GIOVANNI BOTTESINI:

COMMON PERFORMANCE PRACTICE AND CONCERTO DI BRAVURA

by

DAVIDE SORBELLO

(Under the Direction of Milton Masciadri)

ABSTRACT

Despite Italy's leadership in instrumental music from mid-16th to mid-18th century, the Italian 19th century is strongly identified with opera and vocal music. The generation of instrumental musicians who operated in the middle of the century is represented by virtuoso-composers strongly influenced by vocal and opera style and, formally, by Haydn and Mendelssohn. Giovanni Bottesini is one of these composers.

Since the end of the 18th Century, contemporary chronicles of foreign musicography describe a distorted and artificial view of Italian musical culture, which is typically considered to be exclusively vocal. In 1980 Dahlhaus introduced and emphasized the dualism of Beethoven and Rossini and their esthetic value: the absolute instrumental music as the way to access the metaphysic and deep significances; and the Italian opera portrayed as superficial and oriented to the delight of the senses. This devaluation, which adopted the esthetic of absolute instrumental music as a yardstick, influenced the worldwide approach and interpretation of Italian music, which has not always received artistic respect.

As in much of 19th-century Italian music, Bottesini's work is often exposed to the most disparate interpretations and performances, sometimes using this music to show off technical skills, and

sometimes performing it with a superficial approach, thus rarely in accord with the Italian musical language of that period. Dahlhaus' opinions may be one of the reasons of this superficial view of the composer's music; another reason may be represented by the double bass itself as an instrument which, on its own, is so varied in shapes of the body, techniques of playing and schools. Last but not least, Bottesini, who traveled all over the world performing his music, left us a variety of manuscripts, often several for the same piece, with slight variations in phrasing and articulations. This document will establish a common performance practice for Bottesini's instrumental music based on the *École de Garcia: Traité complet de l'art du chant* written by Manuel García in 1847, which will be used as guide for the bass virtuoso's articulation and expression features. All these aspects translated for the double bass from Garcia's treatise, together with oral traditions and information from Bottesini's method, will be applied to and demonstrated through Bottesini's *Concerto di Bravura*.

INDEX WORDS: Giovanni Bottesini; Bottesini's Performance Practice; Manuel Garcia; Double Bass; Concerto di Bravura; Bottesini's method; 19th century double bass.

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Diploma V.O., Conservatorio di Musica “G. Verdi” di Milano, Italy 2013

(B.M. and M.M. Equivalent)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2021

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May 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A sincere thank you to all those people who, with their time and their experience, supported me in this project. Thanks to Dr. Milton Masciadri and the members of my committee Dr. David Starkweather and Dr. Stephen Valdez.

A special thanks is due to Oleg Bellini, excellent pianist and very good friend, who greatly helped me realize the performance of the lecture recital.

A special mention goes to those who helped me realize that it was necessary to shed light on aspects of the 19th-century Italian music that I used to take for granted.

Last but not least, a warm thanks goes to Maura and my family who supported me with unconditional love, especially in the most difficult times.

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INTRODUCTION

Opera and instrumental music in the Italian Ottocento

The orchestral and instrumental chamber music produced by Italian composers during the 19th century is almost unexplored. Despite the nation's historic leadership in instrumental music from the mid-16th to the mid-18th centuries, the Italian 19th century is strongly identified with opera and vocal music.

Especially in the first half of the 19th century, opera in Italy was preeminent over other genres for many reasons. The importance of opera in Italy finds its foundation in the events that occurred during the transition between the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the social and musical environment of the first half of the 19th century, as we will see later in the paragraph. From the second half, the European influence started penetrating and fusing with the Italian operatic style, giving Italian instrumental music heightened regard by the next generation of composers.

Between 1770 and 1815, the tradition of Italian instrumental music was still vibrant. In fact, not too much time had passed since the generations of Corelli and Tartini, and of Gemignani and Vivaldi, who were composers internationally well-known and esteemed, nor since northern Europeans crossed the Alps to study composition and instrumental virtuosity. Moreover, foreign music institutions assigned prestigious positions to Italian instrumentalists and composers, such as Cambini, Boccherini, Viotti, Cherubini, and Clementi. It is not a coincidence that the catalog published in 1822 by Ricordi, the largest Italian national publisher, contains mostly instrumental

editions: sonatas, dances, marches, variations, caprices (mainly for piano, violin, flute and guitar), piano reductions of symphonies, overtures and dances, piano music for four hands, chamber pieces and instrumental didactic methods.[1] Even composers who subsequently devoted their mature years to opera production wrote instrumental music during this period: Rossini's *Sonate a Quattro* written in 1808, and Donizetti's string quartets written in 1817.

After the first decades of the 19th century, the diaspora of the above-mentioned instrumental composers, the popularity of Rossini's operas in 1815 and the widespread fame of Paganini – who implemented, as composer, a kind of instrumental transposition of Rossinian language – orientated the audience's taste decidedly toward the melodrama and virtuosic opera paraphrases for different instruments and ensembles. Another detrimental factor for instrumental music, at that point, was the consequent lack of interest in investing in instrumental compositions by the major national publishers; in fact the Ricordi catalog from 1825 is predominantly vocal music, or instrumental arrangements, over pure instrumental music.[2] It should be mentioned that the bourgeois social classes, from which the movement of Philharmonic Societies thrived, culturally operated in an elitist direction that did not encourage the diffusion of the instrumental repertoire to the lower classes.

Alongside the change of interest away from instrumental music, something was also changing with slow but important transformations in the area of melodrama. The revolutionary storm at the end of the 18th century influenced the art of Cimarosa and Paisiello, which had delighted the aristocracy during the last half of that century. After decades of republican protests and Napoleonic wars, the revolution was exhausted, and the social function of melodrama

[1] Luca Aversano, "La musica strumentale in Italia tra sette e ottocento: declino o viva tradizione?," *Rivista Italiana Di Musicologia* 40, no. 1/2 (2005): 354, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24324689.
[2] Aversano, "La musica strumentale in Italia tra sette e ottocento," 357.

drastically changed. During the 18th century, opera was musical entertainment, focused on the skills of the singers, and the audience had no real interest in the fate of the heroes of the drama. In the 19th century, melodrama was no longer just worldly entertainment. People went to the opera house to participate intensely in the passionate events of the drama, to identify themselves with the characters, to suffer and rejoice with them, to ideally confront the protagonists' misfortunes and behaviors with their own sentimental experiences, and to learn from them a more intense, nobler and passionate life.

In general, romanticism meant enhancement of the individual: the human being. In Germany, this enhancement depicts an individual with a deep feeling of his limitations and with the irresistible need of evasion from it. In Italy, however, the affirmation of the individual resulted in an intensification of feelings, moving away from the prolongation of the individual in the infinity of the nature. Love, as romantic excitement of the heart against reason, has been explored trough the naturalistic evidence of its psychological and affective aspects. In other words, love is the only truth of life, the only good quality, the only positive aspect: everything against it is deception, lie, wickedness and oppression.[3] The works of Rossini in his late period, Bellini and Donizetti, and Verdi were the most significant musical examples of this ideal.

With the new Mazzinian[4] ideology and the rebellions which led to the 1848 revolutions in the Italian peninsula, the romantic individual needed a collective entity represented by *il popolo*, the people. In accord with this new ideal, Giuseppe Verdi fit into the Italian melodrama with huge choral operas: an almost Gluckian style of opera-oratorio, first introduced by Mayr and perfected

[3] Massimo Mila, "La vita della musica nell'ottocento italiano," *Belfagor* 12, no. 5 (1957): 492-493, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26106912.

[4] Giuseppe Mazzini (1807–1872) was an Italian politician, journalist, activist for the unification of Italy and spearhead of the Italian revolutionary movement. His efforts helped bring about the independent and unified Italy in place of the several separate states, many dominated by foreign powers, that existed until the 19th century. An Italian nationalist in the historical radical tradition and a proponent of social-democratic republicanism, Mazzini helped define the modern European movement for popular democracy in a republican state.

by Rossini, with the same musical structures of Donizetti and Bellini, but with a new timbre and a different human quality that was more energic, virile, and brave. These new chorale operas, however, were expensive and difficult to realize. The career of an opera composer at that time was built in the countless smaller provincial theatres, all of which were eag.er to have new titles in their opera seasons but often with small performance spaces and small budgets. With Donizetti's death in 1848, and the end of the revolution, Verdi moved away from chorale operas and political subjects, turning opera's focus to more intimate sentiments, to a psychology more nuanced and penetrating, capable of portraying in music more complex and faceted characters. Verdi's artistic innovations are glorious and somehow surprising at the same time, since he was not an artist with revolutionary intents, but rather a firm supporter of traditions. He was the most important Italian opera composer in a time when opera's supremacy was starting to decline.

The impressive growth of German instrumental music led to its success in Europe and started penetrating across the Alps, showing new musical possibilities. Verdi, as a composer, was aware of these new possibilities, taking them into account and renewing his art, without, however, indulging in a change of musical taste. In his opinion, though, he never abandoned his position of defender of the Italian tradition, closing himself off with a stubborn rejection of modern interest in symphonic music. He was reluctant to compose chamber instrumental music and unenthusiastic about the rising of the first instrumental music institutions, such as "Società del Quartetto di Firenze" (1861) and "di Milano" (1863), which had an important promotional role for instrumental music, proposing classic-romantic chamber music repertoire and opening to symphonism.[5]

Before the German instrumental music traditions were imported starting in the 1860's, there were in Italy many instrumental music composers who were either isolated and lost in the

[5] Marino Pessina, "Il Repertorio Sinfonico italiano 1861-1884," in *Quaderni del Corso di Musicologia del Conservatorio di Milano* 3-1995, a cura di Guido Salvetti (Lucca: LIM, 1997), 12.

vortex of melodrama – such as Stefano Golinelli (1818-1891), Carlo Rossaro (1828-1878), Giovanni Rinaldi (1840-1895), composers of interesting piano music – or strictly influenced by the melodrama and, at the same time, by the classical and romantic ideal of Haydn-Mendelssohn-Schumann – such as Antonio Bazzini (1818-1897), violin virtuoso and composer of music in the Paganini virtuosic style; Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889), double bass virtuoso, composer and orchestra conductor; Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901), cello virtuoso and composer; Ernesto Cavallini (1807-1874), clarinet virtuoso and composer; Antonio Pasculli (1842-1924), oboe virtuoso and composer– and who are not connected to each other by a common musical style.

The first coherent effort for a restoration of an instrumental identity in Italy happened thanks to a generation of composers and musicians born in the second half of the century and who studied in the reorganized music schools of the unified Italy, sometimes completing their studies abroad. These artists include Giovanni Sgambati (1841- 1914), pianist and composer who was a student of Liszt; Giuseppe Martucci (1856-1909), eminent pianist, composer and orchestra conductor; the organist Enrico Bossi (1861-1925) and Leone Sinigaglia (1868-1944), composers who studied with Mandyczewski in Wien and Dvorak in Prague respectively. Regardless of their own individual personalities or artistic goals, they made the crucial historic operation of importing and introducing the instrumental music of Beethoven and Brahms, Liszt and Wagner, Mendelssohn and Schumann into the Italian musical tradition. What this generation, with some opera composers such as Arrigo Boito (1842-1918), did on a cultural level was, however, not enough on an artistic level. They were looking behind, to the above-mentioned composers, in a time when Mahler, Strauss, and Debussy were becoming prominent in the musical life in Europe. This is probably the reason why the character of their production was somewhat academic, with

few exceptions when they were able to introduce voices of a national sentiment, substantially close to the lyricism of melodrama, into Germanic symphonism.

The only exception was Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924), who studied abroad and had German Romanticism as the starting point to look at new stylistic and intellectual adventures, instead of rediscovering older composers. His artistic effectiveness can be associated with the 20th century composers' generation born after 1880, (Ottorino Respighi, Ildebrando Pizzetti, Alfredo Casella and Gian Francesco Malipiero).

Giovanni Bottesini: double bass virtuoso and composer

Among the protagonists of Italian music in the Ottocento, Bottesini's fame has been bound almost exclusively to his activity as a double bass virtuoso. Historians and chronicles considered for long time his activity of composer as secondary, often obscured by the major opera composers, such Rossini and Verdi in particular. Of course, the virtuoso was internationally well-known for his remarkable technical abilities and surprising lyricism and expressivity, even more so if we think about the double bass as an instrument traditionally used as the harmonic and rhythmic foundation of the orchestra. In Bottesini's time there were many excellent double bass players,[6] but he stood out thanks to his technical and expressive skills, which nobody else was able to equal, creating a new virtuosic language and soloistic personality for his instrument. François-Joseph Fétis has written: "Of all the artists who have made himself a reputation as a virtuoso on the double bass, Bottesini is the one whose talent has developed the highest. The beauty of the sound he draws from the ungrateful instrument to which he has devoted himself; his marvelous dexterity in the

[6] Such as Giuseppe Bonazzo, Giambattista Bozzetti, Ercole Cavazza, Angelo Ceschina, Gilardoni, Antonio Mugnone, Luigi Negri, Antonio Scontrino, Luigi Rossi, Luigi Anglois, Giovanni Arpesani.

most difficult passages; his manner of singing, the delicacy and grace of his ornaments, compose the most complete talent that one can imagine."[7]

His activity as a composer had to wait until the end of the 20th century to be discovered and studied by scholars and performers. He composed a good number of operas, symphonic and chamber music, especially string quartets, in which he is compositionally more introspective, devoting more care to form. Bottesini reveals himself as one of the most original and active composers of the Italian musical *Ottocento*. In the elements of his compositions, we can notice features of his experiences gained in contact with the European music society: Berlioz and French instrumental music in particular; yet also Mendelssohn and German instrumental music. Despite the preponderant influence of the melodrama style, his compositions are however part of a clear classical formality from which develop surprising timbral and rhythmic-melodical inventions that represent the value of Bottesini's instrumental art.[8]

Born in Crema in 1821 from a family of musicians, Bottesini studied violin as a child. In 1835 he was admitted to the Conservatory of Milan, choosing the double bass, which was the instrument closest to violin available in order to obtain a scholarship. He studied double bass with Luigi Rossi and composition with Nicola Vaccaj. In 1839 he graduated with the performance of two compositions: a Symphony and his *Fantasia on La Sonnambula*. In only four years he became a virtuoso, able to start a solo career which took him all over the world.

[7] François-Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie génèrale de la musique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1860), 36. Translated from French by the author.

[8] Marcello Conati, "Introduzione," in *Giovanni bottesini concertista e compositore: Esecuzione, ricezione e definizione del testo musicale, Atti della giornata di studi 26 ottobre 1996* (Crema: Centro Culturale Sant'Agostino, 1999), 9-11.

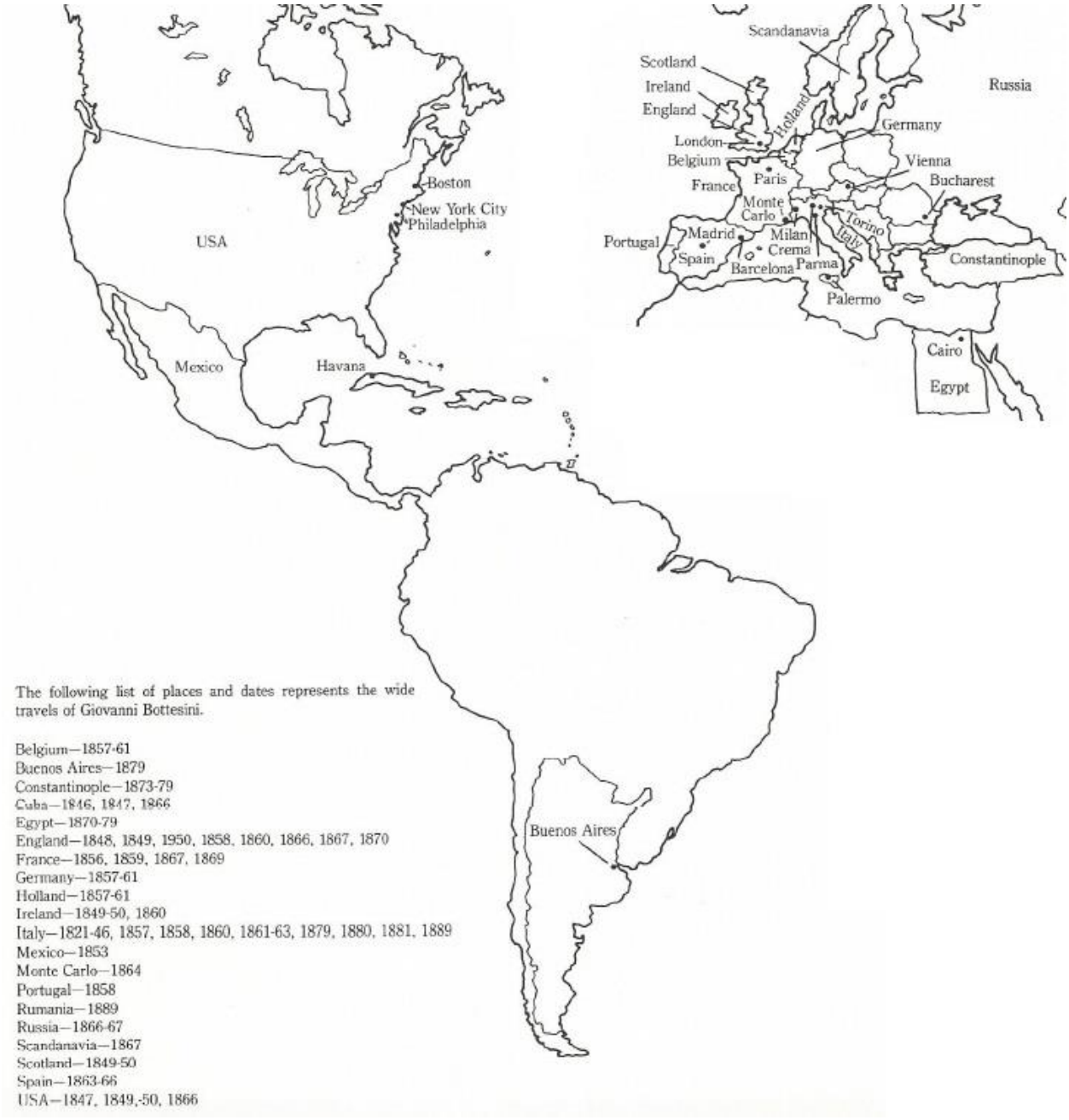

Figure 1-01: Wide travels of Giovanni Bottesini[9]

Recent studies conducted by Piermario Murelli, present professor of double bass at the Conservatory of Milan, have rediscovered a considerable quantity of didactic material, which is

[9] Thomas Martin, "In Search of Bottesini," *International Society of Bassist*, Vol.XI, No.2 (Winter 1985): 24-25.

evidence of an advanced bass school. Rossi adopted in his manuscript method a diatonic system to the study of positions, similarly to violin methods, and also transcribed many etudes and duets from violin and oboe repertoire,[10] technically very demanding, and requiring an absolute mastery of the entire range of the instrument, including harmonics.

Bottesini, with his Testore double bass, performed his music in many concerts around the world, travelling to Cuba, United States, London, Paris and all over Italy and having always great success. Here are a few reviews from his Venetian concerts as testimony of what kind of feelings his playing provoked in the audience:

> … one of them was Bottesini, who turned the bass in a sweet viola d'amore, and on that rebellious instrument he touched the heart with such expressive and touching singing that the human voice helped by words cannot do better; he overcomes the most daring difficulties with amazing valor.[11]

> We heard him, we have been witnesses of the immense excitement he provoked in the theatre. Bottesini is so wonderful that we haven't seen such before and maybe we will never see again. He tamed the most rebellious of the instruments, turning the rude and dark sound of the bass to the sweet sound of the violin; he handles and strains it as easily as it was the most slight and comfortable instrument. It doesn't look arduous and artificial. All this, the prodigious mechanism, is nothing compared with the soul and the feeling that make sounds like singing. He played two pieces, between the acts of the comedy: the first one composed entirely by him; the second one composed of melodies taken from Sonnambula. In both we can admire the highest and touching expression of the adagios, the flute like sounds so pure, the firm and rigorous intonation. In Bellini's melodies the words seemed to literally come out of the strings, so that no baritone or soprano could say more gently, more powerfully: Cari luoghi io vi trovai; Ah! Non giunge uman pensiero! The bass seemed singing it. The brio and the vivacity of Allegros, those passages difficult for everyone else, cannot be said: we miss words, but the effect was amazing. His playing is wonderful for fineness and good taste.[12]

> Bottesini is not only a double bass player, but he plays all the string instruments with the exception that he doesn't need to have in his hand violins, viola, cello to produce their sounds; he makes all those with the double bass, which, under his powerful bow and his

[10] From authors such as Kreutzer, Mayseder, Rode, Libon; Yvon, Vern.
[11] Tommaso Locatelli, "recensione," *Gazzetta Privilegiata di Venezia*, May 29, 1845. Translated from Italian by the author.
[12] Tommaso Locatelli, "recensione al concerto di giovedì 8," *Gazzetta Ufficiale di Venezia*, July 9, 1858. Trans.

> fairy fingers, it's not a limited instrument anymore, but become a new instrument, rich of sounds: groaning and exciting, majestically deep, and sweet, poetic and charming.[13]

Unfortunately, we do not have an exact chronology of Bottesini's compositions: first because, except for rare cases, the author did not date his works, and the only information are from chronicles and letters; and second because, as a traveling virtuoso, he rewrote his compositions many times adapting the pieces to the needs of the moment. His double bass works may be divided into three categories:

Works in opera style and inspired by operas:

- *Tre Grandi Duetti* for two double basses, dedicated to his teacher Luigi Rossi; these duets, despite being youthful works, are technically demanding and full of virtuosic passages. These works are inspired by Rossini's music and by the violin virtuosity of Alessandro Rolla and Paganini.
- Fantasias on operas: *Sonnambula*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *I Puritani*, *Beatrice di Tenda*; *Variations on* "Nel cor più non mi sento", *Variations on* "Il carnevale di Venezia."
- Duets: *Fantasia for two double basses on Rossini's* "Canzonette," *Gran duo concertante* for violin and double bass, *Passione Amorosa* for two double basses, *Duet for clarinet and double bass*.
- *Concerto di Bravura*.

Works inspired by European music influences:

- *Concerto in F-sharp minor*, *Concerto in B minor* (with all their variants);

[13] "Notizie cittadine," *Gazzetta di Venezia*, September 3, 1877. Trans.

- *Grande allegro da concerto "alla Mendelssohn", Allegretto Capriccio "alla Chopin," Capriccio di Bravura*;
- Short pieces inspired by older music: *Air on Bach, Introduzione e Gavotta, Introduzione e Bolero*.

Works in the style of romantic Romanzas:

- *Elegia No. 1in D major, Elegia No. 2* "Romanza drammatica," *Elegia No. 3* "Romanza Patetica," *Mélodie, Tarantella, Rêverie*.

Reception of 19th Century Italian music and Bottesini's music performance issues

Since the end of the 18th Century, "contemporary chronicles of foreign musicography, especially from Germanic areas, describe a distorted and artificial view of Italian musical culture, which, according with it, was stereotypically considered exclusively vocal."[14]

Friedrich Cramer, in 1783, stated: "The level of Italian instrumental music is so low that it set itself under every possible critique ."[15] He also added:

> The Italian prefers to sing rather than play. The mother sings already from the time of the cradle and the youngest children vocalize arias. The Italian knows well that a nicely trained voice, thanks to such a sweet and harmonious language, can arrive closer to the heart than the most beautiful sonatas, despite perfectly performed.[16]

In 1816, Amadeus Wendt made considerations about physio-anthropologic aspects:

> Italy is the land of the song and of the art of singing. Nature shaped its habitants for an easy musicality, which reveals itself in the tenderness and lyricism of their language. Yet the southern vivacity of the Italian, with lively sensibility, push him to express, in every situation, what he feels in a musical way. Italy is remarkably rich in the production of high

[14] Aversano, "La musica strumentale in Italia tra sette e ottocento," 355. Translated from German by the author.
[15] Friedrich Cramer, "Die Instrumentalmusik liegt so darnieder, daf sie fast unter aller Critic ist," *Magazin der Musik* 1/1, (1783): 160. Translated from German by the author.
[16] Cramer, *Magazin der Musik*, 1/2 (1783): 990-991. Trans.

> voices, which fit the melody. That is why, among Italians, harmony and instrumental music are so little developed in comparison to melody and singing.[17]

The imagine of the Italian who sings and the German who plays, according with the contrasting orientation of the two cultures, reflects itself in the opposition between melody-nature-spontaneity and harmony-study-doctrine.[18]

In 1980 with his *Nineteenth-Century Music*,[19] Carl Dahlhaus introduces and highlights the dualism of Beethoven and Rossini and their esthetic value: "on one side the absolute instrumental music – the way to access the metaphysic and deep significances-, on the other side the Italian opera – superficial and oriented to the delight of the senses-."[20]

> Those of us who grew up with and are unable to escape the categories of the German musical tradition from Bach to Schoenberg would have to say that, in Rossini's music, the relation between his musical ideas and their formal presentation is disturbed and out of joint: motives that are often rudimentary or even tawdry are whisked pell-mell into juggernaut crescendos. However, if we wish to do justice esthetically and historically to Rossini's technique, we will have to discard the categories of idea and presentation (which tacitly presuppose the superiority of the former on the latter) and instead substitute the more appropriate concepts of substrate and realization. Rossini not infrequently gives precedence to rhythm over themes, to instrumentation coloratura over melodic contour, to intensified repetition over motivic manipulation. … To measure Rossini's melody with Mozart as his yardstick is to lead ourselves astray. When we try to extract an underlying melody from the coloratura, we sometimes arrive at nothing even remotely resembling a musical idea. … The substrate of Rossini's melodies and harmonies, then, is trivial; his rhythms have a sharpness of focus that emphasizes the banal; his formal designs are guilelessly simplistic; his relentless and rigorous crescendos whip rudimentary themes into cyclonic frenzy.[21]

This German nationalistic view, widely adopted in many countries, including the United States, depicts Italian music as having less dignity, compared with German symphonism. This

[17] Amadeus Wendt, "Kunst und Lage des italienishen Sangers," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 18 (1816): 573. Trans.
[18] Aversano, "La musica strumentale in Italia tra sette e ottocento," 356.
[19] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (California: university of California Press, 1989).
[20] Aversano, "La musica strumentale in Italia tra sette e ottocento," 356.
[21] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 59-60.

evaluation, or better to say devaluation, which adopted the esthetic ideal of absolute instrumental music as a yardstick, does not take into account the characteristics of the operatic genre. This influenced the worldwide approach and interpretation of Italian music, which did not always receive artistic respect. Nowadays it is not even possible to think about playing a Beethoven's sonata, or a Schumann's or Brahms' piece, with free licenses, without respecting the signs written on the score and following a consolidated common performance practice; on the contrary, too often we can hear Italian operas and instrumental music played with a trivial spirit, forgetting the dramatic intent that lies behind an apparently simple structure.

In the paragraph 'Virtuosity and Interpretation" of *Nineteenth-Century Music*, Dahlhaus also examines the figure of the instrumental virtuoso. He compares Paganini, as descendent of seventeenth-century virtuoso violin playing, with Liszt, inspired by Paganini but belonging to the virtuoso pianism which originates in the late-eighteenth-century *Sturm und Drang* style.

> The emergence of the virtuoso violinist in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was conditioned by two features of composition, both of which mutually interacted with the achievements of instrument makers, as well as with the history of church music and operatic entr'acte. The first feature was monodic cantabile, which permitted, indeed provoked, assimilation and adaptation by virtuoso instrumentalists. The second consisted in conceptions of form which allotted an essential, rather than merely ancillary, function to figuration, the "natural" element of improvisation. (Figuration forms the substance, and not a decorative adjunct, to the many modulating episodes in concertos around 1700.) If, then, modern virtuoso violin-playing, which left its mark on the history of art music, originated in the seventeenth century, the forebears of virtuoso pianism, which achieved a similar significance, lay in the late-eighteenth-century Sturm und Drang. Besides the element of figuration, which was taken as a matter of course, a second constituent feature had to emerge for virtuosity to become a grand style of its own rather than a parasitic technique garnishing a composition. If seventeenth-century violin virtuoso thrived on monody, it was in the rhapsodic, expressive style of the Sturm un Drang – a style with free fantasy as its ideal form – that virtuoso pianists found the counterpart to passage work and figuration that they required in order to raise piano virtuosity to a compositional phenomenon of historic significance.[22]

[22] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 134-135.

Once more Dahlhaus implies the superiority of German music and, in this case, piano virtuosity, which, despite the relationship with Paganini's instrumental virtuosity, originates from *Sturm un Drang*, thus ignoring all the Italian instrumental music which descended from Paganini and Rossini.

Bottesini's musical language, as stated above, is strongly influenced by opera and vocal music. It sees at the virtuosic art of Paganini and the form of the German classical and romantic composers. In analyzing his manuscripts, there are two important aspects: the existence of more than one manuscript for the same piece, and the lack of individual bass parts. There are four different manuscripts for Concerto No. 2 for instance. This is due to the fact that Bottesini, traveling and performing his pieces around the world, needed to transcribe and somehow adapt his pieces to the ensemble and the places in which he was performing those pieces. The differences among these manuscripts deal mainly with articulation signs, tonality, orchestration and ensemble composition, and, rarely, a few different notes at cadences. Additionally, all the manuscripts are scores and never individual double bass parts. After a deeper analysis it becomes clear that the composer used articulation signs with phrasing and agogic scope, rather than as bowing and bow stroke signs. This musical intent, with the original variations contained in the manuscripts, leaves room for technical interpretation of those signs, and these interpretations do not always reflect the musical meaning and intent of this kind of music: easy harmonically and formally, but full of deep expressive significance. Moreover, the double bass is an instrument which, on its own, has been and still is quite varied in shape and size of the body, length of the sounding string, use of the bow, fingerings, techniques and schools. As a result, there are a variety of ways of playing and interpreting this music.

In conclusion, the contemporary reception of 19th-century Italian music is not always consistent, and its interpretation doesn't often receive artistic respect. All the above-mentioned reasons together could help explain, though not totally, why the interpretation of the double bass virtuoso's instrumental music, over time and throughout the world, has been and still is very subjective. Performers almost never follow the composer's indications from original manuscripts, arbitrarily changing the phrasing and articulations signs, octaves, and in some cases, even the notes. The music is often used as a vehicle to show off one's own technical skills, instead of interpreting it as a musical language with its own rules and dignity. For these reasons, there is a need to consider a performance practice which addresses the lack of a consistent and accurate interpretation of the most famous and productive composer of music for the double bass.

CHAPTER 2

BOTTESINI'S RELATIONSHIP WITH VOCAL MUSIC

Bottesini and Vocal Music

Melodrama in the 19th century was almost ubiquitous in theatres, conquering a vast popular audience. At the same time, in the bourgeois parlors a cult of chamber music was in vogue, initially with a consistent repertoire of *pezzi caratteristici*[23] for piano solo. Then it was in vogue with reductions of classic symphonies for small ensembles, and, during the 1860's, with string quartets and chamber ensembles. It was also not uncommon for aristocratic residencies to host private matinee concerts, inviting the most important virtuosi, such as Paganini, Rolla, Liszt, Thalberg, Bazzini, Bottesini, etc.

Besides instrumental virtuosos, bourgeois society in the first half of the century had a special predilection for singers, who performed opera arias and romanzas. The Italian *romanza* of the 19th century is derived from the 18th century French "romance:" a genre of short vocal compositions in slow tempo with strophic form, unadorned melody, texts from amateur poets or writers, subordinate accompaniment, and simple expression. These were ideally suited to exploit the vein of sentimentalism.[24] The character of each piece was based on the meaning of the text:

[23] "Characteristic piece:" from 1820 these short pieces for solo piano were composed with intense feelings and virtuosic elements, with however no showing off intents. it has fantasy, descriptive or programmatic titles. It is an intimate and domestic composition appropriate for private performances.
M. Mazzeo and F. Pinto, "Storia della Musica dell'Ottocento," accessed 12 February, 2021, https://moltofolk.wordpress.com/2014/05/31/musica800/.

[24] Roger Hickman, "Romance," Grove Music Online, accessed 12 February, 2021, https://doi-org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.23725.

according to the different characters, there were a few variants called *arietta*, *lamento*, *notturno*, *elegia*.

In Germany the *lied* became the highest expression of the romantic poetry involving illustrious musicians and writers, and in France the delicate 18th century romance developed into the nobler *mélodie*. In Italy, starting with Rossini and his "Soirées Musicales,"[25] the r*omanza* establishes a new tradition of Italian vocal chamber music. The Rossinian *romanza* was a new musical language, recalling popular moods, in a cantabile and elegant style. The vocal line is ornamented with high pitches, trills and staccato notes, and the piano part is carefully composed on refined harmonies with surprising distant keys modulations. The romanzas of Bellini and Donizetti differed from those of Rossini. In Bellini's romanzas the melody is always elegant and full of feeling, with intimate cantabile simple phrasing and stepwise melodies with very few ornaments. The vocal line of Donizetti's songs, of which there exist over 250 ariettas for one or two voices, is instead rich with anticipations, suspensions, ornaments, and figurations in triplets, and clearly recalls the opera vocal style. Verdi influenced some changes in the style of the chamber romanza. Composed in his youth, Verdi's romanzas have love, in its tormented and hopeful version, as the dominant theme. The style is a simple, syllabic and cantabile melody without any high range or ornament, and with more importance given to the harmony and accompaniment.

[25] Published in 1835, Soirées Musicales is a collection of arias and duets composed beginning in 1830, on Metastasio and Pepoli texts.

In addition to the major opera composers, many others were active and prolific composers of chamber romanzas and its subgroup of chamber vocal pieces. These composers include Bonifazio Asioli,[26] Nicola Vaccaj,[27] Saverio Mercadante[28] and Giovanni Bottesini.[29]

As stated previously, Bottesini was a famous virtuoso and composer for double bass. Other than pieces for double bass, he was also an active composer of operas, orchestral symphonic music,[30] and chamber music. To better clarify how the composer was influenced by vocal music, it is worth mentioning that Bottesini also composed chamber romanzas.

During his studies at the Conservatory of Milano, Bottesini studied composition with Francesco Basili, composer of operas and sacred music, and with Nicola Vaccaj, renowned author of vocal music[31] and of a famous vocal method,[32] who surely gave him knowledges about the vocal style and language. Another important figure for Bottesini was Alberto Mazzucato, who was *bel canto* professor at the conservatory. Mazzucato composed many operas and chamber vocal music. He also translated into Italian treatises by Berlioz on instrumentation, Fétis on harmony, and Panofka and Manuel Garcia[33] on singing.

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[26] Bonifazio Asioli, *Dodici ariette con accompagnamento di forte-piano* (Milano: Ricordi, 1817).

[27] Nicola Vaccaj, *Metodo pratico di canto italiano per camera diviso in 15 lezioni, ossiano Solfeggi progressivi ed elementari sopra parole di Metastasio* (London: 1832).

[28] "Serate italiane:" collection of ariettas and duets with piano accompaniment, composed beginning in 1835.

[29] Many other composers took part in the production of chamber romanzas, such as Bazzini, Ponchielli, Arditi and Braga (both were Bottesini's friends); and in the next generation the composers Tosti, Martucci, Sgambati, Leoncavallo, Mascagni, Puccini and many others.

[30] Bottesini's orchestral compositions belong mainly to the program music genre, reflecting his experiences traveling all over the world as virtuoso.
Sergio Martinotti, *Ottocento Strumentale Italiano* (Bologna: Forni, 1972), 315.

[31] Vaccaj composed about 17 operas, many sacred works and more than 100 chamber pieces, including ariette, notturni, arias, romanze, duets, etc. The majority were published in Milan, Paris and London.

[32] Vaccaj, *Metodo pratico di canto italiano*. According to The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, his *Metodo pratico* is not only an excellent primer for the amateur but also a valuable document for the study of 19th-century performance practice.

[33] Manuel Garcia, *Scuola di Garcia. Trattato completo dell'arte del Canto, diviso in 2 parti*, trans. from French Alberto Mazzucato, (Milano: Ricordi, 1842). This treatise is particularly important for the thesis supported by this document.

Vocal lyrics composed by Bottesini were printed by many important publishers not only in Italy, but also in Paris and London. Bottesini's output includes a collection of seven pieces "Notti d'Oriente" printed by Canti between 1886 and 1887, two albums containing six pieces each titled "Ricordanze di Napoli" and printed by Ricordi in 1880, two more albums without titles, many individually published works, and some unpublished pieces. Although not as prolific in number as many other composers, Bottesini's production of vocal chamber music can definitely be considered remarkable. There are also a few compositions which include duets with the double bass, providing repertoire for Bottesini to perform on stage with famous singers. Two of these works are particularly significant: *Une Bouche aimée,* a transcription of Goudnod's "My Beloved Spake" for soprano and cello, in which "the piano accompanies the double bass 'warbles' in competition with the ornaments of the singer;"[34] and *Tutto che il mondo serra*, which is an exact transcription of Chopin's Etude op. 25 no. 7 in which the bass plays the left hand of Chopin's piece and the soprano sings the melody, leaving a simple accompaniment for the piano.

The simplicity and lyricism of the vocal romance easily adapted to instrumental music. During the 18th century the romanza was associated with the slow movements of instrumental concertos or sonatas. In the 19th century they evolved into single movement instrumental pieces with many glorious works by composers from every country. Examples include Beethoven, two romances for violin opp. 40 and 50; Schumann, *Drei Romanzen* for piano op. 28; and Mendelssohn, *Songs Without Words* (*Lieder ohne Worte*). There are some beautiful examples from Bottesini such as *Elegia no. 1* in D Major, *Elegia no. 2* in E minor (also titled *Romanza*

[34] Ettore Borri, "Liriche da Camera," in *Giovanni Bottesini: virtuoso del contrabbasso e compositore*, ed. Luigi Inzaghi (Milano: Nuove edizioni, 1989), 110.

Drammatica), *Elegia no. 3* in E minor (also titled *Romanza Patetica*), and some other small pieces such *Mélodie* and *Reverie*.

To have a clearer sense of the aesthetic ideal of this genre of music, Bonifazio Asioli, who was an extremely influential figure for generations of musicians at the Conservatory of Milan, gave an interesting description of *espressione* (expression):

> From the faithful representation of language, which corresponds to the major or minor intensity of each passion, it is born what in music is called *espressione*, that is nothing else than the ornamented imitation of a specific feeling – The imitation of feelings, that is the expression of the soul's affects, is what gives honor the most to the composer. Since Music has no model to refer to, the composer has to create all from the dominant feelings expressed by words, from his way of feeling passions, from his vivid imagination, from good taste and good musical sensitivity. Singing, first thought of the drama composer, should be enough to express any affect either pathetic, loving, choleric, joyful, or agitated, etc… Yet if we add to singing more or less fast movements of the orchestra, higher or lower sounds, the incredible variety of effects derived from the variety of instruments, the piano and forte, major or minor, as long as all this will indulge and confirm the affect, then the singing will be superior to itself, and the harmony that supports it will produce an amazing pleasure.[35]

This definition may be interpreted through the picturesque aesthetic of painting and poetry: the artist considers what is attractive and valuable to him and recreates it with his sensitivity, culture and technique, rather than copying the natural object itself.[36]

Bottesini's Method

Bottesini's method was commissioned and then published in Paris by Escudier in 1869 and in Milano by Ricordi in 1870.[37] In the preface Bottesini himself explains how he wrote this method and his goals:

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[35] Bonifazio Asioli, *Il Maestro di Composizione* (Ricordi, 1836). Translated from Italian by the author.

[36] Licia Sirch, "Notturno Italiano. Sulla musica vocale da camera tra sette e ottocento," in *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* , 2005, Vol. 40, No. 1/2 (2005), 193. Trans.

[37] "I would not have spontaneously undertaken this work; I decided to do so at the request of all those who, knowing how much kindness I have always received in public, believed that it was my duty to make the little

> Writing a Method for the Double Bass it is not so easy, as it may seem at first. Since it is an instrument that it is played in so many different ways, it has been challenging to organize and explain a series of rules, examples and progressive exercises, which, without tiring the student, make easier his first approach to the instrument and guide him, in the best way, to the complete possession of this instrument, as difficult as important. – I had only three goals composing this method: the Truth for the science, the Beauty for the art, the Usefulness for the student.[38]

The method is divided in two parts: about the double bass, and about the double bass studied as a solo instrument. Bottesini makes a clear distinction between orchestral playing and solo playing:

> The Double Bass has not to aspire to be a solo instrument, both because of the irregularity of its mechanism and due to the low pitches, which are characteristic of its sound. Last of the string instruments, the bass prolongs in the lower register the scale of cello, which on its turn prolongs in the medium register the scale of violin. The only purpose of double bass has to be giving the orchestra the fundamental notes. Have no illusion whoever starts studying this instrument aiming to perform brilliant and virtuosic pieces with purity of sound, elegance of colors and ease of bow. If it is possible that someone with refined intellect, natural predisposition and supported by obstinate studies can reach exceptional results, this is fairly uncommon. This is the reason why, in this method, we have carefully avoided exercises too difficult and etudes too weird, in order to not show off our knowledge at the expenses of young students. The simple C Major scale, well done, it is enough to prove the abilities of the good student.[39]

> The greatest difficulty for the soloist is being able to create uniformity among all the tones that constitute the big range of the double bass, instrument which, despite its imperfections, can give wonderful results.[40]

From these descriptions it is quite evident that Bottesini did not really want to present himself as a brilliant virtuoso. In fact, he writes a great deal about how difficult it is to play the double bass and what its role should be in orchestra, but he writes only briefly and vaguely about solo playing. He seems to warn the student about the difficulty of a soloist career, proposing instead

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experience I have acquired playing the double bass for the benefit of young players." Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso*, 4. Translated from Italian by the author.

[38]Giovanni Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso* (Milano: Ricordi, 1870), 4. Trans.

[39] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso,* 25. Trans.

[40] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso,* 94. Trans.

pragmatic and helpful etudes and exercises. Although Bottesini includes some of the characteristics of his virtuosic works, he more strongly emphasizes how singing and lyricism are an important part of his art. Quoting again from Bottesini's method:

> Like the violin, the double bass requires from those who want to know it and fully master it, other than natural dispositions, that great certainty of hand which, exempting the artist from any mechanical concern, allows him to freely space with thought, realizing on the strings of the instrument the multiple feelings of the soul to which inspiration fascinates.[41]

Keeping in mind Asioli's previous definition of *espressione* and the reviews of Bottesini's concerts from the first chapter, this sentence greatly highlights the composer's idea of playing the double bass: technique in service of expression, and not the opposite.

A considerable section of the first part of the method is dedicated to solfege and harmony:

> Although no notion of harmony is required of the double bass player, we believe we are doing something of no little benefit to our student by adding to these brief hints of solfeggio some basic notions about that science, or rather about the meaning of certain words related to harmony, words necessary to all those who have received a certain musical education. Harmony is therefore the science that teaches us to know, distinguish and then combine with a pleasant effect a quantity of chords, which taken separately are in music what words are in speech. A harmonic progression which is always in the same tone, would soon become monotonous: yet modulation, a science that teaches how to pass reasonably from one tone to another, wonderfully enriches the harmony of innumerable combinations and a variety of effects.[42]

Moreover, according to Asioli, harmony, although simple, is an important part of the composition. As we will see in the next chapter, solfege and a steady and accurate perception of tempo are essential fundaments for the performer. On this steadiness the soloist can perform some variations in tempo in order to add interest and variety to his execution.

The only true reference to bow technique is contained in the following sentences:

> The first difficulty in handling the bow lies in avoiding the crushing of the strings caused by a certain degree of hardness of the hand which is natural in every beginner. In order to

[41] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso,* 6. Trans.
[42] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso,* 20. Trans.

> avoid this very serious inconvenience, the pupil wants to attack the note softly and with a light hand, paying attention to gradually reinforce the sound in the middle of the bow, whether he draws it or pushes it. Another inconvenience which needs attention is a shock produced by a kind of nervous tremor generally felt by the student in the sustained sounds at the end of each bowing, and occasionally by the impatience he has to finish one sound and soon start another.[43]

From these warnings we can understand how important it was for Bottesini to have a free and beautiful sound that is well sustained and clearly articulated. The advice of attacking the note softly at first and then reinforcing it gradually, proposed in order to not push the sound, somehow recalls what is called *messa di voce*[44] in singing. The absence of a section focused on bow strokes and different articulations, in contrast to other string methods of the same period, probably indicates that Bottesini relied on an implied performance practice of articulations, quite possibly related to vocal technique.

Another section of the first part of the method is dedicated to ornaments "*Abbellimenti del Canto.*" In Italian, the word *canto* (singing) is often used with the meaning of melody, therefore the relationship between singing and melody is very strong. In other words, the melody has to be sang. As in other vocal and string methods, Bottesini briefly explores and explains how to perform the most recurrent ornaments: "the caprice of the artist has so increased the number of ways in which the melody is embellished that it is not easy nowadays to name them all: this is why we will limit ourselves to the following which are generally more in use."[45]

All the etudes contained in Bottesini's method are composed following a melodic structure and ordered in increasing technical and expressive difficulty. Frequently the composer indicates bow

[43] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso,* 27 and 30. Trans.

[44] *The singing of a gradual crescendo and decrescendo on a long-sustained tone — a vocal technique originating in 18th century bel canto*. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "messa di voce," accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/messa%20di%20voce.

[45] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso,* 86. Trans.

retakes,[46] which may correspond to vocal breathing. Somehow in the style of Vaccaj's vocal method, but also of other methods such as that of Lamperti,[47] Bottesini includes, at the end of each section, a series of longer etudes which summarize all the technical aspects discussed through the book. The first part ends with "freer etudes in those tones that best suit the double bass;" the second part ends with melodic etudes with piano accompaniment. Finally, in this last section of melodic etudes Bottesini includes some excerpts from his solo compositions, such the *Elegy no. 1* and one variation on *Il Carnevale di Venezia*, and transcriptions of famous opera romanzas from Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini. It is obvious how lyricism and vocal style were the foundation of Bottesini's double bass art.

Manuel Garcia Treatise

Manuel Garcia was born in Madrid on March 17, 1805. He received his first lesson in music from his father and from different masters during the sojourn of his father in Naples between 1811 and 1816. As a boy of fifteen he took some harmony lessons from Fétis in Paris. Garcia's father, born in Seville in 1775 and deceased in Paris in 1832, was a celebrated tenor singer for whom Rossini wrote the part of Almaviva in his opera *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. The elder Garcia composed no fewer than 17 Spanish, 19 Italian and 7 French operas, in addition to a symphony and other products of his pen. A man of "rugged discipline," he made his mark as a teacher of singing: but so varied were his gifts that he excelled in the roles of composer, singer, actor, and conductor. After performing in Europe and the Americas, Manuel Garcia returned to Paris and studied medicine, focusing on the physiology of the voice and anatomy of the vocal cords. Upon

[46] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso*, 44. Ex. Etudes no.4 from the first measure.
[47] Francesco Lamperti, *Guida teorico-pratica-elementaire per lo studio del canto* (Milano: Ricordi 1864). Lamperti's method contains a final section of four melodic solfeges, very similar to Bottesini's method last section of melodic etudes.

joining his father as a teacher of singing, he applied his medical knowledge to the greatest possible advantage, and his fame as a scientific teacher became soon established and widely known. In 1840 he presented to the Institut de France his *Mémoire sur la voix humaine,* a dissertation which obtained for him the congratulations of the Academy. This important treatise laid the foundation of all subsequent investigation regarding vocal-tone production. Appointed professor of singing at the Conservatoire de Paris, Garcia issued in 1847 his *Traité complet de l'art du chant*.[48] This invaluable work, dedicated to King Oscar I of Sweden, has been translated into various languages and has thereby gained a world-wide reputation.[49]

Garcia's treatise is crucial for many reasons. First, he in some ways united the nineteenth century with the eighteenth, thanks to the studies with his father. Second, despite this connection, he seems thoroughly steeped in his own period, revealing an intimate knowledge of contemporary composers, singers and vocal practices; Celletti identified him as "the major theorist of Rossinian vocal school".[50] Third, Garcia was widely acknowledged as the leading voice teacher in Europe, not only in the 1840's when his treatise was published, but throughout his long life; his pupils constituted much of the vocal elite well into the twentieth century. Finally, with an interest in anatomy that led him to invent the laryngoscope, Garcia explained his methods in an invaluably clear way, based for the first time on physiological observations. For all these reasons, his treatise can be considered a central document for the understanding of singing in the nineteenth century.[51]

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[48] The first volume of the *Ecole de Garcia* was published in 1840, and this part was then reprinted with the second volume in 1847.

[49] "Manuel Garcia," *The Musical Times* 46, no. 746 (1905), 225-32. Accessed February 27, 2021. https://www.jstor.org/stable/905245.

[50] Rodolfo Celletti, *Storia del belcanto* (Fiesole: Discanto Edizioni, 1983), 117.

[51] Roger Freitas, "Towards a Verdian Ideal of Singing: Emancipation from Modern Orthodoxy," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 127, no. 2 (2002): 229-30. Accessed January 27, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3840464.

Concerning this document, we will consider only the chapters of Garcia's work in which he describes and explains the agility of vocalization and articulation features, and the part that is relevant to tempo issues. In the next chapter this information will be described and translated in order to apply to double bass technique.

We do not know for sure whether Bottesini knew this treatise specifically, but since he studied with vocal teachers like Nicola Vaccaj and Alberto Mazzucato, who translated Garcia's treatise from French to Italian, and since he was also an opera composer and orchestra conductor, he surely was aware of the *bel canto* traditions and of the principles and rules that Garcia organized in his treatise. In other words, Garcia's work is not important for this document because it influenced Bottesini and his style (which it did not). Rather it is important because it summarizes, analyzes and explains common technical and musical features of *bel canto* in an analytical way, almost scientifically, differently from other vocal methods of that period.

CHAPTER 3

BOTTESINI'S PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

General considerations

This chapter is not intended as technical manual, except in the case of harmonics. Rather it is meant to examine aspects of articulation and agogic, which are probably the most important parts of interpretation pillars of an accurate performance practice. After considering the relationship of Bottesini's instrumental music with vocal and opera music, we can analyze how the stylistic elements included in Garcia's vocal treatise apply to the double bass. As we have seen in the previous chapters, compared to German music, Italian vocal and instrumental music is based on melody, rather than formal structures and development of small thematic elements, and on all those ornaments of the melody in relation to simpler yet effective harmonies. Common instrumental practice suggests specific bow strokes for specific articulation marks. In the Italian opera repertoire, the language changes slightly, making the Classical performance practice not conforming with the spirit and the style of *bel canto*. Thus, the correct and refined use of the bow, as equivalent of the voice physiology, is fundamental in forming a theoretically authentic interpretation of Bottesini's music.

Articulation

In chapter VII of his *Treatise of the Art of Singing*, Garcia wrote about vocalization and defines the "different ways to connect various sounds on any particular vowel:"

Glided or Slurred

Smooth

Marked

Detached

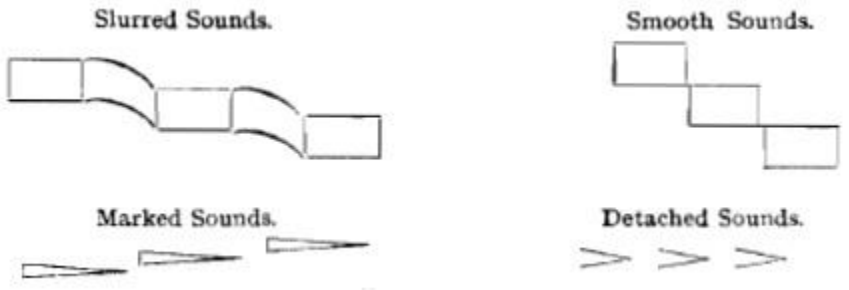


Figure 3-01: Representation of different articulations[52]

He also wrote that "the modes of vocalization are greatly dependent on the manner in which the lungs, glottis, and pharynx perform their function." In the case of double bass, all these functions are performed by bow technique: the glottis is the attack of the sound, the lungs weigh and sustain of the sound, and the pharynx is the resonance of each note or the space given between each attack.

Glided or Slurred (*con Portamento*)

> To slur is to conduct the voice from one note to another through all intermediate sounds. The time occupied by a slur should be taken from the last portion of the note quitted; and its rapidity will depend on the kind of expression required by any passage in which it occurs. It must be made, also, to preserve an equable and progressive motion, whether in ascending or descending. In the ascending slur, the student must avoid opening the vowel; it would be better to close it slightly. It is indicated by the sign: [53]

The concept of glided or slurred notes can be translated to the double bass by using the legato bow stroke in two ways: with slurred legato, and with portamento.

With slurred legato: notes are smoothly connected with the bow, either in one or several bowings, using a very clear left-hand articulation: usually used for fast scales, arpeggios and *volatine.*[54]

[52] Manuel Garcia, *Compendious Treatise on The Art of Singing*, edited by Albert Garcia (London: Leonard & Co., 1924), 9.
[53] Garcia, *Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 8.
[54] Volata (It.). Lit., "a flight, a volley." A series of quick notes forming an embellishment of a melody. Volatina (It.). A diminutive of volata. (Runs)

With portamento: one can use the same finger or change fingers with a glissando effect passing from one note to another, in the same bow or changing the bow. This is usually for larger intervals, but also for small intervals in melodic and *espressivo* passages.

There are two kinds of portamento made by the left hand:

- One can shift with the destination finger. The result is a smooth connection which gives the shift a gentle and sweet character. When played in a single bow, this gives the effect of a melismatic vocal setting (singing the same syllable through more than one note). This is the predominant portamento in Bottesini's music.
- One can alternatively shift with the finger of origin and reach the arrival note with the new finger. The result is an articulated arrival, giving the shift more character and determination. This has the effect of singing two different syllables.

A bow change for the second note can be executed in two ways:

- The bow can change at the start of the shift.
- The bow can change upon arrival at the second note.

Bottesini himself gave us a hint about his taste in portamento:

> Sliding your fingers over a string facilitates the transition from one tone to another with good intonation, especially in dangerous passages. However, it is necessary to carefully avoid making the distance that passes from one linked note to another felt, which would have a very bad effect where it took place. Therefore, try to fall on the note with ease and comfort.[55]

Smooth (*Legato*)

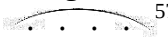
> To sing legato means to pass from one sound to another in a neat, sudden, and smooth manner, without interrupting the flow of voice; yet not allowing it to drag or slur over any intermediate sound. This forms the leading characteristic of vocalization, every other being only a variety used to color it. In order that smooth vocalization may combine every

[55] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso,* 88. Translated from Italian by the author.

> essential, the intonation must be perfect, and the notes should be equal in power, value, and timbre. Legato vocalization, being the most frequently used, needs no sign to indicate it.[56]

The concept of smooth articulation is executed on the double bass using the détaché bow stroke. Détaché indicates that smooth, separate bow strokes should be used for each note (it does not mean detached or disconnected). Notes are produced with an even, seamless stroke with no variation in pressure.

Marked (*Marcato*)

> To Mark sounds is to lay a particular stress on each, without detaching them from one another: this will be attained by giving a pressure to the lungs and by dilatating the pharynx. Marked vocalization helps to bring out the voice, and to correct the habit of gliding notes. This style is chiefly adapted to diatonic scales, the notes of which ought to be retarded a little towards the end. Marked sounds are indicated by tied dots:  [57]

The concept of marked can be articulated on the double bass by the détaché lancé bow stroke. Détaché lancé is a variation of the détaché bow stroke. A slightly separated bow stroke is used to gently articulate the notes with an unaccented, distinct break between each note. In other words, every note is gently attacked (pressure to the lungs = gentle adding of weight to the bow) and released with resonance (dilation of the pharynx = giving the note resonance without holding it). This bow stroke is often used in combination with the louré or porté stroke (a short series of gently pulsed legato notes executed in one bow stroke - it is also known as portato) to perform several separated notes in the same bow.

Detached (*Picchettato*)

> To detach sounds is to utter each individually by a distinct stroke of the glottis in order to separate them from one another. Besides the *éclat* (brilliant character) which these accents impart to a passage, when used with taste, they help to give elasticity to stiff throats. Detach sounds are indicated by dots: . . . .[58]

[56] Garcia, *Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 8.
[57] Garcia, *Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 8.
[58] Garcia, *Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 8.

The concept of detached can be realized on the double bass using a staccato on the string bow stroke. Staccato indicates the bow should remain on the string to play shortened and detached notes, distinctly separated from the following notes with a clear attack of the sound (distinct stroke of the glottis). Detached articulation is often used before an accented note or a slurred group of notes. In these cases, according to the idea of éclat (brilliant character) and elasticity, the detached notes tend to fall on the accented or slurred note following the direction of the phrase, both in ascending and descending motion.

To conclude, Bottesini's manuscripts are always very clear and carefully written, especially in articulation signs. The following is an example, taken from the first 8 measures of the second movement of Concerto di Bravura, that contains all the articulation signs we have analyzed in this chapter, and clearly shows how detailed Bottesini's writing was.

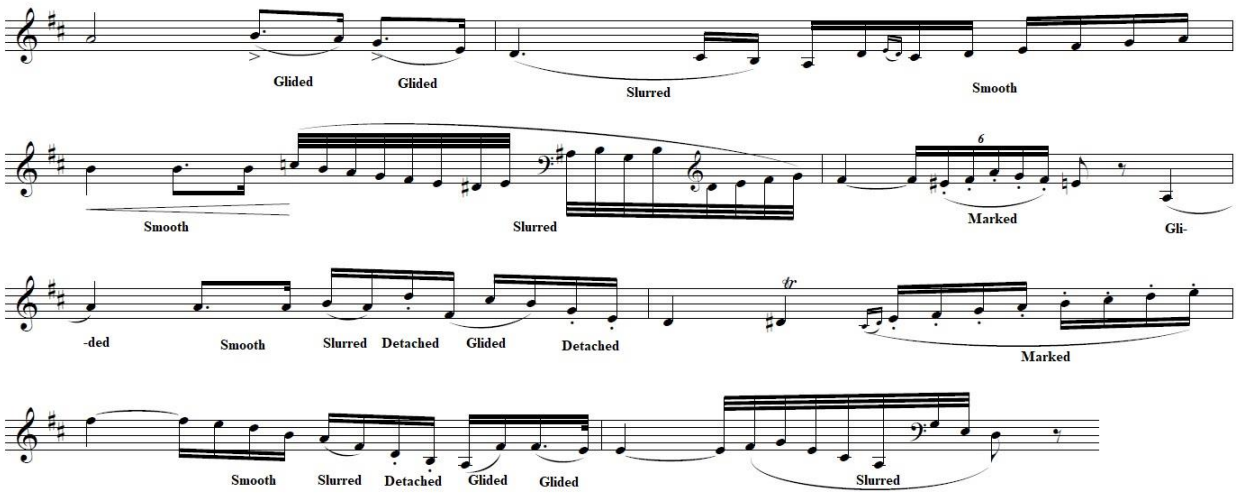


Figure 3-02: Articulations in Concerto di Bravura, mov. II, mm. 2-9.

Phrasing and Agogic

Prolongation

> In passages formed of equal notes, increase of value can be given to any one of them in order to heighten effect, or to support the voice on those parts of the bar which might otherwise be passed over.[59]

Inflections and accents

> The partial inflection given upon separate notes, while all the others remain uniform, is indicated by placing the sign > over a note. This Forte-piano, applied to isolated notes, is called inflection or accent. The most regular accents of song are founded on the emphasis of spoken language and fall on the downbeats in a bar, and on long syllables in words. But as this arrangement would not be sufficient to give character to all kind of rhythm, accents are also placed, when required, on the weak parts or beats of a bar, in this way destroying the prosodic accent.
> Accents are usually placed on appoggiaturas, and on pointed notes, or else on the first note of every figure when repeated.[60]

These accents may be performed with a more intense vibrato, no vibrato at all, and/or prolonging the accented note in order to give it more emphasis. The choice depends on the sensitivity of the performer and on the musical context.

"Emblematic is Bottesini's use of > and ***sf***: he continuously used > to indicate the stress and direction of musical phrase, and ***sf*** when he wanted to indicate an actual accent."[61]

> The stress, too, should be always laid on notes which, requiring nice and delicate intonation, are difficult to seize -such, for instance, as dissonances; in which case the accent concurs with the prolongation on the same sound- or else is placed on any one sound selected in passages of equal notes, in order to avoid monotony. In this case accent and prolongation follow nearly the same rules.[62]

On Tempo

> Anna Maria Pellegrini Celoni, in her Grammar of Song,[63] remarks, *Il tempo è l'anima della musica* (Tempo is the soul of music). This is true: for Tempo gives regularity, firmness, and ensemble to music, while irregularities add interest and variety to its execution. Tempo,

[59] Garcia, *Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 27.
[60] Garcia, *Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 27.
[61] Thomas Martin, "In Search of Bottesini," *International Society of Bassist,* Vol.X, No.2 (Winter 1984): 10.
[62] Garcia, *Compendious Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 27.
[63] Anna Maria Pellegrini Celoni, *Grammatica, o siano regole di ben cantare* (Roma: 1810).

> or Measure, is correct when the entire value of both notes and rests is complete: precision and steadiness are thus acquired; most important qualities, which few singers possess.[64]

Tempo is of three different characters: regular, free, and mixed.

> Tempo is **regular** when an *aria* is characterized by a very decided rhythm, which rhythm is usually composed of notes of short duration. Every change introduced into the value of notes, should, without altering the movement of the time, be procured by adopting the Tempo Rubato.
> Tempo is **free** when, like discourse, it follows the impulse of passion and accents of prosody; Chanting and recitatives are examples of free measures.
> Tempo is **mixed** when the feelings expressed in a piece exhibit frequent irregularities of movement, as is often the case in tender, melancholy sentiments. In such pieces, the value of the notes is generally long, and the rhythm but little perceptible. A singer should avoid marking the tempo too strongly or giving it a too regular and stiff character.[65]

Irregularities in tempo are: rallentando, accelerando, ad libitum or a piacere, col canto, etc.

> **Rallentando** expresses decrease of passion; and consists in slackening the rapidity of a measure, in all its parts at once, in order to enhance its grace and elegance. It is also used as a preparation for the return of a theme or melody.
> **Accelerando** is the reverse of rallentando, as it increases the velocity of a movement, and adds greater spirit and vivacity to the effect.
> In **ad libitum** or **a piacere** phrases, time is slackened; but this kind of free movement must not be arbitrarily introduced. Consequently, whenever a singer intends risking it, he must not diminish the tempo throughout, but have recourse to the tempo rubato, which will be noticed immediately. Certain pieces admit of the voice and accompaniment being alternately free and in strict rhythm; when latitude is given to the vocal part, the time of the accompaniment must be well marked. Suspension and pauses stop the accompaniment altogether and leave the singer for some moments absolutely independent.[66]

Tempo Rubato needs to be used more carefully since it belongs either to tempo character and to tempo irregularities.

> By **Tempo Rubato** is meant the momentary increase of value, which is given to one or several sounds, to the detriment of the rest, while the total length of the bar remains unaltered. This distribution of notes into long and short, breaks the monotony of regular movements, and gives greater vehemence to bursts of passion. To make tempo rubato perceptible in singing, the accents and time of an accompaniment should be strictly maintained: upon these conditions, all alterations introduced by a singer will stand out in relief, and change the character of certain phrases. Accelerando and rallentando movements

[64] Garcia, *Compendious Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 50.
[65] Garcia, *Compendious Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 50.
[66] Garcia, *Compendious Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 51.

require the voice and accompaniment to proceed in concert, whereas tempo rubato allows liberty to the voice only.
This prolongation is usually conceded to appoggiaturas, to notes placed on long syllables, and those which are naturally salient in harmony. In all such cases the time lost must be regained by accelerating other notes. This is a good method for giving color and variety to melodies. An excellent perception of rhythm and great self-possession on the part of a musician, however, are requisite for the adoption of this method, which should be restored to only in passages where the harmony is stable, or only slightly varied; in any other case, it would appear singularly difficult, and give immense trouble to an executant. The tempo rubato, if used affectedly, or without discretion, destroys all balance, and so tortures the melody.[67]

Harmonics

Harmonics were fundamental part of Bottesini's technique and an important part of the range of the instrument. In accord with the need of uniformity of sound through the entire range of the instrument, and in contrast with many players who believe that harmonics have to be played softly and with light and fast bow, these are Bottesini's indications on how to perform harmonics:

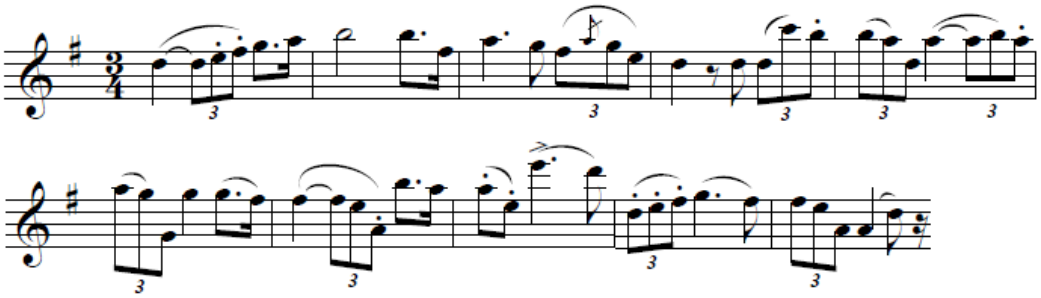


Figure 3-03: Concerto di Bravura, mov. I, mm. 52-61.[68]

Harmonics, on a good quality double bass, withstand a vigorous bow pressure, producing an excellent effect. It's well known that the vibration of a taut string gives the octave in the middle, and both ascending and descending the string gives the same harmonics in the same

[67] Garcia, *Compendious Treatise on The Art of Singing*, 51.

[68] The first phrase of the Allegro moderato of the first movement is composed to be performed entirely in harmonics. Comparing this figure with the Table of Harmonics (Figure 3.05) it is easy to understand how to finger and perform this passage. We have to keep in mind, however, that Bottesini used sounding pitch notation when writing for solo double bass. The example here is written one octave higher, following the modern standard practice.

order. Starting from low to high, or rather moving the hand towards the bridge or toward the nut, we will find the following pitches:

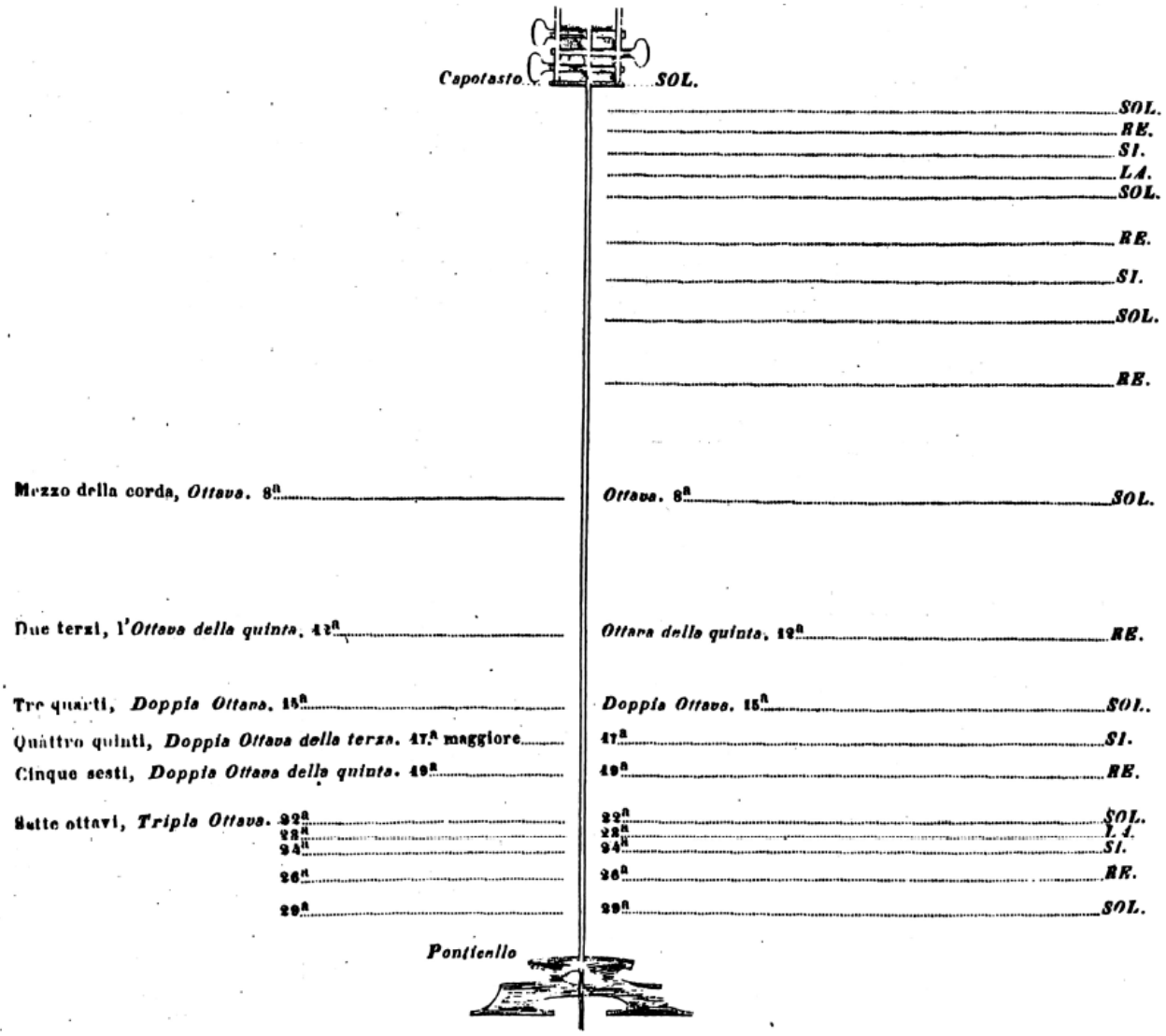


Figure 3-04: Harmonics on G string[69]

We may add the 21st partial that corresponds to F, which as seventh of G is naturally flat, thus we have to use it carefully. It can be used as a passing tone or in those passages where it is not important. The 2nd string gives the same harmonics as the first one until the 24th partial, F#, after which we pass to the *Cantino*. The 3rd is suitable until the 19th partial, E: after that pitch all the pitches will sound sharp.
The only valid way the performer can deal with harmonics is to consider the double octave as the starting point to descend with the bow towards the bridge. The left hand in thumb

[69] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso*, 115.

position can obtain the desired sounds with strength and confidence. Except for the thumb, which will remain perpendicular to the string, the other fingers will pull the string sideways, pulling it more or less according with the color we want to give to the phrase. Double bass harmonics should not be played gently, but rather they should be approached relatively strong with the bow, according to the character of the music played. The inverted harmonics, obtained by ascending from the middle point to the nut, have a dingy timbre and are very difficult to finger. [70]

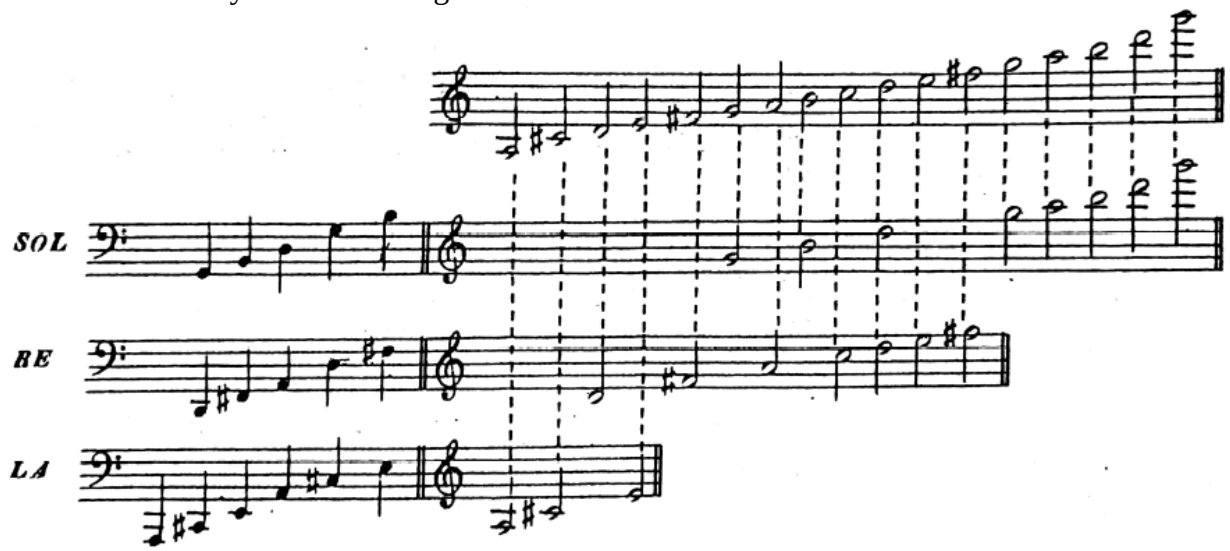


Figure 3-05: Table of harmonics obtained from each of the three strings.[71]

[70] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso*, 94; 115-116. Translated from Italian by the author.

[71] Bottesini, *Metodo completo per Contrabbasso*, 116. Bottesini used sounding pitch notation when writing for solo double bass, rather than the modern standard practice of writing the bass part one octave higher.

CHAPTER 4

CONCERTO DI BRAVURA

Introduction

> The most prominent element is the instrumental technique brought to the limits of human possibilities, with perhaps the most significant example in the *Concerto di bravura in A major* for double bass and orchestra; with it Bottesini places himself at the top of European virtuosity, in a real awareness of the value of artifice itself, where technical exuberance takes the place of traditional musical values. This exuberance establishes itself as a real significant presence, undermining the musical form from within and opening new horizons to it. The virtuosic game, in Bottesini as in Liszt or Paganini, becomes so engaging that it overwhelms every rule other than the geometric progression of difficulties.[72]

Concerto di Bravura, also named Concerto no. 3, is not widely performed and there are only two performance editions of it, both of which however contain some mistakes and arbitrary interpretations of the original manuscript. The only manuscript available, according to Gaspare Nello Vetro,[73] is a score for double bass and piano and it is kept in the library of Parma Conservatory of Music. In the autograph manuscript there is no date, and the information we have from articles and books about Bottesini's music is contradictory. Enrico Salvatore Fazio argues that this is a late work;[74] Gaspare Nello Vetro claims that this is a work written by a young Bottesini.[75] However, neither of them supports their thesis with evidence, although we have some reasons to support the idea of this being a late work.

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[72] Enrico Salvatore Fazio, "Il contrabbassista e le composizioni per contrabbasso," in *Bottesini 1821-1889,* ed. Gaspare Nello Vetro (Parma: 1989), 56. Translated from Italian by the author.
[73] Gaspare Nello Vetro, "Elenco delle composizioni e delle edizioni," in *Bottesini 1821-1889* (Parma: 1989), 173.
[74] Fazio, "Il contrabbassista e le composizioni per contrabbasso," 56.
[75] Gaspare Nello Vetro, "Preface" in *Concerto di Bravura in La Magg. per contrabbasso e pianoforte,* Revisione di Umbero Ferrari (Milano: Nuove Consonanze, 1990).

This concerto contains almost all the technical, stylistic, and expressive figuration that can be found in Bottesini's instrumental writing, from the early works to the last romanzas. As will be seen later, the first and third movements have many of the characteristics of fantasias on opera themes, while the lyricism of the development in the B section of the second movement is clearly more mature and closer to the style of his romanzas. The virtuosic intent (*di Bravura*) is expressed through a demanding solo part, with rapid passages of 16th and 32nd notes without pauses, and the accompanimental function of the orchestra that is almost never in dialogue with the soloist, as in the style of Paganini's violin concertos. All the clear references and borrowed materials from his own pieces are more likely an attempt to create a piece which represents a summation of the composer's style in his maturity than the result of an early collection of ideas. Moreover, Bottesini's aesthetic were oriented towards those romantic composers who expressed themselves in the most moderate, sometimes even classical, form. In conclusion, despite distant from the compositions of the contemporary composers of Bottesini's late career, the form of this concerto, which suits and highlights the virtuosic intent, justifies the idea of a piece written in the composer's maturity and which summarizes his technique.

Formal Analysis

Concerto di bravura, in A major, is composed in three movements connected to each other.

The formal schema of the first movement resembles a *scena e aria*[76] from opera and highlights the virtuosic intent. There is no development of a thematic idea, as we expect from a first movement in sonata form, but rather a succession of sections with the goal of realizing the

[76] *Scena e Aria*, also called *Solita Forma*, is a formal design of scenes found during the bel canto era of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti up to the late operas of Verdi. This structure includes a *scena* (scene composed by introduction, arioso and recitative), an adagio or cantabile, a *tempo di mezzo* (a kind of transition), and a cabaletta.

widest variety of technical effects. The 13-measure orchestra introduction in 6/8 is followed by a 4/4 section, “a piacere,” in which the double bass plays two cadenzas with long arpeggios which cover the entire range of the instrument, first on the tonic and then on the dominant. A short, interrupted arioso section in 6/8 on a tonic pedal gives way to a “recitativo” again in 4/4. This section, in a recitativo style, is written with extreme timbral contrasts making wide and frequent jumps from harmonics to the lowest notes on the instrument. After a long arpeggio on the dominant, there is an Allegro moderato section in 3/4, which is a cantabile initially on harmonics and then in the normal register. This is the first real melody of the piece, built as a compound period comprised of two hybrid phrases of antecedent plus continuation. It offers a more colorful harmonic variety, modulating to C-sharp minor (iii) and returning, through a transition, to the home key with a short cadenza on the dominant. This then leads to a tarantella-like section, which resembles a cabaletta, with fast repeated notes in triplets. The following orchestral section, which ends on the same thematic idea as the orchestral introduction, leads into the second movement.

	mm	**Key**	**Form**
Orchestra Introduction	1-13	A Major	Compound Sentence
A Piacere	14-25	A Major	Virtuosic cadenzas
Arioso Tempo I	26-35	A Major	Melody on tonic pedal
Recitativo	36-51	A Major	Model-sequence technique + cadenza
Cantabile Allegro moderato	52-71	A Major → C# minor	Compound Period
Transition	72-82	A Major	Sentence + cadenza
Tarantella-like cabaletta	83-104	A Major	Compound Sentence
Orchestra coda	105-130	A Major → E Major	Extended Sentence

Figure 4-01: 1st movement: Andante mosso – Allegro moderato (Scena e Aria)

The Andante, in E major, is a romanza in a small ternary form and the theme is the same as the second movement of *Passioni Amorose* for two double basses. The A section, with a one-measure introduction, is an 8-measure period; the B section in C-sharp minor (vi) modulates to B major (V), which prolongs the section on the dominant until the cadenza with double stops; following the cadenza, the A' section returns and elaborates the melody with difficult arpeggios in triplets, almost like a virtuosic variation, which resembles the two double bass parts of *Passioni Amorose* combined by altering the arpeggios to fit the melody notes at the top. The second movement explores all the lyrical characteristic and expressive possibilities of the instrument.

	mm	**Key**	**Form**
A	1-9	E Major	Intro + 8-measures Period
B	10-25	C# minor → B Major	8-measures Sentence + standing on the dominant with cadenza
A'	26-47	E Major	8-measures Period + coda

Figure 4-02: 2nd movement: Andante (Romanza)

The last movement, Allegretto, is in A major and in 3/4. With a theme and variations form, it completes the variety of rhythmic figures in the piece with dotted-note thematic material. The first section, after the 13-measures orchestral introduction, is organized in a small ternary form with a 16-measure period A section modulating to E major (V), a B section in B minor (ii) with a dominant arrival (V) and an extended A' section of 17 measures. A short arpeggiated cadenza leads to the next section where the double bass plays a virtuosic variation of the thematic material, which somehow recalls the second variation of *Fantasia on "La Sonnambula"* in contrary motion, followed by a variation played by the orchestra and accompanied with chordal arpeggios in the

double bass, which resemble arpeggios typical of other compositions such as the *Gran Duo Concertante*, the final part of variations on *Nel cor più non mi sento* and the last part of the cadenza of *Grande Allegro da concerto*. A coda ends the piece.

	mm	**Key**	**Form**
Orchestra introduction	1-13	A Major	Introduction
Theme	14-57	A Major	Small Ternary
A	14-31	A Major → E Major	16-measures Period
B	32-39	B minor → E Major	8-measures Period
A'	40-57	A Major → E Major	Hybrid theme: antecedent + extended continuation
Double Bass variation	58-73	A Major	16-measures Compound Period
Orchestra variation	74-93	A Major	16-measures Extended Compound Sentence
Coda	94-118	A Major	coda

Figure 4-03: 3rd movement: Allegretto (Theme and variations)

CONCLUSION

Bottesini, with his artistic approach to the instrument, enhanced the tradition of the solo double bass, which was started by Dragonetti a few decades earlier. In contrast with Dragonetti, Bottesini developed a language on the double bass inspired by *bel canto* and by a lyricism which was difficult to imagine expressed on such a big and apparently limited instrument. His virtuosic technical writing, inspired by the Italian violin school, and by Paganini in particular, gives Bottesini the right to be cited among the most famous virtuoso composers of the 19th century. Bottesini's music is more than entertaining music, but it is additionally a beautiful expression of the instrumental and vocal art that fascinates the whole world: Italian romanticism.

This document clarifies some of the implied and less evident aspects of Bottesini's composition, giving the opportunity to better understand the style, the historical context, and the aesthetic purpose of his music. The material in this document is a good starting point for establishing a common performance practice for Bottesini's double bass music. This knowledge, together with an appropriate awareness of the harmony and formal structure of each piece, gives the performer the tools to express his own sensitivity without altering the musical meaning.

A probable development of this work will include an additional section about ornaments and a further study and expansion of the paragraph about phrasing and agogic.

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APPENDICES

Lecture Recital Script

Good afternoon. Welcome and thank you for coming to this lecture-recital, titled "Giovanni Bottesini: common performance practice and concerto di bravura." Today I will discuss my ambitious project to summarize and establish a more analytical common performance practice for Bottesini's double bass music. This is based on oral traditions I have learned studying at the conservatory of Milano and working closely to some of the best performers of Bottesini's music, such as Francesco Siragusa and Franco Petracchi. It is also based on Manuel Garcia's vocal treatise, which I have been using as a guide for articulation and tempo features typical of *bel canto*.

I would like to start with an important explanation of the historical background to better contextualize the meaning and the purpose of Bottesini's music and more generally of Italian instrumental music in the first sixty years of nineteenth century.

Despite Italy's leadership in instrumental music from mid-1500s to mid-1700s, Italian 19th century music is strongly and almost exclusively identified with opera and vocal music. This is not entirely true.

At the end of the 18th century, the tradition of Italian instrumental music was still vibrant. In fact, not too much time had passed since the generation of Tartini, Geminiani, Vivaldi, Albinoni, Locatelli, etc., who were active in the middle of the century and internationally well-known and esteemed, nor since northern Europeans crossed the Alps to study composition and instrumental virtuosity in Italy. One example is the young Mozart who traveled all over Italy between 1769 and 1773. Moreover, at the end of the century, foreign music institutions assigned prestigious positions

to Italian instrumentalists and composers, like Cambini (Paris), Boccherini (Spain), Viotti (Paris and London), Cherubini (Paris and Vienna), and Clementi (England). Even composers who subsequently devoted their mature years to opera production wrote instrumental music during the beginning of the 19th century. Examples are Rossini's *Sonate a Quattro* written in 1808 and Donizetti's string quartets in 1817.

After the first decades of the 19th century, the diaspora of the above-mentioned instrumental composers, the popularity of Rossini's operas in 1815 and the widespread fame of Paganini – who implemented, as composer, a kind of instrumental transposition of Rossinian language – orientated the audience's taste decidedly toward the melodrama and virtuosic opera paraphrases. Another detrimental factor for instrumental music, at that point, was the consequent lack of interest in investing in instrumental compositions by the major national publishers; It should be mentioned that the bourgeois social classes, from which the movement of Philharmonic Societies thrived, culturally operated in an elitist direction that did not encourage the diffusion of the instrumental repertoire to the lower classes.

At this point, music history books talk almost exclusively about opera and Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi. However, during this apparent lethargy of instrumental music, other than Paganini, a generation of instrumental virtuoso-composers was operating, not so silently, and composing very interesting and beautiful music. These composers included Antonio Bazzini, Camillo Sivori, Adolfo Fumagalli, Alfredo Piatti, Antonio Pasculli, and, of course, Giovanni Bottesini. They were not however connected by a coherent style, but all of them were influenced by opera and vocal music, especially Rossini's musical language, Paganini's virtuosity, the formal classicism of Haydn, and the early romanticism of Mendelssohn and Schumann.

From an aesthetic point of view, the instrumental music language and the meaning of *espressione* (expression) followed the changes that were influencing the opera field. In the 19th century, melodrama was no longer just worldly entertainment. People went to the opera house to participate intensely in the passionate events of the drama, to identify themselves with the characters, to suffer and rejoice with them, to ideally confront the protagonists' misfortunes and behaviors with their own sentimental experiences, and to learn from them a more intense, nobler and passionate life.

In general, romanticism meant enhancement of the individual: the human being. In Germany, this enhancement depicts an individual with a deep feeling of his limitations and with the irresistible need of evasion from it. A good example is the figure of der wanderer: someone who often travels from place to place without any clear aim or purpose trying to find himself. In Italy, however, the affirmation of the individual resulted in an intensification of feelings, moving away from the prolongation of the individual in the infinity of the nature or the religion. Love, as romantic excitement of the heart against reason, has been explored trough the naturalistic evidence of its psychological and affective aspects. In other words, love is the only truth of life, the only good quality, the only positive aspect: everything against it is deception, lie, wickedness and oppression.

Therefore, after Paganini, instrumental virtuosity was not just a mere showing off of technical skills anymore, but rather the ability of express, through the instrument, those passions and expressions of opera and vocal music; or more generically speaking of *bel canto*: technically demanding, but full of emotions.

Talking about Giovanni Bottesini, we can find confirmations of this expressive virtuosity in almost every comment at his solo performances. People were saying comments like:

> The beauty of the sound; his marvelous dexterity in the most difficult passages; his manner of singing, the delicacy and grace of his ornaments, create the most complete talent that one can imagine.

> He tamed the most rebellious of the instruments, turning the rude and dark sound of the bass to the sweet sound of the violin; he handles and strains it as easily as it was the most slight and comfortable instrument. It doesn't look arduous and artificial. All this, the prodigious mechanism, is nothing compared with the soul and the feeling that make sounds like singing. We can admire the highest and touching expression of the adagios, the flute like sounds so pure, the firm and rigorous intonation. In Bellini's melodies [he is talking about Fantasia on sonnambula] the words seemed to literally come out of the strings, so that no baritone or soprano could say more gently, more powerfully: Cari luoghi io vi trovai; Ah! Non giunge uman pensiero! The bass seemed singing it. The brio and the vivacity of Allegros, those passages difficult for everyone else, cannot be said: we miss words, but the effect was amazing. His playing is wonderful for fineness and good taste.

> …the double bass, which, under his powerful bow and his fairy fingers, it's not a limited instrument anymore, but become a new instrument, rich of sounds: groaning and exciting, majestically deep, and sweet, poetic and charming.

There were no comments about the speed of Bottesini's playing, whether he was amusing, or how loud he played; and so on. It is still present a feeling of something magic or supernatural, directly connected with the "demonic" virtuosity of Paganini, but, fantasies aside, the characteristics of his playing seem evident: singing, poetic, charming, and comfortable.

Unfortunately, these notable characteristics are probably not always obvious. Through my research I found three main reasons that partially explain the at times superficial interpretations, which not always reflect the musical meaning and intent of this kind of music.

One of the reasons could be the Germanic 20th century historiography, led by Carl Dahlhaus, who highlights the dualism of Beethoven and Rossini and their esthetic value: "on one side the absolute instrumental music – the way to access the metaphysic and deep significances-, on the other side the Italian opera – superficial and oriented to the delight of the senses."

Another reason for superficial present-day interpretations lies in the fact that Bottesini, traveling and performing his pieces around the world, had the need of transcribing and somehow adapting his pieces according with the ensemble and the place where he was performing those pieces, leaving us a variety of manuscript, often several for the same piece, with slight variations in phrasing and articulations.

A final reason for a lack of similar approach to interpreting Bottesini's music is that the double bass is an instrument which varies widely in shapes and largeness of the body, length of the sounding string, in the use of the bow – French or German –, fingerings, techniques, and schools. We can thus easily imagine also the variety of ways of playing and feeling music.

These reasons misled performers, who sometimes seem to think that everything is allowed, since it is Italian entertainment music. Thus, I felt the need of thinking about creating a performance practice which could more specifically fill the lack of a consistent and hypothetical accurate interpretation of the most famous and productive romantic composer of music for the double bass.

Before going into the technical and performing aspects of this project, I would like to spend few more minutes discussing the relationship between Bottesini and vocal music, and introducing Garcia's method.

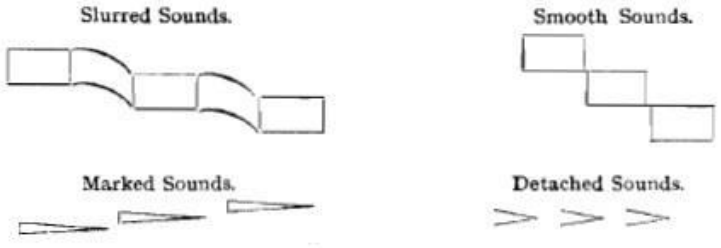
Bottesini was an orchestra conductor (he conducted the premiere of Verdi's Aida among many other operas especially in his period in Cuba and in Cairo) and opera composer (he wrote about eight operas). He also composed a considerable number of romanzas, which was a genre of compositions for piano and voice largely in vogue since the beginning of the 19th century, and which became very important in the second half of the century. For a large number of reasons, even Bottesini's method for double bass tells us how strong his relationship with vocal music was.

In order to demonstrate how to play Bottesini's music for double bass, my research led me to a vocal treatise written by Manuel Garcia in 1840. Manuel Garcia was a singer and singing teacher, very famous all over Europe. He was defined "the major theorist of Rossinian vocal school" and his treatise, explained in an invaluable clear way and based for the first time on physiological observations, can be considered a central document for the understanding of singing in the nineteenth century. Garcia's work is not important for this document because it somehow influenced Bottesini and his style (it definitely didn't and we don't even know for sure whether Bottesini has known this treatise specifically), but rather it's important because it summarizes, analyzes and explains common technical and musical features of Belcanto in an analytical way, almost scientific, differently from other vocal methods of that period.

With all this information in mind, let's get more into the core of the project.

As we have said, compared to German music, Italian vocal and instrumental music is based on melody rather than formal structures and development of small thematic elements, and on all those ornaments of the melody in relation to simpler yet effective harmonies. Common instrumental practice suggests specific bow strokes for specific articulation marks. In the Italian opera repertoire, the language changes slightly, making the Classical performance practice not conforming with the spirit and the style of *bel canto*. Thus, the correct and refined use of the bow, as equivalent of the voice physiology, is fundamental in forming a theoretically authentic interpretation of Bottesini's music.

SLIDE ARTICULATIONS



Garcia explains very well, for what concerns my project, the matter of articulations, phrasing and agogic. He says that "the modes of vocalization are greatly dependent on the manner in which the lungs, glottis, and pharynx, perform their function." In the case of double bass all these functions are performed by the bow:

glottis is the attack of the sound,

lungs is the weight and sustaining of the sound,

pharynx is the resonance of each note or the space given between each attack.

Slurred or Glided

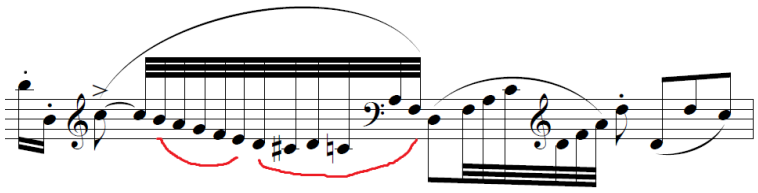
Garcia says:

> To slur is to conduct the voice from one note to another through all intermediate sounds. The time occupied by a slur should be taken from the last portion of the note quitted; and its rapidity will depend on the kind of expression required by any passage in which it occurs. It is indicated with the slur sign.

The concept of glided or slurred notes can be translated to the double bass by using the legato bow stroke in two ways: with slurred legato, and with portamento.

With slurred legato notes are smoothly connected with the bow, either in one or several bows, using a very clear left-hand articulation: usually for fast scales, arpeggios and runs.

Example 1. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. I, m. 41



With portamento: one can use the same finger or change fingers with a glissando effect passing from one note to another, in the same bow or changing the bow. This is usually for larger intervals, but also for small intervals in melodic and *espressivo* passages.

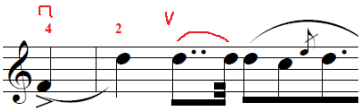
Bottesini himself gave us a hint about his taste in portamento:

> Sliding your fingers over a string facilitates the transition from one tone to another with good intonation, especially in dangerous passages. However, it is necessary to carefully avoid making the distance that passes from one linked note to another felt, which would have a very bad effect where it took place. Therefore, try to fall on the note with ease and comfort.

There are two kinds of portamento made by the left hand:

- One can shift with the destination finger. The result is a smooth connection which gives the shift a gentle and sweet character. When played in a single bow, this gives the effect of a melismatic vocal setting (singing the same syllable through more than one note). This is the predominant portamento in Bottesini's music.

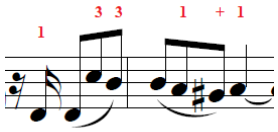
Example 2. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. II, mm. 9-10



with fingering 4 – 2.

- One can alternatively shift with the finger of origin and reach the arrival note with the new finger. The result is an articulated arrival, giving the shift more character and determination. This has the effect of singing two different syllables.

Example 3. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. I, m. 65

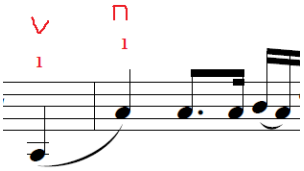


with fingering 1 – 3 – 3 – 1 – + – 1.

A bow change for the second note can be executed in two ways:

- The bow can change at the start of the shift.

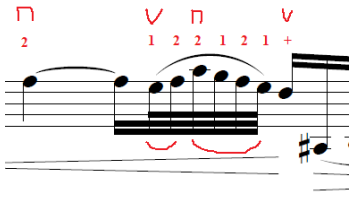
Example 4. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. II, mm. 5-6



with fingering 1 – 1, but changing the bow.

- The bow can change upon arrival at the second note.

Example 5. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. II, m. 13



with fingering 2 – 2 but changing the bow.

Smooth (Legato)

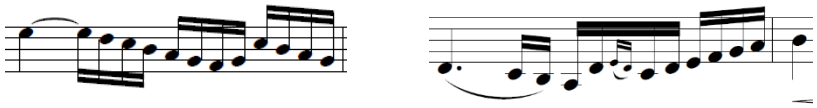
Garcia says:

> To sing legato means to pass from one sound to another in a neat, sudden, and smooth manner, without interrupting the flow of voice; yet not allowing it to drag or slur over any

> intermediate sound. This forms the leading characteristics of vocalization, **every other being only a variety used to color it**. It is indicated with no signs.

The concept of smooth (legato) articulation is executed on the double bass using the détaché bow stroke. Détaché indicates that smooth, separate bow strokes should be used for each note (it does not mean detached or disconnected). Notes are produced with an even, seamless stroke with no variation in pressure.

Example 6. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. I, m. 17; mvt. II, m. 3



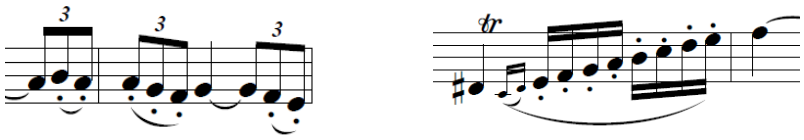
Marked (Marcato)

> To Mark sounds is to lay a particular stress on each, without detaching them from one another: this will be attained by giving a pressure to the lungs and by dilatating the pharynx. Marked vocalization helps to bring out the voice, and to correct the habit of gliding notes. This style is chiefly adapted to diatonic scales, the notes of which ought to be retarded a little towards the end. Marked sounds are indicated by tied dots.

This, together with the detached sign (staccato) that we will see next, is probably the most misunderstood articulation sign. The concept of marked can be articulated on the double bass by the détaché lancé bow stroke. Détaché lancé is a variation of the détaché bow stroke. A slightly separated bow stroke is used to gently articulate the notes with an unaccented, distinct break between each note. In other words, every note is gently attacked (pressure to the lungs = gentle adding of weight to the bow) and released with resonance (dilation of the pharynx = giving the note resonance without holding it). This bow stroke is often used in combination with the louré or

porté stroke (a short series of gently pulsed legato notes executed in one bow stroke - it is also known as portato) to perform several separated notes in the same bow.

Example 7. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. I, mm. 66-67; mvt. II, m. 7

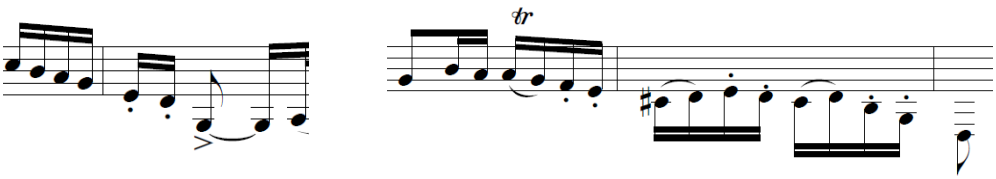


Detached (Staccato)

> To detach sounds is to articulate each individually by a distinct stroke of the glottis in order to separate them from one another. Besides the éclat (brilliant character) which these accents impart to a passage, when used with taste, they help to give elasticity to stiff throats. Detach sounds are indicated by dots.

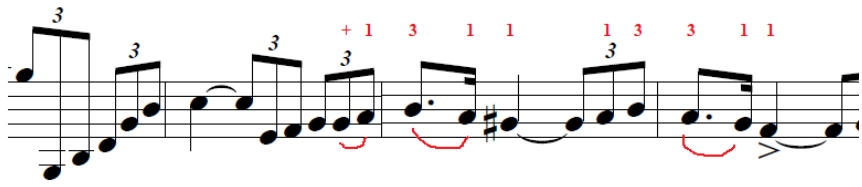
The concept of detached can be realized on the double bass using a staccato on the string bow stroke. Staccato indicates the bow should remain on the string to play shortened and detached notes, distinctly separated from the following notes with a clear attack of the sound (distinct stroke of the glottis). Detached articulation is often used before an accented note or a slurred group of notes. In these cases, according to the idea of éclat (brilliant character) and elasticity, the detached notes tend to fall on the accented or slurred note following the direction of the phrase, both in ascending and descending motion.

Example 8. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. I, m. 18; mvt. III, mm. 58-59

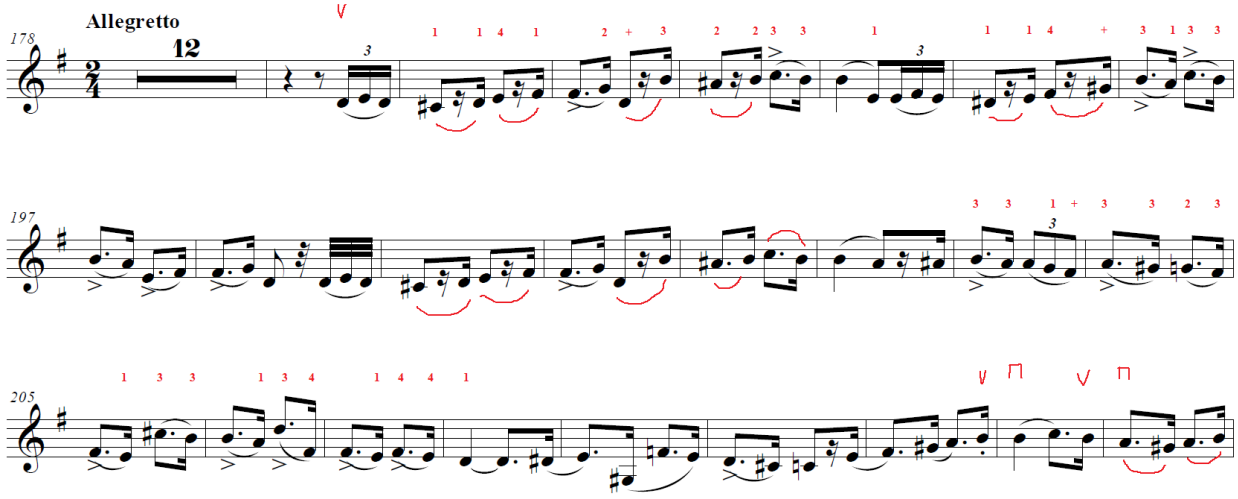


Having explained and analyzed the meaning of each articulation sign (I will talk about the accent sign in a minute), I would like to mention another important factor. We have to keep in mind that Bottesini was used to write his music in a score format. In fact, we don't have any single double bass part with fingering and/or bowings (except for etudes in his method). Analyzing many manuscripts, it becomes clear that Bottesini didn't write the articulation signs with the intent of bowings or bow strokes, but rather as articulation and phrasing marks. For this reason, we can take some liberty interpreting those signs with bowings, but still respecting the original intent. I will play two brief examples in order to make it clearer from my personal interpretation of the original manuscript.

Example 9. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. I, mm. 73-78



Example 10. Concerto di Bravura, mvt. III, mm. 1-36



In both cases I will use slurs (in red) to play in the same bow two or more notes for technical reasons, but in those cases I aim to preserve the nature of the articulation. Even if I slur the dotted rhythm (ex. 10), playing the two notes in the same bow, I will make a differentiation in order to preserve the different articulations of the 8th-note plus rest figure, the dotted 8th-note figure, and the originally slurred dotted 8th-note figure. I will use portamento, and thus using a specific fingering, in the originally slurred notes; I won't use portamento, and thus using a different specific fingering, between two notes that I slur together but that are written with smooth (legato) articulation.

Inflections and accents

As we have seen in the last example, and as we will see in every single piece written by Bottesini, there are accent signs >. What accent signs mean in this music?

Garcia says:

> The partial inflection given upon separate notes, while all the others remain uniform, is indicated by placing the sign > over a note. This Forte-piano, applied to isolated notes, is called inflections or accent. The most regular accents of song are founded on the emphasis of spoken language and fall on the downbeats in a bar, and on long syllables in words. But as this arrangement would not be sufficient to give character to all kind of rhythm, accents are also placed, when required, on the weak parts or beats of a bar, in this way destroying the prosodic accent. Accents are usually placed on appoggiaturas, and on pointed notes, or else on the first note of every figure when repeated.

These accents may be performed with a more intense vibrato, no vibrato at all, and/or prolonging the accented note in order to give it more emphasis. The choice depends on the sensitivity of the performer and on the musical context. (if we are playing a slow movement, we have more room; if it's a fast movement the inflection will be smaller).

Emblematic is Bottesini's use of > and *sf*: he continuously used > to indicate the stress and direction of musical phrase, and *sf* when he wanted to indicate and actual accent.

AGOGIC

Agogic is referred to all those internal tempo variations, which include:

- Ritardando and Accellerando
- Ad libitum or A Piacere
- Tempo rubato

Garcia summarizes these concepts with accuracy, but, since we are talking about small variations of tempo to add some interest in the phrase, it would require a long time to explain and analyze every single phrase. Thus, I won't discuss this subject today. But it is worth to mentioning that there are objective factors that influence the choice the musician performer will make concerning agogic:

- Tempo (fast, slow movement)
- Characteristics of the accompaniment (long notes or arpeggiated, rhythmic and steady accompaniment)
- Harmony (harmonic progressions or prolongations, sequences, cadences)
- Accents and articulation signs

You will find more information about it into the document.

In conclusion, let me briefly introduce Concerto di Bravura before performing it.

Concerto di Bravura, also named Concerto no. 3, is not widely performed and there are only two editions of it, both of which however contain some mistakes and arbitrary interpretations of the original manuscript. The only manuscript available is a score for double bass and piano and it is kept in the library of Parma Conservatory of Music. The concerto contains almost all the technical, stylistic and expressive figuration that can be found in Bottesini's instrumental writing, from the

early works to the last romanzas. All the clear references and borrowed materials from his own pieces are more likely an attempt to create a piece which represents a summation of the composer's style in his maturity than the result of an early collection of ideas. I am sure you will recognize thematic materials from Passioni Amorose for two double basses, from Gran Duo Concertante for double bass and violin, many arpeggios and virtuosic passages from Fantasias.

I hope you will enjoy this performance of *Concerto di Bravura*.

PERFORMANCE

Thank you to everyone who is watching, thanks to the members of my committee who, because of the pandemic and the necessary restrictions, are my in-person audience today and thank you to my pianist and friend Oleg Bellini.

Have a good afternoon.