be able to handle certain Heldentenor roles. The dramatic tenor is best suited to the heavy Italian repertoire, and therefore, still needs some amount of warmth and beauty to the tone. Although power is a paramount concern, it is generally not the all-consuming priority that faces the

¹³⁴ Sometimes the Erik is cast lighter than the dramatic tenor/Heldentenor voices that normally sing Wagner’s leading tenor roles. This is due to Erik’s aria “Willst jenes Tags due nicht dich mehr entsinnen.” The aria requires a B♭₄, although some Heldentenors take lower options, and features more lyrical writing. Sometimes the sacrifice of vocal power is made for a voice still of substantial size but comfortable with the lyrical writing of this aria.

¹³⁵ Miller, Training Tenor Voices, 12.
Helendtenor – a noted exception would be Calaf in Puccini’s Turandot. Although this Fach is known for its triumphant heroes, passionate lovers, ferocious warriors, and dramatic emotions, dramatic tenors may also be the ideal interpreters of J. Strauss II’s Eisenstein from the comic opera Die Fledermaus. The role has been tackled by both tenors and baritones with easy top; however, the baritones generally make a number of concessions in lower-note options — choosing to save their high notes, and thus their voices, for key climactic moments. Dramatic tenors have enough volume in the middle and low registers to handle the baritonal tessitura of the role but the stamina and range to easily assail Eisenstein’s upper tones.

The dramatic tenor may also take on some of the Wagnerian repertoire. Although Wagner eventually pushed the envelope and succeeded in finding the most powerful tenorial instruments of the human race, this was not an initial demand of his operas.

Wagner's early operas did not necessitate a special kind of tenor: Joseph Tichatschek, the Bohemian who created Rienzi and Tannhäuser, had earlier sung Tamino at Dresden: when he had difficulty in singing a passage in the Act 2 finale of Tannhäuser Wagner obligingly cut it before the première (1845). Aloys Ander, who sang Lohengrin when Wagner first heard his opera (1861), had previously introduced the roles of Raoul, John of Leyden, Faust and Arnold to Vienna; when Tristan und Isolde was under consideration there it was proposed that Ander should sing Tristan, but he lost his voice and his nerve and stood down, despite Wagner's offer to shorten Act 3. When the Paris version of Tannhäuser was given at the Opéra in 1861, Albert Niemann, having often sung the title role, as well as that of Rienzi and Lohengrin, in Germany, refused Wagner's suggestions on performance or interpretation. Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, who created Tristan at Munich in 1865, considered it an honour to work with the composer and Wagner in turn admired his Lohengrin, Tannhäuser (in which he restored the cut made for Tichatschek) and Tristan. Schnorr died, aged 29, five weeks after the Tristan première.136

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Leading up to Tristan, Wagner had not yet settled on the *Heldentenor* instrument, even though he was demanding a great amount of power from his singers. In that time Tamino was often cast as a stronger tenor voice to contrast the heroic leading tenor with the lyrical Papageno. Tichatschek was a tenor of considerable power and able to sing Wagner’s earlier works up to a point. It was not until the repertoire grew to a power and stamina that outlasted even the dramatic tenors that a new more powerful extreme was needed. Fallows also highlights Wagner’s willingness to amend his operas in order to accommodate his tenors at this time. For roles such as Erik in *Die Fliegende Holländer* the lyrical tessitura of the aria can prove almost uncomfortably high for the *Heldentenor*. Wagner himself was not a fan of Italian opera and eventually wanted a tenor sound unlike the Italian school (which he found weak and unmanly).

**Roles for Dramatic Tenor (Tenore Drammatico)**

Beethoven: Florestan in *Fidelio*

Leoncavallo: Canio in *I Pagliacci*

Puccini: Calaf in *Turandot*, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, Dick Johnson in *La Fanciulla del West*

Saint-Saëns: Samson in *Samson et Dalila*

R. Strauss: Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*

J. Strauss II: Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*

Verdi: Radames in *Aïda*, Otello in *Otello*
Wagner: Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, Lohengrin in *Lohengrin*, Erik in *Die Fliegende Holländer*, Tannhäuser in *Tannhäuser*

Dramatic Tenors: Placido Domingo, Franco Corelli, Enrico Caruso, Jonas Kaufmann, Mario del Monaco

**Heldentenor (Heroic Tenor, Wagnerian Tenor, Tenore Eroica)**

Prior to delving into the characteristics of the *Heldentenor* voice it becomes necessary to understand exactly what this voice is as opposed to how this was idealized. As was true with other tenor *Fächer*, the desires of the composer and the vocal writing do not always match the choice of instrument nor the ideal voice for the job.

In her review of Marc Weiner’s *Richard Wagner and the Antisemitic Imagination*, Irene Heskes relays Weiner’s description of Wagner’s motivation and aesthetic ideals that lead to the eventual rise of the *Heldentenor*.

Weiner begins his book with consideration of visual and then vocal relationships. The special eyes of the *Volk* must recognize each other as similar and then see others as different. Siegmund and Sieglinde know they are kin by gazing into each other’s eyes. There are other examples of such privileged recognition throughout the *Ring* cycle as well as in the other music dramas. Wagner’s message was to “know oneself” as a Germanic *Volk* with distinctive art and culture, set apart from “the others.” As early as the 1840s, he had begun to espouse concepts of special performance styles that would define and distinguish German Opera in a newer dramatic form. It would have music and subject matter of sharp distinction from French and Italian operatic works. Beyond melodic scores and librettos, there would be particular details of staging, costuming, acting, and, most significant, of vocal sounds.137

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Heskes’ writing highlights several key points essential to the understanding of Wagner’s vocal aesthetic. Wagner considered the actual voices of the characters to be a primary consideration in creation of his art-form. Unlike other prominent opera composers, he was not writing parts to fit the voices of his leads or to best exploit the vocal abilities of a particular celebrity. Instead he searched for singers that best fit his own ideal. Of equal importance are his goals of creating a uniquely German operatic ideal and his disdain for the singing found in the Italian and French schools.

In his treatise, *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited*, Miller explains the resulting differences in timbre due to differences in technique between the major national schools of singing.\textsuperscript{138} The French school he describes as tending toward the brighter end of the spectrum. He cites the French pedagogical tendency to focus on forward resonators in and around the nose and mouth and notes that “while it is true that the best French singing clearly differentiates between nasals and non-nasals, there tends to be rather consistently a veil of nasality in French vocal tone which is the product of the slightly lowered velum.”\textsuperscript{139} Next on the spectrum he places the Italian school with its aesthetic ideal of *chiaroscuro* (light and dark). Although the Italians do emphasize forward resonance it is balanced with an equal emphasis on open space in the pharynx. The result is a vibrant ring balanced with darker colors that round the tone and fill out the sound. The Germans are located on the darker end of the spectrum, with heavy emphasis on pharyngeal space. He explains that to


\textsuperscript{139} Richard Miller, *National Schools of Singing*, 75.
those trained by this school the resulting darker sound is perceived as adding girth or strength to
the sound even though acoustics would dictate that the resulting weakening of overtones would
make actual projection more difficult. The singer essentially has to use brute force to accomplish
what balanced resonance does naturally.

It is this stronger timbre that Wagner desired for his leading roles. He sought a sound as
strong and as German as his characters. Jander and Harris note his desire to separate himself
from the French and Italian aesthetics featured in the operas of his contemporaries.

Wagner did not use the term Heldentenor himself but was adamant in dissociating his
tenor parts from the ‘so-called dramatic-tenor roles of recent times’ (‘den sogenannten
dramatischen Tenorpartien der neueren Zeit’), especially citing Robert le diable (Prose
Works; Eng. trans., 1894, iii, 202–3). He blamed ‘the positively criminal [Italian] school
of singing now in vogue’ for devoting its entire attention to ‘vocal trickery’, thereby
making the usual tenor appear ‘unmanly, weak and completely lacklustre’ (‘unmännlich,
weichlich und vollständig energielos’). Although recognizing that his tenor parts
demanded extraordinary stamina, Wagner was more concerned that the singer be
‘thoroughly alive’ to the spiritual significance of the role. 140

Wagner’s perception of the balanced chiaroscuro as weakening the voice as opposed to the
harsher German approach of singing louder with a duller sound fits Miller’s observation that
pupils of the German school tend to perceive a greater amount of pharyngeal space as
strengthening the voice.

As Heskes observes from Weiner and Ellis, Wagner did not want this stronger sound
across the board, but only for his leading German characters. These scholars observe the more
heroic vocal force demanded for Norse gods and German Heroes contrasted with the vocal

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writing of roles such as Sixtus Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*, and the Niebelungen in *Der Ring des Niebelungen*. The so-called German *Volk*, in Wagner’s mind, needed more heft and vocal magnificence which were not a part of his aesthetic when writing for non-*Volk* characters (in the above example Jews and underworld creatures). To be fair, everyone dies at the end of *Der Ring des Niebelungen* regardless of *Volk*-status; however, these observations highlight the judicious process that went into Wagner’s vocal writing as well as explain how his operatic aesthetic affected his taste in voices — which he in turn influenced immensely.

Wagner’s own choice of singer, however, was not always well aligned with the vocal ideal for the operas he wrote. Many an impresario has lamented the difficulty in casting the titular role of Wagner’s *Siegfried* and the composer himself was no exception. Wagner is reported to have passed over Vogl and Niemann, two tenors who later became celebrated interpreters of *Siegfried* for Georg Unger who Fallows describes as “no great success.”

Unfortunately, what Wagner seems to have interpreted as a weaker, non-German, sound were not only signs of healthy singing, but in fact the results of the very technique needed to maximize vocal efficiency, and therefore power, projection, and stamina, which is necessary to accomplishing the superhuman singing needed for his heroic leads.

The careers of Niemann and Vogl suggest legitimate *Heldentenors* in the sense that their voices are well matched to the vocal writing. They were able to sing multiple performances, received favorable reviews, and were able to triumph in a number of Wagner’s toughest and

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heaviest roles. Unger by contrast shows exactly the opposite in his career. Maitland and Fifield note that Unger was forced to cancel performances due to issues with vocal exhaustion and that after 1877 Wagner no longer relied on Unger, indicating Unger lacked the necessary stamina due to vocal heft, tessitura, or possibly both.\(^{142}\) If Unger had indeed pushed his voice or practiced the over-widening of the pharynx in an attempt to manufacture a darker sound, then exhaustion would be expected. A further issue may be the role of *Siegfried* itself. In addition to a high tessitura, the titular role of Wagner’s third-installment for his *Ring Cycle* has no less than seventy-five A\(_{4}\)’s. *Siegfried* is a role that requires immense power and even more staggering endurance. It is a role that requires a Heldentenor in his prime.

With a *zona di passaggio* ranging C\(_{4}\)-F\(_{4}\) the true Heldentenor is marked not only by the size of his incredible voice but also his ability to sustain this superhuman sound for hours at a time.\(^{143}\) The true Heldentenor is able to maintain this sound, for long periods of time, in his top register with healthy technique. The Wagnerian *Fächer*, more than any other, rely on immense stamina. This stamina is a combination of biological gift and vocal efficiency. The former is determined at birth, but the latter is the result of careful study and judicious choice. Although Wagner’s roles are known for their heroic singing, the same axiom applies here as to all acoustic performing — ping is power.


\(^{143}\) Miller, *Training Tenor Voices*, 12.
Roles for Heldentenor

Heggie: Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick*

Korngold: Paul in *Die tote Stadt*

Mozart: Tito in *Clemenza di Tito*

Meyerbeer: Vasco de Gama in *l’Africaine*

R. Strauss: Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*

Verdi: Radames in *Aida*

Wagner: Title tenor roles of *Parsifal, Tristan und Isolde, Siegfried*, and

*Tannhäuser, Lohengrin*, and *Rienzi*, Loge in *Das Rheingold, Siegmund*

in *Die Walküre, Erik in Die fliegende Holländer*

Heldentenors: Lauritz Melchior, Benn Heppner, John David DeHaan, Clifton Forbis,

Allan Glassman, Siegfried Jerusalem, Jay Hunter Morris, Clive Owens, Ian Storey
Chapter 3

BARITONES & BASSES

Basses, tenors, eunuchs, and in some literatures falsettists did indeed perform the male vocal music of earlier centuries. However, it is equally plain that much of the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for male voice was of medium vocal range, totally appropriate to the kind of voice we today term baritone.\(^{144}\)

As Richard Miller explains, although most men are some type of baritone, the early history of this voice type was clouded by the historical conception that men’s voices were either counter tenors, tenors, or basses. Tenors were used occasionally to fill comedic roles but baritones were not considered as a unique legitimate entity. Instead they were grouped with the basses until nineteenth-century composers began to exploit the capabilities of the male voice to the point that the distinction high, medium, and low became necessary.

The term baritone did not come into widespread usage until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Before that, regardless of range or dramatic stipulations, opera and oratorio roles for low-voiced males were listed as the property of the bass singer. A number of roles composed in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and those by Handel and by Mozart and his contemporaries, were originally indicated for bass voice but are eminently suitable to the baritone or the bass-baritone.\(^{145}\)

Baritone voices have existed as long as humans have roamed the earth, even if they weren’t formally recognized by composers and impresarii. Roles such as the titular character of Mozart’s Don Giovanni are perfectly suited to the baritone voice even if singers in that time had to market themselves under a different banner. Jander, Sawkins, and Forbes point toward the aesthetics of


operatic singing and composition for the eventual emergence of the baritone voice. "Baritone roles arrived late in opera chiefly because so much emphasis had previously been laid on florid singing, for which the lower male voice was not well suited." In reality many of the Baroque, Classical, and Bel Canto composers wrote florid singing for both baritone and bass voices. Even with great coloratura facility, however, lower voices with their richer colors and broader sounds cannot compete with the agility of higher voices. Additionally, the aesthetic of tenors using falsetto (Mode 2 singing) for head voice allowed lyric baritones with decent upper facility to work in higher Fächer. Roles such as Count Almaviva in Mozart’s Le nozze di Figaro were often included in the repertoire of well-known tenors (See discussion of historical Zwischenfächer men in Chapter 4).

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### Figure 3.1 The Baritone & Bass Fächer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fach</th>
<th>Primo Passaggio</th>
<th>Secondo Passaggio</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyric Baritone</td>
<td>B₄ - C₄</td>
<td>E₄ - F₄</td>
<td>Beautiful tone. Needs access to an A₄ on the top. Capable of more dramatic moments but is not a heavy voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdi Baritone</td>
<td>B₄ - C₄</td>
<td>E₄ - F₄</td>
<td>Powerful voice with significant heft and ring, easy access to/stamina for C₄ - A₄ area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic Bass Baritone</td>
<td>A₄ - B₄</td>
<td>D₄ - E₄</td>
<td>Wagner’s <em>Hoher Bass</em>, the dark timbre of a bass that can sing in the range of a baritone. The most powerful low male voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Baritone</td>
<td>A₄ - B₄</td>
<td>D₄ - E₄</td>
<td>Formerly the <em>basso cantante</em>, dark rich sound that can be bass-like on the bottom but baritonal on the top.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>A₄ - B₄</td>
<td>C₄ - D₄</td>
<td>The lowest male voice, should have access to a C₂.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lyric Baritone (Lyrischer Bariton, Spielbariton, Baritono Lirico)**

The Lyric Baritone is the most common male voice. As Miller describes:

Most of the opera and art song literatures are written for the lyric baritone. The lyric baritone is destined to sing the major roles in the lyric theater. Many of opera’s greatest

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baritone vehicles belong to him. Roles in operas by Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, a
great deal of the French operatic literature, and the vast reservoir of the lied and the
mélodie literature are his staples. The bel canto poles of agility and sostenuto are united
in his literature. The lyric baritone serves as the backbone of opera theater.\textsuperscript{148}

Like the lyric mezzo-soprano, lyric baritones are truly middle voices often with some access to
the high notes of tenors and velvety lower pitches of bass baritones. The difference between
these voices and baritone is the preference for a tessitura in the middle register that only moves
to either extreme in occasional passages. Jander, Sawkins, and Forbes note that "the baritone is
generally considered the ‘normal’ voice among men. If an average male speaking voice is made
to sing, some sort of baritone is probably what will be heard. To some extent this normality is
reflected in the operatic repertory. For example, the roles in Mozart commonly sung by a
baritone have a range and tessitura that suit the ‘normal’ voice quite comfortably. They will
require a $B$ and an $f'$, with the occasional extension of a note or two on either side."\textsuperscript{149,150} As
discussed in the last chapter, the transition from falsetto to full chest high notes forever changed
the way men sang in opera. Once the world embraced the more extreme and vibrant tenorial
register we know today, singers that could once encompass a large number of tenor roles now
found themselves physically unable to compete. As male singers kept their high-notes in Mode 1,
a harsher line, some might say a great wall, was forged between the tenor and baritone repertoire.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{148} Richard Miller, \textit{Securing Baritone Voices}, 9.
  \item \textsuperscript{149} Owen Jander, et al. "Baritone." \textit{The New Grove Dictionary of Opera. Grove Music Online.}
  \item \textsuperscript{150} The $B$ and $f'$ specified here are equivalent to $B_2$ and $F_4$.
\end{itemize}
The English-speaking world of opera uses the term *lyric baritone* as a general blanket to cover a wide array of roles from the high-lying Pelleas in Debussy’s *Pelleas & Melisande* to heavier roles such as titular character of Tchaikovsky’s *Yevgény Onégin*. Some may even include John Ford from Verdi’s *Falstaff* and Enrico from Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*. To better comprehend this *Fach* we shall divide it into three subcategories utilizing terms readily used in the opera world today to describe the baritone voice: the light lyric baritone or Baryton-Martin, the full lyric or simply the lyric baritone, and the heavy lyric or Cavalier baritone. Over the course of his career, a lyric baritone will likely need to sing repertoire from all three subcategories.

**The Baryton-Martin**

On the lighter end are roles that sit so close to the tenorial tessitura that some are actually sung by tenors. “High baritone roles, calling on the head voice, were a French specialty: their leading exponent was Jean-Blaise Martin whose long career at the Opéra-Comique gave rise to voice-type known as the *baryton-Martin*.”[151] French baritone Nicolas Jean-Blaise Martin (1768-1837) was an operatic sensation at the Opéra Comique in Paris during the nineteenth-century. In the *Grove Music Online* article Phillip E. J. Robinson describes Martin’s training and eventual success at the newly formed Opéra Comique.

He made his début at the Théâtre de Monsieur in 1789 in *Le marquis de Tulipano*, a French version of Paisiello’s opera *Il matrimonio inaspettato*. Lessons with LOUISE-ROSALIE DUGAZON and the actor François Joseph Talma helped him to overcome his deficiencies as an actor and in 1794 he moved to the Théâtre Favart, remaining there until

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it merged with the Feydeau to form the Opéra-Comique in 1801. Martin specialized in comic servant roles in new operas by Dalayrac, Boieldieu, Méhul, Isouard and others. He retired from the Opéra-Comique in 1823 but returned briefly in 1826 and 1833, when he appeared in Halévy’s *Les souvenirs de Lafleur*, a pasticcio incorporating songs from his most successful roles. He was also a member of the imperial chapel (later the royal chapel) from its foundation until July 1830, and taught singing at the Paris Conservatoire from 1816 to 1818 and 1832 to 1837.\(^{152}\)

Martin has become somewhat of a legend amongst baritones and pedagogues. Supposedly he was a baritone capable of reaching the top of the tenor’s range with amazing skill at fioratura. Some legends claim that he could repeatedly reach a C\(^5\) (tenor’s High C) with ease. In his dissertation “Jean Blaise Martin and the Opéra Comique: A Study of the Airs Sung by the Original Baryton-Martin,” Richard Hartley Weidlich describes the enigmatic instrument that captivated Paris.

By many accounts Martin's voice was classified as a "basse-taille," which by definition places it at the lower end of the tenor voice and not the higher end of the baritone voice. However, as Fetis cites, Martin's voice had the "caractere d'un beau baryton qui. dans les cordes elevees, atteignait aux limites des tenors les plus eleves. et qui, dans les sons graves, avait la sonorite d'une basse"\(^ {153}\) [quality of a beautiful baritone that, in the high notes, reached the limits of the highest tenors, and which, in the low notes, had the sonority of a bass]. It is to be remembered that at this time a tenor's highest range would have used a falsetto production.\(^ {154}\) Many accounts concur that the sound was that of a


baritone that could reach the high tenor range without strain. Martin having mastered the art of blending the chest and head registers to create a three-octave range.\textsuperscript{155}

Martin lived in the time of falsetto dominant upper-register production, not the more virile homogenous sound required today. These differences in vocal technique and performance practice would have shaped what sounds impressed composers and critics of the time. Richard Miller goes so far as to question whether the voice was truly remarkable or merely remarkable in comparison to singing during the life of Martin. Miller points to the expanding use of the baritones upper-range in music composed after the demise of Martin and observes that the “upper range possibilities of many baritones equal those of their tenor colleagues.” Miller concludes “perhaps Blaise-Martin’s long range would seem less remarkable to us today.”\textsuperscript{156}

The discrepancy between the facts and legend of Martin’s voice lead to similar inconsistencies in the repertoire named for him. Robinson suggests roles such as Escamillo in Bizet’s \textit{Carmen} and Valentin in Gounod’s \textit{Faust} alongside Debussy’s \textit{Pelleas}.\textsuperscript{157} These roles require three very different voices and only \textit{Pelleas} fits the description of a light high baritone voice. Escamillo requires great bravura and at times a good deal of vocal power. He has become a role triumphed by hefty-voiced baritones with sufficient projection and lower register volume as well as bass-baritones with sufficient ease and stamina in the upper register. It should also be noted that the high notes for Escamillo are F\textsubscript{4} and F\textsuperscript{#4}. These pitches are generally within or at the upper border of a tenor’s \textit{zona di passaggio} — by no means a tenorial high note. Bass baritones


\textsuperscript{156} Richard Miller, \textit{Solutions for Singers}, 158.

(and even true basses) are known to sing these pitches and bass baritones are often preferred for casting Escamillo. Valentin’s aria was written for English baritone Sir Charles Santley whose repertoire included the title character of Wagner’s *Die Fliegende Holländer*.\textsuperscript{158} The role requires high notes with enough vocal heft to be heard over the thick orchestration of brass instruments. By contrast the role of Pelleas requires three occurrences of A\textsubscript{4} and is regularly cast with both baritones and tenors. Of these three roles only the latter fits the quasi-tenor, or baritenor, nature described by J. B. Steane as the hallmark of this *Fach* and he too questions the use of the term today.

…a high, lyric baritone, almost a tenor, usually bright of timbre and light of weight, but with a free, unthroaty production characteristic of the French school. Jean Périer, the first Pelléas, was probably typical, with Gabriel Soulacroix a distinguished predecessor and Camille Maurane (b 1911) a notable representative in more recent times. It is always doubtful whether the term should be applied to ‘foreign’ baritones who might seem to qualify, such as Mattia Battistini or Yury Mazurok. The continued use of the term, so long after its originator has passed out of memory, might also be questioned.\textsuperscript{159}

A measure of clarity could be found by recordings of the Baryton-Martin voice. Although Martin himself did not survive to make recordings his successors have. Most notable of the French baritones are Pierre Bernac and his student Gérard Souzay. Both Bernac and Souzay possessed lighter lyric baritone instruments which were better suited to the *melodie*/*art song* repertoire than operatic singing. They fit more closely to the *lieder baritone* or *non-operatic baritone* described

\begin{footnotes}
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by Miller as a lyric baritone voice too light to viably execute the lyric repertoire.\textsuperscript{160}

Those on the lighter end may wish to devote a significant amount of time to the performance of art song. Indeed, more than any other \textit{fach}, the lyric baritone is strongly tied to the art song recital. “The burgeoning song and oratorio repertory of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century particularly suited the more lyric type of baritone. Johann Michael Vogl, who began his career in opera performing such roles as Orestes and Count Almaviva and creating Pizarro in the 1814 version of \textit{Fidelio}, is best remembered as the singer Schubert most admired in the performance of his songs.”\textsuperscript{161} An advantage of possessing the voice of the common man is the commercial value in writing music for that voice.

While nineteenth-century romanticism in opera turned composers towards the more heroic sounds of verismo singing, the growing body of \textit{lieder} and art song recitals embraced the lyric baritone with its mellow timbre and every-man appeal. “Operetta became a strong repertory for light baritones. The comic baritone part, replete with patter song, dates back at least to Mozart and Rossini’s characterizations of Figaro; it also became a staple of Gilbert and Sullivan.”\textsuperscript{162} Operetta composers such as Jacques Offenbach in France and Sir Arthur Sullivan in England embraced the lighter baritone as a sort of comedic Napoleon-Complex counterpart to the robust verismo baritone of grand opera. Roles such as Offenbach’s General Boum from \textit{La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein}, and Sullivan’s Major-General Stanley from \textit{The Pirates of Penzance} serve as prime examples of such roles.

\textsuperscript{160} Miller, \textit{Securing Baritone Voices}, 10.


\textsuperscript{162} Jander, "Baritone (i)." Accessed January 4, 2018.
For the purposes of this study, the term Baryton-Martin will retain its more common contemporary usage as a light-lyric baritone voice with an easy upper extension and notable agility. Essentially this represents the baritonal equivalent of the so-called pants-role/light-lyric/coloratura mezzo soprano. The timbre may take on a brighter tone even exhibiting the timbre of a tenor in the upper register. The difference will be the darker, more baritonal timbre of the middle and lower registers. Passaggi will likely be a half-step, or so, higher than most lyric baritones. Miller lists the passaggio of a lyric baritone at B\textsubscript{4} for the primo passaggio and E\textsubscript{4} for the secondo passaggio — a half step higher overlaps with the Heldentenor C\textsubscript{4} and F\textsubscript{4},\textsuperscript{163}

With the higher passaggio, easy high notes, and brighter timber the voice of the Baryton-Martin can be very similar to the tenor. It is likely that he will be called a baritenor or even a lazy tenor many times in his career. When singing Rossini’s Figaro, he may choose to interpolate additional high ornaments in the aria “Largo al factotum,” as well as the duets “All’idea di quell metallo” and “Dunque io son” beyond the customary high A’s (A\textsubscript{4}) of the aria and both written iterations of A\textsubscript{4} in the final trio “Ah, quel colpo inaspettato.”\textsuperscript{164} The singer may also add extra fioratura to the already coloratura-ridden role. He may even find it viable to add some of the lower lying character tenor roles to his repertory.

Tessitura normally marks the sometimes fine-line between the high baritone and the tenor. Tenors possess greater stamina for the upper register than their middle-voiced counterparts. The problem may not be reaching the high notes but sustaining the almost high notes — the upper

\textsuperscript{163} Richard Miller, \textit{The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique} (Belmont, CA: Schirmer, 1996), 117.

passaggio. Reaching a high C is one matter, producing a ringing high C after singing in the C₄ to A₄ tessitura for three minutes of an aria is a much more difficult feat. Higher notes require a thinner vibrating edge of the vocal folds. A singer reaching these notes through an upper extension to the normal range and therefore singing almost exclusively in his extreme top register will find himself more exhausted and his voice less forgiving. An upper extension gives some baritones a passport into the Tenor Land, but they're not true citizens — their stay is limited.\(^{165}\)

The roles listed below are by no means limited only to the Baryton-Martin but instead are roles from the lyric repertoire that may best fit a lighter lyric baritone. Certainly as a baritone ages, as with any singer, his mature voice will take on darker colors and greater power than it’s juvenile state. Physical maturity may, and likely will, allow this baritone to sing more of the standard lyric baritone repertoire successfully. The singers listed below may or may not have marketed themselves as Baryton-Martin. Thomas Hampson, for example, advertised himself as a lyric baritone for much of his career and more recently has taken on an increasing number of verismo roles\(^ {166}\). Still the lighter weight and extreme upper extension (with great ease) sung homogeneously with a warm mellow baritonal timbre make him an ideal example of the Baryton-Martin. Notably missing from the roles listed below are the baritones of Mozart’s operas. As discussed later, these roles were written in a time when little and often no distinction was made between the baritone and bass. Roles such as Guglielmo in *Cosi fan tutte*, Conte

\(^{165}\) The issue of tessitura as it relates to the baritenor voice, voice classification, repertoire, and vocal exercises is discussed in Chapter 4.

Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the titular role of *Don Giovanni* are ideally performed by a voice with enough substance to be heard while singing below the primo passaggio and even in the lowest parts of the range in the large ensembles.

**Roles for the Baryton-Martin or Lighter Lyric Baritone**

Bizet: El Dancaïro from *Carmen*

Debussy: Pelleas from *Pelleas et Melisande*

Humperdinck: Die Hexe from *Hänsel und Gretel*

Massenet: Werther from *Werther*\(^{167}\)

Monteverdi: Orfeo from *Orfeo*

Ravel: Ramiro from *L’heure Espangol*

Rossini: Figaro or Fiorello from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

R. Strauss: Harlekin from *Ariadne auf Naxos*

J. Strauss II: Eisenstein from *Die Fledermaus*


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\(^{167}\) Assuming the use of Massenet’s own alternate version in which the keys are all the same but the High B’s are taken down an octave. Massenet reworked the title role for the lower *Fach* for the Italian Baritone Mattia Battistini. See Robert Dennis, “Newly Digitized: Massenet’s Werther, for baritone,” *Loeb Music Library Blog*. August 28, 2013. Accessed December 9, 2017. [https://blogs.harvard.edu/loebmusic/?s=Massenet+Werther+baritone](https://blogs.harvard.edu/loebmusic/?s=Massenet+Werther+baritone)
The Lyric Baritone

Looking at the voice of the lyric baritone, what the general musically astute populous pictures when they hear the label baritone, one will find a warm mellow color. The voice of a lyric baritone is known more for the round beauty of its timbre than its cut or size. A lyric baritone expecting to work in opera will need a useable range from A₂ to G#₄. Certain staples of the lyric baritone repertoire will exhibit demands beyond this range. Rossini’s *Figaro* is also a staple of this repertoire. As opposed to the Baryton-Martin, the full lyric baritone likely will not add ornaments beyond A₄ and may or may not ever be comfortable interpolating all of the higher performance-practice ornaments when doing a full run of the opera. On the lower end are the Mozartian roles such as Il Conte from *Le nozze di Figaro* and Guglielmo from *Cosi fan tutte* in which the baritone role will dip repeatedly into the lowest portions of the bass staff and at times sing below the bass and bass-baritone roles in ensembles.¹⁶⁸ One such example is found in the Act II Finale of *Le nozze di Figaro* where Count Almaviva sings below Figaro and Don Bartolo.

As the bel canto gave way to verismo, lyric baritones fell somewhat out of fashion. Composers became enamored with baritones such as Domenico Cosselli, the creator of Donizetti’s Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, who where moving up from bass roles into the

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baritonal register with great power and ferocity.\textsuperscript{169} The lyric baritone was not completely forgotten. Puccini wrote several roles, most notably Schaunard in \textit{La Bohème} and Frank in \textit{Edgar}; but his place in the leading roles of opera was taken by larger voices. In the twentieth century the lyric baritone experienced a resurgence. “The early 20\textsuperscript{th} century witnessed an outpouring of new baritone roles in French, Italian and German opera.”\textsuperscript{170} English and American composers such as Benjamin Britten (Tarquinius and Junius in \textit{The Rape of Lucretia}, and the titular role of \textit{Billy Bud}), Jake Heggie (Joseph de Rocher and Owen Hart in \textit{Dead Man Walking}, and Charlie in \textit{Three Decembers}), and John Adams (Oppenheimer in \textit{Dr. Atomic} as well as Nixon and Chou En-lai from \textit{Nixon in China}) championed this voice in their operas.

The roles listed below represent roles from the common repertoire that are generally accomplishable by the average lyric baritone. In such a competitive \textit{Fach}, special considerations should be made for qualities which help an individual’s voice stand apart. Voices with exceptional agility, for example, may do well to specialize in the works of Rossini and other bel canto composers. Those with lower extensions may find their particular abilities well highlighted by Mozart. Those with upper extensions may wish to encompass some of Baryton-Martin repertoire.

\textsuperscript{169} Summarized from \textit{Ashbrook, William, Donizetti and His Operas} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Roles for the Lyric Baritone

Adams: Nixon and Chou En-Lai from *Nixon in China*, Oppenheimer from *Dr. Atomic*, Leon Klinghoffer in *The Death of Klinghoffer*

Bizet: Zurga from *Les pêcheurs de perles*, Morales from *Carmen*

Britten: Billy Bud from *Billy Bud*, Tarquinius & Junius from *The Rape of Lucretia*, and Demetrius from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Massenet: Albert from *Werther*

Heggie: Joseph De Rocher from *Dead Man Walking*, Charlie from *Three Decembers*, Mr. Gower & Potter from *It’s a Wonderful Life*

Menotti: Bob from *The Old Maid & the Thief*, Ben from *The Telephone*

Mozart: Papageno from *Die Zauberflöte*, Il Conte Almaviva from *Le nozze di Figaro*, Guglielmo from *Cosi fan Tutte*, Masetto from *Don Giovanni*

Donizetti: Belcore from *L’elisir d’amore*, Malatesta from *Don Pasquale*

Gounod: Mercutio and Paris from *Romeo & Juliette*, Wagner from *Faust*

Offenbach: General Boum from *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, Agamemnon from *La belle Hélène*, Jupiter from *Orphée aux enfers*

Rossini: Figaro & Fiorello from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Dandini from *La Cenerentola*, Taddeo from *L’Italiana in Algeri*

J. Strauss II: Dr. Falke from *Die Fledermaus*

R. Strauss: Harlekin from *Ariadne auf Naxos*
Lyric Baritones:    Thomas Allen, Stéphane Degout, Nathan Gunn, 
                        Theo Hoffman, Simon Keenlyside, Christopher Maltman, 
                        Hermann Prey, Bruno Sandes, John Tibbetts II

Cavalier Baritone

At the heavier end of the lyric spectrum lies the *Cavalier Baritone (Kavalierbariton)*. Purists 
may disagree as historically this term was used to denote a very specific repertoire that required a 
baritone of great pulchritude as well as vocal ability. Historically, however, the roles in this *Fach* 
overlapped with lyric and dramatic baritone repertoire including the titular womanizer of 
Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and bullfighter *Escamillo*. Today, however, few baritones limit 
themselves to such a small specialty and practically, there is enough market saturation that 
directors are no longer required to choose between a baritone who can sing and a baritone that’s 
pleasing to the eyes.\(^{171}\) The cavalier or heavy lyric baritone is not as robust as the Verdi baritone 
(Heldonbariton) but possesses greater power and more virile energy than the lyric baritone. This 
is still a lyric voice with a dramatic edge. *Passaggi* for this baritone will tend toward the lower 
end of the lyric baritone or possibly align with those of the heavier Verdi baritone (spinto 
baritone). The cavalier baritone faces the danger of being pushed into repertoire that is too heavy 
since his voice will present greater size and strength than the average lyric baritone. Most 
sources comment on a particular need for a handsome appearance — largely due to the presence 
of leading “ladies” men roles such as Don Giovanni and Escamillo.

\(^{171}\) Kevin Clarke, “Interview with Mr. Barihunks: The Beefcake side of Oper(ett)a,” *Operetta 
http://operetta-research-center.org/interview-barihunks-beefcake-opera/
Roles for the Cavalier Baritone

Bizet: Escamillo from *Carmen*

Gounod: Valentin from *Faust*

Massenet: Hérode from *Herodiade*

Mozart: Don Giovanni from *Don Giovanni*, Il Conte from *Le nozze di Figaro*

Puccini: Lescaut from *Manon Lescaut*, Sharpless from *Madama Butterfly*, Frank from *Edgar*

Tchaikowsky: Оне́гин (Onégin) from *Евгений Onégin* (Yevgény Onégin), Prince Yeletsky from *Пиковая дама* (The Queen of Spades/Pique Dame)

Verdi: Rodrigo de Posa from *Don Carlo*, John Ford from *Falstaff*

Wagner: Wolfram from *Tannhäuser*

Cavalier Baritones: Jonathan Bryan, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Ethan Simpson, Eberhard Wächter

**The Verdi Baritone (Helden Bariton, Baryton-Noble)**

The Verdi baritone usually begins in the lyric repertoire but eventually moves onto the heavier repertoire of *verismo* singing. Miller describes this category as “the most coveted low-voice male.” These voices are expected to display testosterone thunder, immense control throughout the range, and sustainable high notes (certainly F’s and G’s, but some interpolate high

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A’s or more), and immense stamina.\textsuperscript{173} “It must have size and power that competes with full orchestral sound, authority in complex ensembles and duets, the ability to present a low range that is capable of ‘projection,’ the ability to keep up a sustained voce media tessitura, and an upper range capable of brilliance and power.”\textsuperscript{174} Although this \textit{Fach} is tied by name to Verdi, it is the equivalent of spinto baritone.

The problem with its primary association with Verdi is the assumption that all Verdi baritone roles fit one voice. Verdi’s baritonal writing is anything but uniform throughout his canon, indicating that he wrote for very different baritone voices. Pedagogue Stephen Smith warns that using a composer as a label for a \textit{fach} is not only misleading but potentially dangerous.

Of course, a lush, big, resonant sound is ideal for Puccini. The problem is that many singers try to make their voices sound like “Puccini voices” or “Mozart voices” or “Verdi voices” instead of just singing with their true voices in any repertoire. I don’t believe there is such a thing as a ‘Mozart voice’ or a ‘Puccini voice’ or a ‘Verdi voice.’ The audience, critics, or producers make those kinds of categorizations, but I think singers should always sing with their true voice. Singers who believe in those categorizations can limit their possibilities and restrict their vocal production, thinking their voices are appropriate to only one style or composer.\textsuperscript{175}

In point of fact, Verdi wrote for a number of different baritones. In his article “The Origin of the Verdi Baritone,” John Clayton Seesholz examines schools of singing contemporary to Verdi and

\textsuperscript{173} Vocal athleticism is an essential component to opera. The ability to add extra high notes or low notes (in accordance with good taste for the stylistic norms of the piece) is not always required but highly praised. This practice may be best explained by the maxim: if you’ve got it, flaunt it. For Verdi and his repertoire, this was especially true.

\textsuperscript{174} Miller, \textit{Securing Baritone Voices}, 9.


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observes that Verdi’s work shed a light on advances already discovered in the baritone voice. Other composers were also adding to this repertoire. Donizetti’s Enrico from *Lucia di Lammermoor* is a staple of the repertoire. Faraone from Rossini’s *Mosé in Egitto* and the title character of his *Guillaume Tell* have also been claimed by the heftier baritone voice. Seesholtz observes that Verdi’s uncompromising expectations demanded the utmost abilities of the most skilled singers as musicians and actors. The baritone Jean Baptiste-Faure performed the premier of Verdi’s *Don Carlos* in the role of Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa. Elizabeth Forbes notes that he was known as an interpreter of the titular roles in Mozarts *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro* as well premiering the title role in *Hamlet* by Thomas. Faure was praised especially for his dramatic interpretations, now a hallmark of the Verdi baritone. The titular roles of Verdi’s *Macbeth* and *Rigoletto*, as well as the popular role of Germont from *La Traviata* were written for the Italian baritone Felice Varesi. By contrast to Faure, Varesi is described as “a prototype of the modern dramatic baritone who evolved from the operas of Donizetti and of early and middle-period Verdi...he made a powerful Macbeth, Rigoletto was undoubtedly his finest role; his


singing of ‘Si vendetta’ always aroused enormous enthusiasm and was invariably encored.”

While Faure seems to have embodied the dramatic ability needed for many Verdi roles, Verasi appears closer to the modern interpretation of the Verdi baritone as a vocal power house. In examining Faure’s other repertoire with roles such as Malatesta in Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*, his voice seems closer to the Kavalierbariton. This would have given him the cut and force for some the Verdi roles he premiered, which are on the more lyric of Verdi’s baritone writing. Verasi possessed an instrument of true force. Roles written for his voice require immense power and stamina to soar over powerful orchestral textures for sustained periods. It is unlikely that one baritone will fit each of Verdi’s roles with the same ease. As Smith explains, the naming of a *Fach* after a composer creates problems in what a voice should be. As a *Fach*, the Verdi baritone is a voice of greater power and brilliance than a lyric or cavalier baritone with great facility for the high baritone tessitura. As Seesholz describes:

> Many of the high baritone roles in Verdi’s operas are considered the true test of baritone stamina and range. The title role in Rigoletto (1851) is perhaps the highest demonstration of Verdi’s challenge for the baritone voice. The score calls for a range that extends to A[flat]4, which is high for a baritone, yet a not uncommon practice in operatic composition of this period. The true difficulty lies in Verdi’s requirement of the baritone to regularly maintain a tessitura in the E[flat]4 to F4 range. This puts the baritone in a very difficult negotiation of the traditional Italian registration event called the secondo passaggio.\(^{181}\)

Much like the *Heldentenor* must primarily be a voice of power and with stamina for the tenorial tessitura so the Verdi baritone requires immense stamina for the baritone’s upper range. Here


\(^{181}\) Seesholz, “Verdi Baritone,” 522.
again one must understand that two Verdi baritones may have very different voices, each of
which will be better suited to different roles but both of which will make his home chiefly in the
verismo repertoire.182

Roles for the Verdi Baritone

Bellini: Riccardo in \textit{I Puritani}

Bizet: Escamillo in \textit{Carmen}

Donizetti: Enrico in \textit{Lucia di Lammermoor}, Alphonso in \textit{La Favorita}

Leoncavallo: Tonio in \textit{Pagliacci}

Puccini: Scarpia in \textit{Tosca}, Jack Rance in \textit{La Fanciulla del West},
           Michele in \textit{Il Tabarro}

Verdi: Germont in \textit{La Traviata}, Amonasro in \textit{Aïda}, Di Luna in \textit{Il Trovatore},
          Iago in \textit{Otello}, Renato in \textit{Un ballo in Maschera}, title roles of \textit{Rigoletto},
          \textit{Macbeth}, and \textit{Simon Boccanegra}

Wagner: Wolfram von Eschenbach from \textit{Tannhäuser}, Donner from
          \textit{Das Rheingold}, Hans Sachs from \textit{Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg}

Verdi Baritones: Ettore Bastianini, Joshua Jeremiah, Robert Merrill, Sherill Milnes,
                 Mark Rucker, Jeremiah Sanders, Jonathan Clayton Seesholtz,
                 Leonard Warren, Giorgio Zancanaro

Dramatic Baritone/Dramatic Bass Baritone (Hoher Bass, Baritono Drammatico)

The heaviest of the baritone Fächer comes with its own controversy. The main problem exists with classifying the major Wagnerian roles as baritones or bass baritones…and whether those are actually separate voices. Jander, Sawkins, and Forbes classify these voices as bass-baritones. “In Germany, the heavier ‘Heldenbariton’ voice, a counter-part to the Verdi baritone, developed, especially with the operas of Wagner, typified by Anton Mitterwurzer, the first Wolfram and Kurwenal. But the principal development was that of the ‘Hoher Bass’, the voice-type of Wotan and Hans Sachs (and typified by Franz Betz); this is a bass-baritone rather than a baritone proper.”

The simultaneous development of the conceptual Verdi baritone, Heldonbariton, and Hoher Bass or dramatic bass baritone may be the origin of this controversy. In the time of Wagner the bass baritone did not exist. The repertoire sung today by the “lyric bass baritone” was generally assigned to a basso cantante (literally singing bass). The higher range and tessitura demands of Wagner required something larger than the baritonal singing that had existed up until that time. These voices had a dark color more typical of a bass but could bring their immense instruments into the range and tessitura of a baritone. The bel canto and versimo composers were already favoring larger baritone voices that could sustain a high tessitura in the upper passaggio with immense force. The Germanic countries were ‘discovering’ these voices

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184 Some pedagogues prefer to separate the lyric bass baritone, dramatic bass baritone, lyric bass, and dramatic bass. In theory this is indeed a viable division, however, in practice the singers in these categories overlap to a point that all four divisions almost merge (and the polarizing roles are so different that these categories should not be merged).

185 See earlier discussion on Verdi Baritones (Charakterbariton, Baryton-Noble).
as well and labelled them *Heldenbariton*. If we take the name at face value the bass baritone is the lowest baritone (bass is the adjective and baritone the noun). He is a baritone of bass-like quality just as the baritone saxophone is a lower member of the saxophone family. Wagner needed a baritone with more metallic cut to be heard over his orchestra, the immense power to balance his “new” dramatic soprano and Heldentenor, and the dark *Schwarzbass* color ideal to the German aesthetic for the authority of characters such as a royal Norse god.

The *seriöser Bass* (or *Stehbass* as he is often called because he frequently remains in one place without dramatic movement to deliver his impressive pronouncements) believes that he above all vocal categories must deliver the dark, rich sound so much in demand by the Germanic ear. *Ein Schwarzer Bass* (a black bass) is much-prized singer among the Germans; his timbre must be “black,” the most solemn, the most sepulchral of all vocal colors attainable by the human vocal instrument. The elements of vocal production found within the Germanic aesthetic are able to produce this quality of blackness. As a result, his range is frequently very much limited in the upper voice, becoming a hoot or hollow straight-tone anywhere above his second registration point. His generally slow vibrato rate is often thought to contribute to vocal opulence, warmth and roundness. Flowing legato, ease of production, and lyrical line, so much a part of the French *basse*, are not among his vocal attributes.¹⁸⁶

This darker *Schwarzbass* color was the solemn timbre Wagner desired in the baritonal tessitura.

This required a singer that possessed the dark *Schwarzbass* color naturally, without manufacturing the voice, accompanied by the stamina to maintain the baritone tessitura. The term *Hoher Bass* described the ability to maintain the higher tessitura coupled with the dark timbre. Elizabeth Forbes reports that the actual singers themselves experienced success in a number of baritone roles ranging from lyric to verismo repertoire in addition to their Wagnerian characters. Franz Betz who originated Hans Sachs in Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger* sang a wide variety of baritone roles for major houses of the time. His repertoire included Valentin in

¹⁸⁶ Richard Miller, *National Schools of Singing*, 166.
Gounod’s *Faust*, Amonosro in *Aida*, and the titular roles of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and Verdi’s *Falstaff*. Betz sang Wotan in the first full production of Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in 1876 at Bayreuth. Similarly Theodor Reichmann’s repertoire included the title role of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, Count di Luna from Verdi’s *Il Trovatore*, Escamillo from Bizet’s *Carmen*, the titular hero of Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*, and Amonasro in *Aïda* among others. Reichmann’s Wagnerian repertoire included Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger*, and Wotan in *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*.

In the twentieth and twenty-first century, men such as James Morris, Greer Grimsley, and George London continued to combine baritone repertoire with this dramatic voice. Morris triumphed in Wotan for three complete cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Metropolitan Opera. His repertoire includes Scarpia in Puccini’s *Tosca*, Don Giovanni from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, and Conte Almaviva from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Greer Grimsley, one of the world’s current reigning interpreters of Wotan, has also triumphed internationally in the baritone repertoire as Scarpia and Jack Rance in Puccini’s *Tosca* and *Fanciulla del West*, as well as Escamillo in Bizet’s *Carmen* and Amonasro and Di Luna in Verdi’s *Aïda* and *Il Trovatore*.

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Both Grimsley and Morris have deep voices that have allowed them to take on lower repertoire including the four villains from *Les contes d’Hoffmann*, and Claggart in Britten’s *Billy Budd*. Similarly the legendary George London who sang the Wotan to Birgit Nilsson’s Brünnhilde was renowned as one the greatest interpreters of Don Giovanni and Scarpia. London also performed Amfortas from *Aida*, the four villains from *Les contes d’Hoffmann*, and Escamillo in Bizet’s *Carmen*. As we approach lower Fächer of both the male and female groups, the walls are simply less rigid. A rather ambiguous soup of roles for the lower voices based on a series of shifting traditions coupled with norms based on the careers of uniquely gifted singers has led to a great deal of inconsistency in the field of vocal classification.

For the purposes of this study, the larger Wagnerian roles will be designated Dramatic Bass Baritone and included in the baritone family for the following reasons: (1) this treatment of the heavier low-voice is more consistent with the treatment of other Fächer. (2) The vocal writing of this repertoire is more consistent with writing for the baritone voice; (3) this is the term currently in common use — there is little value in adding confusion.

As a developing voice many of these future Wagnerians may take on some bass roles while they learn to coordinate the enormous force of their upper voices. Barbara Doscher states, “a young baritone who sings with a very dark color, i.e., emphasis on the lower harmonics, may very well have first formant frequencies of a bass, regardless of what his natural vocal timbre

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may be.” This sort of development, spending time in a lower Fach, is normal for larger voices. Jander makes such an observation in the career of Anton Forti. “In the final version of Fidelio, Pizarro was sung by Anton Forti, an Austrian baritone of extraordinary range who sang several tenor roles (including Rossini’s Otello and Max in Der Freischütz) and created Lysiart in Weber’s Euryanthe (1823).” The same sort of transition is seen by Heldentenors who start as baritones, and are perhaps even able to sing baritone roles professionally (discussed further in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4).

### Roles for Dramatic Baritone/ Dramatic Bass Baritone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Opera</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bartók:</td>
<td>Bluebeard</td>
<td>Bluebeard’s Castle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bellini:</td>
<td>Oroveso</td>
<td>Norma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britten:</td>
<td>Balstrode</td>
<td>Peter Grimes, Claggart in Billy Budd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Menotti:</td>
<td>Abdul</td>
<td>The Last Savage</td>
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<td>Mussorgsky:</td>
<td>Boris Godunov</td>
<td>from Boris Godunov</td>
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<td>Puccini:</td>
<td>Scarpia</td>
<td>in Tosca</td>
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<td>Saint-Saëns:</td>
<td>High Priest of Dagon</td>
<td>in Samson et Dalila,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strauss:</td>
<td>Orest</td>
<td>in Salome,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verdi:</td>
<td>Falstaff</td>
<td>in Falstaff, Nabucco in Nabucco, Phillip II in Don Carlo</td>
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Wagner: Wotan in Der Ring des Nibelungen, Amfortas in Parsifal,
Der Holländer in Der fliegende Holländer, Hans Sachs in
Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Dramatic Bass Baritones: James Morris, Greer Grimsley, George London, Friedrich Schorr

**Lyric Bass (Bass Baritone; Basso Cantate)**

In the post-Wagner world, the term “bass baritone” has been expanded to refer to a wide variety of voices. Roles traditionally for the basso cantante (singing bass or lyric bass) are often now referred to as bass baritone repertoire. Although it is the currently popular term the label bass baritone is a bit of a misnomer. Today many treat the bass baritone as a hybrid voice between a baritone and a bass — a sort of lower equivalent of the baritenor. The bass baritone or lyric bass relates to basses in the same manner that lyric coloratura sopranos have higher, brighter, lighter, and more agile instruments than their lyric, spinto, and dramatic soprano sisters. In some ways the idea brings the body of vocal categories full circle. Prior to the bel canto period, when every low voice was bass, baritones were merely basses with bad low notes and good upper range fireworks. Much of the writing for pre-bel canto baritone roles was done with general concept that all low voice males are bass-capable. It is the counterpart to the mezzo soprano who had a similar evolution out of the soprano family. Roles such as Cherubino, Zerlina, and Dorabella were written with the general concept that non-contralto women were sopranos. As such,

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there are a number of roles that tie mezzi to their higher voiced cousins — this does not make the mezzo a hybrid. Additionally, one must remember that all Fächer have some degree of overlap in their canon of roles. The Fach system is not perfect. Both the dramatic mezzo soprano and dramatic soprano lay claim to Santuzza from Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Rosina, listed for contralto, is the general property of the lyric mezzo voice but claimed by lyric coloratura sopranos as well. Roles were written for the singers making the premier and often those voices were the top singers of the day — the vocal prodigies whose capabilities extended far beyond the bounds of normal. When examining individual roles, it is quite common to find multiple Fächer that can viably accomplish singing. In addition to the roles listed below, the lyric bass will find a broad repertoire in the field of oratorio. Because the penchant for low lying passages in oratorio compositions, baritones may find only limited possibilities.

Bass baritone is the commonly used label at present, but the repertoire here is more akin to the bass family. The term lyric bass eliminates some of this confusion when discussing the family of bass and baritone Fächer. The lyric bass possesses a deeper range and prefers a lower tessitura than the lyric baritone. He does not have the power of the dramatic bass baritone. His larger voice equivalent is the bass (or dramatic bass). For the lyric bass, the amorphous ancestry of bass and baritone writing is problematic.

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Roles for the Bass Baritone/Lyric Bass

Britten: Mr. Flint from *Billy Budd*, Bottom from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,
         Noye from *Noye’s Fludd*

Händel: Giulio Caesare from *Giulio Caesare*,

Debussy: Golaud from *Pelleas et Melisande*

Donizetti: Don Pasquale from *Don Pasquale*, Dr. Dulcamara from *L’elisir d’amore*

Mozart: Leporello and Masetto from *Don Giovanni*, Figaro, Don Bartolo, and Antonio
         from *Le nozze di Figaro*, Don Alfonso from *Cosi fan tutte*, the Speaker from
         *Die Zauberflöte*

Offenbach: the villains (Lindorf, Copélius, Miracle, Dapertutto) from
            *Les contes d’Hoffmann*

Rossini: Don Bartolo from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Don Magnifico from
         *La Cenerentola*, Don Geronio from *Il turco in Italia*, Mustafa from
         *L’Italiana in Algeri*

Ward: Reverend Hale from *The Crucible*

Bass Baritones: Ildebrando D’Arcangelo, Paul Grosvenor, Luca Pisaroni, Rafael Porto

**Bass (Basso Profondo, Schwartzbass, Basso, True Bass, Dramatic Bass)**

The true bass is renowned for his ringing low notes. He must still possess the same facility with
his voice as his higher counterparts, but his roles are generally written to emphasize the lower
register of his voice. Much like the true contralto, this voice is characterized by its dark color and
ability to live in the vocal basement. It is still expected that he sing with clear diction, a
homogenous tone, and project to the back of the hall. This is one of the rarest male voice types. Historically the more heroic roles of the Basso Profondo (literally the deep bass) have been separated from the comedic roles of the Basso Buffo (comic bass). Many roles once considered the buffo’s repertoire such Don Bartolo from Il barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini), Leporello from Don Giovanni (Mozart), and the titular role of Don Pasquale are now sung by the bass baritone and bass. Much like the bass baritone and lyric baritone it is up to the individual bass to examine his own instrument and decide which roles truly suit his voice. In practice many basses will be billed under the title “bass” and “bass baritone” depending on the role they are singing and the location of the performance.

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199 Richard Miller, Securing Baritone Voices, 11-12.

200 Europe and North America are not aligned in their treatment of voices. European houses tend to favor the terms Contralto instead of dramatic mezzo soprano and bass over bass baritone. Organizations in the United States generally do the opposite unless there are separate dramatic mezzo soprano and contralto roles (such as Fricka and Erda in Wagner’s Das Rheingold) — the same is true for bass baritone and bass roles. Oratorio productions usually revert to contralto and bass.
Roles for Bass

Bartók: Bluebeard from *Bluebeard’s Castle*

Beethoven: Rocco in *Fidelio*

Britten: Claggart from *Billy Budd*, Hobson and Swallow from *Peter Grimes*

Debussy: Arkel from *Pelléas et Mélisande*

Donizetti: Don Pasquale from *Don Pasquale*,

Gounod: Méphistofélès from *Faust*

Mozart: Il Commendatore from *Don Giovanni*, Sarastro from *Die Zauberflöte*,

Osmin from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

Mussorgsky: Boris Godunov from *Boris Godunov*

Rossini: Basilio from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Mosè from *Mosè in Egitto* (also Moïse from *Moïse et Pharaon, ou Le passage de la Mer Rouge*), Alidoro from *La Cenerentola*

Schönberg: Moses from *Moses und Aaron*

Verdi: Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, Phillip II from *Don Carlo*,

Wagner: Gurnemanz from *Parsifal*, Hagen from *Götterdämmerung*,

King Marke from *Tristan und Isolde*,

Basses: François Loup, Peter Volpe, Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, Jerome Hynes,

Matthew Bohler, Zachary James
Chapter 4

BARITENORS

Baritenor refers to a voice that lies between the primary categories of tenor and baritone, also called a Zwischenfach (literally between type). Both male and female Zwischenfächer or Zwischen voices occur to varying degree. Few voices fit perfectly into one Fach. The instrument of the singer is his or her own body and human bodies are subject to infinite variation. Two men of the same height may have hands of different size, different leg to torso ratios, necks of varying length and girth, etc. Consider for a moment the clothing industry, which attempts to make products for these individual bodies. In the United States men’s pants are generally sized by waist and inseam measurements. Because of the vast array of mixing and matching in the human body, these two measurements do not guarantee the same fit to every man. Variations in the girth of the calves and the thighs; the proportions of the waist, hip, thigh, knee, and calf; the size and shape of the buttocks; etc., mean that two men with the measurements of a waist of thirty-two inches and an inseam of thirty-two inches may not find the same pants fit them both equally well. Certain variations in the pants, boot cut, relaxed fit, stretch fabrics, etc., will be more or less appealing based on these varying factors. Similar complexity exists in fitting vocal repertoire to individual voices. Because most roles are hand tailored to the singer doing the premiere of the work, vocal repertoire is largely a wardrobe full of pieces made specifically for other people. Organizing these pieces into groups that are generally wearable by a single person is the task of the Fach System. The infinite variations which may or may not affect the fit, look, and practicality of the clothes are also found in the human voice. This is the reason that in previous
chapters of this study lighter or heavier variations were given within the vocal categories described. This is also why some roles can be sung by multiple voice types but other roles may not fit any one category particularly well. For example, the role of Santuzza in Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* is sung professionally by the spinto soprano, the dramatic soprano, and the dramatic mezzo soprano. Gemma Bellincioni, who created the role, was well known for her interpretations as the title heroines of Bizet’s *Carmen*, a mezzo soprano role, and Puccini’s *Tosca*, a soprano role. Conversely, Violetta Valery in Verdi’s *La Traviata* is notorious for vocal demands that need a completely different soprano for each act: “a coloratura soprano to negotiate the high-wire singing in the first act; a lyric soprano for the emotional outpourings of the second act; and an even fuller, lirico-spinto sound for the death scene.”

Normally singers find the category that predominately fits their voice and use that as a sort of home base for their repertoire. As they age and further develop their technique they continually reexamine their body of repertoire and make necessary changes so that the repertoire evolves over time with the instrument. Occasionally, voices evolve in a way that makes them an equally good fit, or bad fit, for multiple bodies of repertoire. Sandra Cotton explains these variations in the voice as a set of expectations in which tall people generally have larger feet and short people generally have smaller feet, but occasionally there are tall people with small feet or

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short people with large feet. Zwischen voices don’t fit the Fach system as cleanly as the majority of voices. In the case of the baritenor they may exhibit the passaggio of a lower tenor, the tessitura of a lyric baritone, a timbre that sounds like an amalgamation of the two, and a long range that encompasses the basic needs of both Fächer.

As we look at baritenor voices, let us first reexamine the four criteria of range, timbre, tessitura, and passaggio to understand how they seemingly fail to identify the proper place of these young male singers when they properly place so many other voices. Following the discussion of these criteria we shall examine the concept of Zwischenfächer voices from diverse perspectives. This will include an examination of influential men such as Manuel García I and Giovanni Battista Rubini who actively sang leading baritone and tenor roles at the top international level and shaped much of the repertoire sung in opera houses today. These observations will provide historical and pedagogical context for considering the debate of whether a voice should ever be guided toward a particular primary and/or secondary category or left with the label of Zwischen. Finally, we will examine how the sliding scale of physical maturation and technical development further complicate these concepts to better understand what technical elements of vocal production may require adjustment and how attempts to classify a voice may actually lead to vocal harm.

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The Four Criteria of Vocal Classification

Range

In choirs across the country range is often used as the primary determinant of voice placement. In her dissertation *Voice Classification and Fach: Recent, Historical and Conflicting Systems of Voice Categorization*, Sandra Cotton notes that “with the most extreme voices as an exception (the high lyric coloratura soprano and/or the contralto with a truly limited top), the range of well-trained female singers will probably not inhibit them from singing repertoire belonging to a few of the neighboring voice classifications.”

She further observes that there are differences between the maximum potential range which is physiologically possible, and the useable range made possible by a given singer’s technical prowess. She then compares the work of Ingo Titze, who supports range as a primary determinant of voice category to pedagogues such as Doscher, Bunch, and McKinney who warn that range is simply too unreliable. William Alex Martin concurs with Bunch and McKinney warning that range is an often misleading criterion. As discussed in Chapter 1, this study takes the same view point. If it were possible to sing all the notes one could phonate with the same ease, range would be a better indicator of *Fach*. Range answers the question “Can the singer hit the note?” Unfortunately that simple yes or no does not provide answers for the follow-up questions: Under what circumstances can they sing the note?


How often can they sing the note? Will anyone want to hear the sound of them singing that note? Does singing that note harm the singer (or their audience)?

In terms of Zwischenfächer voices, the lack of reliability is the precise problem. A baritone with a high register extension or a tenor with deep low notes may be easily misclassified if range is the primary consideration. Often this is the case for the collegiate voice teacher. Because tenors are a rarer voice type than baritones, lower voiced men with an upper extension are often put in the tenor section of a choir. Choral tenor lines generally avoid the high As, Bs, and Cs, but tend to stay in the upper passaggio. Because these ensemble tessiture tend to be polarizing, false tenors are pushed up a path of raising their larynx, distorting their timbre with nasality to manufacture a brighter sound than they naturally have, and masking their register breaks to higher pitches. Barifakers by contrast depress their larynges to achieve a darker timbre, eradicating their upper register, lowering their perceived register breaks, and often sacrificing their longevity.

**Tessitura**

Cotton explains that tessitura is not only a more reliable identifier of vocal classification but can actually be in opposition to the indications made by range. “It is possible, for example, for a singer to have a rather high range but for that singer’s comfortable tessitura to be relatively low. Likewise, there are arias that do not have particularly high notes, but in which a singer must maintain a relatively high tessitura. Singing with an appropriate tessitura is essential for the
health and longevity of the voice.” Tessitura answers the questions: How often, how long, and under what circumstances can the artist sing this note? Tessitura is the reason repertoire assignment (discussed later) often poses great difficulty for Zwischenfächer voices. They can hit all of the notes vocalizing, but they lack the endurance to sing them in succession as the song or aria requires. After vocal faults have been consistently eliminated from the singer’s technique, tessitura is one of the most important factors in whether or not a singer can survive a role.

Passaggio

Martin acknowledges that registration events may not be the total picture of the voice but promotes them as the single best criterion for voice classification. Cotton cites McKinney’s sentiment that the register breaks may be best used for evaluating voices with less training. Because trained singers generally work to unify the registers, this can mask the true location of the primo and secondo passaggio. She also notes the possibility that technique can influence the location of these transition points in individual singers. Furthermore, she notes how close the breaks are between various voice types. As seen in Chapters 2 and 3, the passaggi are often only a semitone different between two Fächer. It is certainly plausible for an individual that the register breaks may lie higher or lower than normal for their voice category and therefore indicate the wrong repertoire.


Timbre

In the 1970s, K. Mitchell observed the influence of the voice over the perception of a character in opera productions. Part of these observations included the fact that tenors, baritones, and basses can sing many of the pitches, but the distinguishing factor was the tone color. “A note of the same pitch tends to sound different when sung by different voice types — e.g. darker when sung by a baritone than when sung by a tenor — due to the fact that each voice type is distinguished by a specific timbre that affects its full range.”\textsuperscript{210} As McCoy explains in \textit{Your Voice: An Inside View}, pitch and frequency are not exactly the same. Rather, pitch is our perception of frequency. Similarly, dynamics (volume) are our perception of amplitude. Timbre is our perception of the spectral envelope of our complex sound. The spectral envelope describes the relative strength and weakness of the overtones in the sound.\textsuperscript{211} In her discussion of timbre Cotton includes both color and volume. She notes that vocal size or heft “is not measurable in amplitude or decibels, but is rather a subjective aural measurement of the ability of a voice to project over other instruments and in various settings. Timbre, therefore, is a criterion that is also expected to prescribe the types of orchestration over which a voice might be able to sing.”\textsuperscript{212} Timbre answers the question: What do they sound like? How do they sound? Citing the work of Barbara Doscher about the adjustable nature of the human vocal tract, Cotton notes that “timbre


\textsuperscript{211} McCoy, “Your Voice: An Inside View,” 15-25.

\textsuperscript{212} Cotton, “Voice Classification,” 24.
is a set of options, prescribed by the physiological shape and size of the vocal tract.”²¹³ She recommends the use of timbre for the smaller classifications (lyric, spinto, dramatic, etc.) and not the larger classifications (soprano, mezzo soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, bass). Just like range, timbre can actually have some overlap between categories. Sherill Milnes was renowned for his easy high notes with their tenor-like ring. Even after an international career spanning decades at the world’s top opera houses, there are many people who think he should have sung tenor repertoire. Tenor Lauritz Melchior began his professional career as a baritone and was only encouraged to retrain after a colleague recognized his ringing high notes were actually his voice reaching its ideal tessitura and not a mere matter of baritone fireworks.²¹⁴

Another issue that arises in timbre as a criterion of vocal classification is its malleability and dependence on vocal technique. By changing the shape of the vocal tract, one can alter the spectral envelope of the voice. Singers employ this ability to create different vowel sounds by altering the first two formants. In the case of a Zwischenfächer voice, small alterations can seemingly align them with the wrong category. As discussed later, vocal faults such as nasality or a depressed larynx distort the natural tone colors of the voice. Although timbre is an important criterion, it must be considered in light of tessitura and registration as well.


**Historical Perspective**

Cotton notes the importance of examining historical singers through the lens of modern voice classification to better understand and evaluate the validity of our own methods of classification and to better understand the voices that created these roles. Cotton examines the historical perspective through the treatises of García and Hiller. Johann Adam Hiller’s treatise *Anweisung zum musikalisch-zierlichen Gesange* of 1780 gives clues into the perspective of voice classification around the time of Mozart and Haydn. Cotton observes that Hiller’s writing indicates he “attributed longer ranges more to diligence than to physiological determinants.” The implication is of a very different world for singers in the eighteenth century than those of today. Soprano Renee Fleming repeatedly describes the pressure to fit her repertoire into a tidy package in her autobiography *The Inner Voice: the Making of a Singer*. In her case the pressure was for a package of Mozart and lyric Strauss heroines. The packaging would make her more marketable and easier for casting directors to conceptualize her place in their upcoming seasons. If Hiller’s writing is indicative of a dominant perspective of the time, then the ability to take on a larger repertoire between various *Fächer* would have been encouraged. Examining the careers of García, Rubini, and de l’Isle who sang both baritone and tenor roles it seems this flexibility was highly desired by the industry of eighteenth century and nineteenth century singing. The ‘box’ of classification was less important than the product of the singer.

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216 Cotton, “Voice Classification,” 32.

The most famous of the three tenors was (and still is) Manuel García. Radomski and Fitzlyon report this internationally acclaimed tenor was renowned for his performances in the role of Il Conte Almaviva for the Madrid premiere of Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1802. García’s performance as a tenor of what is now considered a baritone role (and in García’s day was labeled as a bass role) may be for several reasons. The opera itself lacks a leading tenor role, and García may have simply opted for a role of greater prominence. The houses may also have made concessions in the vocal writing for García to accommodate the celebrity. García himself may have been a larger tenor, possibly a spinto or heavier, with the heft, range, and endurance to include some baritone roles in his repertoire. Distinctions between types of tenors where not made in García’s time as they are today. Finally, an answer may lay in García’s training, or lack thereof, at this point in time. García began formal training after his professional career was already underway. His studies began roughly four years before the premiere of Rossini’s *Il barbière di Siviglia* in Rome in 1816. After his study in Italy, García was undoubtedly solidified in his technique and in the tenor repertoire for which he gained international fame. García and his family toured internationally to great acclaim before he returned to Europe and became an equally acclaimed voice teacher. By this time, the tenor had risen to prominence as one of the most prized voices of opera. Even in the height of his fame, however, he kept the title character of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, a role which even baritones consider lacking in high notes, in his repertoire. The bass baritone Ildebrando D’Arcangelo performed this role for the 2014


Salzburg Festival and the San Francisco Opera in 2017. The famed bass Nicola Rossi-Lemeni sang the Don for the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Metropolitan Opera. Similarly the American bass Peter Volpe, who achieved international acclaim for some of opera’s lowest repertoire, is a highly sought after Don Giovanni. The sheer fact that García was able to include Mozart’s Don Giovanni and Almaviva along with his bel canto tenor repertoire points to an extraordinary instrument, certainly one that would not be contained by one vocal category.

In addition to García, Mécène Marié de l’Isle, who created Donizetti’s Tonio in La fille du régiment with its many daunting High C’s and Giovani Battista Rubini, who created the role of Arturo in Bellini’s Puritani with its notorious high F (F⁵), fit this category. In discussing the voice of Rubini, Julian Budden describes his use of falsetto as opposed to head-voice in the upper register and the musical choices he was forced to make in accommodation of this technique.

During Rubini’s career the tenor, traditionally the young hero of opera buffa, was assuming the same role in the serious genre. In the new Romantic opera of the 1830s Rubini had at his disposal an intensity of expression that far outshone the cool heroics of the castratos and their female successors. His phenomenally high range, which induced Bellini to include a high F for him in the third act of I puritani, must be understood in the context of the convention of his day, when no tenor was expected to sing any note higher than a’ with full chest resonance. The upper fifth of Rubini’s range was in the less expressive falsetto register. In order to avoid ugly changes of timbre and to gather

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strength for high notes, he had not only to exaggerate differences between loud and soft, but to sing whole numbers in a whispering *pianissimo* instead of allowing his voice to expand naturally and easily. He is also credited with introducing Romantic mannerisms such as the ‘sob’. He was neither good-looking nor a good actor; his strength lay in the beauty of his tone and the natural artistry of his phrasing.\(^{223}\)

Rubini exhibits a number of vocal sacrifices which are indicative of what would be termed ‘faulty’ technique today. The severe register breaks and inability to sing a full range of dynamics throughout his voice would preclude him from singing those roles today. Some of these issues may stem from using falsetto instead of *voce piena in testa* (true head voice). Miller, in fact, warns that frequent use of the falsetto may induce “pathological conditions.”\(^{224}\) The loss of power, stamina, and drastic timbre changes are often seen when voices are forced into the wrong tessitura for too long.

Like García, Rubini was also successful with baritone characters such as the titular role of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, although he occasionally sang Ottavio.\(^{225}\) Similarly the French Tenor, Mécène Marié de l’Isle found greater success in heavier roles such as Max in Weber’s *Der Freischütz* and eventually changed to baritone entirely. He sang “Tonio in Donizetti’s *La fille du régiment* (1840). Engaged at the Opéra in 1841, he sang Eléazar (*La Juive*), Max (*Der Freischütz*), Arnold (*Guillaume Tell*), Raoul (*Les Huguenots*), Fernand (*La favorite*) and Robert le diable. He then became a baritone and, after singing in Italy, in 1848 he returned to the Opéra, where he sang the title role of *Guillaume Tell*, Nevers (*Les Huguenots*), Alphonse (*La favorite*)


\(^{224}\) Richard Miller, *Training Tenor Voices*, 130.

and Raimbaud (Le comte Ory)." That these tenors had the facility to accomplish roles such as Mozart’s Almaviva (García) and Don Giovanni (García and Rubini) as well Donizetti’s Enrico (Marié de l’Isle) reveals either a sizable lyric (or larger) baritone with and excellent upper extension and falsetto or a truly sizable tenor voice. In either case it is unlikely that any of the three aforementioned tenors possessed instruments similar to the those singing the bel canto repertoire today.

It is this historical perspective to which William Alex Martin advises returning in his dissertation Highs and Lows of the Baritenor Voice: Exploring the Other Male Hybrid. Martin argues that baritenor voices should not be moved towards tenor or baritone but rather trained as Zwischenfächer voices that encompass repertoire from both sides. His basis for this concept comes from the modern bass baritone which he describes as a readily acceptable male-hybrid voice between the lyric baritone and lyric bass. He argues that the baritenor should be another recognized male hybrid voice type and provides a list of repertoire from the art song and operatic repertoire that would be appropriate to such voices. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, the term bass baritone is a bit of a misnomer. The term originated with Wagner who desired a voice that could sing in the baritone range with the power and dark color of a bass. This ideal for characters such as Wotan and Fliegender Holländer were the lower equivalent of his Heldentenor, a tenor that could sing with the power and color of a baritone. The bass baritone

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label eventually overtook the repertoire of the former *basso cantante* or singing (lyric) bass. Professionally, however, the overlapping of repertoire by lower male voices goes well beyond the concept of the bass baritone. Roles such as Escamillo and Don Giovanni are regularly sung by voices called bass baritone, bass, lyric baritone, Verdi baritone, and dramatic baritone.

There is an equivalent label to Martin’s professional baritenor found in the female *Fächer*. She is called simply a *Zwischen* and encompasses literature between the mezzo and soprano repertoire. Roles such as Santuzza in Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Lady Macbeth in Verdi’s *Macbeth* are often recognized as a part of this repertoire. Richard Miller describes this voice as “possessing the weight and color of a dramatic soprano, she can manage much of the same literature as the dramatic, but her most comfortable range is closer to that of the mezzo-soprano.”

Like Martin, Jennifer Allen advocates for the use of the Zwischen label. She notes that after Wagner with his demanding orchestrations and strong associations between vocal qualities, such as power or timbre and character assignment, the tendency to classify with more precise specificity increased. Allen’s observation helps to explain why a prominent tenor such as García could be widely celebrated in both tenor and baritone roles in a pre-Wagnerian world but why Placido Domingo has received heavy criticism for his attempts to add baritone roles to his repertoire.

One can hardly imagine that men such as Lawrence Brownlee or Juan Diego Florez, who soar through the most difficult fioratura of the leggiero tenor repertoire with ease and accuracy could also produce the vocal thunder expected for Don Giovanni’s demise or the letter duet

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between Enrico and Lucia. Part of the difference can be explained by the aforementioned change from falsetto dominant high notes to voice di petto production for the tenorial tessitura. Could such careers be possible after this transition? Certainly the most controversial example in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries would be that of Placido Domingo who has sung leading tenor and baritone roles at the top international level. Most recently his switch to predominantly baritone roles after a career as a commercially and artistically praised tenor has been met with commercial success but heavy artistic criticism. In a recent interview Christa Ludwig chided “Placido Domingo will soon be singing Sarastro. What’s the point of that? Or does he have nothing but the music? I find it sad when one cannot get away from work — it is ridiculous.”

Domingo’s Zwischen work is actually not a new phenomenon, it spans his entire career. He began working as a baritone with his parent’s Zarzuela company in Mexico but his professional operatic debut began in the leading tenor role of Alfredo in Verdi’s La Traviata in Monterrey. This was followed by 12 roles with the Israel National Opera and his 1968 Metropolitan Opera debut as Maurizio in Cilea’s Adriana Lecouvreur. In 1992, while in the midst of a career as one of the greatest living interpreters of the tenor repertoire, Domingo released a studio recording with Claudio Abbado, Kathleen Battle, and Frank Lopardo of Rossini’s Il barbiere di Siviglia in which Domingo sang the lyric baritone role of Figaro. Music critic Richard Osborne praised Domingo’s performance in the role for his artistry. At the same time he noted the

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difficulty in hearing a tenore di grazia such as Lopardo as the noble Almaviva against the robust tenor of Domingo as the working-class Figaro. Osborne added this could be due to what he heard as a baritone quality in Lopardo’s voice or the difficulty of casting another tenor against the robust voice of Domingo.231 That same year Domingo was featured on a live recording of the first act of Wagner’s Die Walküre singing Sigmund to Deborah Polaski’s Brünnhilde under the direction of Barenboim with the Berlin Staatsoper. Domingo would reprise this role in 2003 with Washington National Opera - a performance praised by The New York Times.

If this executive footrace from one side of the country to the other looks like conflict of interest -- the boss making a star of himself -- remember that Mr. Domingo’s presence sells tickets on both coasts and that doubling his responsibilities only begins to satisfy the appetites of a man who thrives on constant motion. And if readers of opera reviews are tired of hearing about the geriatric miracle of a tenor well into his 60’s, let me just confirm it. Siegmund on Saturday was the work of thoroughgoing vocal health. Tenors 25 years younger would be hard pressed to match it.232

Holland’s glowing review of Domingo’s Wagnerian hero also points out an important aspect of his career. Domingo’s name is enough to make a production a commercial success. Currently at a record breaking 148 roles, Plácido Domingo may be the exception instead of the rule.

Nevertheless his work proves that the Zwischen life is possible.

Domingo, though a prime example of a baritenor, is certainly not the only singer to move between Fächer. Regina Resnik began her career as soprano, making her acclaimed Met debut in


1944 as Leonora in Verdi’s *Il Trovatore*. She continued to perform internationally as a soprano but noticed her voice adopting a darker timbre. She was described by some as a soprano with a low extension and others as a true mezzo soprano with an upper extension. She eventually switched her repertoire to mezzo-soprano and continued to garner international acclaims in roles such as Mistress Quickly in Verdi’s *Falstaff*, the Countess of Tchaikovsky’s *Queen of Spades*, and the titular heroine of Bizet’s *Carmen*. The opposite switch has been seen from Waltraud Meier, who, like Domingo, has actively sung roles from the higher and lower primary *Fächer*. Meier’s career includes Wagnerian mezzo roles such as Ortrud in Wagner’s *Lohengrin* and the titular heroine of the same composer’s *Tristan und Isolde*. Perhaps Meier represents the ultimate example of *Zwischen* singing because her seasons regularly include both mezzo soprano and soprano repertoire. Although she has been praised internationally for performances of Isolde, Kundry, and Sieglinde, Meier has refused to take on the crown jewel of Brünnhilde. "It frustrates me that pitch is half a tone higher than it was in Wagner's time. If it was that bit lower, I could sing Brünnhilde, as well as Strauss's Salome and Verdi's Lady Macbeth. But today they lie just too high for me - I could not get them into my throat."

We have not yet discussed the raising of the concert pitch, but this has certainly been a problem for singers. The high notes that helped give rise to the prima donna in the seventeenth century and eighteenth century were lower than the altissimo pitches of today. The role of

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Kundry in Wagner’s *Parsifal* was created by the Austrian Soprano Amelia Materna. Like Meier she began as a dramatic mezzo soprano singing roles such as Amneris in Verdi’s *Aida* and Ortrud in *Lohengrin*. In addition to creating the role of Kundry, she was the first soprano to sing Brünnhilde in *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*, and the first complete *Ring Cycle*. The standard concert tuning pitch of $A_4 = 440$ Hz was established in 1939. The previous standard was established in Paris in 1859 at $A_4 = 435$ Hz. Anthony Baines and Nicolas Temperley note that historically, in spite of intended standards, there has been variation throughout Europe. French Baroque Pitch could be as low as $A_4 = 392$ Hz, our modern $G_4$, and they report historical standards as high as $A_4 = 466$ Hz, roughly our modern $B$-flat$_4$. These adjustments seem small but they have large ramifications at the top end of the register. Scott McCoy notes that higher notes require more energy not only because they must vibrate faster, but also because the difference in frequency between the pitches is greater. This is where one must remember that pitch is a perception of frequency but not the equivalent of frequency. When we move from 220 Hz to 440 Hz the ear perceives a jump of one octave from $A_3$ to $A_4$. Vibrations have increased by 220 Hz. The next $A$ continues that doubling of frequency. For the ear to perceive the same distance of one more octave to $A_5$ we must increase vibrations twice as much (440 cycles this

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time) to reach 880Hz.\textsuperscript{237} This can be readily seen in figure 4-1 in which McCoy shows how the same perceived distance on the keyboard corresponds to the actual measure of frequency.

\textbf{Figure 4-1 McCoy’s Display of Frequency and Pitch}\textsuperscript{238}

![Figure 4-1 McCoy’s Display of Frequency and Pitch](image)

For the singer, this means a measurable difference between singing the semitones at the top of his or her range versus the lower end. The general raising of the tuning pitch only exacerbates this problem. Meier’s lament describes a trouble for all singers. While instruments in the orchestra and its tuning evolved greatly through the eighteenth century and nineteenth century, the voice reached its basically final form with the evolution of \textit{Homo sapiens}. With essentially the same instrument, we are attempting to sing over instruments of greater resonance and power, while enduring the tessitura of higher frequencies.

Domingo, Resnik, and Meier serve as success stories for \textit{Zwischen} voices in the modern age. It bears observing, however, that these artists achieved international stardom within one primary vocal category (Domingo as a Tenor, Resnik as a Soprano, Meier as a Mezzo Soprano)


\textsuperscript{238} McCoy, \textit{Inside View}, 19.
before they moved into the other repertoire. This made their out-of-\textit{Fach} repertoire less of a financial gamble for professional organizations producing the performances. As Jennifer Allen points out, however, fame is not a guaranteed license to embrace once’s \textit{Zwischen} characteristics. As an example, she points to the harsh criticism that mezzo soprano Cecilia Bartoli has received for her performances and recordings of soprano roles. One could make the same observation of the negative criticism for Domingo’s work as a \textit{verismo} baritone. It may be more accurate to say that fame is not necessarily a license to embrace new repertoire but it certainly garners support for the artist.

When a study such as this presents seemingly contradictory material what is the correct conclusion? There are many factors that ultimately govern success in any performing career. The aforementioned artists prove the possibility that repertoire can be flexible beyond a single vocal label. For the baritenor, the decision of repertoire and marketability should be made with his teacher, coaches, agents, etc., in consideration of the opportunities he has and his own vocal abilities. The same is holds true for all singers. Ultimately the correct answer lies in the honest and judicious examination of their voice. Meier refused the role of Brünnhilde because the tessitura of that role didn’t fit her voice as other dramatic soprano roles. She did not attempt the role anyway on the logic “I’ve entered this \textit{Fach}, now all the roles are mine.”

One thing common to the singers discussed as \textit{Zwischen} success stories is the development of a solid vocal technique. The correct repertoire, whether or not it crosses vocal categories, cannot be solidified when technical deficiencies exist in the voice. Allen and Martin both warn of dangers related to mislabelling a voice and attempting to move them in the wrong
directions. Miller says unmistakably: “Determining the Fach of a singer is not the primary concern for the teacher. Of much greater importance is the freeing of the instrument from the tensions of malfunction and from preconceived ideas that so often contribute to incorrect vocal production. Only then is it possible to determinate eventual vocal category.”

In the discussion that follows common faults are examined. The physiology of each fault is discussed from the research of multiple pedagogues as well as their recommended solutions.

**Physiological Development vs. Vocal Faults: Fixing What Can Be Fixed**

Time is a common obstacle for many singers. The juvenile instrument, with rare exception, does not contain the power, stamina, and wider range of the mature voice. As the singer reaches maturity, useable vocal range expands. The singer generally gains the greater stamina needed for more demanding operatic roles. The instrument grows in size and resonance. Singers may acquire notes on the top or the bottom or possibly on both ends. Areas of the voice that may have been weak eventually “catch up” to match the other registers. This catch-up happens through a combination of physiological maturity and improvements to vocal technique. Both are necessary. Richard Miller notes that “an important aspect of voice training is to recognize what are reasonable expectations at appropriate developmental stages for each category. The potential dramatic soprano should not be expected to accomplish tasks suited to her soubrette counterpart

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of the same chronological age.” Miller’s statement brings two important facts to light: (1) age plays an important role in vocal development, and (2) different voice types often follow different developmental paths. For the voice teacher this means that a young lyric baritone and young dramatic baritone will not have same facility with their instrument. Similarly the young lyric baritone may gain access to his top and produce ringing a ringing B-flat₄ while a young dramatic tenor of the same age struggles to even reach a B₄ or C₅. Miller underscores the latter point by explaining voices “of dissimilar size are not meant to attempt identical maneuvers at comparable periods of technical development.” That young lyric baritone with an easy top demonstrates better high notes than a young dramatic tenor struggling with his passaggio.

The problem in terms of vocal classification comes when the qualities exhibited by the juvenile voice point in a false direction and/or to multiple Fächer; for example, if the baritone in the above example produces easy high notes but struggles with the lower end of his range. Now add a brighter timbre to the mix. The young lyric baritone, at this point in his development seems more like a future tenor than a baritone. The range and timbre both seem more closely aligned to a young tenor voice. Similarly if the robust tenor voice struggles with the upper passaggio but exhibits a warm rich sound and ease at the bottom his voice will seem to indicate the qualities of a bright baritone. Now let’s assume both of these young singers exhibit registration events at C₄ and F₄. Both singers like the same general tessitura. The struggling tenor sits a little higher in general but never approaches anything above the passaggio with ease. There is a little extra warmth that opens up in the baritone on the low end, but his voice takes on a gravelly

241 Miller, *Soprano Voices*, 5-6.
unsteadiness below C₃ and he has no problem consistently producing high notes. Because the teacher does not possess psychic abilities to foresee the mature instrument, he or she can only work with the voice in its current state. If the singer and teacher are not committed to the needs of the voice as it exists in that moment, they will likely waste time pursuing a false path. Quite often, this false path will lead to technical problems that develop as a direct result of trying to fit a voice into the wrong mold. Return for a moment to the clothing analogy. Wearing ill-fitting shoes for a day can be inconvenient or even painful. Over time the wrong shoes can lead to severe foot, knee, hip, and back problems.²⁴³

In terms of strictly physical developments, time is the only cure. There are, however, often more factors at play which can be addressed by the teacher before the singer reaches maturity. These factors are vocal faults — problems in the singer’s technique that must be addressed. These faults can obscure the four criterion discussed above and obscure the true nature of the singer’s voice. In the case of the Zwischenstimmen it may be several vocal faults that hide behind the one major symptom.²⁴⁴ Voice classification in young voices is both difficult and dangerous because the teacher cannot readily hear what is a matter of physiological development and what is a side-effect of any number of possible vocal flaws.


²⁴⁴ Zwischenstimmen literally “between voices.” Like Zwischenfächer it refers to voices that fall between the labels of vocal classification systems.
Nasality: the False Squillo That Elevates

When discussing the baritenor one such obstacle is nasality. Normally the issue of nasality is a simple problem that requires a simple solution. In the case of the baritenor, this can be the tip of a much more complicated iceberg. James McKinney identifies several of the issues in this complex problem:

One of the difficulties in discussing nasal resonance is reaching a consensus on how much of it is good and desirable, and what limit must be passed before it becomes excessive. Another difficulty is that there are two distinct, but closely related, tone qualities that are identified as nasality. In some writings it is not easy to determine which type is being discussed.245

As McKinney explains, the issue of nasality has become a sort of Pandora’s Box in vocal pedagogy; it brings more than a fair amount of controversy, complication, and ambiguity. For example, is nasality really ever desirable? Whether or not it’s desirable it’s certainly necessary for the production of nasal phonemes. Without the ability to make nasal and non-nasal sounds the singer sacrifices clarity of diction. Should nasal phonemes be used as part of the solution or will that make the problem worse? What kinds of nasality are happening? What causes these different types of nasality? Are these causes of nasality inherently wrong or merely an exaggeration of something right?

For a moment, let us return to the physiology discussed in Chapter 1. The velum raises to close off the nasal passages when performing actions such as swallowing or vomiting. In this sense it is similar to the epiglottis, it functions as a valve that directs air, food, etc., as needed to the proper entrance or exit of the body. For singing and speech it is the velum that directs sounds

towards or away from the nasal cavity, not any part of the nasal cavity itself. Ralph Appelman notes that:

The nasal cavity extends from the floor of the cranium to the roof of the oral cavity. The septum divides this large cavity into two separate cavities call fossae, which act as resonators in the production of nasal sounds. The nasal fossae are not amenable to change, and their conformation cannot be changed during phonation at any pitch or intensity. The nose has no other significant resonating cavities. This nasal cavity has two orifices, the anterior nares at the front of the nose and the posterior nares at the opening into the oropharynx. Neither of these orifices is subject to control.²⁴⁶

Most pedagogues agree that a nasal timbre is undesirable. In his article “The Seduction of Nasality,” Scott McCoy outlines more specifically that nasality impairs diction, projection, and vocal beauty.²⁴⁷ The presence of nasality gives the impression of a more forward sound and, because of its similarity in timbre to squillo, creates the false impression of a sound that will cut to the back of a concert hall. In terms of our criterion, nasality most directly affects timbre. The nasal aspects tend to overpower the dark colors of the voice and give a false impression of brightness. The key to this particular puzzle is in the overtones. “While nasality can give the illusion of increased resonance, it might actually diminish the impact of the singer’s formant.”²⁴⁸

Even if the young singer is not producing an atrociously nasal sound, he may produce a seemingly forward or bright sound that doesn’t project in larger spaces. In a young tenor, this is undesirable, but does nothing to obscure his primary voice classification. For a baritone, however, the resulting vocal color moves closer to the tenor end of the spectrum. In this


particular instance the vocal fault of nasality renders timbre inert as a criterion. Before the timbre is evaluated, nasality must be remedied.

Both Vennard and McKinney identify two separate nasalities which they describe as the “honk” and the “nasal twang.”\textsuperscript{249,250} The first type, the honk, is described as a post-nasal sound which results from a lowered velum. Pedagogues such as Lilli Lehmann, refer to this nasality as “open singing,” which she too differentiates from the nasal twang.\textsuperscript{251} Alderson describes this nasality as the result of a velum “so low that nearly all of the sound waves are directed into the nose.”\textsuperscript{252} Similarly Kristin Linklater points to “a lazy soft palate, which may sit flaccidly on the back of the tongue, and the tongue itself which can bunch up at back, driving the sound sharply into the nose.”\textsuperscript{253} Berry seems in agreement with Linklater’s suggestion of a possible combination of tongue and velum position in his prescription of exercises built on the stop-plosive consonants [g] and [k].\textsuperscript{254} He adds to these exercises the use of nasal consonants combined with closed and open vowels “in words such as ‘moon,’ ‘morning,’ and so on to begin

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{249} William Vennard, \textit{Singing; the Mechanism and the Technic}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Los Angeles: Carl Fischer, 1967), 93.
\item McKinney, Vocal Faults, 134-138.
\item Lehmann, \textit{How to Sing}, (Luton: Andrews UK, 2010), 76.
\item Kristin Linklater in Robert Barton and Rocco Dal Vera \textit{The Voice Onstage and Off} (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College, 1995), 374-375.
\item Prescribed by Berry as “kekekeke…then AH very open gegegege…then AH very open.” In Barton & Dal Vera, \textit{The Voice} 374.
\end{itemize}
with until you get a yawning feeling on the vowel.”

Vennard advocates for the total elimination of any nasal quality in the sound and describes nasal resonance as a “negligible” part of the singing voice. Miller addresses this type of nasality when he discusses “insufficient closure of the velopharyngeal port;” he proposes the need for a flexible velum but echoes Vennard’s opinion of total closure for non-nasals. These statements are supported by Appelman who asserts that the nasopharynx “is a closed resonator and does not serve a primary function during the production of most vowels and consonants because the uvula is pressed firmly against the pharyngeal wall, thus closing the entrance to the nasopharynx.” McCoy echoes the need for flexibility in velar position, especially in the French language with its use of sustained nasal vowels, but explains that this flexibility includes “firm closure of the velum against the pharynx” for stopped consonants. Rodenburg seems to focus on the agility of the velum rather than its position in his statement that nasality results when the “adjustment to the soft plate is too sluggish.” Lilli Lehmann echoes the same agility noting that good singing incorporates a full gambit of nasal and non-nasal colors. Doscher cites a study by Fritzell which found “there is considerable dimensional variation among singers.”

259 McCoy, Seduction of Nasality, 580.
260 Patsy Rodenberg, as quoted in Barton & Dal Vera, *Voice*, 374
the findings of P. J. Rousselot who cites the research of Passavant on velar position in relation to vocal timbre. Passavant found that a velopharyngeal opening of 12mm² did not affect the quality of the vowel.263 McKinney similarly observes “that in some singers the closure of the nasal port is seldom complete, yet there is no obvious nasality.”264 Passavant’s observations highlight the important fact that all bodies contain variation and therefore may reach the same ends in slightly varying ways. Whether or not the velum is fully closed against the pharyngeal wall is less important that whether that closure is sufficient.

Miller recommends using the fingers to occlude and release the nostrils while sustaining a pitch.265 This exercise will produce a change in vocal timbre if the velopharyngeal closure is insufficient. Miller also notes that this exercise “often brings about an immediate solution to hypernasality.”266 If the nasal resonance is enough to create a difference in timbre when the nostrils’s are occluded, then it’s too much. In light of Passavant’s research, which shows that a slight opening does not affect the timbre of the voice the better focus would be the resulting timbre and not the exact velar position.

For correcting a lowered velum, which allows nasal dominance, McKinney suggests activating the palatal muscles with a regime of exercises that involves a mix of nasal consonants, especially [ŋ], and plosive consonants that “require closure of the nasal port.”267 These

263 P. J. Rousselot, Prinicipes de Ponetique Experimentale (Paris: H. Didier, 1924), 268.
264 McKinney, Vocal Faults, 135.
265 Miller, Solutions for Singers, 112.
266 Ibid.
exercises, in theory, will then build strength and coordination in the small muscles needed to achieve both the lift needed for a non-nasal sound and the flexibility to correctly form nasal consonants and vowels when needed. Conversely Lessac warns against the use of “words with nasal consonants” and instead focuses on exercises that reinforce a non-nasal tone. McCoy joins McKinney and Miller in advocating for flexibility (or perhaps more accurately agility) of the velum, but cautions the use of nasal consonants which “will ensure that the palate is low and air is diverted through the nose.” He too stresses the need for nasal consonants to be balanced by sounds that will require full velopharyngeal closure. Lehmann points toward the use of vocal exercises that employ French words that will require the agile raising and lowering of the velum as well as words that begin with plosive consonants such as [b] and [p] because the non-nasal consonants allow for singing with the velum elevated. Additionally McCoy suggests non-vocal exercises such as having the student exhale entirely “through the nose, intermittently interrupting the airstream by lifting the palate to close the nasal port.”

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268 It should be noted that although McKinney does advocate the use of nasal consonants as a part of the corrective methods for post-nasal nasality he warns that nasal vowels, such as those found in the French language, should be avoided.

269 Arnold Lessac in Barton & Dal Vera, Voice Onstage and Off, 374-375.


271 Lehmann, How to Sing, 76-83.

Alderson gives a word of caution regarding direct manipulation of the soft-palate.

Even if a singer can be made aware of the movement of the velum, the sensations can be misleading. When a singer feels a lot of arching movement across the soft palate, it is normal to assume the velum is in its optimally high position. Usually, however, a singer who feels this sensation has actually stiffened the velum and the walls of the oro-pharynx. The result is a disappointedly harsh sound whose main virtue will be high volume. It is often more efficient to train the result of raising the velum instead of concentrating on the actual movement.”

Alderson suggests work on the breath as a means of indirectly regulating the movement of the velum. She asserts that different types of inhalation will have a direct effect on the positioning of the pharynx, larynx, tongue and velum. She advises “directing the airflow across the hard palate and molars during inhalation,” will result in a relaxation of the throat and appropriate raising of the velum — setting the internal mechanisms properly, without direct manipulation, for good singing. Alderson is also supported by the research of Barbara Doscher and Berton Coffin. X-rays of the tenor Enrico Caruso and baritone Pasquale Amato revealed that the singer’s concept of full or partial closure is not always aligned with the physiological reality. Caruso insisted that he did not experience full closure of the nasal port but instead used a raised velum combined with active nasal resonance. They report that the tenor was shocked that his velum did fully close against the posterior wall of the pharynx. Conversely Amato did not experience full velopharyngeal closure. This supports Alderson’s claim that many sensations associated

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275 Doscher, *Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 120.

with the soft palate are not what they seem. Trying to manipulate such faulty variables will prove ultimately ineffective if not detrimental.277

Further support for Alderson’s position is found in the sage advice of Lamperti who imparts, “good singing is the elimination of unnatural local efforts without weakening the intensity of the voice.”278 Like Alderson, Lamperti warns the singer from obsessively pursuing muscular control, describing the production and placement of the voice as “natural phenomena.”279 Instead he points towards efforts which will elicit the desired muscular response. Lamperti’s approach works to incorporate the instinctive responses of the body to achieve the desired results. In the treatment of nasality Lamperti advises the use of nasal and non-nasal exercises to smooth problems on both ends of the chiaroscuro spectrum. “To cure the ‘nasality’ of the consonant ‘m,’ cross it with ‘b,’ as if you had a ‘cold in the head.’ The guttural quality of ‘b’ disappears when combined with ‘m.’ It then vibrates more on the lips.”280 Lamperti makes similar recommendations between the phonemes [n] and [d] as well as [ŋ] with the syllable [ig]. Along with these exercises he gives the warning to use them “homeopathically or they will do more harm than good.”281 Lamperti’s advice ultimately moves in the same direction as McCoy and McKinney, looking for proper balance of the voice and use of the breath instead of obsessive

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278 Lamperti, Vocal Wisdom, 87.
279 Lamperti, Vocal Wisdom, 88.
280 Lamperti, Vocal Wisdom, 86-87.
281 Lamperti, Vocal Wisdom, 87.
focus on the elimination of a singular vocal fault or muscular action. His exercises increase the 
agility of the velum so that nasal and non-nasal phonemes are possible.

The second type of nasality, the twang, describes a harsh penetrating timbre that 
dominates the voice. It is “associated with a high overtone somewhere in the range of 
2500-2800Hz.” McKinney is quick to point out that this particular fault, though associated 
with nasality, is not the result of a lowered velum but rather pharyngeal constriction. As such he 
advises a solution that begins with examining both posture and breath support. These 
observations are supported by Margaret Greene who notes that tension surrounding both pharynx 
and larynx can result in a nasal timbre. Both Greene and McKinney cite the elevated larynx as 
a possible contributor to this type of nasality. Miller makes similar observations from the data 
made possible by modern medical technology. “The recent technique of flexible fiberoptic 
examination of the larynx (fiberoptic nasopharyngolaryngoscopy) which permits the vocal folds 
to be observed during nearly optimal conditions for singing supports the assumption that certain 
laryngeal configurations appear to accompany nasality.” Similarly McCoy warns that nasality 
can become a dangerous crutch in the male passaggio because it initially seems to make singing 
in this area easy. With an elevated larynx, the reinforced second harmonics combined with the 
bright buzz of the nasal resonator resemble a voice moving in the direction of a balanced squillo

282 McKinney, Vocal Faults, 135.
283 McKinney, Vocal Faults, 137-138.
285 Miller, Structure of Singing, 295.
with ease in the passaggio. A raised larynx effectively substitutes depth of sound, vocal endurance, and vocal flexibility for temporary ease of traversing the passaggio. Unfortunately this sacrifice also leads to reduced ease and resonance of the top voice where the constricted pharyngeal space caused by raising the larynx becomes costly to the singer. Titze notes “a raised larynx crowds the hyoid bone, the tongue and the jaw. Any tissue that is raised in the neck will displace tissue above it, making articulatory movements more difficult.”

Titze notes that the raised larynx position proves more effective in the belting voice where the singer “trades the warmth and dark timbre in the classical style for brightness and power in the belt.”

Let us now apply this idea to our young lyric baritone. The natural timbre of his voice is darker than a tenor but brighter than a bass. The raised larynx strengthens the tone in the 2,500 Hz - 2,800 Hz region. This is within the frequency range of the singer’s formant (ping) of 2,400 Hz - 3,200 Hz. Although the fundamental pitch remains the same, the relative strength of the upper harmonics (the spectral envelope) has changed. Timbre or tone color, is how the human ear perceives the spectral envelope. Thus, the change in timbre of a raised larynx can create a change in tone color that the ear perceives as similar to the ring of a balanced chiaroscuro tone. The teacher’s and singer’s instincts to consider tenor repertoire are reinforced by the seeming ease of the young baritone’s passaggio. The voice is “opening up” to higher ease and brightening in timbre. The lyric baritone, spiel tenor, and Heldentenor are all near the tenor-baritone border and

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can conceivably experience registration events at C\textsubscript{4} and F\textsubscript{4}.\textsuperscript{290} The nasal twang leaves us with registration events that could be tenor; a brighter timbre, also pointing to tenor; and increased ease on the high end, more tenor. The elevated laryngeal position can diminish the ease and extent of the low range, less baritone. The elevated larynx will not increase the singer’s endurance for high singing, so the tessitura of the voice does not make the same jump as the range, timbre, and passaggio; but faulty tessitura can take a little time to show itself. Tessitura is a matter of endurance. The young baritone vocalizes to better high notes, possibly even higher high notes, than his young tenor colleagues but finds great frustration when he cannot transfer this progress from vocal etudes to repertoire.

The matter only becomes more complicated, because the two physiological causes of nasality can combine. Alderson notes that the soft-palate and larynx should move in opposite directions. “The velum and larynx always move in opposition to one another. That is, anything that raises the velum lowers the larynx.”\textsuperscript{291} What Alderson describes is the physiological motion of ideal singing. Doscher notes that the opposite is also possible: a raising of the larynx with a lowering of the velum. “Brighter or darker resonance timbres are obtained primarily by the relationship between the soft palate and the larynx, which always move in opposing directions. When the larynx rises, the soft palate descends, and vice versa. Thus the high arch of the palate produces the darker timbre, and the lower arch the brighter one.”\textsuperscript{292} The dreaded marriage of honk and twang into an undesirable union of vocal disaster are indeed possible.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{290}] Miller, \textit{Securing Baritone Voices}, 11.
\item[\textsuperscript{291}] Alderson, “Positioning the Velum,” 26.
\item[\textsuperscript{292}] Doscher, \textit{Functional Unity of the Singing Voice}, 128.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
We have already identified the physiological solution of the nasal honk is sufficient velopharyngeal closure. Depending on the singer that may or may not mean total closure. The solution for a nasal twang is to relax the constriction of the pharynx. In terms of laryngeal position this means that the larynx is suspended in the dynamic equilibrium between the swallowing and yawning muscles.

If the sterno-thyroid primary depressor works antagonistically with the thyro-hyoid primary elevator, the larynx stays in a steady, median position. As a result the space in the pharynx is increased and undesirable tongue tension is avoided. Cooperation between the sterno-thyroid and the crico-thyroid helps the latter stretch the vocal folds more gently and efficiently. The stylo-pharyngeal system, working on the horns of the thyroid cartilage, stretches the cords further for high voice singing, and this same system contributes to the widening of the pharyngeal cavity.293

When sternothyroid and thyrohyoid muscles are kept in equilibrium, as Doscher prescribes, then the larynx is suspended in a stable position that facilitates phonation with the greatest efficiency. The larynx and velum will move in opposition to one another. The exact position will depend on the individual’s structure. Therefore an elevated larynx describes a posture in which the swallowing muscles are overly engaged and the larynx raises above that dynamic equilibrium. When the two nasalities combine, that elevated larynx is accompanied by insufficient velopharyngeal closure. In ideal singing, the opposition of soft-palate and larynx maintains sufficient velopharyngeal closure and the dynamic equilibrium of the swallowing and yawning muscles.

Both the nasal honk and the twang are best fixed by use of breath and not by obsessive muscular management. For the same reasons described by Amy Alderson for avoiding localized

efforts in correcting a low velar position, attempting direct control of the muscles surrounding
the larynx can ultimately lead to disaster. James McKinney suggests using the natural reaction of
a yawn to achieve this lower laryngeal position.

Place an index finger gently on the notch of your larynx. Observe what happens when
you begin to yawn. You will feel the lower jaw drop freely open, the larynx descend
slightly, and a gentle lifting in the area of your soft palate, as cool air goes deep within
your throat and lungs. Now continue the action until it becomes a full yawn, noticing the
tension which develops in the throat and lower jaw. Experiment with trying to speak or
sing (1) in the beginning-of-a-yawn position, and (2) in the full-yawn position. You will
discover that the first position is conducive to easy phonation, while the second is some-
what antagonistic to it.\textsuperscript{294}

McKinney carefully specifies that the ideal position comes from the beginning of the yawn
during which the laryngeal muscles relax.\textsuperscript{295} The larynx then achieves Doscher’s suspended
equilibrium. Starting from the beginning-of-a-yawn position helps the student find a natural
connection to the proper sensations of a freely suspended larynx and reinforce their own innate
instincts to generate the ideal physical response of a larynx that begins in a relaxed position.

Constance Rock advocates this same approach using the inhalation phase of singing to achieve
dynamic equilibrium and then finding sufficient subglottic pressure through \textit{appoggio} to
maintain that equilibrium throughout singing.\textsuperscript{296}

McKinney further explains that “when a singer has made high laryngeal posture a habit,
it can be a difficult one to break.”\textsuperscript{297} In this case he suggests having the singer actually place a

\textsuperscript{294} McKinney, \textit{Vocal Faults}, 130.


\textsuperscript{296} Constance Rock, “The Application of Literature in the Correction of Vocal Faults” (DMA

\textsuperscript{297} McKinney, \textit{Vocal Faults}, 141.
finger on the notch of the thyroid cartilage (Adam’s Apple/Eve’s Apple) once the larynx drops into the beginning-of-a-yawn position. From there the singer can experiment with various images or other concepts that keep the larynx in this suspended equilibrium. The student should not attempt to hold down the larynx with either their fingers or sublaryngeal muscles (yawning muscles). “This problem requires a great deal of patience from both the singer and the teacher, but it can be solved eventually.”

The opposing motion of larynx and velum, either good or bad, should not be taken for granted. McKinney explains although both faults may be present in a singer, solving one will not necessarily fix the other, indicating that the larynx and velum are not inseparably bound in opposition. Speech pathologist Christina H. Kang of the Mayo Clinic in Arizona further notes that while the movement is related it is not always a one-to-one relationship:

One can raise the velum and lower the soft palate, but if you think of the faucial pillars and their attachments, muscle contraction could also pull the velum down and the larynx up thereby shortening the space between the two. Also due to this connection and even the pharyngeal constrictor muscles, there likely has to be some domino effect if one structure moves. I am not convinced there always has to be an exact linear relationship, but there is a cause-effect.

Kang reaffirms the ideal movement in opposite directions of the velum and larynx and further highlights the relationship between the two structures: the movement of one will indeed affect the other. Kang also addresses the possibility that the movement of one structure will not necessarily cause a proportional movement of the other structure in a given direction. As an

298 McKinney, Vocal Faults, 141.

299 McKinney, Vocal Faults, 138-140.

300 Christina H. Kang, Email to Author, March 20, 2012.
example Kang points to Krishka Nayak’s video, *The Diva and the Emcee*, which displays an MRI of a soprano singing. At 2:20-2:26, one can observe the velum and larynx rise in tandem.\(^{301}\)

According to Miller the raised larynx is a legitimate part of *voce finta*, a vocal coloration which is especially used for moments of gentle introspection by “light tenors in particular, and is often used to excess among some baritone *Lieder* singers.”\(^{302}\) Miller notes that:

In *voce finta* (feigned voice) timbre, two conditions prevail: (1) slight laryngeal elevation, and (2) some breath mixture. (The first condition will produce the second). Laryngeal adjustments for ascending pitch in singing are normally undergirded by corresponding adjustments in the torso; in *voce finta*, these adjustments are avoided. Depending on the extent of laryngeal elevation and breath mixture *voce finta* sounds disembodied. This “feigned” timbre can be sung as early as the *primo passaggio*, where increase in breath energy is essential if normal registration events are to happen.\(^{303}\)

In a developing male voice, the young singer may be tempted to substitute *voce finta* for the correct approach to the upper register. The appeal of this approach is the ease of ascending the *zona di passaggio* with a seemingly uniform and very possibly pleasing timbre. Although lyric baritones and tenors use often use *voce finta* as a vocal coloration, it should never be taken as a substitute for true male head voice.\(^{304}\) It is important to develop the full vibrant head voice prior to exploring alternative vocal colors. Both Lamperti and Miller warn against the use of *voce finta* until the student is able to produce a ringing tone that is fully supported and homogenous in timbre with the rest of the voice.\(^{305}\) In the case of a young lyric baritone, the use of *voce finta*

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\(^{302}\) Miller, *Structure of Singing*, 119.

\(^{303}\) Ibid.

\(^{304}\) Ibid.

\(^{305}\) Miller, *Structure of Singing* 119-120.
may obscure the upper and middle registers enough that his voice seems destined for a tenorial future. The lack of breath support, as described by Miller, will result in a lighter sound which is easier to produce. The elevated position of the larynx will further make the accession of the upper voice easier than normal for a young baritone sans proper appoggio. For this baritone in tenor’s clothing, the raised laryngeal position will give false ease to the high notes but not proper longevity. Maintaining the higher tessitura will still prove difficult. As the young baritone masters the skill of appoggio, maintaining the relaxed position of the larynx may prove difficult and cause frustration when singing in the upper register. This can result in a larger timber disturbance between the registers or initially a total inability to effectively reach the upper tones. In time, however, the relaxed position of the larynx will be coupled with proper subglottic pressure due to the coordination of proper breath support, and those initial inconsistencies in the tone will vanish.

The Deep Depression of a Swallowed Tone

It bears mentioning at this point, that there is a reciprocal risk to mistaking nasality, both honk and twang, for forward resonance — doing exactly the opposite. In an effort to prevent nasality, there are those who will mistakenly work to cover or darken the sound to the point that it becomes swallowed (i.e., too far back). This can result in several alarming vocal problems which include: impaired ability to properly produce nasal phonemes, loss of resonance, depressed larynx, pushing, tongue tension, and at the very least muddy diction. This may be of particular
problem in the passaggio where the desire to prevent an overly open sound results in a
swallowed tone devoid of squillo.

McKinney, who advocates using a low laryngeal position, warns against pushing the
larynx too low. “The beginning-of-a-yawn position is ideal for singing and should be cultivated.
The full-yawn position is exaggeratedly low and should be avoided, it is known as the depressed
larynx.” Titze also warns that when the yawn is “carried to an extreme, it produces a dull and
excessively dark sound.” Miller advocates for the stable laryngeal position that does not
change with pitch. Like Constance Rock, these men advocate using the inhalation phase of
singing to find the low but not depressed posture of the larynx (the aforementioned equilibrium
between the yawning and swallowing muscles).

In most male heavy-duty physical activity unrelated to the singing voice, as energy is
increased the larynx assumed a slightly lower posture. Although this is partly the case for
energetic singing as well, it is unnecessary to force the larynx downward, as in the yawn,
in order to “cover” the tone. With proper breath preparation the larynx finds a natural
stabilized lower position. The pharynx also undergoes some additional expansion without
conscious attempts to rearrange it. There is no further need to “open the throat” or to
“spread the pharyngeal wall.” Space is already there. Upon inhalation one senses
“openness” without consciously engendering it. Natural spacial adjustment and
realignment commensurate with the poised larynx - along with the airflow - create a
feeling of openness. At best localized effort to open the throat, or to increase pharyngeal
space, feels like a foreign object has been lodged in the throat.

Miller articulates several important points. (1) The tendency to lower the larynx as energy is
increased. The result is a deeper and seemingly richer sound. In the same way that nasality


308 Miller, *Baritone*, 103.
creates a false *chiaro*, too much space and/or laryngeal depression create a false *oscurro* quality. The resulting sound seems stronger, fuller, and richer. For the singer, this thicker sound may be attractive as a vehicle toward heavier repertoire. The tendency to depress our larynx when grunting out a heavy set at the gym, pushing for a faster sprint time, or cheering at competitive sporting events only complicates the matter because we associate this action with moments of emotional intensity/excitement or when making loud noises. We mistake the *unnatural* depression of the larynx as a *normal* posture. (2) The dangers of micromanaging vocal technique through localized effort apply here as well. Pedagogues frequently warn about this approach, as was seen in the discussion of nasality. Attempting to overthink the natural muscular actions of the human body rarely leads to success. The singer would do better to find triggers that elicit the natural physiological responses. If further acute problems persist, the ailing singer should consult a professional. (3) The dilation of the pharynx happens without a conscious effort to force its expansion. The beginning-of-a-yawn feeling at inhalation for the balanced onset will create the necessary space. Attempting to add further space only inhibits the freedom of the natural voice. Changes to the size and shape of the vocal tract result in adjustments to which specific frequencies are amplified and attenuated. By attempting to hyper expand the pharyngeal space or depress the larynx the singer adjusts the spectral envelope of their sound. This time the forward ring of the singers formant is sacrificed for a darker sound that has less cut — or possibly none at all.

For our young lyric baritone this action may diminish his once easy top. The thicker sound and deeper timbre may encourage him to look toward heavier baritone or bass-baritone
repertoire. Moving into heavier repertoire will prove especially problematic as many of Verdi’s baritone roles require power and ease at the top. $G_4$ and $A_4$ cannot be difficult for the successful singer of this music. Additionally, because this thicker sound sacrifices the forward ring our confused baritone’s voice will be lost in the heavy orchestration and ensembles of larger repertoire. By contrast, although some of the bass-baritone roles may seem to fit better with the richer sound, the polarizing tessitura of the “bassier” ensemble registers will prove exhausting.

For our young tenor, the impression of added color and girth will move his timbre more towards the baritone end of the spectrum. He may also experience difficulty in the passaggio because the weighted voice does not traverse the extreme registers with the same vibrant freedom as the natural sound. He may have to push the voice in order to reach the top register or disconnect from the false weight of the middle resulting in an abrupt color change. As a tenor, who is required to sing in the upper passaggio for great lengths of time, he may now appear to have difficulty maintaining the higher tessitura as the added weight and drastic gear shifting remove ease from the sound. He may also experience a decrease in his endurance for higher sustained passages, whereas the high baritone tessitura will appear a better fit because he can use his falsely thickened middle voice homogeneously throughout that range. By obsessing feverishly on a large back space or low larynx the tenor has instead gone overboard and made himself a baritenor by acquiring vocal faults that limit his instrument. Adopting this approach is discussed by Andrew Zimmerman who explores methods for Heldentenors to diminish vocal resonance and adapt the timbre of their voices to better fit the baritone art song repertoire. “The Heldentenor’s technique focuses primarily upon the ringing voice quality; by leaning (in a
judicious way) toward a yawny production, he may be aided in his attempt to develop warmer, gentler characteristics.”

Zimmerman’s work to alter a natural Heldentenor into an instrument more appropriate for baritone lieder demonstrates precisely how powerfully vocal technique can obscure the criteria of vocal classification. For the purposes of this study, the author maintains that the singer should always use their own natural healthy singing and instead find the repertoire that best fits their own voice.

**Etudes and Arias: the Marriage of Vocal Exercises and Repertoire**

Constance rock describes the discrepancy that often exists between what a singer can do when vocalizing and what the singer can accomplish in literature. Many singers interchange the terms “vocal exercises” and “warming up.” These terms are not equal. Although warming up the voice is one function of vocal etudes, they are primarily a way to train vocal technique. They provide a way for singers to focus on the playing of their instrument without the additional hurdles of language and dramatic communication. Vocal exercises can be used to train agility for coloratura, stamina for the tessitura of an aria or entire role, intonation/pitch accuracy, dynamics in all registers of the voice, and that is only the beginning. Too often we memorize a standard set of vocal exercises that seem to wake up our singing mechanism (and brains) then rush to work on repertoire. Warming up the voice for singing is as important as warming up the body prior to physical exercises; however, vocal exercises should not be limited to this singular function.

309 Andrew Neil Zimmerman, “Siegfried goes to College: Transforming a Heldentenor into a Recital Baritone” (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 2010), 95.

regimen of exercises should include work to strengthen weak areas in the artist's technique.

Exercises can also be gleaned from passages of the singer's own repertoire by using those excerpted passages as vocal etudes without text. In this way the singer simultaneously sharpens vocal technique and works parts of the vocal line into his own voice.

In *Training Tenor Voices* Richard Miller suggests a vast array of exercises for correcting vocal faults in the tenor voice. Fourteen of these exercises are discussed in this study. The first seven, listed in Figure 4-2, are suggested by Miller for helping tenors who have been mislabeled as baritones. These exercises can more generally be of use to victims of oppression from overly heavy production and depressed larynges. He begins with exercises that emphasize agility to help remove overly dark production and the excessive vocal weight discussed above.
Figure 4-2 Miller’s Exercises for Moving from Baritone to Tenor

Exercise 1

Exercise 2

Exercise 3

Exercise 4

Exercise 5

Exercise 6

Exercise 7

Exercises 1-4 work varying degrees of coloratura and help the singer to free unnecessary heft from the vocal production. Exercises 1 and 2 can be ideal aides for those suffering from the depressed larynx. The use of multiple onsets gives the opportunity to practice finding that idea posture of dynamic equilibrium for the larynx. Miller recommends first finding a natural bright position in the speaking voice then using that as a starting place for singing. Nasal consonants will also be helpful in finding a better forward ring in the tone. 312 As Exercises 1-4 become increasingly comfortable, it will helpful to assign repertoire that incorporates this new lighter agility. Constance Rock notes that vocalises “cannot include all potential vocal difficulty that might be present in vocal literature.” 313 Rock advises finding literature that continues the work of correcting the vocal faults one is attempting to correct. In the case of our upward moving singer, two such possibilities from the English song repertoire are Purcell’s “Man is for the Woman made,” and “I’ll sail upon the Dog Star.” The former features less coloratura and sits in a slightly lower tessitura than the latter. For that reason, “Man is for the Woman made” might be the better starting piece. The vocal writing of both pieces features similar melodic patterns to the those found in Exercises 1-4, and approach the top with agile melismas as opposed to sustained pitches that would allow the singer to continue weighting or swallowing the high notes. When making

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312 Richard Miller, Tenor Voices, 135.

the transition from etude to repertoire, it can be helpful to have the singer vocalize through the piece using a favorite phoneme on which they find the most consistently healthy sound. Next the singer can sing with the vowels of the actual text without any consonants to practice the coordination of maintaining a healthy balanced *chiaroscuro* through all vowel shapes of the piece on the specified pitches. This step also helps the singer to focus on the development of a legato line. Finally the consonants can be added to the good legato line. Incorporating Miller’s advice for using the speaking voice, the singer can also speak the text or alternate speaking and singing passages where the overly dark or depressed production tries to reappear.

Exercises 5-7 feature less agility. Of particular interest is Exercise 6, which requires the singer to make a new onset on the high note. As dark production is worked out of the voice, these last three exercises will help the singer focus more on consistency of tone and good legato singing. For the baritenor voice particular attention should be paid to areas in which the timbre becomes inconsistent or feels labored. The singer and teacher can work together to determine if these qualities are the matter of further vocal faults or a sign of singing in the wrong tessitura. Eventually, as vocal freedom is found throughout the range, it will be necessary to begin shaping a body of repertoire appropriate to that liberated instrument.

**Finding the Tessitura**

Even if the voice is free of these vocal faults it is conceivable that some voices will still align as a *Zwischenfach*. Certainly categories for these voices already exist and have been discussed: the Lyric Baritone (esp. the Baryton-Martin), the Character Tenor, and the
Heldentenor, for example. The issue lies in deciding where to go, and how to assimilate repertoire. These voices share the same general register events and overall range. The timbre can also be quite similar. The tessitura required of their repertoire, however, is often the determining factor.

For the Zwischen voices one of the greatest difficulties in repertoire assignment lies in finding that correct tessitura and finding the repertoire that allows them to sing artistically without wandering too high or too low for too long. Quite often this can mean the notorious game of keys where no one wins and everyone wants to quit. The teacher feels frustrated and the student feels homeless. Vocal exercises that emphasis stamina present a helpful means for discovering the current level of comfort for a given tessitura and gradually helping the student find the keys which best suit their voice. In Training Tenor Voices Richard Miller suggests seven exercises for developing the stamina for the tenor register. These exercises are numbered eight through fourteen in Figure 4-3. Using these exercises will provide a platform to examine how they can be used to help the teacher and singer decide whether a move to higher tessitura is the right decision. These exercises should be used after problems related to laryngeal posture have been sufficiently handled.
Figure 4-3  Miller’s Exercises for Tenor Tessitura

Exercise 8

Exercise 9

Exercise 10

Exercise 11

Exercise 12

Exercise 13

Exercise 14

Adapted from Richard Miller, *Training Tenor Voices*, 107-109

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These exercises are printed in the original keys shown by Miller in *Training Tenor Voices*. When using them with a baritenor voice it is advisable to start in lower keys than shown in Figure 4-2. It is necessary to maintain a free and vibrant tone at all times when singing these exercises. The goal is to prepare the singer for repertoire that will sit in a higher tessitura. With each rising semitone it is necessary to evaluate the ease and tone quality. If there is a sound or sensation of strain, then the pitch is too high to be sung well at that time. This process will give student and teacher a clearer picture as to when higher and lower keys are needed. It should also be noted that these exercises will not change a baritone to a tenor through muscular development. Instead, the exercises for stamina are helpful in understanding where the voice has sufficient ease to sing for extended periods of time.

Exercises 8 and 9 can be accomplished by both tenors and baritones with good upper range facility. For the baritone these exercises provide an ideal start to managing the high tessitura of Rossini’s “Largo al factotum” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Indeed it is a helpful jumping off point for the following duet of “All’idea di quel metallo” as well. Mastering both of these pieces is often not a game of high notes, but surviving the passages that lie around the upper passaggio for extended periods. If Exercise 8 and 9 are working sufficiently well and the voice seems ready to embrace the new challenge, then a viable option would be Schubert’s “Halt,” from *Die schöne Müllerin* in the original published key of C Major. The piece is low enough that a high baritone can survive it without undue exhaustion but high enough to further test the tessitura in the context of a piece. The beginning of the piece sits lower than the middle and end. A voice that wants to move into a higher Fach will start to blossom as it reaches the G4,
and finish the lied with an easy vibrant tone. If the singer has to shout the top and sounds noticeably exhausted or less steady by the end of the piece then he would do well to try this piece in a lower key. From the Italian repertoire Alessandro Scarlatti’s “Amor Preparami” is also an excellent choice. The excursions up to an F₄ and D₄-E₄ are an excellent mechanism for broaching the higher tessitura.

Exercises 10-12 move more firmly into the tenorial tessitura, although baritones considering the Verdi repertoire may also consider them useful. All three of these exercises, especially at pitch, will exacerbate a raised larynx, should that problem be a part of the singing. If the larynx can remain relaxed and the singer can move through these exercises with an easy legato (not shouting or breaking between notes), then higher repertoire is the next step. Leonardo Vinci’s “Teco sì, vengo anch’io” proves an excellent example. High baritones may have all of the required notes, but the higher tessitura of Vinci’s piece and continued iterations of A₄ while maintaining the consistent color and resonance necessary to legato singing will prove too difficult for lower voices. If the piece is accomplished but labored, (i.e., more survived than sung) lower repertoire, for at least the present, is advised. The Vinci takes the singer in the tessitura of many lower tenor arias. Arias such as “Dalla sua pace” from Mozart’s Don Giovanni, “Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön” from Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte, and “Quanto è bello” from Donizetti’s L’elisir d’amore are all viable options. By taking this approach, there is less of a chance that the singer will bring bad habits into arias that may play a significant role in their future repertoire. In the Lieder repertoire, “Am feierabend” from Schubert’s Die schöne Müllerin
presents an extended opportunity for upper-range singing as well. Voices that are not ready to maintain this tessitura should consider pieces that lie lower, of which, there are many.

Exercises 13-14 continue to explore the higher tessitura in new ways. Exercise 13 takes the highest arch of all the exercises but also demands a sustained tone near the top of a tenor’s passaggio. The singer (and his teachers) must evaluate whether he can accomplish this with good legato singing as opposed to shouting or resorting to faulty technique. The difficulty in Exercise 14 lies in starting with the high note, then re-articulating it through a legato approach. The decent from A₄ to G₄ then back to A₄ doesn’t allow for a rest. Beginning on the A₄ requires the singer to execute the top with a good onset and continue with good legato singing. Successfully singing these exercises means every high A will match. At this level of vocal proficiency there are many repertoire options available. The choice becomes less limited by “Zwischen issues” and instead more dependent on other qualities of the tenor’s voice. The baritone should have realized his general discomfort with this tessitura. He may also notice that his easy brilliant high notes are becoming more difficult as he spends too much time singing this high. Hopefully he is ready to embrace the repertoire that feels natural and allows him to sing with vocal freedom.
Conclusion

The most succinct solution to vocal classification can be stated in three words: sing what fits.

The difficulty comes in finding that fit. Problems with physical coordination that affect physiological processes necessary to singing can make the correct repertoire feel or sound like a bad fit. The singer can create their own problems by obsessively working to match a desired sound or career trajectory. The “industry” of directors, conductors, critics, connoisseurs, and colleagues add their own pressure to the mix with heavy opinions that can further misguide a confused singer. Worrying about the eventual audition package, Fach, and career trajectory are almost unavoidable in an industry that demands polished excellence from a continually younger crop of singers. Unfortunately, these concerns only lead to the harm of prematurely labelling the voice before it is ready to embrace professional level rigor. Until the underlying vocal faults are properly evaluated and eliminated, the correct repertoire may remain elusive. So the maxim must be modified: sing now what fits now. Even when the vocal faults are ‘solved’ the voice will continue to evolve; the correct repertoire will change as the instrument, the body of the singer, changes with age. The borders between Fächer may seem like immense walls in theory, but singers continually leap back and forth successfully at all levels. The commitment to continuous improvement as a vocal artist demands the disciplined pursuit of higher excellence in all areas of singing. Ultimately, this is the solution for every voice — baritons included.
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