

# **HYBRID VOCAL PERSONAE**



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## **Abstract**

Vocality, an integral aspect of personality, is impossible to separate without compromising either entity. Whereas vocal personae are versatile in principle with the potential to express themselves in diverse ways, their development and appreciation can be hindered by binarian gender concepts and social roles. This thesis assesses vocality beyond *ersatz* dichotomies. This is achieved by studying vocal personae formed, irrespective of reason, by more than one hormonal category and influence. The singers studied are four historically-distinct vocal groups starting from early CE and reaching up to present. They are referred to as Byzantine eunuch cantors, Baroque castrati, intersex and transvocal singing personae. The general eras are considered alongside individual cases and common elements and philosophical / societal attitudes are compared. Based on individual teaching methods and research results, this thesis confirms hybrid vocal personae as a valid alternative. If supported by appropriate tuition as well as current progress in humanities and science, this is suggested that it might benefit human vocality as a whole.

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The notational system followed in this thesis is a version of the one introduced by Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz in his book *Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen als physiologische Grundlage für die Theorie der Musik* in 1863. According to that, the middle C is presented as  $c'$ , with octaves above as  $c''$ ,  $c'''$ , etc. and octaves below as  $c$ ,  $C$ ,  $C'$ ,  $C''$ , etc.

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I dedicate this work to Hybrid Vocal Personae of All Times.

### **Author's declaration**

The early stages of this research were presented as a paper under the same title at British Forum for Ethnomusicology Annual Conference 2006. Also, the first part of Chapter IV of this thesis is an upgraded commentary on the results contained in this writer's December 2008 article: 'The Changing Female-To-Male (FTM) Voice.' *Radical Musicology*. Vol. 3: 32 pars.

# INTRODUCTION

## Vocality and Gender

The human voice is the most powerful, versatile and intriguing instrument in music history. Among numerous writers and composers, Richard Strauss, for instance, noted that ‘the human voice is the most beautiful instrument of all, but it is the most difficult to play’.<sup>1</sup> This is because the human voice is an integral part of the human body. Similarly to other acoustic instruments, singing consists of power and sound resources, complemented by sound modifiers. However, in ‘the human vocal instrument these elements can be related physiologically to the action of: the lungs, the vocal folds, and the vocal tract, respectively.’<sup>2</sup> Even though singers ‘make use of the same vocal instrument when speaking or singing ... (their ability to sing) requires full conscious control over parts...(which remain) unconscious during speech.’<sup>3</sup>

Since the human voice is a living instrument, it is able to express thoughts and emotions within a variety of contexts, both ordinary and extraordinary. Irrespective of material or idealised background, the human sound has the power to connect and divide as well as the ability to conform and transgress. As a result, mythologies, religions and ideologies have all

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<sup>1</sup> Kjell Bloch Sandved. 1963. *The World of Music: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Michigan: Abradale Press; 1253.

<sup>2</sup> David Howard. ‘The Human Singing Voice.’ In Peter Day, ed. 1999. *Killers in the Brain – Essays on Science and Technology from the Royal Institution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 116.

<sup>3</sup> Howard: 113.

recognised and utilised this wide range of qualities. However, instead of remaining an obedient tool fulfilling the scopes of mythology or ideology, the human voice became not only integrated but also, in many cases, intrinsic to them. This has been symbolised effectively in the story of Orpheus, whose 'disembodied' singing-head became 'immortalised' and equated with his singing.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in a more recent context, the secular Baroque singing voice became a symbolic icon able to exhilarate as well as heal with its florid journeys.<sup>5</sup> The above examples demonstrate that, contrary to initial intentions and conscious of authority, the voice can be transformed into an autonomous entity. However, before I proceed further, I should clarify that, in this thesis, the use of period terms such as 'Renaissance' and 'Baroque' is only in order to facilitate both musicological 'geography' and 'navigation'. As stated by Treitler, similar terminology, merely used as 'construction' means, is 'an artefact of writing music history (and) not a given about the historical world.'<sup>6</sup> Another significant issue is that most of these unclear 'definitions of historical periods ... are relatively recent additions to the musicologists' vocabulary.'<sup>7</sup> Using these terms to

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<sup>4</sup> James R. Ellis. 2003. *Sexuality and Citizenship: Metamorphosis in Elizabethan Erotic Verse*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; 182 – Cf. A. N. Marlow. October 1954. 'Orpheus in Ancient Literature.' *Music & Letters*. Vol. 35, Issue 4: 361-69; 316, 365.

<sup>5</sup> This is demonstrated, for instance, in Farinelli's first and last-known public performances: starting from his renowned debate with a famous trumpet player and ending with his singing for the King of Spain. Cf. Charles Burney. 1773. *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*. London; 213-4 & Charles Burney, Frank Mercer, ed. 1957 / 1789. *A General History of Music*. New York: Dover; 815.

<sup>6</sup> Leo Treitler. 'The Historiography of Music.' In Nick Cook & Mark Everist, eds. 1999. *Rethinking Music*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press; 359.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Wainwright. Introduction: "From 'Renaissance' to 'Baroque'?" In Jonathan Wainwright & Peter Holman, eds. 2005. *From Renaissance to Baroque*. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company; 1. As stated in the same source, 'Renaissance' was first used as musicological term by A.W Ambros in 1868. 'Baroque', though existing

define either vocal or instrumental music periods is, therefore, both precarious and superficial. However, as in other works, I make use of period terms for economy of communication.

Singing voices are potent musical channels, yet this power is rarely measured in decibels. Though every artist is equally able to whisper, cry and yell, what we identify as singing strength is frequently in inverted ratio to volume. For instance, a pianissimo becomes inexorably united with the emotions and thoughts creating it; its medium, the human voice, makes them immediately accessible and recognisable to audiences. As with all other instruments, a human voice is characterised by pitch, timbre, range, volume etc. These can only be controlled by knowledge and command of one's singing instrument. This consists mainly of the lungs, the larynx and pharynx, the head resonance and the mouth.<sup>8</sup> Irrespective of singing talent though, in-depth knowledge and specialised training are required in order to produce maximum effects, and ideally, 'a good operatic voice needs a concentration of energy around 3 kHz.'<sup>9</sup> Moreover, 'for trained operatic singers, in addition to the conventional singer's formant ... another energy peak was observed in the region of 8-9 kHz.'<sup>10</sup>

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as a 1734 reference, it did not come to acquire its present musicological context until the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>8</sup> However, the Italian School of Singing first mentioned about the need of whole body participation in singing (*'la partecipazione di corpo in canto'*). This phrase was frequently repeated by Nino Piccaluga, tenor, to his students (late 1930s). One of them, Antonis Kalaitzakis, tenor, passed this to me during his teaching.

<sup>9</sup> W.T. Bartholomew. 1934. 'A physical definition of 'good voice-quality' in the male voice.' *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*. 6: 25-33; 25. The researcher then mentioned that 'this concentration must be produced with a special resonator in the larynx or lower pharynx.' *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Sang-Hyuk Lee *et al.* 2008. 'The Singer's Formant and Speaker's Ring Resonance: A Long-Term Average Spectrum Analysis.' *Clinical and Experimental Otorhinolaryngology*.

The vocal instrument, being an integral part of each person, remains influenced by individual factors. For instance, health matters and age or psychological aspects, like personal space and stress, can have an effect on or even render a perfectly shaped singing medium untenable. Therefore, 'professional singing technique has had to develop over the centuries not only to give singers conscious control over these elements of the vocal instrument, but also to respond to the challenges posed by the historical development of musical ideas, the variety of places in which music was to be performed, and the increasing size of audiences.'<sup>11</sup>

Conversely, no technical assistance can deal in depth with the issue of the gendered voice. This is due to a human voice's inability for disassociation from its perceived gender thus far, be it male, female, variant or transgressive.<sup>12</sup> Gender vocal perceptions are influenced by social and historical factors. Graddol and Swann, for instance, suggest that 'average pitch of voice seems to be partly a function of vocal anatomy, partly of environmental factors ... and partly a result of social adaptation.'<sup>13</sup> Though the above applies to every gendered voice, its results are more prominent

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Vol. 1, Issue 2: 92-6; 96. As explained, 'this second peak was interpreted as the second resonance of the epilarynx tube. We applied the formula that was derived for a uniform tube that was closed on one end (the glottis) and open on the other (the aryepiglottic collar). This formula is  $F=(2n-1)c/4L$  where  $c$  is the speed of sound in the vocal tract (340 m/s),  $L$  is the length of the epilarynx tube (3 cm) and letter  $n$  is 2. Use of this formula revealed a second resonance frequency at about 8.5 kHz.' IR Titze & SM Jin. 2003. 'Is there evidence of a second singer's formant?' *Journal of Singing*. Vol. 59, Issue 4: 329-31.

<sup>11</sup> Howard, 1999: 114.

<sup>12</sup> Numerous scholars have also been researching the gender of constructed instruments, e.g. cello, guitar or the clarinet. However, these results have so far remained mostly theoretical endeavours. Cf. Stephen Cottrell. 'The gendered saxophone.' Unpublished paper. [http://www.bfe.org.uk/resources/2006\\_Winchester\\_-\\_abstracts.pdf](http://www.bfe.org.uk/resources/2006_Winchester_-_abstracts.pdf) (Accessed: 12.08.08). Also, the terms variant or transgressive here, according to my semiology, imply intersex and trans vocality.

<sup>13</sup> D. Graddol and J. Swann. 1989. *Gender Voices*. London: Blackwell Publishers; 26.

when one is dealing with singers existing beyond the so-called ‘traditional’ male-female threshold. These voices have been given, depending on the attitudes surrounding them, various names and designations, some kind to them and some less so. Most of these tend to co-exist not only during the same era but also in similar cultural backgrounds. For instance during the Baroque era, the names *musico*, *virtuoso*, *primo uomo* as well as *castrato*, *evirato* and *non-integro* had come to describe the very same artists. Only recently, developments in critical thinking, such as gender-queer theory, have managed to counterbalance this adulation-disparagement approach, thus contributing to a few less emotive and more diachronic terms, including alternative and non-binarian voices, or, as the title of this work suggests, ‘hybrid vocal personae’.<sup>14</sup> Gender-variant singers, like all hybrid vocal personae, are either celebrated or segregated, sometimes both, depending on their era’s established ideas and attitudes. Though they occur regularly throughout history, the most typical example of gender-variant voices in Europe is still associated with one historical and musical era: that of the so-called Baroque. However, topical studies in musicology and archaeology have now established that though ‘baroque’ non-binarian singers are still highly celebrated, they were neither the first nor the only ones used as church cantors during Common Era.

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<sup>14</sup> The term was conceived in 2005 and presented in March 2006 during the BFE Annual Conference, Winchester: Winchester University.

## The Byzantine Predecessors

The phenomenon of Byzantine eunuchs had received limited scholarly attention until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The research, however, has demonstrated that eunuchs in Byzantium participated in almost all aspects of its life, apart from two very significant ones: they could never fulfil the roles of a husband and, foremostly, an emperor.<sup>16</sup> Eunuchs became prominent scholars, monks, saints, generals and, on rare occasions such as that of Basil Lekapenos, even regents accused of being the true governing power behind the emperor.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, ‘an order of eunuchs was ... formed in Byzantium ...an order that was as numerous as it was powerful and hierarchically organized. Special titles of nobility were created for them and certain responsibilities were reserved for them.’<sup>18</sup> The Byzantine eunuchs’ extensive study included church icons and byzantine chant

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Rodolphe Guilland. 1943. ‘Les Eunuques dans l’Empire Byzantin: Étude de Titulature et de Prosopographie Byzantines.’ *Études Byzantines*. Vol. I: 197-238.

<sup>16</sup> The prohibition against eunuchs to marry can, mainly, be found in the following extract from Justinian’s *Digest*, which also demonstrates the dual meaning of the term eunuch: ‘Si spadoni mulier nubserit, distinguendum arbitror, castratus fuerit necne, ut in castrato dicas dotem non esse: in eo qui castratus non est, quia est matrimonium, et dos et dotis actio est.’ In P. Krueger, Th. Mommsen, R. Schoell, W. Kroll, trans. and eds. 1905. *Digest*. *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. Berlin: Weidmann; XXIII 3.39 § 1. (‘Where a woman marries a eunuch, I think that a distinction must be drawn between a man [a eunuch] who has been castrated and one [a eunuch] who has not, so that if he has been castrated, you may say that there cannot be a dowry; but where a man [a eunuch] has not been castrated, there can be a dowry and an action for it, because a marriage can take place here.’ Alan Watson, eds. 1998. *The Digest of Justinian*. Vol. I. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; XXIII 3.39 §1). A similar extract can be found in *Digest* XL 2.14 § 1.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Immanuel Bekker, ed. 1838. *Theophanes Continuatus; Ioannes Cameniata; Symeon Magister; Georgius Monachus*. Bonn; 442; George Cedrenos, I. Bekker, ed. 1838. *Compendium historiarum*. II. Bonn: CSHB; 379; Michael Glycas, J-P. Migne, ed. 1886. *Opera Omnia*. In P.G: col. 651. Also Basil’s Byzantine title was *paradyrstos* (in this context, *para* means aside or beside, whereas *dynastos* [or, rather, in the nominative declension. *dynastes*] defines the emperor).

<sup>18</sup> Guilland, 1943: 197-8. The Eunuchs’ Order (‘Ἡ τῶν Εὐνοῦχῶν Τάξις’).

notation. This eventually brought to light and added another important role on the list: that of eunuch cantor.<sup>19</sup>

Even though the subject of Byzantine eunuch cantors has recently acquired more attention, still remains attractive to few. The major reason lies in the combined verbal and musical diversity of Byzantium. Another factor though, could be attributed to the taboo associated with castration performed, solely or mainly, for the sake of art. There are Byzantinologists, who, though they have acknowledged the presence of eunuch cantors, have denied that the operations took place within the state of Byzantium until the end of Justinian's reign.<sup>20</sup> This kind of denial appears intriguingly similar to the attitudes surrounding the *Musici* or castrati in Baroque era. Due to numerous similarities, this thesis will examine the phenomenon of both eunuch groups together, and subsequently compare them to modern equivalents: the natural male sopranos, female intersex and transsexual vocal personae. This will help us establish the diachronic element of what,

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<sup>19</sup> These comprised examples of beardless cantors in icons and higher male vocal lines in Byzantine notation. In Greek Orthodox Church, the shaving of a priest's beard is an equivalent - at times a synonym - for his unfrocking. Similarly to Catholicism, lay women were never allowed to sing in churches. A higher than usually male vocal line, therefore, most likely, denoted either a castrated or an intersex individual. However, based on contemporary documents, Spyraou claims that there were cases of nuns singing in churches. (Evangelia Spyraou. 10-15 September 2007. 'Η Ηχοχρωματική Ποικιλία στην Βυζαντινή Χορωδιακή Πράξη.' *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of the ASBMH*. Athens: 144-56; 146-8.). This is not a possibility to exclude. Nonetheless, there is no evidence supporting the nuns' specialised cantor training, which was state-funded and documented. This makes unlikely for this reference to be applicable to elaborate florid chant (and, therefore, to *Asmatic Akolouthia*). Please note that falsetto singing is something almost unknown post-1453; this practice continues up to 21<sup>st</sup> century Byzantine Chant.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, 'Procopius of Caesarea (B.G. 471-472) and Zonaras (III 240) tell us that the princes of Abkhasia and Lazika in the Caucasus practiced eunuchism on a large scale for the sake of profit. The majority of the eunuchs designated for service in the Grand Palace were of Abkhasian origin. Justinian I succeeded in causing this practice to cease by demonstrating its barbarity. He sent the Abkhasian palace eunuch Euphrantas to Abkhasia, who no doubt eloquently pleaded the case of eunuchs, for he succeeded in convincing the Abkhasian princes to renounce the practice.' Guillard, 1943: 198.

from now on, will be referred to as 'Balance of Blame' and will be discussed in detail within Chapters I and II.<sup>21</sup>

Due to ecclesiastical attitudes, since the cantors were low clerics and not secular singers, only a limited number of names are mentioned: those of choir directors or soloists (*protopsaltes*). Among the limited names, 'the first eunuch who had a formative influence on musical culture in the capital was Brison, a choirmaster ... credited with organizing the nocturnal hymn singing during the Patriarchate of John Chrysostom'.<sup>22</sup> Not all cantor names are mentioned in a positive light. Among them is that of the *domestikos* Euthymios Casnes, the son of the emperor Romanos I, who has been closely connected with the patriarch Theophylactos (933-56) and blamed for compromising the standards of Chant at Mass. In Chapter I, however, I will be discussing the anti-eunuch stance behind such accusations. Negative allegations against eunuchs have been preserved in several contemporary documents, including the *Defence of Eunuchs*.<sup>23</sup> The reason for that discrimination had not been purely a matter of aesthetics. As Kathryn Ringrose suggests, Byzantine eunuchs formed 'a third gender but not a third sex ... (because) language routinely sets (them) outside the norms of male or female gender.'<sup>24</sup>

There are suggestions that eunuch singers had become more accepted by the 12<sup>th</sup> c. By that time, the etymology of the word eunuch had been,

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<sup>21</sup> Chapter I: 25ff

<sup>22</sup> Moran, 2002: 100.

<sup>23</sup> Theophylactos of Ochrid wrote the letter / treatise *In Defence of Eunuchs* in 12<sup>th</sup> century 'for his brother, a eunuch and cleric of Hagia Sophia.' Moran: 100.

<sup>24</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 50.

mistakenly as suggested by Ringrose, assumed to be altered from ‘guardian of the bedchamber’ to ‘well-or high-minded’, thus reflecting a relatively more positive view.<sup>25</sup> However, there are two actual historical narratives, which demonstrate a well-meaning attitude. The first account, recorded by Odo de Deuil, reveals the comments of King Louis VII of France about the ‘sweet chanting’ of eunuchs in Constantinople, whereas the second extract, recorded by Anthony of Novgorod, describes the Transfer of Gifts in Hagia Sophia and the way it was chanted by eunuch cantors, sub-deacons and a monk.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Theodoros Balsamon states that in twelfth century all cantors were eunuchs. I will be discussing these extracts in more detail in Chapter I.<sup>27</sup> Ringrose even comes to suggest that eunuchs were acculturated into Byzantine society and that ‘by the tenth century the gendered status of eunuchs had improved and been normalized in society’.<sup>28</sup> However, there are scholars, such as Tougher, who express serious doubts about this claim.<sup>29</sup>

This kind of hard-earned recognition and tolerance, if entirely accurate, did not last for long. The reason for that was ‘the conquest of 1204 (which) brought with it the destruction of the fragile choral organization of the Hagia

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<sup>25</sup> Ringrose: 16. As claimed, by the 12th c. ‘eunuchs were perceived to be perfect servants of God or of aristocratic men, highly educated and well trained. An etymology derived from terms like well-minded or high-minded seemed logical.’ *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> The king, who was also called Louis the Young (1120-80 CE), visited Constantinople in 1147, whereas the Archbishop of Novgorod (Russia 1211- c. 1231 CE) in 1200. Moran, 2002: 107.

<sup>27</sup> Chapter I: 54-5.

<sup>28</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 86.

<sup>29</sup> He claims that even ‘if we were to accept that eunuchs were acculturated to this role it does not necessarily follow that they thus constituted a third gender. The view that a more positive construct of eunuchs evolved by the tenth century (or eighth, or ninth: confusingly the date given varies) is also debatable.’ Tougher, 2004: 523.

Sophia and its attendant churches and monasteries, since the conquerors (Venetians) introduced the Latin rite to the Great Church. The eunuchs fled into the countryside or sought employment in Russia, Trepezunt or even in Southern Italy.<sup>30</sup> When Byzantine rule was reinstated in 1261, the old 'true tradition', having being oral, was not amongst them. The original ritual, which involved the eunuch chanting, could never be restored; mainly due to an atmosphere of hostility increasingly aimed at eunuchs by then - singers or not. This has been preserved in Athanassios the Athonite's *typikon*, which, among other documents, proscribed the admittance of eunuchs in Lavra monastery.<sup>31</sup> Gender-variant intolerance soon presided in Orthodoxy and the resultant transition was almost 'seamless'. Until recently, few could have suspected that the overtly masculine present sound of the Byzantine Chant has been the product of the last two centuries before the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. However, remnants of the original chants were eventually recovered from South Italy or other Byzantine outposts, like Thessaloniki, Mount Athos, Epirus, Trepezunt and Nicaea.<sup>32</sup>

Due to limited immediate information on Byzantine eunuch cantors, it was necessary for me to seek for additional input from the general, historical, theological and, of course, musicological background. My

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<sup>30</sup> Moran: 108.

<sup>31</sup> *Megisti Lavra* or Great Lavra is a major monastery 'built on the south-eastern end of the Athos Peninsula and is the earliest and biggest foundation on Mount Athos. It was founded by the monk Athanassios the Athonite during the years of the Emperors Romanos the Second and Nikephoros Phocas. He is considered to be the founder of Athonite monasticism and the Holy Monastery of Great Lavra is the mother monastery of Mount Athos.' <http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/Athos/Monastery/MegistiLavra.html> (Accessed: 25.09.09).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Bartolomeo Di Salvo. 1959 & 1960. 'Gli Asmata nella Musica Bizantina.' *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*. Vol. 12: 45-50 & 127-45; Vol. 14: 145-78.

attempt was to replicate the circumstances surrounding their lives so that I could understand them better. To this scope, twentieth-century works, such as that of Dr. Demetrius Zambaco-Pachâ, were also utilised when trying to assess how local surviving sources of information or misconception about eunuchs were viewed in early modern Istanbul and compare them with eunuchs' confirmed societal status in Byzantium.

### **The Celebrated Baroque Singers – *Musici* or *Castrati***

As stated, the 'beginnings of the castrato practice were intimately connected with the Papal chapel in Rome where castrati appeared for the first time as early as in 1562.'<sup>33</sup> However, during the twentieth century, even until the 1980s, it was widely claimed that the singers were first introduced in Catholic Spain and in 1599 were transferred from there to Rome.<sup>34</sup> Significant recent works, such as those of Shaun Tougher, Kathryn Ringrose, Neil Moran and the most recent one by Nicholas Clapton, brought different aspects of the singers' introduction to broader attention. For instance, there is sufficient substantiation of castrati singing in Italy by 1550. Additionally, we can find 'castrati singing in the court chapel in Munich from at the latest 1574, when the great Orlandus Lassus was in

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<sup>33</sup> Manfred F. Bukofzer. 1947 / 2007 reprint. *Music in the Baroque era: From Monteverdi to Bach*. Von Elterlein Press; 399. This was later cited in Maria R. Maniates. 1979. *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530 –1630*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press; 114.

<sup>34</sup> Pietro Paolo Folignato and Girolamo Rossini were both officially admitted in 1599.

charge'.<sup>35</sup> Finally, as stated in *Cum Pro Nostro Pastoralis Munere* of 1589, Pope Sixtus V restructured the Capella Giulia choir by taking the new vocal group into consideration.<sup>36</sup> Irrespective of the exact date though, the Pope's original intentions were clearly summed on the phrase *Ad honorem Dei*: the singers were to be employed solely in order to serve the Glory of God in church.<sup>37</sup> Soon the double standards and discrimination towards the singers would reveal a less than holy idea behind those papal words.<sup>38</sup> In spite of date imprecision and true intentions though, the above occurrence marked a unique event for the future of European music art period ever since. Without it, aspects such as the florid singing style (a characteristic of those singers' special abilities) and compositions incorporating their vocal idiosyncrasy in mind, both integrated in the opera genre, the character of Western music would have been different. In spite of musical appreciation, however, the above period had an attached negative *conditio sine qua non* to it: the large-scale surgical abuse of young boys in Italy and abroad.<sup>39</sup>

The term castrato refers to 'a type of high-voiced male singer, brought about by castrating young boys with promising voices before they reached puberty'.<sup>40</sup> Though there are opposing views on the subject, based on original sources such as correspondence, the terms 'evirato' or 'castrato'

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<sup>35</sup> Clapton, 2004: 10.

<sup>36</sup> Bull 'Cum pro nostro pastoralis munere'. 27 Sept 1589 / 1752. *Collectionis Bullarium, brevium, aliorumque diplomatum sacro sanctae Basilicae Vaticanae*. Rome, iii, 172 (transl. in Milner, 1973: 250). The extract is discussed in Chapter II of this thesis: 121.

<sup>37</sup> The delay in announcement constitutes a period of careful apprehension of the whole phenomenon for the Vatican.

<sup>38</sup> These will be addressed in detail on Chapter II.

<sup>39</sup> The number again is imprecise and, possibly, exaggerated.

<sup>40</sup> John Rosselli. 'Castrato.' In Stanley Sadie, ed. 2001- 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Vol. V; 267.

can be viewed as intimidating and judgmental. This appears to contradict translated texts by Pierfrancesco Tosi and Giambattista Mancini, the great singing teachers of 1700, where the term appears to have been used positively.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, the translation does not necessarily reflect the original texts where the capitalised word '*Musico*' (musician) was used instead. The noted term was used, for instance, exclusively by Tosi, even though it used to include originally all adept artists.<sup>42</sup> Though *Musico* is a less judgmental term and, therefore, more consistent with the rest of this thesis, due to matters of reference, it will be used interchangeably with the presiding term.<sup>43</sup> Both sides of the adulation-disparagement wording can, however, only express partial qualities and do not bear diachronicity.<sup>44</sup>

The singers' presence became central to both church music and opera, mainly in Italy and Spain - but also in countries under their influence - throughout the two so-called baroque centuries: 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. It is remarkable that, though their opera stage contribution was stopped by 1830, it took almost another century for them to disappear from the places of their

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<sup>41</sup> Though, had it been actual, this phenomenon would not have been improbable as recognised by Gender Theory's term 'reclaiming negative connotations'. This is seen, for instance, in current to us notions for insulting words such as 'queer' or 'tranny'.

<sup>42</sup> This is demonstrated in several extracts, such as the one praising the talents of 'Signor Pistocchi Musico il più insigne de' nostri' ('Signor Pistocchi, the most notable of our Music[i]'). Pierfrancesco Tosi. 1723 reprint / 1968. *Opinioni de' cantori antichi, e moderni o sieno osservazioni sopra il canto figurato*. Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe (1723 reprint) & (1968 edition) New York: Broude Brothers; 65. Cf. Tosi: 77, 89, 91 & 114.

<sup>43</sup> *Musico* was not only the title preferred in singers' 'promotion' for concerts, operas etc. but also widely used in everyday Italian life. This has also been reflected in Burney's work as demonstrated in the following extract: 'Orgitano played the harpsichord ... and signor Consorte, a musico, was there to sing.' Charles Burney, Percy A. Scholes, ed. 1773 / 1959. *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*. (Title of 1959 edition: *An Eighteenth-Century musical Tour in France and Italy*). London: Oxford University Press; 196. Also, Burney in the same book's glossary stated: 'Musico; a general term for musician; but now chiefly applied in Italy to a castrato.' Burney, 1773 / 1959: 228.

<sup>44</sup> This is going to be referred in detail when discussing hybridity as an alternative option.

initiation: the Vatican Choirs. The reason behind the Papal States' introduction of a voice-type created by castration is more complicated than was initially perceived. This was a practice that the Vatican openly condemned from the eighteenth century, yet continued to use the singers' talents for almost two hundred years. First of all, there is a clear difference in attitudes between the Baroque period and present attitudes. According to the former, castration was, particularly in the seventeenth century, regarded almost as a form of celibacy suitable for those following a monastic vocation. The first singers, usually associated with monasteries, were mostly monks and fewer, if any, secular performers. Beyond being a matter of taste, castrati voices were treated as a liturgical necessity of those days. Women, after all, based on the misinterpretation of St Paul's words, were not allowed to sing in churches.<sup>45</sup> The use of choirboys, on the other hand, was considered a good but short-term solution by Italian congregations who adored high voices. Finally, the falsettists, with their shrill, stretched 'white' voices were, according to Rosselli, treated as 'artificial' and unsatisfactory.<sup>46</sup>

Since the introduction of the *musici*, falsettists were reduced to singing secondary parts. Contemporary accounts, such as that of Charles Burney, refer to a rare brilliance in *musici*'s voices supported by the sheer presence of true power, an uncommonly - for those days - wide range and an

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<sup>45</sup> This is to be discussed further in Chapter II: 123, fn. 426.

<sup>46</sup> In addition, Rosselli mentioned that the falsettists' sound 'came to seem weak and reedy compared with that of castrati.' John Rosselli, May - Aug 1988. 'The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850.' *Acta Musicologica*. Vol. 60, Fasc. 2: 143-79; 147.

immense breathing capacity. Their most remarkable aspect though was their timbre; a timbre incorporating the characteristics of a boy's and a woman's voice within a male body (especially true for the *sopranisti*). Those concepts of philosophical triad were first ignited during the Greek Antiquity but, as stated by Celletti, took shape during Renaissance's *Poetics of Wonder*, first presented in Marino's *Adone*.<sup>47</sup> The singers' voices and expression of sexual ambiguity became examples of an otherworldly quality.

The singers' vocal qualities were not only due to their physiology but also their strict training regime. Castration, more commonly taking place between the ages of 9 and 12, resulted in a greater thoracic development and therefore, when supported by proper instruction, an unusual breath capacity and control. The larynx and the vocal folds, on the other hand, remained small and flexible, somewhere between those of a boy and a woman. Also the position of the larynx did not drop, thus resulting in its being closer to the areas of the head resonance. The sound remained brilliant as well as strong; greatly helped by the increased breath capacity. The singers' hard training would have been considered incomprehensible by modern standards. Nevertheless, this gave the *figlioli* <sup>48</sup> a round musical education,

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<sup>47</sup> Man, woman and child. Rodolfo Celletti, trans. Frederic Fuller. 1996. *A History of Belcanto*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 7-8.

<sup>48</sup> Term initially applied solely to Napoli Conservatoire students (Mazzola. 1759. *Istruzioni, ordini e regole da osservarsi puntualmente da' figlioli di questo real Conservatorio della Pietà de' Torchini dentro e fuori di esso*. Napoli: Biblioteca del Conservatorio). The term ended up describing all young castrati Conservatoire students in general. ('I castrati, detti "figlioli", erano ben curati, nutriti e vestiti e avevano il riscaldamento in inverno.' Irene Marx. September 2006. 'I castrati in Italia durante il periodo barocco.' *Dante Alighieri Bollettino*. <http://www.dante-alighieri.nl/bollettino/nummers/bollettino0609.htm> (Accessed: 12.05.07).

encompassing all aspects of singing, improvisation, harpsichord playing as well as composition.

## **The Modern Era**

By the end of the eighteenth century, tastes and principles in music and art were increasingly changing and becoming defined by male - female gender boundaries. Nonetheless, the demand for unusual vocal quality has survived against all odds. In our times, following a lengthy period of oppression, that demand is definitely growing. Significant new artists possessing a hybrid vocal persona, distinctly different from what is obtained by falsetto, can be enjoyed in concert halls or even famous opera houses. Hybrid Vocal Personae are, according to my definition, those formed, irrespective of reason, *by the combination of more than one hormonal category or group*. This thesis will present the most significant voice-cases of the present time, the methods followed and advancements brought to other fields, such as gender / queer studies. My intention, however, is foremost to discuss common grounds without suppressing individual views. If Hybrid Vocal Personae are approached without prejudice, the art of singing has a lot to gain from their sensitive and original approach. Since the scope of this thesis goes beyond pure musicology, the viewpoints expressed will also need to incorporate latest developments in other disciplines such as gender / queer studies and medicine (anatomy and endocrinology). Whereas musicological focus is to remain throughout, the latter perspectives cannot

be neglected. This would need to encompass and explain variant terminology in order to place the general phenomenon of Hybrid Vocal Personae under a similar perspective.

## Hybridity

Hybrid as a noun is, according to dictionary definition, firstly an organism that is the offspring of genetically dissimilar parents or stock. This deals especially with offspring produced by breeding plants or animals of different varieties or breeds or species. Secondly, the term implies a composite of mixed origin, especially a word that is composed from parts from different languages. Finally as an adjective the word means crossed, interbred, intercrossed.<sup>49</sup> Hybrid is also the combination of two opposing or plainly different elements within the same body. However, the history of the term is itself ambiguous. According to one source it seems to be related and even derived from another Greek word meaning 'presumption towards the gods' or hubris.<sup>50</sup> Famous examples of hubris were, according to the myth, the acts of gender transformation of the great Greek soothsayer Teiresias. The tradition wants the soothsayer's gender transformation behind the

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<sup>49</sup> Based on [www.WordReference.com](http://www.WordReference.com) – Adapted from WordNet 2.0 Copyright 2003 By Princeton University.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Robert Bagg, transl., introduction and notes by Robert Bagg & Mary Bagg, 2004. Antigone 'From what kind of parents was I born?' *The Oedipus Plays of Sophocles: Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Kolonos, Antigone*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press; 168. The use of the term implying 'presumption' has been used in several 5th c. BCE works, such as Sophocles' *Ajax* (where Ajax dared to believe that he did not need Zeus' help) and Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (where Orestes avenged his father's murder by killing his mother).

condemnation to blindness by goddess Artemis or Athena, according to another account.<sup>51</sup> To the ancient Greeks a human with dual gender experience was trespassing on the gods' realm and therefore becoming unacceptably close to them. The other etymological source, however, which points the origins of hybrid to the term *ιβροίκαλοι*, seems to de-stigmatise it from any concept of 'presumption towards the gods', the Aristotelian *hamartia* or even the more modern concept of sin.<sup>52</sup>

## Definition

In order to define hybrid vocal personae, we will be examining two vocal extracts taken from recordings of *Ombra Fedele* by Riccardo Broschi (*Idaspe* – Dario, 1730). The samples, which might appear similar to the untrained ear, can demonstrate how hybrid influence is being reflected in contemporary performances.<sup>53</sup> These two performances are not only acoustically dissimilar but also philosophically incongruent. The first one has been artificially produced for the film 'Farinelli, il Primo Uomo' but the title was later changed to 'Farinelli, il castrato'. There the producers used

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<sup>51</sup> For the various aspects of this myth: Cf. Alexander Haggerty Krappe. 1928. 'Teiresias and the Snakes.' *The American Journal of Philology*. Vol. 49, Issue 3: 267-75.

<sup>52</sup>The ca. 5<sup>th</sup> century CE Greek word is found in Hesychius' 'Συναγωγή Πασών Λέξεων κατά Στοιχείον.' (Alphabetical Collection of All Words). Library of San Marco at Venice (Marc. Gr. 622, 15th century). This is the sole appearance of a term translating to *χοίροι*, i.e. hogs. Regarding *hamartia*, 'it is now generally agreed that ... (the term) in Aristotle's Poetics, ch. 13 means "mistake of fact". This is, however, truly a moralising Victorian misinterpretation. *Hamartia* is rather 'a general term: it can mean specific acts, specific decisions leading to acts, or dispositions, which may vary from some kind of ignorance to some defect of character.' T. C. W. Stinton. Dec. 1975. 'Hamartia in Aristotle and Greek Tragedy.' *The Classical Quarterly*. New Series. Vol. 25, Issue 2: 221-54; 221 & 254.

<sup>53</sup> Both 'Farinelli, the castrato' and Javier Medina recorded versions have been included in the CD-R accompanying this thesis.

computer-combining techniques to unite the timbres of Derek Lee Ragin, a countertenor and Eva Godlevska, a female soprano in their attempt to recreate Farinelli's unique vocal range and quality. Though the technology involved is remarkable, as explained in detail by Philip Depalle, G. Garcia and X. Rodet in their paper, the final result could have never surpassed the level of impressive fiction and attained scientific credibility.<sup>54</sup> The following writers' problematics reveals the production's main weak point:

...we can take into account the physical characteristics of the whole vocal production system of the castrati, the global aesthetic of the historical recording and descriptions found in the literature. On the other hand, the design of the final processed voice is conditioned by the wishes of the film and music producers. The definitive choice concerning the timbre of the voice is a compromise between the two preceding constraints.<sup>55</sup>

However, the film's final visual as well as acoustic results confirm that, in any set of conflicting circumstances, the choice has been the commercially attractive over the historically accurate. As a result, the film's Farinelli did not bear eunuchoid characteristics.<sup>56</sup>

The second recording depicts an actual and intact voice belonging to a contemporary artist. The unusual timbre and high notes (for a male voice) are in this case and for reasons that will be explained soon, the products of a

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<sup>54</sup> Ph. Depalle, G. García, X. Rodet. 1994. 'A Virtual Castrato (!?).' *International Computer Music Conference*. Aarhus (Denmark) - <http://recherche.ircam.fr/equipes/analyse-synthese/listePublications/articlesRodet/ICMC94CASTRAT/> (Accessed: 12.05. 2006).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> He did not possess, for instance, a rounder facial shape or a childlike speaking voice.

medically-induced condition of intersexuality.<sup>57</sup> The voice belongs to Javier Medina, a then thirty-five year old natural male soprano from Mexico. The recording is technologically inferior to the first one and the singer's appearance, unlike the inaccurate depiction of Farinelli on the film, is more gender ambiguous and perhaps less attractive to the modern wider audiences. The singer, even though on testosterone during this recording, had been exhibiting pre-pubescent or eunuchoid characteristics, with total absence of Adam's apple and scarcity of facial hair. However, most significantly, this second recording sample deals with vocality and frequencies which are not artificial or commercial by-products but a genuine expression and proof of human diversity.

According to dictionary definitions, both music samples can be considered as possessing hybridic characteristics. However, the first result only appears as such due to technological manipulation. Therefore, it should be more accurately portrayed as a Designer Voice, as expressed by Deborah Cameron in her article and, as such, is beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>58</sup> The present thesis defines vocal hybridity by two prerequisites: a. the final vocal results to belong to the same person and b. the reasons behind these results to be owed to hormonal and secondarily psychological gender ambiguity. The reasons can be potentially attributed to differences existing in the human brain, bodily structure or genitalia. Finally, these can be permanent, temporary or even relapsing. The person's vocal variation can

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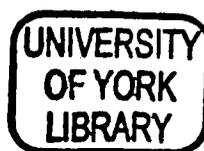
<sup>57</sup> Cf. Chapter III and Appendices 3.4.1 and 3.4.3.2.

<sup>58</sup> Deborah Cameron. December 2001. 'Designer Voices.' *Critical Quarterly*. Vol. 43, Issue 4: 81-5; 81-2.

even be just a matter of choice. Whereas I consider all aforementioned reasons behind a vocal gender ambiguity as secondary in importance or even irrelevant, my concern is that the variation should always reflect the bearer's personality or choice – we all recognize, of course, that this is not necessarily the case. For example, Domenico Mustafà (1829 – 1912), the last great *musico* once confided that he would be prepared to kill his own father, had he discovered that there was not an accident but his father's involvement in his castration.<sup>59</sup> Apart from this not so rare case of abuse, the principle is that, given the opportunity, human diversity can provide us with far richer examples of hybrid ingenuity than any artefact of technological manifestation. The terminology described above became an integral part of my work since the middle of 2005. Though once intrigued by the whole Greek, or rather Hellenistic, etymological debate, I currently see vocal difference or ambiguity as deserving to be freed from moralising shadows of the past. When human diversity prevails, the new artists of our times will be created. To conclude, a hybrid vocal persona is the one formed not only by the combination of two contrasting hormonal categories, but also by the influence of the emotional and mental aspects of more than one gender identity. Though hormones are important elements, they are far from the only formatives of the complex gender human experience.

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<sup>59</sup>Alberto De Angelis. 1926. *Domenico Mustafa: La Cappella Sistina e la Societa Musicale Romana*. Bologna: Zanichelli; 8. Accidents with wild boars devouring genitalia, as claimed in Mustafà's case, were a common excuse for castration.



# CHAPTER I

## Theories

The phenomenon of Hybrid Vocal Personae has been closely associated with that of eunuchism. Even though, strictly speaking, castration is not necessarily present or required in order to form this vocal idiosyncrasy, the majority of medical doctors and voice specialists, as well as audiences, will still consider its formation as a developmental default, disorder or plain misfortune. Variety or variational factors and parameters (like alternative yet non-necessarily defective formation) will rarely be recognised. Two major theories or attitudes have been developed in order to make castration and non-binarian formation more palatable; those of Balance of Blame and *Ad honorem Dei*.

## The Balance of Blame

Guilt and blame are two concepts with a powerful impact on human psyche. That is why philosophers, like Wilhelm Reich, have stated that affective guilt can be used as a tool of social control, because of being 'associated with a general sense of unworthiness'.<sup>60</sup> A person in that sort of situation rarely asserts any rights and privileges. Consequently, totalitarian

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<sup>60</sup> G.E. Berrios *et al.* 1992. 'Feelings of Guilt in Major Depression: Conceptual and Psychometric Aspects.' *British Journal of Psychiatry*. Vol. 160, Issue 6: 781-7; 781.

governments always promote a sense of guilt among the public, in order to make them more obedient. Reich claims that this type of power controls the 'masses against the economic pressure by accentuating their sexual guilt and their moral dependence on the existing order'.<sup>61</sup> Modern evolutionary psychologists, however, conjecture that guilt and shame helped preserve 'beneficial relationships', such as 'reciprocal altruism'.<sup>62</sup> This is particularly applicable in the case studied here. I will examine below how these concepts present themselves in the powerful situation of both mass castration – as in the cases of Byzantine and Baroque singers – as well as alternative formation when seen under strict societal binarian perspectives.

Castrated individuals or those subjected to alternative formation in their youth are rarely responsible for their condition. On the other hand, potential or actual perpetrators – irrespective of intention – are. Therefore, we could argue that if there is a need for individual instead of mass or institutional condemnation, the persons responsible should be at the receiving end of it. Nonetheless, this is one of the cases where we experience the following contradiction: perpetrators are rarely blamed and almost never punished, whereas victims are, in reality, treated as if they have been responsible for their situation or condition. The Balance of Blame here has been practically reversed and any sense of justice nullified. If that

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<sup>61</sup> Wilhelm Reich. 1946. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. New York: Orgone Institute Press; 60.

<sup>62</sup> R.L. Trivers. 1971. 'The Evolution in Reciprocal Altruism.' *Quarterly Review of Biology*. Vol. 46: 35-57. In Stefano Pallanti & Leonardo Quercioli. August 2000. 'Shame and Psychopathology.' *CNS Spectrums*. Vol. 5, Issue 8: 28-43; 32.

were a unique historical occurrence, the importance would still be great but limited to a specific era. This thesis will argue and demonstrate though that this is a recurring incidence in non-binarian formation (vocal or not) and one of the cases, where the public takes little interest in the Balance of Blame.

Many times, the accusations against eunuch vocality do not only affect the singers themselves but also their supporters who find their arguments discredited. For instance, in an article about 'the defunct voice of the operatic castrato' Kehler questions the validity of any other supportive to many singers' arguments, unless these were solely focused on artistic appreciation. As mentioned, the 'widespread practice of blaming the eunuch or castrato for his bodily state and social status elicited vigorous counter-arguments from connoisseurs of the singing voice, though for obvious reasons their grounds of opposition tended to be limited to the aesthetic'.<sup>63</sup> However, the reversal in Balance of Blame is not something restricted to singers created by *castratio eufonica* but forwarded towards all non-binarian formation.

Modern biology would argue that alternative formation is an intrinsic possibility for all living organisms. This has been demonstrated by Hunter in his 1995 work, where he presented aspects of sex determination, differentiation and intersexuality in placental mammals.<sup>64</sup> Based on similar works, we could assume the non-binarian gender development as an option

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<sup>63</sup> Grace Kehler. May 2004. 'Occult Charm and Social Ills: Vernon Lee's "A Wicked Voice" and George Du Maurier's Castrated Texts.' *Opera and Nineteenth-Century Literature*. No. 34 - 5, par. 6. - <http://beta.erudit.org/revue/ron/2004/v/n34-35/009438ar.html?vue=integral> (Accessed: 25.05.08).

<sup>64</sup> R.H.F. Hunter. 1995. *Sex Development, Differentiation and Intersexuality in Placental Mammals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

in humans; even before historical records. In literature, however, this was first mentioned by the character Aristophanes in the *Symposium* reference about 'men, women and androgynes' in prehistorical times: 'In the first place...the sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two ...which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word "Androgynous" is only preserved as a term of reproach.'<sup>65</sup>

Castrates are known to be existent since distant times in history and in numerous civilisations 'such as the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Chinese and some African peoples as special slaves or servants.'<sup>66</sup> Though we cannot determine exact dates, circumstances or reasons behind the first incidence of castration in humans, we can safely argue that it was in order to reproduce certain effects of alternative natural formation for a variety of reasons. Some of them were, almost certainly, punishment, docility, slavery or disempowerment of a certain or potential enemy. This applied particularly during Byzantine era, for instance in the case of Basil Lekapenos, instead of killing a potential threat to the throne.<sup>67</sup> Other reasons could include the passage to priesthood for certain cults in antiquity, like that of Cybele, or an extreme path to purification for others, like Origen and his followers in 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The last official exponents of this idea

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<sup>65</sup> Plato, trans. Benjamin Jowett. ca 385 / 1955. *Dialogues of Plato, Part IV – Symposium*. New York: Pocket Library; 188.

<sup>66</sup> A.P. Cawadias. 3 April 1946. 'Male Eunuchism Considered in the Light of the Historical Method.' *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*. Vol. 39: 501- 6; 501.

<sup>67</sup> According to Byzantine Law, 'only eunuchs and priests could not become emperor in Byzantium – and so posed no threat to the ruler.' Rose-Marie & Rainer Hagen. 1997. *What great paintings say: Masterpieces in Detail*. Vol. III. Köln & London: Taschen; 18.

were the Skoptsy cult, who, as it is formally claimed, disappeared during the first year of Russian Revolution in 1918. However, there are adequate traces of them in Romania just before the WWII. Most importantly, 'our medical knowledge of eunuchism is based on study of the Skoptzys.'<sup>68</sup> Their contribution will be examined in Chapter III.

Both the concepts of alternative formation and its replication – via castration – are seen as a major threat to the binarian societal system. As Koyama acknowledged, 'society doesn't want deviation in general'.<sup>69</sup> As a result, 'physical differences are corrected without consent, even if it doesn't help the child's quality of life.'<sup>70</sup> According to L. J. Martin, 'only a few known conditions that may produce sexually-anomalous genitalia pose a health threat to individuals, yet since the nineteenth century, intersexuality has been medicalised as a condition requiring diagnosis and treatment.'<sup>71</sup> The reason lies in the current belief that 'the birth of a child with ambiguous genitalia constitutes a social emergency.'<sup>72</sup>

The reaction towards this document has been significant yet varied; many doctors initially agreed but there were a lot of opposing or concerned voices among patients and researchers. However, the power to decide what a social emergency is seems to belong to the medical status quo. Parents

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<sup>68</sup> Cawadias: 502.

<sup>69</sup> E. Koyama. 2006. 'From 'Intersex' to 'DSD': Toward a Queer Disability Politics of Gender.' <http://www.intersexinitiative.org/articles/intersectodsd.html> (Accessed: 12.03.08).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> L. J. Martin. 11 Aug 2006. 'Medicalizing and Managing Intersexuality.' Paper. *American Sociological Association*. - [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p103367\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p103367_index.html) (Accessed: 12.03.08).

<sup>72</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). July 2000. 'Evaluation of the Newborn with Developmental Anomalies of the External Genitalia.' *Pediatrics*. Vol. 106, Issue 1: 138-42; 138.

come second but those immediately affected are the least able to take part in this decision making. Since all alternative voices of our day have been affected by the issue of medicalisation of variant formation, it is important to understand the possessors' point of view. For instance, even the following positively-inclined editors recognised that: 'If AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) declines to elaborate on the nature of this emergency, it is perhaps there is little question that the revelation of intersex poses a grave threat to the existing social order.'<sup>73</sup> However, they continue, 'the very fact of intersex is material evidence that sex is not an either / or proposition, but rather exists on a continuum.'<sup>74</sup> I will be visiting this all-important concept of continuum throughout this thesis. AAP has later tried to incorporate changes in society within its policies and in 2006 they attempted to reflect them in the following statement:

Terms such as "intersex," "pseudohermaphroditism," "hermaphroditism," "sex reversal," and gender-based diagnostic labels are particularly controversial. These terms are perceived as potentially pejorative by patients and can be confusing to practitioners and parents alike. We propose the term "disorders of sex development" (DSD), as defined by congenital conditions in which development of chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomic sex is atypical.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> S. M. Meagher & P. DiQuinzio. 2005. *Women and Children First: Feminism, Rhetoric and Public Policy*. New York: State University of New York Press; 93.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Lee *et al.* August 2006. 'Consensus Statement on Management of Intersex Disorders.' *Pediatrics*. Vol. 118, Issue 2: e488-e500 - [www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2006-0738](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2006-0738) (Accessed: 2.05.09).

The introduction of the term DSD proved so controversial that it created uproar and division within the intersex community. Since then, this has been crystallised into three different views. The first, by Cheryl Chase and ISNA (Intersex Society of North America), who were partly involved in drawing up the previous document, attempt to explain their choice in the following rationale:

Intersex itself is not a disorder, rather a variation. But Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, for instance, is an inherited disorder affecting adrenal function. Many women with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome have become comfortable with the term AIS, which is based on 'syndrome'. But 'syndrome' is a pattern of symptoms indicative of some disease or disorder. 'Disorder' refers to the underlying cause, not intersexuality itself, and certainly not to the whole person.<sup>76</sup>

The ideas had been first presented in the controversial Dreger *et al.* paper in 2005.<sup>77</sup> Since then, though Dreger and Sousa have been acclaimed by their fellow researchers in Northwestern University or institutions, like Guggenheim, they have become hated and ridiculed figures of a significant

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<sup>76</sup> Intersex Society of North America (ISNA). 24 May 2006. 'Why is ISNA using 'DSD'?' <http://www.isna.org/node/1066> (Accessed: 18.04.08). In March 2008 ISNA was renamed to 'Accord Alliance'. This had no effect on its previous policies and views on DSD.

<sup>77</sup> A. Dreger *et al.* 2005. 'Changing the Nomenclature / Taxonomy for Intersex: A Scientific and Clinical Rationale.' *Journal of Pediatric Endocrinology & Metabolism*. Vol. 18: 729-33.

part of the intersex community.<sup>78</sup> In theoretical terms, here we have a shift in Balance of Blame. Due to its obvious significance, we will be re-examining it in detail when referring to Balance of Blame in our era.

The second more condescending view was expressed by Koyama and Intersex Initiative and recognised that:

... with the recent introduction of the new term, DSD, or disorders of sex development, the intersex existence may once again retreat into the shadows of public consciousness, leaving behind activists and intersex individuals who also happen to be trans or genderqueer as the only people who still refer to DSD as 'intersex'.<sup>79</sup>

The writer endorsed the term DSD as a necessary step forward.

Finally, the third view is that of OII (Organisation Intersex International) who believe that variation should be the preferred notion and that:

Viewing these variations as a medical illness creates a special medical category which includes an extremely large group of 'disorders' which have nothing in common from a medical point of view except

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<sup>78</sup> Dreger's 2008 article expressed more moderate views. Sceptics, however, attributed this to changes in research funding resulted by the then imminent Obama inauguration. Cf. Alice Dreger. September – October 2008. 'Footnote to a Footnote: On Roving Medicine.' *The Hastings Center Report* - Included in *Bioethics Forum*. Vol. 38, Issue 5. <http://www.thehastingscenter.org/Bioethicsforum/Post.aspx?id=2484&blogid=140> (Accessed: 12/01/09). For the newest developments on DSD issue / Dreger and the views of Organisation Intersex International: <http://www.intersexualite.org/AliceDreger.html> (Accessed: 10.01.10).

<sup>79</sup> E. Koyama (Intersex Initiative). February 2006. 'From "Intersex" to "DSD": Toward a Queer Disability Politics of Gender.' Keynote speech. *Translating Identity Conference*. Vermont; University of Vermont. <http://www.intersexinitiative.org/articles/intersectodsd.html> (Accessed: 12.03.08).

that the person is of intermediate sex as established by current norms.<sup>80</sup>

Due to the attempt of DSD terminology to renew the shift of Balance of Blame, this active and significant debate will be re-examined in Chapter III.

### ***Εἰς Δόξαν Θεοῦ* and *Ad Honorem Dei* – The Diachronicity of Variant Forms**

Both sides of official Western and Eastern Christianity condemn castration and frown upon alternative formation. However, they have also utilised it and therefore needed some sort of justification, which they found in the above-mentioned Greek and Latin notions. Both of them, derived from the two most ancient written forms of the New Testament, literally mean ‘to the Glory of God’ and recognise the use of alternative formation or castration for this purpose only.<sup>81</sup> The reason that these terms are stated here is because of their immediate connection with eunuch singers and non-binarian personae during both Byzantine and so-called Baroque eras. These terms also, more carefully disguised, can still apply to hybrid vocal personae of the present.

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<sup>80</sup> C.E. Hinkle (OII). 2006. ‘Why is OII not using DSD?’

[http://www.intersexualite.org/Response\\_to\\_Intersex\\_Initiative.html](http://www.intersexualite.org/Response_to_Intersex_Initiative.html) (Accessed: 14.03.08).

<sup>81</sup> The two most ancient forms of the New Testament are claimed to be, first, Rylands Papyrus 52 in *Koine* Greek, which was written approximately between 117 and 138 CE and second, the *Vetus Latina*, a collective name given to the numerous early translations in Latin dating before St Jerome’s *Vulgate* Bible between 382-405 CE.

The most significant biblical reference revealing the initial concept of 'eunuch' can be found in the following extract:

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it.<sup>82</sup>

This has been perceived to include intersexuals, man-made eunuchs, and celibates following the path to spiritual sanctity. Even though, according to International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, 'primarily and literally, a eunuch is an emasculated man', the above extract has been subjected to numerous interpretations and misinterpretations.<sup>83</sup> Among recent claims, there are also those questioning the concept's association with homosexuality.<sup>84</sup>

Early ideas concerning eunuchism were far more versatile than those of recent centuries. This can be seen in the extract: 'and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure'.<sup>85</sup> It has been suggested that the word in Hebrew, that is *caric*, has acquired a more metaphorical

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<sup>82</sup> Matthew 19:12.

<sup>83</sup> James Orr, John Nuelsen, Edgar Mullins, Morris Evans, and Melvin Grove Kyle, eds. 1939. 'Eunuch.' *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com> (Accessed: 1.05.08). The definition is based on 'A eunuch, one with damaged or amputated testicles, or with his sexual organ cut off, will not enter the assembly of the Lord'. Deut. 23:1.

<sup>84</sup> Examples: <http://www.homosexualeunuchsandthebible.com>, <http://www.fellowship-of-faith.com/EUNUCHISMANDHOMOSEXUALITY.PDF> & <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/pdf/2000-6.pdf> (Accessed: 4.02.09).

<sup>85</sup> Acts 8: 27.

meaning. This is also 'reflected in English Versions of the Bible where "officer" and "chamberlain" are found as renderings (compare Gen 37:36; 39:1, where *caric* is applied to married men; Est. 4:4).'<sup>86</sup> These references demonstrate the conflict between the ancient concepts of eunuch and eunuchism and those more restrictive ones, which became applicable in early medieval times. Contrary to restrictive definition, when eunuchism is viewed as a whole, all alternative formation and vocal personae appear under a similar perspective. Eunuchism, that is non-binarian formation, is then characterised by certain qualities, the most important being the lack of the traditional heterosexual procreative role. The reason that I am focusing on role instead of ability here is because of its higher gender-related significance. One other reason though, is that there are exceptions, in terms of *potentia generandi*. For instance, there are cases examined and presented since 1953, known as Fertile Eunuch Syndrome. There the writers state that the semen 'shows abnormalities of sperm count, morphology, and mobility, but at least 2 patients are said to have fathered children.'<sup>87</sup>

The consequences of not fulfilling traditional roles and either choosing or accepting to live beyond the typical binarian restrictions are significant.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> J. Orr, ed. 1915. 'Eunuch.' *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/E/Eunuch> (Accessed: 1.05.08).

<sup>87</sup> E.P. McCullagh *et al.* 1953. 'Syndrome of eunuchoidism with spermiogenesis, normal urinary FSH and low or normal ICSH: ('Fertile Eunuchs').' *Journal Clinical Endocrinology*. Vol. 13, Issue 5: 489-509. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/dispmim.cgi?cmd=entry&id=228300> (Accessed: 1.05.08).

<sup>88</sup> This is in spite of the fact that child rearing 'no longer justifies the sexual division of labor, for the economic logic of having children has ended. Procreation is now optional.' D. Sanders. 2005. 'Flying the Rainbow Flag in Asia.' <http://bangkok2005.anu.edu.au/papers/Sanders.pdf> (Accessed: 12.03.09).

This can 'constitute a social emergency.'<sup>89</sup> If this happens, an individual's psychology can become overwhelmed by feelings of shame. The impact of shame should not be underestimated since it has the potential to stretch 'along a continuum from modesty to disabling interpersonal terror.'<sup>90</sup> The social consequences, depending on the level of threat perceived by the general public, can range from ridicule and segregation to outright hatred or even murder. In this thesis, we will be examining the whole range of these experiences; for instance, common satire and accusations against Byzantine eunuch cantors as well as demonstrations of extreme hatred and murder.<sup>91</sup> Due to reasons of constant abuse and discrimination, singers influenced by non-binarian formation not only tend to behave differently to the rest but also to challenge stereotypes. Suddenly gender ceases to be seen as a black and white image-gallery and starts appearing as a continuum. I will now examine the first group of hybrid vocal personae that were experienced by audiences during the Common Era.

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<sup>89</sup> AAP, 2000: 138.

<sup>90</sup> S. Pallanti & L. Quercioli. Aug. 2000. 'Shame and Psychopathology.' *CNS Spectrums*. Vol. 5, Issue 8: 28-43; 28.

<sup>91</sup> For instance, cases of transsexual victimisation such as the 'Twenty-year-old [FTM] Brandon Teena (who) was brutally murdered on December 31, 1993 on account of gender non conformity. The incident attracted national attention and spurred transgender activists to demonstrate against the ever-increasing regularity of violence towards transgendered people.' [http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/teena\\_b.html](http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/teena_b.html) (Accessed: 1.05.08).

## Byzantine Eunuch Cantors (Saint Sofia in Constantinople)

In 1943, Rodolphe Guiland published the article 'Eunuchs in the Byzantine Empire: A Study in Byzantine Titulature and Prosopography'.<sup>92</sup> His work, an extensive study of Byzantine eunuch title-holders in church, army and civilian hierarchy, proved an invaluable source to researchers and amateurs alike. However, even though the work, the first of its kind, was exhaustive, it hardly helped us recognise any singers among the numerous names and titles. It is surprising 'at least for anyone familiar with the traditions of Baroque opera (that) the eunuchs who sang at court or in the churches of Constantinople have not been dealt with by Byzantine scholars.'<sup>93</sup> For instance, Brison is only referred to in relation to 'Empress Eudoxia, the wife of Arcadius, (who) also had her own eunuchs. One of them, Briso [sic], played an important role in the events of the time'.<sup>94</sup> Guiland, however, had recognised that the study could not 'be exhaustive, for a number of reasons.'<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, the work did not make the phenomenon of Byzantine eunuch singers more accessible. Most importantly, Guiland's approach was not a singled-out case but the norm; until recently the subject of Byzantine eunuch cantors remained limited to few.

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<sup>92</sup> Rodolphe Guiland. 1943. 'Les Eunuques dans l'Empire Byzantin: Étude de titulature et de prosopographie byzantines.' *Études Byzantines*. Vol. I : 197-238.

<sup>93</sup> Moran, 2002: 100

<sup>94</sup> Guiland, 1943: 216.

(English Translation: A. Malik. <http://www.well.com/user/aquarius/guiland-eunuques.htm>. Accessed: 12.04.08). The information about Brison is provided by Socrates Scholasticus. ca 439 CE. *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Included in J-P. Migne, ed. 1857-66. P.G. 67: 33-841; VI 8, 16. Another source is Sozomen. In Philip Schaff, ed. 1888. *Socrates and Sozomen Ecclesiastical Histories*. Wien - Re-issued by Logos Inc.: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf202.html> (Accessed: 6.02.09); VIII. 18.

<sup>95</sup> Guiland: 197.

The recent sudden attention towards the Byzantine eunuch cantors can only be resultant of what was described by Tougher as ‘a notable increase of interest in the subject of eunuchs.’<sup>96</sup> His review included a brief summary of the most important books and articles within the field.<sup>97</sup> In this list, however, one cannot help but notice some omissions. One of them is the article ‘Byzantine Castrati’ by Neil Moran, which was published in 2002.<sup>98</sup> This selective kind of reference only underlined the limited interest that the subject of Byzantine eunuch cantors was receiving thus far. The primary reasons behind this must have been attributed to the verbal and musical language diversity of Byzantium. Another factor though must be the taboo element still surrounding the subject of castration purely for the sake of art.<sup>99</sup> Byzantine musicologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even the most prominent ones such as Egon Wellesz and Dimitri Conomos, neither recognised this voice type in conjunction to Byzantine chant nor related the post-1261 change of Asmatic style to any particular singing group’s disappearance

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<sup>96</sup> Shaun Tougher (reviewer). 2004. ‘The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium by K. Ringrose (Book Review).’ *Journal of Social History*. Michigan: Gale Group: 522; 522.

<sup>97</sup> Tougher mentioned several studies which, as stated, had ‘ranged from general overviews of the eunuch in history [P.O. Scholz, 2001, *Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History*] to specific investigations [D. Ayalon, 1999, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study in Power Relationships*; L. Engelstein, 1999, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folkale*; S. Nanda, 1999, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*; S.-s. H. Tsai, 1996, *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty*] to edited collections [S. Tougher, 2002, *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond*] and individual articles [A.K. Grayson. 1995. ‘Eunuchs in Power: Their Role in the Assyrian Bureaucracy.’ *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*. Vol. 240: 85-98; W. Stevenson. 1995. ‘The Rise of Eunuchs in Greco-Roman Antiquity.’ *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. Vol. 5: 495-511].’ Tougher, 2004: 522.

<sup>98</sup> Neil Moran. 2002. ‘Byzantine Castrati.’ *Plainsong and Medieval Music*. Vol. 11, Issue 2: 99-112. Tougher acknowledged Moran’s work soon after in ‘Two Views on the Gender Identity of Byzantine Eunuchs’ included in Alison Shaw, Shirley Ardener, eds. 2005. *Changing Sex and Bending Gender*. Oxford & New York: Berghahn Books; 62.

<sup>99</sup> Also known as *Castratio Euphonica*.

from Constantinople.<sup>100</sup> Until recently, in spite of famous Byzantinologists' acknowledgement and part study of the eunuchs, the attitude towards their operations was that of a clear avoidance or refusal: these were rarely placed within the state of Byzantium *per se*.<sup>101</sup> As Kathryn Ringrose recognises, 'Rhetorically, at least, the Byzantines claimed that they never did castrations – the castrators were always "others" – usually people like the Arabs or the Persians.'<sup>102</sup> This claim though, originally put by mainstream sources such as the Greek Orthodox Church, cannot withstand much scrutiny as we will discuss below. The whole situation, characterised by the secrecy and denial of status quo towards the eunuch singers' occurrence, appears intriguingly similar to that of the Baroque era attitudes surrounding the *Musici*.

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<sup>100</sup> Egon Wellesz. 1961, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*. Oxford: Oxford at Clarendon Press (very thorough otherwise and consisted of almost 500 pages). Dimitri E Conomos. 1984. *Byzantine Hymnography and Byzantine Chant*. Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press. Only contemporary Byzantine musicologists in Greece, such as Evangelia Spyrakou, have changed this attitude of denial; especially following the publication of Neil Moran's articles and books.

<sup>101</sup> For instance, based on extracts from the legal compilations of the Justinian Codex, the Basilica as well as the scholia from the Canon, Marava Hadjinikolaou stated in 1950 that the operation was not allowed to be performed on Greek slaves, neither within Byzantium nor abroad. And continued that however, 'it was allowed to all human traffickers to buy and sell barbarian slaves who had undergone this operation outside the limits of Greek soil.' ('Autre facilité pour l'importation d'esclaves eunuques dans l'Empire: une disposition du Code [Cod., livre IV, titre XIII], reprise dans les Basiliques [Basil. livre XIX, t. I, LXXXIX] et que nous retrouvons dans les scholies des Canons [Rhalis, t. I: 53 -55], ne permet pas qu' on pratique cette opération sur les esclaves grecs, ni dans le pays, ni a l'étranger; mais il est permis a tous les trafiquants d' acheter et de vendre des esclaves barbares qui ont subi cette opération hors des limites du sol grec.') Anna Marava Hadjinikolaou. 1950. *Recherches sur la vie des esclaves dans le monde Byzantin*. Athènes; 44. Cf. Angeliki E. Laiou, editor-in-chief. 2002. *The Economic History of Byzantium – From the seventh through the Fifteenth Century*. Vol. I. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Studies; 546 & 725.

<sup>102</sup> Kathryn Ringrose. 2006. 'Perceiving Byzantine Eunuchs through Modern Medicine.' [http://www.wralth.plus.com/byzcong/paper/1/1.8\\_Ringrose.pdf](http://www.wralth.plus.com/byzcong/paper/1/1.8_Ringrose.pdf) (Accessed: 12.05.07).

## Music & the Singers

Byzantine Music is undeniably of composite origin. As has been recognised, 'early Christian worship had an origin: Jewish worship form and practice.'<sup>103</sup> However, when referring to music, the influences by both classical Greek modes and Jewish liturgical music are of almost equal importance. As demonstrated, 'with one exception no written record of the earliest Christian music has been preserved: this one exception is formed by the fragment of a Hellenistic hymn found at Oxyrrynchus.'<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, influences from Jewish and Syriac music were also blended. For instance, it has been suggested that 'the Byzantine *proasmata* may indeed have their counterparts in the *p'tichot* (openings) of midrashic psalm-paraphrases'.<sup>105</sup> The Byzantines, however, developed and incorporated different influences under a new systematic musical notation. Also, contrary to the polyphonic development in Western Mass, here the music remains entirely monophonic, as if it were coming 'from one mouth'.<sup>106</sup> The above concept though is also applicable to Ambrosian and Gregorian chant. However, the reasons behind the preponderance of monophony in Christian Churches in late antiquity

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<sup>103</sup> B. Williams & H. Anstall. 1990. *Orthodox Worship – A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing.

<sup>104</sup> Egon Wellesz. 1932. 'Byzantine Music.' *Journal of Royal Music Association*. Vol. 59, Issue 1: 1-22; 1.

<sup>105</sup> Eric Werner. 1985. *The Sacred Bridge. Vol. II – The Independence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church during the First Millennium*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, Incorporated; 70.

<sup>106</sup> Jacques-Paul Migne, ed. 1865. *Patrologia Graeca*. Vol. 61, col. 315 (Commentary on I Cor. 14:33 by St. John Chrysostom, Homily 36): 'For indeed there must always be but one voice in the church, as there is but one body. Thus the reader alone speaks, and the bishop himself is content to sit in silence; and the chanter chants alone. Even though all respond, the sound issues as if from one mouth.'

appear to be less dogmatic and more politico-cultural.<sup>107</sup> As recognised, Chant 'remained the normative form of liturgical music in the churches of the east, though not without strong influence at times from the musicological developments within their respective cultures.'<sup>108</sup>

Byzantine music can be distinguished or divided into two types, demonstrated in the *Hagiopolites* (i.e. of the Holy City of Jerusalem) and the Asma Collections. The Byzantinologist monk Bartolomeo Di Salvo, furthermore, divided these collected works into several genera: 1) the *genos ekphonetikon* 2) the *genos sticheratikon* 3) the *genos* of the *Asmatikon* and 4) the *genos* of the *Psaltikon*.<sup>109</sup> As recognized, the 'genos ekphonetikon was not used for chants but for the solemn recitation of Scripture'.<sup>110</sup> The second kind, the *genos sticheratikon*, contained the simplest kind of chants which are found in the books called *cheiromologion* and *sticherarion*.<sup>111</sup> The *asmatikon* chants or *genos kalophonikon*, studied by Di Salvo in *Gli Asmata*, were meant for professional choirs, mostly consisting of eunuchs in pre-1204 days, since they required an advanced melismatic delivery.<sup>112</sup> Finally, the *genos* of the *psaltikon*, an intensely ornamented solo repertoire, was consisted of *kontakia*, alleluias and solo as well as communion hymns.

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<sup>107</sup>This is attributable to religious and political identity factors (animosity among the two sides) formed by events such as the Schism and the Crusades.

<sup>108</sup> Dennis W. Krouse. 'Chant (in Christianity).' In Orlando O. Espin, James B. Nickoloff. 2007. *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press; 221.

<sup>109</sup> Bartolomeo Di Salvo. 1959. 'Gli Asmata nella Musica Bizantina.' *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*. Vol. 12: 127-45. In Moran, 2002: 109.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Neil Moran. 1986. *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*. Leiden: J. Brill; 48.

<sup>112</sup> Neil Moran. 1979. 'The musical "Gestaltung" of the Great Entrance ceremony in the 12th century in accordance with the rite of Hagia Sophia.' *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*. Vol. 28: 167-93; 187. The style was particularly cultivated in *Hagia Sophia* of Constantinople.

The true difference of these genera, however, lies in compositional terms. For instance, while the *Hagiopolites'* chants were based on ten different modes (four authentic, four plagal and two medial), the *Asma* forms applied the use of at least sixteen modes (four authentic, four plagal, four medial and four *phthorai*). There was a great 14<sup>th</sup>-century attempt to revive the pre-Latin empire melismatic style but this came to be associated solely with one choirmaster or *Maistor*, John Cucuzeles. Due to its technical requirements, this style is scarcely sung. Both *asmatikon* and *psaltikon* were replaced during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century by a new type of music manuscript uniting choral and solo chants in one book. The new anthology, which often begins with the *papadikē*, a brief music treatise written, as the term implies, by a priest, has come to be known by the same title.<sup>113</sup>

## Music Characteristics

Manuscripts containing early to middle Byzantine musical notation are particularly important for those wishing to study the presence of Byzantine cantors and their effect in the Chant. The early manuscripts date back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, unless following the *ekphonic* notation, which are significantly older. As noted, the Orthodox neume manuscripts tend to be consciously

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<sup>113</sup> The term denotes a short 'elementary manual of middle Byzantine notation included as an introduction to the *Akolouthiai* (church services) manuscripts of the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Its earliest version is found in a *sticherarion* from the year 1289.' (Grove, 2001: 52). However, the first known *Papadike* is the one compiled by 'John Papadopoulos, the Cucuzeles or Koukouzeles' in 1336CE. This most significant compilation is contained in Codex Athens 2458, (ms. Athens 2458, Athens, Gr.: National Library). P. Panagiotides. 'The Musical Use of the Psalter in the 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries.' In C. Troelsgard, ed. 1997. *Byzantine Chant: Tradition and Reform*. Athens: Aarhus University Press; 159.

archaic and conservative by comparison to Western tradition. In more detail, as preserved in ms. Athens 2406,

The musical signs or neumes are written in a combination of dark and red ink. The somata or “bodies,” which signified single-tone movements in the melody, and pneumata, “spirits,” which signalled movements of two tones or greater, are in dark ink.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, the last class of neumes, known as the *megales hypostaseis*, which provided details about the dynamics and movement direction of the singing voice, were also written in red ink. These factors caused confusion to modern day scholars who had to work hard in order to decode the manuscripts. Nowadays, however, the meaning of the above signs seems clearly established. Most music samples from that era are anonymous.

There is a major differentiation between the notation of the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the one starting from the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and later. This is usually called the Round or Middle Byzantine system and hymns written in it are characterised by certainty in melodic structure. There is however, a significant level of probability in both its rhythmical and modal qualities. Early Byzantine notation systems, on the other hand, remain a rather contentious topic to researchers. For instance, the neumes according to Cloislin Notation (c. 1100-1160), which is near enough to the Round system, only appear to have a vague melodic indication rather than expressing exact intervals. Earlier neumes of the 10th and 11th centuries,

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<sup>114</sup>Andrew Walker White. 2006. ‘The Artifice of Eternity: A Study of Liturgical and Theatrical Practices in Byzantium.’ PhD Dissertation. Maryland: University of Maryland; 179. (ms. Athens 2406, Athens, Gr.: National Library).

however, as stated by Wellesz and Höeg, 'had no melodic content whatever, but only showed the rhythm of an orally transmitted series of hymns.'<sup>115</sup> Another important differentiation between the two styles in Byzantine music is that, contrary to pre-1300 authors' anonymity, 'composers emerge from their anonymity in late Byzantine manuscripts.'<sup>116</sup> As identified by Gregorios Stathes, there are thirty-six composers who can be chronologically positioned between the ends of thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>117</sup> Also, Miloš Velimirović, based solely on a unique 15<sup>th</sup>-century music manuscript, was able to reveal a list of eighty post-1300 CE singers and composers.<sup>118</sup>

## Music Education

Education in Byzantium remained Helleno-Roman in principle and music schoolbooks consisted of works by Claudius Ptolemaeus, Aristoxenos, Cleonides and Aristides Quintilianus.<sup>119</sup> Based on them, Byzantine music

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<sup>115</sup> H.J.W. Tillyard. 1953. 'Byzantine Music about A.D. 1100.' *The Musical Quarterly*. Vol. 39, Issue 2: 223-31; 223.

<sup>116</sup> Moran, 1986: 3.

<sup>117</sup> Gregorios Stathes. 1975-6. *Ta Cheirographa Byzantines Mousikes: Hagio Horos*. I. Athens; 49.

<sup>118</sup> Milos Velimirović. 1966. 'Byzantine composers in ms. Athens 2406.' *Essays presented to Egon Wellesz*. Oxford: 7-18. In Moran: 3.

<sup>119</sup> Ptolemaeus (ca. 90 – ca. 170 CE), apart from his mathematical and astronomical work, wrote the music theory book *Harmonics* which deals with the mathematics of music. His teachings of basing the intervals on mathematic ratios as well as observation were in contrast to those of Aristoxenian and closer to Pythagorean ones. Aristoxenos (4<sup>th</sup> c.) was a peripatetic philosopher, mainly Aristotelian in his ideas, who wrote extensively on music theory. According to his theory, the scale intervals should be formed by the ear and not mathematical ratios. His only surviving work is an incomplete treatise consisted of three volumes and entitled *Harmonica* or *Elements of Harmony*. The details of Aristoxenus' work were preserved in ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ ΑΡΜΟΝΙΚΗ, better known as *Harmonica Introductio*

theorists, such as George Pachymeres, Nicephorus Gregoras and Isaak Argyrus created edited anthologies or *exegeses*. These remained the standard texts for Byzantine music until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most importantly, however, music within the higher division of Byzantine liberal arts ‘was approached from an acoustical, mathematical and philosophical point of view and it had very little to do with the music the authors or readers heard constantly around them.’<sup>120</sup> The everyday approach was more reflected in the practical education of lower classes rather than in that experienced by privileged private school attendants. Nonetheless, in all aspects of education singing, alongside reading, was treated as very important. The aetiology was that knowing psalmody would be a religious achievement young people could take with them throughout their lives.<sup>121</sup>

There is scarcity of sources referring to the education of proficient cantors or *psaltai* destined for the major churches. According to Moran, ‘this may hang together with the fact that the profession was dominated in Constantinople at least, by castrati.’<sup>122</sup> There is a certainty, however, that in the Great City the most established school for *psaltai* was situated in St.

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‘now commonly attributed to Cleonides.’ (Thomas J. Mathiesen. 2000. *Apollo’s Lyre: Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press; 366). There is only scarce information available about the writer. This is also reflected in his chronological records; ca. 100 – 400 CE. Aristides Quintillianus’ work *De Musica* complements Cleonides’ material by providing ‘detailed explanation of the meaning of each note-and tetrachord- name’. (*Op.cit*: 375). His details are equally scarce to those of Cleonides and his life and work appear be placed ‘in the late third century.’ (*Op. cit*: 524).

<sup>120</sup> Moran, 1986: 23.

<sup>121</sup> Johannes Quasten. 1973. *Musik und Gesang in den Kulturen der heidnischen Antike und christlichen Frühzeit*. Münster (Westfalen): Aschendorff; 193. In Moran: 23.

<sup>122</sup> Moran: 25. It is stated that although ‘the practice [of castration] was forbidden by law, the chances for advancement within the organization of the royal palace were such, that even wealthier families made eunuchs of their children (Guilland: 200).’ Moran : 25. [Original Guilland text: ‘...les parents, même ceux des classes les plus élevées, consentirent à la mutilation de l’un de leurs enfants.’]

Paul's home for orphans, which appeared to welcome eunuchs as well as 'bearded' men. According to Oikonomides, this was attributed to the presence there of John the *Orphanotrophos*, a prominent eunuch and brother of Emperor Michael IV. John, among his many political and monasterial deeds, supervised the renovation of this orphanage in 1032 CE.<sup>123</sup> According to Krause, eunuch monasteries, similarly to palace schools, taught music. Moreover, boys with outstanding voices were so sought after in Constantinople that they were educated as *psaltai* by the state.<sup>124</sup>

## The Singers

According to Moran, the 'Greek mania for logical organization and numbers which characterizes so much of Byzantine thought also found its expression in the manner in which music was placed in the service of the church and the state.'<sup>125</sup> This was more obviously reflected in the two diverse professional singing groups – the *kraktai* and the *psaltai* – that supplied the musical ceremonial milieu.<sup>126</sup> Each group was directed individually by a

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<sup>123</sup> Nicolas Oikonomides. 1972. *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et X siècles*. Paris; 319. John's position of political influence and involvement at punishing the conspiracy of *Dux* of Thessalonica Constantine Diogenes eventually led to his downfall. Similarly to the fate he inflicted himself on Diogenes, John is believed to have been 'blinded in his monastery' on May 1043 on the orders of the still powerful ex-empress Theodora 'and against the wishes of Constantine IX Monomachos'. Lynda Garland. 1999. *Byzantine Empresses - Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204*. London: Routledge; 162.

<sup>124</sup> Johann H. Krause. 1869. *Die Byzantiner des Mittelalters in ihrem Staats – und Hof – und Privatleben*. Halle; 317.

<sup>125</sup> Moran, 1986: 2.

<sup>126</sup> The *kraktai* were mostly used in acclamations in the hippodrome (especially for the factions of the 'teams' of Blues, Greens, Whites and Reds), whereas the *psaltai* were eventually only employed in churches.

*domestikos*, a singer more experienced than the rest who played the role of the leader or precentor. The role of the *psaltai* was of particular importance for the promotion and upholding of Christian devotion in Greek Orthodox Mass. Not surprisingly, the rules dictating their role in church as well as aspects of their private lives became parts of significant ecclesiastical documents. For instance, 'Chapter VIII, 47 of the *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, a series of canons said to have originated in Syria at the end of the fourth century, allows singers and lectors, in contrast to the higher clergy, to marry after ordination (Funk 571: canon 26)'.<sup>127</sup> Similar rules dictated that they were not to engage 'in games of chance or become intoxicated (canon 43)', and like all clergy, 'were to observe the periods of fasting (canon 69)'.<sup>128</sup> As commanded by Greek Orthodox canon law, the *psaltai* were regarded as low clerics and, in the same way as lectors and *archontes*, had to be ordained. The inferior level of their ordination, however, explained why both these group members could not wear the *orarion* or enter the church sanctuary.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, they could chant from the ambo and, as said, still marry after their investiture.<sup>130</sup> The most important role of this professional body of cantors was to ensure that the standard of singing would remain high instead of atypical or

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<sup>127</sup> Moran, 1986: 14. Cf. Council of Chalcedon, canon 14.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> The *orarion* is a long narrow stole worn by the deacons, over their left shoulders. The front part is then draped over their left forearms. This is mostly worn as a double *orarion* and is a clear signifier of the deacons' official role in the church. The inability to enter the sanctuary is based on 23<sup>rd</sup> Canon of Laodicea and is explained further in Jean Darrouzès. 1970. *Recherches sur les Offikia de L'Eglise Byzantine*. Paris: Institut Français d'Etudes Byzantines; 89.

<sup>130</sup> The ambo is the central stand in the nave of the church. According to canonist Theodoros Balsamon, the latter part of this rule had become outdated by 12<sup>th</sup> century, since by then most *psaltai* were eunuchs (P.G. 137, 532).

unprofessional.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, as stated, ‘warblings and theatrical chanting’ were never to be allowed in church.<sup>132</sup>

According to Justinian’s instructions of 535 CE, which were later propagated by Heraclius around 620, the number of cantors in Saint Sophia and its subordinate churches was not to surpass twenty-five.<sup>133</sup> Even though, according to this second act, the number of all priests and lectors increased, the number of cantors never followed that pattern. The distribution of the singers, based on Philotheos’ Treatise on Ceremony and other Late Byzantine documents, appears to have been made into two choirs of twelve singers, each with their own mastersinger; both choirs were led by a director or *protopsaltes* as the title became known as from the twelfth century.<sup>134</sup> Analytically, the ‘twelfth century *typikon* of the (Theotokos) Eleousa (in the Pantocrator monastery) specifies a complement of 24 singers, namely two *domestikoi*, 16 *psaltai*, two *laosynaktai* and four *kanonarchai*.’<sup>135</sup> The term *domestikos* in church ‘designated the prefect in

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<sup>131</sup> Balsamon provides a characteristic example of unprofessional chanting: ‘the singing of the women who followed the banner in church processions’ P.G. 137, 1361-3. In Moran, 1986: 14.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero, trans. Walter Miller. 1913. *De Officiis*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 112.

<sup>133</sup> Justinian, *Novella* 3 Par. 1.

<sup>134</sup> As mentioned in Zonaras (PG. 134, 1376) and is depicted (as a title) in Skylitzes’ Manuscript (folio 22). Skylitzes ‘lived and wrote towards the end of the eleventh century, probably in the early years of the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118). His work, which covers the period AD 811-1057, was conceived as a continuation to the chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, which was in turn a continuation of the chronicle of George the Monk.’ John Skylitzes, Paul Stephenson, transl. & ed. Nov. 2006. *Synopsis Historion - Byzantium in the Eleventh Century*. ‘Introduction.’ <http://homepage.mac.com/paulstephenson/trans/scyl.html> (Accessed: 6.02.09).

<sup>135</sup> Moran, 1986: 15. The Pantocrator monastery followed the same rules applied to St. Sophia.

charge of the chants (*melōdia*) and the cantors (*melōdoi*).<sup>136</sup> However, not all cantors were present at every ceremony; instead they rotated every week.<sup>137</sup>

Theodoros Balsamon speaks of a multitude of eunuch cantors existing in Constantinople before 1204. However, since the nature of their singing there was not secular, the only surviving names are of those directing choir and music practice in *Hagia Sofia* or other major churches.<sup>138</sup> The first eunuch 'who had a formative influence on musical culture in the capital was Brison.'<sup>139</sup> 'The late fourth and early fifth century eunuch' is mostly recognised as the Choirmaster of Saint Sofia in the service of the empress Eudoxia.<sup>140</sup> Most significantly though, 'according to the fifth-century church historian Socrates, Brison is credited with organizing the nocturnal hymn singing during the Patriarchate of John Chrysostom'.<sup>141</sup> Due to his position and alleged friendship with the empress, Brison has been described as 'an influential figure', whereas other sources, such as the Catholic

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<sup>136</sup> John, bishop of Kitros, P.G.119; 973. There is only one cantor *domestikos* mentioned by name, the eunuch Euthymius Casnes, whom I will discuss in detail on pages 52 & 53. Also the *laosynaktis*' responsibility (*laos*= people and *synagō*= to bring together) was dealing with the daily assemblies and absences of the clergy. (Jean Darrouzès. 1982. 'Geographie Ecclesiastique de L'Empire Byzantin 1.' *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*. Vol. 40; 204). Finally, *kanonarchos* (or *kanonarchēs*) was a young lector who read aloud the verses of the musical kanons before they were chanted by the group of cantors. Similarly to *domestikoi*, there were two *kanonarchoi*; one for the choir on the right and one for the choir on the left, although the typikon of the Pantocrator monastery lists four. (Alexei Dmitrievskij. 1895-1917. *Opisanie liturgičeskikh rukopisej*. Kiev-St. Petersburg. Vol. I: 678. In Moran: 17).

<sup>137</sup> Dmitrievskij, *Opisanie* I: 678. In Moran: 15.

<sup>138</sup> Even though there are documents mentioning secular Byzantine singing, we have no sources mentioning any names or songs.

<sup>139</sup> Neil Moran. 2002. 'Byzantine Castrati.' *Plainsong and Medieval Music* - Volume 11, Issue 2: 99-112; 100.

<sup>140</sup> Nicole J. Camastra. Fall 2008. 'Hemingway's modern hymn: music and the church as background sources for "God rest you merry, gentlemen".' *The Hemingway Review*. Vol. 28, Issue 1: 51-67; 55.

<sup>141</sup> Moran: 100.

Encyclopaedia, have referred to him purely as Eudoxia's 'usher'.<sup>142</sup> During the first years of his patriarchy, 'John (Chrysostom) made a move to combat the nocturnal processions which the Arians conducted within the city on the eve of Saturdays and Sundays'.<sup>143</sup> In order to support the 'Niceneans', or mainstream Orthodox Christians, under Chrysostom, Eudoxia 'lent the services of her chamberlain, the eunuch Brison, to train and conduct the choir needed to counter the provocative hymns sung by the Arians as they moved through the city'.<sup>144</sup> According to one of these sources, Socrates Scholasticus, an ecclesiastical historian born around 379, it was during those processions that Brison, a strong yet hated figure for the Arians, 'was struck with a stone'.<sup>145</sup> Though the singer and choirmaster's expertise 'extended beyond music', he is, particularly, credited with 'establishing antiphony between two choirs of singers and the use of castrati at court and in the churches'.<sup>146</sup> Given the general attitude supporting monophony in Eastern Christianity, this must have been revolutionary in attitude. However, Brison's influence is additionally demonstrated in the role he was asked to play, due to his friendship, during the years of Chrysostom's first exile in 402-3. On that occasion, 'Brison ... was sent to John (Chrysostom) with a

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<sup>142</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08452b.htm> (Accessed: 7.02.09).

<sup>143</sup> Chrysostom wrote homilies whose theological aim was 'to refute the claims of Anomean Arians that they know God's essence (1-4), and that the Son, as a creature, is totally unlike the Father (7-12).' Gerard H. Ettliger. Sept. 1986. 'Review.' *Church History*. Vol. 55, Issue 3: 357-8: 358. Cf. St. John Chrysostom, trans. Paul W. Hapkins. 1984. *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*. Fathers of the Church. Vol. 72. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press; 270.

<sup>144</sup> Wendy Mayer & Pauline Allen. 2000. *John Chrysostom*. London: Routledge; 8.

<sup>145</sup> Socrates Scholasticus. ca 439 CE. *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In J-P. Migne, ed. 1857-66. P.G. 67: 33-841; 6.8. Also in Philip Schaff, ed. 1888. *Socrates and Sozomen Ecclesiastical Histories*. Wien. Re-issued by Logos Inc.: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf202.html> (Accessed: 6.02.09).

<sup>146</sup> Moran: 101.

request from the empress to return'.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, 'John's attachment to Brison is confirmed ... by two letters addressed to Brison from the year 404'.<sup>148</sup> By this time, however, we have significant lexical changes in reference to eunuchs. As Guyot suggests, the etymology of the word eunuch, during the fourth century, was altered from 'guardian of the bed' to 'well-minded', thus reflecting a relatively more positive view.<sup>149</sup> This, apart from personality attributes, might be able to explain why Brison and other eunuchs were becoming so influential.

Brison's reformations were officially integrated into the preparation ritual for the Hagia Sophia consecration in 535 CE. On that occasion, the number of singers, as dictated by emperor Justinian, was specified not to exceed the number of twenty-five.<sup>150</sup> The cantors were divided into two choirs, consisting of twelve cantors each, led by a director. This remained applicable throughout the sixth and seventh centuries. The piece of legislation demonstrates that up to this stage, the choir must have been divided into different vocal ranges, according to Byzantine chant, and was not entirely made of either low or eunuch male singers. Since cantors were treated as members of the lower clergy, like them they were also ordained and tonsured. However, unlike the higher clergy, low clergy and

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<sup>147</sup> Neil Moran, 1986: 25.

<sup>148</sup> Moran: 101.

<sup>149</sup> P. Guyot. 1980. *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-romischen Antike*. 20 n. 14. However, Ringrose disagrees with Guyot's view.

<sup>150</sup> Justinianus, Jacques-Paul Migne, ed. 1878. *Justiniani Imperatoris Novellae ad Religionem Pertinentes*. Patrologia Latina 72. Paris, cols. 921-6.

subsequently cantors were allowed to marry after ordination.<sup>151</sup> This rule was to be re-examined within two centuries and specifically during the years of Leo V the Armenian (813-20 CE). The emperor, known for his iconoclastic beliefs, was also known for his love of music and his supposedly-fine voice.<sup>152</sup> It is reputed that he liked to ‘intone the beginnings of the chants for the choirs.’<sup>153</sup> This appears to have facilitated his demise. The Emperor Leo V was assassinated right after ‘personally directing the chanting of the morning Office before Christmas in St Stephen’s chapel in 820’.<sup>154</sup> The important detail here is that Leo’s assassins had been disguised as cantors and thus entered the palace confines via the cantors’ allocated gate. Singers until then used to live in private city residences. Following this event, however, cantors were obliged to reside within imperial palace quarters.<sup>155</sup> This rule must have brought an added disadvantage to ‘bearded’ cantors with families. It might have also accelerated the general implementation of unmarried eunuch cantors.

The next most important singer after Brison to be ‘identified by name’ was Euthymius Casnes, ‘a *domesticos* of the Great Church (whose) ... name

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<sup>151</sup> Franz S. Funk. 1905. *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*. Paderborn; 571 (canon 26).

<sup>152</sup>The emperor’s singing ability, however, has been disputed in Skylitzes’ chronicle. Nonetheless, the illustrated manuscript contains the scene of him directing three singers; one of them is thought to be a eunuch. (Ioannes Skylitzes. Late 11<sup>th</sup> c. *Σύνοψις Ἱστοριῶν* (*Synopsis Historiarum*). Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional de Espanā; Vitr. 26-2, folio 22 – Appendix 1.3). Also, regarding the iconoclastic crisis of the eighth and ninth centuries, this movement took the form of an ‘anti-image, intellectual theology’ which appears to have begun, most probably, with Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315-403). Epiphanius characteristically ‘rejected the ability of art to convey any truth about divine nature’. Glenn Peers. 2001. *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium*. London, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press; 69 & 65.

<sup>153</sup> Moran, 2002: 102.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup>Georgios Kedrenos, Jacques-Paul Migne, ed. 11th c. / 1894. *Georgii Cedreni Compendium Historiarum*. Patrologia Graeca. Vol. 121. Paris, col. 949.

comes up in connection with the activities of the unworthy patriarch Theophylactos (933-56), son of the emperor Romanos I'.<sup>156</sup> The categories, based on accounts of the historian John Skylitzes, were that 'the patriarch ... in order to lighten the solemnity of the service ... appointed Euthymius Casnes as domesticos, who reputedly introduced diabolical dances, obscure cryings and tavern songs into the service'.<sup>157</sup> This detail suggests that, like their Baroque Era successors, the eunuch Byzantine singers also sang in theatres.<sup>158</sup> However, Skylitzes' accusations were neither necessarily impartial nor true and could purely have reflected the writer's anti-eunuch stance. As stated by Moran, this was, after all, at a time that Constantine Porphyrogenitos 'was carrying out his flights of solemn ritualistic fantasy in his book of ceremonies.'<sup>159</sup> Similar allegations against the singers though were included in several other documents. Nine centuries later, in the *Defence of Eunuchs*, the whole body of accumulated accusations was used as evidence against general partiality.<sup>160</sup> The reason for that discrimination, however, had not been purely a matter of different views or aesthetics. As Kathryn Ringrose suggests, even though 'Byzantine society does not set eunuchs outside its culture and its conceptual framework ... language

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<sup>156</sup> Moran, 1986: 16.

<sup>157</sup> H. Thurn, ed. 1973. *Ioannes Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, Berlin; 243. In Moran, 2002; 102. Cf. The objections of Elena Boeck about the un-orthodox imagery contained in the Madrid Skylitzes manuscript and its possible Sicilian origins. (Elena Boeck. 2009. 'Un-Orthodox imagery: voids and visual narrative in the Madrid Skylitzes manuscript.' *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*. Vol. 33, Issue 1: 17-41; 41).

<sup>158</sup> As stated earlier, no secular Byzantine music and singing scores survive.

<sup>159</sup> Moran, 1986: 16.

<sup>160</sup> Theophylactos of Ochrid wrote *Defence of Eunuchs* in 12<sup>th</sup> century 'for his brother, a eunuch and cleric of Hagia Sophia'. Moran, 1986: 100.

routinely sets eunuchs outside the norms of male or female gender.<sup>161</sup> Most significantly, ‘the language used in connection with eunuchs in Late Antiquity’, that is until the eighth century, remained ‘heavily negative.’<sup>162</sup> However, based on two historical narratives, it has been claimed that the singers were finally being accepted in society during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The first mentions that, during his visit to Constantinople, King Louis VII of France had the opportunity to listen to the Mass and admire the eunuchs’ ‘sweet chanting’ and ‘the mingling of voices, the heavier with the light’.<sup>163</sup> The second extract is by Anthony of Novgorod who describes the Transfer of Gifts in Hagia Sophia and the way it was sung first by eunuch cantors, then by sub-deacons and finally by a single monk. During that time it was noted ‘a great weeping and emotion and humility among all the people, not only in the Hagia Sophia, but also in the galleries.’<sup>164</sup> Irrespective of admiration expressed by the two visitors, neither of these examples truly reflects the local societal attitudes. Even though there were confirmed positive societal and lexical changes during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, during the same period there was also the demonstrated need for a document such as *In Defence of Eunuchs*. However, the biggest positive proof to some was the

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<sup>161</sup> Kathryn M. Ringrose. 2003. *The Perfect Servant - Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 50.

<sup>162</sup> Ringrose: 34. Examples of negative language usage against eunuchs are the words *θηλυθρώδης* (woman-like, which among numerous other examples can be found in St Basil, trans. R. Deferrari, ed. 1928-34. *The Letters*. Cambridge, Mass; No 115), *θηλυδρίας* (effeminate man, which can be found in John Skylitzes, H. Thurn, ed. 1973. *Joannes Scylitzes: Synopsis Historiarum*. New York; 245, l. 40) or *γυναικάριον* (little woman, which is mentioned in Leo the Deacon, I. Bekker, ed. 1828. *Leonis Diaconi Caloënsis Historiae libri decem*. Bonn; 39, l. ii).

<sup>163</sup> Odo of Deuil, Virginia Berry, ed. 1948. *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*. New York; 68.

<sup>164</sup> Khrisanf Loparev. 1889. *Kniga Palomnik*. St Petersburg: Publications of the Orthodox Palestine Society. Vol. 51; 12. In Moran, 2002: 107-8.

one found in *Canones Sanctorum Patrum qui in Trullo Imperialis Palatii Constantinipoli*. There, Theodoros Balsamon states that in twelfth century ‘the *ordo cantorum* consisted entirely of eunuchs’.<sup>165</sup>

Finally, during the same period of time, we have another known eunuch choir director but this time at Smolensk, in Russia. ‘The outstanding singer Manuel the Eunuch’, before becoming Smolensk bishop, was thought to have initially arrived there together with two other singers.<sup>166</sup> This had been based on three, contrasting in dates, Russian Chronicles known as *Sophia*, *L'vov* and *Avraamka*. However, after more careful examination, Manuel, possibly the *protopsaltes*, that is a soloist or head singer, appeared to have been there first in 1130 CE.<sup>167</sup> It is uncertain whether the singer had been a Saint Sofia cantor or if he was even based at Constantinople prior leaving Byzantium. The other two singers, names unknown but most probably used as *domestikoi*, that were responsible for the ensemble and congregational singing, seemed to have moved there much later, in 1153.<sup>168</sup> This is consistent with other sources that credit Manuel with organising ‘the study of singing’ at Smolensk in 1137.<sup>169</sup> Based on the above examples, some have suggested that by the tenth century the singers had been ‘acculturated’ or integrated into Byzantine society and that also ‘the

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<sup>165</sup> Jacques-Paul Migne, ed. 1865. *Patrologia Graeca* 137, col. 532. Paris.

<sup>166</sup> Johann von Gardner, trans. Vladimir Morosan, ed. 2000. *Russian Church Singing – History from the Origins to the Mid-Seventeenth Century*. Vol. II, USA: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press; 49.

<sup>167</sup> Gardner: 71.

<sup>168</sup> Gardner: 73.

<sup>169</sup> E.J. Moure. 1910 / 2008. *The Abuse of the Singing and Speaking Voice – Causes, Effects and Treatment*. London: Kegan Paul & Co. / Peffer Press; 5.

gendered status of eunuchs had improved and been normalized in society.<sup>170</sup> However, others express serious doubts about it.<sup>171</sup>

Irrespective of the above views, this kind of hard-earned recognition and tolerance did not last for long. As recognised, the Fourth Crusade and ‘the conquest of 1204 brought with it the destruction of the fragile choral organization of the Hagia Sophia and its attendant churches and monasteries, since the conquerors (i.e. Venetians) introduced the Latin rite to the Great Church.’<sup>172</sup> The eunuchs, despised by the crusaders, initially fled into rural areas. However, since the new status quo, called the Latin Empire, did last for almost sixty years, the singers had to emigrate. They found refuge mostly in Russia, Trepezunt, Venice and Southern Italy.<sup>173</sup> When Byzantine traditions were restored in 1261, the true tradition of chant, having being oral, was not amongst them.<sup>174</sup> The original ritual, known as

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<sup>170</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 86.

<sup>171</sup> Tougher, 2004: 84.

<sup>172</sup> Moran, 2002: 108.

<sup>173</sup> Far Southern Italian territories, such as Naples, not only had remained on friendly terms with their previous Byzantine rulers but also ‘continued use of Byzantine titles.’ [Example: Catapan, i.e. Patrician]. Patricia Skinner. 12 January 2008. *Family Power in Southern Italy - The Duchy of Gaeta and its Neighbours (850- 1139)*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series. No 29. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 56. Also, there was a Greek community in Venice, strong ‘enough to sustain a printing and publishing trade’ as well as create a significant Byzantine music presence in churches there. (Iain Fenlon. 2007. *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 67). However, from a political perspective, the cantors’ decision to seek refuge in the land that brought the distraction of their own remains rather awkward. Unless the 12<sup>th</sup> century’s life for eunuch cantors in Constantinople had been less ideal than studies have claimed so far.

<sup>174</sup> The tradition in Byzantium had until the Sack of Constantinople survived mostly by repetition. This bears similarities with many other esoteric traditions. ‘These are transmitted by certain persons attached to a special institution, or are the property of a special group [in the specific case, Byzantine priesthood].’ (J. Vansina. 1985. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press; 34). After 1204, those who had to move abroad thought about putting the hymns and other information into writing in order to preserve it. As the above writings were not only associated with rituals not supposed to be disclosed to lay congregations, but also revealed a part of Byzantine history which official sources did not want to be known, these texts were only kept in

the 'chanted/sung office' or *asmatiki akolouthia*, which involved the eunuch chanting, could not be truly reinstated.<sup>175</sup> The main reason was that the atmosphere had by then become seriously hostile towards the eunuchs - singers or not. For example, Athanassios the Athonite's *typikon*, among other documents, proscribed 'the superior ... never to receive a eunuch in our Lavra, even if he be an old man'.<sup>176</sup> And in order to make sure that his demands would have a proper effect, the Athonite continued: 'If anyone transgresses this command of mine ... let him be separated from the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit ... let him also receive the curse of our holy fathers and be anathematised from the inheritance of the just.'<sup>177</sup> Athanassios' views soon became the official ones in Orthodoxy and the resultant transition was successful and almost 'seamless'. In fact, until very recently, few could have suspected that the all gender-specific masculine sound of the supposedly original Byzantine Chant had only been the product of the last two centuries before the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. However, though the evidence could have been manipulated there or in the mainland, remnants of the original chants were eventually recovered from Southern Italy or other Byzantine outposts, such as Thessaloniki, Mount Athos, Epirus, Trepezunt, and Nicaea.

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monasteries. It is only in our time that there are successful attempts for these hymns and documents to be published.

<sup>175</sup> Gregory W. Woolfenden. 2004. *Daily liturgical prayer: Origins and Theology*. Liturgy, Worship & Society Series. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd; 95.

<sup>176</sup> John Philip Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero. 2001. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents - A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*. Harvard: Harvard University Press (Dumbarton Oaks Studies); 263 - rule 48.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas & Constantinides Hero, 2001: 263.

## The Art of *Cheironomy*

Canon 75 of the Council of Trullo (691) and Theodoros Balsamon's interpretation of it in the twelfth century state:

Concerning those who are entrusted with the singing in churches, we wish to receive neither those who desire disordered shoutings thus dislodging the natural form with a loud clamour, nor those who are no fit to belong to a church; we wish rather those who with great diligence and a sense of duty offer the psalmody to God, the overseer of all secrets. For the sacred oracle taught the sons of Israel to be pious.

The above instruction was made even more specific when Balsamon concluded that 'theatrical psalmody is to be prohibited as well as dancing of the hands (*orchēsis tōn cheirōn*), protracted sounds and vibrato'.<sup>178</sup>

The 'dancing of the hands', mainly applied in choir direction, appeared to produce an extraordinary effect upon both congregations and spectators. For instance, Odo of Deuil seemed particularly impressed when describing the Constantinople cantors in 1147; especially by the effect produced by their gentle clapping of the hands and the 'inflections of the fingers'.<sup>179</sup> Some other observers' remarks go even further. In 1158, Vincent of Prague claimed in his Annals (*Chronicon*) that the choirmaster's

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<sup>178</sup> P.G. 137, 769-72. Translated in Moran, 1986: 39. The expression "*cheironomia*" (from *cheir*= hand plus *nomos*= law) was used in ancient Greece to indicate the movement of the arms and hands in dancing and pantomime. *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Odo of Deuil, Virginia Berry, ed. 1948. *De Profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*. New York; 68. Odo of Deuil was a Crusades' historian quite negatively inclined towards Byzantines. The above comment is among the limited positive ones.

'gyrations' and 'saltes' he experienced when in church produced a greater impression ...than the chant itself.<sup>180</sup> This kind of church cheironomy soon appeared to have acquired an iconic if not anecdotal state. For example, being ill, Pope Gregory the Great, when addressing Leander of Seville in his introduction to *Moralia in Job*, compared himself 'with a chanter whose voice could not perform that which the hand [of the *Maistor*] ordered'.<sup>181</sup> This incident indicates that singing according to cheironomic directions must have been observed 'by the time of Gregory in Constantinople, if not also in Rome.'<sup>182</sup>

As recorded in the late Byzantine codex 1656 of the Great Lavra on Mt. Athos, cheironomy was a practice introduced by the fathers Cosmas Melodos and John of Damascus.<sup>183</sup> Both the above as well as codex 811 of *metochion* of the Holy Sepulchre in Constantinople state that most but not all Byzantine music neumes had their correspondence in cheironomy.<sup>184</sup> As stated, the neumes *ison*, *oligon*, *oxeia*, *petaste*, *kouphisma*, *pelaston*, *duo kentemata* and *apostrophos* could each be signified by a distinctive hand gesture. However, the single *kentema*, the *hypsele*, *elaphron* and *chamele*

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<sup>180</sup> Helmut Hucke. 1979. 'Die Cheironomie und die Entstehung der Neumenschrift.' *Die Musikforschung*. Vol. 32: 1-16; 14.

<sup>181</sup> Hucke: 9. The two men knew each other from Constantinople.

<sup>182</sup> Moran: 39. Gregory's papacy lasted from 590 until his death in 604 CE. Examples of cheironomia: Skylitzes manuscript in Madrid I11. 17 – an illumination of the emperor Leo V (813-20) directing a choir. [Appendix 1.3].

<sup>183</sup> Lorenzo Tardo. 1938. *L' antica Melurgia Bizantina*. Grottaferrata; 226. Cosmas, the Melodian, Saint (ca. 706-ca. 760) and John of Damascus or Damascene, Saint (ca. 676 - ca. 754 / 787).

<sup>184</sup> Jean-Baptiste Thibaut. 1900. 'Étude de Musique Byzantine.' *Izvestiia Russkago Arkheologiceskago Instituta*: 361-96; 366. Examples of Neumes or Psaltic Byzantine Chant Notation in Appendix 1.2 (Cf. 1.1).

did not have an equivalent cheironomic sign.<sup>185</sup> Irrespective of similarities, Byzantine Cheironomy is not to be confused with the modern concept of choir or orchestra direction. As stated, 'cheironomy could be rather described as an exact science for the indication of specific musical intervals, of melodic figures and of marks of expression.'<sup>186</sup> Due to that, it was considered as an essential side of Byzantine choral tradition, which did not survive except in minor 'references in literary works and the silent representations in frescoes, icons, and miniatures'.<sup>187</sup> The most characteristic of them, perhaps, written by John Cantacuzenos described the singing rites performed at the funeral of Andronicos Palaiologos in St. Sophia as such: 'it seemed as if only a select number of officiants had taken part in them (and)... a perfect and harmonious performance was given when the whole congregation sang the sacred hymns antiphonally'.<sup>188</sup>

### **Singing in Icons – A Matter of Symbolism**

All depictions of eunuch cantors have survived due to them being more or less minor themes within icons.<sup>189</sup> Especially in miniature icons, singers were exemplified as 'dramatis personae in the theatre of politics in the illustrated history of John Skylitzes' or, in worship books and documents, as

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<sup>185</sup> Tardo: 189.

<sup>186</sup> Moran, 1986: 46.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Egon Wellesz. 1961. *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 113.

<sup>189</sup> Appendix 1.3.

less than central partakers in sacred rituals.<sup>190</sup> As long as this continued to be the case, a cantor possessed no more significance or importance than the rest of the surrounding personae, be those priests, defenders or Byzantine enemies. This state, however, was thoroughly transformed when cantors started being components of venerated Late Byzantine icons. As stated, 'it should be noted that the formal delimitation of depicted figures depending upon their semiotic significance (value) is particularly relevant for the icon' and differentiates it from secular art.<sup>191</sup> Thus, during the times of Palaiologos' dynasty, it became paramount to 'deal with those figures which (were) not themselves objects of reverence, but which (were) present in pictures (icons) being worshipped.'<sup>192</sup> The matter of distinction between religiously revered and secular figures within an icon could neither be monodimensionally answered nor satisfy all beliefs. In certain backgrounds, in fact, such as among Greek or Russian Old Calendarists, there are believers who still would not worship an icon if secular or surrounding characters are also depicted in it.<sup>193</sup> The repercussions of this attitude are complicated and could easily explain why the depictions of the *psaltai* are limited.

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<sup>190</sup> Moran: 5.

<sup>191</sup> Boris A. Uspensky, Stephen Rudy, ed. 1976. *The semiotics of the Russian icon*. Semiotics of Art 3. Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press; 68.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.* Palaiologos or Paleologan dynasty is the last one ruling the Byzantine Empire (1259-1453).

<sup>193</sup> Uspensky: 69. The Julian calendar is still used on Mount Athos and many National Orthodox churches. Those Orthodox Churches no longer using the Julian calendar, they tend to use the Revised Julian rather than Gregorian calendar. Regarding the complicated issue of the revised calendar see <http://www.chrysostom.org/andrew/texts/parsells-calendar.pdf> (Accessed: 10. 09. 09).

On the other hand, artistic depictions in Comnenan period were more concerned with realism and certainly not abstract. Therefore, in their depictions, they did not include anonymous singers or choirs 'but they chose to recreate an image which would recall the *psaltai* in the Great Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople.'<sup>194</sup> The realism in those icons was, in fact, so vibrant that one could potentially determine the precise liturgical moment in them.<sup>195</sup> These icons, apart from having preserved important historical information, tend to reveal matters like cantors' costumes and hierarchy as well as chant cheironomy. Issues of gender, however, are in need of more in depth study and observation.

## Gender and Sexuality

Contrary to any priestly expectations and intentions, many eunuch singers behaved in a secular manner. This secularity has sometimes been either exaggerated or underrated by scholars, depending on where their sympathies lie. The reason is, as for other Hybrid Vocal Personae before the twentieth century, there are no surviving documents and sources from that era which could be considered as a first-hand viewpoint or reflection. The closest equivalent is the *Defence of Eunuchs* written by Theophylactos of Ochrid during 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>196</sup> Theophylactos' brother, Demetrios, was himself a

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<sup>194</sup> Moran, 1986: 5.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. 'The accompanying painting to stanza 20 of the Akathistos Hymn in codex Moscow gr. 429 where the portrait of John Cucuzeles is believed to be included.' Moran: 5.

<sup>196</sup> Theophylactos, against his will, 'was appointed to the autocephalous archbishopric of Ochrid by the emperor (Alexios Komnenos) between the *basilikos logos* of 1088 and ...

eunuch cleric in Hagia Sophia who, tired and appalled by the accusations against eunuchs, asked his brother to present their position to the Byzantine public. Theophylactos drew on ‘writings of the apostles and church Fathers, as well as on Roman law ... [and] concluded that castration was not an offence against God. Nor did the physical fact of castration have an effect on one’s soul: there were eunuchs who had become saints, patriarchs, bishops and priests.’<sup>197</sup> Graphically, the act of castration performed by the parents to a child ‘was compared to the pruning of a growing vine.’<sup>198</sup> This way, Theophylactos attempted to defend the wealthy families’ practice. They took this route, which seems extreme to us, in order for one of their children to possibly have ‘a career at court.’<sup>199</sup> The *Defence of Eunuchs* was criticised for partiality and for an utter beautification of a grim subject; thus, it was eventually discredited. However, due to Theophylactos’ association with his brother and fellow eunuch clerics, this document constitutes the most likely treasury for – at least some of – the bearers’ true opinions and beliefs. For this reason, I will be discussing it further at a later stage.<sup>200</sup>

According to Ringrose, there was an acculturation process that worked to shape eunuchs and define their distinct gender category. For instance, they adopted a certain physical appearance marked by a particular style of

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around 1090.’ Margaret Mullett. 1997. *Theophylact of Ochrid*. Aldershot: Variorum; 53. He is recognised as an inspired theologian and orator (and celebrated as a Saint in Bulgaria), who has ‘left many homilies and, most important, a commentary on the whole New Testament, which has been treasured by Orthodox Christians.’ - <http://www.abbamoses.com/months/december.html> (Accessed: 10.09.08).

<sup>197</sup> Moran, 2002: 100.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Cf.* pages 77ff.

dress and body language.<sup>201</sup> Contrary to Theophylactos' claims about asexuality and almost saintly eunuchs, several scholars claim that '[their] gender ambiguity granted them opportunities to explore intimate relations with both men and women.'<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, Aucoin and Wassersug claim that, because they possessed 'qualities of male and female, eunuchs in certain societies developed a sexuality which encompassed aspects of both.'<sup>203</sup> Nonetheless, we lack documents reflecting Byzantine eunuchs or partners' first-hand experiences. Given the era's general attitudes, 'the extent and nature of the sexual activity that the eunuchs engaged in may never be definitively known.'<sup>204</sup> This can be used to draw an obvious similarity, which, however, bears significant gender connotations: 'As with women of the past, eunuchs did not write their own stories.'<sup>205</sup>

Issues of gender in Byzantium remain undefined. In many even earlier cultures, like the Classical Athenian society of 500 BCE, there has been clear and adequate information on gender roles and connotations. In this case, however, the researcher is being presented with at least two contradicting presentations: one prepared for the Byzantines and another one for the Crusaders and other foreigners. For instance, the role of women in everyday life in Byzantium was far more engaging than in Western European societies of those days. For the sake of diplomacy, however,

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<sup>201</sup> Cf. Ringrose, 2003: 78.

<sup>202</sup> M. W. Aucoin, R. J. Wassersug. 2006. 'The sexuality and social performance of androgen-deprived (castrated) men throughout history: Implications for modern day cancer patients.' *Social Science & Medicine*. Vol. 63: 3162-73; 3168.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> In Aucoin & Wassersug, 2006: 3169.

women had to withdraw, for instance, from their governmental duties when foreign visitors were invited to the palace. This type of quasi-etiquette had to be reflected in documents too. Therefore, as Averil Cameron suggests, the 'study of Byzantine gender poses both conceptual and methodological problems' because 'the term "Byzantine"... is used in a number of ways, depending on the relevant academic constituency.'<sup>206</sup> The shortcomings of observing any of these individual views exclusively are obvious, because not only is 'gender in Byzantium still an issue – the study of Byzantine gender has hardly begun.'<sup>207</sup> In this thesis I shall mainly focus on issues of gender affecting eunuchs together with differentiation existing among different groups and 'audiences', such as Byzantines and Western Crusaders.

The rivalry between Greeks and Latins can be traced back into Antiquity. However, the years around 1100 constitute the most crucial chapter in the cultural and political decline between the two sides. It is widely acknowledged that the Crusades 'brought Western Europe into vital contact with its Eastern counterpart, with the hope of renewing the ties of Christian fraternity and, most of all, of finding an ally against Islam.'<sup>208</sup> These intentions were never realised. Instead, the early crusaders, who had to pass through Byzantium on their way to Holy Land, discovered there a

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<sup>206</sup> Averil Cameron. 'Sacred and Profane Love: Thoughts on Byzantine Gender.' In Liz James, ed. 1997. *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*. London: Routledge; 1.

<sup>207</sup> Cameron. In James, ed.: 7.

<sup>208</sup> Marc Carrier. 2002. 'Perfidious and Effeminate Greeks: the Representation of Byzantine Ceremonial in the Western Chronicles of the Crusades (1096-1204).' *Annuario dell' Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica Venezia*. Vol. 4: 47-68. [http://www.geocities.com/serban\\_marin/carrier2002.html](http://www.geocities.com/serban_marin/carrier2002.html) (Accessed: 10.4.08).

way of life and societal structure totally foreign to Western one. Most importantly, those crusaders realised that the two sides, far from resembling each other, had more things dividing them with different 'goals and ideals.'<sup>209</sup> They perceived and accused Byzantines as 'effeminate and perfidious'. Among the reasons used by the crusaders to justify these views were the Byzantine excessive court ceremonial and their 'lack of virility'. Most importantly for this thesis though, the Byzantine civilization features that the Crusaders viewed as decadent were namely 'eunuchs, rich and flamboyant attires, as well as laziness and excessive refinement.'<sup>210</sup> These views have been preserved in several documents but the most reliable ones remain those written by the chroniclers Odo of Deuil and William of Tyre (c. 1130-85).<sup>211</sup>

Byzantines, as described in several documents, such as the *Alexiad* by Anna Komnene, regarded the Crusaders as 'uncultured barbarians'. The extent of this dislike and distrust can be found in the following extract from the XI notebook chapter VIII. This is Anna's transmission of Bohemund's message that, supposedly anticipating his demise, had been left for the Emperor Alexios Komnenos to read 'posthumously':<sup>212</sup> Communicating his 'eternal' hatred and vengeance he stated his act and will:

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<sup>209</sup> Carrier, 2002.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> The works were *De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem* (On Louis VII's journey to the East) and *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* (translated as *History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea* in the Standard English edition by E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey, published in 1943).

<sup>212</sup> Bohemund, Bohemond or Bohemondo I of Taranto was the prince of Antioch (1058-1111). 'He developed in the shadow of his father's transformation from a Norman brigand-mercenary to the founder, as Duke of Apulia, of a powerful new state in Southern Italy.'

For to shatter the Roman Empire under thy sway, I died when alive, and came to life when dead. For as soon as I reach the continent opposite and see the men of Lombardy, and all the Latins and Germans and the Franks, our subjects and most warlike men, I shall fill thy towns and countries with many murders and much bloodshed until I plant my spear on Byzantium itself.

And Anna Komnene concludes in dismay: 'To such a pitch of arrogance was the barbarian carried.'<sup>213</sup> To her, Bohemund was not only a barbarian but also one who, in double insult, insisted on disregarding the supposed Byzantine superiority. Though the relations between the two sides were treacherous enough already, this could not compare to the results brought by the Fourth or so-called 'Unholy Crusade'.<sup>214</sup> That became perhaps the zenith of this long and ill-fated divergence, which led to total deterioration of diplomacy between the two sides of medieval Christianity. Apart from any other consequences, this resulted in the disappearance of the original Byzantine chant and its main representatives: the Eunuch Cantors of Saint Sophia in Constantinople.

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However, 'Bohemund was surpassed in the succession to his father's Apulian realm' by Roger Borsa; his father's eldest son. First Crusade was an opportunity for Bohemund to realise his dreams who is nowadays thought as 'an archetype of self-seeking opportunist, hungry for a principality of his own in the east.' (John Barker. 'Bohemond of Taranto.' In Christopher Kleinhenz. 2003. *Medieval Italy – An Encyclopaedia*. The Routledge Encyclopaedias of the Middle Ages. London: Routledge; 133.) The simulated death described by Anna Komnene helped Bohemund escape prosecution. His actual death happened three years after his return to Italy, following his defeat in Antioch (1108).

<sup>213</sup> Anna Comnena (Komnene), trans. Elizabeth A. Dawes, ed. 1928. *The Alexiad*. London: Routledge; 298-9.

<sup>214</sup> John Godfrey. 1980. *1204 – The Unholy Crusade*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

## Eunuchs and the Ceremonial

Shaun Tougher states 'that eunuchs were an integral part of the history of the Byzantine Empire and its society is a fact well known both to the Byzantines and their medieval contemporaries, and to modern-day historians.'<sup>215</sup> However, in order for us to understand the depth of the eunuch role as well as its associations with the previously mentioned notion of *ΕΙΣ ΔΟΞΑΝ ΘΕΟΥ* (To the Glory of God), we should also focus on their ceremonial participation. In true Byzantine manner, Rodolphe Guilland stated:

Like angels they surrounded the ruler, who was the representative of God here below... Eunuchs presented the insignia of coronation to the ruler: they led the ruler after his return from a victorious war into a chapel of the Virgin, and ... they transformed him from a warrior prince to a Christian prince. Finally the eunuchs ... accompanied the ruler to the sacred bath of the Blakhernes ... in which he submerged himself in order to be reborn. In Byzantium, the eunuchs represented a celestial power on earth.<sup>216</sup>

The last sentence is not only the epitome of the Byzantine notion of *ΕΙΣ ΔΟΞΑΝ ΘΕΟΥ* but also bears uncanny similarities with some of the roles

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<sup>215</sup> Shaun Tougher. 'Byzantine Eunuchs: An Overview.' In Liz James, ed. 1997. *Women, Men and Eunuchs. Gender in Byzantium*: 168-84; 168.

<sup>216</sup> Rodolphe Guilland. 1943. 'Les Eunuques dans l'Empire Byzantin: Étude de titulature et de prosopographie byzantines.' *Études Byzantines*. Vol. I: 197-238; 200-1.

assigned to their successors in the Vatican ceremonial; those of the young Baroque eunuch students of the Conservatorios.

On one hand, the Byzantine cantors' influence and power, for the above reasons, was many times greater than anticipated. On the other hand, they experienced an expected animosity and envy. According to Hopkins, 'the reasons for such vehement hatred of eunuchs on the part of the traditional elite stems from a revulsion at their physical condition, their lowly origin, but perhaps most of all from the perceived influence of the court eunuchs over the figure of the emperor himself'.<sup>217</sup> Nonetheless, not all emperors were in favour. For instance, Julian was so vehemently against eunuchs that he even sent (the eunuch) Eusebius to be burnt alive because he accused him with his poor relation to his imperial cousin, Constantius.<sup>218</sup> The so-called eunuch power was once again reinstated after the Emperor's death in 363 CE. As mentioned, this influence continued, more or less, undisturbed until the Sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204.

## Different Groups and Methods

According to the method applied, we can distinguish at least two individual eunuch groups with variant characteristics: those operated before and after puberty. Hopkins says that those of 'the former category were presumably

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<sup>217</sup> K. Hopkins. 1978. *Conquerors and Slaves*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 195.

<sup>218</sup> Tougher. In James, ed., 1997: 170.

more prevalent, for only by being created a eunuch before puberty would one exhibit the classic physical characteristics of the group that denoted sexlessness.<sup>219</sup> These characteristics were ‘high-pitched voices ... faces with smooth glossy skins covered with a network of fine wrinkles’, and a tendency ‘to run to fat’.<sup>220</sup> Another distinguishing feature also, according to the widely travelled tenth-century historian Masudi, ‘was that (eunuchs’) armpits did not smell.’<sup>221</sup>

Details of the operation can be found in several sources but the most extensive among the contemporary accounts is the *Epitome of Medicine*, which was written by Paul of Aegina, a seventh-century doctor.<sup>222</sup> Paul affirms that he had performed the operation himself sometimes, even if it was against his will. Then he describes two methods of castration, the first by compression, the other excision:

That by compression is thus performed: Children, still of a tender age, are placed in a vessel of hot water, and then when the parts are softened in the bath, the testicles are to be squeezed with the fingers until they disappear, and, being dissolved, can no longer be felt. The method by excision is as follows: let the person to be castrated to be placed upon a bench, and the scrotum with the testicles grasped by the fingers of the left hand, and stretched; two straight incisions are then to be made with a scalpel, one in each testicle; and when the testicles

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<sup>219</sup> Hopkins, *Conquerors*: 193-4.

<sup>220</sup> Mas'udi, Aloys Sprenger, ed. 1841. *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*. London: Oriental Translation Fund of Gr. Britain and Ireland; 346. In Tougher, 1997: 177.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> Paul of Aegina, trans. F. Adams. 1844 -7. *The Seven Books of Paulus Aegineta*. Vol. II, VI 68, London; 379-80.

start up they are to be dissected around and cut out, having merely left the very thin bond of connection between the vessels in their natural state. This method is preferred to that by compression; for those who have had them squeezed sometimes have venereal diseases, a certain part, as it would appear, of the testicles, having escaped the compression.'<sup>223</sup>

Another later account, the one by Masudi, also mentions the practice of 'dragging'.<sup>224</sup> Finally, it should also be underlined that, though this was rare in Byzantium, sometimes the castration was full and not partial; this meant that the penis was also removed like in cases of Chinese or Harem eunuchs. Issues of poor technique as well as lack of hygiene made the second method, mentioned by Paul of Aegina, frequently fatal to those subjected to it. This has been demonstrated in the *Novellae*, a part of the colossal legislative work 'Corpus Iuris Civilis'. The work, which was partly written and compiled by emperor Justinian I (527-65), 'affirmed the horrifying mortality rate following the operation, since, out of 90 persons undergoing the operation, barely 3 survived.'<sup>225</sup> As in all eras, however, alternative formation remained a reality and eunuchs did not have to be purposely created. However, what is different is the justification, which varies immensely according to era's attitudes. For instance, Patriarch Methodios was brought to trial accused of seducing a woman. During the proceedings, Methodios disrobed and revealed the reason he was incapable

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<sup>223</sup> Paul of Aegina, trans. F. Adams: 379-80.

<sup>224</sup> Tougher. In James, 1997: 176.

<sup>225</sup> R. Schoell and W. Kroll, eds. 1905. *Justinianus Imperator: Novellae CXXXII*. Corpus Iuris Civilis iii, 4, Berlin. In Guiland, 'Les Eunuques': 199.

of this. As Bury describes, the patriarch ‘explained that, many years ago, he had been tormented by carnal desire, and that in answer to his prayer his body had been withered.’<sup>226</sup>

Byzantine eunuchs were also created after reaching puberty. As noted earlier though, these did not share the supposedly asexual characteristics of the pre-pubertal eunuchs. Rouselle, in particular, states about postpubertal castrates that they still retained certain signs of virility as ‘other male hormones (were) produced...by the suprarenal glands’.<sup>227</sup> As a result, they could ‘feel desire’, and ‘achieve erection and ejaculation of seminal fluid from the prostate and the seminal vesicles’.<sup>228</sup> This is the reason that the fourth century martyr Basil of Ancyra characteristically advised virgins to avoid those eunuchs who had been castrated after puberty. His aetiology was that those ‘burn with greater and less restrained desire for sexual union and ... not only do they feel this ardour, but they think they can defile any woman they meet without risk.’<sup>229</sup> However, given the differences between pre-pubertal and post-pubertal eunuchs, Tougher states that ‘it does seem most likely that the former category (was) more prevalent, and the sources do tend to suggest that most eunuchs were created young.’<sup>230</sup> Another

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<sup>226</sup> J.D. Bury. In Tougher, 1997: 176.

<sup>227</sup> A. Rouselle, trans. F. Pheasant. 1988. *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*. Oxford and New York: Blackwell; 122-3. The suprarenal or adrenal gland, divided into cortex (90%) and medulla, ‘is... not a single endocrine gland since it secretes different steroids with widely different activities and functions...In the adult, it can be divided ... into three layers (the glomerulosa, fasciculata and reticularis.). Each layer has a distinct histological appearance and secretes different steroid hormones (aldosterone, cortisol and androgens respectively).’ Stephen Nussey, Saffron A. Whitehead. 2001. *Endocrinology: an integrated approach*. Oxford: BIOS Scientific Publishers Ltd; 122.

<sup>228</sup> Rouselle: 122-3.

<sup>229</sup> Basil of Ancyra. In Rouselle: 122-3.

<sup>230</sup> Tougher, 1997: 177.

fundamental issue, which is frequently overlooked, is that of origin. Even established scholars such as Ringrose 'have not fully explored this avenue' and purely documented that 'by the eleventh century, it is apparent that castrations were regularly performed within the Byzantine Empire and that youths who were castrated were often drawn from free-born families within the empire.'<sup>231</sup> This is in contrast to previous assumptions stating that 'Byzantine eunuchs were of non-Roman origin and of servile status'.<sup>232</sup> Nowadays, there is adequate proof of members of prominent Byzantine families who became eunuchs. Perhaps the most well-known example is that of Basil Lekapenos, the illegitimate son of Romanos I Lekapenos (920-44). He was castrated as a child 'in order to prevent him from ever becoming emperor.'<sup>233</sup> However, as stated by Ringrose, with 'John (Tsimiskes') death, Basil Lekapenos became a kind of regent for the young princes.'<sup>234</sup> Thus, even though he was a eunuch, Basil Lekapenos effectively ruled the empire until around 985.'<sup>235</sup> This is another example demonstrating that gender issues in Byzantium were far more complex than initially perceived.

### ***In Defence of Eunuchs – Theophylactos of Ochrid***

There are two Byzantine documents discussing eunuchs as their subject. The first one was Claudian's *In Eutropium* (399 CE), clearly anti-eunuch in

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<sup>231</sup> Ringrose. In Tougher: 177.

<sup>232</sup> Hopkins, 1978: 172. In James, ed.: 177.

<sup>233</sup> Tougher: 179.

<sup>234</sup> These were the 'born in the purple' princes, Basil II and Constantine VIII.

<sup>235</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 130.

stance, whereas the second one, *In Defence of Eunuchs* (12<sup>th</sup> c.), written by Theophylactos of Ochrid, was pro-eunuch in attitude. Most significantly, the latter was composed following his brother's, Demetrios, request. As explained in writer's words and iambic style in Preface:

My brother is the reason why I write this essay,  
because he is a eunuch, and a model of the well-ordered life.  
But, feeling disgusted regarding the things said about eunuchs,  
which some say unjustly,  
he seeks suitable consolation.<sup>236</sup>

The *Defence*, constructed as an overheard public argument between a monk and a eunuch, takes place in Thessalonica and is presented as a letter to a 'benevolent advocate of eunuchism.'<sup>237</sup> The monk opens the 'dialogue' with his anti-eunuch stance. Was this a coincidence or confirming a eunuch opposition within monasterial circles? After all, among the first significant post-Latin Empire documents, such as by Athanassios the Athonite, there were those preventing any further acceptance of eunuchs in monasteries.<sup>238</sup> This ban, applied to both 'eunuchs and beardless youths', can also be found

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<sup>236</sup> Paul Gautier. 1980. *Theophylacte d'Achrida: Discours, Traités, Poésies, Introduction, Texte, Traduction et Notes*. Thessalonike: Association de Recherches Byzantines. In *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*. Vol. 16:1. Thessalonica & Theophylactos of Ohrid. *Theophylactus Bulgariae Archiepiscopus*. P.G. 123-6. In Kathryn M. Ringrose. 2003. *The Perfect Servant*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press; 201.

<sup>237</sup> The place is not specified.

<sup>238</sup> John Philip Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero, ed. 2001. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents - A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*. Vol. 1. Harvard (Washington D.C.): Harvard University Press (Dumbarton Oaks Studies); 233.

in *Tzimiskes* [16], which was created to counteract the many disturbances brought by Athanassios' document.<sup>239</sup>

After reaching almost the end of his argument, the monk appears neither to interact nor to utter a single word until almost the last part of the document.<sup>240</sup> Thus, the eunuch is allowed to express the whole of his argument, consisting of sixteen different sub-topics, without interruption. This would have been credible if presented as Defence in a Court case. Given that the place was public and that Theophylactos was supposedly able to overhear the argument in so many details though, there is a noticeable lack of argument by those standing or passing by. This, irrespective of strong points made within the text, immediately deprives the *Defence* of credibility. The writer, nonetheless, seemed to be aware of his shortfalls. As acknowledged at the end of his text, he was 'neither Simonides nor Hippias'.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup>Tzimiskes [16]: 'We must strictly enjoin that boys, beardless youths, and eunuchs who journey to the Mountain to be tonsured should not be received at all. But in case it cannot be avoided, and the situation becomes urgent, we order that nothing should be done, and nobody should be admitted or tonsured unless the *protos* and all the superiors of the Mountain have investigated the case and freely consent. But if one of the superiors or *kelliotai* out of contempt for these stipulations should introduce into his field or cell a eunuch or a child, and after being denounced for this once and then twice, and should give no evidence of changing his ways, then we consider it best simply to drive him away from the Mountain.' (John *Tzimiskes*. 971-2. *Typikon* (also known as '*Tragos*'). *Manuscript*: Original charter preserved in the archives of the Protaton monastery (Karyes). In John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero with the assistance of Giles Constable, 2000: 238). Ringrose, however, also mentions that 'at the same time ... regulations for monasteries for women recommended the use of eunuch priests, stewards, spiritual directors, and doctors when the nuns required such services.' Ringrose, 2003: 111.

<sup>240</sup> He appeared to be dissuaded from elaborating further.

<sup>241</sup> The writer here means either Simonides of Amorgos, an iambic poet of the middle of the 7th century BCE or Simonides of Ceos (c. 556-469), a lyric poet. Hippias of Elis (Ἰππίας) was a Greek Sophist of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (460-399 BCE) and, as such, a contemporary of Socrates.

The *quasi*-letter starts with the argument of the first dialogue-participant, the monk, reproaching the other one, the eunuch, 'for having permitted his nephew to be castrated and for having thus opposed the Creator, by believing that it was better to fashion the human being in this way, and for having violated divine and human laws.'<sup>242</sup> The monk's 'arsenal' focused initially on the Law of Moses, a powerful Church resource 'against the crushed and the cut eunuchs' as well as texts from the Apostolic and Patristic canon laws. The final source was one of Justinian's civil laws contained in *Digest*.<sup>243</sup> Based on this, the monk believed that the eunuch 'had corrupted the nature of the child by predisposing him to easily forgo the passions'.<sup>244</sup> Among the many eunuch sins used as examples, the monk mentioned the 'cupidity and the avarice ... the miserliness and even absolute egotism ... ambition, jealousy, love of squabbling, treacherousness, spitefulness, oversensitiveness, testiness'.<sup>245</sup> To these he soon added the championing 'of good food and heavy drinking', indecent and improper deportment, and obscene language. Most importantly, he mentioned the rumour 'that the majority of them practice abominable homosexuality'.<sup>246</sup> Among the various groups, the monk paid a lot of negative attention to the 'group of eunuchs, which the theatre casts the spotlight on ... these crooners and warblers who ... introduced into the church licentious songs that reek of

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<sup>242</sup> *Defence of Eunuchs*: 291, II. 24 – 295, I.1-2.

Translation: <http://www.well.com/user/aquarius/theophylactus.htm> (Accessed: 12. 10. 08).

<sup>243</sup> *Digest* XL 2.14 § 1.

<sup>244</sup> *Defence of Eunuchs*: 293, I. 7-9.

<sup>245</sup> *Defence*: 293, I. 9-13.

<sup>246</sup> *Defence*: 295, II.14

luxury.<sup>247</sup> Following that, the monk completes his argument and almost disappears until the conclusion of the other side of the argument.

The eunuch's stance is initially presented in a very soft-mannered way: 'It seems to me that you are making reference to eunuchs (*εκτομίας*, cut men; a term applied to full-castrates) who live among the Persians and Arabs or elsewhere, so that ... we are unable ...to look back at you and deny the charge, as if we didn't have amongst us the Archbishop of Thessalonica, the Bishop of Pydna, the Bishop of Petra, the Bishop of Edessa in Bulgaria, and many others in different occupations and social classes.'<sup>248</sup> Apart from any obvious connotations, the extract has a strong subliminal purpose. First, the different castration methods are established here; the Byzantine eunuchs are not fully-castrated. Therefore, they feel dissimilar and, perhaps, superior to those who are. The examples of well-known public figures, such as Narses and Basil Lekapenos, are there to support or even confirm this.

The eunuch's first argument deals with monk's accusation that castration is against the Law of Moses. The eunuch discredits the monk's position by applying his very 'weapons': 'If I ...am at variance with the Creator', said the eunuch, 'why isn't he also at variance who has elected to remain celibate ...? Marriage includes the procreation which results from it.'<sup>249</sup> However, wedlock is mentioned here alongside sexual function. So if 'one does not wish to use the sexual organs for the purpose for which they had been made, he would oppose the Creator's plan and argue against the art

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<sup>247</sup> *Defence*: 295, I. 7-9.

<sup>248</sup> *Defence*: 297, I. 1-6.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

of Wisdom ... but you consider the begetting of children to be superfluous.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, the monk is shown to be nothing but a eunuch in substance because of having changed the nature of his genitals: 'even though the natural task of the testicles is to produce sperm for the sake of producing offspring, say that you bewail the sowing of sperm because of your desire for fair virginity.'<sup>251</sup> Consequently, his criticising of eunuchs appears to be rather hypocritical since he had 'chosen (himself) a life beyond nature'.<sup>252</sup>

The next section discusses the true meaning of the Law of Moses and, particularly, the verse 'He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.'<sup>253</sup> This is the extract which is, even in our times, evoked in order to condemn modern surgical eunuchs such as transpeople under a similar rationale to that of the monk. In *Defence*, the eunuch mentions that this passage is used symbolically and not literally thus meaning those unable to sow the 'seeds of the Logos' in 'Celestial Jerusalem'. Otherwise,

God would not have accorded to the eunuch of which Isaiah speaks all the honour that you are aware of, if he reviles him in Moses. What, in

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<sup>250</sup> *Def*: 297, II. 15-9.

<sup>251</sup> *Def*: 299, I. 3-7.

<sup>252</sup> *Defence*: 299, I. 13-5

<sup>253</sup> 'Ουκ εισελεύσεται θλαδίας και αποκεκομμένος εις εκκλησίαν Κυρίου' (Deuteronomy, 23:1) [Septuagint] <http://sepd.biblos.com/deuteronomy/23.htm> (Accessed: 14.02.09). The above English translation, which is the most-commonly used, is far from being precise. This is because *θλαδίας* is a far wider term and, therefore, not being translated fairly as 'he that is wounded in the stones', which demonstrates a very specific method.

your opinion, was Daniel? What were the three children? What was Nehemiah? And before them, what was Ebedmelech?<sup>254</sup>

Subsequently, the canons of the apostles and the fathers of the Church are discussed in the eunuch's words, which appear ahead of his times. Even though 'I honour and venerate them and consider them truly as living laws ... I do not consent to be their prisoner.'<sup>255</sup> After that, significantly, he addresses issues discussed in this thesis' Balance of Blame. Also, since Byzantine eunuchs responsible for 'this mutilation, [the monk should] attenuate the force of [his] attacks against [them].'<sup>256</sup> However, the parents, 'who are impassioned by chastity and purity' and 'collaborated with [the boy's] desire to be a eunuch so as to prevent all danger', are not condemned either.<sup>257</sup>

The next part justifies the Church Fathers' opposition to eunuchism, first based on doctrines 'of the accursed Simon' and second 'because of the after-effects of Manes and Marcion'.<sup>258</sup> However, the eunuch's answer is that focusing on the spirit rather than the letter of the Law would commit

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<sup>254</sup> Def: 301, I. 6-9.

<sup>255</sup> Def: 301, II. 20-1 & 303, I. 1.

<sup>256</sup> Def: 303, I. 6-8. This is another indication of Byzantine eunuchs' prepubertal castration.

<sup>257</sup> Def: 303, I. 6-8.

<sup>258</sup> Def: 303, II. 28 & 305, I. 1-2. The so-called heretics' 'doctrine seemed to be based on the removal of testicles' and the claim that '[marriage] was evil because it was an institution of the Evil One.' Simon Magus or Simon of Gitta was a Samaritan Gnostic in the first century CE. He is mentioned in Acts of the Apostles, 8: 9-24. The second extract corresponds to the Persian Manes or Mani (circa 215-75 CE), a quasi-Gnostic prophet and founder of the Manicheans, whose doctrine was influenced by both Persian Magi and Buddhism. He won a huge following before been prosecuted and crucified. Augustine of Hippo had been an auditor of the sect for nine years before converting to Christianity. Marcion was a dualist and, possibly, an early Gnostic (born c. 84 CE). He is now considered as a predecessor of Manichaeism. Among his claims was that 'marriage was a filthiness and an obscenity'. (Joseph Betty, ed. 1722. *Tertullian's Prescription against Heretics*. Oxford; 30-44. In Paul Johnson. 1988. *A History of Christianity*. London: Penguin; 47 & Benjamin Walker. 1983. *Gnosticism: Its History and Influence*. Wellingborough: Crucible; 126).

'nothing reprehensible'.<sup>259</sup> On the contrary, according to the following extract which expresses older *quasi-monastic* ideas, 'the practice of eunuchism ...contributes greatly and profoundly to sanctification.'<sup>260</sup> Also, when referring to the emperors, he finds it justified for them to have closed their eyes to this practice. After all, 'it was in their interest for this type of man to be multiplied, always well-disposed toward his master according to the etymological sense of the term.'<sup>261</sup> At this stage, the *Defence* becomes increasingly a polemic, especially against the Justinian legislation due to its impact to the lives of twelfth century eunuchs. The attacks against Justinian are almost personal and typical for his era's attitudes. As implied, the emperor was truly incapable and even emasculated in another sense:

I absolutely laugh at the law of this brave emperor, who was unable to advise Theodora not to promote the eunuchs and not to honour them with the highest dignities. Moreover, he could not have succeeded in this advice, since the empress treated this man no better than a slave, and he was not even concerned to avoid making Narses so blessed.'<sup>262</sup>

Following that, the eunuch addresses the late emperor and questions the mortality rates mentioned in his *Novellae*.<sup>263</sup>

If castration is altogether lethal, whence do the eunuchs come who fill up your palace, and the head of the army, Narses, who extended the

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<sup>259</sup> *Def*: 305, I. 5-9.

<sup>260</sup> *Def*: 309, I. 4-5.

<sup>261</sup> That is 'well minded' rather than the former meaning of the word, which was 'a guardian of the bed'. Ringrose, 2003: 198.

<sup>262</sup> *Def*: 309, II. 21- 4 & 311, I. 1. His sarcasm is aimed here at the empress' strong – to some manipulative – persona and her influence on Justinian. Narses was one of the most powerful eunuch figures; an army general with a political stand, in Byzantium.

<sup>263</sup> The rate, according to these 'new laws' in Justinian legislation, was almost 96%.

frontiers of the Roman Empire?’<sup>264</sup> The emperor was accused of utter hypocrisy. The solution, according to the eunuch, would have been for him to choose to ‘either abolish castration and never employ eunuchs, or give them the highest responsibilities and favour castration because it [was] very advantageous.’<sup>265</sup>

Regarding the older legislation, the eunuch discovers ‘a mundane and altogether vulgar motivation’ behind it: ‘they reflect only the inspirations of the princes of this world.’<sup>266</sup> The reasons for those princes prohibiting castration had to do, according to the speaker, with ‘populating the empire, maintaining a military force, recruiting a crowd of soldiers and attracting bloodthirsty men who will set up camp outside the laws of Christ...’ Following that, there is a rather obscure reference to the Photian Synod and ‘the hatred of the great and very holy pontiff of God, Ignatius, and of his partisans.’<sup>267</sup> This appears to be purposely concealed since the character wished that it would be relegated to the land of oblivion like a pale leper and a shame unworthy of the beautiful wife [church] of the charming Husband [Christ]. However, the immediate association between Photius’ anti-eunuch

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<sup>264</sup> Def: 311, I. 9-11.

<sup>265</sup> Def: 311, I. 13-21.

<sup>266</sup> Def: 313, I. 7-8.

<sup>267</sup> Def: 315, II. 24-7 & 317, I. 1-2. The first period of events surrounding the high-profile dispute between Photius and the eunuch Ignatius are described in the following extract: ‘Monastic pressure on Methodius [the patriarch 843-7] to purge all bishops compromised under second iconoclasm was given new life by his rigorist successor, the monk Ignatius (847-58; 867-77), a castrated son of Emperor Michael I. ...Ignatius deposed one of Methodius’ close associates, Gregory Asbestas, archbishop of Syracuse, who appealed to Rome. ... Ignatius himself was swept away by a political crisis and replaced by the head of the imperial chancery, the great lay intellectual Photius, who was consecrated by none other than Gregory Asbestas. In spring 859, the deposed Ignatius’ supporters met in Constantinople and claimed to depose Photius; Photius retorted with a Synod that attacked Ignatius.’ Rosamond McKitterick, ed. 1995. *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. Vol. II – c. 700-c. 900. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 370.

legislation and Ignatius' eunuch status could not be overlooked. The language of the *Defence*, which has, at this stage, become sharp and sarcastic, thus making it more of a polemic, continues into the next section. Since, according to the monk's claims, 'the existence of many passions among the eunuchs [is derived] from the fact that they have been reduced to the state of a woman, [the eunuch hesitates] to reply on this point because it does not merit refutation.'<sup>268</sup> Instead, he refocuses on the assumption that eunuchs tend to be accused of every possible vice. Nonetheless, their actual vices are minimal when compared to 'the rapes of virgins, the adulteries and other abominations' committed by average males. They though, instead of being ashamed, 'even count them up as victories.'<sup>269</sup> Referring to the eunuchs of the palace, the monk is subsequently accused of preferential ignorance of their many good deeds. A similar attitude is inferred regarding the eunuchs of the church. However, here the eunuch also acknowledges that there are '... many eunuchs [who] are weak ... even ... libertines and altogether debauchers'.<sup>270</sup>

The small part dedicated to the eunuch cantors demonstrates more musical knowledge than, perhaps, initially expected. The character speaks about counterpoint, harmony and skilful composition. He also infers that austerity does not preclude the introduction of the latter. The example of the austere John Chrysostom – and Brison – confronting the Arians by the use of melodically attractive hymns is used to demonstrate this:

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<sup>268</sup> *Def*: 317, II. 7-9.

<sup>269</sup> *Def*: 317, II. 26-8.

<sup>270</sup> *Def*: 321, II. 22-8.

Moreover, all the ancient songs in use in the Church, what pleasure do they not exceed, especially when they are sung with harmony and skill. Either erase it, or introduce it into the holy books: The scene was decorated with an Egyptian richness that belonged to the demons of God. Nonetheless, if we concede that it must be banned from the church, it is not the inventions of eunuchs that we are banning, but ... of people of your tribe, who have transmitted them to them in order to adorn them with harmony.<sup>271</sup>

The next part demonstrates the possible true reasons behind the previous accusation: 'Indeed ... we do not say that the eunuchs of today are evil because of those who once supported the Arians.' Subsequently, the names of 'holy eunuchs' at 'the cohorts of the Lord Jesus' are mentioned as well as that of Symeon from Athens 'who ... according to a strict observance on Mount Athos ... has founded there a community of eunuch monks.'<sup>272</sup>

The eunuch, able to provide us with several more examples is finally stopped by the monk who exclaims: 'that is sufficient for now ... do not persuade me too to become a eunuch in time.' However it is the eunuch who states the final words: 'For in the eyes of an impartial judge, those who attack eunuchs right away seem to do it either recklessly and inconsiderately, or by sensuality and envy.' The work ends with the amicable separation of the interlocutors and Theophylactos' attempt to

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<sup>271</sup> *Def.* 323, l. 7 – 18.

<sup>272</sup> *Op.cit.* 329, l. 9 through to 331, l. 6.

justify overhearing the conversation yet never finding out their identities:<sup>273</sup>

‘Behold the merchandise that I send to you from Thessalonica, not without trouble, for I am neither Simonides nor Hippias, even if my memory flourishes even in my old age.’

### **The eunuch in *Defence***

As recognised, ‘there are no surviving published sources in which eunuchs actually speak for themselves.’<sup>274</sup> The closest equivalent to an immediate account is included in *Defence* in which the main character is well-mannered and belongs to the upper classes in Byzantine society. This is obvious by the level of education as well as profound knowledge of political and ecclesiastical issues. It is quite probable that some of the qualities depicted in the text were based on Theophylactus’ brother, Demetrios, ‘a eunuch and cleric of Hagia Sophia’, and his immediate circle of friends.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> ‘As for myself, busy thinking of a means to preserve for you the content of their conversation, I did not ask them who they were or where they were from - they did not seem in fact to come originally from Thessalonica - and it is true that I did not try to let them know who I was, for fear of being bothered with being invited to participate in their intellectual debate. For they were - as they showed - fastidious: they would not have let me go, but would have seized me like a prey.’ *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 42.

<sup>275</sup> Moran, 2003: 8. Demetrios was also definitely chanting as a part of his priestly duties. A poem composed after his brother’s death was contained in one of Theophylactus’ letters (1107CE) to the bishop of Kitros. This shines light on some of Demetrios’ qualities as well as his variety of roles:

Who will contain the violent attacks of the praktors?  
Who will close the frog-mouths of the *sekretika*?  
Who will be the friend of wise judges?  
Who will be respected by senators for the worth of his character?  
To whom shall I reveal the pain of my suffering  
Now that I no longer have a doctor for my torment?

(Paul Gautier, ed. 1986. *Theophylacte d’Achrída*. II. Lettres. Thessalonique: CFHB; 559. Translated in Mullett, 1997: 246).

Ringrose has even suggested that Demetrios ‘was probably castrated as a child by his family, following the pattern of the recently castrated child evoked’ in *Defence*.<sup>276</sup> However, the limited information existing about Demetrios, perhaps, necessitates some careful level of assumption. Even though, we cannot confirm the amount of Demetrios’ contribution to this treatise, the work, firstly, is significant because it represents the closest to an immediate Byzantine eunuch account. Secondly, among the eunuch arguments there are significant statements revealing the eunuchs’ position as the third gender in Byzantine society. Demetrios’ everyday reality frustrated him so much that he requested his powerful brother, Theophylactos, to give him a voice by writing this ‘letter’ to a friend.<sup>277</sup> Thirdly, some of his integrated arguments sound similar to modern arguments expressed by 21<sup>st</sup> century alternative gendered personae and voices.

### **Theophylactos in *Defence***

The writer ‘was born on the island of Euboea, close to Athens, and pursued his education in Constantinople under Michael Psellus.’<sup>278</sup> After his ordination, he became a deacon at Hagia Sophia, and soon was appointed as

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<sup>276</sup> This is assumed by the writer in Ringrose, 2003: 62. She also accepts the possibility of him being a congenital eunuch or someone who suffered a childhood accident (Ringrose, Notes, 51: 228).

<sup>277</sup> The structure and political views expressed in *Defence* could have created problems for the writer, had it been made widely public.

<sup>278</sup> Hugh Oliphant Old. 1998. *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. Vol.3 - The Medieval Church. Michigan & Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing; 52.

a preacher and master of rhetoric at the theological academy. This was brought to the attention of the emperor Alexius I Comnenos, who made him the tutor of his future son-in-law, Constantine Doukas, the heir presumptive.<sup>279</sup> The above particulars can explain the writer's in-depth knowledge of events not only happening within the great church but also the palace. However, as a result of a very successful speech, at a relatively young age Theophylactus was sent to Bulgaria, where he was appointed Metropolitan or Archbishop of Ochrid. Nonetheless, leaving the cultured and cosmopolitan Constantinople and spending almost twenty-five years of his life in Ochrid was, according to several sources, something initially done against his will.<sup>280</sup> This could explain some bitterness unrelated to the subject hidden within the eunuch's words and aimed at the Byzantine status quo. Theophylactos, the writer, is presented as particularly political for a cleric, even in high position, and also unwilling to observe diplomatic pretences. This can be explained by his sense of ecclesiastical autonomy cultivated by his creation and promotion of an Autocephalic Church at Ochrid.<sup>281</sup> Finally, he appears obviously pro-eunuch in his stance, which

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<sup>279</sup> In this case, a priest is taking a usually accustomed to eunuchs role. For instance, as stated by Zambaco-Pachâ, 'among the Byzantines, the distinguished families used to entrust the education of their sons until the age of fourteen and fifteen to eunuch tutors.' (Zambaco-Pachâ, *Les Eunuques d'aujourd'hui et ceux de jadis*: 82-3). Did Theophylactos have the opportunity to experience other than his brother's perspectives in this capacity?

<sup>280</sup> 'At the end of the eleventh century, while expressing at times the deepest scorn for his Bulgaria flock, he wrote a *Vita* of St. Clement of Ohrid ... in which he heaped the most lavish praise on Cyril and Methodius.' (Dimitri Obolensky. 1994. *Byzantium and the Slavs*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press; 251). Cyril and Methodius were Byzantine missionaries who brought Christianity to the Slavs (2<sup>nd</sup> half of ninth century).

<sup>281</sup> When Khan Boris of Bulgaria became a Christian in 865, the Byzantine emperor Michael III acted as his godfather. 'His son and successor, Symeon (893 – 927), and later the Western Bulgarian Tsar Samuel (976 – 1014) made their respective capitals of Preslav and Ohrid [sic] into important religious centres, where Byzantine liturgy, theology and religious culture were successfully appropriated by Slavs. And since Byzantine canon law

makes his arguments overtly convincing and biased at times.<sup>282</sup> For instance, even though one can easily imagine counter-arguments, the monk is not allowed to express a single one of them.

The points of view stated in *Defence* are advanced yet mostly associated with their era. The most important of them is Theophylaktos' *quasi*-humanistic recognition that 'there are good and bad eunuchs just as there are good and bad men, and the physical fact of castration is not relevant to the quality of an individual's soul.'<sup>283</sup> However, some of the arguments expressed bear a connotation that seems uncannily contemporary. For instance, the Deuteronomy 26.1 verse is used intact by intolerant preachers against transgender individuals. For the above reason, the *Defence* remains a 'modern' document in terms of some of its arguments. If we were to perceive eunuchs under a wider perspective, as suggested earlier, then the document still offers us significant aspects of the one side of the argument for Hybrid Vocal Personae.

### **Endocrinological and other issues (Zambaco-Pachâ research)**

During the beginning of twentieth century, a significant medical researcher studied castration in the same environment more or less and conditions that

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admitted in principle a multiplicity of ecclesiastical centres, Bulgarian tsars created independent patriarchates in their capitals.' John Meyendorff. 1982. *The Byzantine legacy in the Orthodox Church*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press; 26.

<sup>282</sup> There are other documents that demonstrate his impartiality more clearly. For instance, a poem in which he accuses a eunuch for lewdness.

<sup>283</sup> Ringrose, 2003 : 121.

had affected, centuries earlier, the Byzantines cantors.<sup>284</sup> Dr Demetrius A. Zambaco-Pachâ, a Greek in origin but Turkish in identity, was by then receiving international renown, especially in the treatment of leprosy.<sup>285</sup> His work on *The Eunuchs of Today and those of Yester Times*, however, could be perceived as a conscious attempt to exonerate his official country. The reason is that the issue of castration, amongst others, had made 'the great Bismarck' to remark in 1889: 'The presence of Turkey in Europe constitutes an anachronism.'<sup>286</sup> The consequences of this and similar comments were so grave for the establishment that discerning voices, like Bismarck's, needed to be proven wrong and retrieved; when possible, even silenced.<sup>287</sup> The writer is, in fact, steadfast that, 'If the great demolisher of frontiers and falsifier of dispatches was still of this world, this [view] would have been, certainly, retracted.'<sup>288</sup> After all, it is immediately recognisable that '[both] eunuchism and slavery are absolutely irreconcilable' with the Constitution

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<sup>284</sup> Démétrius A. Zambaco-Pachâ. 1911. *Les Eunuques d'aujourd'hui et ceux de jadis*. Paris: Masson et Compagnie, Editeurs (English translation : A.N. Constans).

<sup>285</sup> At that time, his list of honours included: Correspondent of the French Institute (Academy of Sciences), Associate National Member of the Academy of Medicine in Paris and St Petersburg as well as of the Dermatological Societies of Paris and Vienna. Additionally, he was an honorary member of the Medical and Tropical Hygiene Society as well as a Commander of the Legion of Honour.

<sup>286</sup> Zambaco-Pachâ: 3.

<sup>287</sup> Only four years after this book's publication, on 24th April 1915, this sort of attitude created what is now known as the Armenian Genocide. This was the starting event which affected the lives of several minorities in Turkey, including the Greeks (1922). The events still remain unrecognised as genocide by the Turkish government. (Scott Jaschik. 22.10.07. 'Genocide Deniers.' *History News Network*. G. Mason's University. <http://hnn.us/articles/43861.html> (Accessed: 18.02.09). Cf. Alexis Alexandres. 1983. *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*. Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies.]

<sup>288</sup> Zambaco mentions about Bismarck: 'Si le grand démolisseur de frontières et falsificateur de dépêches était encore de ce monde, il se serait, certes, rétracté.' *Ibid*.

and ‘the sublime words of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice.’<sup>289</sup> Subsequently, Zambaco-Pachâ discusses the major reformational acts by Sultan Mahmoud, Abdul Medjid and Midhat Pasha on the matter as well as the less successful attempts by Abdul Hamid. Moreover, the press is credited with supporting the ‘abolition of slavery and the still flourishing institution of the emasculated.’<sup>290</sup> How flourishing was that institution in his days? According to Wilson and Roehrborn, around ‘200 eunuchs were said to have lived in the palace of Topkapi in Istanbul after the royal family had moved to other palaces.’<sup>291</sup> Also, ‘after the Turkish revolution the eunuchs continued to be devoted servants until the royal family was sent into exile in March of 1924.’<sup>292</sup> After accepting that castration was not only active but also flourishing in 1911 though, Zambaco changes his attitude. The following paragraph is the writer’s first attempt to shift the Balance of Blame: ‘On pretext, it is true that slavery and eunuchism have reigned well amongst mostly Christian countries until the middle of eighteenth century and that the eunuchs figured inside the palaces of Byzantine emperors, not to mention the Vatican right inside the Sistine Chapel!’<sup>293</sup> Several examples of slavery in Western countries are named, including France, England, and the United States. Regarding the eunuchs, the writer rhetorically questions if

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<sup>289</sup> Zambaco-Pachâ: 4. Since the book is aimed at an influential French audience, not surprisingly, the repetition of those ‘sublime words’ is frequent.

<sup>290</sup> Zambaco-Pachâ: 6.

<sup>291</sup> Jean D. Wilson & Claus Roehrborn. 1999. ‘Long-Term Consequences of Castration in Men: Lessons from the Skoptzy and the Eunuchs of the Chinese and Ottoman Courts.’ *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. Vol. 84, Issue 12: 4324-31; 4327.

<sup>292</sup> K. Mourad. 1990. *Farewell princess*. London: Muller. In Wilson & Roehrborn: 4327.

<sup>293</sup> Zambaco: 7.

it was not the Christian emperors and the popes that got most use of them.<sup>294</sup>

This revokes both the Byzantine and Baroque Italian attitudes that attempted to represent most eunuchs as not created locally. Concerning castration, it is always 'the others' and never 'us' who commit such atrocities.

Even though the writer recognised that castration still played an active part in the life of Turkish high society, the role of Zambaco's book appears foremostly political, a strong international diplomatic move, and subsequently a voice of change aimed at abolishing barbaric practices. In fact, since this is a work mostly outside the writer's field of expertise in dermatology and leprology, his scientific credibility is compromised at times.<sup>295</sup> Its propagandistic aspect is demonstrated in several parts, for instance, the writer's denying of the established role of eunuchs within Muslim religion.<sup>296</sup> Irrespective of this, however, there are significant medical points made in Zambaco's study. Before discussing them, I would

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<sup>294</sup> *Op. cit.*: 10.

<sup>295</sup> There is, however, an interest in early sexology demonstrated in his 1882 work 'Onanism and Nervous Disorders in Two Little Girls' (D. Zambaco. 1882. 'Onanisme avec troubles nerveux, etc.' *L'Encéphale*. Vol. 2: 260-74). The methods discussed and accepted there were almost equally barbaric to those condemned in the 1911 work. More specifically, he 'reported that neither corporal punishment such as whipping or restraint with straps helped ... (and only) cauterization without anaesthesia (did) ... This was applied to the clitoris, the vulvar orifice repeatedly, and on one occasion to the buttocks as "punishment".' John Studd, Anneliese Schwenkhagen. 2009. 'Review: The historical response to female sexuality.' *Maturitas*. Vol. 63: 107-11; 108..

<sup>296</sup> Zambaco-Pachâ: 18-9. However, a major example of that role had been reported by the Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubayr after paying a visit to Medina in 580 / 1184 [Discrepancy due to different calendars followed by Islamic and Western world]. The religious visitor 'described a group of eunuch guardians in the mosque of the prophet: "On the eastern side [of the tomb] is an arbour made of aloe wood. This is the place where some of the guardians who watch over the blessed mosque spend the night. The guardians are Ethiopian and Slavic eunuchs'. Roland Broadhurst, trans. and ed. 1952. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr: being the chronicle of a mediaeval Spanish Moor concerning his journey to the Egypt of Saladin, the holy cities of Arabia, Baghdad the city of the Caliphs, the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Norman kingdom of Sicily*. London: Cape. In Shaun Marmon, Elisabeth Shaun. 1995. *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society*. Oxford University Press USA; 33.

like to mention two important details. The first of them dealt with different castrational methods applicable to veterinary and human practice. The human procedure, though not typical in other countries, appeared in the writer's days to be far more outdated than the veterinarian practice. Zambaco states that in 'veterinary art, the testicular excision is the most dangerous practice, the one that gives the highest mortality (rates) due to haemorrhages. And yet, this is the one employed to humans by barbarous emasculators.'<sup>297</sup> The excision, as seen in early works dealing with Byzantine and Baroque castrates, was not viewed as necessary.<sup>298</sup> Does this demonstrate ignorance, an intention to create the gravest possible impressions or a change in practice? Immediately, the writer discusses the complications from the operation in animals before questioning: 'What could we say about the poor little slaves mutilated by less than Christian reverends, without the least precaution, and even less care than the one applied to animals, either before or after the mutilation, in order to combat complications resulting to hecatombs?'<sup>299</sup> Once again, castration is not mentioned as performed in the Muslim world and the Balance of Blame is shifted.

Zambaco discusses the role of eunuchs as *hanim* or ladies' home helpers in Muslim high society. It was in this capacity and in his role as a dermatologist/ leprologist that he came to observe and study on a big scale

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<sup>297</sup> Zambaco: 80.

<sup>298</sup> For instance, Paulus Aegineta as well as Ancillon.

<sup>299</sup> Zambaco: 80. The writer names here the 'horrendous complications', which, still in his days, happened in spite of 'precautions imposed by scientific progress (gangrene, peritonitis, tetanus, haemorrhages, and infections).'

but with meticulous care ‘numerous eunuchs within an aristocratic clientele ... under most contexts’.<sup>300</sup> This, as stated, happened ‘where appropriate, and with great difficulties.’<sup>301</sup> These difficulties arose because ‘eunuchs oppose their exhibition even more than the most prude virgins. Showing their mutilation is a humiliation they avoid; even to a doctor.’<sup>302</sup> The role of eunuchs is to accompany rich ladies when going out. Most importantly, they are there to watch over those women and members of great families closely.<sup>303</sup> The eunuchs, generally seen as a big group, were recognised to exhibit individual physiognomic characteristics, depending on the place of their origin. According to that, they were mainly distinguished into African and Oriental, including the Constantinopolitan subcategory.

Based on the above, their characters and tastes appeared to the writer as greatly similar. For instance, ‘in Constantinople, the palace eunuchs maintain a happy life, principally as harem favourites. They love horses, jewels, cockfights; these are important to them.’<sup>304</sup> The Constantinople ‘group’, also, were perceived to behave in a similar way when growing older: ‘They get immersed into bigotry and pass their time reading religious books, and praying, thus preparing for their future lives an indemnity for those deprivations they suffered whilst down here.’<sup>305</sup> An interesting aspect of their earthly lives is that, contrary to Christian eunuchs, ‘they can marry with women that they buy, as slaves, even white ones, and that complies

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<sup>300</sup> Zambaco: 84.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> Zambaco: 85.

<sup>304</sup> Zambaco: 87.

<sup>305</sup> Zambaco: 88.

with the law and the Muslim religious rite.<sup>306</sup> The example of Soughour Agha and ‘his beautiful legitimate wife’ is mentioned here.<sup>307</sup> Subsequently though, according to Zambaco, ‘something exorbitant’ was noted: the harem slaves tended to become ‘frenetically infatuated’ with their co-server eunuchs.<sup>308</sup> That was the reason that *spadones*, which means eunuchs that have had their penis preserved, became obsolete as guardians of women after the fifteenth century in Constantinople.<sup>309</sup>

### ***Spadones* and Complete Eunuchs**

According to Paul of Aegina, *spadones* were fashioned in Byzantium with a quite elaborate method. This is simplistically described here as produced ‘by pulling out the seminal glands after having sliced the scrotum’.<sup>310</sup> Zambaco, however, recognises alongside the above method, another one. According to that, castration was ‘produced by a single blow of the razor severing both scrotum and testicles.’<sup>311</sup> I have not been able to confirm if this change of practice, reported in 1911, is associated with Ottoman Empire practices. The only certainty, based on contemporary documents by Aegineta and Ancillon, is that this method was neither preferred in Byzantium nor Baroque Italy. Following the description, the writer also discussed sexual

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<sup>306</sup> Zambaco: 90.

<sup>307</sup> Zambaco: 91.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* Zambaco’s remarks demonstrate his attitude towards castrates: ‘lorsqu’ on manque de grives, on mange des merles’ (on English terms, ‘it’s better to have half a loaf than no bread’).

<sup>309</sup> Zambaco: 91. The Ottomans sacked Constantinople and Byzantine times ended in 1453.

<sup>310</sup> Zambaco: 96.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

potency for *spadones*. He recognised, for instance, that, 'on occasion, the phallus remained active and thus attempts of sexual connection could lead to mutual yet sterile satisfaction.' There are even cases with noted ejaculation, which is, however, 'constituted of prostatic liquid combined with the secretion of other accessorial for the generation glands.'<sup>312</sup> The writer, who seemed to have examined his patients' orgasm, described the latter as completing with a 'quasi-voluptuous expulsion which [produced] a genuine form of consolation.'<sup>313</sup> As also stated, subsequently, 'the partner did not appear to be deprived of any of the physiological act's inherent sensations.'<sup>314</sup> Thus, Zambaco justified why both Romans and Byzantines, particularly empresses, were served by *spadones* as well as them becoming so powerful in Byzantium.

The other category of eunuchs discussed is of the complete ones. Those castrates, the sole ones employed at harems, were definitely produced with the one stroke method. This was performed, again according to the writer, by non-Muslims and specifically by Christian 'men of God' and 'reverend fathers' inside the Coptic monasteries of Gisgeh, Assiout and 'above all the monastery of Deir-el-Abiad situated close to Solog in high Egypt.'<sup>315</sup> The method that 'made those monasteries rich' was described as such:

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<sup>312</sup> Zambaco: 97 - The suprarenal glands.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> *Op.cit.*: 99. Similar information is provided by Paolo Mantegazza, V. Robinson ed., trans. S. Putnam. 1935. *The sexual relations of mankind* ('*Gli amori degli uomini*'). New York: Eugenics Publishing Co; 105.

After attaching their victims on a table horizontally by the arms, legs and torso, with medium straps, and tying the penis and scrotum in a knot, they had it all cut off by a finely sharpened instrument! In order to prevent the retraction of spermatic chords into the abdomen and the intra-abdominal haemorrhage, almost always fatal, the less than good (men) used to apply an attractive massive ligature, on the spine. After that, they used to pour boiling coal-tar pitch over the wound or they cauterised it with a heated in the fire iron bar!<sup>316</sup>

Not surprisingly, the mortality rate of complete eunuchs was extremely high. Specifically, ‘according to Godard, nine out of ten (used to) succumb shortly after the mutilation’.<sup>317</sup> Those surviving used to suffer from chronic medical issues like incontinence and cystitis. In order to prevent them, ‘the operators in cloth used to leave a small end of the penis at times.’<sup>318</sup> This, however, made those eunuchs ‘depreciated’. Following that, the writer briefly recognised that there were Arabs slaves who themselves used to practice castration. However, those acts were again blamed on others since they were happening under the influence of either France or England in Red Sea areas.<sup>319</sup> Those named places, where castration was still practiced in 1911, were stated as Darfur, Kordofan and Omok.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> *Zambaco*: 99-100.

<sup>317</sup> *Op.cit*: 101. This is in accordance with Justinian’s claims in *Novellae*.

<sup>318</sup> *Op.cit*: 102.

<sup>319</sup> *Op.cit*: 103.

<sup>320</sup> *Op.cit*: 104. The first two places are parts of modern Sudan and the third one of Siberia.

## Physical Condition of Eunuchs

Zambaco is well-informed in all his contemporary field research.<sup>321</sup> In this work he discussed issues of prepubertal body modification in castrates, especially in terms of thoracic over-development and acromegalia. Previous eras' research was also backed by radiographical evidence. The latter demonstrated that in all eunuchoid cases there is a 'persistence of cartilage conjugation.'<sup>322</sup> Additionally, 'there is a delay in ossification of the juxta-epiphyseal cartilages through prolongation of the osteogenesis.'<sup>323</sup> Following that, important, truly pioneering, examples dealing with the effects of natural variations were discussed. These findings have been able to establish the connection between natural and man-made castrational characteristics and thus be applicable to all cases. The above will also prove relevant to work I will be discussing in more detail on chapter III. The first scientific discovery, published by Launois and Roy in January 1903, was the disproportionate elongation of inferior members observed in the human body of a twenty-seven year old anorchid.<sup>324</sup> Also, at the end of the same year, Richon and Jean de Lize announced their study based on a recent

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<sup>321</sup> He mentions the contributions of E. Godard [1867. *Observations Médicales et Scientifiques, Egypte et Palestine*] and L. Lortet [1896. *Archive D'Anthropologie Criminelle*. Lyon Medecale. Vol. 81] in the study of prepubertals as well as E. Teinturier [1877. *Les Skoptzy*. Paris: Publications du Progress Medical]. In addition, Zambaco mentions the works of Woods, Hutchinson, Budet / Janso as well as Launois / Roy [1904. *Etudes Biologiques sur les Géants*. Paris] in reference to eunuchoidal infantile giants. Cf. the case of Bernard Coyne, 8' 4''; still alive in 1911.

<sup>322</sup> Zambaco: 106.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.* The term anorchid signifies a male naturally born without testicles.

observation of a fifty-five year old 'natural castrato'.<sup>325</sup> They noted two main issues: 'absolutely rudimentary genitals' and 'elongation of inferior body members'.<sup>326</sup> However, their truly significant observation was that in this case the tibia was equally in proportion elongated to the femur.<sup>327</sup> This happened because the usually superior member, the femur, was less developed than expected. Similar results to castration were noted as associated with thyroidectomy. Dr Widal demonstrated a case in 1904, under the strange section title, *Eunuchoid and Feminism*: 'a 42-year-old man measuring 1 metre and 82 centimetres, who presented all the attributes of feminism [sic]: beardless face, reedy voice, developed hips and breasts.'<sup>328</sup> The body was characterised by gigantism and the genitals by atrophy, all due to typhoid fever. Again the radiography proved the epiphyseal cartilages to be fused. Most significantly, there was no acromegaly. This is, perhaps, the first noted case where eunuchoid gigantism did not coincide with acromegaly. In fact, after a few more similar cases, it became obvious that 'testicular ablation [and] atrophy [were] not the only causes of limb elongation.'<sup>329</sup> Following the discussion of a few additional eunuchoid characteristics, such as adiposity, the writer

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<sup>325</sup> Today we would be using the term intersex instead.

<sup>326</sup> Zambaco: 107.

<sup>327</sup> 'The tibia is situated at the medial side of the leg, and, excepting the femur, is the longest bone of the skeleton... In the male, its direction is vertical and parallel with the bone of the opposite side; but in the female it has a slightly oblique direction downward and lateralward, to compensate for the greater obliquity of the femur.' Henry Gray. 1918 / 2000. *Anatomy of the Human Body*. Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, par. 1 - [www.bartleby.com/107/](http://www.bartleby.com/107/) (Accessed: 23/02/09).

<sup>328</sup> Zambaco: 108. Feminism is a term associated with women's rights even before the French revolution in 1789. Here, however, is presented as meaning femininity or effeminacy.

<sup>329</sup> Zambaco: 108-9.

focused on vocal characteristics. As stated, 'castration before puberty preserves a childlike, feminine, voice, such as the one encountered in all Oriental eunuchs.'<sup>330</sup> Apart from the obvious confusion between the concepts of infantile and feminine, there is also the claim that all eunuchs from the Orient were prepubertal. However, this is not in accordance with evidence showing harem eunuchs exhibiting fully grown beards at the palace of Topkapi or Janus Museum.<sup>331</sup> This was, perhaps, the reason behind the physicians to the harem inspecting not only 'the eunuchs on arrival to be certain that both penis and testes had been removed' but also re-examining them 'every few years to be certain that nothing was amiss.'<sup>332</sup> Subsequently, after discussing the non-prominent or absent Adam's apple, the underdeveloped larynx and the rudimentary thyroid body, Zambaco concluded that the 'subject possessed a soprano voice, sweet and pleasant, but discordant at times.'<sup>333</sup> The majority of the cases studied by Zambaco exhibited these vocal characteristics, which, according to the writer, were most annoying 'during a conversation.'<sup>334</sup>

Regarding the eunuchs' moral state, the writer stated that castration not only produced 'remarkable changes in the individual's psychosis' but

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<sup>330</sup> Zambaco: 110.

<sup>331</sup> The Palace of Topkapi is situated in modern Istanbul, Turkey, whereas the Janus Museum is in Maryland, USA (Cf. Appendix 1.4).

<sup>332</sup> N. M Penzer. 1936. *The harem: an account of the institution as it existed in the palace of the Turkish sultans with a history of the Grand Seraglio from its foundation to the present time*. London: Harrap; 125-51. In Jean D. Wilson and Claus Roehrborn. 1999. 'Long-Term Consequences of Castration in Men: Lessons from the Skoptzy and the Eunuchs of the Chinese and Ottoman Courts.' *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. Vol. 84, Issue 12: 4324-31; 4327.

<sup>333</sup> Zambaco: 110.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

also differences in character and intellectual faculties.<sup>335</sup> The latter was specifically portrayed as ‘an intellectual decline which could not escape observation.’<sup>336</sup> However, if that was accurate, numerous talents would have never been presented to either Byzantine or Baroque audiences; some of them in capacities requiring high intellect, such as elaborate interpretation, composition or diplomacy. On the contrary, eunuchs, according to Zambaco, lacked energy and were ‘indolent, aboulic, servile, coward, embittered, cruel, deprived of affection, and egoists.’<sup>337</sup> The Byzantine ones are presented as being even worse: ‘cruel, scheming, ambitious, debauched, criminals up to the level of monstrosity.’<sup>338</sup> Both paragraphs, apart from being overtly generalised, sound uncannily similar to accusations brought by the monk character in the *Defence of Eunuchs*. The two works, separated by viewpoint and an eight centuries’ interval but characterised by almost identical human and physical geography, demonstrate ongoing negative attitudes towards castrates. The Zambaco-Pachâ monograph remains stereotypical, irrespective of its several scientific attributes and the attempt to present the whole body of eunuch studies up to 1911.<sup>339</sup> Among this work’s qualities, however, one could not include

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<sup>335</sup> Zambaco: 111.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> Zambaco: 230. This is mostly due to their supposed intimate relations with Byzantine empresses; something that Zambaco considers as deplorable. ‘Voilà quels ont été les rôles que les eunuques ont joués dans ce malheureux bas empire tombé si bas!’ *Op.cit.*: 235.

<sup>339</sup> In terms of non-medicinal information though, for instance about the Italian castrati, the writer is less careful and thus some inaccuracies have been noted. Also there is a vehement demonstration of hatred towards Byzantine eunuchs, which could only be attributable to his Turkish upbringing; especially because of his Greek origin (*Cf.* Alexis Alexandres, 1983. *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*. Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies). The particular deprives this part of his work of most credibility.

impartiality and humane consideration towards those patients. Even though Zambaco demonstrated overwhelming empathy towards young slaves about to be castrated, this did not continue with them reaching the state of adulthood. Eunuchs, throughout his work – and irrespective of his lengthy converse with them – always remained medically interesting yet personally and politically embarrassing cases to him.

## Conclusion

As noted, the Byzantine state ‘could not have functioned without its eunuchs.’<sup>340</sup> Among their various roles we would include those of trusted ‘councillors and guards of emperors and empresses’, priests of all ranks and even army generals.<sup>341</sup> Even more applicable to this thesis, however, there are innovative and influential cantors. Their post-1204 withdrawal from the Byzantine Chant made the genre variant and inferior to some. However, the above statements would not imply that there are not equally valid voices questioning the reasons behind this significance. Alexander Kazhdan, for instance, known for his provocative approach at times, had stated in 1985 that it is ‘not clear why eunuchs were so important in the Byzantine administration.’<sup>342</sup> The reasons for this questioning have ranged from

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<sup>340</sup> Moran, 2002: 99.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> Alexander P. Kazhdan, Ann Wharton Epstein. 1985. *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries – The Transformation of the Classical Heritage*. VII. Berkeley: University of California Press; 67. Kazhdan was characteristically called posthumously ‘a giant among Byzantinists in a subject that tends to giants – and gigantomachy.’ (Anthony Bryer. 5 June 1997. ‘Obituary: Alexander Kazhdan.’ *The*

ideology to pure distaste. As more recently revealed by Ringrose, the important point was that 'this specially gendered category' became 'so integral to the life of Byzantium that its own social behaviour persistently contradicted its own formal strictures'.<sup>343</sup> In other words, Byzantium not only allowed castration but also placed 'castrated men at the top of its most important administrative hierarchies'.<sup>344</sup>

The above hierarchy, nonetheless, did have its serious consequences in everyday life. Feelings of guilt created a scapegoat phenomenon associated with castration. The deeply religious Byzantines were brought up to view emasculation as sin and church fathers condemn it as a 'remnant of a pagan past'.<sup>345</sup> However, instead of accusing themselves for employing and deeply integrating the latter in their societal demands, the Byzantines applied a clear shift in Balance of Blame. Castrates, irrespective of their contribution in society or actual morals, were deemed to be repulsive monstrosities and treated as moral scapegoats or outright expendables. For instance, when Constantine I learned of Maximian's plot to assassinate him in his sleep, he survived by putting a eunuch to be killed in his place instead.<sup>346</sup> Even though, the Byzantine gender structure was more inclusive than that found in Western Europe, in this case the clear third gender provision goes beyond

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*Independent.* <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-alexander-kazhdan-1254232.html> (Accessed: 31.03.09).

<sup>343</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 8

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> Moran, 2002: 99.

<sup>346</sup> Lactantius, J.L. Creed, ed. 1985. *De Mortibus Persecutorum*. USA: Oxford University Press; 30.1 & Timothy D. Barnes. 1981. *Constantine and Eusebius*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 40-1; 305 Maximian was Diocletian's co-emperor.

its societal comfort sphere and true intentions.<sup>347</sup> Castrates were deemed as a necessary evil and were never truly integrated within ‘mainstream’ society. This can be seen in the everyday use of language. As noted by Ringrose, eunuchs are ‘almost always defined or described with a language of negation that speaks in terms of what they are not rather than what they are.’<sup>348</sup> In effect, Byzantine eunuchs enjoyed a rare ‘insider/outsider’ status. Though contested throughout their lives, their contribution was unique. Moreover, the ‘intricacies of the complicated court ceremonial would have been meaningless without their knowledge; they led armies and determined state policy; they had their own schools and cloisters.’<sup>349</sup> Irrespective of similarities, the extent of that standing has never been replicated in another era.<sup>350</sup>

Understanding gender perceptions in Byzantium, particularly in terms of eunuchs, resembles creating a mosaic ‘from widely scattered sources’.<sup>351</sup> This is not only due to different eras’ perceptions but also to Byzantine diplomacy which preserved gender roles diversely depending on expected readership: Byzantine or Western. Therefore, societal placement and attitudes should be discussed within their own framework. This task seems almost impossible given the amount and kind of information in our possession. For instance, as stated by Ringrose, Byzantine ‘eunuchs were systematically acculturated’ and Theophylaktos’ work supports that

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<sup>347</sup> Byzantines allowed the participation of women in high governmental duties.

<sup>348</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 35

<sup>349</sup> Moran, 2002: 99.

<sup>350</sup> There are some similarities with the status enjoyed by Baroque Castrati; the latter never ascended to viceroy or army general status though.

<sup>351</sup> Ringrose: 70.

assumption: 'they will be acculturated by their masters, whether for better or worse.'<sup>352</sup> How should we perceive this acculturation process though? For instance, in late Roman antiquity, 'gender roles were constructed by the interplay of individual effort and social expectations.'<sup>353</sup> Eunuchs were expected to behave in a certain way and they were thus not only allowed but also invited to provide 'intimate personal service ... as barbers, bloodletters and physicians'.<sup>354</sup> Singing, which was both encountered in the emperor's palace and in major churches like *Hagia Sophia*, was seen as another suitable role for castrati in those early days. As far as gender is concerned, it has been suggested that some of them 'carefully cultivated unmasculine behaviour as a way of presenting themselves and that they did this because it was what society expected of them.'<sup>355</sup>

One aspect of this acculturation route, perhaps its most significant one, becomes strictly associated with lack of common origins and family connections. The lack of common origin, however, is based on the hypothesis that 'almost all eunuchs came from servile backgrounds and were foreign born.'<sup>356</sup> More specifically, as has traditionally been suggested, eunuchs 'were either prisoners or slaves castrated outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire and brought in subsequently.'<sup>357</sup> This conveniently vague idea had been based on an almost never enforced set of

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<sup>352</sup> Ringrose: 70

<sup>353</sup> Maud Gleason. 1995. *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*. Princeton; 162.

<sup>354</sup> Ringrose, 2003: 83

<sup>355</sup> Ringrose: 71.

<sup>356</sup> Ringrose: 70.

<sup>357</sup> Ringrose: 71.

laws prohibiting ‘the making of eunuchs within the boundaries of the empire.’<sup>358</sup> Even if we believed that this particular was something entirely applicable up to early Byzantine times, we cannot help noticing the convenience precluded by this kind of coincidence: foreign status and gender otherness.<sup>359</sup> To xenophobic Byzantines then, acquiring eunuchs as well as subjecting them to a complex acculturation process would be justified by their alien status. Thus, feelings of guilt and Balance of Blame became equally less pertinent. However, Ringrose’s monodimensional concept of acculturation cannot explain the eunuchs’ ascent to positions of power. This is because she appears to ignore the possibility of a bilateral acculturation process, which would clarify the more complex relationships existing within Byzantine society.

Recent results of musical, textual and visual research have made it impossible to ignore the eunuchs’ contribution to Byzantine chant. However, the defining evidence that brought this particular to wider attention has been primarily pictorial and particularly icons depicting tonsured yet unbearded men chanting from the church ambo. The above evidence managed to evade mainstream Byzantinologists’ attention for too long, especially given that it was placed within a tradition equating a priest’s lack of beard with laity and unfrocking. The exclusive composition of professional *psaltai* choirs by eunuchs, as stated by Balsamon in the twelfth and Anthony of Novgorod in the thirteenth centuries, is of fundamental

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<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Anna Marava Hadjinikolaou. 1950. *Recherches sur la vie des esclaves dans le monde Byzantin*. Athènes; 44.

<sup>359</sup> Plenty of examples, such as Basil Lekapenos or even Theophylactos’ brother Demetrios, confirm that this was not applicable in later times.

significance for the understanding of Byzantine Chant.<sup>360</sup> This not only explains the chant's change in melismatic character, especially when referring to the 'repertoire of the Asma from St. Sophia', but also the post-1300 presence of gender rigidity in cantors.<sup>361</sup> The Latin empire, or *Imperium Romaniae*, which was established after the first Fall of Constantinople in 1204 and lasted until 1261, made most aspects of the ancient office of the Great Church, known as the 'chanted/sung office' or *asmatiki akolouthia*, redundant; most significantly the use of eunuchs as cantors.<sup>362</sup> Symeon of Thessaloniki 'devotes a large part of *de Sacra Precatione* to describing and defending the office, by then largely confined to Thessaloniki, which did not survive the Turkish conquest of that city in 1430.'<sup>363</sup> There are only three original manuscripts of the *asmatiki* as sung by eunuch cantors surviving 'in south Italian copies'.<sup>364</sup> The loss of the ancient office has had serious substantial rather than stylistic implications on post-1300 Byzantine music *akolouthiai*. This is visualised in late Byzantine paintings, where cantors 'are nearly always bearded.'<sup>365</sup> The need of new simpler hymns contained in *Papadike* is the music proof of the deep sociological as well as vocological changes in Eastern Roman gender geography.

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<sup>360</sup> P.G. 137: 532. The singing of eunuchs had also been stated by Anthony of Novgorod (13<sup>th</sup> c.) when describing the transfer of gifts during a *Hagia Sophia* Mass.

<sup>361</sup> Moran, *Gestaltung*: 187.

<sup>362</sup> Woolfenden, 2004: 95.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.* Symeon of Thessaloniki. ca.1429. *De Sacra Precatione*. In P.G. 155, 624ff – re: *asmatiki akolouthia* see chapter 345.

<sup>364</sup> Neil Moran. 1975. *The Ordinary Chants of Byzantine Mass*. Vol. II. Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung, Karl Dieter Wagner; 27f.

<sup>365</sup> Moran, 1986: 151.

## CHAPTER II

### Prologue

Byzantine Hybrid Vocal Personae have many similarities with the renowned singers of the Baroque era and could, therefore, be considered their cultural predecessors. Nonetheless, major political and religious issues have created de facto segregation between these two formidable churches within European Christianity: Greek Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. A series of harmful events between the Byzantines and the Venetians or 'Franks' had already affected their bilateral relations and these can be gathered into what have become known as the East-West or Great Schism (1054) and the Fourth Crusade, which resulted in the Sack of Constantinople (1202-4). The latter was one of the most remarkable events in medieval history. On 12<sup>th</sup> April 1204, 'an army of only 20,000 men' and a convoy of less than 200 ships manned by both Venetians and Franks, having been defeated merely three days earlier, managed to 'take Constantinople.'<sup>366</sup> The city had until then defied attacks by numerous assailants such as the Avars, Persians and Arabs. The crusaders, breaking their oath to Innocent III, began to loot the 'Queen of cities' as the Byzantines called their capital.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Jonathan Phillips. 2005. *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*. London: Pimlico; 241.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Appendix 2.1.

Unless we examine the full repercussions of preceding the Sack events on both sides, it is impossible to assess the power of the grudge between them. Contemporary Byzantine accounts of the dramatic events, preserved by Nikitas Choniates, talk of ‘the deeds wrought by these nefarious men’ and ‘the relics of the holy martyrs ... thrown into unclean places!’<sup>368</sup> The crusaders were also accused of snatching ‘the precious reliquaries, (thrusting) into their bosoms the ornaments ... and (using) the broken remnants for pans and drinking cups’.<sup>369</sup> In the space of one paragraph, the writer extends the injury received. It is ‘Christ (who) was robbed and insulted and His garments were divided by lot; only one thing was lacking, that His side, pierced by a spear, should pour rivers of divine blood on the ground.’<sup>370</sup> The accusations from the Crusaders’ side were equally venomous. Odo of Deuil, a chronicler as extreme as Choniates, treats the Byzantines – or ‘Greeks’ – as heretics since they rebaptised those Roman Catholics willing to marry a Greek Orthodox.<sup>371</sup> Therefore, the ‘Greeks’ ‘were judged not to be Christians, and the Franks (or Crusaders) considered killing them a matter of no importance’.<sup>372</sup> He accuses the Byzantines of hypocrisy with no intention of honouring their promises to Rome; his wording is consistent with the recurring accusations of effeminacy made against them: ‘the Greeks degenerated into women; putting aside all manly

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<sup>368</sup> Nikitas Choniates, trans. D. C. Munro. 1912. Rev. Ed. *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*. Series 1. Vol. 3; 1. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; 15-6. Cf. Appendix 2.2.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> This is a further attempt to treat Byzantines as pagans.

<sup>372</sup> Odo de Deuil, trans. V. Gingerick Berry. 1148 / 1948. *De profectioe Ludovici VII in Orientem*. Morningside Heights and New York: Columbia University Press; 57.

vigour ... they lightly swore whatever they thought would please us, but they neither kept faith with us nor maintained respect for themselves.<sup>373</sup> According to Odo, this justifies the Crusaders' hatred: '(the Byzantines) really (had) the opinion that anything which (was) done for the holy empire (could not) be considered perjury.'<sup>374</sup>

Since then for the last eight centuries, there have been limited attempts to remedy the consequences of past atrocities.<sup>375</sup> Bilateral diplomatic communications between Eastern and Western Christianity have remained minimal. Neither side has been keen to accept or acknowledge positive contributions, let alone influences, from the other side. The consequences have been theological but, even more importantly, political. The most prominent of these is associated with the final Sack of Constantinople by the Muslim Turks in 1453. Even in those crucial times, with the 'Infidel' breaking down the walls, the old divide determined the behaviour of one 'Christian' towards another. So 'the Latin delegates and Pope Eugenius IV were not interested in compromise with the Greeks ... and [made it clear that] without church union there would be no military aid to Constantinople.'<sup>376</sup> On the other side, some fifty years earlier in 1407, Manuel II, representing a significant portion of the Constantinopolitans

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<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> For example the following news extract from 27.11.04: 'VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope John Paul II, seeking to heal rifts with other Christians, on Saturday handed over the relics of two Orthodox saints that were brought to Rome from ancient Constantinople centuries ago.' <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6588646> (Accessed: 12.09.08). [Appendix 2.3].

<sup>376</sup> Adam William Hellebuyck. 27 March 2006. 'Foreign Relations and the End of Byzantium: The Use of Personal Diplomacy during the Reign of Constantine XI Palaiologos (1448-1453).' BA Hon - Department of History. Michigan: University of Michigan; 60.

defending Orthodox faith from Papacy, explained that ‘while the promise of Latin military aid against the Turks had the potential to save Byzantium, the bitter divide that church union would cause between the Greeks could lead to conflict or even civil war.’<sup>377</sup>

Even before the events of 1453 though, the repercussions of the Fourth Crusade of 1204 ‘went far beyond the walls of Constantinople.’<sup>378</sup> Among them, there is a politically minor yet significant cultural result: the eunuch cantors’ flight to Mount Athos and Thessaloniki as well as Southern Italy and Venice. The Crusaders’ rule, which became known as the Latin Empire, ended in 1261. By then, changing attitudes meant that the singers’ inheritance was never allowed back to Constantinople or into the Eastern Orthodox Ritual. In fact, except for Byzantinologists, the average lay Greek Orthodox, foremostly the cantor, not only ignores but vehemently denies the singers’ presence in Byzantine ritual.<sup>379</sup> However, as examined in Chapter I, the presence has been confirmed by several original sources. The lack of communication between the two sides of Christianity means that there has been limited condemnation of the Eastern Church in connection to *castratio*

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<sup>377</sup> Manuel II Palaeologos, trans. J. Chrysostomides. 1407 / 1985. *Funeral Oration on his Brother Theodore*. Thessalonike: Association for Byzantine Research; 244. In Hellebuyck: 52. ‘O life no longer bearable were it not for our religious faith, since living is no longer desirable particularly to me, as also to all those who knew precisely how outstanding your [Theodore Palaiologos or Palaeologos Porphyrogenitos] character was, o friend of God. This then was the meaning of those signs from afar when they declared a change of fortune for the worse. We however saw this and leapt for joy, thinking that the evil would befall our foes, as some had predicted. Now that the evil turned out to be against us, clearly affecting us all, so vast, so bitter, so irreparable that nothing remains but to live in despondency, weeping and mourning for the rest of time.’

<sup>378</sup> Phillips: 281.

<sup>379</sup> I have encountered hostility during my attempts to discuss the fact with regular church cantors in Greece. Also, a not so amicable first telephone conversation obliged me to conceal my research interests when visiting the Church of Greece Library in August 2007.

*euphonica*. Until recently, the eunuch singers or castrati were ‘recognised as an important phenomenon in the history of Western vocal music, first noticed in the latter half of the sixteenth century ... and coming to an end for practical purposes at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth.’<sup>380</sup> In the past, Crusaders had treated Byzantium as corrupt for a number of reasons, among them the presence of the eunuchs. Nonetheless, in a strange reversal of Balance of Blame, the Vatican has been not only widely but also solely blamed for the presence of castrated singers in their church choirs. Their presence has been viewed as an embarrassment by many, especially because of where and when they were singing. According to Rosselli, this is attributable to the singers’ appearing ‘not in antiquity or in another continent but in early modern times and at the heart of Western Christendom.’<sup>381</sup>

Nowhere in Italy has ever admitted an association with castration. Even vigorous efforts to find out the truth were thwarted. For example, Charles Burney (1726-1814), the music historian and composer, tried very hard to find out which cities the operation was taking place in. But his efforts were frustrated by local secrecy and serious misinformation. As Bergeron describes in characteristic vein, the Burney report ‘reads a bit like a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song’:<sup>382</sup>

I was told at Milan that it was at Venice; at Venice that it was Bologna;  
but at Bologna the fact was denied, and I was referred to Florence;

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<sup>380</sup> John Rosselli. May - August 1988. ‘The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850.’ *Acta Musicologica*. Vol. 60, Fasc. 2: 143-79; 143.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> Kathryn Bergeron. 1996. ‘The Castrato as History.’ *Cambridge Opera Journal*. Vol. 8 Issue 2: 167-84; 171.

from Florence to Rome, and from Rome I was sent to Naples ... At Naples, Mr. Gemineau, the British consul ... assured me ... that this practice is absolutely forbidden in the Conservatorios.<sup>383</sup>

This list, 'apart from whatever fun the Italian officials might have been having with their English inquisitor', demonstrates that in a linguistically and politically divided Italy, citizens frequently blamed their ills on their neighbouring enemies.<sup>384</sup> Most importantly, 'Italy seemed especially susceptible to outside criticism since it was not a unified country and had foreign rulers for many of its regions.'<sup>385</sup> Even though castration had been an open secret within mainstream society, this secret would never be trusted to foreigners or outsiders. The citizens of the individual city-states were keen to avoid becoming associated with 'an unsavoury act in the folds of a great, culturally sanctioned alibi.'<sup>386</sup> Irrespective of these feelings of guilt and disassociation, however, the *musici* became central to both church music and opera in Italy throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>387</sup> Even though the singers' contribution to the opera stage was over by about 1830, they were still contributing to the Vatican Choirs until 1913.

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<sup>383</sup> Charles Burney. 1771. *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*. London; 301-2.

<sup>384</sup> Bergeron: 171. The modern Italian Common Language was established after the end of WWII.

<sup>385</sup> R. Somerset-Ward. 2004. *Angels and Monsters: Male and Female Sopranos in the Story of Opera, 1600-1900*. New Haven: Yale University Press; 83.

<sup>386</sup> Bergeron: 171.

<sup>387</sup> As well as Spain and other countries following their influence.

## Chronological views about the singers

The beginnings of the practice of castration in Italy 'were intimately connected with the Papal chapel in Rome where castrati appeared for the first time as early as in 1562.'<sup>388</sup> This appearance has been attributed to the extraordinary capacity of these 'new' voices' to meet the high demands of the music being sung: 'Because of the breath control and sheer physical vigour required by excessive embellishment, boy sopranos and falsettists (were) quickly supplanted by ... a new phenomenon, the male castrato.'<sup>389</sup> Despite these views, many writers until the 1990s tended to chronologically focus on the official admission of Pietro Paolo Folignato and Girolamo Rossini in the Sistine Chapel Choir in 1599.<sup>390</sup> However, this was confused with the eunuch singers' first transfer from Spain to Rome. In the last forty years, however, musicologists have reassessed the balance and brought additional aspects to wider attention.<sup>391</sup> They have, for instance, brought to

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<sup>388</sup> Manfred F. Bukofzer. 1947 / 2007 reprint. *Music in the Baroque era: From Monteverdi to Bach*. Von Elterlein Press; 399 & Maria Rika Maniates. 1979. *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530-1630*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press; 114.

<sup>389</sup> Maniates: 114. And the writer continues with the following remark: 'The subsequent craze for this voice type, a fad that invades baroque opera, can be attributed to the mannerist love of artificiality and stylisation.' *Ibid*.

<sup>390</sup> Picture of Girolamo Rossini - Appendix 2.4.

<sup>391</sup> Examples ranging from earlier to latest available editions: Ian Fenlon. 1976. 'Music and Spectacle at the Gonzaga Court, c. 1580-1600.' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*. 103 No 1: 90-105, Maria Rika Maniates. 1979. *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530-1630*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, Richard Sherr. Spring 1980. 'Guglielmo Gonzaga and the Castrati.' *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 33, Issue 1: 33-56, John Rosselli. 1988. 'The *Castrati* as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850.' *Acta Musicologica*. Vol. 60: 143-79, Kathryn Ringrose. 2003. *The Perfect Servant and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Shaun Tougher. 2008. *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society*. Routledge, Neil Moran. 2002. 'Byzantine Castrati.' *Plainsong and Medieval Music*. Vol. 11: 99-112, Nicholas Clapton. 2008. *Moreschi and the Voice of the Castrato*. London: Haus.

our attention events happening almost fifty years earlier, such as ‘the earliest mention of castrati in (Guglielmo Gonzaga’s) reign [which] may be contained in a letter from Cardinal Ippolito II d’ Este, one of the greatest patrons of the sixteenth century, dated November 9, 1555.’<sup>392</sup> This earlier material has been further summed up in John Rosselli’s work which claims an absence of evidence ‘of castrati singers in Western Europe before 1550’. Nonetheless, ‘their presence for centuries in the Byzantine Church (and, in the twelfth century, at such an outpost as Smolensk) may make one wonder about possible links with Venice.’<sup>393</sup> More specifically, ‘two Spanish castrati were hired for the Duke of Ferrara’s chapel in the late 1550s; the Duke in 1556 inquired about another castrato (due to arrive from Savoy) in phrasing that suggests a fairly routine matter.’<sup>394</sup> Twenty years later, a significant change in singing style and composition took place. During that time, ‘(Vincenzo) Giustiniani, a noble amateur ... (discussed) at length a new style of solo singing, (which had) leapt into prominence around 1575.’<sup>395</sup> This early writer also provided us with the names of singers

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<sup>392</sup> Richard Sherr. Spring 1980. ‘Guglielmo Gonzaga and the Castrati.’ *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 33, Issue 1: 33-56; 35. ‘Guglielmo Gonzaga, third Duke of Mantua (r. 1550 – 1587)... (and) one of the major musical patrons of his time’ was particularly interested in the castrati. *Op.cit.*: 33. The Cardinal’s letter, which refers to his ‘little singers’ that the Duke was interested in (‘che V. Ecc.a [Vostra Eccellenza] haveva d’un di miei cantoretti’) will be analysed in the following pages together with the rest of the material focusing on Gonzaga’s intentions to bring castrati singers over to Italy. *Op.cit.*: 52.

<sup>393</sup> John Rosselli. 1988. ‘The *Castrati* as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850.’ *Acta Musicologica*. Vol. 60: 143-79; 146.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.* The Duke, in this case, was Ercole II d’Este. He was succeeded in 1559 by Alfonso II d’Este who became the new Duke of Ferrara, Modena, Reggio, and Rovigo.

<sup>395</sup> Maniates : 14. Cf. Vincenzo Giustiniani. MS 1628. *Sopra la musica*. Rome; 531. In Carol MacClintock. 1982. *Readings in the History of Music in Performance*. Indiana: Indiana University Press; 28.

known to be adept at improvised ornamentation.<sup>396</sup> The events of this early period are important, but a high degree of misunderstandings surrounds them. Because of this, I will discuss and re-evaluate them below in more detail.

### **The Music in Guglielmo Gonzaga's Court (ca. 1550-87)**

The early days of the castrati singers' phenomenon in Italy appears closely connected with both the intentions and, frequently unsuccessful, attempts of the third Duke of Mantua, Guglielmo Gonzaga, to discover suitable singers for his Court. The Duke was far from the typical patron of the arts.<sup>397</sup> His in-depth musicianship and interest in young promising castrato voices made him continue his pursuit for several years, irrespective of difficulties and disappointments associated with limited funds.<sup>398</sup>

Castrati were possibly first mentioned 'in a letter ... dated November 9, 1555.'<sup>399</sup> This not only makes the first known Italian reference for the singers almost fifty years earlier than the end of sixteenth century but also in

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<sup>396</sup> The names mentioned are those of 'Giovanni Andrea napoletano, Cesare Brancaccio, and Alessandro Merlo romano.' Giustiniani: 531. In MacClintock: 28.

<sup>397</sup> He was one of the renowned Italian Renaissance composers for madrigals, who still receive contemporary attention. See: Jessie Ann Owens and Magumi Nagaoki, eds. March 1995. *Guglielmo Gonzaga: Madrigali a cinque voci (Venice, 1583) (Sixteenth-Century Madrigal)*. New York and London: Garland Publishing. The third Duke of Mantua is also associated with Palestrina revisions. (Oliver Strunk. 1947. 'Guglielmo Gonzaga and Palestrina's Missa Dominicalis.' *The Musical Quarterly*. Vol. 33, Issue 2: 228-39).

<sup>398</sup> Misunderstandings associated with his 'penuriousness' when pursuing new *musici cantori* abroad for his Court could be also related to a composer's careful selection of prospective singers (none of the examples mentioned demonstrate a brilliant young singer). Therefore, this characterisation and the events surrounding it might be in need of further investigation. Sherr: 33.

<sup>399</sup> *Op.cit*: 35.

association with what was widely known as a country hostile to the castrati: France. There, the Cardinal Ippolito II d' Este stated that, following the Duke's interest in his 'little French singers' or '*cantoretti Francesi*', he would be willing to offer him two to choose from. Even though the reference is not immediately clear, the language used, when examined retrospectively, is revealing. Whereas *cantorini*, for instance, would be a far more appropriate term to describe the Cardinal's 'little singers', *cantoretti* is an ambivalent word rarely used in sixteenth century Italian. However, if the letter writer's intention was truly to discuss boy singers, the words *fanciulli*, *putti* or *figliuoli* would have been more appropriate.<sup>400</sup> According to Sherr, the fairly awkward term in the letter rather signifies that Ippolito 'did not exactly know what to call his French singers'.<sup>401</sup>

The necessary connection appears to have been made through a later letter, written on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1563. There castrati singers were apparently offered to Gonzaga on the same terms as the *cantoretti* mentioned in the former document. Two years later, the reference becomes not only more specific by stating the Italianised name of one singer, Guglielmo Fordo, and his status as *castrato francese* but also deals with him and another, unnamed, singer about to be pensioned.<sup>402</sup> Fordo's surname appears also

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<sup>400</sup> In the next centuries, however, the term *figliolo* or *figliuolo* would become strongly associated with the young castrati at conservatoires. Then, in order to make the necessary distinction, the term for non-castrated pupils would be *figlioli entieri* ('whole' young boys).

<sup>401</sup> Sherr : 35.

<sup>402</sup> 'Si raccomanda la speditione del Cattaneo per la sua pensione et non meno quella di Guglielmo Fordo, castrato francese.' G.P. Conegrani. 15 Aug. 1565. 'Letter.' Mantua. Archivio di Stato, Archivio Gonzaga (AG); busta 2573. The surname appears also spelled as Fordos in Sherr: 35.

spelled as Fordosio in another document.<sup>403</sup> I have been unable to establish the number of years that the singer remained in ducal service, but the latter reference could put his employment starting date well before 1555. The singer's pension appears to have also commenced in 1555. By that time, Gonzaga is known to have had in his Court, apart from Fordo, 'two French castrati and a Spanish "eunuco" priest who sang a spectacular Magnificat ("che fu cosa veramente rara").'<sup>404</sup> The Spanish priest, who was the Duke's latest acquisition, was twenty-eight years of age and his talents must have fulfilled the Gonzaga employment requirements for castrati: 'ability to sing high notes (and) ... facility in improvised counterpoint or "contrapunto" (a skill required of almost all professional singers at the time)'.<sup>405</sup>

In the mean time, Guglielmo Gonzaga kept his options open in Spain, where his agent, Girolamo Negri, continued looking for talented young castrati. However, in his letter of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1565, Negri was disappointed and complained to the Duke about the lack of available quality singers.<sup>406</sup> Specifically, he noted that in the whole country there were only six truly remarkable singers. His disappointment was vehement enough for him to

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<sup>403</sup> In ASM (AG): busta 3146. This document is a financial account for all *musicisti* (not only singers) employed in the Gonzaga court. Liv. Martinelli, Gugl. Testori, Gugl. Fordosio, Tas. Gallo, Cl. Bordognone, Ag. Buon Vicino, Garc. Spagnuolo, Ant Bressiano, and Don G. Brusio were each receiving 3-0-0 ducats, whereas the *Maestro di Capella* Gianches de Wert was paid with 9 – 63 – 0 ducats. The undated account has been estimated to be from around 1577- 80. (Iain Fenlon. 1981. *Music and patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua*. Vol. 1. Cambridge Studies in Music. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 109).

<sup>404</sup> Valeria Finucci. 2003. *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity and Castration in the Italian Renaissance*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press; 234.

<sup>405</sup> Sherr: 36. The singer's voice had been described enthusiastically to the Duke on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1565.

<sup>406</sup> Especially willing to move over to Mantua for much less than the sum that they used to earn in Spain, i.e. five hundred ducats per year. In the ducal letter of 14<sup>th</sup> July 1565 it was stated to Negri that the three castrati employed by him received 'three ducats a month and expenses'. *Ibid.*

suggest that the Duke would be better off by trying to 'make his own' figliuoli.<sup>407</sup> This, according to Negri, would not only have been more economical for the Duke but also have given him the added advantage of providing a proper education for the pupils. However, though the Gonzaga family medical connections would have made this easily achievable, the agent was instructed to continue searching for singers in Spain instead.

Gonzaga continued his attempts to find good castrati singers in Spain and France until four years before the end of his reign in 1587. It's worth noting that French audiences did not appear to be characterised by the 'typical' anti-castrato attitude until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>408</sup> Irrespective of continued attempts on the Duke's behalf, however, the search in Spain appeared to be marred by his increasingly high expectations. In this later phase of his search for castrati singers abroad, they were expected to be as young as fifteen years of age so that they could be trained further, yet already adept in ornamentation and lute playing.<sup>409</sup> Nonetheless, the most significant deterrent against Gonzaga's aspirations was that these were never accompanied by equally good prospective salaries for the singers. The effort to hire castrati singers from overseas appears to have been relinquished by 1584, following two years of intense yet unfruitful negotiations. This plan was immediately replaced in 1586 with attempts to hire singers from Rome. This effort might have yielded more

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<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.* '...ch'io crederai che fosse men male veder havergli figliuoli, et che havessero solamente habilità di farsi credendo io che la si farebbero meglio che quà...'. 12<sup>th</sup> May 1565, ASG: 593.

<sup>408</sup> Sherr: 40.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

fruit; however, Guglielmo's death on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1587 'heralded a sudden shift in the political, economic and artistic policies of the Duchy.'<sup>410</sup> His son, Vincenzo, started immediately importing cultural aspects of the 'hedonistic atmosphere' thriving in Ferrara and Florence Courts.<sup>411</sup> This became more accessible due to Mantuan and Ferrarese cultures' already established close-by. This proximity can be attributed to the wedding of Alfonso's II d' Este, Duke of Ferrara, and Margherita Gonzaga's wedding on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1579. One of the major consequences of this wedding was that, 'within a few years of [Margherita's] marriage, a number of female virtuoso singers were attracted to the Este court.'<sup>412</sup>

## The Court of Parma

Guglielmo Gonzaga, however, was not the only prominent patron of the arts associated with the first confirmed presence of *musici cantori* in Italy. Margaret of Parma, also known as 'Madama', was another significant benefactor and this position was attributable to her powerful connections with most sovereigns of sixteenth century Europe.<sup>413</sup> Whereas we are unable 'to reconstruct the musical personnel in Margaret's service before

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<sup>410</sup> Iain Fenlon. 1976-7. 'Music and Spectacle at the Gonzaga Court, c. 1580-1600.' *Proceeding of the Royal Musical Association*. Vol. 103: 90-105; 90.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> Fenlon: 96. This was contrary to the musical tastes of Guglielmo Gonzaga, who was known to be unimpressed by famous female groups and rather preferred male sopranos instead.

<sup>413</sup> Margaret was the illegitimate 'daughter of Emperor Charles V, half-sister of Philip II of Spain, the wife of Ottavio Farnese of Parma and the mother of Alessandro Farnese, a famous military commander.' Seishiro Niwa. February 2005. "'Madama" Margaret of Parma's patronage of music.' *Early Music*. Vol. 33, Issue 1: 25-37; 25.

1559', it is known that 'she had already employed musicians in her own right in Rome in the 1540s'.<sup>414</sup> The first clear reference to a castrato singer in Margaret's court comes from a letter from Scipione and Guglielmo Gonzaga dated 19<sup>th</sup> April 1586. Margaret is mentioned as 'Madama d'Austria', who has 'four sopranos, three boys and a castrato'.<sup>415</sup> There, the castrato is specified not by name but in association with his position as 'canon in Aquilia' as well as mentioning that 'he lived well'.<sup>416</sup> Therefore, probably, 'he would not leave there without [offering] very good terms.'<sup>417</sup> The name of the singer was later revealed to be that of Giacomo Antonio Pales, mentioned in Margaret's payroll of 1586 as soprano. Scipione attempted to lure him to Mantua but on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1586 the singer stated that he was unsure.<sup>418</sup> Though, Bertolotti claimed that Pales moved to Mantua in October of the same year, later works, such as those of Fenlon and Parisi, do not support this.<sup>419</sup> Irrespective of Pales' appointment in Mantua or not, however, in Margaret's court there are at least four disputed singers' names mentioned in a 1566 payroll as well as musicians' member

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<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> Margaret of Parma was born in Oudennarde, Netherlands in 1522 and died at Ortona in 1586. Even though she is sometimes referred to as 'Margaret of Austria', (there are two superficially similar portraits, which might have contributed to this confusion) the dates (the Margaret of Austria concurrent to the former was born in 1584 and died in 1611) and events surrounding their lives (the latter married to Philip III and became the Queen of Spain) could not let us confuse the two distinct personalities. The reasons that Margaret of Parma was referred as 'Austrian' had to do with the spheres of influence in Italy of those days and that Parma used to be under Austrian 'supervision'. The term is also potentially derogatory since the Duchess was never perceived as 'Italian' when in Italy.

<sup>416</sup> In Niwa: 32.

<sup>417</sup> Archivio di Stato Mantova. Archivio Gonzaga: busta 941. In Niwa: 32 (full Italian text in Niwa: 37).

<sup>418</sup> A. Bertolotti. 1969. *Musici alla corte di Gonzaga in Mantova*. Bologna; 67.

<sup>419</sup> S. Parisi. 1989. 'Ducal patronage of music in Mantua, 1587-1627.' PhD thesis. University of Illinois. In Niwa: 37.

list drawn at Candlemas 1567.<sup>420</sup> The singers, most of Flemish origin and named as Thomas Ruys, Gian Gilouz, Joos Wtersalem and Niccolas Cupers, are described simply as ‘four soprani’. Margaret’s chapel manuscripts, nonetheless, tended to name boy sopranos clearly as such. The evidence is inconclusive nonetheless. The first of them, Ruys, is referred to as ‘alto’ in another document of 1568, which would also indicate a falsettist status. Another piece information associated with this name, though possibly misprinted as Thomas or Tommaso Buys [sic], is that on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1570 he was old enough to be mentioned as musician and ‘cleric from Utrecht’ in Margaret’s Court. Given both the Duchess’s origin and fascination with Flemish musicianship as well as the status of Flanders as a significant centre for castrati in sixteenth century, these documents are, perhaps, in need of further investigation.<sup>421</sup>

## The Official Inauguration

Apart from Spain, France, Flanders and Italy, however, ‘castrati (were) singing in the court chapel in Munich from at the latest 1574, when the great Orlandus Lassus was in charge’.<sup>422</sup> Back in Italy, early Papal Bulls, such as the *Cum pro nonstro pastorali munere*, revealed that in Rome itself the

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<sup>420</sup> E. vander Straeten. 1960. *La Musique aux Pays-Bas*. VII. New York; 503-4, I. D’ Onofrio. 1919. *Il carteggio intimo di Margherita d’ Austria, duchessa di Parma e Piacenza*. Naples; 197-207 and Archivio di Stato Parma (ASP), ‘Computisteria farnesiana’ 240 in Niwa: 27 & 35.

<sup>421</sup> As documented, ‘Two-thirds of (Margaret’s) musicians came from the Low-countries.’ Niwa: 33.

<sup>422</sup> Clapton, 2004: 10.

reorganisation of the *Capella Giulia* choir by Pope Sixtus V in 1589 required ‘12 singers: four basses, four tenors and four contraltos [falsettists] and, in addition, for the voice which is called soprano, four eunuchs, if skilled ones can be found; if not, six boys’.<sup>423</sup> As demonstrated in the above extract, it had been considered that, whereas the term eunuch had already been used by that time, no castrato singer would be ‘formally described as such until 1599.’<sup>424</sup> This is, however, partly accurate and only for the Vatican and other associated with them clerical sources. As seen in the courts of Gonzaga and Margaret Farnese, the term had been in use before 1599. The meaning of the inaugurational postponement for the castrati singers signifies possibly the Vatican’s ‘buying of time’ and re-evaluating their presence in their midst.

Dates should not monopolise our attention more than intentions. Though castration was prohibited by Justinian legislation, during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries ‘the church turned a blind eye and the practice ended only when Italy was reunified in 1870.’<sup>425</sup> Theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries accepted Aquinas’ view that we are ‘caretakers’ rather than owners of our bodies, observing that, castration became ‘licit only for saving life, on medical advice and with the boy’s consent.’<sup>426</sup> However, a minority believed that this could also be justified for artistic purposes.

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<sup>423</sup> *Collectionis Bullarium brevium allorumque Diplomatum sacro sanctae Basilicae Vaticanae*. 1752. iii. Rome; 172.

<sup>424</sup> Rosselli: 146.

<sup>425</sup> Colin Martin. 22 April 2006. ‘The Unkindest Cut: Emasculated Musicians.’ Review. *British Medical Journal*. Vol. 332: 980.

<sup>426</sup> John Rosselli. 1992. *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 36.

According to Rosselli, the argument chiefly used was that the benefit to the community (adding to the effectiveness of church services or meeting the supposed needs of rulers) ‘outweighed the damage to the individual’.<sup>427</sup> As stated by Finucci, the Theatine Zaccaria Pasqualigo, ‘a castrator of boys by profession (“puerorum emasculator ob musicam”) elaborated, when all is said and done, a boy’s throat has more intrinsic value than his testicles.’<sup>428</sup> This view demonstrates the original papal objective behind the quasi-dogma of *Ad Honorem Dei* and its importance. The papal dogma meant that the singers were to be employed in order to serve the glory of God in church. On the other hand, ecclesiastic powers, especially during late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, could never be seen as condoning castration. Therefore, numerous conventions were invented in order to present the subject under a more agreeable or even ethical light. For example, a ‘convenient hypocrisy (perhaps on occasion the truth) was that the operation was requested by the child himself.’<sup>429</sup> Or else, ‘absent this particular fiction of “request,” it was often claimed that the child had been injured in an accident.’<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Rosselli : 36.

<sup>428</sup> Zaccaria Pasqualigo. 1641 / 1655. *Eunuchi, nati, facti, mystici: Ex sacra et humana litteratura illustrati*. Dijon: Apud Philiberrum Chavance. In Valeria Finucci. 2003. *The Manly Masquerade – Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance*. Duke University Press; 243. The Theatines, a ‘religious order of men, founded by Gaetano dei Conti di Tiene, Paolo Consiglieri, Bonifacio da Colle, and Giovanni Pietro Carafa, afterwards Pope Paul IV. Carafa was Bishop of Chieti (Theate), a city of the Abruzzi in Southern Italy, from which the congregation adopted its specific name, to distinguish it from other congregations (such as Jesuits) modelled upon it.’ F. Ragonesi. 1912. ‘Theatines.’ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. - <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14557a.htm> (Accessed: 11.05.08).

<sup>429</sup> W. A. Frosch. 2006. ‘The sopranos: Post-Op Virtuosi.’ *The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) Journal*. Vol. 20: 595-7; 596-7.

<sup>430</sup> Frosch: 597.

But what was the reason for Papal States' introduction of a voice-type created by castration? First of all, in 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy castration was almost regarded as a 'specialized form of the celibacy imposed by a monastic vocation.'<sup>431</sup> The first generation of singers in Papal choirs were, like Folignato and Rossini, priests rather than secular performers. Within a few years, castrati voices had become a definite necessity. That was because, especially in Papal States, women's voices, based on a literal reading of St Paul's words, were not allowed to sing in churches.<sup>432</sup> This, however, was not strictly-speaking just a Christian tradition but went back to Judaic liturgical practice. We read, for instance, that the 'female voice, free to participate in singing at home and in the processions and celebrations outside the temple, was not heard within its walls.'<sup>433</sup> As stated, 'a fundamental issue in the role of women as music makers in Jewish culture is related to the Talmudic dictum (*Berachot* 24a) that "the woman's voice is indecent". This is invoked with regard to the prohibition of a male to recite a blessing or any other prayer while hearing a woman singing.'<sup>434</sup> This

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<sup>431</sup> Rosselli, 1992: 766.

<sup>432</sup> *Let women be silent in the assemblies, for it is not permitted to them to speak.* (1 Corinthians 14:34). Educated Theological suggestions have attempted to explain this extract as implying the instruction against pagan (Dionysian) 'shrill ululation which Corinthian women had imported into Christian worship' of those early days. Brian J. Capper. 'Public Body, Private Women: The Ideology of Gender and Space and the Exclusion of Women from Public Leadership in the Late First Century Church.' In Robert Hannaford and J'annine Jobling, eds. 1999. *Theology and the Body: Gender, Text and Ideology*. Leominster, UK: Gracewing; 136.

<sup>433</sup> Edward Dickinson. 1953. *Music in the History of the Western Church*. New York: Scribner's; 29. In Leslie Clutterham. 2000. 'A Chronology of the Treble Voice in Choral Ensembles.' <http://www.calstatela.edu/centers/Wagner/treble.htm> (Accessed: 14.03.09).

<sup>434</sup> Edwin Seroussi. 11-13 July 1998. 'De-gendering Jewish music: The survival of the Judeo-Spanish folk song revisited.' Paper. *Music as representation of gender in Mediterranean cultures*. Venice. [http://www.umbc.edu/eol/MA/ma\\_stg/altri/seroussi.htm](http://www.umbc.edu/eol/MA/ma_stg/altri/seroussi.htm) (Accessed: 14.03.09).

attitude of exclusion, however, has been moved away from in many modern Synagogues.

The voices of choirboys and falsettists had been used as alternatives to *evirati* male sopranos, but there were drawbacks to both. Choirboys were a good but short-term solution due to puberty. On the other hand, it was recognised that ‘Artificial falsettists ... often made unpleasant sounds.’<sup>435</sup> Their sound was considered to be artificial as compared to the natural high male sound of the *castrati* and we must assume, too, that they would have lacked the equivalent technical capabilities and qualities possessed by modern countertenors, like Scholl and Jarrousky.<sup>436</sup> So it is understandable that the introduction of the *Musici* left the *falsettists* restricted to performing *comprimarii* alto parts in Opera.<sup>437</sup>

Contemporary accounts refer to a rare brilliance in *castrati* voices supported by the sheer presence of true power, an uncommonly-wide range (as compared with other white voices) and an immense breathing capacity. Their most remarkable aspect though was a timbre incorporating the vocal qualities of a boy and a woman within a male body. As a result, it has been said that the ‘castrato embodied the trinity – man, woman and child’.<sup>438</sup> These idealistic thoughts were first formulated during Greek Antiquity but took more specific form in the Renaissance. Works like Marino’s *Adone*

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<sup>435</sup> Celletti, 1991: 108.

<sup>436</sup> This is achieved, for instance, by employing the closest equivalent to the *castrato falsettone*. The incorporating of chest vocal quality to the remaining registers does help to produce ‘chiaroscuro’ and therefore ‘richness’ and variety of sound.

<sup>437</sup> A *Comprimario* (*comprimarii* –pl.) is a supporting singing actor in an opera.

<sup>438</sup> Patrick Barbier, transl. Margaret Crosland. 1998. *The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon*. Souvenir Press; 17.

helped prepare the way, according to Rodolfo Celletti, and eventually ‘made the castrato the embodiment of a vocal “poetics of wonder”.’<sup>439</sup> Consequently, the singers’ voices and expression of sexual ambiguity became associated with it and admired as examples of otherworldly qualities; necessary when depicting the roles of heroes and demigods in opera. However, as Feldman has observed, ‘during enlightenment times, criticisms of castrati and practices of castration were mounting, but initially at least most Italians still accommodated them easily to the “natural” paradigms of singing’.<sup>440</sup>

## Singers and Composers

Multitudes of composers have been inspired and intrigued by the phenomenal abilities of the singing *Virtuosi*. This has been reflected by the ‘percentage of castrato parts in individual operas (which) was at its highest during the early Roman and Venetian periods’.<sup>441</sup> Male roles, mostly sung by soprano or alto voices, lead; any existing female roles were limited in proportion. The character imbalance was later remedied under Metastasio’s powerful influence.<sup>442</sup> The poet and librettist’s plots, which were characterised by symmetrical structure and more realistic love affairs, brought about a better balance between male and female characters.

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<sup>439</sup> Celletti: 8.

<sup>440</sup> Feldman: 364-5.

<sup>441</sup> Heriot: 32.

<sup>442</sup> Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, known as Metastasio (3<sup>rd</sup> January 1698-12<sup>th</sup> April 1782).

Nonetheless, matters of taste and regulations did not yet favour the presence of female singing actors on stage. This came into prominence closer to the end of the eighteenth century and can be seen even surviving during the years of Late *Bel Canto* or even Romanticism in opera.<sup>443</sup> The first example can be seen in Rossini's *Aureliano in Palmira* that 'opened the Carnival season on December 1813. Giovanni Velluti (1761-1861) the last of the great castrati sang the hero Arsace, as he did when the opera was presented in London in 1826.'<sup>444</sup> In Romantic opera, it is also reported that, Richard Wagner once considered casting Domenico Mustafà as Klingsor in *Parsifal* in 1882. However, this information must be considered as, at best, anecdotal, nonetheless, since it seems impossible to trace its primary source.<sup>445</sup> The closest evidence for this event I have been able to establish is recorded by Franz Haböck. As noted, Richard Wagner had 'commented very positively and enthusiastically about the achievements of Mustafà and the other castrati singers of the Sistine Chapel whom he had often listened to when in Rome.'<sup>446</sup> According to Felix Mottl, the composer was at this time 'musing with the idea of replacing the Grail Temple's boy-choir (in Parsifal)

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<sup>443</sup> This coincided with the introduction of more vocal variety in opera seria characters.

<sup>444</sup> R. J. Farr. November 2005. 'The thirty-nine operas of Gioachino ROSSINI (1792-1868) - A conspectus of their composition and recordings.' Classic Review. NAXOS: Naxos Music Library.

[http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2005/Nov05/Rossini\\_conspectus.htm](http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2005/Nov05/Rossini_conspectus.htm). (Accessed: 12.05.06).

<sup>445</sup> This applies even to the most reliable sources, such as the Grove, which fail to cite the primary source.

<sup>446</sup> Franz Haböck. 1927. *Die Kastraten und Ihre Gesangskunt*. Berlin und Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart; 501. There is even a debated meeting between the Sistine chapel group of castrati and the composer at Villa Wahnfried.

with castrati from the Sistine Chapel.<sup>447</sup> Irrespective of intentions, these encounters had limited effect since the quest for realism had already brought and established the biogeneric voices on stage.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, most great composers worked together with their *primi uomini*. It is recognised that ‘both composers and singers tested each others’ limits in terms of taste and agility, the former bearing in mind that singers would always seek to ‘improve’ on their efforts, and the latter creatively exceeding the notes on the page whenever they got the opportunity.’<sup>448</sup> On the other hand, some composers practically learned aspects of their art from the *musici*. Mozart, for instance, ‘had the good fortune of receiving singing lessons from the celebrated castrato Giovanni Manzuoli in London.’<sup>449</sup> So a strange correlation and interdependency developed between the two artistic groups. This lasted, together with some fame or finance-associated rivalry, until the operatic castrato era’s demise in 1830. Like the singers, the composers’ lives were often affected or even marred by equivalent scandals and notoriety. For instance, Georg Friedrich Handel, a composer who wrote many of his works for the castrati, was also treated as an enigma.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Haböck: 501. Felix Josef von Mottl (1856-1911) was a famous conductor, contemporary to the composer. His interpretations and orchestrations of Wagner’s work remain acclaimed to our day.

<sup>448</sup> John Potter. 2007. ‘The tenor–castrato connection, 1760-1860.’ *Early Music*. Vol. 35, Issue 1: 97-110; 97.

<sup>449</sup> Katalin Komlós. 2003. ‘Mozart the Performer.’ *Apropos Mozart*, Group 3; 4. <http://www.aproposmozart.com/group3.htm> (Accessed: 12/11/08).

<sup>450</sup> Handel’s enigmatic personality included references to ‘serious solemn religiosity, an asexual life in the service of his music, two bankruptcies, in 1737 and 1745, a series of paralytic strokes, and mental disorder.’ (W. A. Frosch. September 1989. ‘The “Case” of George Frideric Handel.’ *New England Journal of Medicine*. Vol. 321, Issue 11: 765-9; 765). Similarly to the singers, the above co-existed with a variety of contradicting stories.

Malicious rumours affected all singers; even those with a 'spotless' reputation like Farinelli, who became known as '*il ragazzo*' or '*il gemello*'.<sup>451</sup> *Il gemello* 'alludes to (Farinelli and Metastasio) both being born together (so to speak) in the light of the public, because one was first heard with admiration in Naples singing in *Angelica e Medoro*, the first dramatic composition that issued from the pen of the other.'<sup>452</sup> The detail had been revealed by the poet 'in his preface to *La Nitteti*, set by Nicola Conforto and sent to Farinelli for its premiere at Madrid in 1756.'<sup>453</sup> Regarding '*il ragazzo*', the connotations appear to be somehow darker. As stated by King, the 'frequent comparison of castrati to boys and boy prostitutes ... suggests that the castrato's voice had become a displaced vehicle of paederastic desire'.<sup>454</sup> The same writer underscores that this incidence 'increased in popularity among elite audiences during precisely the same period that the political nation was calling for reforms of the patronage and electoral systems and moving to protect boys from

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According to one of them, the then young composer was mentioned as a 'good-looking man' and that 'the talk (was) that he was the lover of Victoria (Tarquini).' (G. Schnath, ed. 1927. *Briefwechsel der Kurfürstin Sophie van Hannover mit dem Preussischen Königshause*. Berlin and Leipzig. In Anthony Hicks. 1976. 'Handel's Early Musical Development.' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*. Vol. 103, Issue 1: 80-9; 83). This story also did not remain unchallenged and the 'supposed affair' was suggested to be 'an imaginative detail invented by the author of the *Memoirs* [John Mainwaring. 1760. *Memoirs of the Life of the late George Frederic Handel*. London].' (Reinhard Strohm, 1974, 'Handel in Italia: Nuovi Contributi.' In Hicks: 80). Similarly to the singers, this interest in Handel's enigmatic persona has continued up to the present day. Cf. Gary C. Thomas. 'Was George Friederic Handel Gay?: On Closet Questions and Cultural Politics.' In Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds. 1994. *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. 155-204. New York: Routledge.

<sup>451</sup> Burney: 153. The Italian words translate as 'the boy' and 'the twin'. [Appendix 2.5.]

<sup>452</sup> B. Brunelli, ed. 1951. *Tutte le opere di Pietro Metastasio*. Milan; 1220.

<sup>453</sup> Daniel Hertz. 1984. 'Iconography: Farinelli and Metastasio – Rival twins of public favour.' *Early Music*. Vol. 12, Issue 3: 358-68; 358.

<sup>454</sup> Thomas A. King. Summer 2006. 'The Castrato's Castration.' *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 - Restoration and Eighteenth Century*. Vol. 46, Issue 3: 563-83; 574.

paederastic abuse in schools.’<sup>455</sup> This equation has been used before, in more details but in less bold terms: ‘Many young castrati in Rome were kept by ecclesiastical personalities such as abbés, priests, or monsignori, and such relationships, in the context of the period, were often far from chaste.’<sup>456</sup> In 1762 Casanova ‘beheld Giovanni Osti, (a young castrato) nicknamed Giovannino di Borghese, who was the minion of Cardinal Borghese.’<sup>457</sup> At the Teatro Aliberti the writer was able to observe the singer’s charms as well as his ease in performing gender-ambiguous roles. Obviously shocked by his feelings of attraction towards Osti, the well-known libertine remarked: ‘Rome the holy, which thus strives to make all men pederasts, denies the fact, and will not believe in the effects of the glamour of her own devising.’<sup>458</sup> This was even noted during the final days of the castrati at the Sistine Chapel Choir, by Domenico Mustafà’s successor as its Perpetual Director. Don Lorenzo Perosi, whose role will be studied in detail in Chapter III, mentioned several reasons as to why he wanted to change the policy which still permitted the admission of castrati as choristers. Among them is the following, expressed in Perosi’s own words: ‘I pursued this policy for a serious moral reason, for as soon as I arrived in Rome I received so many requests from abnormal men who wished to enter the chapel that I suspected this concealed a dishonourable motive, especially

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<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>456</sup> Barbier: 153.

<sup>457</sup> Laurence Senelick. 2000. *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre*. London and New York: Routledge; 195. In Casanova’s words the singer was introduced as ‘the favourite pathic of Cardinal Borghese (who) supped every evening with his eminence.’ Giacomo Girolamo Casanova de Seingalt. 1984 /1960 Reprint. *Memoirs*. Chapter X. <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/casanova/c33m/chapter86.html> (Accessed: 12.04.09).

<sup>458</sup> Casanova, *Memoirs* : Chapter X.

when I saw unhappy children. This fear alone gave me the energy to overcome the problem.’<sup>459</sup> However, knowing both Perosi’s intentions towards the remaining Sistine Chapel castrati and his serious mental health issues, the events described might not be entirely accurate.

Private lives and the contradictions between actual events and rumours are of significance and deserve further examination. Stories, depending on the teller’s aims, can range from the more or less accurate to the exaggerated and entirely fabricated. And there might be a range of motives behind these tales: adulation, common satire, fear of the unknown, homo/xenophobia or plain hatred. All these elements can be examined thoroughly by looking at the satire and rumours that surrounded the lives of all *primi uomini* but, most conspicuously, Farinelli.

The adulation inspired by his singing became the subject of both artistic and social satire ‘to such an extent that there emerged what can be called a “Farinellian theme” in the satirical literature written from 1734 to 1738, and beyond.’<sup>460</sup> I will only focus here on the gendered nature of several negative remarks contained in these satirical works. Those comments were mostly focused on two elements perceived to be socially-threatening: ‘the castrato’s “hybrid” sexuality, and the harmless sexual pleasure he provided for his female admirers.’<sup>461</sup> On the one hand, the intriguing nature of the singer’s hybridity has been expressed in the

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<sup>459</sup> De Angelis: 80.

<sup>460</sup> Xavier Cervantes, 2005. “‘Let’em Deck Their Verses with Farinelli’s Name”: Farinelli as a Satirical Trope in English Poetry and Verse of the 1730s.’ *British Journal for the Eighteenth-Century Studies*. Vol. 28: 421-36; 421.

<sup>461</sup> Cervantes: 430.

following extract, which portrays the attitudes not only towards Farinelli but also the castrato phenomenon as a whole:

A Paradox, a Thing uncommon,  
And sung of neither Man or Woman:  
It walks upright, and this same Creature  
Has in its Face each female Feature.<sup>462</sup>

On the other hand, the threat of sexual pleasure without harm was viewed by some authors as so extreme to social and gender hierarchy that they expressed it in explicit terms: 'without benefit of propagation, / Gay *Farinelli* cuckolds half the nation'.<sup>463</sup>

Satire has the scope to exaggerate and criticise what is perceived to be wrongful and ill-conceived. Farinelli's only actual accounts, however, which can be viewed through his correspondence with Count Sicinio Pepoli, demonstrate a different picture altogether: the singer was not only overtly sensitive and reserved but also suffered from low self-esteem. Additionally, his own, friends and relatives' accounts may describe some extravagance but mostly describe his suffering from melancholy or depression.<sup>464</sup> Farinelli, long before going to Spain, was planning 'to leave professional singing before it leaves him first.'<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Anonymous. 1736. 'F-i's Labour'. *The St. James's Register: or, Taste a-la- mode [...]*. London; 36.

<sup>463</sup> [Thomas Gilbert]. 1738. *The World Unmask'd. A Satire*. London; 5.

<sup>464</sup> This is frequently encountered by persons with hormonal deficiency, such as the castrati. This suffering deteriorated towards the end of Farinelli's life.

<sup>465</sup> Carlo Broschi Farinelli. 1731-49 / 2000. *La solitudine amica: Lettere al conte Sicinio Pepoli*. Palermo: Sellerio Editore; 34.

## The 'Methods'

Boys with promising voices or some musical inclination were, as suggested, 'outright sold to conservatories on the chance that they might have a chance at a successful and more importantly, lucrative career.'<sup>466</sup> In order for them to be accepted for training, they needed to undergo the 'procedure'. In 'Eunuchism Display'd', a treatise written by Charles Ancillon and published in 1718, we read about the different applied methods. The first of them involved the severing of the spermatic cord; this was 'done by cutting the Vein that conveyed their proper Aliment and Support, which makes them to grow lank and flabby, till at last they dry up and come to nothing.'<sup>467</sup> The second one necessitated the complete removal of the testicles. As stated, due to lack of proper methods of anaesthesia, other 'more creative methods were employed in order to make this process more bearable.'<sup>468</sup> The same source describes another method in detail:

[It] was, to take the Testicles quite away at once, and this Operation was commonly effected, by putting the Patient in a Bath of warm water, to soften and supple the Parts, and make them more tractable; some small time after, they pressed the Jugular Veins, which made the Party so stupid, and insensible, that he fell into a kind of Apoplexy, and then the Action could be performed with scarce any Pain at all to

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<sup>466</sup> Angus Heriot. 1975. *The Castrati in Opera*. New York: Da Capo Press; 38.

<sup>467</sup> Charles Ancillon. 1718. *Eunuchism Display'd. Describing All the Different Sorts of EUNUCHS; The Esteem They Have Met with in the World, and How They Came to Be Made So*. London: E. Curl; 15-6

<sup>468</sup> Jennifer Sowle. August 2006. 'The Castrato Sacrifice: Was It Justified?' M.A. Thesis. University of North Texas; 22.

the Patient; and this was generally done by the Mother or Nurse in the most tender infancy.<sup>469</sup>

In some of the cases the boys were given 'some opium in order to properly sedate them enough for the surgery.'<sup>470</sup> Though the use of opium proved effective, it was not without risks and 'it was observed, that most of those who had been cut after this manner, died by this Narcotik; It was thought more advisable to practice the Method I just before mentioned.'<sup>471</sup> The latter implied the earlier-mentioned 'recipe' of warm bath and jugular vein pressure, which was considered to be safer. Of course, the illegality of the whole procedure aggravated the conditions. None of the methods mentioned, could have been carried out within anything resembling a modern hospital or even a clean and sterile environment.<sup>472</sup> Therefore, infections were rife; haemorrhages were not that rare either. Apart from the dangers already mentioned, castration did not preclude an unsuccessful vocal result or a minimal to modest career. Nonetheless, this did not dissuade 'parents (who) hoped to raise the living standard of their own families'.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Ancillon: 16.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> In relation to the surgical practice between 1500 and 1800, 'primitive practices such as bloodletting were still pre-eminent, standards of hygiene were dreadful, and hospitals were not widely established.' D.A. Rew. 1999. 'Bimillennial Historical Review – Part II, Europe and Surgery from AD 1500 To 1800; the Modern World Is Shaped.' *European Journal of Surgical Oncology*. Vol. 25, Issue 3: 311-16; 316. Cf. Depictions of 1500-1800 Surgery in Appendix 2.6.

<sup>473</sup> P.O. Scholz. 2001. *Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History*. Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers; 278.

## Physiology & Training

Vincenzo Martinelli presented the vocal results of castration to an English aristocrat in 1758:

Around age twelve or thirteen, at the limits of puberty when the tree has become able to produce fruit, the voices of [boys] become soprano and more often a tolerable if not perfect contralto, especially in Italy; and by means of castration the soprano or contralto is perpetuated into old age, which is the reason castrati were invented. Then comes that perfect puberty, between fifteen and eighteen years of age, when the voice is at its loveliest green, and the lungs are acquiring even greater force, until age twenty-five when the lungs finish growing and all the organs attain their maturity. And the man has reached his physical perfection and can maintain his vigour thus until his forties.<sup>474</sup>

However, the singers' vocal qualities were not only attributed to their physiology but also their training, which was a strict and multidimensional one. This training made the castrati not only into singers but also all-round musicians. In particular,

Of the seventy or so most famous castrati to flourish between circa 1600-1830, nearly half were composers with a notable output of works. All were keyboardists, often of some note, and many were

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<sup>474</sup> Vincenzo Martinelli. 1758. *Lettere Familiari e critiche*. London: G. Nourse; 378-9. In Feldman: 365.

highly reputed teachers and even writers on music, consulted on intimate details of musical knowledge.<sup>475</sup>

However, the singing training, specifically devised with these voices in mind, became responsible for utilising the castrato-specific physiology in order to produce an immense vocal control and breath-capacity. This was a physiology which, though characterised by a merging of binarian aspects, developed into an individual entity.

The basic distinction between mature male and female voices lies in the laryngeal and vocal folds' formation. This is attributable to the increasing secretion of testosterone within the male adolescent body. Particularly under dihydrotestosterone, its metabolite, 'the total length of the male vocal cords grows from a prepubertal mean value of 17.35 mm to 28.92 mm in the adult, an increase of 63%, whereas female vocal cords increase by only 34% (from a mean of 17.31 mm to 21.47 mm).'<sup>476</sup> However, both natural endocrinological formations and prepubertal castration can arrest these developments in adolescence. As a result, the larynx and vocal folds remain childlike and their length closer to the 17.35 mm aforementioned reading. Another characteristic of the castrato larynx is that, contrary to the average male one, there is no 'increase in the anteroposterior length of the thyroid cartilage'.<sup>477</sup> This is demonstrated by the lack of Adam's apple and its undescended positioning. Therefore,

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<sup>475</sup> Martha Feldman. 22 Feb. 2007. 'Draft for the interdisciplinary workshop on "Medicine, Body, Practice",' University of Chicago. (PDF – currently unavailable) & *Opera and Sovereignty*: 365.

<sup>476</sup> J. S. Jenkins. 1998. 'The Voice of the Castrato.' *Lancet*. Vol. 351: 1877-80; 1877.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid*.

similarly to a child, the resultant organ remains closer to the areas of the head resonance and its sound characterised by brilliance, volume and clarity.<sup>478</sup>

Another result produced by early castration, which can also be present in certain intersex conditions such as Klinefelter's syndrome, was that the pituitary gland, without the presence of testosterone in the body, overproduced growth hormone.<sup>479</sup> The immediate results of this were unhindered general bodily growth and acromegalia.<sup>480</sup> Apart from that, '(the) operation ensured that the thoracic cavity developed greatly, sometimes disproportionately (leading to a form of gigantism)'.<sup>481</sup> This thoracic development, when supported by proper instruction in the singers' cases, could result in an unusually improved breath capacity, resonance and control. An eighteenth-century account described the castrato sound 'as clear and penetrating as that of choirboys but a great deal louder with something dry and sour about it yet brilliant, light, full of impact.'<sup>482</sup> Apart from the sound, the singers' physical characteristics included 'a smooth pale

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<sup>478</sup> In Acoustics, every object 'that possesses the properties of mass and compliance is a resonator.' (Johan Sundberg. 1987. *The Science of the Singing Voice*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press; 11). Exemplifying, one could say that 'a resonator resonates at certain frequencies, or that it possesses resonances (*formants* in the case of the vocal tract) in certain frequencies.' (Sundberg: 12) However, closer to a singer's perception, the term resonance defines 'internal sensitivities which result from the transmission of laryngeal vibrations to the skeletal framework by means of the extrinsic laryngeal muscles.' (Nicole Scotto di Carlo. 1994. 'Internal Voice Sensitivities in Opera Singers.' Paper. Basel: S. Karger AG; 1. <http://aune.lpl.univ-aix.fr/lpl/personnel/scotto/articles/IVS94.pdf> (Accessed: 14.03.09).

<sup>479</sup> Castration was most commonly taking place between the ages of 8 and 12.

<sup>480</sup> *Acromegalia* is a condition characterised by disproportionate length of arms and legs compared to the rest of the body.

<sup>481</sup> John Rosselli, L. Macy, ed. 'Castrato.' *Grove Music Online*. <http://www.grovemusic.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu> (Accessed: 12.08.07).

<sup>482</sup> C. De Brosses. 1799. *Lettres historiques et critiques sur l'Italie*. Vol. 3; 246 (translated in Jenkins: 1878).

skin, with, later in life, fine wrinkles around the eyes, no beard, plentiful scalp hair, a tendency to obesity, rounding of the hips, and narrowness of the shoulders'.<sup>483</sup> Depictions of most of the mentioned features have survived in numerous portraits and representations, some times exaggerated in caricatures.<sup>484</sup> In a similar way to women, the singers were prone to early osteoporosis. However, their supposed greater longevity due to lack of secreted testosterone has been debated. This, as Jenkins suggests, could be attributed to other factors.<sup>485</sup> The gender-indefinite futures have been misinterpreted by 'some musicologists (who) stress femininity rather than ambiguity in their descriptions of the castrati as "feminine men", "perfect nymphs" "more beautiful than women themselves".'<sup>486</sup> Nonetheless, there is another view, less binarian and judgemental as well as, perhaps, more representative of the singers' perspective. According to this, the physical characteristics of the castrati allowed Baroque society to perceive the *musicisti* 'as blank canvases on which either sexual role could be projected, in real life as on the stage.'<sup>487</sup>

The singers' training in the conservatoires was responsible for maximising their abilities and eventually creating the most famous artists of those days. The most famous of these institutions, which were founded as

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<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>484</sup> Examples of Caricatures - Appendix 2.7.

<sup>485</sup> '(O)n 25 documented castrato singers born between 1610 and 1762 the mean lifespan was 65.1 years (SD 12.1) and was similar to that of 25 intact male singers born between 1605 and 1764 who lived a mean of 64.9 years (13.1). The relative longevity for this period may be explained by the fact that both groups lived fairly cosseted lives.' Jenkins, 1998: 1879.

<sup>486</sup> Joke Dame. 'Unveiled Voices.' In Brett, Thomas, Wood, (Eds.). 1994. *Queering the Pitch*. New York & London: Routledge; 143.

<sup>487</sup> Dorothy Keyser. 1987-8. 'Cross Sexual Casting in Baroque Opera: Musical and Theatrical Conventions.' *Opera Quarterly*. Vol. 5, Issue 4: 46-57; 49-50.

charitable organisations during the 16th century, were situated in Naples. These were four in number; namely, the Sant' Onofrio, Pietà dei Turchini, Santa Maria di Loreto, and Poveri di Gesù Cristo. As Sowle observes, 'By around the year 1650, these organizations had converted almost completely from simply charitable places of general education to an intensive school for music instruction'.<sup>488</sup> There the students were given a properly rounded musical education, which would enable them to become not only good singers but also adept musicians, even well-known composers.

The breakdown of a typical singing school day regime for a young castrato was as follows:

[It] consisted of one hour of singing difficult and awkward pieces, one hour practising trills, one hour practising ornamented *passaggi*, one hour of singing exercises in their teacher's presence and in front of a mirror so as to avoid unnecessary movement of the body or facial grimaces, and one hour of literary study; all this, moreover, before lunch. After, half-an-hour would be devoted to musical theory, another to writing counterpoint, an hour copying down the same from dictation, and another hour of literary study.<sup>489</sup>

Vocal technique, however, was not the only focus within this regime. Much attention was given to music and general education; for instance, grammar and Latin as well as the art of effective pronunciation. When the young

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<sup>488</sup> Sowle: 27.

<sup>489</sup> Giovanni Andrea Angelini Bontempi. 1695. *Historia Musica, nella quale si ha piena cognitione della teorica*. Perugia: Costantini ; 170. The study of counterpoint was done on the *cartella*, which was 'a glazed tile with music staves upon it, this device served as a precursor to the personal chalkboards used later for schoolchildren.' Heriot, 1975: 48.

singers had successfully completed their studies, they were 'proclaimed ready for (their) debut'.<sup>490</sup> This, to the most able of them, meant a contract with an opera house; to the less gifted, permanent employment by a church choir. To the least fortunate though, this rigorous schooling would have only resulted in them becoming overqualified monks.

Sometimes the reasons that singers failed to complete their conservatoire years successfully were not musical ones. In our 'politically-correct days', the word would have been about preferential treatment on one side as opposed to the other side's claims about prejudice, discrimination and bullying. In those days, eunuch students were treated rather differently from their colleagues. Because they were believed to be more susceptible to infections after their operation, their immune system more fragile, they were given better food and warmer dormitories than their *integri* peers.<sup>491</sup> There is evidence, though it is minimal, that this 'occasionally sparked jealousy and resentment between the castrati' and the other students, and may have also accounted 'for the fact that a marked number of castrato students eventually left and became runaways.'<sup>492</sup>

### **The Aging *Musico***

Apart from artistic merits when young, the *virtuosi* also became known for their astonishing vocal longevity. This has been attributed to their unique

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<sup>490</sup> Sowle: 29.

<sup>491</sup> That is 'whole' or 'intact' as opposed to *evirati* (emasculated) singers.

<sup>492</sup> Sowle: 27.

physiology, especially the fact that their small vocal folds ‘were amplified by adult muscular development and a large rib-cage’.<sup>493</sup> This allowed the singer to achieve superb results of power and ornamentation with less effort and, therefore, less fatigue than other voices performing similar repertoire. There are several contemporary sources, which tend to confirm the singers’ vocal longevity. For instance, during his 1770 Journeys in Italy, Dr. Charles Burney had the opportunity to visit the retired Tomasso Guarducci in his *palazzo* at Montefiascone, close to Rome. Burney describes how ‘(the singer) was so obliging as to let (him) hear him, in a song of Signor Sacchini’s composition, which he sung divinely.’<sup>494</sup> The writer even found that Guarducci’s ‘voice ... (was) more powerful than when he was in England’ and that ‘his taste and expression (seemed) to have received every possible degree of selection and refinement.’<sup>495</sup> Another similarly well-documented example, since he sang in church every Saturday, was that of Matteucci or Matteuccio. It was said that ‘although (the singer) was eighty years of age, he was still able to sing in any style and preserved a voice of such clarity and purity that, if he was not seen, one would think him a singer in the flower of his youth.’<sup>496</sup> Similarly, Farinelli is reputed to have never stopped singing. Even three weeks prior to his death at the age of seventy-seven, ‘he was still practising several hours a day, accompanying himself on

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<sup>493</sup> Barbier: 215.

<sup>494</sup> Burney, 1773 / 1959: 198.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.* This compares the singer’s private performance to a relatively ill-received concert performance in England three years earlier (ca. 1767).

<sup>496</sup> Giambattista Mancini, trans. Pietro Buzzi. 1777 / 1912. *Practical Reflection on the Figurative Art of Singing*. Boston: Richard G. Badger; 29.

the harpsichord.<sup>497</sup> However, his modesty and awareness that his voice had lost most of its power meant he would not perform in public or before visitors and only rarely 'agreed to do so in order not to appear uncivil.'<sup>498</sup>

Nonetheless, not all *virtuosi* aged gracefully. The most infamous example remains that of Caffarelli, who, contrary to Farinelli, insisted on singing in public with his voice past its prime. The most venomous comments against the singer were written by the architect Luigi Valvitelli, who had been present at one of Caffarelli's public performances between 1762 and 1764. The architect, truly enraged by both Caffarelli's singing 'like a bleating goat' (*capronescente*) and his appearance, stated: 'He sang like an old castrato who (understood) music, but he looked like a big goat with a hard and ugly voice, and that is how people admired the relic of the man who in the past was the best castrato after Farinelli.'<sup>499</sup> Unlike the other singers mentioned above, however, Caffarelli lost his voice not in his seventies or eighties but in his mid-fifties. Only five years later, he came to a decision to stop his public performances and sing only in church and on special occasions. The singer's relatively early vocal loss remains an exception among *musici* and is, perhaps, in need of further investigation.

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<sup>497</sup> Barbier: 217.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.* Burney confirmed the singer's daily practice on the harpsichord, yet he stated that the singer 'had long left off singing'. (Burney: 152). It did not appear that Farinelli sang for his friends, Burney and Padre Martini, during that visit.

<sup>499</sup> L. Valvitelli. 23 January 1762. 'Letter.' In Barbier: 214-5.

## Sexuality

In the first years of their appearance on stage during the seventeenth century, castrati were perceived, according to Feldman, as 'seductive figures of idyllic, heroic youth'.<sup>500</sup> In this same period, 'the power of making music had been equated 'to that of producing semen.'<sup>501</sup> Significantly, the singers' perceived gender ambiguity made them more sexually attractive to both men and women. This, according to Hester, went even further and led to 'frequency, ease of and adeptness with which they performed sex acts' with both sexes.<sup>502</sup> Depending on viewpoint, this belief on sexual prowess has been greatly challenged and debated. For instance, numerous medical professionals, based on the research into members from the Skoptsy sect, vehemently deny sexual potency for castrates. Other scholars though, appear to be more open-minded in considering 'other options'. Jenkins, for example, acknowledges that 'although their sexual performance may have been deficient, some castrati maintained their libido (Tenducci actually married), and women were comforted by the fact that any dalliance would not result in embarrassing pregnancies.'<sup>503</sup> This had been characteristically

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<sup>500</sup> Feldman: 364.

<sup>501</sup> Angelini Bontempi, 1695: 239-40. In Finucci: 245. The historiographer and composer of the opera *Il Paride* was himself a castrato.

<sup>502</sup> D.J. Hester. 2005. 'Eunuchs and the postgender Jesus: Mathew 12:12 and transgressive sexualities.' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. Vol. 28, Issue 1: 13-40; 18.

<sup>503</sup> Jenkins: 1879.

reflected in the 1659 poetic extract: 'There are those who in soft eunuchs place their bliss / And shun the scrubbing of a bearded kiss.'<sup>504</sup>

Among the most well-known verses inspired by a *musico*, which is viewed by Barbier as homosexually-charged, is the one penned by the composer Domenico Cimarosa: 'When you sing, you smooth voice / swiftly moves from ear to heart / Awakening pleasure, awakening love / And the saddest thoughts flee wandering away.'<sup>505</sup> Even though there is no proof of any greater occurrence of homosexuality among the singers than in the general population, some conservatists view them as a synonym of all new ills in society and others as the confirmation of operatic degradation.<sup>506</sup> For instance, in early 18<sup>th</sup> century England, Jonathan Swift wrote that an old gentleman said to him that 'many Years ago, when the practice of an unnatural vice grew so frequent in London, that many were Prosecuted for it, he was sure it would be a Fore-runner of Italian-Operas, and Singers.'<sup>507</sup>

Irrespective of these different views, like most physiological alterations and operations, castration did not create the same results for everyone. Otherwise, we would have a few thousand Farinellis to commemorate here. Therefore, depending on factors such as age at the time of operation, but chiefly on genetic predisposition, one could retain more or less ability in terms of traditional heterosexual functioning. However, even in our more

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<sup>504</sup> John Dryden, J. Kinsley, ed. 1958. *Poems of John Dryden*. London: Oxford University Press, Vol. 2; 708.

<sup>505</sup> G. Monaldi. 1928. *I Teatri di Roma negli ultimi tre secoli*. Naples: Ricciardi; 21. In Barbier: 153.

<sup>506</sup> As perceived from the viewpoint of ideological conservatism, 'a conservatist must be from the right side of the political perspective.' G.S. Yildiran. 2005. 'Conservatism; Justice and Development Party.' M.A. Thesis. Izmir: D. Eylul University; 6.

<sup>507</sup> J. Swift and T. Sheridan. James Woolley, ed. 1992. *The Intelligencer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 65.

sexually-liberated era, few researchers have expressed non-phalocentric sexual concepts and possibilities (for instance, by considering non-‘traditional’ penetration). Whatever their sexual persuasion, Roger Freitas contends that the singers were viewed as the embodiment of the ideal lover, and argues that the roles for which they were used suggest as much.<sup>508</sup> This can be read through the lines of the anonymous – and infamous – ‘*Lamento del Castrato*’ which supposedly presents us with one of the rarest contemporary and, possibly, immediate of singers’ accounts. However, due to its sexual claims, the source’s reliability has been questioned. In this poem, the anonymous poet becomes the castrato singer who ‘points out the advantages of his state, in which intercourse will not result in unwelcome pregnancy. ... The musical setting, in recitative and arioso, matches the views expressed’:<sup>509</sup>

Upon my words it is not so. Oh how delightful it is to use on a beautiful unwilling girl a key so full of cunning which opens for all and never leaves a mark. And if someone says that my cartridges are blank I answer that all over the world, for births, celebrations and pleasures even the Bombardiers shoot without their balls!<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Roger Freitas. 2003. ‘Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato.’ *The Journal of Musicology*. Vol. 20, Issue 2: 196-249; 249.

<sup>509</sup> <http://www.naxosdirect.com/title/8.553319>

<sup>510</sup> Anonymous. 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century. In Luigi Manzoni (collector). 1881. *Il libro di Carnevale dei secoli XV e XVI*. Bologna: Commissione per i Testi di Lingua.

## *Primi Uomini* and their Living Legacy

Only singers with the finest voices were given the opportunity to become operatic artists and potential idols and we have been deprived of their achievements for numerous reasons, including lack of recorded evidence. Only the most successful castrati have remained more than mere names to us, sometimes for the wrong reasons. Nonetheless, the singers' contribution to Western music and to the opera genre in particular remains immense. Opera, an initial entertainment commodity confined within the old city-states' confine of Florence, Mantua, Rome and Venice, soon spread to the whole of the Italian peninsula.<sup>511</sup> Though the genre is still considered by some as 'such a "genetically" Italian expression', it had by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century engulfed almost the whole Europe.<sup>512</sup> As a result, opera singers became international stars 'able to command enormous fees.'<sup>513</sup> Contrary to modern stars though, the *musicisti* singers' achievements have survived their 300-years reign and demise and left a living legacy even to our days. This thesis will focus on the personal contribution to the genre as well as on the advancement they brought to hybrid vocal personae in general.

The most well-known *musicista* remains Carlo Broschi or Farinelli (1705-82). Manuscripts with his improvisations, contained in Franz

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<sup>511</sup> During the early 1600, Italy did not exist as an entity but consisted of the remnants of Medieval / Renaissance, individually governed, city-states or *Cantoni*. The most prominent of their individual rulers were still the Pope in Rome, the Medici family in Florence, the Doge in Venice, the Sforza family in Milan, and the Este family in Ferrara.

<sup>512</sup> '... un'espressione così "geneticamente" italiana come l'opera.' Daolmi & Senici, 1st October 2002: par. 1 Available: <http://musicologia.unipv.it/girardi/daolmisenici.htm> (Accessed: 14.03.09).

<sup>513</sup> Jenkins: 1879.

Haböck's work, confirm a vocal range spanning from *c* (131 Hz) to *d'''* (1175 Hz) whereas Quantz defines the singer's voice as 'penetrating, full, rich, bright and even'.<sup>514</sup> As underlined by Haböck, however, though the high register is remarkable, the exception here lies in his low register. In particular, the aria 'Navigante che non spera' in Leonardo Vinci's opera *Il Medo* (1728) takes the singer into *C'*, where a tenor would be more "at home".<sup>515</sup> Among the singer's immense skills had been the ability to create a one-minute *tenuta* on the same breath without the need to replenish. This capacity, based on the singer's portraits and paintings, could have been attributed to his enlarged thoracic development. The singer's skeletal development, typical for this 'family' of hybrid vocal personae, has been supported by findings in the 2006 exhumation of his remains in Bologna. Carlo Vitali, a Farinelli expert, reported that the remains 'looked tall and sturdy, quite matching the impression collected from several contemporary portraits and caricatures.'<sup>516</sup> This, as elaborated by Belcastro, professor of physical anthropology, 'would be a typical outcome of castration.'<sup>517</sup> As growth is controlled by the competing action of two hormones, HGH [Human Growth Hormone] and testosterone, a lack in the latter may easily

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<sup>514</sup> Quantz puts Farinelli's range even lower to *A* as well as puts his highest note to *c'''*. ('Farinelli possiede una voce penetrante, piena, brillante e ben modulata, che se estende dal *la2* fino al *do5*.) J. Quantz, *Lebenslauf von ihm selbst entworfen*: 233. In Sandro Cappelletto. 1995. *La voce perduta*. Torino: EDT; 15. This passage's translation might not be entirely accurate due to international note names' variation.

<sup>515</sup> Haböck, 1923 : 209, 227 & 12.

<sup>516</sup> *Gramophone*. 12 July 2006.

<http://www.gramophone.co.uk/newsMainTemplate.asp?storyID=2595&newssectionID=1> (Accessed: 14.08.08).

<sup>517</sup> Maria Giovanna Belcastro, University of Bologna.

cause the bones to increase to an abnormal length.’<sup>518</sup> The most compelling evidence though is musicological and can be found on scores of music sung or composed by the singer. For instance, the aria *Son qual nave ch'agitata*, composed especially for Carlo by his brother Riccardo, demands an impeccable phrasing control. There are several points in the aria demonstrating this and asking for constant runs for several bars, entwined with *messa di voce* and seemingly impossible breathing points. However, none could compare to the twenty-eight-bar struggle from bar 66 until the end of part A. This is one of the characteristic passages proving beyond doubt Farinelli's immense singing abilities. Charles Burney reviewed the singer's performance in this aria:

The first note he sung was taken with such delicacy, swelled by minute degrees to such an amazing volume, and afterwards diminished in the same manner to a mere point, that it was applauded for full five minutes. After this he set off with such brilliancy and rapidity of execution that it was difficult for the violins of those days to keep pace with him.’<sup>519</sup>

However, even the *quasi*-canonised Farinelli has not been exempt from parody and ridicule. An anecdote about an aristocratic English lady exclaiming after his performance ‘One God, one Farinelli!’ has been

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<sup>518</sup>The extract continues with further findings: ‘An extremely tight ischiatic notch (connecting the head of the femur to the pelvis) provides one more hint to castration, as does frontal hyperostosis (abnormal thickening of the frontal bone), until now the only discovered trace of any major pathology. An enlarged jaw and a fairly normal set of teeth have also been measured.’

Carlo Vitali. 14 November 2007.

[http://www.comune.bologna.it/iperbole/farinelli/inglese/testi/riesumazione\\_del\\_farinelli-news-engl.htm](http://www.comune.bologna.it/iperbole/farinelli/inglese/testi/riesumazione_del_farinelli-news-engl.htm) (Accessed: 15.12.08).

<sup>519</sup> Burney, 1773/1959: 154.

parodied in Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress*.<sup>520</sup> The detail is situated at the front of Plate 2, entitled 'The Levée' in the form of "an engraving that has fallen to the floor", entitled 'A Poem dedicated to T Rakewell, Esq'.<sup>521</sup> The threat of ridicule, however, is something that modern hybrid vocal personae also have to contend with. As medical doctors and practitioners recognise, 'attitudes towards gender diversity [such as intersex or trans-identity] include a combination of awe, fear, respect, ridicule, disgust, dismay, pity, and bemusement.'<sup>522</sup> Therefore, the displacement of binarian male-female vocal expectation bears dual-sided effects for both the artist and the audience. In some cases, the consequences for the singer can be very traumatic. For instance, a young natural male soprano, Radu Marian 'didn't talk or sing for an entire year' as a consequence of his teachers' inability to accept his individual singing persona.<sup>523</sup> He had a voice 'so high, delicate, and mysterious that it could put people into a sort of trance, but at the age of 17 he came down with severe laryngitis and a doctor told him to stop using the voice altogether.'<sup>524</sup>

The respect and awe shown towards Farinelli have always existed alongside ridicule. This was reflected in his frequently melancholic

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<sup>520</sup> Angus Heriot. 1975. *The castrati in opera*. London: Calder and Boyars; 99.

<sup>521</sup> Daniel Hertz. Aug. 1990. 'Farinelli Revisited.' *Early Music*. Vol. 18, Issue 3: 430-48; 438. Cf. Appendix 2.8.

<sup>522</sup> S. F. Ahmed, S. Morrison and I. A. Hughes. 2004. 'Intersex and gender assignment; the third way?' *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. Vol. 89: 847-50; 848.

<sup>523</sup> Marian is a Natural Male Soprano, who has never confirmed the reasons behind his vocal idiosyncrasy; Kallmann Syndrome, an endocrinological condition, has at times been connected with his vocal idiosyncrasy.

<sup>524</sup> September 2005. 'The Strange Art of the Male Soprano: Radu Marian.' *Details*: 317-21; 318. The laryngitis was caused by Conservatoire teachers' attempt to turn Marian into a tenor.

disposition and peculiar sense of underachievement at times.<sup>525</sup> Both of these psychological characteristics were aggravated in later life. One of the agents of the Count Edoardo Pepoli, son of Sicinio, stated in a letter written on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1761: 'I have heard of the arrival in Bologna of the Knight Signor Farinelli and his Melancholy; I have to say it like that, because I believe that he has married 'her'.<sup>526</sup> I dislike his great infirmity, which will eventually cut his life short; (a life) which could have been conducted contented and happy.'<sup>527</sup> Even at the greatest moments of his career, during his tremendous success in London, Farinelli had the sense that this would not last for long. Before travelling to Spain he told the father of Edoardo, Count Sicinio Pepoli: 'I increasingly put in my mind to leave the profession before it 'leaves' me (first).'<sup>528</sup> We are not aware whether the singer had by then received proposals from Spain.

Farinelli's move to Spain in the summer of 1737 signaled a new stage in his life and career. Contrary to expectations, he stayed in Madrid for twenty years. The main aim of his career, instead of singing, which seemed to improve Philip V's mental health condition, had been his court and

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<sup>525</sup> Hormonal deficiencies, usual in a castrato, have been recognised for producing similar mood swings. 'Androgen insufficiency is considered to exist as a syndrome in which there are ... nonspecific signs and symptoms, such as ... feeling sad and melancholy'. (Abdulmageed M. Traish *et al.* 2007. 'Testosterone and Erectile Function: From Basic Research to a New Clinical Paradigm for Managing Men with Androgen Insufficiency and Erectile Dysfunction.' *European Urology*. Vol. 52: 54-70; 60.

<sup>526</sup> I tried to reflect the mood of a highly-gendered language such as Italian when translating the passage into English.

<sup>527</sup> Agent of Count Edoardo Pepoli. 23 June 1761. 'Letter.' In Francesca Boris, collab. 2000. *La Solitudine Amica*. Prefazione. Palermo: Sellerio Editore; 40. 'Sento esser arrivato in Bologna il signor Cavaliere Farinelli, e sua malinconia; e necessario dir cosi, perché credo l' abbia sposata. Mi dispiace pero di questa sua infermità, la quale finalmente gli darà breve la sua vita,che poteva condurre lieta, e felice.'

<sup>528</sup> 'Sempre più mi metto in testa di lasciare la professione prima che lei lasci me.' (Carlo Broschi. In Boris: 34).

diplomatic career. As McGeary notes, 'To attach Farinelli formally to his service, on 19/30 August the Spanish king honored Farinelli with two appointments. ... (Apart from) *familiar criado* (personal servant) Farinelli was also appointed *musico de càmara* (chamber musician).'<sup>529</sup> When the King died, the singer returned to Italy. Voltaire, a vehement opponent of the castrato phenomenon, criticises the aspect of Farinelli's nearly-regal figure in Spain in his novel *Candide*. In that work, published in 1759, which was the year of Farinelli's retirement, Voltaire introduced a castrato with the following words: 'I was born at Naples ... there they geld two or three thousand children every year; some die of the operation, some acquire a voice more beautiful than those of women, and others are raised to offices of state.'<sup>530</sup> Daniel Hertz connects 'The Rake' with 'Candide' by commenting that 'the gallows humour of Voltaire at his epigrammatic best makes a fine match for Hogarth.'<sup>531</sup>

Farinelli's achievements went beyond the singer-musician-composer's sphere. His diplomatic career brought him to places not usually allowed to musicians let alone the *evirati cantori* of his days; in this way he broke open the barriers for future followers.<sup>532</sup> His contemporary Dr. Charles Burney summed up the singer's greatest legacy in the following way: 'No vocal performer of the present century has been more unanimously allowed by

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<sup>529</sup> Thomas McGeary. 1998. 'Farinelli in Madrid: Opera, Politics, and the War of Jenkins' Ear.' *The Musical Quarterly*. Vol. 82, Issue 2: 383-421; 390.

<sup>530</sup> F-M Arouet Voltaire. 1991. *Candide*. Paris: Courier Dover Publications; 27. Cf. Appendix 2.9.

<sup>531</sup> Hertz: 441.

<sup>532</sup> Farinelli's example could only be compared to that of the Byzantine Basil Lekapenos. The Byzantine, however, never started from a singer's background – still considered to be inferior – but from that of an aristocrat.

professional critics as well as general celebrity to have been gifted with a voice of such uncommon power, sweetness, extent, and agility as Carlo Broschi, called Farinelli.<sup>533</sup> Three years earlier, the same writer, nearly ‘mesmerised’ by the singer’s personality, had noted Farinelli’s extraordinary attributes and potential influence: ‘He possessed such powers as never met before, or since, in any human being; powers that were irresistible, and which must subdue every hearer; the learned and the ignorant; the friend and the foe.’<sup>534</sup> If a learned composer and historian could react to the singer’s talents and personality in such a manner, then we could imagine his ‘typical’ audience’s adulation. Farinelli was multi-gifted and could not be ignored. However, his greatest contribution to Hybrid Vocal Personae of modern times, apart from the scarcely preserved immense musicianship, was his quest for respected visibility.

The second singer of most renown to us was Caffarelli (born Gaetano Majorano) (1710-83). Nicolò Porpora, who, among numerous other singers, was the teacher of both Farinelli and Caffarelli, described Caffarelli as ‘the greatest singer in Europe’.<sup>535</sup> Caffarelli was among the very few for whom there is supporting evidence of him requesting his own castration.<sup>536</sup> We read, specifically, that the grandmother of the ten-year-old gave him the profits from two vineyards so that he could educate himself in grammar and

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<sup>533</sup> Charles Burney, F. Mercer, ed. 1776 / 1935. *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*. Vol. 2. London: Foulis; 789.

<sup>534</sup> Burney, 1773: 204.

<sup>535</sup> Editorial (editor unknown). 1935. ‘Handel’s Songs and Singers.’ *Music and Letters*. Vol. 16, Issue 3: 200-7; 201.

<sup>536</sup> Other known singers were Antonio Bannieri (brought up at the French Court during Louis XIV’s early years of reign) and Luigi Marchesi (1754-1829) who, as claimed, ‘demanded castration against his parents’ wishes.’ Barbier: 25.

especially music, 'to which he is said to have a great inclination, desiring to have himself castrated and become a eunuch.'<sup>537</sup> Haböck claims that the young singer – and Porpora's pupil by then – had been kept performing the same sheet of solfeggios for six years.<sup>538</sup> Later in his life, the singer's merits were summed up by one of his contemporary authors in the following way:

It would be difficult to give any idea of the degree of perfection to which this singer has brought his art. All the charms and love that can make up the idea of an angelic voice, and which form the character of his, added to the finest execution, and to surprising facility and precision, exercise an enchantment over the senses and the heart, which even those least sensible to music would find it hard to resist.'<sup>539</sup>

Unfortunately, the singer's tempestuous character and notoriety seem to have survived better than his art. Caffarelli remains famous to some mainly for being a 'bombastic and quarrelsome man who spent time in gaol, became very rich and bought a dukedom and two palaces!'<sup>540</sup> However, based on original accounts from the singer's stay at Pistoia between 1729 and 1731, Grundy Fanelli describes an unassuming and kind-hearted young

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<sup>537</sup> '... ut ille proficere possit studio gramaticae, et etiam dare operam cum majori decentia Musicae, in qua dictus Cajetanus magnam habere dicitur inclinationem, cupiens se castrare et eunucum fieri.' (E. Faustini-Fassini. 1938. 'Gli astri maggiori del bel canto napoletano.' *Note d'archivio*. Vol. 15; 124).

<sup>538</sup> Haböck, 192: 382-5.

<sup>539</sup> Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm. 1877-82. *Correspondance Litteraire, Philosophique et Critique*. Paris. In Angus Heriot. 1956. *The Castrati in Opera*. London: Calder & Boyars; 150-1.

<sup>540</sup> Henry Barton Baker. 2007 / 1904. *History of the London Stage and its Famous Players 1576-1903*. Glacier, MT: Kessinger Publishing; 166.

Caffarelli who was perceived to be ‘blessed with perfection’.<sup>541</sup> Irrespective of the truth of either claim, the singer’s greatest legacy should be the strong commitment and perfectionism he exhibited throughout his singing career. In terms of hybrid vocal perspective, however, I would need to underline the conviction that enabled him to make conscious choices and bear the consequences. Contrary to Farinelli, the singer’s path, whatever it entailed, was and remained his choice. There is no evidence of him ever regretting it.

The contribution of Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci (c1735-90) remains equally unique. This singer, born in Siena, spent his early life in Italy and first appeared on stage at the age of twenty. In 1758 he went to London, and the city became fascinated with the castrato. The singer also became known for his friendship with Mozart who wrote a famous lost *scena* for him. The only details we know about this is that the composer was ‘in a hurry as he (had) to compose a *scena* for Tenducci for performance on the following Sunday by the Maréchal’s own orchestra ... It was to be scored for piano, oboe, horn and bassoon.’<sup>542</sup> Charles Burney examined and gave details of the finished score.

The following comments by Lydia Melford in *Humphrey Clinker* summarise not only Tenducci’s singing talents but also contemporary attitudes towards the *musici*:

There I heard the famous Tenducci, a thing from Italy—it looks for all the world like a man, though they say it is not. The voice to be sure is

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<sup>541</sup> J. Grundy Fanelli. February 1999. ‘A sweet bird of youth: Caffarelli in Pistoia.’ *Early Music*. Vol. 27, Issue 1: 55- 63; 62.

<sup>542</sup> Oldman, 1961: 49. Cf. Appendix 2.10.

neither man's nor woman's but it is more melodious than either; and it warbled so divinely that while I listened I really thought myself in paradise.<sup>543</sup>

The singer wrote a renowned Treatise on singing entitled 'Instruction of Mr. Tenducci to his Scholars' and composed Ranelagh songs, which he, however, rarely used to sing in concert.<sup>544</sup>

Modern information about the singer will always mention the stories surrounding his ill-fated marriage. The rumour-like stories mention that Tenducci 'eloped and married a girl from an influential Irish family', and, as a result, he was incarcerated.<sup>545</sup> However, original accounts, such as the eloquent story written by his wife Dona, née Maunsell, preserve the details of his imprisonment:

There he was attacked with a fever, which brought on a spitting of blood. And reduced him to a very melancholy state, his life being in great danger, and had it not been for the humane assistance of two gentlemen, Doctors of Physic ... he must have perished in this horrid gaol.<sup>546</sup>

Tenducci was not the only castrato who married and similar stories can be read about another singer, this time in Germany: 'In 1667, after a prolonged and at times trying engagement, Sorlisi [a singer in Dresden's electoral

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<sup>543</sup> T. Smollett, A. Ross, ed. 1771 / 1988. *Humphrey Clinker*. London: Penguin; 123.

<sup>544</sup> G. F. Tenducci. 1785 [?]. *Instruction of Mr. Tenducci to his Scholars*. London: Longman & Broderip.

<sup>545</sup> Jenkins, 1998: 1879.

<sup>546</sup> Dora Tenducci. 1768. *A true and genuine narrative of [the marriage and subsequent proceedings of] Mr. and Mrs. Tenducci. In a letter [from Mrs. Tenducci] to a friend at Bath, etc.* London: J. Pridden; 27.

Hofkapelle] succeeded in marrying a young woman named Dorothea Lichtwer, the stepdaughter of a lawyer who practised in that city.<sup>547</sup> His account, similarly to Tenducci's, demonstrates the 'far-reaching consequences of his decision to push one of those relationships far beyond traditionally accepted limits.'<sup>548</sup>

The marriage prohibition was declared in 1587 in a letter written by Pope Sixtus V to the bishop of Novara and papal nuncio to Spain. According to those papal views, women

who marry [eunuchs] live not chastely but are instead joined carnally, with depraved and libidinous intention, under the pretext and in the form of matrimony, aspiring to these shameful unions, which offer an occasion for sins and scandals and make for the damnation of soul.<sup>549</sup>

This view was similarly perpetuated by secular writers, such as Ancillon, who justified the papal prohibition and underlined the moral dangers arising from eunuchs' sexuality:

It is certain, however, that a eunuch can only satisfy the desires of the flesh, sensuality, passion, debauchery, impurity, voluptuousness and lechery. Since they are not capable of engendering children they are more sought after by debauched women, because they provide them with the pleasures of marriage unaccompanied by any of its risks.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Mary E. Frandsen. 2005. 'Eunuchi Conjugium: The Marriage of a Castrato in Early Modern Germany.' *Early Music History*. Vol. 24: 53-124; 55.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>549</sup> Sixtus V, 1587. In Appendix 2.11.

<sup>550</sup> Ancillon: 159-60.

Ancillon's views were quite typical and rather 'representative of the austere and moralising fringe of his time.'<sup>551</sup> There is, of course, no proof that the castrati were truly more disposed to sexual offenses than others or that their mistresses should be automatically treated as 'debauched'. However, the fascination with their sexuality and their attempts to marry did not wane. Another report, this time by Charles de Brosses, stated the case of 'one of these *half-men* [a castrato] (who) presented a request to Pope Innocent XI [pope from 1676 to 1689] for permission to marry, explaining that the operation had been done poorly; whereupon the pope wrote in the margin: *Che si castri meglio* [Let him be castrated better].'<sup>552</sup> Like their contemporaries, most *musici* would have liked to have lived in matrimony; some fought for it. Therefore, apart from any artistic contribution, a great legacy for Sorlisi, Tenducci and the rest of those singers has to be their vehement opposition and fight against the injustice of Papal marital exclusion for eunuchs. This struggle has continued through the centuries, right into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, marriage for transgender individuals in the United Kingdom became possible only after the introduction of the Gender Recognition Act 2004.<sup>553</sup>

Another significant singer, Siface (1653-97), is reputed to have got his name from his role in Cavalli's opera *Scipione Africano*. He is the only

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<sup>551</sup> Barbier: 152.

<sup>552</sup> Brosses, *Lettres d'Italie*: 36.

<sup>553</sup> After 2004, the GRA 'enables marriage and civil partnership for transsexual people in their acquired gender once they have obtained a GRC [Gender Recognition Certificate].' Stephen Whittle. 'The Gender Recognition Act 2004.' In James Barrett, ed. 2007. *Transsexual and Other Disorders of Gender Identity – A Practical Guide to Management*. Oxford & New York: Radcliffe Publishing: 262.

famous singer who was not only notorious for his amorous misadventures but also paid for them with his life. Anecdotes speak of him bragging about an affair with a married woman; and indeed: 'because of his liaison with the Countess Elena Forni, née Marsilii, the castrato Siface was murdered on the road between Ferrara and Bologna by killers hired by the Marsilii family.'<sup>554</sup> While other stories mention the husband as responsible for ensnaring and murdering the singer.

The singer's openly sexual behaviour not only had grave and dramatic consequences but also confirm the singer's active sexual persona. Though this does not necessarily constitute the rule, the dramatic events of Siface's death make it impossible to ignore. This is similar to perceptions of modern hybrid vocality, in which it is not unusual for intersex or transgender sexuality to be considered to be revolting and thus either ignored or treated as non-existent.

Another significant figure was Gaetano Guadagni (1725-92), a contralto *musico* who was later able to develop as a soprano. His name has been connected with Handel's arias 'But who may abide' and 'Thou art gone up on high' that were especially written for him in the *Messiah*. Referring to the first aria, Bergeron writes:

[once] we have recognised the 'grain' of Guadagni in the purposely extravagant, even queer, turns of an aria designed to celebrate the magnificent strangeness of its singer, we cannot help but become more aware of the inevitable problem of that singer's absence.

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<sup>554</sup> Heriot, 1956: 134 & Giacomo, *Conservatorio di San Onofrio*: 98.

Without the castrato this aria is, like so much of the music created for these lost singers, essentially unrevivable.<sup>555</sup>

However, the singer's most renowned role and greatest contribution to hybrid vocality is that of Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Burney describes him as a 'determined spirit ... supporting the dignity and propriety of his dramatic character, by not bowing acknowledgement, when applauded, or destroying all theatrical illusion by returning to repeat an air, if encored at the termination of an interesting scene'.<sup>556</sup> However, in those days this so offended 'the opera audience in general, that, at length, (Guadagni) never appeared without being hissed.'<sup>557</sup>

Giovanni Battista Velluti (1780-1861) was the last great operatic castrato. The reasons behind his castration remain unclear and, as claimed, could even be attributed to a medical mistake: 'as just about the boy was about to undergo an operation for completely different medical reason the parents and the doctor failed to understand each other. The latter, who was probably accustomed to carrying out orchidectomy, deliberately castrated the child.'<sup>558</sup> Because of this episode, that its substantiation Barbier fails to support, the family must have faced a certain de facto predicament. Since the military career planned by his father became immediately impossible, the

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<sup>555</sup> Kathryn Bergeron. 1996. 'The Castrato as History.' *Cambridge Opera Journal*. 8: 167-84; 177.

<sup>556</sup> Charles Burney, F. Mercer, ed. 1773-89 / 1957. *A General History of Music (1773-89)*. New York. Vol. II; 877.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>558</sup> Barbier: 228.

only suitable alternative was a singing vocation.<sup>559</sup> Padre Mattei soon became young Velluti's singing teacher in Bologna, where the Conservatoire training for young castrati continued to remain of high standards, unlike the training in Naples. Even though during his début and first years Velluti co-existed with established names, such as those of Rauzzini and Rubini, he became known eventually not only as the last operatic *virtuoso* but also the one to have operatic works specifically written for his voice. The times had changed, however, and not even the castrato-favouring Rossini was willing to accept 'abuses in the ornamentation of arias'.<sup>560</sup> Rossini is reputed to have found Velluti possessing three embellished versions of his 'Aureliano in Palmira' arias. After that, the composer began 'to notate embellishments more fully in his own scores.'<sup>561</sup> However, other accounts suggest that 'he did not expect singers to sing all notes as written but was instead ... providing a guide for inexperienced singers or those lacking in skill.'<sup>562</sup> The last operatic composer to write for Velluti's male soprano voice was Giacomo Meyerbeer in 1823-4; the opera was *Il Crociato in Egitto*. By the time of the singer's final appearance on the London stage in 1829, nonetheless, the castrato-in-opera phenomenon was increasingly seen as out of place.

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<sup>559</sup> The attitudes were vastly different to the Byzantine ones, where eunuchs, such as Narses, were able to access and ascend the military hierarchy.

<sup>560</sup> Barbier: 233.

<sup>561</sup> Clive Brown, Foreword by Roger Norrington. 2000. *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press; 419.

<sup>562</sup> Jennifer Hall-Witt. 2007. *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780-1880*. New Hampshire: University Press of New England; 51.

The last known castrato, Alessandro Moreschi (1858-1922), was born in Montecompatri, near Rome, and died in Rome. The singer, who contrary to his predecessors mostly sang liturgical music, became the soloist as well as the choir conductor at the Cappella Sistina from 1883-98. Pope Leo XIII had banned the practice of castration in 1878 and in 1902 he prohibited the admission of new castrati singers in the Vatican choirs. These dramatic events are concluded by Pius X, Leo's successor, in 1903. Among the first acts of the new pontiff was the dissemination of the *motu proprio* 'Tra le sollecitudini' ("Amidst the Cares") on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1903 which stated: 'Whenever . . . it is desirable to employ the high voices of sopranos and contraltos, these parts must be taken by boys, according to the most ancient usage of the Church.'<sup>563</sup>

Franz Haböck, who knew Moreschi, described his voice as being 'powerful, but pure and clear as crystal, with effortless breath control.'<sup>564</sup> The singer's greatest contribution to hybrid vocality, his recordings of 1902 and 1904, irrespective of technical deficiencies, are our only modern witnesses to the castrato voice. Only because of Moreschi's contribution has the castrato sound escaped the sphere of mythology and been preserved for future generations. Natural Male Sopranos of our time, such as Medina, use him as a frequent point of reference.

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<sup>563</sup> Pope Pius X. 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1903. *Tra le Sollecitudinini*, Vatican; V. 13. <http://www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html> (Accessed: 15.06.09).

<sup>564</sup> F. Haböck. 1927. *Die Kastraten und ihre Gesangkunst*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt; 207.

## Conclusion

Culture is a child of history and artistic appreciation a reflection of each era. Therefore, vocality is primarily attached to a period's ideas and beliefs and secondarily to taste. Irrespective of controversiality and a temporary fade out that surrounded the phenomenon in the beginning of twentieth century, however, the castrati singers' appeal has managed to survive well into the twenty-first century. Depending on individual researchers' viewpoints, the subject fascination might be more musicologically, historically, vocally, medically or gender-focused. To a musicologist with a singing background, the phenomenon of the *musici cantori* or castrati cannot but be assessed, at least primarily, through accounts of their sound, technique and singing styles. After all, as John Potter has observed, the singers' presence during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries

defined the art of singing; it was the eventual loss of their irrecoverable skills that in time created the myth of bel canto, a way of singing and of conceptualizing singing that was entirely different from anything that the world had heard before or would hear again.<sup>565</sup>

This is supported by much surviving evidence in the form of written ornamentations, *cadenze* and entire singing compositions. As we know from contemporary articles and the evidence gathered in the literature of music, the singers' level of vocal control and extemporisation was greatly advanced because of their schooling and seems unlikely to be repeated.

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<sup>565</sup> Potter, 2007: 99.

To appreciate the castrato phenomenon one must also take a historical perspective. There are two major research elements, which have been discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. These deal, firstly, with the possible connections between the eunuch singers of the so-called Baroque era and their Byzantine ‘predecessors’; and, secondly, with the chronology associated with the castrati singers’ first introduction in Italy during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary documents demonstrate several possible routes that could link the Byzantine and Baroque groups. The first route is associated with the Sack of Constantinople in 1204 by the Crusaders, which ‘brought with it the destruction of the fragile choral organization of the Hagia Sophia ... since the conquerors introduced the Latin rite to the Great Church.’<sup>566</sup> This led to the eunuch cantors’ disappearance from Byzantium. They emigrated to a number of countries, including Italy, and this establishes a more than reasonable correlation between the Eastern and Western eunuch singers. One resulted positive aspect of this is that Greek scholarship has recently started recognising the Byzantine castratos’ contribution to the work of late Byzantine masters.<sup>567</sup> However, unless the rift that still exists between these two Christian churches, Orthodoxy and Catholicism, can be, at least partially mended permitting a thorough examination of the subject by affiliated as well as independent scholars from both sides, any proof is likely to remain superficial and debatable.

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<sup>566</sup> Moran, 2002: 108.

<sup>567</sup> As recognised, ‘οι καλοφωνικές συνθέσεις των υστεροβυζαντινών μαϊστόρων οφείλουν χάριτας στην τέχνη των βυζαντινών καστράτων.’ (‘the beautifully-voiced compositions of the late Byzantine masters owe gratitude to the art of the Byzantine castrati’). Evangelia Spyrahou. 10-15 September 2007. ‘Η Ηχοχρωματική Ποικιλία στην Βυζαντινή Χορωδιακή Πράξη.’ *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of the ASBMH*. Athens; 155.

The views on the chronology by which the castrato singers arrived in Italy are also important. The fact remains that there still 'seems to be no evidence of castrati singers in Western Europe before the 1550s'.<sup>568</sup> However, the research on the courts of Gonzaga and Margaret of Parma and other equivalent areas of research may well produce further evidence, especially if examined in connection to documents existing in foreign archives. This could perhaps bring the singers' first Italian introduction, irrespective of names used, earlier than 1555. Any new evidence on the historical aspects discussed could have an impact not only on Hybrid Vocality but also on European history in a way that should not be underestimated.

The lost marvel of the castrato sound could never make the act of castration palatable to modern musicologists and audiences. The undeniable abuse of thousands in the name of potential artistic careers remains a dark point in modern European history. Furthermore, the twenty-first century secularisation in Europe could hardly condone the practice's justification under the quasi-dogma of *In Honorem Dei*. This is why there have been serious attempts to discredit or disregard the phenomenon. On occasion, the singers have even been de-personalised and equated to singing-machines. For instance, a mid-twentieth century scholar claimed that the castrati 'had neither sex nor natural personality'.<sup>569</sup> In Lang's view, which is at the

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<sup>568</sup> Rosselli, 1988: 146.

<sup>569</sup> Paul Henry Lang. 1966. *George Frideric Handel*. New York: W. W. Norton; 170.

extreme end of a spectrum, the singers were only '(instruments) of prodigious versatility and perfection ... (but not) living character(s).'<sup>570</sup>

Even with modern gender-awareness, there is 'the need to categorise a voice according to gender'.<sup>571</sup> In fact, the singers' occurrence has been increasingly viewed under a gender or social historical perspective. Gender theorists' diverse views on the castrato can range from claims of asexuality and quasi-femininity to 'virility, (where) the phallus has been displaced into his voice.'<sup>572</sup> The gender perspective has influenced many modern scholars, who, however, tend to exhibit equally diverse views. Whilst recognising the artistic achievements of the castrati, some accuse the 'monstrous' singers of being sexual beings: they have been called 'capons, geldings, half-men, (and) they became man-made monsters who were paradoxically highly sexualised in the audience's eyes.'<sup>573</sup> Sociologists, examining the phenomenon within a mostly modern perspective, can also be more or less negatively inclined towards the singers. According to one view, the singers' popularity is perceived as something sociologically superficial that 'dabbled in the realms of androgyny and gender instability to stimulate sexual and artistic curiosity.'<sup>574</sup> However, the reality appears to be far more perplex than these, mostly negative, claims.

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<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>571</sup> Joke Dame. 'Unveiled Voices.' In Brett, Wood & Thomas. 1994. *Queering the Pitch*. New York & London: Routledge; 139.

<sup>572</sup> Dame: 144.

<sup>573</sup> L. Hutcheon and M. Hutcheon. 2000. *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*. Nebraska: University Of Nebraska Press; 120.

<sup>574</sup> Edward Behrend-Martínez. Summer 2005. 'Manhood and the Neutered Body in Early Modern Spain.' *Journal of Social History*: 1073-93; 1075.

More than four hundred years since the singers' official introduction to Vatican Choirs and eighty-seven since Moreschi's death, the singers' legacy is still capable of provoking not only controversy but also inspiration, in spite of the shadow of castration. This fact only mars our modern appreciation of the castrato art. On occasion, what appear to be feelings of subconscious guilt tend to reverse the Balance of Blame. The reversal can then cause the castrators' crimes to remain unseen whereas the victims' lives stay scrutinised and often vilified. What seems initially to be a paradox, however, has a strong psychological basis: the association of castration anxiety with primordial fear.<sup>575</sup> Moreover, from another perspective, castration can be seen as a symbol of the 'traumatic origin of consciousness.'<sup>576</sup> Both psychological and mythological aspects were combined in 1902 by Karl Jung in his chapter on 'Mother complex', a study of the matriarchal / mother goddess archetype and its effects on human consciousness. According to this, the dramatic effects 'on the son may be seen on the ideology of the Cybele and Attis type: self-castration, madness and early death.'<sup>577</sup> These examples elucidate the reasons behind the complex human reactions to castration: like any archetype, ancient associations have left fear of this act deeply immersed in our psyche.

It is, however, important to recognise that this abuse did not affect all singers in the same way. Whereas some would bear the consequences of

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<sup>575</sup> Sigmund Freud. 1913 / 2001. *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. London: Routledge; 153.

<sup>576</sup> Norman Austin. 1990. *Meaning and Being in Myth*. University Park: Penn State University Press; 61.

<sup>577</sup> Karl Yung, trans. R.F.C Hull. 1902 / 2003 Revised Edition. *Four Archetypes: mother, rebirth, spirit, trickster*. London: Routledge; 20.

their castration heavily throughout their lives, such as Farinelli and Balatri, others seemed to be able to live relatively happy and contented lives.<sup>578</sup> The castrati Carestini and Salimbeni, for instance, ‘burst out laughing when people expressed pity for them’.<sup>579</sup> It is impossible to know whether this was a nervous reaction or genuine sarcasm towards societal attitudes. There are even a few, more or less, verified cases where singers, such as Caffarelli, appear to have expressed the desire, ‘to be castrated and become (eunuchs).’<sup>580</sup>

But, is it possible for us to appreciate a phenomenon associated with a specific socio-economic as well as religious background without adding input from a modern perspective? We can understand the effects of extreme poverty in society, but it is much harder for us to appreciate the reasoning contained in *In Honorem Dei*. And, while able to understand sacrifice for the sake of art, the modern perspective can hardly accept this when it is imposed on an underage child, usually without their informed consent. Even though, we only have limited immediate records as to how the singers felt about their castration, from our contemporary standpoint, we cannot but

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<sup>578</sup> However, there are cases expressing not melancholy but utter anger instead. For instance, Domenico Mustafà threatened that he would kill his father if he were to discover him responsible for the singer’s castration. This incident, described in De Angelis, happened during a soirée following a ‘socialite’s’ inconsiderate remarks about the singer’s ‘reduced state’. De Angelis: 8.

<sup>579</sup> Barbier, 1998: 2.

<sup>580</sup> ‘...ut ille proficere possit studio gramaticae, et etiam dare operam cum majori decencia Musicae, in qua dictus Cajetanus magnam habere dicitur inclinationem, cupiens se castrare et eunucum fieri’. E. Faustini-Fassini. 1938. ‘Gli astri maggiori del bel canto Napoletano.’ *Note d’archivio*. Vol. 15; 124. (‘...so that he could study grammar and especially music, “to which he is said to have a great inclination, desiring to have himself castrated and become an eunuch”.’ In John Rosselli. May - Aug. 1988. ‘The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850.’ *Acta Musicologica*. Vol. 60, Fasc. 2: 143-79; 153.

perceive the operation as a personal catastrophe for each individual. Stories of modern self-castration or cult-performed genital mutilation are rarely examined in context when evaluating individual effects. Assuming that this attitude persists, we are unlikely to understand the reason behind Carestini and Salimbeni's enigmatic laughter.<sup>581</sup>

The contribution made by castrati to Hybrid Vocal Personae remains not only valuable but also unique; a *sui generis* connection between ancient and modern alternative vocality. Particularly during times, when traditional views of masculinity and *potentia generandi* prevailed, their talents and subsequent visibility made the alternative a powerful possibility in art as well as in society. In a way, irrespective of the lack of collective spirit among them or supporting ideology, the operatic castrati could be considered as the first 'queer' icons of Early Modern Europe. The flexibility of their acting and social roles, permitting them to overcome a binary relationship and its boundaries, has made the singers a phenomenon far ahead of their time. Only in our day, 'the theory of gender as construction' as well as modern revivals of Baroque opera let gender and voice be 'put into action as a stylistic option, as choice.'<sup>582</sup> To most of his contemporaries, nonetheless, the castrato was viewed as 'a nothing', 'a sex without name'.<sup>583</sup> Artistically, moreover, the singer remained frequently a

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<sup>581</sup> 'Why Carestini and Salimbeni laughed, we will never know. You can trust eunuchs to keep their secrets.' R. J. Wassersug. 2004. 'Eunuch power in old Byzantium.' *Gay & Lesbian Review*. Vol. 11, Issue 3: 18-20; 20.

<sup>582</sup> Dame: 140.

<sup>583</sup> 1. Honoré de Balzac, trans. C. Bell. 2003. *Sarrasine*. eBookMall; 34.

I ought to kill you!' shouted Sarrasine, drawing his sword in an outburst of rage. 'But ... You are nothing! If you were a man or a woman, I would kill you, but...

de-personalised voice only exhibiting 'all the Warblings and Turns of [an even finer] Nightingal [*sic*]'.<sup>584</sup>

Appreciating fully a phenomenon, such as the *Musici*, however, from the viewpoint of Hybrid Vocality remains intriguing and challenging. Contemporary documents, even those negatively inclined, recognised that: 'There can be no finer Voices in the World, and more delicate, than of some Eunuchs, such as *Pasqualini*, *Pauluccio*, and *Jeronimo*, (or *Momo*,) and were esteemed so when I was in *Rome*, which was in the Years 1705 and 1706'.<sup>585</sup> For us today, nonetheless, the singers survive mostly as names. No matter the availability of immediate music materials, such as scores, for instance by Farinelli or Tenducci; their actual voice singing before there was the means to record it, remains remote and forever lost. We have to acknowledge, like their contemporary Charles Ancillon, that 'it is impossible to give any tolerable Idea of ... the Beauty of their several Voices: In short, they are above Description'.<sup>586</sup>

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2. Extract from Anonymous. 1738. 'The Ladies' Lamentation for ye Loss of Senesino.' *The Musical Entertainer*. London: My Warbler Celestial, Sweet Darling of fame, is a shadow of something, a Sex without Name.

<sup>584</sup> Charles Ancillon. 1718. *Eunuchism Display'd* (Anonymous version. *Traité des eunuques*). London: E. Curl; 31.

<sup>585</sup> Ancillon: 29.

<sup>586</sup> Ancillon: 30.

## CHAPTER III

### The Intersex Vocality

#### Prologue

Though the act of castration has been closely associated with hybrid vocality, this is not a *conditio sine qua non*. Diversity, arising from a natural condition, that is, ‘eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb’ can be equally behind alternative vocality.<sup>587</sup> It is possible that the category of ‘eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men’ was invented in the first place, irrespective of reasons, as an attempt to imitate some aspects of naturally occurring intersex differentiation.<sup>588</sup>

In terms of vocality, the natural male soprano or alto remains better documented and researched than the female tenor or bass. Irrespective of documentation, nonetheless, the hybrid female vocal persona demonstrates an equal variability factor to the male one. However, cultural history is rarely developed within a vacuum. In the case of male sopranos and altos, national as well as ecclesiastical events of the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of

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<sup>587</sup> Matthew, 19: 12. ‘For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.’

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.* ‘Sometimes a child is born with genitalia which cannot be classified as female or male... these conditions are ... collectively referred to as intersex.’ Leonard Sax. Aug. 2002. ‘How Common is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling.’ *The Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 39, Issue 3: 174-8; 174.

20<sup>th</sup> century have been of particular relevance and importance to their development. Therefore, in order to understand the vocal phenomenon in context, historic and cultural connections would need to be examined in detail.

## **Hybrid Male Vocality – The Old meets the New**

### **Italy: National and Vocal History in Juxtaposition**

The reunification of Italy in 1870 brought a wide change in legislation and attitudes. The new laws demonstrated a clear foreign influence – unsurprisingly perhaps, since the previous occupiers had mostly been the Austrians and the French. One of these new post-unification pieces of legislation had a particularly powerful impact on the fate of the remaining singers of the Sistine and Giulia Choirs. This is associated with a major phenomenon in European History: the revival of Modern Italy, also known as *Risorgimento*, which played a major part in changing attitudes. This eventually brought to an end three centuries of the Sistine choir.

The term *Risorgimento*, ‘excludes a purely territorial meaning’ and literally describes ‘something that once was there, that has temporarily stopped being there, and then starts again.’<sup>589</sup> This phenomenon, consisted

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<sup>589</sup> L. Salvatorelli, trans. M. Domandi. 1970. *The Risorgimento: Thought and Action*. New York, Evanston & London: Harper and Row Publishers; 4 & 5.

of a long series of events, will need to be followed in detail in order to appreciate its impact. The focal point for this chapter will be the events at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which become closely associated with the last castrati singers in Italy.<sup>590</sup> However, during 1748, which marks the early revolutionary stages of the *Risorgimento*, one cannot but acknowledge the great significance of an important ecclesiastical document. Benedict XIV's treatise *De Synodo Dioecessana* is the first Vatican document to be considered to be openly critical towards the castrato phenomenon:

... in the circumstances of the present time, when the secular powers allow the castration of boys to pass unnoticed, at least by dissimulation;<sup>591</sup> when a musical fashion has been introduced into the churches which can only be maintained with difficulty (or not even with difficulty) without castratos; when for a long time now people have been accustomed to hear these voices even in the Papal Chapel, [I ask] whether a bishop who removed the castratos would act prudently, or whether he would not rightly incur the blame and hatred of men as an author of novelty which would disturb the public peace.<sup>592</sup>

Nonetheless, Benedict also recommended that 'the wise bishop will not remove the castratos but will rather take care that theatrical fashions are not

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<sup>590</sup> Earlier historians, like Carducci, put the beginning back in 1748. That year, as cited by Salvatorelli, 'is capable of including a broad interpretation of the beginnings of the *Risorgimento*; politics and culture, reform and philosophy can all be associated through it.' Salvatorelli: 25.

<sup>591</sup> Benedict here cleverly criticises previous Popes as well as himself. The Vatican States' ruler is certainly one of the above mentioned 'secular powers'.

<sup>592</sup> Benedict XIV, 1748: 294f.

adopted by church choirs . . . and that if such singers are clerics they do not appear on the stage.’<sup>593</sup> Though the phrasing and aetiology might appear to us to be a compromise, the Pope’s words had a great influence and demonstrated the changing attitudes towards the singers.

Singers Luigi Marchesi and Giovanni Battista Velluti were born in 1754 and 1780 respectively. Velluti, the last operatic soprano and *primo uomo*, was born in Montolmo, near Macerata.<sup>594</sup> In 1788 ‘a local doctor castrated him as treatment for a cough and high fever.’<sup>595</sup> Following this unfortunate event, his father, who previously aspired to a military career for his son, felt obliged to enroll him in musical training. Ten years later, marked the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars (1798-1815) and by then Velluti was old enough to have completed most of his singing education.

The Napoleonic wars ‘played havoc with social and artistic structures in Italy, including the conservatoires where young castrati had received their rigorous training.’<sup>596</sup> In February 1798, the French troops attacked and occupied the Vatican State; the region became known as the Roman Republic and the Pope, Pius VI, was obliged to flee to Tuscany. Before he fled though, he reversed the ban on women performing on stage in Rome and the Papal States. Ferdinando IV of Bourbon, then King of Naples, tried to rescue Pius, but he lost his power too. As a result, the Parthenopean, or

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<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>594</sup> There are three different spellings of the singer’s surname, depending on the extract and the sources, English or original. Unless associated with a specific extract, I use the most common Italian orthography.

<sup>595</sup> This was rare yet not unheard of in those days; for example, castration was still the only possible way for doctors to treat a hiatus hernia.

<sup>596</sup> Clapton, 2004: 20.

Neapolitan, Republic was proclaimed in January 1799. However, this only lasted for a few months. In April 1799, while Napoleon was in Egypt, General Suvorov led an Austro-Russian army across northern Italy and the French republics were overpowered. Two months later, in June 1799, Naples was taken over by Cardinal Ruffo in the name of King Ferdinando. In September the Bourbon crowds advanced towards Rome. The events thus far demonstrate the complicated nature of the Italian nation.

The Bourbon victory made Maria Carolina of Austria, the wife of Ferdinando IV and sister of Marie Antoinette, the founder of the reactionary party. Following the death of Pope Pius VI, any Spanish influence had faded at Naples and she was able to act as Regent. Republicans, liberals or simply people who co-operated or compromised themselves under French rule were eliminated as a result. Many artists, scientists and intellectuals are numbered among the thousands of victims. However, we need to understand that not all those who fought for the restoration of old Italy had been genuine patriots. In fact, 'behind the patriotism of the Sanfedisti, there was only weak, backward, servile Italy, the old Italy that had to disappear before the new could truly rise'.<sup>597</sup> The new status quo did not remain unchallenged. During June 1800, Napoleon confronted the Austrians at Marengo. The Austrians were more numerous and – following ferocious combat – gained local control initially in the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> June 1800. Nonetheless, Marshal Desaix's heroic struggle managed to annul the Austrian advantage and by the end of the day victory had been declared by the French army.

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<sup>597</sup> Salvatorelli, 1970: 60.

However, whereas the French remained powerful in central and Southern Italy until Unification, 'Austria was mistress of Northern Italy.'<sup>598</sup> This is a crucial divide in Italian history that has affected Italian politics ever since; some would claim, even to the present day.

Napoleon's presence, initially approved of by most Italians, produced the first unification attempt for Italy after 1800. During 1800, the young Velluti débuted at Forlì. In 1802 the Cisalpine Republic, comprising Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna, was renamed the Italian Republic and in 1805, after the addition of Venice, it became the kingdom of Italy. Quite predictably, the newly established Italian Republic had no Italian government. The Corsican-born, yet mostly French in mentality, Napoleon I had crowned himself King and made Eugène de Beauharnais his viceroy. Ironically, his previous views expressed in the *Code Napoléon* of 1804, which made the practice of castration punishable by law, did not prevent the Emperor from making the castrato Crescentini 'a Knight of the Iron Cross of Lombardy ... and (inviting) him to Paris.'<sup>599</sup> One year later, in 1806, Joseph Bonaparte, his eldest brother, was made king of Naples.<sup>600</sup> Among his first pieces of legislation was a law forbidding castrati from entering the schools and the Conservatoire. However, retired singers would continue to

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<sup>598</sup> Salvatorelli: 68.

<sup>599</sup> 'Every person, guilty of the crime of castration, shall undergo the penalty of perpetual hard labour. If death has resulted therefrom, before the expiration of forty days, next after the crime, the criminal shall undergo the penalty of death.' *Napoleonic Penal Code – Book the Third: Of Crimes and Delicts, and of their Punishment*. Title II. Crimes and Delicts against Individuals. Chapter I – Section I, § II. 'Wilful Wounds, and Blows, not amounting to Murder, and other wilful Crimes and Delicts': 316.

[http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/france/penalcode/c\\_penalcode3b.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/france/penalcode/c_penalcode3b.html) (Accessed: 12.08.09). Clapton, 2004: 20.

<sup>600</sup> Joachim Murat replaced him in 1808; he was Napoleon's brother-in-law.

teach there for decades.<sup>601</sup> During those same years, on the singers' side, we have Marchesi's retirement and Crescentini's singing in France. The combination of political change and the limited number of *primi uomini* sees the introduction of more women sopranos singing trouser roles by 1809-10.

Two years later, in 1812, Savoy, Piedmont, Liguria, Tuscany, Parma, and the Papal States were occupied by France. Sardinia, however, was left under the house of Savoy and Sicily under the Bourbons. Italian patriots eventually became disenchanted with Napoleon. This led to the formation of several revolutionary societies, such as the Carbonari, which brought the actual Italian unification forward. In 1813 and on the opera stage, Velluti performed Arsace in Rossini's *Aureliano in Palmira*. This was a role specifically written for him by the composer. His overt use of ornamentation would soon compel Rossini to present his scores with more fully-written singing lines.<sup>602</sup>

Austria did not stay idle for long. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the country became once more the leading power in a still-divided Italy. This was fully realised after crushing two major Italian revolutions; one in 1820-1 and another in 1831. The Congress of 1815 generally restored the power of old ruling families, and thus the pre-Napoleonic status quo, with only a few exceptions. Under the Austrians, Venice together with Lombardy became the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom and Sardinia acquired Liguria. Also Naples and Sicily, united in 1816, became known as the

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<sup>601</sup> Patrick Barbier, trans. Margaret Crosland. 1996. *The World of the Castrati: the History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon*. London: Souvenir; 227.

<sup>602</sup> Cf. fn 635.

kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Austrian influence became paramount in Italy. However, neither the efforts of Metternich nor the Holy Alliance could deter the further development of the movement for independence.<sup>603</sup>

In the mean time, Velluti performed Armando in Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto* in 1824 and soon after left for London. He stayed there, performing as well as directing, until 1829. The *London Magazine* stated in 1825 that: 'His *portamento* is exact, no taint of nose, mouth, or throat, is discoverable in its production; nothing can be more perfect or more finished; there are no roughnesses, no inequalities.'<sup>604</sup> Attitudes, however, had changed dramatically. Only one month earlier, *The Times* had criticised his invitation to London with sharp tones:

His shameless patrons have dared to insult, not only the British nation, but even humanity itself, by thrusting forward this non-creature upon the stage . . . But women; can women too, attend the scene? Can British matrons take their daughters to hear the portentous yells of this disenfranchised of nature, and will they explain the cause to the youthful and uninformed mind? . . . The British people are content to seek for entertainment within the confines of nature.'<sup>605</sup>

Very soon the reviews were speaking about the 'lugubrious and impure

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<sup>603</sup> Holy Alliance (created on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1815) was initially a coalition of Russia, Austria and Prussia. The three countries' monarchs used the Alliance as the means to prevent the spreading of revolutionary influences (for instance, of the French Revolution) from entering their countries. The Alliance, with the inclusion of England and France in 1818, became eventually known as Quintuple. The Alliance did not survive the death of Russia's Alexander I in 1825.

<sup>604</sup> *London Magazine*, July 1825: 474.

<sup>605</sup> *The Times*, 30 June 1825: 3a.

intonation of Signor Velluti.<sup>606</sup> As J.Q. Davis stated, when the singer 'arrived for his final season in London on 11 April 1829, (he) was no longer welcome at the opera.'<sup>607</sup> He survived by giving lessons and singing English concert arias. By 1830 Giovanni Battista Velluti had returned to Italy. There he appeared 'in *Tebaldo e Isolina* (Lugo di Romagna, 1830), *Il crociato in Egitto* (Brescia, 1830; Florence, 1833), *Aureliano in Palmira* (Brescia, 1831), Giuseppe Nicolini's *Il conte di Lenosse* (Venice, 1831) and an Italianised *La muta di Portici* (Gaetano Rossi and Stefano Pavesi, Venice, 1831).'<sup>608</sup> The singer retired in 1833.

By 1833, the *Risorgimento* movement had divided and consisted of three main groups. First were the radicals, led by Mazzini and Garibaldi; these were eager to create a republic. Second were the moderate liberals, associated with the house of Savoy.<sup>609</sup> Finally, there were the Roman Catholic conservatives who promoted a confederation under a papal presidency. Between 1848 and 1849, there were numerous unsuccessful attempts for independence taking place in Naples, Venice, Tuscany, Rome and Sardinia. However, things started changing for the better soon after. First of all, Count Camille di Cavour, who was the prime minister of Sardinia in 1852, joined England and France in the Crimean War (1853-6). Alessandro Moreschi was born in Montecomparti soon after the end of the

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<sup>606</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 1 April 1826: 150.

<sup>607</sup> J. Q. Davies. 2005. 'Veluti [sic] in speculum': The twilight of the castrato.' *Cambridge Opera Journal*. Vol. 17, Issue 3: 271-301; 300.

<sup>608</sup> *Op.cit*: 301.

<sup>609</sup> In '1946, when the Kingdom of Italy came to an end, the House of Savoy was the world's oldest reigning dynasty. The heads of the House of Savoy had ruled, first as counts, then as dukes and finally as kings, for almost a thousand years.'  
<http://www.regalis.com/savoy.htm> (Accessed: 25. 11.09).

war, in 1858. On the political scene, Count Camille helped France in the conflict against Austria in 1859; this eventually added Lombardy to the existing lists of freed Italian states. Then, in 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi conquered Sicily and Naples and turned them over to Sardinia. Moreover in 1861, Modena, Parma, Tuscany and the Romagna all voted by plebiscite to join Sardinia.<sup>610</sup> The same year, on 17<sup>th</sup> March, Victor Emmanuel II, King of Piedmont-Sardinia, was proclaimed King of Italy and the last operatic castrato Giovanni Battista Velluti passed away. However, the most obvious events with connection to our subject were the annexation of Venice five years later in 1866 and that of papal Rome in 1870. From then on, the majority of Italian territory became unified into one nation under a constitutional monarchy. The years from 1861 until the end of Fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini (1922-43) see Italy governed by more or less the same liberal establishment adopted by Sardinia in 1848. The reigns of Vittorio Emanuele II (1861-78), Umberto I (1878-1900), and the first half of the reign of Vittorio Emanuele III (1900-46) were marked by modest social and political improvement, and by some industrial growth in 20<sup>th</sup> century Northern Italy.

The French were among the very few European audiences reluctant to appreciate the castrati singing phenomenon. Well-known exceptions existed, such as Napoleon I, who contrary to his past attitudes, eventually hired Velluti and Crescentini, two castrati singers. Nonetheless, this never became

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<sup>610</sup> Romagna is a historical region that corresponds to the south-eastern portion of modern *Emilia-Romagna*.

a popular trend in France, where castration remained actively practiced for numerous medicinal purposes, like hernia. Musical audiences, as plenty of scholars agree, remained less keen to appreciate not only the operated male soprano voices but also the general artistic phenomenon.<sup>611</sup> Voltaire summed up this sentiment through the words of Procurante in *Candide*: 'Swoon with pleasure if you wish or if you can at the sight of a eunuch warbling the roles of Caesar and Cato and walking about the stage in a clumsy fashion. As for me, I long ago gave up these miserable performances which today constitute the glory of Italy and are paid for so dearly by sovereigns.'<sup>612</sup> These words not only demonstrate Voltaire's dislike of the singers but are also strongly associated with Italy: one of France's occupant countries and their most significant cultural rival. However, this view of the singers has not only been questioned but also challenged by Lionel Sawkins in his article of 1987, which contains numerous examples. According to one of them, 'castrati were in fact employed continuously, both in church music and opera at the court, from the reign of Louis XIV until the Revolution, nor were they absent from 19<sup>th</sup>-century music under Napoleon, or from the chapel of Charles X.'<sup>613</sup> Nonetheless, this is a greatly under-researched area where the attitudes outside the Court, as demonstrated earlier, still present us with a different picture. More recent research has even claimed that

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<sup>611</sup> Among these scholars are: A. Heriot. 1975. *The Castrati in Opera*, London: Calder & Boyars, A. Harman with A. Milner & W. Mellers. 1977. *Man And His Music: The Story Of Musical Experience In The West*. Vol.2 - Late Renaissance and Baroque Music, c.1525-c.1750. London: Barrie and Jenkins and Thomas Walker. Castrato. In Stanley Sadie, ed. 1980. *New Grove Dictionary*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Vol. 3. London: Macmillan.

<sup>612</sup> Voltaire, ch. 25.

<sup>613</sup> Lionel Sawkins. 1987. 'For and against the order of Nature - Who sang the soprano?' *Early Music*. Vol. 15, Issue 3. Lully Anniversary Issue: 315-324; 319.

'following the French Revolution, aristocratic courts preferred to put on productions of conservative *opere serie* with castrati than risk *opera buffa* with its subversive themes.'<sup>614</sup>

Following the Risorgimento, among the newly-introduced French-inspired legal codes in Italy of 1870 was the first law expressly forbidding the practice of castration for musical purposes. A few years later, in 1878, Pope Leo XIII re-affirmed his initial intentions by further prohibiting the hiring of new sopranos and sopranists by the church. Nonetheless, a number of them still remained in the Sistine Chapel and in other papal choirs in Rome. A group photo of the Sistine Chapel Choir taken in 1898 shows that by then only six singers bearing eunuchoid characteristics remained there, including the *Direttore Perpetuo*, Domenico Mustafà.<sup>615</sup> Even though we have no recordings of Mustafà's voice, according to surviving contemporary accounts, like that of Franz Haböck, the singer possessed a voice 'as sweet and pleasant as that of a woman' with a usable range of at least two octaves from *c'* to *c'''*.<sup>616</sup>

In 1900 Moreschi sang at the funeral of Umberto I in the Pantheon. In 1902 a ruling extracted from Pope Leo XIII, where the Sistine Choir Perpetual Director Don Lorenzo Perosi had been a co-writer, made clear that no further castrati should be admitted. The official end to the singers' regime though, came on 22nd November 1903. On that St Cecilia's Day the

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<sup>614</sup> R. Somerset-Ward. 2004. *Angels and Monsters: Male and Female Sopranos in the Story of Opera, 1600-1900*. New Haven: Yale University Press; 83.

<sup>615</sup> Appendices 3.1 & 3.1.1.

<sup>616</sup> Franz Haböck. 1927. *Die Kastraten und ihre Gesangskunst*. Berlin & Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart; 203.

then new pope, Pius X, issued his *motu proprio* entitled *Tra le Sollecitudini* ('Amongst the Cares'). This contained the following definitive instruction: 'Whenever ... it is desirable to employ the high voices of sopranos and contraltos, these parts must be taken by boys, according to the most ancient usage of the Church.'<sup>617</sup> Fourteen years later, Franz Haböck interviewed Moreschi and found that his three-octave range (*a'-a'''*) had by then shrunk to merely *a-g''*. Nonetheless, the writer reported that his voice remained powerful and 'like a wind instrument in its crystalline clarity and purity'.<sup>618</sup> He also admired his 'matchless *messa di voce*', simultaneously claiming that the singer had never accomplished 'a good trill or coloratura'.<sup>619</sup>

Political and social turbulence saw the rise of Fascism after WWI and colonial wars. Mussolini, pledging the return to old Italian values, social order and political magnitude, led a march on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1922 in Rome and was subsequently made prime minister by Vittorio Emanuele III.<sup>620</sup> These views would soon trigger the persecution of minorities, irrespective of them being ethnically or gender-sexually defined ones.<sup>621</sup> On 21<sup>st</sup> April of the same year, Alessandro Moreschi, the last of the singers and the only one to have ever been recorded, died in his apartment in Via Plinio in Rome, situated just a few minutes' walk away from the Vatican.

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<sup>617</sup> Pius X. 22 1903. *Tra le Sollecitudini*. Vatican: V. 13.

<http://www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html> (Accessed: 15.08.08).

<sup>618</sup> F. Haböck: 115.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>620</sup> Based on information taken from *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 2007 - 6th Ed.

<sup>621</sup> In 1931 the Fascist government under Mussolini 'outlawed homosexuality'; this was the result of the so-called 'Battle for Births', which was 'launched in 1927'. Hamish McDonald. 1999. *Pathfinder History - Mussolini and Italian Fascism*. Cheltenham, UK: Nelson Thornes; 27.

## The Last Exponents – Sistine Chapel Photographic and Phonographic Accounts

During Moreschi's late years, as indicated in his early 20<sup>th</sup> century photographs, he was surrounded by two of his confirmed castrati Sistine Chapel colleagues. They are known to be the soprano singers Giovanni Cesare and Domenico Salvatori. However, unlike Moreschi, we have limited information about them.<sup>622</sup> We know that Moreschi survived them both by almost fifteen years and we know that Salvatori and Moreschi were not only close friends but also actually buried in the same grave. I have not been able to establish, whether this was decided by them or, for instance, Don Lorenzo Perosi, the then Sistine Chapel choir director.<sup>623</sup> However, given the location of the grave, in the Moreschi family vault of the Verano cemetery in Rome, it seems entirely possible that this might indicate both singers' last will.

There are no signs of singers younger than Moreschi in the Sistine Chapel choir. However, there have been unconfirmed rumours about castrati singers surviving Moreschi in the Sistine or other choirs. For instance, an article from the Guardian claimed, as late as 2001, that 'other historians suspect that Domenico Mancini, another private pontifical singer who performed from 1939 to 1959, was a castrato, too.'<sup>624</sup> This claim has now been refuted by Mancini himself in an interview, which I submit in the form

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<sup>622</sup> Pictures in Appendices 3.1. & 3.1.1.

<sup>623</sup> Cf. Leonardo A. Ciampa. 2006. *Don Lorenzo Perosi*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.

<sup>624</sup> Carroll, 14th August 2001: 30.

of both recorded and translated transcript.<sup>625</sup> This interview was part of a video recording, first submitted to the Castrati History Yahoo Group by the late Elsa Scamell. It has subsequently been studied by Nicholas Clapton in his book *Moreschi – The Last Castrato*. The same file had been briefly and anonymously mentioned earlier in the booklet accompanying the CD ‘Moreschi - The Last Castrato’. This particular interview dashed any earlier claims about Mancini.

Having examined the negative atmosphere before and after the ban on castrati, we can predict the attitudes following Moreschi’s death in 1922. Any remaining castrati would have been wiser not to attract unnecessary attention. Even Mancini, who had learned the art of singing from Moreschi and remained grateful to his teacher and proud to be associated with the phenomenon, was punished as a result of this association. Don Perosi, who was in 1922 the new Perpetual Director of Sistine Choir treated the young singer as a castrato and thus prevented him from entering the Choir. This is particularly interesting because, even though Perosi abhorred the practice and the phenomenon, he must have still known the particular characteristics of castrated singers. Even though Mancini’s technique and phrasing used to evoke or even emulate Moreschi, his physique clearly demonstrated an uninhibited masculine maturation.<sup>626</sup> Also, any early suspicions could easily have been eliminated by a visit to a specialist doctor. Therefore, it is probable that Don Perosi’s rejection of the singer signifies something far

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<sup>625</sup> Domenico Mancini. 1967 / 1981. ‘Interview’. In *Le Voci di Roma - Primo Volume*. Edizioni di Timclub: LP TIMA37. In Clapton : 162 - Appendices 3.2 & 3.2.1 & CD-R 5.3 (back cover).

<sup>626</sup> This would be later underlined by the sporting of a moustache.

more profound with regard to the whole phenomenon: disassociation and disambiguation. The Sistine Choir should never be seen again as vague about or associated with the castrati singers. Since then the Vatican's preferred policy is to cover all relevant traces by silence. This became the religious and national policy in Italy and was first reflected in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, published in 1931 under the auspices of H.M. the King. There, in an extensive reference, castration is recognised as 'being operated by humans on the most different organisms and for the most different causes.'<sup>627</sup> However, the extensive analysis of methods applied to animals, vegetables and parasites does not contain a single mention of human castration.<sup>628</sup> This same attitude is followed in the latest edition of the New Catholic Encyclopaedia, also published by official sources. This work refers to rather obscure personalities, like the current *Direttore Perpetuo* in the Capella Sistina, Father Giuseppe Liberto, yet ignores some of its most significant contributors and public figures; among them Domenico Mustafà, Alessandro Moreschi and, even, Don Lorenzo Perosi, all of them associated with the presence of last castrated singers in Capella Sistina.<sup>629</sup> Domenico

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<sup>627</sup> 'La castrazione è operata dall' uomo sui più vari organismi, per i più diversi casi.' Cesare Artom. 1931. 'Castrazione.' In *Enciclopedia Italiana – Di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* [Pubblicata sotto l'alto patronato di S.M. Il Re d' Italia]. Vol. IX. Milano e Roma: Istituto Giovanni Treccani; 385.

<sup>628</sup> Artom: 385.

<sup>629</sup> Liberto is a keen exponent of the Vatican system. In his view, 'Any kind of guerilla action against Vatican II does not produce good fruits. The council's principles by now are untouchable.' This mostly refers to comments made by his predecessor, Monsignor Domenico Bartolucci, who had blamed Don Lorenzo Perosi for the deterioration of Church music. Cf. S. Magister. 21 July 2006. 'I Had a Dream: The Music of Palestrina and Gregory the Great Had Come Back - An exclusive interview with maestro Domenico Bartolucci. Who strangled Gregorian chant and polyphony – and why. And how to bring them back to life. Benedict XVI? "A Napoleon without generals".' <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/72901?eng=y> (Accessed 5/09/08).

Mancini's translated interview gives us a brief but rare insight into the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Vatican.<sup>630</sup> Italian speakers can also listen to the original interview, for which we have only limited bibliographical information, but which states Mancini's age (76) and, therefore, constitutes a relatively accurate chronological reference.

During the years following Moreschi's death, audiences were drawn more to *Verismo* and had little interest in the art of the Baroque era. It has been suggested that the keys for the musical interpretation of that era had been lost even before Moreschi's times. This was demonstrated by the choice of pieces for the original Shellac recordings of 1902 and 1904. The twentieth century audiences still exhibited some early music fascination but both tastes and ideals had changed. It was, for example, more than acceptable then for the music audiences to listen to *virtuosi* arias as written by Handel transposed down an octave and re-allocated to tenors, baritones or basses. During the composer's time though, there was 'not a known instance of an alto part or an aria being transposed down an octave for a bass'. According to the same source, 'if a soprano (or an alto) was not available, he preferred to write new music'.<sup>631</sup> Before the beginning of the last century, the art of improvisation had also become mostly obsolete and discredited. According to Lydia Goehr, by '1800 ... the notion of extemporisation acquired its modern understanding [and] was seen to stand

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<sup>630</sup> See Appendix 3.2.1.

<sup>631</sup> Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas*: 21 (both extracts).

in strict opposition to “composition” proper.’<sup>632</sup> Similarly, inspired by the same views, Gioia had claimed a few years earlier that improvisation ‘is doomed ... to offer a pale imitation of the perfection attained by composed music.’<sup>633</sup> This attitude was still the case during the days of my own singing training at the Greek Conservatoires (I graduated in 1992). Both improvisation and ornamentation, however, had survived uninterrupted in other music genres such as jazz, blues or flamenco. One of the consequences of the discredited improvisation in conservatoire-taught ‘classical’ singing was the ABA aria form’s reduction into AB. This might appear relatively superficial to modern audiences but the implications of ABA were far deeper than purely musical variation and an excuse for ornamentation. Following the castrati singers’ fall from Vatican grace and their subsequent disappearance, a whole quasi-religious and philosophical cosmotheory based on the imitation of the Triad became extinct.<sup>634</sup> This goes far beyond the debated contribution of composers such as Gluck or Rossini towards the operatic demise of the *Musici*.<sup>635</sup> The *opera seria*

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<sup>632</sup> Lydia Goehr. 1992. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 234.

<sup>633</sup> Ted Gioia. 1988. *The Imperfect Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 66.

<sup>634</sup> Also, the original singers, according to Barbier, reflected ‘the trinity in the human form – man, woman and child’. (Barbier, 1996: 17). Similar ideas had also inspired the Skoptsy from the town of Saratov to claim that ‘they had no need of the churches: their own bodies as the place where the Holy Trinity dwelled were the better temples than[sic] the ordinary churches.’ I. Tulpe & E. Torchinov. 2000. ‘The Castrati (‘SKOPTSY’) Sect in Russia: History, Teaching and Religious Practice.’ *The International Journal for Transpersonal Studies*. Vol. 19: 77-87.

<sup>635</sup> As discussed earlier, Celletti, based on Stendhal’s chronicles, debates the view that Rossini started writing down his aria-ornamentations ‘because he was disgusted at the overdone interpolations and variations put in by the castrato Giovanni Battista Velluti.’ (Celletti, 1996: 142). On the contrary, the writer suggests that the reason for the composer’s particularly detailed notation is because Arsace’s character in *Aureliano in Palmira* ‘presents a type of coloratura which is more elaborate than in earlier *opera seria* roles.’ *Ibid*.

tradition remained accessible and could be retrieved by reading the treatises and manuscripts of the original era. However, this aspect only started receiving proper attention again from scholars and conservatoire-trained performers after the 1950s.

## The Falsettists

During the times of the *Musici*, a ‘new dislike of ... falsettists’ meant that they sang mainly secondary parts – especially in opera.<sup>636</sup> Their voices were thought to be unnatural and inferior to those of the *virtuosi*. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century tastes and standards had changed, thus making the *musici*, previously revered as divine, a synonym for ‘unnatural voices’. However, in modern times falsetto singers have been seen, somewhat awkwardly, as the most suitable solution for the roles written for the high-voiced male baroque singers.

This attitude towards performance has been supported by most modern ‘countertenors’.<sup>637</sup> Musicians and scholars, like René Jacobs or Peter Giles,

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<sup>636</sup> John Rosselli. ‘Song into Theatre: the beginnings of opera.’ In J. Potter, ed. 2000 *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 89.

<sup>637</sup> The unilaterally applied term ‘countertenor’, which is preferred nowadays, is confusing. Not only was it initially associated with a vocal line ‘above the tenor’ one – especially in early church music – but also that line was frequently sung by the *musici*. (De Marco, 2002; 174). For instance, Charles Burney uses the term in the sense of alto castratos. Talking about Giovanni Carestini or Cusanino, the writer says that ‘his voice was at first a powerful and clear soprano, which afterwards changed into the fullest, finest, and deepest counter-tenor that has perhaps ever been heard.’ (C. Burney. 1776-89. *A general history of music, from the earliest ages to the present period*. London. Vol. 4; 369-70.) The early church music reference has perhaps been misunderstood by Jacobs or Giles and transferred to baroque days’ Italy. There, however, as we can see in Tosi and Mancini, the most frequent references tend to support the term *falsettisti*. This has survived to our day as several Italian academic and other articles demonstrate. For instance, see Antonella Nigro’s

tend to focus mostly on some oratorio-based facts, where the falsettists were more established, and then try to apply them to the Italian opera genre as well. However, according to Nicholas Clapton, as recorded by Michael Church,

[Any] comparisons between castrati and modern falsettos - which is what most countertenors are - are otiose. They produced their sound in a completely different way because, as they never had a change at puberty, they retained the high notes of a boy's voice while developing the chest register of a tenor. This gave them a range with which we just can't compete.<sup>638</sup>

Also manuscripts showing Handel's original castings, for example, rarely or never support this view.<sup>639</sup> These authors also clearly tend to support another view that wants the composer 'regularly interchanging such (high voiced and stylistic) roles between castratos and women'.<sup>640</sup> Whereas those castings give us adequate proof about women singing parts primarily meant for a *virtuoso*, very few falsetto singers' names are mentioned there and none of them belongs to a *protagonist*. However, the reasons for Handel's casting of women instead of *primi uomini* were not purely artistic. Biographies dedicated to the composer mention his endless fall-outs with

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Chapter 'Considerazioni Sulla Tecnica Del Canto Italiano Dal Sec. XVI Ai Giorni Nostri.' <http://www.cantorisancarlo.it/Considerazioni.pdf> or in Flavio Ferri-Benedetti's article, who is an upcoming 'countertenor' yet as an Italian uses the term *falsettista*. <http://www.haendel.it/interpreti/falsettisti.htm> (Accessed: 1/1/09).

<sup>638</sup> Michael Church. 23 August 2000. 'A Cut above the Rest.' *The Independent*. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/a-cut-above-the-rest-697561.html> (Accessed: 1/1/09).

<sup>639</sup> Winton Dean & Merrill Knapp. 1995. *Handel's Operas, 1704-1726*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; 20-1.

<sup>640</sup> Dean & Knapp: 21.

singers challenging his authority. Only a few of those recorded incidents are concerned with women singers. One of them is the infamous episode with Francesca Cuzzoni who 'refused to sing *Falsa Imagina* from *Ottone*, (so) Handel picked her up and threatened to throw her from the window.'<sup>641</sup>

But neither the falsetto singer, nor the female voice offers a true replacement for the *musici*. Moreschi's recordings, despite the imperfections, speak of a vocal quality closer to that of a male child, as do the numerous treatises dating from the original era, and little related to that of a woman or a falsettist. The modern countertenor is a biologically mature male singing falsetto, which, in simplified terms, is a technique using only the front part of the singer's vocal folds in order to produce high notes. That was never the case when a castrato sang. His larynx and folds, as known, remained unaffected by puberty and always childlike. The performer's voice was, unlike a falsettist, very powerful because he utilised his vocal folds' entire length, which were also supported by his build which was dramatically different to that of the average adult male body. For example, a round and large ribcage encapsulated two bigger than usual lungs. This meant, following a suitable training, enormous breath capacity controlling childlike vocal folds. The resulting vocal clarity and strength were immense. This is why no averagely built high-voiced male or female singer could, in those days, or can now challenge the abilities of *primi uomini*. If a true vocal replacement option is our aim, then we might have to start looking to

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<sup>641</sup> Charles Burney. 1785. *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster-Abbey and the Pantheon (May 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>; and June the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>, 1784), in Commemoration of Handel*. London; 20.

the point where the usual limits of human biology are exceeded by non-legally or medically reprehensible interventions.

## Natural Alternatives

Throughout history, there have been individuals unable to experience puberty as most people do. However, early and later twentieth century developments in endocrinology, in terms of hormones and receptors, permitted to access conditions under a different perspective.<sup>642</sup> The reasons for arrested puberty can vary immensely – ranging from the so-called ‘intersex conditions’ to accidents happening before a child reaches puberty; the results can vary equally widely. The main intersex conditions or variations that are likely to arrest puberty in boys and result in the development of vocal eunuchoid characteristics, partly similar to those

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<sup>642</sup> Is it recognised that Bayliss and Starling first defined ‘classical’ hormones in 1902. Starling, in particular, introduced the term hormone, from the Greek verb *ὀρμάω*, which means to arouse to activity. Bayliss, however, claimed in 1924 that this term had been suggested by W. B. Hardy. (W.M. Bayliss. 1924. *Principles of General Physiology*. London: Longmans; 14). The term hormone was first applied in order to define those chemical messengers which ‘have to be carried from the organ where they are produced to the organ which they affect by means of the blood stream.’ E.H. Starling. 1905a. ‘Croonian Lecture: On the chemical correlation of the functions of the body.’ *Lancet*. Vol. 2: 339-41. Cf. W.M. Bayliss & E.H. Starling. 1902. ‘The mechanism of pancreatic secretion.’ *Journal of Physiology*. Vol. 28: 325-52.

Also, in biology, the function of ‘Receptors (is to) allow the cells to recognize specific ligands and to receive extracellular messages. They can be classified into five families: 1) receptors for lipidic or lipophilic ligands; 2) the seven transmembrane receptors which mediate their messages by transduction through the activation of G-proteins, effectors and second messengers to amplify the response; 3) receptors which present an enzymatic activity on their transmembrane domains; 4) channel-receptors, transmembrane oligomeric molecules which let ions flow into the cell and 5) receptors which role is to internalize ligands, whatever their various functions.’ J. Féger, S. Gil-Falgon, C. Lamaze. Dec. 1994. ‘Cell receptors: definition, mechanisms and regulation of receptor-mediated endocytosis.’ *Cellular and Molecular Biology* (Noisy-le-grand). Vol. 40, Issue 8:1039-61; 1039.

exhibited by the *musici*, are either Hypogonadotropic Hypogonadism or the combination of XXY chromosomes. The conditions are more commonly known by their first researchers' names as Kallmann and Klinefelter's syndromes. However, we have to clarify that the above are not conditions *sine qua non*. Kallmann syndrome is a subcategory of Hypogonadotropic Hypogonadism and XXY does not necessarily lead to the development of Klinefelter's syndrome.

The best way to describe these conditions is to make use of the relevant organisations published medically-based introductions. One description, for example, reads that 'in addition to occasional breast enlargement, lack of facial and body hair, and a rounded body type, XXY males are more likely than other males to be overweight, and tend to be taller than their fathers and brothers.'<sup>643</sup> So far, this description fits uncannily well with those describing the body shapes of *musici* too. It continues:

... a far more serious symptom, however, is one that is not always readily apparent. Although they are not mentally challenged, most XXY males have some degree of language impairment. As children, they often learn to speak much later than do other children and may have difficulty learning to read and write. And while they eventually do learn to speak and converse normally, the majority tends to have some degree of difficulty with language throughout their lives. If

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<sup>643</sup> Robert Bock. August 1993. 'Understanding Klinefelter Syndrome (Office of Research Reporting, NICHD).' *NIH Pub.* No. 93-3202.  
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/klinefelter.cfm> (Accessed: 2/10/ 2008).

untreated, this language impairment can lead to school failure and its attendant loss of self-esteem.<sup>644</sup>

And with this any resemblance to the *musici* ceases, for they were able not only able to learn and ‘process’ vast amounts of music, but also to add, innovate and contribute. Examining now the characteristics of the other major intersex ‘condition’, for instance that of Hypogonadotropic Hypogonadism, we are soon able to draw similarities with, as well as differences from, the latter. Marcello Spector states that like XXY males ‘patients with Kallmann syndrome usually come to medical attention because of a delayed puberty or incomplete sexual development’. The clear difference is that ‘anosmia or hyposmia is present in 80% of the patients and establishes the diagnosis of the syndrome in individuals with isolated gonadotropin deficiency’. As with XXY males, ‘prepubertal testes, micropenis and cryptorchidism are usually seen’.<sup>645</sup> But even though the condition usually makes the individual appear shorter in stature than average, along with other manifestations including learning disabilities, and chondrodysplasia punctata, ‘when patients with Kallmann’s syndrome are identified after the age of 16, eunuchoidal skeletal proportions are often present. Arm span can exceed height by 6 cm, and the upper to lower body ratio can be decreased’.<sup>646</sup> The latter makes the two ‘conditions’ sometimes

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<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>645</sup> Cryptorchidism or ‘Cryptorchidism is a condition in which one or both testicles do not descend into the scrotum.’ Rittler & Castilla. 2002. [http://www.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0102-311X2002000200006](http://www.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0102-311X2002000200006) (Accessed: 21.01.2009).

<sup>646</sup> Marcello Spector. ‘Endocrinology – Kallmann’s Syndrome.’ <http://www.medstudents.com.br/endoc/endoc1.htm> (Accessed: 12.05.2007).

less easily identifiable. The usually small stature and sickly disposition of an individual with Kallmann syndrome is certainly not a great asset to a singing career. However, there are case-singers with Kallmann syndrome that not only managed to become average singers but also excelled in their art. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century examples, which are tricky to verify scientifically, are reputed to include Frank Colman (recorded in the 1920-30s). A more recent one, even though the singer has never been willing to confirm this, is the male soprano Radu Marian. After years of silence, the singer has gone to great lengths in order to deny being affected by any intersex or hormonal condition. One of the methods involved the photographic manipulation of his image so that it presents him as overtly hairy. This, however, comes in contrast to his actual image when seen at close proximity as well as his childlike voice.

Apart from intersex conditions, individuals can suffer accidents of many sorts, which can produce results similar to eunuchoid ones which have been described above.<sup>647</sup> In some instances, the vocal students were able to overcome the vast amount of difficulties and become professional singers.<sup>648</sup> Individuals experiencing any of the above conditions will be prone to osteoporosis or brittle bone disease, unless they receive Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) – the most common method being testosterone injections. HRT, of course, was not scientifically possible before the

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<sup>647</sup> Including medically-induced ones.

<sup>648</sup> See Javier Medina's interview – Appendix 3.4.1.

twentieth century unless in herbal and unregulated forms.<sup>649</sup> The problem is understood to be that testosterone intake can potentially arrest the treated individual's ability to use his higher voice range as before. I will explain below why this is not always the case.

## The Skoptsy

Even though eunuchs are an ancient phenomenon, their condition was not considered to be medical. Therefore, one cannot find proper medical descriptions of eunuchs until the late nineteenth century. However a century earlier, a Russian Christian sect, known as the Skoptsy, came to the notice of the Russian authorities and by the late nineteenth century they had provoked a rise in scientific interest.<sup>650</sup> The historian Engelstein states that, 'following the example of a charismatic vagrant [Kondratii Selivanov] who claimed to embody the reincarnated Jesus Christ, the believers subjected themselves to pain and mutilation in the expectation of redemption.'<sup>651</sup> In more detail, 'males submitted to the removal of the testicles in a ritual called the "minor seal" but in order to 'achieve a higher level of purity, the penis

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<sup>649</sup> Modern herbal examples include damiana, saw palmetto berry, sarsaparilla and pygeum. In Christopher P. Steidle. 1999. *The Impotence Sourcebook*. Lincolnwood, IL: Lowell House; 87-8.

<sup>650</sup> The sect was first discovered by the Russian authorities in 1771-2 according to Engelstein – in the Oryol (Orel) region. Then 'the authorities arrested and interrogated about 60 peasants, including Akulina Ivanovna and two male prophets [Andrei Ivanov, Selivanov's predecessor, was among them], but Selivanov himself escaped.' (Engelstein, 1994: 3 - <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/sympo/94summer/chapter1.pdf> (Accessed: 12.05.06). Kondratii Selivanov, the leader, was eventually betrayed and captured three years later. He described his capture, subjection to the knout and exile in Siberia in the document 'The Passion of Kondratii Selivanov'. This became the 'sect's principal sacred text.' (*Ibid*) After this the sectarians were forced to go underground.

<sup>651</sup> L. Engelstein. 2003. *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale*. New York: Cornell University Press; xi.

itself was severed. This was the “major” or “royal” seal’.<sup>652</sup> Women’s purification involved the ‘removal of nipples, breasts or protruding parts’ of their genitalia.<sup>653</sup> However, not all Skoptzy chose to subject themselves to either type of castration rite. After all, not only the pain but also the severe penalties of exile and hard labour imposed by the state did act as a severe deterrent against the practice.

The cult received further, and unwanted, attention following the destruction of Tsarism and the rise of Communism in 1917. Many even suggest that, following the period known as Dictatorship of the Proletariat in early USSR, the Skoptsy or Skoptzy were finally eliminated.<sup>654</sup> However, recent Russian researchers claim that ‘some old sectarians can be still found in the rural districts of Russia.’<sup>655</sup> Before those early twentieth century prosecutions though, members of the sect had already fled to Romania where, according to Cawadias, they had ‘found greater freedom’, formed whole villages and worked ‘mostly (as) coachmen or drivers in Bucharest and other towns.’<sup>656</sup> The same writer also claimed that he was aware of their existence there until the end of WWII, although not of their exact numbers. The reason for our interest here is because members of the sect

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<sup>652</sup> Engelstein, 2003: 13.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>654</sup> This, according to Lenin, was ‘The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is rule won and maintained by the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, rule that is unrestricted by any laws.’ Vladimir Lenin. 1951. *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. Selected Works. Vol. 2, Part II. Moscow: Communist Publishers; 41 ff.

<sup>654</sup> I. Tulpe & E. Torchinov. 2000. ‘The Castrati (‘Skoptsy’) Sect in Russia: History, Teaching and Religious Practice.’ *The International Journal for Transpersonal Studies*. Vol. 19: 77-87. <http://etor.h1.ru/castrati.html> (Accessed: 15. 10. 2004).

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>656</sup> A.P. Cawadias. June 1946. Male Eunuchism Considered in the Light of the Historical Method. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*. Vol. 39, Issue 8: 501-6; 502.

were the first eunuchs to undergo full medical examination, including prepubertal castration cases, such as the images of Iwan Gregor or Andrei demonstrate.<sup>657</sup> The major pioneer researchers' names associated with the study of Skoptsy began with E.W. Pelikan, then Eugène Pittard, Julius Tandler, Siegfried Grosz and lastly Walter Koch. Before the first of these, however, Ernest Goddard (1827-62), a French anatomist and anthropologist, published an important anthropological study of Egyptian eunuchs. Those researching the Skoptsy have all made significant use of Goddard's material in their own work.

E.W. Pelikan (1824-84), the first to study the Skoptsy *per se*, was a renowned forensic scientist in Russia.<sup>658</sup> Like Goddard, he had identified, among other characteristics, the macrosomia and macroskelia as well as adiposity of prepubertal eunuchs.<sup>659</sup> Pelikan, like his predecessor, also studied behavioural issues. Then from the early twentieth century until end of the First World War, the research, still mostly anthropological/morphological with some aspects of medical study, was led by Eugène Pittard.<sup>660</sup> He made use of anthropological techniques, which produced precise mensurational values and assessment on large scales. Subsequently in 1904, based on his material, Launois and Roy and then

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<sup>657</sup> Appendix 3.3.

<sup>658</sup> Evgenii [V.] Pelikan. 1872. *Sudebno-meditsinskie issledovaniia skopchestva i istoricheskie svedeniia o nem.* St. Petersburg: V. I. Golovin.

<sup>659</sup> Macrosomia and Macroskelia are medical conditions producing long bodies and long legs.

<sup>660</sup> Eugène Pittard. 1934. *Castration at the man and the morphological modifications which it involves; research on the followers of a sect of eunuch mystics, the Skoptzy.* Geneva: Masson. (Original title: *La Castration Chez L'homme Et Les Modifications Morphologiques Qu'elle Entraîne : Recherches Sur Les Adeptes D'une Secte D'eunuques Mystiques, Les Skoptzy*).

Mobius, later in 1906, became responsible for the first proper medical studies of the Skoptsy eunuchs; they mostly focused on the morphological and psychological characteristics or 'syndromes'. The last to study the sect members, as such, were Tandler and Grosz as well as W. C. Koch in 1907. The researchers, of Jewish-Austrian and German origin, mainly followed Pittard's lines and studied the Skoptsy during the period of German occupation of Romania. Their main contribution was clarification of some morphological aspects mentioned in earlier work.

Pittard and others had analysed the morphological differences between prepubertal and postpubertal castration. More specifically, the scientists had stated that in prepubertal castration we have macrosomia, macroskelia, under-growth of bodily and facial-hair. This is contradicted by the uninhibited by dihydrotestosterone development of scalp hair.<sup>661</sup> Postpituitary reaction is likely to create obesity problems later in life; this is attributable to diminution of a basal metabolism. Other consequences include diminished libido as well as hypoplasia of external genitals, prostate and seminal vesicles. Finally there can also be serious, if variable, psychological consequences, such as introversion and overcompensation. However, these do not tend to affect a person's intellectual functions or achievement potential. On the other hand, in post-pubertal eunuchs the

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<sup>661</sup> 'Testosterone, dihydrotestosterone (DHT), androstenedione, dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) and its sulfate (DHEAS) are the major androgens in the systemic circulation.' Guy G. R. T'Sjoen. January 2006. 'Psycho-Endocrinological Aspects in Aging Males and Transsexual Persons,' Doctoral Dissertation. Ghent: University of Ghent; 13. 'Although testosterone itself exerts androgenic and anabolic actions through binding to the nuclear androgen receptor in target cells it is essentially a prohormone, being reduced to the more active androgen DHT (with effects on the urogenital tract, hair follicles, skin and liver) whereas a fraction of testosterone can be aromatised to oestradiol.' T'Sjoen: 127.

above characteristics do not present themselves in the same way. For instance, there is neither excessive tallness and macroskelia or underdevelopment of hair and potency and libido are often maintained. Furthermore, even though some psychological manifestations appear similar in both cases, in post-puberty these can be counterbalanced by a more mature personality structure. Nonetheless, there are certainly similar metabolic and hormonal findings in both groups. Apart from those mentioned above, there are disturbances of creatine metabolism as well as a small decrease in the secretion of androgens and oestrogens in the urine.

### **Opposing Views – Piletskii, Nadezhdin, Pelikan**

Piletskii, Nadezhdin and Pelikan had been typical children of their era. Their research, as demonstrated by the uncomfortable pictures of the subjects, was characterised by a lack of respect as well as consideration for them. In Pelikan's study on the medical causes and consequences of castration (1872), we read the various techniques applied in precise and quite insensitive detail. The researcher also 'tried to understand the physiological effects of their loss.'<sup>662</sup> However, there were other people, contemporaries of these early medical researchers, who were also looking at the Skoptzy phenomenon, and their views need to be considered in parallel.

The most important of these was Nadezhdin, an official who examined the Skoptzy from a scholarly as well as a religious / ethical perspective. The

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<sup>662</sup> Engelstein, 2003: 11.

differences in Pelikan's and Nadezhdin's views, rising out of their differing starting points, are best exhibited in their views on how castration shaped sexual desire. Nadezhdin's observation remained ambiguous. For instance, he claimed that sometimes castration destroyed and at other times enhanced desire 'to the point of savage, frenzied, even bestial rage'.<sup>663</sup> Pelikan, on the other hand, saw the social dangers brought about by loss of desire, even though he demanded that the Skoptzy severely repress themselves. Individuals cannot exercise restraint without the presence of free will firmly established on ability. On this moral point three researchers from three different disciplines and with otherwise opposing views - Pelikan, Nadezhdin and the theologian Piletskii, who also wrote about the Skoptzy - were all united. The castrated individual does not experience things in the same way as other so-called normal males and this appears somehow threatening to all three perspectives. The medically-minded Pelikan, in particular, theorised about the pre-pubertal castrated male:

... the onset of puberty does not bring him family happiness; manly courage and lofty dreams are alien to him; rather, he acquires the vices of people with limited vision and crude morality: egoism, cunning, perfidy, and cupidity.<sup>664</sup>

In terms of theological belief, Piletskii regarded the sectarians as ill-advised yet genuine; whereas, as Engelstein affirmed, Nadezhdin considered that they 'preyed on luckless victims ... objects of trickery and compulsion.'<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> Pelikan, 1872. In Engelstein, 2003: 65.

<sup>664</sup> Pelikan, 1872. In Engelstein, 2003: 12.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*

As a scientist, Pelikan recognised that ‘mental blindness ... was the precondition for susceptibility to fanatical religious faith.’<sup>666</sup> However, as a forensic expert, it was he who insisted that the Skoptsy were truly accountable for their actions. Since the sect’s creed was methodically circulated and intelligible to others, the Skoptsy were deemed not insane and consequently capable of facing trial. The prosecution was allowed to proceed largely due to Pelikan’s medical account. However, not all of his statements were equally judicious and based upon reason. Like Nadezhdin, he had overgenerous notions on the subject of Skoptsy ceremonial practices. These bore a strange resemblance to contemporary and later anti-Semitic accusations in Russia and Europe. Pelikan, for instance, reported accounts of the sect of eating the excised testicles or breasts of the newly castrated, and this added credibility to them. Other accounts stated that young girls were impregnated during orgies and that as soon as infant boys were born they were pierced to the heart and drained of blood, which was then used during communion. Pelikan did not denounce Nadezhdin’s claims that ‘the mortification of infants and communion with their blood is a religious-historical fact.’<sup>667</sup> Furthermore, similar to later Nazi claims against the Jews, he considered the Skoptsy as a ‘conspiracy [*zagovor*] against the rest of humanity.’<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Engelstein: 67.

<sup>667</sup> N.I. Nadezhdin. 1845. *Issledovanie o skopcheskoi eresi* (n.p.: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del), reprinted as ‘Strady Kondratiia Selivanova.’ In V.V. Rozanov. 1914. *Apokalipsicheskaia sekta: Khlysty i Skoptsy*. St. Petersburg: Vaisberg i Gershunin; 349. In Engelstein, 2003: 15.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Natural Male Soprano / Alto

The last few years have seen a new wave of attention to the phenomenon of naturally-high male voices by a small yet highly specialised audience. Many academics, singers, musicians and well-read ‘amateurs’ around the globe are debating the whole issue via the Internet. There are even some extremist websites that are so obsessed with the subject that their debates propose practices that are well outside any legal parameters.<sup>669</sup> Between the years 2002 and 2004, new sites arose regularly trying to unveil certain secrets behind the so-called baroque music revival. The singers Michael Maniaci, Radu Marian, Javier Medina or Jorge Cano, still mostly known only by a specialised audience, triggered a lot of this renewed interest. The reason was primarily their singing abilities, which are superb and are usually advertised by the media as the ‘closest sound to that of the castrati from the baroque era’. However, it was the secrecy surrounding the ‘conditions’ which created the voices of these and other up and coming singers that fascinated this particular audience.<sup>670</sup> Most of the performers are understandably keen to keep those ‘conditions’ well out of public attention, but it may be that the secrecy is what keeps the whole phenomenon alive. However unless one can bring all known facts together, the drawing of scientifically valuable conclusions is virtually impossible. The answer to the whole phenomenon can hardly be only a medically-based occurrence.

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<sup>669</sup> Some of these sites belong to followers of the old Skoptsy movement and support actual castration.

<sup>670</sup> Cf. Javier Medina first interview – Appendix 3.4.1.

This chapter has focused so far on male individuals exhibiting prepubescent male vocal characteristics. Whereas Natural Male Soprano is a term introduced in the late nineties, the singing phenomenon described constitutes nothing new. Male altos existed during the early twentieth century, not long after Moreschi's death. Since the Natural Male Sopranos came so soon after the last castrati, and because the sound they produced was the closest anybody could make to singers like Moreschi, inconsiderate terms, such as endocrinological castrato (following the 1902 developments in endocrinology), were applied to them and used indiscriminately.<sup>671</sup> However, it is the intention of this thesis to go beyond the boundaries of binary gender concepts. Especially when applied to the human voice, these concepts are of very limited purpose, which has already been satiated during the last one and a half centuries. Earlier centuries, like the seventeenth and eighteenth in opera, permitted more flexibility in understanding of a character's polarity, and the human ideal on stage was expected to possess some qualities from both genders: for example sensitivity as well as strength. However a clear-cut conception of gender was developed by the *Nuova Scuola* or *Verismo*, where the characters presented were overtly binary (very male or very female) and exhibited a rather simplistic form of passion.

The end of World War II marked the start of a fast-paced and ever-changing era. Though the audiences did not necessarily approve of non-

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<sup>671</sup> The term 'endocrinological castrato' is still in use, but in this thesis you will find it, whenever possible, replaced with other less judgemental terms such as intersex, which is happily used by most people with other than XX or XY chromosomal variations.

traditional lifestyles, they were themselves subjected to faster transformations than those of earlier generations. This permitted a progressively more flexible approach from singers, irrespective of the audiences' actual perceptions. A less rigid disposition has been the primary cultural reason behind the more accepting attitude found during the early years of the twenty first century. The renewed interest in our era in the voices of natural male sopranos, or altos, could be understood by this fifty-year shift in cultural mores.

### **Scientific Studies and History**

The Skoptsy studies, especially the most recent, are significant when considering the case of natural male sopranos. Following the socio-anthropological research conducted by the likes of Goddard and Pelikan, two important researchers appeared in the field in the years following. The first one was R. Millant, a young French medical doctor who fought and died during the First World War. The second one, Demetrius Alexandre Zambaco-Pachâ, was a Greek physician of renown who he used to treat Abdul Hamid.<sup>672</sup> His most relevant studies to this thesis involved the eunuchs of Constantinople.<sup>673</sup> Most contemporary studies on the subject are medically-focused, perhaps because recent discoveries in endocrinology

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<sup>672</sup> Abdul Hamid (21/22 September 1842 – 10 February 1918) was the 34<sup>th</sup> sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>673</sup> D. A. Zambaco-Pachâ. 1911. *Les eunuques d'aujourd'hui et ceux de jadis*. Paris: Masson; 228-35.

have led to an understanding of eunuchism as an endocrine ailment. Scientists are concerned about its effects on all body organs and structures and while there is consideration of psychology and behaviour, the focus is mainly on the body's biochemical processes; in other words, the metabolism. This is understandable when the metabolism is rendered so unstable due to such close association with physiopathology. The research results, which appear to have more or less processed and finalised in twentieth century, currently represent a clinical picture of male eunuchism irrespective of aetiology. Therefore, one cannot avoid a necessarily scientific approach when dealing with vocal personae influenced by such issues.

### **Exceptional 20<sup>th</sup> century Singers**

During the twentieth century, music lovers were able to experience live performances and recordings from singers with unusually high ranges. Though the voices of those vocal personae had not been produced by surgical intervention, their prepubertal variation made them behave in a manner closer to a *musico* than to a modern countertenor. They were often referred to by the *quasi*-medical term 'endocrinological castrato' and treated as novelties. The aggravated historical memory still following the original *virtuosi* was probably the reason behind most of those early twentieth century singers' choice not to sing operatic or even classical repertoire. Some of them even preferred to be credited as *tenor-altini* instead of using a

range name invoking some effeminate association. There are several singers whose quality of voice merit attention. However, since the scope of this thesis is to examine the conscious hybridity in a vocal persona, I should like to draw attention to two performers whose uniqueness lies beyond their voices, because they have spoken publicly about their variation thus preparing the road for their vocal successors.

Jimmy Scott was born in 1925 in Cleveland and, though he has only recently reached a wider audience, jazz connoisseurs have long numbered him among the genre greats. He has been acknowledged as a favourite by some of the great jazz singers of the twentieth century, including Billie Holiday, Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, and Nancy Wilson. Aside from his unique voice and expression though, 'Little' Jimmy Scott has been perhaps the first singer to admit owing his magnificent voice to Kallmann syndrome. The syndrome, also known as hypothalamic hypogonadism, was responsible for arresting his puberty as well as growth. Nonetheless, the diminutive Scott, only five foot in height, received the 2007 National Endowment Jazz Master Award and still performs at the age of eighty-three.

The singer I will consider next was born almost 32 years after his courageous predecessor. Paulo Abel do Nascimento was born in 1957, the 15th child of a poor family in Brazil, and affected by the same condition as Scott. He studied composition and conducting in São Paulo where the composer and recorder soloist Roger Cotte heard and appreciated his

distinctive altino voice (*f* to *f''*).<sup>674</sup> As a result of this meeting, do Nascimento was subsequently educated in Europe where he also debuted in 1981 in Belgium. His repertoire consisted mostly of cantatas and lieder but his most famous singing appearance was in the film 'Dangerous Liaisons' with the Handelian aria 'Ombra mai fù'. Unfortunately, we cannot predict the impact of his career might have had, if he had reached maturity because he died in 1992, aged 35 in Paris of an AIDS-related disease.

### **Natural Male Sopranos – The Legacy of the Present**

The last decade of twentieth century saw the first steps of a few new singing sensations. This marked the beginning of a new legacy for hybrid vocal personae. For a variety of reasons, the following young singers' voices have never experienced puberty or the consequent maturation.

Javier Medina has perhaps the most extraordinary story of all. Born in 1970, in Xochimilco, Mexico City, he suffered a leukaemia-related illness at the age of eight which led to endocrinological and physiological changes like those of the castrati. His larynx and vocal folds remained childlike, as one can read in the interview he gave to me in 2004.<sup>675</sup> Therefore, his pure soprano voice bears many of the characteristics of those early singers. He has sung with the ancient music ensemble, *Ars Nova*, as well as participated in the innovative Mexican play – *'Monsters and Prodigies: the History of*

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<sup>674</sup> <http://www.tp4.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/~ak/disc/padn/padn.txt> (Accessed: 21/01/2009).

<sup>675</sup> Appendix 3.4.1.

*the Castrati*' - and toured through USA and Europe. Javier has recently commenced his Master's Degree in Music as well as launched his solo career. He remains the only singer of this generation who has publicly revealed all the aspects of his condition.

I first met Medina in 2003-4, when we both participated in the then active Castrati History web group, founded by the late Elsa Scamell in 2002. In those days the group counted several well-known academic and artistic names among its members.<sup>676</sup> I soon found common ground with Javier, which culminated in a first interview in 2004. I was among the first to identify to him the full effects of the medical mistake he had suffered in 1978, especially in comparison to the early male sopranos of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as the last castrati singers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Sistine Chapel. We finally met in person on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Amsterdam when I watched him perform in *Monsters and Prodigies* performed by the Mexican group 'Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes'.<sup>677</sup> Both the unique quality of his singing voice and a natural acting ability were very much in evidence during the performance. Medina himself admits feeling more at ease when on stage.<sup>678</sup>

Jorge Cano is an Argentinean singer, who has made his entrance to the music scene during the last decade. He is reputed to possess a voice combining rare qualities: not only immensely high and agile but also more powerful than expected. Because of this various sources refer to him as a

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<sup>676</sup> One of them was Nicholas Clapton.

<sup>677</sup> Appendix 3.4.2.1. & 3.4.2.2 (additional material).

<sup>678</sup> Recital Review & Interview 2008 in Appendix 3.4.3.1 & 3.4.3.2.

'Total Male Soprano' or *Assoluto*, in the Old Italian tradition Dr. Cheryl Boyd Waddell, previously Director of Vocal Activities of Clayton College and State University Morrow, USA, is the only one who is known to have studied his case so far. We do not have exact medical information about his condition, apart from Waddell's observation that 'his larynx is like that of a twelve year old boy'. Apart from his vocal abilities, the singer is also known to be a dedicated researcher into the early castrati (17<sup>th</sup> century). Unfortunately, Cano is not known to have given any further interviews or, most importantly, brought any recordings to wider attention.

Michael Maniaci was born in 1976 in USA and trained at the Julliard School and Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. His major break came in 2003 when he became the winner of the 2003 Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions and recipient of the 2003 ARIA award. Ever since then he has been gaining attention for his rare male soprano voice as well as stage presence. Maniaci, in particular, is noted for his unusual ability to sing into the upper soprano register without using falsetto. Unlike singers with similar ability, it is claimed not that he has a hormonal imbalance but that his larynx and folds have been affected by partial facial palsy.

Maniaci resembles a castrato since he neither sings falsetto nor does he have a typical lower male chest register, like a countertenor. However, he is keen to disassociate himself from endocrinological cases and, unlike a castrato, he states that he is 'physically intact and fertile'— though this has

been debated by medical experts.<sup>679</sup> Maniaci is the only famous sopranoist operatic figure currently appearing on international stages, such as the Metropolitan Opera, La Fenice, and Opera North, and genuinely reproducing in lead roles a sound from the past re-immersed in a modern condition. He is known mostly for singing the works of Handel, Mozart and Monteverdi.<sup>680</sup>

### **The Debatable Male Soprano**

Radu Marian was born of Romanian origin in 1977 in the then Soviet Republic of Moldavia. He was recognised as a child prodigy from the age of four. At the age of seven he was already performing next to well-established Russian artists and there is even a recording of him singing the famous 'Queen of the Night' aria accompanied by a full-size orchestra.<sup>681</sup> He obtained his singing Diploma in 1990 at the early age of thirteen with first award for Extraordinary Talent. In parallel, he also graduated as a concert pianist. However, at the age of seventeen, due to severe laryngitis, 'Radu Marian didn't talk or sing for an entire year.'<sup>682</sup> He had a voice so high, delicate, and mysterious that it could put people into a sort of

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<sup>679</sup> R. Dawson Scott. 12 October 2007. 'The Man with the 300-Year-Old Voice.' *The Times*. London.

<sup>680</sup> S.C. Loder. 12 April 2005. 'An Interview with Michael Maniaci.' *Opera Today*. [http://www.operatoday.com/content/2005/04/an\\_interview\\_wi\\_4.php](http://www.operatoday.com/content/2005/04/an_interview_wi_4.php) (Accessed: 30.04.2006).

<sup>681</sup> Radu Marian. 2000. *Alia Vox*. Musicaimmagine MR 10048, CD; track No 7.

<sup>682</sup> 'He came down with the acute laryngitis after he had been trying, in vain, to sing in the lower tenor range.' 2005. 'The Strange Art of the Male Soprano.' *Details*: 317-21; 318.

trance'.<sup>683</sup> The doctor prescribed a year's aphonia. Marian, being deeply religious, 'worried that he had lost something sacred, but he turned to God and trusted that, in time, the Lord would save his voice.'<sup>684</sup>

In 1999, aged twenty-two, Radu began singing in Italy under Flavio Colusso's direction.<sup>685</sup> Together they toured Europe performing works by Giacomo Carissimi.<sup>686</sup> In 2000, they both made an important step towards a new music era by recording the CD *Alia Vox*. It was then that the singer captivated every connoisseur's imagination with his rendition of *Ave Maria*' by Bach - Gounod, sung in the original key.<sup>687</sup> His stature and general features as they appeared in the CD covers made it clear that he was not an ordinary high-voiced male singer. In that photograph Marian appeared as clearly hairless and diminutive. He also looked a lot younger than his actual age and androgynous, especially when compared to Colusso. However, within one year, his pictures started exhibiting some facial hair and his features also showed some change. Since then, an endless debate has ensued on numerous websites and in a number of academic circles regarding Marian's status as a natural male soprano. The singer's voice in his Bononcini recording appeared suddenly more mature and alto-ish, without losing any of his high range or virtuosity.<sup>688</sup> This *timbre* variation has been

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<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>685</sup> Flavio Colusso is an early music specialist and conductor of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian Baroque. Being himself a counter-tenor, he is particularly interested in natural male sopranos or sopranists. He has also worked with Aris Christofellis (*Farinelli et son Temps* – EMI).

<sup>686</sup> Marian has also studied conducting with Colusso.

<sup>687</sup> This is sung in the same key used by Alessandro Moreschi, which requires a *d'*; truly testing to anyone not possessing a genuine soprano voice.

<sup>688</sup> Radu Marian. 2005. 'Antonio Maria Bononcini: Cantate in Soprano.' Arcana A335; CD.

less apparent in his latest recordings though.<sup>689</sup> Even though Marian still spoke, according to the accounts of the *Details* editor, in 2005, in a childlike voice, during the last few years various concert and internet circles attempted to describe him as a sopranoist countertenor and disassociate him from the phenomenon of natural male sopranos. These posts have since been retrieved and are not currently online.

## The Hybrid Female Vocal Persona

Female intersex vocality has been examined much less than its male counterpart. Despite the number of cases of male intersex vocality known to scientists and audiences alike, most female intersex singers, though undoubtedly present, have kept their vocal idiosyncrasy a secret. The small number of possible cases is known about only by circles of connoisseurs and not by wider audiences. Thus far only female singers with a transient background, such as Lisa-Lee Dark from Swansea, have revealed their vocal history in public.<sup>690</sup> Dark has become increasingly known within

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<sup>689</sup> With *Ars Antiqua Austria*: 2006. *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. Symphonia 06220 & 2007. *Romanus Weichlein: Missa Rectorum Cordium*. Symphonia SY06223. Also, with Clemencic Consort: 2007. *Tommaso Albinoni: Il Nascimento dell' Aurora*. Oehms Classics OC 913 (2 CDs).

<sup>690</sup> As was announced in 2004, a 'Soprano who did not discover she was a woman until she was 19 is preparing to release her debut album. Because of a rare medical condition Lisa-Lee Dark, from Swansea, thought she was a boy. Despite being a pupil at an all-boys comprehensive school, she only discovered her true gender after she left and doctors diagnosed congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH).' Daniel Davies. 13<sup>th</sup> September 2004. 'Lisa-Lee album launch.' *The Western Mail*. [http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/tm\\_objectid=14635278](http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/tm_objectid=14635278) (Accessed: 12.07.09).

connoisseur opera circles since 2004 and her case deserves further examination.<sup>691</sup>

The presence of intersexuality neither predisposes the sexuality nor gender identity of a person, irrespective of male, female or transient background. On the one hand, this means that, whereas the uncharacteristically low female voice can be perceived as a burden by most women, others can appreciate the opportunities opened by their vocal uniqueness. This has been seen in the recent Nygren *et al.* study, where women ‘with [Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia] CAH rated significantly higher values on the statement: “my voice is a problem in my daily life”, as compared with the controls.’<sup>692</sup> On the other hand, there are few biological females who can even be secretly glad for their masculinised vocality. In everyday life, however, this personality trait might also be underscored by feelings of guilt and / or non-conforming gender self-perceptions.

Even though Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia remains the primary condition behind female intersex vocality, other factors can be equally responsible.<sup>693</sup> The most significant of these could be considered to be the Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). This syndrome, which affects ‘at least

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<sup>691</sup> ‘Rising international opera singer Lisa-Lee Dark is celebrating her success in Europe during 2008, with a brand new opera release. Lisa-Lee’s debut opera recital album, ‘Sola, perduta, abbandonata’, was recently named the 20th biggest selling opera album in Europe (during 2008), from an independent record company.’ <http://www.myspace.com/darklisalee> (Accessed: 12.07.09).

<sup>692</sup> Ulrika Nygren, Maria Södersten, Henrik Falhammar, Marja Thorén, Kerstin Hagenfeldt and Agneta Nordenskjöld. 2009. ‘Voice characteristics in women with congenital adrenal hyperplasia due to 21-hydroxylase deficiency.’ *Clinical Endocrinology*. Vol. 70, Issue 1: 18-25; 20 & 21 (Fig. 3). For Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) definition, see next section. The numbers of CAH cases viewing their voices as a problem were thirty-eight, whereas this was reduced to twenty-four in the control group.

<sup>693</sup> We are going to examine this alongside other intersex variations in next section.

5% of the population' does not have a 'uniform definition ... in large because of its diverse and heterogeneous nature.'<sup>694</sup> Apart from CAH and PCOS, other factors can include hypothyroidism as well as a combination of secondary elements, including age or sudden hormonal changes. Age-related factors, especially, are known to lower women's range as well as vocal colour. The next section is going to examine the characteristics and effects of all the above conditions on female vocality.

### **Conditions, Syndromes, Diseases and / or Human Variation**

Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia is a multi-faceted disorder particularly associated with 21-hydroxylase deficiency.<sup>695</sup> It has been defined as 'an autosomal recessive inherited disorder resulting in cortisol and often aldosterone deficiency and excess production of precursor steroids with androgen effects.'<sup>696</sup> An autosomal recessive gene is one of several routes through which a disorder can be inherited. There have to be two copies (one from each parent) of an irregular gene present 'in order for the disease or

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<sup>694</sup> Enrico Carmina & Rogerio A. Lobo. 1999. 'Commentary: Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): Arguably the Most Common Endocrinopathy Is Associated with Significant Morbidity in Women.' *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*. Vol. 84, Issue 6: 1897-9; 1897.

<sup>695</sup> It is believed that women 'with 21-hydroxylase deficiency would usually experience marked androgen excess until effective treatment is instituted. This early life androgen excess is known to influence gender identity and role'. Peter Y. Liu, Alison K. Death and David J. Handelsman. 2003. 'Androgens and Cardiovascular Disease.' *Endocrine Reviews*. Vol. 24, Issue 3:313-40; 320.

<sup>696</sup> P.C. White & P/W. Speiser. 2000. 'Congenital adrenal hyperplasia due to 21-hydroxylase deficiency.' *Endocrine Reviews*. Vol. 21: 245-91 and D.P Merke & S.R. Bornstein. 2005. 'Congenital adrenal hyperplasia.' *Lancet*. Vol. 365: 2125-36; both quoted in Nygren *et al*; 18. The 21-hydroxylase deficiency 'accounts for 95% of all CAH patients.' *Ibid*.

trait to develop.<sup>697</sup> Therefore, there is a one in four chance that it will develop. The disorder is subdivided into three forms: the classic CAH, which ‘includes the forms of salt wasting (SW) and simple virilising (SV)’ and the non classic (NC) CAH ‘a milder form ...with symptoms such as early onset of puberty, excessive body hair or infertility.’<sup>698</sup> As with the other bodily characteristics, the voice is not equally affected by all three types. Depending on the level of androgens, therefore, the female voice can range from possessing a slightly lower than expected fundamental frequency (FO) to being perceived as that of a bio-male. This unusually low FO can be aggravated by either the lack or a delayed start of glucocorticoid treatment.

The term Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS or AIS) implies genetically males (XY), whose cells, due to a defective androgen receptor, do not act in response to testosterone or androgens in general.<sup>699</sup> Consequently, their genitalia do not form as male. In particular, XY babies with CAIS ‘typically are born with a vaginal opening and clitoris indistinguishable from those seen in ... female (XX) babies. In almost all cases, the condition is not suspected and the diagnosis is not made until puberty, when these “girls” are brought to medical attention because they

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<sup>697</sup> Diana Chambers & David Zieve, reviewers. 20.05.08. ‘Autosomal recessive - overview.’ *University of Maryland - Medical Centre*. <http://www.umm.edu/ency/article/002052.htm> (Accessed: 12.07.09).

<sup>698</sup> Nygren *et al.*: 18. Characteristics of all CAH forms include clitoromegaly. This in the case of Lisa-Lee Dark permitted the child to be perceived as male.

<sup>699</sup> Annemie L.M. Boehmer *et al.* 2001. ‘Genotype versus phenotype in families with androgen insensitivity syndrome.’ *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. Vol. 86, Issue 9: 4151-60. <http://jcem.endojournals.org/cgi/content/full/86/9/4151> (Accessed: 21.10.10).

have never menstruated.<sup>700</sup> Subsequently, the adolescents are discovered to 'have undescended testicles, and ... neither the uterus nor the ovaries are present.'<sup>701</sup> Even though there are even more serious vocal implications to the individual than in Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, CAIS or AIS can hardly be considered as an example of female hybridity. Vocal personae affected by this variation are only 'phenotypically female' but 'genotypically male'.<sup>702</sup> Individuals with both CAH and CAIS characteristic are usually subjected to early surgical intervention.<sup>703</sup>

The case of Polycystic Ovaries' Syndrome (PCOS) is even more intriguing to define. In 1935 Stein and Leventhal described its symptoms as enlarged sclerocystic and polyfollicular ovaries, menstrual dysfunction and hirsutism.<sup>704</sup> However, according to the 2003 Rotterdam consensus workshop, the syndrome is defined 'as a broad spectrum of manifestations such as obesity, insulin resistance, hyperandrogenism ... and menstrual irregularities.'<sup>705</sup> The most relevant for this study, the 'deepening' of the vocal timbre, is named among symptoms in women with PCOS.<sup>706</sup> It is claimed that, in exceptional cases, there can be such a decrease in the

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<sup>700</sup> Leonard Sax. Aug. 2002. 'How Common Is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling.' *The Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 39, Issue 3: 174-178; 175.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> *Cf.* pages 219ff.

<sup>704</sup> I.L. Stein, M.L. Leventhal. 1935. 'Amenorrhea associated with bilateral polycystic ovaries.' *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*. Vol. 29:181-91; 181. PCOS is used to be called the Stein-Leventhal Syndrome.

<sup>705</sup> Razelle Kurzrock, Philip R. Cohen. 2007. 'Polycystic ovary syndrome in men: Stein-Leventhal syndrome revisited.' *Medical Hypotheses*. Vol. 68: 480-3; 481. As the title reveals, the article writers consider the possibility of PCOS in men: '...PCOS appears to be due to one or more primary defects in the upstream gonadotropin/androgen and/or insulin pathway, rather than in the ovaries themselves.' *Op.cit.*: 482.

<sup>706</sup> T.J. McKenna. September 1997. 'Androgenic Disorders.' *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*. Vol. 9, Suppl. 1: S1.

woman's fundamental frequency (FO) so that the voice even experiences a change in register. Medication used to alleviate the symptoms, such as Metformin, is still not considered to be full-proof. Hypothyroidism is characterised by a 'deficiency or absence of thyroid hormone (which) slows metabolic processes'.<sup>707</sup> The most commonly-known aetiology is iodine deficiency. However, the reasons for this can be complicated and range from autoimmune to pituitary or hypothalamic disorders. Significant vocal changes are known to be caused by the disease. In this case, the voice 'has a flat, low pitch with a dull, coarse raspiness', which 'results from the myxedema of the vocal folds. (This) may lead to breathy vocal quality and insufficient loudness.'<sup>708</sup> The above symptoms are so characteristic that they can be used for diagnostic purposes.

The possibility of health issues, such as CAH, PCOs and hypothyroidism, being combined is not uncommon. This creates in effect additional secondary conditions possibly affecting the female intersex voice, thus making the diagnosis more complicated. Even though some of the conditions described can be life-threatening, the prospect of life-long medication, with numerous side-effects, is not always advantageous for the body or the voice. Therefore, it is important to separate the emergency from the variation factor and seriously consider the pros and cons before medicating or operating. Assuming that the female intersex singer is at ease

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<sup>707</sup> Erik D Schraga. 13 March 2008. 'Hypothyroidism and Myxedema Coma.' *eMedicine*. <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/768053-overview> (Accessed: 20.07.09).

<sup>708</sup> Frank E. Lucente, Gady Har-El, Ari J Goldsmith. 2003 – 5<sup>th</sup> Rev Ed edition. *Essentials of Otolaryngology*. USA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 247 & H.M. Tucker. 1993. *The Larynx*. Stuttgart and New York: Georg Thieme Verlag; 144.

with the changes, retaining the difference might be healthier at times and should remain an option.

Finally, age-related vocal hybridity is usually attributed to hormonal changes associated with menopause. Characteristics include not only a lower range, accompanied by frequent loss of higher range, but also a lack of intensity and vocal fatigue. According to Nelson's hypothesis, 'a change in the oestrogen/androgen ratio is in part responsible for voice changes' during that time.<sup>709</sup> However, the Newman et al. study in 2000 stated that their 'results (did) little to confirm or disprove this theory.'<sup>710</sup> Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and other medication as well as vitamins are usually prescribed in order to counteract and 'treat' the vocal differentiation produced by a variety of reasons, including menopausal effects. This treatment, nonetheless, does not necessarily make the voices healthier but rather more predictable and role-fulfilling.

Even though borderline timbre and range are more common in popular and folk styles than in women's classical singing, nonetheless, they are not unheard of.<sup>711</sup> For instance, this writer had the opportunity to perform and record several times in his pre-transitional borderline lower range within a popular or art song context but only twice within a classical one. Unusually lowered voices, arising for a number of reasons, including older age, made

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<sup>709</sup> J. Nelson. 'The potential role of selected endocrine systems in aging process.' In: Masoro E, ed. 1995. *Handbook of Physiology--Aging*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press: 377-94.

<sup>710</sup> Scott-Robert Newman, John Butler, Elizabeth H. Hammond, and Steven D. Gray. 2000. 'Preliminary Report on Hormone Receptors in the Human Vocal Fold.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 14, Issue 1: 72-81; 78.

<sup>711</sup> The limited reference here is due to incomplete evidence of underlying conditions as well as the extensive discussion of my vocal case in Chapter IV.

possible Vivaldi's authentic singing group of Figlie di Coro, 'those foundlings at Venice's Ospedale della Pietà who performed at Mass and Vespers from behind grilles in the high choir galleries or "cantorie".'<sup>712</sup> This has been recently replicated in the project *Schola Pietatis Antonio Vivaldi*, more widely-known as 'Vivaldi's Women', where, at least, two of the singers are currently able to cover the harmonically required tenor / bass range.<sup>713</sup>

### **The rare case of Lisa-Lee Dark**

Within the modern context of hospitalised birth, it is rare for newborns not to receive a thorough medical examination which will include their genitals. As demonstrated, the measurements, especially for males, can be particularly specific. Even though Lisa-Lee Dark is less than 30 years old and though her mother was within easy hospital access, she describes her case as such: 'I was born in a car, and was taken first to the Carmarthen Hospital, but because I wasn't resident in the area, they sent me to the Swansea Hospital. Each one probably assumed that the other hospital had done a full examination.'<sup>714</sup> Does this description, however, also underline the newborn's external

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<sup>712</sup> <http://www.spav.co.uk> (Accessed: 23.07.09).

<sup>713</sup> <http://www.spav.co.uk> (Accessed: 23.07.09). 'The bass line was always doubled by continuo instruments, so the low voices are never left exposed. In scores by some of Vivaldi's Pietà-contemporaries an alternative bass note is occasionally given an octave higher'- the *G* for example. *Ibid*.

<sup>714</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/hometruths/lisaleedark.shtml> (Accessed: 20.07.09). *Cf.* Appendix 3.5.

masculinisation? Significant anatomical differences are easier to notice than borderline ones, even without a thorough examination.<sup>715</sup>

Even to someone with a transient background such as this writer's, the most significant point remains Dark's living as a boy for 19 years. The case here is not about discovering a different gender identity and then transitioning, but discovering the true biological identity and assuming it. It was only at the age of nineteen that a doctor finally had her karyotype checked and Lisa Lee was shown to possess XX chromosomes. Therefore, she was biologically female and, as initially stated, 'neither a hermaphrodite nor a transsexual.'<sup>716</sup> At almost the end of that interview, however, the singer admits to being less fond of binarian analogies and inclusion: 'I've never classed myself as very masculine or very feminine. I just feel like me.'<sup>717</sup> Even though the singer's career achievements in Puccini's *Turandot*, cast as Liu, are discussed in articles and interviews, her vocal schooling has not been mentioned as such.<sup>718</sup> Dark has stated that she is currently preparing for the release of her second album.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.* Following that, a thorough examination revealed the presence of a womb as well as ovaries.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>718</sup> *The Opera Magazine*, October 2007 & *Euro news* magazine, January 2008.

<sup>719</sup> Private communication via email (09.09.09).

## Early Intervention

Irrespective of the common belief that there are only two sexes, '17 out of every 1,000 people fail to meet our assumption that everyone is either male or female. This is the approximate incidence of intersexuals: individuals with XY chromosomes and female anatomy, XX chromosomes and male anatomy, or anatomy that is half male and half female.'<sup>720</sup> Babies are born with more or less different amounts of binarian variation. In previous centuries, cases such as that of Levi Suydam in the 1840s, an intersexual who 'menstruated regularly but also had a penis and testicles', though demonised, were still visible. Nowadays, however, figures such as Dark are becoming rarer.<sup>721</sup> This is due to early surgical intervention, which '(helps) maintain the two-sex system'.<sup>722</sup> More specifically, 'Today children who are born "either/or-neither/both" - a fairly common phenomenon - usually disappear from view because doctors "correct" them right away with surgery.'<sup>723</sup> This is rarely due to a genuine medical emergency, however, and more often because 'ambiguous genitalia [are regarded as] a social emergency.'<sup>724</sup>

Early surgical intervention constitutes a form of genital mutilation and abuse, because it is a priori done without the individual's consent. Due to

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<sup>720</sup> C. Moore. 2000. 'Sorting by Sex.' *American Scientist*. Vol. 88: 545-6; 545.

<sup>721</sup> Sax, 2002: 174.

<sup>722</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling. 2000. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books; 31.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid.

<sup>724</sup> AAP, July 2000: 138.

the size and extra-sensitivity of an infant's genitalia, significant implications, for instance, for the individual's sexual future are far from being unknown.<sup>725</sup> Except for cases of life threatening medical emergency, education on intersexuality should be given priority and be forwarded equally towards family, school and the young individual. Intersexuals, such as Chase, as well as scholars, such as Fausto-Sterling, '(have) joined ... in calling for an end to all such unnecessary infant surgery' and recommend the delay of any operation until the individual is able to consent.<sup>726</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> See the well-publicised cases of both ISNA and OII founders: Cheryl Chase (Bo Laurent) <http://www.isna.org/about/chase> (Accessed 21.07.09) and Curtis Hinkle [http://www.intersexualite.org/English\\_OII/IAIA/Curtis/CurtisWriting.html](http://www.intersexualite.org/English_OII/IAIA/Curtis/CurtisWriting.html) (Accessed: 21.07.09). For the crucial debate on Disorders of Sex Development (DSD) terminology currently dividing the two organisations, see pages 29ff of this thesis.

<sup>726</sup> William Stanley. Feb. 2001. 'Review: Deconstructing the Discourse of Sexual Dimorphism: Rethinking, Bending, and Crossing Sexual Boundaries Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality - book review.' *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 38, Issue 1: 83-6; 85. Of course, the matter of early surgery is still debated. The following articles contain examples of, as stated-by-the-doctors, successful outcomes: C.J. Migeon, A.B. Wisniewski, J.P. Gearhart *et al.* 2002. 'Ambiguous genitalia with perineoscrotal hypospadias in 46, XY individuals: long-term medical, surgical, and psychosexual outcome.' *Pediatrics*. Vol. 110, Issue 3. [www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/110/3/e31](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/110/3/e31); P.A. Lee, S.F. Witchel. 2002. 'Genital surgery among females with congenital adrenal hyperplasias: changes over the past five decades.' *Journal of Pediatric Endocrinology and Metabolism*. Vol. 15: 1473-7. Nonetheless, any views on early intervention would need to be confirmed first by those immediately concerned. This is *a priori* impossible in early-operated infants until much later in life. An extremely unsuccessful case of early intervention, for a different reason, which should, however, always act as a warning against this approach is the now infamous 'John / Joan' case. That impossible-by- today's- standards intervention had been deemed as successful by the most renowned sexologist and researcher of the sixties and seventies, John Money; a view that was never shared by the tragic individual, David Reimer, who finally committed suicide in 2004. Cf. John Money. January 1975. 'Ablatio penis: normal male infant sex-reassigned as a girl.' *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Vol. 4, Issue 1: 65-71 & John Colapinto. 2000. *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised As a Girl*. London: Quartet & New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

## Conclusion

The publicity surrounding most natural male sopranos of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been accompanied by phrases such as 'a-voice-in-a-million'. The singing personae have been appreciated in live concerts and left beautiful and unique recordings to us. Many have even broken the 'code of silence' and claimed connection to the original castrati lineage or have been called 'modern Farinellis'. However, irrespective of artistic values, most natural male sopranos have been affected by various conditions, such as Kallmann or Klinefelter's Syndromes. These produce individual and, at times, contrasting physical and vocal features. This is perhaps their greatest difference from the early singers, who, due to common factors such as surgery and training, used to be characterised by common attributes. Therefore, even if artistically brilliant, most of the natural male sopranos could not rightfully be compared with the original *primi uomini* or Sistine Chapel castrati. As far as comparisons with Farinelli go, the last actual demonstration of his vocal artistry in public happened more than two hundred and seventy years ago on 25th August 1737.<sup>727</sup> We have no records of his amazing voice other than accounts of his contemporaries, such as Charles Burney's, and vocal scores demonstrating his high flexibility, range and immense breath control. For the rest, it is important

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<sup>727</sup> This was because Farinelli had moved to Spain and was named on that day Chamber Musician to the King.

that we are able to distinguish the particulars from the quasi-canonised mythical figure.<sup>728</sup>

The only actual proof that we have about the castrato voice is based on the shellac records made by Alessandro Moreschi in 1902 and 1904. This happened not only during the early years of recording 'engineering' but also when the singer was past his prime. Nonetheless, Moreschi's voice in those recordings, no matter the imperfections, remains crystal clear, real and unaugmented by imaginary perfections. This is one of the reasons that Javier Medina, mentioned in his recent interview in York that he identified with Moreschi.<sup>729</sup> Even had he not mentioned this, however, his identification would have been obvious to anyone familiar enough with Moreschi and his era.<sup>730</sup>

Another difference between modern natural male sopranos and the original singers lies in their training. Some of the young singers, especially those not living in central Europe or USA, had to endure years of unsuitable training. Thankfully this is improving as many, like Javier Medina, research the singing methods utilised by their most famous predecessors. In fact many natural male sopranos, for example Medina and Jorge Cano, are nowadays known to follow the techniques and principles of singing as explained, for instance, by Pier Francesco Tosi in their Observations on

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<sup>728</sup> A more realistic depiction of Farinelli can be found through the pages of *La Solitudine Amica*, as is the title of his published correspondence with Count Sicinio Pepoli. (Carlo Broschi-Farinelli, C. Vitali, ed. 2000. *La Solitudine amica*. Palermo: Sellerio Editore).

<sup>729</sup> The reader can find the singer's interview in Appendix 3.4.3.2 (Part A / 2008).

<sup>730</sup> Medina has, for instance, researched and copied his recital suit after Moreschi's famous photo of 1905.

florid Singing. Some singers take their research further and rediscover forgotten works by masters such as Niccolò Porpora. Even so, the natural male sopranos in our time never have the chance of the years of training appropriate for their voices that were possible for original era castrati.

The most important characteristic of the natural male soprano is that, for whatever reason, neither their larynx nor their vocal folds have matured beyond that of an 11 or 12-year old boy. The result is that their speaking and singing voices do not need to engage falsetto in order to achieve higher than usual tessituras. They attain them, depending on their technique, using a similar 'mechanism' to that a choirboy or a female singer. Nonetheless, the 'final product' sounds like neither of them. The timbre possesses a 'ringing' quality and therefore carries well through space, even when the sound is not big as such. The voice's idiosyncrasy resembles that of a uniquely matured child and neither suffers when singing in stratospheric heights nor presents signs of hoarseness or fatigue.<sup>731</sup> Those affected will retain their childlike voices unless they start HRT. Some medical or other accidents can produce similar effects too.

Another indication of a naturally high male voice, related to previous one, is that the break happens much higher. This attribute is similar to boys' voices and it gives the chest register 'the largest number of notes: from b flat to d" or e".<sup>732</sup> In both cases, this can be extended to cover 'from a to

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<sup>731</sup> Unlike e.g. the vocal instrument of Angelo Manzotti, who sings a similar repertoire but is a sopranist-countertenor.

<sup>732</sup> Celletti, 1996: 108.

f''; almost twice the range that female voices' modal register can achieve.<sup>733</sup>

The natural male soprano's chest register is powerful and full of harmonics.<sup>734</sup> This reference, however, is not used to imply that the singers, alike their predecessors, would not engage higher registers. In fact, for the castrati 'it was the blended register, the voce mista, which opened up a new sound [the falsettone] through higher and more powerful notes.'<sup>735</sup> Javier Medina demonstrated this attribute in *Los Pajaros Perdidos*, which he was able to sing without engaging his falsetto range.<sup>736</sup>

The great enigma, finally, behind the 'extraordinary natural case' of Radu Marian does not seem likely to be resolved, unless the singer decides to speak for himself.<sup>737</sup> However, the singer's usual answer to questions about his condition is that of pretended ignorance, his attitude one of 'Let the Mystery Be'.<sup>738</sup> Because of this a range of rumours, claims and counter-claims have spread, most of which are still to be found online. The first is that the singer 'is the rare case of an endocrinological castrato and sounds much more like a treble than like a falsettist.'<sup>739</sup> Because of his suspected condition, Kallmann Syndrome, others have asserted that he had to start

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<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.* Modal register, the most frequently used in Western Languages' speech and singing, refers to the resonant mode of vocal folds. This implies 'the optimal combination of airflow and glottal tension that yields maximum vibration.' P. Ladefoged & I. Maddieson. 1996. *The Sounds of the World's Languages*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>734</sup> Especially when the hormonal variation did result to augmented and rounded in shape chest development.

<sup>735</sup> Naomi André. 2006. *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; 44.

<sup>736</sup> See Review – Appendix 3.4.3.1.

<sup>737</sup> 'Per uno straordinario caso della natura Radu Marian è probabilmente l'unico artista del nostro tempo a essere dotato di una voce di soprano.' *UNIBO Magazine*. 1 October 2003. <http://www.magazine.unibo.it/Magazine/Notizie/2003/10/01/1+concerti+di+Musica+Insieme.htm> (Accessed: 12.03.09).

<sup>738</sup> *Details*: 318.

<sup>739</sup> *The Male Soprano Page*. <http://www.tp4.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/~ak/disc/rm> (Accessed: 10.12.2006).

HRT and that was the reason behind his slight vocal and bodily change. However none of these is likely to be confirmed. His 2007 Albinoni recording describes the singer as ‘A gift of nature (and) probably the only male singer of our day and age who has been blessed with a natural soprano range.’<sup>740</sup> The wording of this is like that in the University of Bologna magazine article.<sup>741</sup> This has probably been based on Flavio Colusso’s earlier views of Marian as ‘a sopranista whose voice is different from the other countertenors and sopranists, of the Baroque music world.’ And the conductor elaborated that the singer’s voice ‘doesn’t sound like a falsetto voice but as a soprano’s.’<sup>742</sup> Marian, on the other hand, makes sense of his prodigious gift by ‘speaking mystically’ and further avoids intrusive questions by reminiscing about his grandmother’s visions before he was born: ‘When he will come out in the world, he will have a sign. He will have something which another human being doesn’t have.’<sup>743</sup>

There are rumours of abuse by some singers’ parents or teachers; these assert that medication and specifically hormonal and other blockers

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<sup>740</sup> Oehms Classics, *Il Nascimento dell’ Aurora*

<http://www.oehmsclassics.de/cd.php?formatid=333&sprache=eng> (Accessed : 12.11.08).

See also the following extract from *Res Musica* ‘Gardons pour la fin le sopraniste Radu Marian, qui sera jugé épatant ou détestable selon les sensibilités des uns et des autres. Certains pourront peut-être se laisser impressionner par les sonorités produites par un chanteur qualifié par d’aucuns de « castrat naturel », et dont la tessiture et le timbre sont bel et bien, incontestablement, ceux d’un véritable soprano. D’autres frémiront devant ce filet de voix strident et aigrelet, qui sans doute n’aurait pas attiré l’attention si son propriétaire n’avait été un chanteur masculin. Sans doute ce genre de curiosité est-il tout à fait compatible avec la nature de l’ouvrage interprété, éminemment « baroque » dans tous ses excès et dans ses débordements.’ Pierre Degott. 12 April 2008. ‘Attention au sopranist Radu Marian !’ <http://www.resmusica.com/imprimer.php3?art=5267> (Accessed: 12.11.08).

<sup>741</sup> *UNIBO Magazine*. 1 October 2003.

<http://www.magazine.unibo.it/Magazine/Notizie/2003/10/01/I+concerti+di+Musica+Insieme.htm> (Accessed: 12.03.09).

<sup>742</sup> Marian, 2000, *Alia Vox*.

<sup>743</sup> *Details*: 318.

are the true basis behind supposed conditions. It has been recognised that blockers are misused in sports, especially 'archery, diving, and gymnastics.'<sup>744</sup> Androgen or oestrogen blockers, on the other hand, can be administered to young transsexuals. There, 'in carefully screened young people, hormone-blockers that suppress the release of gonadotrophins from the pituitary, may be administered to suspend further unwanted pubertal development.'<sup>745</sup> Such blockers are more or less available, depending on the country. For example in the Netherlands, they are only legal when used to suspend puberty in this way. Androgen or oestrogen blockers are only advisable when the risks from severe gender dysphoria outweigh any benefits obtained from a natural puberty.

Finally, the less documented character of female vocal hybridity is equally significant. More frequently evidenced in popular and folk rather than classical styles, we have several good contemporary vocal examples. Voices formed differently for a number of medical reasons, such as CAH and PCOs as well as age-related factors demonstrate the full range of possibilities, which go past stereotypical expectations of sex and gender by bridging the vocal void. The results then go beyond the aesthetically pleasing and provide the audiences with both surprising and original

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<sup>744</sup> <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/prevent/sports/doping.html>. Also, an equal policy can be found in the Anti-Doping European Convention: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/135-2008.htm>. (Accessed: 12/12/08).

<sup>745</sup> B.W.D. Reed, P.T. Cohen-Kettenis, T. Reed, N. Spack. December 2008. 'Medical care for gender variant young people: Dealing with the practical problems.' *Gender Identity Research and Education Society*: 1-9; 3. Cf. H.A. Delemarre-Van de Waal and P. Cohen-Kettenis. 2006. 'Clinical Management of Gender Identity Disorder in Adolescents: A Protocol On Psychological and Paediatric Endocrinology Aspects.' *European Journal of Endocrinology*. Vol. 155(Suppl. 1): S131-S137.

elements. It is, therefore, important that all kinds of naturally-alternative vocalities are given both the opportunity to train and a platform for expression. Most importantly, however, in order for this to be achieved, hybrid vocal differentiation and autonomy must be allowed to exist and must be respected. This attitude would preclude intervention, first and foremost, unless for genuine medical emergencies and consent explicitly expressed by the individual.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Trans Vocal Persona

Even though this writer's gender affirmation journey began in July 2002, this was only medically assessed in March 2003.<sup>746</sup> During the aforementioned period, the focus of the initial investigation, which will be explained in detail below, was the male adolescent voice as well as the first hypothesis in relation to the FTM voice: its comparability to the adolescent voice as well as its viability. From a sociological and gender studies' perspective, however, there was also the need to discover all existing associations and references in regards to cases of similarly-voiced individuals. I shortly realised the presence of two major attitudes. Firstly, the mainstream media either deliberately ignored the existing artists or only recognised them as 'drag' novelties – even those with a classical background. Secondly, the trans-related artistic organisations, which started forming around that time, only embraced avant-garde acts, with little or no classical background, which were aimed at a specialised audience. Appalled by the one-dimensional and scandal-mongering approach from both sides, my aspiration became to challenge misconceptions as well as prejudice wherever possible: a trans-artist should neither be underestimated nor forced underground and thus excluded from mainstream options.

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<sup>746</sup> The term gender affirmation or transition is referring to the 'passage' to full-time living as a man, whereas medical assessment here implies the starting on testosterone.

In addition, the aim became to collect all known methods and existing personal accounts. The outcomes of this combined research would be recorded, analysed and then combined with my own account in progress. This would be used as a step forward towards developing new methodological and, possibly, ideological concepts in regards to the new vocal family. All above aims remain as intact and valid today as in those challenging days of 2002 and 2003. However, since the beginning of 2005, the methodological-ideological aspect of this research has been greatly facilitated by the introduction of the concept of hybrid vocal personae, which brought my work on transvocality into a new and far more exciting territory. Able to embrace all singing personae influenced by more than one hormonal category, the new term appeared immediately to unite early phenomena, such as the musici and their predecessors, with modern alternative voices.

Within the family of hybrid vocal personae, the transvoiced artists emerged at once as possessing a unique status. Focusing on the two most prominent formative factors studied by medicine, endocrinology being the most significant field, and psychology, this vocal category has been made possible in its entirety only in our times, because of the combination of gender dysphoric and dual hormonal experience within the same fully-formed persona.<sup>747</sup> There is also a third significant factor to be considered:

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<sup>747</sup> The reference to psychology, as opposed to psychiatry, here is because of the negative associations of the latter for TS participants. Cf. W. Barnes. February 2006. 'The Medicalization of Transsexualism.' - <http://www.trans-health.com/displayarticle.php?aid=6> (Accessed: 20.10.09).

the transvoiced individuals, instead of the lack of puberty characterising other hybrid vocal personae, are the only ones with experience of both binarian 'rites of passage' to adulthood.<sup>748</sup> This chapter is to discuss how these three as well as other factors are able to influence the transsexual hybrid vocality.

I would need to underline that the trans-related terminology followed here is the one preferred by most trans theorists and activists in U.K. as well as abroad. According to this idiomatic choice, there is an established distinction between 'transgender' and 'transsexual'. In simple terms, the difference lies on the transsexual individual's decision to permanently transition, which means to leave behind his or her assigned sex at birth, cross '(the) boundary or border' and live full-time as a new man or woman.<sup>749</sup> This entails taking hormones and having surgery and, therefore, is significantly different to temporary cross-dressing and experiencing life as a man or woman as most transgender persons do.<sup>750</sup> More specifically, let us read the reasoning given by the president of FTM International:

As a transsexual man I describe myself as having changed the sex of my body, but not my gender. Because I am transsexual, I sought to align my body and my spirit, psyche, soul, gender expression, so I changed my body to manifest that. Not all transgendered people do

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<sup>748</sup> However, of course, the second experience is inferior to that of biological males or females.

<sup>749</sup> Dave King. 2003. 'Gender Migration: A Sociological Analysis.' *Sexualities*. Vol. 6: 173-95; 175.

<sup>750</sup> However, as always, exceptions exist. There are individuals who choose to live full-time in their acquired gender, without the need for prescribed hormones or surgery.

this. Transgender does not mean changing gender. It means going across gender. Now, if gender is both expressed and interpreted, then it may be said of my experience in both a female and a male form that I was transgendered when I expressed my male gender through my female body, but in my male body I am no longer transgendered because my expression and your interpretation of my gender will not conflict.<sup>751</sup>

For all the above reasons, my work here deals only with the transsexual hybrid vocal persona.

Though most relevant academic material is usually concerned with the MTF speaking and, rarely, singing version, this chapter will primarily discuss the FTM singing vocal persona. However, because of the fact that I have been a researcher and singing tutor involved with both FTM and MTF voices since 2004, the second division of this chapter will reflect the work on MTF vocality. The first part, however, will commence with accounts of my own vocal journey as well as the aetiology behind the relatively 'unorthodox' approach. This is the re-evaluated form of a work, which its initial aspects were first presented in September 2004, before been tested further and been published in 2009.<sup>752</sup> Nonetheless, before being able to make comparisons and draw conclusions about the transmale vocality, we would first need to examine some aspects of the male changing voice in adolescence.

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<sup>751</sup> Jamison Green. 18<sup>th</sup> August 1995. *Keynote Address to First FTM Conference*. USA.

<sup>752</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Sex and Gender Diversity: *Reflecting Genders*. 12<sup>th</sup> September 2004. MMU, Manchester. UK & *Radical Musicology* 3 (2008): 32 pars. 17 May 2009 <<http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk>>.

## Some thoughts on the Changing Bio-male Vocality

It is broadly recognised that male 'adolescent singers experience vocal problems ... (associated with their) special "rite of passage" from childhood to adulthood'.<sup>753</sup> Even though the exact age and other individual characteristics of these hormonally-induced changes can differ, the vocal results generally tend to include 'fluctuations in range, tone quality, and the ability to move the voice [less] easily... (These results may) cause some boys to think that they can no longer sing.'<sup>754</sup> Not surprisingly, the singing teacher's input, which should explain the physiological and vocal changes in depth, can be of particular importance to a young singers' future development. Even though there is adequate scientific research and evidence supporting the continuation of singing in puberty, many voice teachers still insist otherwise. Let us examine the history behind both continuation and discontinuation of singing in puberty views.

Music educators, such as Behnke and Browne, had claimed back in 1885 that 'no serious vocal work should be attempted before the voice of the man or of the woman has completely settled.'<sup>755</sup> The writers recognised, however, that there are two categories associated with the manner of boys' vocal changes in puberty: the gradual and the abrupt mode or 'break'. In

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<sup>753</sup> Sally Hook. 2005. 'Vocal Agility in the Male Adolescent Changing Voice.' Doctoral Dissertation. Missouri, Columbia: University of Missouri; 1.

<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>755</sup> Emil Behnke and Lennox Browne. 1885. *The Child's Voice*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington; 62.

case of a gradual vocal change, Behnke and Browne accepted that 'singing may possibly be continued, under the guidance of a competent master without detriment.'<sup>756</sup> Nonetheless, in the case of a sudden voice change or 'break' they believed that singing was beyond reach. Irrespective of this distinction, however, the writers' main view remained intact: due to safety, 'the voice trainer has no business to interfere' before the voice's complete settlement.<sup>757</sup> This belief remained almost entirely unchallenged in voice training as well as scientific research until 1950.<sup>758</sup> Around that time, however, pioneers, such as Cooper and McKenzie, started researching alternative possibilities.<sup>759</sup> Contrary to previously expressed views, they expressed the belief that 'singing and voice training during mutation was desirable.'<sup>760</sup> Their contribution brought such a significant change in attitudes that by 1977, sceptics were not only able to question the truth behind the Behnke findings but also attributed them to an absence of a suitable education, capable of dealing with the idiosyncrasies of changing vocality.<sup>761</sup> More recent music educators, however, such as Leck, believe that the former prohibitive views might have truly been based on a misunderstanding of past theories.<sup>762</sup>

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<sup>756</sup> Behnke and Browne: 91-2.

<sup>757</sup> Op.cit: 62.

<sup>758</sup> Cf. D.A. Weiss. 1950. 'The pubertal change of the human voice.' *Folia Phoniatica*. Vol. 2, Issue 3: 126-59.

<sup>759</sup> The researchers are discussed in detail in the next paragraph.

<sup>760</sup> Hook: 13-4.

<sup>761</sup> For instance, see: F.J. Swanson. 1977. *The male singing voice ages eight to eighteen*. Cedar Rapids, IA: Laurance Press.

<sup>762</sup> Henry Leck. 2001. *The boy's changing voice: Take the high road*. VHS #8742094 or DVD 6228. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard.

The first published research, which questioned the Behnke and Browne views, can be found in the fifties. It was, specifically, Irwin Cooper's works in 1950 and 1953, which first dealt with the boy's changing voice from a new perspective.<sup>763</sup> The reason behind these studies was his attempt to resolve the junior high school choral problem by utilising all available voices safely and effectively. His original research material was both followed and improved by the works of McKenzie in 1956 and Swanson in 1960.<sup>764</sup> It took almost two decades for the next major works' publication by John Cooksey in 1977-8 and in 1984.<sup>765</sup> Other important works that assessed earlier teachings, somehow critically, are those by Groom in 1979, Lee in 1980, Baressi and Russell in 1984, Cooksey and Welch in 1998 and Killian in 1997 and 1999.<sup>766</sup> These studies were able to

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<sup>763</sup> I. Cooper. 1950. 'The junior high school choral problem.' *Music Educators Journal*. Vol. 37, Issue 2; 20 & 21; I. Cooper. 1953. *Changing voice in junior high—"Letters to Pat"*. New York, NY: Carl Fischer, Inc.

<sup>764</sup> F.J. Swanson. 1960. 'When voices change.' *Music Educators Journal*. Vol. 46, Issue 4; 50, 53-4, 56.

D. McKenzie. 1956. *Training the boy's changing voice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

<sup>765</sup> John M. Cooksey. 1977-8. 'The development of a continuing, eclectic theory for the training and cultivation of the junior high school male changing voice. Part I: Existing theories. Part II: Scientific and empirical findings. Part III: Developing an integrated approach to the care and training of the junior high school male changing voice. Part IV: Selecting music for the junior high school male changing voice.' *Choral Journal*. Vol. 18, Issues 2, 3, 4, 5: 5-13, 5-16, 5-15, 5-18 & J.M. Cooksey. 1984. 'The male adolescent changing voice: Some new perspectives.' In M. Runfola, Ed. *Research symposium on the male adolescent voice*. Buffalo: State University of New York Press; 4-59.

<sup>766</sup> M.A. Groom. 1979. 'A descriptive analysis of development in adolescent male voices during the summer time period.' Doctoral dissertation: Florida State University. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 40-09A, 4945. P.A. Lee. 1980. 'Normal ages of pubertal events among American males and females.' *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*. Vol. 1, Issue 1: 26-9. A.L. Barresi & T.P. Russell. 1984. 'Criteria for selecting appropriate choral literature to assist in the development of the boy's changing voice.' In M. Runfola, ed. *Research symposium on the male adolescent voice*. Buffalo: State University of New York Press: 166-82. J.M. Cooksey & G.F. Welch. 1998. 'Adolescence, singing development and national curricula design.' *British Journal of Music Education*. Vol.15, Issue 1: 99-119. J.N. Killian. 1997. 'Perceptions of the voice-change process: Male adult versus adolescent musicians and non musicians.' *Journal of Research in Music Education*.

specify the vocal changes as taking place between the ages of eleven and fifteen years in adolescent males. Similarly to materials supporting the singing cessation in puberty, they also observed and recorded the changing voice's issues. However, any similarities between the two opposing 'groups' seemed to stop there. The reasons are that the new researchers not only mentioned changes associated with tone quality, range and other characteristics of the changing vocality but also demonstrated a positive attitude towards the vocal maturation process for the first time. This constructive approach was reflected at devising vocal training options and a suitable repertoire for this vocal period. Most importantly, all above works focused on the educators' need for specific training in all aspects encountered by adolescent changing voices. Though matters have improved vastly, as demonstrated in a 1999 report on music educators, still '84.8% (of the teachers) felt that their formal training had not prepared them adequately to teach boys with changing voices. Only 70.6% of respondents taught their students about the voice change process.'<sup>767</sup> This extract confirms the need for voice teachers and practitioners not only to be educated better in this context but also for this to be upgraded regularly. Otherwise, firstly, these educators would continue passing negative and wrong messages about changing vocality to their students and, secondly, they would be less able to

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Vol. 45, Issue 4: 521-35. J.N. Killian. 1999. 'A description of vocal maturation among fifth and sixth grade boys.' *Journal of Research in Music Education*. Vol. 47, Issue 4: 357-69.

<sup>767</sup> A. Adler. 1999. 'A survey of teacher practices in working with male singers before and during the voice change.' *Canadian Journal of Research in Music Education*. Vol. 40, Issue 4: 29-33; 30. The percentage mentioned above is compared to the 85.3% of the total of voice practitioners who were trained to deal with changing voice issues.

help them with a suitably devised for their age and needs exercising and repertoire regime.

### **Most Important Names, Techniques and Methods**

The works of Cooper, McKenzie, Swanson and Cooksey, especially in terms of 'identifying and charting vocal ranges (are recognised to have) contributed greatly to the body of knowledge concerning adolescent male voices.'<sup>768</sup> Irwin Cooper was a choir director educated in Europe, who used to be, at first, a firm supporter of boys' cessation of singing in puberty. The reason of his reconsideration was him listening to adolescent boys' voices singing 'around a campfire during scouting excursions.'<sup>769</sup> He noticed then that the changing voices, instead of following the well-known song-keys or pitches, were able to achieve singing in tune by transposing the songs.<sup>770</sup> Cooper put the whole theory to test, and, simultaneously, the basis of good practice, by asking all the boys in classroom to sing the refrain of 'Jingle Bells'. After listening to them individually and with a tap on the shoulder, Cooper started distinguishing those boys who seemed to possess changing or 'cambiate' voices.<sup>771</sup> As a result of this 'experiment', he registered five developmental voice types in puberty: girl sopranos, boy sopranos,

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<sup>768</sup> Hook: 14.

<sup>769</sup> Hook: 16.

<sup>770</sup> Collins, 1981: 2.

<sup>771</sup> See below. The Italian term soon acquired an anglicised pronunciation.

cambiata, baritones and basses (rare).<sup>772</sup> This five-group division, however, was only used as a flexible indication rather than a strict vocal boundary system. Corisande Auburn, an MA research student in 1953, recorded the early progress of Cooper's career, particularly, during the forties and fifties, as both a voice clinician and a workshop provider throughout the USA.<sup>773</sup> It is stated that towards the end of the forties, as a result of his work with other educators in workshops, the shape of the previous vocal grouping became amended as: soprano I & II, changing voice, and baritone.<sup>774</sup> During the same period of time, Cooper also published singing materials for junior high choirs as well as his first academic article.<sup>775</sup> In that article, the pioneer educator explained his choice behind the employ of the term *Cambiata*, instead of the applied since 1936 and rather preferred term 'alto-tenor'.<sup>776</sup> Explaining this kind of vocal idiosyncrasy, Cooper stated that the part 'should be filled with interest and used often as the melody part, for it has a

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<sup>772</sup> Cooper, 1953. In Hook: 16.

<sup>773</sup> Corisande Auburn. 1953. 'Teacher-Training Institutions in Relation to the Apparent Widespread Lack of Teacher Understanding Concerning Junior High Vocal Phenomena and Its Choral Potential.' M.A. thesis. Florida: The Florida State University.

<sup>774</sup> Auburn: 18.

<sup>775</sup> The song books were *Unison Songs for Teen Age Boys* in 1949 and *Tunetime for Teentime* in 1952.

<sup>776</sup> The 'alto-tenor', a term coined by Hollis Dann (*Hollis Dann Song Series Conductor's Book: A Guide to Choral Song Interpretation*: 101) had 'become associated with a vocal range extending from F below middle C (i.e. *f*) upwards an interval of a sixth or seventh (i.e. up to *d'* or *e'*), whereas, the *cambiata* extends upwards to octave middle C' (i.e. *c''*). The researcher acknowledges that 'the upper fifth of this range frequently holds some soprano quality, but it is still part of the voice and is available for use.' Cooper, 1950: 21. Even though early practitioners had embraced the term 'alto-tenor' (Mursell and Glenn in 1938), it was McKenzie's book *Training the Boy's Changing Voice* in 1956 that made it more widely known.

beautiful tone quality, full of vigour yet capable of exquisite *pianissimo* singing. Quickly moving melodies (however) are not advocated.<sup>777</sup>

Second in chronological terms is Duncan McKenzie, another vocal pioneer who 'combined the successes of many educators (from America and New Zealand) as he laid out his theory of teaching the boy's changing voice'.<sup>778</sup> The main characteristics of his theory included, firstly, the belief of the gradual lowering of the boys' voices pitch in adolescence and, secondly, that, due to this gradual aspect, singing in puberty did not jeopardise either the vocal health or future. Based on these ideas, McKenzie supported the necessity of devising a suitable vocal tuition technique for boys. Among the methods introduced was a 'yodelling' approach for the so-called young bass. This approach, which applied the method of vocalising to connect the adolescent boys' mutational lower register with his *false* one, enabled the teenage singer to retain flexibility between registers. This was particularly useful when the song asked for higher notes that the adolescent voice could so far achieve in modal register.<sup>779</sup> The use of the yodelling technique, however, was there to underline McKenzie's main idea: boys' voices should neither be classified strictly at this stage nor required to sing

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<sup>777</sup> Cooper, 1950: 21. In the same extract, the writer also suggested that 'Baritone parts should be slow-moving, using interval leaps of fourths and fifths with intervening short scale figures.' *Ibid.*

<sup>778</sup> Hook: 14. This is due to his first known work of 1956. However, McKenzie's first material, more traditional and lesser-influential, was published more than twenty-five years earlier: D. McKenzie. 1930. *Music in the junior school*. Toronto: J.M. Dent & Song Limited.

<sup>779</sup> D. McKenzie. 1956. *Training the boy's changing voice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; 40-1.

in ranges that are uncomfortable to them.<sup>780</sup> Only for reasons of estimation rather than classification, he then published two charts of vocal ranges suitable for this voice stage. The first one described the distinction between changing and unchanged vocal phases, whereas the second one concerned 'boy basses' and included ranges for USA grades 7-9 as well as high school ranges, applied in grades 10-12, for high baritone, baritone, bass and low bass.<sup>781</sup> As said, however, these range diagrams were only meant to be used as a helpful educational device and never as something definitive.

Frederick Swanson's work on the changing voice started in the 1960s. Among the most important and relevant views to this thesis, we can first distinguish his work on the adolescent bass in 1961.<sup>782</sup> During the same year, the researcher-educator also noted the importance of the tessitura as well as repertoire for the changing voice. This led to the 1981 statement that adolescents, both boys and girls, should continue to be taught sound vocal production during the voice change.<sup>783</sup> In particular, Swanson noted that there 'is really only one problem that differentiates the young male singer with the changing voice from other singers: range. The young adolescent is adding tones down in the bass clef. Therefore, that is where he must sing,

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<sup>780</sup> McKenzie: 35.

<sup>781</sup> McKenzie: 30 & 32.

<sup>782</sup> Frederick J. Swanson. 1961. 'The proper care and feeding of changing voices.' *Music Educators Journal*. Vol. 48, Issue 2; 63-4, 66.

<sup>783</sup> Other views included that educating boys and girls separately within the school choir context could produce better singing results (F.J. Swanson. 1960. 'When voices change.' *Music Educators Journal*. Vol. 46, Issue 4; 50, 53-4, 56 & F.J. Swanson. 1977. *The male singing voice ages eight to eighteen*. Cedar Rapids, IA: Laurance Press) and that provided they are taught properly, and contrary to general views, boys can be keen about singing (F.J. Swanson. 1984. 'Changing voices: Don't leave out the boys.' *Music Educators Journal*. Vol. 70, Issue 5; 47-50).

and he must develop these newly emerging tones properly.’<sup>784</sup> This is particularly important because, instead of facing the whole changing vocality as a negative experience, Swanson focuses on ability rather than disability. The writer, in fact, appears to criticise discreetly this sort of negative attitude in the following extract: ‘Assuming [that the adolescent male] has not lost his voice entirely so that he can neither speak nor sing (voice change is not the cause for such dysfunction), one can easily find out what tones the youth can produce, and that is where one begins. As additional pitches are added to the developing range, the material to be vocalised and sung can be adjusted.’<sup>785</sup>

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the 1981 work by Swanson, however, was his penning of the five patterns of male voice change. The first, known as ‘Pattern One’, appears to be the most recurrent one. This consisted of voices whose bass-baritone register develops swiftly without this to affect the functioning of his treble range. This vocal pattern is demonstrated by the singer’s use of ‘his baritone voice for a while, then (shifting) into the treble voice with surprising, even amusing, effect’.<sup>786</sup> Contrary to previous model, ‘Pattern Two’ singers are characterised by a rapid vocal and general change in puberty. They are portrayed in the above work as ‘neglected, discarded, wasted, lost singers’, whose voices drop ‘almost overnight into the deepest regions of the bass clef; the treble tones

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<sup>784</sup> F.J. Swanson. 1981. ‘The young male with a changing voice.’ *NATS Bulletin*. Vol. 38, Issue 1; 32.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>786</sup> Swanson, 1981: 33.

disappear'.<sup>787</sup> The similarity of 'Pattern Three' singers stands closer to the first model of changing vocality. In this case, however, the central tones of the voice tend to 'disappear' or become unusable for a significant period of time. The next group, known as 'Pattern Four', could be depicted as the gradual vocal category change pattern.<sup>788</sup> Due to this gradual factor, the voices rarely experience, for instance, problems associated with their *passaggio*.<sup>789</sup> The last pattern appears to be the rarest. According to Swanson's descriptions, in 'Pattern Five' the voice tends to drop 'five or six tones, (then) stays at that level for as long as a semester, suddenly drops five or six more tones, then levels off for a longer period of time, drops a bit more, etc.'<sup>790</sup> This work demonstrates the essential for imaginative and adoptable approach suitable for the individual needs of pubescent/adolescent male singers.

The latter part of Swanson's study almost coincides chronologically with the first significant research carried by John Cooksey, which was published in 1977-8.<sup>791</sup> The results of Cooksey's investigation, focused on pubescent and early adolescent vocal change, eventually culminated in his

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<sup>787</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>788</sup> From soprano to alto to tenor etc.

<sup>789</sup> Swanson, 198: 34.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>791</sup> John M. Cooksey. 1977-8. 'The development of a continuing, eclectic theory for the training and cultivation of the junior high school male changing voice. Part I: Existing theories. Part II: Scientific and empirical findings. Part III: Developing an integrated approach to the care and training of the junior high school male changing voice. Part IV: Selecting music for the junior high school male changing voice.' *Choral Journal*. Vol. 18, Issues 2, 3, 4, 5; 5-13, 5-16, 5-15, 5-18.

‘Contemporary, Eclectic Theory.’<sup>792</sup> According to this theory, there are five stages of Adolescent Voice Change.<sup>793</sup> The researcher, apart from ranges, also gave details of the principal features of each voice range, in both speaking and singing terms.<sup>794</sup> Whereas the first three stages can be considered to be self-explanatory, Cooksey provides more details for stages IV and V, in other words, the two final stages in the vocal maturation process. According to his definition, in stage IV the adult sound and vocal quality are neither fully apparent nor mature. This becomes more applicable in the range below *B b*, which remains underdeveloped and cannot be achieved effectively. The agility of this baritone-like range remains compromised, especially when dealing with intervals of more than a fourth or fifth. The adult characteristics, such as resonance, range, voice classification, can be first assessed during stage V, especially when accompanied by the proper training. As a result, vocal agility, resonance, and power increase significantly.<sup>795</sup> Even though Cooksey sees ‘numerous differences between Cooper, Swanson, and McKenzie on vital issues’, he also ‘noted (an eight-point) *agreement* of philosophy among these three

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<sup>792</sup> Though the important longitudinal research was undertaken by Cooksey, Beckett, and Wiseman in a 3-year study begun in 1978 in California (*N* = 86). Although this research was not published in its entirety, Cooksey shared it at a Research Symposium in 1983.

<sup>793</sup> This will be referred as AVC from now on.

<sup>794</sup> Stage I. Beginning of Mutation- Principal Feature: Lowering of the *Upper* limit of range. Stage II. Highpoint of Mutation - Principal Feature: Narrowing of the Singing Range. Stage III. End of Mutation - Principal Feature: Lowering of the Lower Limit of the Singing Range. (Vol. 8, Issue 2; 9 & 10) Stage IV. Postmutational Period - End of the most dramatic stage of pubertal development. Stage V. Early Adult Phase - Body and resonance of the tone increases, and characteristic adult qualities emerge.

<sup>795</sup> *Op.cit.*: 14.

pioneers'.<sup>796</sup> Similarly to his predecessors, Cooksey, from the start, recognised five stages in changing vocality.<sup>797</sup>

In his 2000 evaluation of his eclectic theory, the writer explained that the theory constituted to all healthy pubescent/adolescent boys passing through the five stages of vocal change in an entirely predictable sequence. When summed up, these five pubertal/adolescent developmental surges produce the five-stage phenomenon we call male adolescent voice transformation. However, these stages are not equally experienced by all and each stage's duration can be dependent on individual characteristics.<sup>798</sup> Though the work of all four researchers/educators is focused on the adolescent changing vocality, their full contribution and effect extends far beyond their initial scope. In particular, their input, and specifically that of John Cooksey, has clearly influenced the initial concepts and ideas behind this work on the Changing FTM Vocality.

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<sup>796</sup> The eight-point agreement consisted of the following: '1. The voice change occurs at the onset of puberty, and is directly related to the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics. 2. Most currently published literature is inadequate to fit the range and tessitura of the male changing voice. 3. Irregular growth rates in the vocal mechanism can make the voice unpredictable and difficult to control, particularly if it is forced into the wrong pitch range. 4. In groups of boys between the ages of 12 and 15, one might expect to find voices in many different stages of growth. 5. The rate in which voice changes occur vary with individuals. 6. Individual and group voice testing is necessary. 7. Teachers should help students to understand their voices during the change and 8. It is very important to establish good singing habits during this time.' John Cooksey, October 1977, Vol. 18: 12-3.

<sup>797</sup> Stage I, Early mutation, Midvoice I (beginning of change); Stage II, High mutation, Midvoice II (middle of change); Stage III, Mutation climax, Midvoice IIA (climax of change); Stage IV, Post-mutation Stabilization, New Baritone (tapering period) Stage IV, Post-mutation Settling Baritone (expansion/development) (J.M Cooksey 2000. 'Voice transformation in male adolescents.' In L. Thurman & G. Welch, Ed. *Bodymind & Voice: foundations of voice education, book four: lifespan voice development* (2nd ed.).

<sup>798</sup> Cooksey, 2000: 823.

## Section A

### The Changing Female-to-Male Voice – An Evaluation

In a drop of water

The child was searching for his voice.

F. G. Lorca – *El Nino Mudo* (The Dumb Child) transl. Roy Campbell

The research contained in this chapter was first presented in 2004 and has recently been upgraded and published in an article.<sup>799</sup> Both main versions contain records compiled from research on singing FTM voice, yet differ significantly due to the rather personal and emotionally-charged character of the first paper.<sup>800</sup> Research necessitates experience and solid methodology as well as some distance from its subject. This is why most

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<sup>799</sup> A.N. Constansis. 2008. 'The Changing Female-To-Male (FTM) Voice.' *Radical Musicology*. Vol. 3. <http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk> (17 May 2009), 32 pars. There was also an intermediate stage of this work, containing the first participants' results, which was produced and edited in 2006.

<sup>800</sup> This was reflected clearly in the non-traditional abstract format: 'Like most transsexuals, I started having clear indications of my gender dysphoria in my early childhood. As I was growing up in the very transgender-unfriendly Greek capital during the late sixties and seventies, however, it was obvious to me that silencing the facts of my "condition" was my only viable option. In consequence, I rarely spoke as a child, since I knew that my strangely masculine manners and unusually deep voice would immediately expose me to harassment. Even despite my caution, I seldom managed to avoid being targeted by others, and this situation lasted throughout my childhood. Fortunately, however, that constant struggle never turned me against my voice. In fact, my singing became my only solace during those very dark days of my life. I finally became a professional singer. Whether amateur or professional, however, my singing voice has always remained for me the best way of revealing my true self. When in 2002 transitioning became the only viable option, I wanted to take my voice with me on my journey. This paper describes the way that I managed to achieve this, and challenges the usual views about the inevitability of the loss of FTM voices during transition.' This format remained served as an abstract of this work until 2006.

researchers tend to work on secondary projects first and later pursue their true interests. This, however, did not happen in my case. Even though I used to have some previous research experience in musicology, this did not involve purely scientific aspects. These had to be learned whilst in the process of the actual project. As a result, numerous mistakes were made on the way and had to be corrected as soon as possible before jeopardising the project's credibility. On the one hand, the most important of these mistakes was this researcher's initial lack of emotional distance from the project. On the other hand, this project's initial stages were based greatly on personal aspects.

### **Evaluating the Particulars**

As stated in 2004, 'most transmen report the loss of their singing voice, as well as of the effective use of their speaking voice, soon after the start of testosterone injections'.<sup>801</sup> This well-established particular has rarely been challenged. Not surprisingly, medical works, even those with the added advantage of an insider's knowledge, such as by Gorton *et al.*, clearly advise that 'professional or amateur singers and speakers should be warned that frequently voice changes occur that may be significantly detrimental to vocal performance. These changes are both unpredictable and

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<sup>801</sup> A. N. Constansis. 2004. 'The Changing FTM Voice.' Paper. *6<sup>th</sup> International Congress: Reflecting Genders*. MMU, Manchester – UK; 1.

irreversible'.<sup>802</sup> To this, Adler and Van Borsel have added that 'the loss in the high tones might not fully be compensated for by the gain in the lower frequencies and that the change really means a reduction in pitch range – it is not a question of switching over to a lower singing voice.'<sup>803</sup> This view, certainly applicable in most singing FTM cases, obviously, does not discuss options, such as specially-devised exercising regimes, or the use of *falsetto*.

The vocal changes are associated with the change in hormonal regime prescribed to FTMs. Though there are international variations and new methods of hormonal administration added in, still in 2009, most FTMs tend to start from the highest recommended intake. The high potency is chosen in order to 'induce virilisation, including a male voice pitch', as well as produce general 'male physical contours' in the least possible time.<sup>804</sup> This particular, however, remains contrary to changes experienced, for instance, by the bio-male during adolescence, where the principle is low start and gradual increase in natural testosterone. This remains a key issue, irrespective of the later in life incidence of the 'second puberty' or transition. Of course, several would question the meaning of 'natural' in connection to transsexual occurrence. Even though the ability for spontaneous sex reversal is far from being scientifically unknown in nature,

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<sup>802</sup> R. N. Gorton, J. Buth and D. Spade. 2005. *Medical Therapy and Health Maintenance for Transgender Men: A Guide for Health Care Providers*. San Francisco: Lyon-Martin Women's Health Services; 59.

<sup>803</sup> R.K. Adler & J. Van Borsel. 'Female-to-Male Considerations.' In R.K. Adler, S. Hirsch and M. Mordaunt. 2006. *Voice and Communication Therapy for the Transgender / Transsexual Client*. San Diego & Abingdon: Plural Publishing; 144.

<sup>804</sup> L. Gooren. 2006. 'Hormone Treatment of the Adult Transsexual Patient.' *Hormone Research*. Vol. 64 [suppl. 2]: 31-6. Normal range for a biological male is 290 to 900ng/dl, but around 500ng/dl is the highest female-to-male achievable. [The abbreviation ng/dl stands for nanograms (a nanogram is one-billionth of a gram) per decilitre (one-tenth of a litre)].

this is rarely discussed in everyday life or considered in relation to transsexualism, which is still treated as ‘unnatural’ by many.<sup>805</sup> This was, for example, the reason behind the article’s ‘need’ for justification in the form of ‘the biology of culture or ... conceptions of “the natural”.’<sup>806</sup> Since the aetiology behind gender dysphoria, however, still evades a fully-scientific explanation, it would be right to assume that other aspects, such as variation rather than disorder, would need to be taken into consideration. In numerous examples, after all, nature remains far more versatile than our perceptions of it, which, again, though rarely questioned, can be closely personal.<sup>807</sup>

Hormonal administration for Female-to-Male transsexuals has changed significantly since the days of my transition in 2003. The relatively recent introduction of Nebido, ‘a long acting testosterone undecanoate

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<sup>805</sup> For instance, sex ‘reversal occurs routinely among the adults of many marine fishes. The coral reef species *Anthias squamipinnis* is a protogynous hermaphrodite species in which all fish begin life as females. Individuals live in bisexual social groups ... When one of the male dies or is removed, a large female changes sex’. S. Wachtel & S. Demas. August 1991. ‘Bkm satellite DNA and ZFY in the coral reef fish *Anthias squamipinnis*.’ *Genome*. Vol. 34, Issue 4: 612-7; 612. It is also known that a ‘number of compounds can cause apparent sex reversal, sex behaviour alterations, and/or genital malformations in various species. For instance, andiandrogens, such as P, P’- DDE and 2,3,7,8 –tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD) cause feminisation of mammals, whereas oestrogens cause feminisation in a number of reptile species’. David O. Norris, James A. Carr, Eds. 2006. *Endocrine Disruption: Biological Bases for health effects in Wildlife and Humans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 173-4.

<sup>806</sup> This is reflected in the following editor’s input: ‘The challenge, as presented here in extended form, might be thought to have wider implications as well, to do with the relationships construed between constructions of gender, of voice quality and of the (vocalising) body; to do with – we might say – the ‘biology of culture’; or, to put it another way, with conceptions of ‘the natural’. (Constansis. Middleton, Ed.; 2).

<sup>807</sup> One classic example remains the presence of homosexuality in the animal kingdom as viewed by religious preachers as well as ‘medico-biological research’, which is far from being ‘immune to the influences of politics and personal prejudice. (Therefore), it is necessary to distinguish between the objectivity of *data* and the unquestionable subjectivity of the context in which research questions are asked in the first place.’ W. Ricketts. 1984. ‘Biological Research on Homosexuality: Ansell’s Cow or Occam’s razor.’ *Journal of Homosexuality*. Vol. 9, Issue 4: 65-93; 83.

injection offered at 3 monthly intervals', has reduced - or even replaced - the need for bi-monthly or weekly injections.<sup>808</sup> This method is considered generally to be 'a safe and effective treatment for hypogonadism which is well tolerated by patients.'<sup>809</sup> More specifically, Nebido is treated as 'an optimal formulation for replacement in FtM that is well accepted and does not cause major problems.'<sup>810</sup> Irrespective of positive results thus far, however, the medication remains still experimental in terms of long-term effects. Another important issue is that, when used on transition and based on the participants of this research project, it tends to bring the full effects sooner than other types of testosterone, including Sustanon.<sup>811</sup> Apart from testosterone undecanoate, however, transdermal gel solutions, such as Testogel or Androgel, 'represent an effective alternative to injectable testosterone preparations.'<sup>812</sup> The recommended dose is 5mg, which should never exceed the 10mg, is usually applied 'once daily at about the same time, preferably in the morning.'<sup>813</sup> If needed, the daily dose should be

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<sup>808</sup> R. Smith, N. Karavitaki & J. Wass. 2008. 'Clinical experience of Nebido: monitoring the efficacy and safety of intramuscular testosterone undecanoate in hypogonadal men.' *Endocrine Abstracts*. Vol. 15; 297.

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>810</sup> M. Meriggiola *et al.* April 2008. 'T04-P-04 Effects of Testosterone Undecanoate (TU) administered alone or in combination with letrozole or dutasteride in Female to Male transsexuals (FtM).' Abstracts of the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Federation of Sexology. *Sexologies*. Volume 17, Suppl. 1; S81.

<sup>811</sup> Sustanon 250 is the injectable combination of four different testosterone esters: 'Testosterone propionate Ph. Eur. 30 mg/ml, Testosterone phenylpropionate B.P. 60 mg/ml, Testosterone isocaproate B.P. 60 mg/ml, Testosterone decanoate B.P. 100 mg/ml (equivalent to a total of 176mg of Testosterone).' <http://emc.medicines.org.uk/document.aspx?documentId=5164> (Accessed: 26.08.09).

<sup>812</sup> R. S. Swerdloff & C. Wang. September 2003. 'Three-year follow-up of androgen treatment in hypogonadal men: preliminary report with testosterone gel.' *The Aging Male*. Vol. 6, Issue 3: 207-11; 207.

<sup>813</sup> Testogel. 29 June 2009.

<http://www.epgonline.org/viewdrug.cfm/drugId/DR004103/language/LG0001/drugName/TSTOGEL-50-mg-Gel> (Accessed: 15.07.09).

adjusted 'by the doctor depending on the clinical or laboratory response in individual patients'.<sup>814</sup> Though there have been noted only minor health side effects, such as skin irritation, we still do not know the medication's long term effects. However, the major concern for this method is 'the risk of testosterone transfer' to women and children.<sup>815</sup> Provided they are administered responsibly, nonetheless, transdermal gel solutions remain, for the time being, the best low start-gradual increase method.

During the years 2003 and 2004 both testosterone undecanoate and transdermal gel methods were either unknown in the UK or rarely used since, due to higher costs, they were not prescribed on the NHS. In their place, 'the usual hormonal treatment (was) Sustanon 250mg (given) intramuscularly every two weeks, or testosterone enanthate (Primoteston Depot) if the patient (was) sensitive to peanut (arachis) oil'.<sup>816</sup> In the mean time, in the Netherlands the regime was only slightly more flexible, where the intramuscular doses used were of 200-50 mg bi-monthly. In the US, however, in 2005 'injected testosterone (was) started at a range of doses (25-125 mg / week depending on the patient and clinician) and titrated upwards based on clinical effects and trough levels'.<sup>817</sup> To this day, as

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<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.* Women in relationship with men using transdermal testosterone can get virilised as a result unless the medication is used responsibly. The effects on children can be even more severe since testosterone can arrest their growth. Precautions include '(washing) hands carefully after applying the gel, (covering) the application area with clothing once the gel has dried (and showering) before any situation in which this type of contact is foreseen.' *Ibid.*

<sup>816</sup> A. Levy, A. Crown, and R. Reid. 2003. 'Endocrine intervention for transsexuals.' *Clinical Endocrinology*. Volume 59; 409.

<sup>817</sup> Gorton *et al.*: 59. Titration is the process of gradually adjusting the dose of a medication until the desired effect is achieved. 'If lower doses are used initially, titration should probably be considered more frequently'. *Ibid.*

assessed directly through participants of this research, the US health system remains more positively inclined towards gradual administration than many European ones.<sup>818</sup>

Lower doses have become in the past associated with medical bias, especially by the TS community and this has even been recognised by medical practitioners. Some of the medical reasons behind prescribing lower or ‘inadequate’ doses have been named as the ‘doubts about the integrity of transgender individuals and the authenticity of gender dysphoria as a diagnosis’.<sup>819</sup> Professional singing and teaching experience as well as research made me ignore the above views and decide to transition on a lower than usual testosterone intake.<sup>820</sup> Though this was my option, the psychological and everyday-life implications of not ‘passing’ were neither made easier by this choice of mine nor the suffering was alleviated. Despite of numerous job losses and related negative incidences, however, I believe that the low start-gradual increase regime and regular exercising allowed me to retain my singing ability and improve my hybrid vocal persona in several ways. Nonetheless, of course, the transitional experience would need to be improved, irrespective of choice of hormonal regime and amount of social exposure. This could be achieved, for instance, by the provision of a more protected environment and careful planning before transition, assisted by

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<sup>818</sup> This fact may be attributed to the currently high-publicised issue of the USA health system remaining private.

<sup>819</sup> Levy, Crown and Reid, 2003: 409.

<sup>820</sup> I started singing ballads professionally at the age of twenty. After years of performing in art song / ballads as well as classical styles, I obtained my soloist’s singing Diploma in 1992, aged twenty-nine.

those already transitioned.<sup>821</sup> The singing method, which I am about to explain in detail, was based on research on male adolescent and Female-to-Male comparisons as well as aspects of vocal pathology and therapy. The resulted exercise regime was then tested by me, a singing FTM in transition, during 2003 and 2004.<sup>822</sup>

### **The first realisation – A re-assessment**

Some events, which might appear initially minor in importance, have the power to bring a significant level of awareness and change. This was brought to me during my first FTM group meeting, in August 2002. By that time and anticipating my vocal changes, I had already commenced researching on changing voices. The research was initially based on material introduced during my final year of BMus studies. Soon, however, I discovered and focused my study on specialised books, such as *Working with the Adolescent Voice* by John Cooksey.<sup>823</sup> Nonetheless, it was that first FTM group meeting in 2002 that ‘brought me face to face with two cases of

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<sup>821</sup> This would be the choice of most transsexuals, who frequently e.g. consider transitional requirements, such as RLT, as unjustifiable and overestimated. The real-life test (RLT) ‘is the first significant hurdle most transsexuals face in gaining access to hormone therapy and gender-confirming surgery. The real-life test has been part of the Standards of Care developed by the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association [nowadays, this is known as WPATH] since their inception in 1979. It may come as a surprise to learn that no research preceded the recommendation for a real-life test, and that no research was published on the efficacy of the real-life test in determining success in the new gender role or in minimizing regret after physical transition to the other sex until nearly twenty years after the HBGDA Standards of Care were developed.’ <http://www.trans-health.com/displayarticle.php?aid=80> (Accessed: 15.07.09).

<sup>822</sup> Since then it has been used under my supervision by 15 of my immediate students as well as FTMs from the general community.

<sup>823</sup> J.M. Cooksey. 1992. *Working with the adolescent voice*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing.

what I now call “entrapped FTM voice”.<sup>824</sup> Both group members were over the age of fifty and on testosterone for eighteen months on average. Their speaking characteristics included permanent hoarseness, lack of control, colour and limited power. Moreover, the resultant voices were unconvincing for transmen and, significantly for this research, unsuitable for singing. A brief conversation as well as a ‘touch’ at the individuals’ larynxes made me realise the full extent of the problem.<sup>825</sup> There was a clearly incomplete or, even, arrested laryngeal development exhibited in both larynxes, which were, somewhat, bigger in size than those of average sopranos yet more rigid to the touch.<sup>826</sup> Though this was a suspected outcome, it was still a revelation to me.<sup>827</sup> As a result, the aforementioned episode can be

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<sup>824</sup> Constansis, 2009: par. 4.

<sup>825</sup> This is a technique I had first seen demonstrated and used during winter 2002 by Jacob Lieberman, a vocal osteopath. Cf. J. Lieberman. ‘Principles and Techniques of Manual Therapy: Applications in the Management of Dysphonia.’ In T. Harris, S. Harris, J.S. Rubin and D. Howard, 1998, *The Voice Clinic Handbook*. London: Whurr Publishers Ltd: 91-138.

<sup>826</sup> It is necessary for us to note here that, even though the reliability of the manual therapy technique has been questioned by traditional ENT specialists, it has, nonetheless, been approved by more holistically-minded medical professionals (Cf. *The Voice Clinic Handbook*) as well as been used, due to its effectiveness, by many professional singers. Given the current character of this research programme, so-far not possessing a clinical kind of support, the above has been the only available method of assessment, when possible due to locality issues. Factors, such as laryngeal position, quality of tissues (for instance, laryngeal side differences or ‘fibrotic’ qualities), muscle tone, range of joint movement (which can only be assessed by a qualified manual practitioner), irregular tenderness or pain etc. (Cf. Lieberman, 1998: 107) can be revealed to any vocal practitioner with adequate knowledge in anatomy, practice / experience and perceptive skills. In all cases, the participants have been advised to see their doctor before commencing this programme. Even though holistically-minded medical professionals recognise that problems and tensions, for instance, existing on the vocal folds are most likely to be reflected on laryngeal position or muscle tone, this research would benefit immensely from clinical ENT support and objective observations, such as those obtained via stroboscopy.

<sup>827</sup> This rigidity factor as revealed by manual examination is not necessarily associated with their ages. Both individuals’ voices still exhibit the same characteristics, even after voice therapy.

considered to be the first official stage of this research. The reasoning would require the use of some level of medical approach and terminology.<sup>828</sup>

## **Anatomy of the Vocal Tract -- Voice Theory**

The vocal instrument encompasses most of the human body and vocal quality is something associated with a variety of issues.<sup>829</sup> There are a number of factors and formations, which are distinctly reliant to a person's bio-gender, the larynx being one of them.<sup>830</sup> Morphologically, the laryngeal shape resembles 'a triangular box above, which is flattened behind and at the sides ... (and it is then) bounded in front by a prominent vertical ridge ... (below this point, however, the shape appears to be) narrow and cylindrical'.<sup>831</sup> Significantly, its structure consists mainly of nine separate cartilages, which 'comprise the single cricoid, thyroid, and epiglottic cartilages, and the paired arytenoid, cuneiform, and corniculate cartilages'.<sup>832</sup> One very noteworthy vocal factor is that these nine parts of strong yet elastic tissue behave differently during both the maturation and the ageing process.

The main difference of various laryngeal cartilages, though they are parts of the same structure, is that, depending on sex and other genetic

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<sup>828</sup> Scientific terms' definition is to be provided in corresponding footnotes.

<sup>829</sup> The whole body participates in singing process through breathing, vibrations, *appoggio* - support, etc. The vocal quality is, for instance, influenced by the shape of the ribcage and the lung capacity.

<sup>830</sup> The larynx is, in iconic terms, the voice production centre of the human body.

<sup>831</sup> H. Gray. *Anatomy of the Human Body*. 1995. New York: Churchill Livingstone; 1638.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*

dispositions, they tend to develop as well as ossify at different stages.<sup>833</sup> For example, in terms of development, growth 'of the vocal apparatus at puberty in girls can be seen mostly as a scaling up of the pre-pubertal vocal apparatus, but in males there are significant changes in the relative proportions of the vocal apparatus.'<sup>834</sup> Moreover, the thyroid cartilage is prone to early ossification, whereas the epiglottis, which is consisted of hyaline cartilage and prone to fibro-cartilage conversion, is not. The ossification process commences soon after the full development of the larynx is completed. Even though, on the one hand, this happens around the age of twenty-five for the thyroid cartilage and slightly later for the cricoid and arytenoids, these cartilages do not become truly osseous until the person reaches the age of sixty. On the other hand, the corniculate cartilages (*cornicula laryngis*), which are consisted of fibro-cartilage, do not complete the ossification process until the person reaches the age of seventy. Most importantly, the laryngeal formation is, fundamentally, the home of both the true and false vocal folds. A biological male's true vocal folds are longer (20-25 mm) and thicker on average than those of a biological female (15-20 mm).<sup>835</sup> These longer folds are, in turn, situated within the bio-male larynx,

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<sup>833</sup> 'During ageing, laryngeal cartilages are subject to calcification, with consequent changes in elasticity of the cartilages. The age of onset of calcification varies considerably. It may begin in men in their thirties ... (but in) women, ossification begins later and is less extensive'. W.J. Hardcastle and J. Laver, eds. 1999. *The Handbook of Phonetic Sciences*. Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.; 263. 'The male larynx increases rapidly and disproportionately, and the pharyngeal cavity increases its size relative to the oral cavity.' *Op.cit*: 277.

<sup>834</sup> *Op.cit*: 277. 'The male larynx increases rapidly and disproportionately, and the pharyngeal cavity increases its size relative to the oral cavity.' *Ibid*.

<sup>835</sup> The longer folds are responsible for producing the lower fundamental frequency (Fo) in men.

which is a considerably bigger structure than that of a bio-woman.<sup>836</sup> The above anatomical information bears a significant effect on the FTM voice in transition as well as in development.

Before a transman starts receiving testosterone treatment, he is always warned about the dramatic effects that it will have on his speaking as well as singing voice. This warning, especially in the UK before 2002-3, was rarely accompanied by any detailed and sound methodology of dealing with transmale changing vocality.<sup>837</sup> The general consensus, though this had been challenged by Van Borsel *et al.* in 2000, remained until recently that 'FTMs don't need speech services because testosterone will cause pitch to drop'.<sup>838</sup> This claim can be unfair to transmen because, as Davies and Goldberg admit, 'testosterone doesn't always drop pitch low enough for FTMs to be perceived as male'.<sup>839</sup> There were no published references on singing FTM voices during my pre-transition days.<sup>840</sup> This lack of specific reference in 2002 made me look for material that described a relatively similar process:

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<sup>836</sup> For example, the vertical diameter is 44mm and the circumference 136mm in males, whereas in females the measurements are 36mm and 112mm respectively.

<sup>837</sup> The published online 2004 paper 'The Changing FTM Voice' (not currently online) became, probably, the first FTM-originated singing work used by participants both in the UK and USA. In addition, the 2007 PPT revisited version of this research is mentioned in FTM Australia website. Finally, the 2008 article 'It's up to us to make our voices sing' published in *Voiceprint*, Journal of the Australian Voice Association helped Australian participants to access my work.

<sup>838</sup> S. Davies and J. M. Goldberg. 2006. *Changing Speech*. Vancouver, Canada: Trans Care Project; 18.

<sup>839</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>840</sup> The most detailed methodology, which treats the FTM voice as a whole, with some singing references, is provided by Adler and Van Borsel, published in 2006. See also Van Borsel *et al.* 2000. 'Voice problems in female-to-male transsexuals.' *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*. Vol. 35, Issue 3: 427- 42. In terms of singing reference this 2000 article mentioned the complaints of 'three subjects [the research was conducted between 'January 1986 and January1994' in Ghent University Gender team, Belgium] (who) had described the observed voice alteration in rather negative terms stating that they could no longer sing as high or as good as before.' *Op.cit*: 428 & 437. The article, which contained pure research results and had no scope of providing any singing methodology, remained mostly inaccessible to non-academic FTMs.

that of the changing voice of an adolescent biological male.<sup>841</sup> The rest had to be based on a prescribed - individualised hormonal approach and on devising the best method out of versatile vocal techniques that I was already familiar with.

The initial assumption of this research was the attempt to imitate - as closely as possible - a male adolescent's vocal way through puberty.<sup>842</sup> This hypothesis was soon counterbalanced by realisations of differences between the two groups: biomale adolescents and transmales in transition. For instance, my body and subsequently laryngeal cartilages did not possess an adolescent's degree of flexibility at the age of 39.<sup>843</sup> Positive and supporting elements, however, can be, like in my case, the possession of an already-trained and larger than usual larynx and the presence of longer and thicker vocal folds.<sup>844</sup> Apart from physiological differences, however, the most essential principle brought into my consideration was in regard to the hormonal regime: the secretion of testosterone in biomales does not suddenly commence at the highest level. As a result, the boy does neither fully-masculinise nor mature within six months or a year. There are mostly sociological reasons behind an FTM's attempt to achieve otherwise: the need to 'pass' within a hostile environment. Due to 'sex steroid treatment ... (especially in high doses, being) associated with various side effects', I have

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<sup>841</sup> This assumption was soon discovered to be less equivalent than initially hoped for.

<sup>842</sup> This was recognised from the start to be 'as close as possible'.

<sup>843</sup> I started on testosterone on 27 March 2003.

<sup>844</sup> *Constansis*: par. 14. This also applies to my students with good speaking and singing ability after transition: they all have sizeable larynxes. In my case, the previous vocal idiosyncrasy used to categorise me as 'an alto with the capacity for very low notes, down to C3 [C'], an octave below Middle C [c']'. *Ibid.*

always had doubts about this abrupt method and its physiological consequences for our bodies.<sup>845</sup> Vocally, however, as based on my research and teaching experience so far, am truly convinced that this approach does not support a singing transman's best interests.

## Hypothesis

The increase in testosterone levels results in the bio-female larynx and vocal folds' start to lose their innate characteristics. Anatomically, the vocal folds are attached, via vocal ligaments, 'in front to the angle of the thyroid cartilage, and behind to the vocal process of the arytenoid'.<sup>846</sup> During bio-male puberty, testosterone initially creates oedema on the folds. Due to accumulated collagen, both the folds' thickening and elongation become permanent. The result of this process is a fully-grown larynx and folds and a male fundamental frequency. The main differences between a bio-male and a changing FTM vocal persona are associated with biological imprint as well as the fact that a transman's 'second puberty' or transition is happening later in life. Consequently, the vocal folds, though they have the ability to thicken, cannot become as long as a bio-male's.<sup>847</sup> The reason is that, due to a combination of reasons, the laryngeal cartilages cannot grow enough at this stage in order to accommodate the changes. In fact, even when

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<sup>845</sup> P. Van Kesteren, H. Asscherman, J. A. Megens, and L. Gooren. 'Mortality and morbidity in transsexual subjects treated with cross-sex hormones.' 1997. *Clinical Endocrinology*. Vol. 47: 337-42; 337.

<sup>846</sup> H. Gray. *Anatomy of the Human Body*. 1995. Churchill Livingstone, New York.

<sup>847</sup> S. Davies and J. M. Goldberg. 2006. *Changing Speech*. Vancouver, Canada: Trans Care Project. The FTM larynx growth needs the presence of adequate active testosterone receptors. Also, the structure stands better chances to grow sufficiently if the person is young when at transition.

adequately developed, the FTM larynx follows a wide-round pattern of growth characterised also by a partial descend and a lack of Adam's apple. The reasons behind this differentiation can range from the XX chromosomal imprint and lack of testosterone receptors to the association of the hormone with early laryngeal ossification. As known, 'there (is) a preponderance of laryngeal cartilage ossification in men compared with women'.<sup>848</sup> This characteristic, perhaps, gives added stability and power to the fully-grown bio-male larynx. In an FTM voice, however, this fact may be an added detriment. Even though we cannot have excised larynxes to confirm this, a possible aetiology can lie in the disturbed analogy of developed versus less developed cartilages or the non-ossified versus the abruptly ossified areas of the larynx.<sup>849</sup> Either of these options can be detrimental to the overall instrument's structural balance (especially when the immediate high levels of T do not permit the cartilage to adjust gradually). This hypothesis would need to be further confirmed by MRI radiographic and other scientific evidence.<sup>850</sup> However, results obtained through external manipulation technique tend to support it and, among other causes, explain why the new male voice can become entrapped.<sup>851</sup> When this happens, the transman's voice sounds weak and permanently hoarse, and lacks the right harmonics. Interestingly, when the vocal tract is given time to adjust and when a

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<sup>848</sup> M. Mupparapu, and A. Vuppalapati. 2005. 'Ossification of Laryngeal Cartilages on Lateral Cephalometric Radiographs.' *Angle Orthodontist*. Vol. 75, Issue 2; 192.

<sup>849</sup> The abrupt ossification appears to be closely associated with the abrupt hormonal administration.

<sup>850</sup> Magnetic Resonance Imaging or MRI is a medical scanning technique frequently used in radiology in order to check the internal body structures and functions.

<sup>851</sup> My own evidence consists of laryngeal growth data based on measurements obtained externally. I also use the Liebermann technique in order to assess the amount of rigidity, flexibility and balance of the whole structure.

programme of carefully selected exercises is followed throughout the vocal transition, the results are very encouraging. In fact, the low start-gradual increase category, which is discussed in the participants' section of this chapter, tends to behave more predictably and retain vocal ability almost throughout the transition.<sup>852</sup> However, irrespective of positive outcomes, the need for the transitioning FTM to respect his limitations remains when following this programme: during the one year period of stage one, only mild exercises should ever be allowed, since vigorous ones would risk damaging the changing voice.

## **Method**

### **Testosterone**

Based primarily on research and later preference, my transition started on a lower level of hormones than was usual for transmen, especially in 2003. The consultant took my individual circumstances and research points into consideration and agreed to prescribe. Nonetheless, I was warned that by opting for this method of hormonal administration the full masculinising effects would be deferred.<sup>853</sup> Significant to me issues of vocal preservation made this risk of delay worth taking. However, examining matters in retrospect, though I would have never chosen anything but the low start-

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<sup>852</sup> The range remains close to one and a half octave on average, whereas with the abrupt administration this is reduced to less than an octave.

<sup>853</sup> That is the low start and gradual increase method of testosterone intake.

gradual increase hormonal regime, I would have liked this to be accompanied by a better level of support. For instance, instead of solitary transitioning, it would be more appropriate if this was done, for instance, in groups of three.<sup>854</sup> Also serious planning should be considered beforehand so that matters, such as alternative employment provision, are in place before the changes start becoming noticeable. Though these support proposals would be especially applicable to the low start-gradual increase category, nonetheless, they would also be appreciated by most transitioning transsexuals.

The specific terms of hormonal administration were compromised in 2003 by issues such as cost and availability. For instance, testosterone gels were still prohibitively costly and, therefore, not prescribed on the NHS. The usually accepted regime was based on injectable forms, which, however, did not exist in lower than 100mg potencies. This, under my present level of knowledge, would not have been a problem. In my early transition, however, I was completely unaware of the possibility to administer injectable hormone gradually, for instance, by applying the same daily methods used by diabetics.<sup>855</sup> As a result, in my case, a low start-gradual increase oral testosterone administration was applied.<sup>856</sup> However,

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<sup>854</sup> This should be ideally supported by already transitioned FTMs who are training or are already qualified as counsellors (I have known several transmen who have recently completed the relevant training in the UK). This proposal was included in my recent WPATH 2009 paper, which, however, due to ill health, could not be presented.

<sup>855</sup> For instance, Becton Dickinson (BD) type insulin syringes and needles can be used. The hormonal solution can then be easily calculated, divided in daily amounts/syringe sections and administered. Skills, such as the confidence needed in order to self-inject, are soon acquired.

<sup>856</sup> Personal hormonal regime (2003-4): I started on 40 mg of Restandol daily, which amount was doubled within two weeks' time. This remained in place until the first six

my point is to advocate the low start and gradual increase in testosterone intake as a method kinder to the whole vocal instrument. I would never recommend the use of this specific drug form to singing FTMs and, therefore, choose to provide the details of this specific hormonal regime only in footnotes. Oral testosterone is known to trigger heartburn and is highly ineffective since a great amount of the hormone is wasted through digestion. Importantly, 'this is the form of testosterone most likely to cause liver damage if used at doses high enough to be effective'.<sup>857</sup>

## Vocal Results

Six months within the testosterone intake my voice started demonstrating the signs of change: it became tenor-like in terms of both register and strength and had lost its pure head register. However, only two months after the change in hormonal regime, which started on the seventh month, my 'mixed' register 'decreased to the point where I was no longer able to sing tenor'.<sup>858</sup> My larynx felt more open and, according to the measurements that I could make externally, was truly wider too.

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months of hormone treatment was completed. During the seventh month the consultant changed my medication to Sustanon 100, administered bimonthly, as well as one capsule of Restandol (40mg), taken daily. The next stage of my treatment, on the ninth month, consisted of bimonthly injections of Sustanon 100 as well as two capsules of Restandol daily. I switched to full potency injections (Sustanon 250) in March of 2004.

<sup>857</sup> A. Blustin, ed. with A. Levy, R. Reid, and S. Whittle. July 2005. *Current Treatment for Female-to-Male Transsexuals and Transgender People*. FTM London & FTM Network; 6. I knew that I was not going to use it for more than a year and never at its maximum dosage.

<sup>858</sup> Constansis: par. 17.

The next stage of my treatment, which happened in end of November 2003, caused my voice to ‘break’. Until then, my voice had remained both manageable and musically usable to some degree. The following four months, both challenging and rewarding, started to produce the long-awaited masculine physical persona. The gains in appearance made me supposedly ‘ignore’ my vocal loss. However, I knew that the next few months would test my hypothesis on the FTM vocality in transition. I could only hope that both these beliefs and my vocal ability would be proven viable. In this frame of mind, I finally completed the hormonal progression to full potency at the end of March 2004.

Within one month’s time, the mild exercise regime started to produce two separate ‘voices’ instead of one. Though I could explore them limitedly, there was a clear distinction between the developing high voice (*falsetto*) and low voice (chest only). The low register, revealing itself as that of a bass-baritone, was weak and with no mixed range to it. As a result, reaching *c’* in pitch meant changing to *falsetto*. The newly acquired high voice – in contrast to my previous head or mixed chest register – was proving to be both strong and flexible. I was able to reach higher notes than my previous alto tessitura used to permit.

This part of the diary of my vocal transition was recorded in 2004.<sup>859</sup> Since then, my voice has acquired new dimensions and manageability as well as encountered problems. Now, in September 2009 and for the last six years, I have been teaching both FTM and MTF singers as well as cisgender

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<sup>859</sup> As demonstrated in Graphs 1 & 2: 282-3.

female voices. My vocal persona, a genuine example of hybridity as explained in previous parts of this thesis, currently covers a range of three octaves – exceptionally extending to three and a half.<sup>860</sup> In the following section, I present some details of the vocal techniques I used during my transition. The mentioned daily programme is a guideline and can be adopted according to individual needs without jeopardising the research project. The exercise regime is equally significant to the gradual hormonal support: both sides need to be in place so that the new vocal persona may survive the ‘break’ (or maturation, as it is technically called), and be re-born in a new form.

## **Technique**

Completing vocal studies and knowing the basic mechanisms of the vocal instrument for a singer, foremostly, means learning to listen and respect the individual voice’s limitations. Particularly, pushing the fragile singing instrument during transition cannot but produce ill effects. Therefore, the research process started with finding exercises that would not only protect my voice from harm, but also enhance it during its most difficult time. The most important safeguard for any voice, and particularly the FTM vocality in transition, is the development and use of a sound diaphragmatic breathing

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<sup>860</sup> The discrepancy in range, apart from any issues mentioned in Developing Voice section, is attributed to vocal economy: retaining the ability to demonstrate to all students, irrespective of vocal type, meant stopping the frequent access of the extremes of my range.

technique.<sup>861</sup> All human beings breathe diaphragmatically when they are newborns and infants, and humans never cease to use this form of breathing during their sleep. The correct application of diaphragmatic breathing is the most recommendable healthwise, because of utilising the full lung capacity. Also, this method has the advantage of supporting better the vocal change to a lower fundamental frequency (FO). The pedagogical notes on diaphragmatic breathing can be found in Appendices.

## **Previous Professional History**

Before explaining the combined method of breathing and vocal exercising that I used during my own and other participants' transition, I should elaborate on my background in voice / music therapy, voice teaching and other relevant professional experience. Before qualifying as a singing teacher and soloist in 1992, I had also studied acting and worked within both fields. However, the years between 1990 and 1992, apart from being the start of my voice teaching career, were also the beginning of my work in voice and music therapy. The context was a social group for adults with learning disabilities situated in Agia Paraskevi, one of the northern Athenian suburbs. In those days, the voice therapist's qualification did not exist in Greece and this was only counteracted by professional training obtained by

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<sup>861</sup> Due to their well-known benefits, diaphragmatic breathing exercises have even been included in the treatment for medical conditions, like COPD or asthma (e.g. by the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.). See also: M. Vitacca, E. Clini, L. Bianchi, and N. Ambrosino. 1998. 'Acute effects of deep diaphragmatic breathing in COPD patients with chronic respiratory insufficiency.' *European Respiratory Journal*. Vol. 11: 408-15.

means of a relevant work experience and a lot of individual research. Therefore, the few existing experts, coming from a variety of professional backgrounds, were, firstly, keen to work within big organisations, thus dealing with a significant variety of cases and, secondly, to stay put so that the experience and reputation thus achieved was maximised. Several practitioners, some of whom later even pursued international careers, were part of that 'window of opportunity' existing during the eighties and nineties in Greece.<sup>862</sup> In my own case, the two-year's employment period in ESEPA (Centre for Special Professional Education) made me work both as a voice and music therapist for the first time. The thirty participants in total were affected by issues as varied as Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy and autistic spectrum - Asperger's. My approach, which was initially based entirely on singing and acting voice principles and methods, was soon enriched by accessing relevant research and developing suitable techniques for the individual target-groups. I consider this time in my career as both difficult and rewarding. It was also particularly valuable and significant towards my later development. Years later, another significant input happened during my final BMus year where I was introduced into anatomy, aspects of endocrinology, vocal osteopathy and singing methods such as Jo Estill and Accent.<sup>863</sup> My present work has been both influenced and formed by these two significant periods of input.

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<sup>862</sup> Georgia Dacakis, one of the major male-to-female transsexual voice practitioners, who is currently working in Australia, is undoubtedly the most significant name of that period.

<sup>863</sup> Jo Estill is a renowned educator, researcher and singing performer whose method assesses difficult technical aspects individually. More information on her extensive research can be found at [http://www.trainmyvoice.com/about\\_research.html](http://www.trainmyvoice.com/about_research.html) (Accessed: 12.12.08).

## **Breathing & Vocal Technique in Transition – A Reassessment**

The technique provided in Appendices, which is both safe and rewarding for the changing FTM voice, remains only an indication. Individual aspects should be taken into consideration before deciding on the most suitable approach for each voice. Therefore, having established ideas can be a particularly unnerving experience for the teacher and the singer, or both. For instance, the initial intention during my early transition in 2003 had been to follow my established practice regime. This trained singer's routine had already been used for many years and consisted of one and a half hours daily. This, however, could still be mostly achieved whilst the vocal changes were only subtle. Even then, there was the need for significant compromises due to my changing folds' limitations as well as the accrued lung fatigue. This exhaustion was aggravated by 'the prolonged use of a strong chest binder, which I (ended up) wearing for almost three years (August 2002-May 2005).'<sup>864</sup>

The most prominent modifications in my vocal folds made any attempts for 'open' exercising very demanding and equally disappointing in

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In addition to her work I utilise aspects of the Accent Method, 'a rational voice therapy' method 'developed by the Danish professor Svend Smith (1907-85) [...] (in order) to treat people with pathological or weak voices.' This is achieved by helping 'the student to coordinate breath, vocal function, articulation, body movement and language.' (Klaus Møller. 17 Dec. 2008. 'The Accent Method'. <http://www.voicesource.co.uk/article/180> (Accessed: 17. 12. 08).

<sup>864</sup> Constansis: par. 22.

comparison to my previously established standards.<sup>865</sup> Therefore, I soon stopped applying this method, apart from employing it in order to ‘mark’ or test, the limited secure areas of my voice. Instead, based on previous voice therapy experience as well as knowledge of modern singing techniques, I started engaging also exercises based on consonants, especially fricatives. The selected exercises were derived from both current sources, such as the Accent and Jo Estill methods, and traditional material, such as *Belcanto* techniques. My own contribution has been to combine them cautiously and then test their efficacy in regards to the FTM vocality.

### **The Students / Participants’ Contribution**

The first prospective participants of this research approached me during 2004, around the time of the Manchester presentation. Keen to help as well as evaluate the results of my own participation from another perspective, I accepted initially three transitioning FTMs. They had all commenced their hormonal administration by following the abrupt method. The initial assessment made me realise that none of the voices seemed to experience the vocal stages of transition closely to my terms. I accepted the participants and in order to establish some common ground, I stated two conditions: a commitment to one year’s programme and a minimum of one year’s previous singing experience. These requirements were followed in full. However, I realised soon that, since singing was not many FTMs priorities,

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<sup>865</sup> That is exercises based on open vowels and sung in full voice.

participants should be allowed to join this research programme from different locations and at different stages and time.<sup>866</sup> This major compromise proved to be particularly important since it made this research possible. As a result of the Manchester presentation, additional participants joined the programme. However, still at that point, these were only followers of the abrupt administration. This made me decline admitting any new participants following the same regime until I could find an equal number of ones following the different hormonal regime. Publicising my research through FTM international and Yahoo FTM groups brought, finally, participants who, for a variety of reasons, had started or were about to start on a slow start-gradual increase testosterone administration. I did not accept any further followers of the abrupt administration during the first stage of this programme.

Participants exhibited from the start a wide age range as well as transitional stages.<sup>867</sup> Obviously, they were divided into two groups, according to the method of hormonal administration – abrupt or slow start / gradual increase. However, the lessons have always been one-to-one and the grouping existed only for study purposes. These groups, eventually, consisted of eight members each and were subdivided in similar proportions according to age.<sup>868</sup> The number eight, in the second group, was achieved by adding my own results to seven individual ones. All results were

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<sup>866</sup> This is achieved by using a variety of communicational methods, such as Yahoo Messenger or Skype.

<sup>867</sup> The ages range from early twenties to late fifties.

<sup>868</sup> Cf. Graphs 3 & 4: 284 (These can also be viewed as part of the original paper in Appendices 4.3.1 & 4.3.2).

anonymised and treated equally. The participants followed the same exercising regime for the first year and received the same level of individualised provision by the practitioner / researcher.<sup>869</sup> After the end of each session, the recorded data (audio as well as written) was analysed and compared to the rest of the data collected within the given week. In regular monthly intervals the individual data was compared to those produced by same age group subcategory following either the abrupt or gradual hormonal method of administration. The abrupt method is defined by the application of 250mg of injectable testosterone from the start, whereas the low start and gradual increase by the introduction of 100mg bimonthly for 6 months (in either injectable or gel format) and then the continuation with 200 - 250mg bimonthly for the remaining six months.

Vocal aspects examined as part of this programme have been, apart from the range gain or loss, which is the most objectively observable, factors such as the improvement in quality of the produced sound and, foremostly, the health of it.<sup>870</sup> The improvement in voice quality was judged, mainly from a musical and singing perspective, when compared to all available recordings obtained by the individual singer, before and after transition. This aspect, in particular, is examined in connection with the breathing, the clarity or not of vocal production, including intonation, the

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<sup>869</sup> This can be assessed by the researcher's reports as well as participants' diaries, which, according to the participation agreement, were required to be submitted weekly. In the diary, the individual participant is requested to record his own perception of his singing progress as well as general vocal persona. This report is encouraged to be as realistic as possible by including both positive and negative aspects. Most significantly, as mentioned, this diary is meant to reflect the participant's perspective and not that of the researcher.

<sup>870</sup> In case of any doubt about the latter, the participant was asked to obtain a medical opinion about his ability to continue his participation in this research.

lack of obstructions (such as produced by the muffling of the sound by the tongue), the resulted ability for ‘projection’, the presence of overtones and the vocal centre differentiation; both in comparison to previously-experienced focal points and those of vocally-comparative bio-males.

Currently, this first stage consisted of the one year programme has been completed. This time allocation, according to combined results, ‘may indicate an FTM’s successful singing transition.’<sup>871</sup> Fifty per cent have chosen to continue on to the second stage – The Developing FTM Voice, which is also of minimum of one-year duration. However, due to the nature of developing voice, this can be extended further, depending upon progress and intentions.

## **Ethical Considerations**

It has been claimed that any research ‘involving human subjects is socially important, but morally perilous because it exposes subjects to risks for the advancement of science.’<sup>872</sup> Even when, strictly speaking, the study is not medical, where the risks are recognised to be significantly higher, there is the need of respect for ‘individuals’ views and rights ... and obligations of liberty, privacy, confidentiality, truthfulness, and informed consent’.<sup>873</sup> Since this is a research involving human subjects, all these conditions

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<sup>871</sup> Constansis: par. 25.

<sup>872</sup> Tom L. Beauchamp and James Childress. 2001. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press; 320.

<sup>873</sup> Beauchamp and Childress: 64.

needed to be taken into consideration. For this purpose, primarily, every contribution needed to be anonymised and informed consent to be obtained.<sup>874</sup> In order for the anonymity to be guaranteed, the whole progress, including results, as well as vocal samples have only been recorded under code-names. Also, even when the vocal development proved to be lesser than anticipated, advancement always occurred and no harm was ever caused to any contributor. In general, the principles of 'autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice' have been observed throughout this programme.<sup>875</sup>

## Results

FTM transvocality behaves in a less conventional manner than the rest of changing voices. This can be attributed to several parameters, such as testosterone receptors and cartilage response in adult transitioning larynxes, which can create further impediment. These aspects would need to be taken into consideration before composing any FTM vocality-associated programme or investigating outcomes. Moreover, one should always remember that the vocal reactions to artificial testosterone are not unilateral and rarely stable or predictable, especially during the first year. The results of this research have been shaped by all aforementioned elements.

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<sup>874</sup> Consent was obtained, mostly, via email, due to the variety of locations and methods of participation.

<sup>875</sup> Beauchamp and Childress: 339.

For study purposes only, the participation outcomes were classified according to age and method of hormonal administration. However, as said, additional issues, such as laryngeal development, bodily size and structure, were taken into account during the subgroups' study. Graph 3 demonstrates the division into four age groups of 20-9, 30-9, 40-9 and 50-9. Each of them were divided further into two categories, based on their following of abrupt or gradual method of hormonal administration.

In three out of four case-singers under the age of 40 who followed gradual administration, there was a gain in range of between a fifth and a ninth as well as an improved quality. The latter, as already explained, has been achieved by analysing the recorded data obtained during scheduled sessions. The main criteria for defining an improved quality have been, foremostly, the participant's previous level of achievement, the clarity and 'roundness' of the new tone, the intonation, the ability to project etc. However, there were some less expected outcomes within the same group. The most notable result was that of 'entrapped vocality', as defined earlier, which was pre-existent in one of the four case-singers under 40. Even though there was progress achieved through exercise, the development reached a standstill. The characteristics were constant hoarseness and failure to access and manage particular vocal areas. The participant, in his late twenties, had requested my advice after one year of abrupt testosterone administration. His larynx was not been properly widened and similar to that of a hybrid mezzo-soprano. This example may designate the importance of testosterone administration for the FTM transitioning voice and thus

would need to be placed alongside factors such as the participant's age and physique.

The second study group was consisted of singing participants over 40, who were not in their prime any more, and, therefore, were expected to produce less predictable or successful results. However, this was not necessarily the case. Once more, in all eight cases there was vocal range extension (from a fourth up to a sixth maximum). However, in four out of eight contributors, the voices did not transition smoothly and had some proportion of entrapped vocality, considerably higher than the one existing in younger singers' groups. In this case, irrespective of vocal improvement in all cases, the progress was unable to generate a consistent singing quality; especially in those following traditional testosterone regime.<sup>876</sup> There was an unanticipated result from one of the singers over 50, who had started on a gradual hormonal regime but, for personal reasons, had been incapable of committing to lessons during that period. As a result he suffered entrapped vocality too. This, however, was eliminated soon after the beginning of the lessons. During the first six months, the participant's voice not only exhibited significant development but also acquired more than an additional fifth and a reasonable singing quality.

The first phase of this research has indicated that voices on a gradual hormonal regime behave in a way that is closer to average bio-voices and can be extended without harm. The results designate a preponderance of more predictable results among those following the gradual hormonal

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<sup>876</sup> In other words, this implies an abrupt hormonal intake.

regime together with carefully arranged exercising.<sup>877</sup> A second phase programme, even though delayed due to health and other reasons, is currently in progress as well as the Developing Voice stage of phase one. The additional input is needed to make these results more conclusive and precise.

### **Comparability of Changing FTM Vocal Results to those of Adolescent Boys – Cooksey Scale**

Irrespective of transmale intentions to view transition as a second puberty, there are significant differences between adolescent males and adult trans-males. The most important of these differences are in the genetic ‘footprints’ and, consequently, the amount of growth these two groups are allowed due to dissimilar stages in development. More specifically, in the first group ‘the increased activity of the pituitary and gonad glands and, specifically, the release of the testosterone into the body (results to) ... an increase in size of all the organs concerned with male voice production.’<sup>878</sup> Whereas, however, the adolescent body’s potential for growth, depending on genetic factors, is full, the adult trans-male body’s prospective for development is only limited in comparison due to issues, such as age,

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<sup>877</sup> Cf. Graph 4.

<sup>878</sup> J.M. Cooksey and G.F. Welch. 1998. ‘Adolescence, Singing Development and National Curricula Design.’ *British Journal of Music Education*. Vol. 1, Issue 1: 99-119; 103.

genetic predisposition and androgen receptors (AR).<sup>879</sup> As a result, the balance of similarities and differences between the two changing voice groups can vary significantly. For instance, young biomale and trans-male individuals are going to have a lot more similarities than differences, especially if trans-males are allowed to transition as close as possible to the years of actual puberty. This has lately become more acceptable and possible due to the use of ‘blockers’. For instance, (in the Netherlands) adolescents ‘are now allowed to start puberty suppressing treatment with gonadotrophin-releasing hormone analogues (GnRH<sub>a</sub>) if they were older than 12 years of age and fulfil the same criteria as were used for the 16–18-year olds.’<sup>880</sup> This type of puberty-suppressing treatment, using GnRH<sub>a</sub> or ‘blockers’, is reversible. The delaying results thus produced allow for time so that the level of gender dysphoria is assessed ‘under less time pressure’, without the discomfort brought by puberty experienced in the wrong body.<sup>881</sup> Also, in terms of bodily development, this ‘will be hampered and fusion of the growth plates delayed, (which) may give the opportunity to

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<sup>879</sup> The androgen receptor (AR) is also known as NR3C4 (nuclear receptor subfamily 3, group C, member 4). This type of nuclear receptor is activated by binding on the androgenic hormones testosterone and dihydrotestosterone. The androgen receptor is also related closely to the progesterone receptor. Significantly, progestins can block the androgen receptor, if they are in high enough dosages.

<sup>880</sup> H.A. Delemarre-van de Waal and P.T. Cohen-Kettenis.2006. ‘Clinical management of gender identity disorder in adolescents: a protocol on psychological and paediatric endocrinology aspects.’ *European Journal of Endocrinology*. Vol. 155 (Supplement 1): S131-S137; S132.

<sup>881</sup> *Ibid.* As explained, the effects of GnRH<sub>a</sub> administration ‘will discontinue progression of puberty by blocking the activity of the GnRH receptor at the pituitary level, which results in a decrease of gonadotrophin release. In turn, a decrease in the stimulation of gonads will lead to ... to regression of the first stages of the already developed sex characteristics.’ *Op.cit.*: S133.

manipulate growth.’<sup>882</sup> In this case, the laryngeal and lung /chest developmental results can be similar to bio-male patterns. Otherwise, the older the trans-male individual at transition, the less comparable the vocal and other results would be.

John Cooksey identifies five individual stages in adolescent male voice development.<sup>883</sup> The changes are also recognised as ‘a predictable, sequential, but sometimes erratic process which generally takes place over a period of 1-2 years.’<sup>884</sup> Are these stages or results comparable to changing FTM voice analogies? The first time this was assessed was based on my individual results obtained in 2003-4. The immediate realisation was that there were comparable similarities in stages of development and timing. However, the other realisation was that the Cooksey results only compared to mine and not to results obtained from other members of the FTM group: their voices tended to ‘break’ abruptly before reaching six months on testosterone. Also, the voices tended to remain of limited or no singing use for a much longer time than it was needed by me. Though most of the transitional aspects followed by all participants, including myself, were similar, there were two major differences between my vocal results and those of other individuals: the low start-gradual increase method of hormonal administration and the presence of vocal exercising in transition.

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<sup>882</sup> For instance, since bio-females ‘are about 12 cm shorter than males, (doctors)... may intervene with growth stimulating treatment in order to adjust the female height to an acceptable male height.’ *Op. Cit.*: S134.

<sup>883</sup> Chapter IV, pages 15-7. In a few details, these are: ‘Stage I: Midvoice I (early, beginning of change), Stage II: Midvoice II (Middle of change), Stage III: Midvoice IIA (Climax of change), Stage IV: Newvoice (Tapering period) & Stage V: Emerging Adult (Expansion and development period).’ Cooksey and Welch: 104.

<sup>884</sup> *Op.cit*: 105.

The results needed to be validated further and this was assessed properly in 2006, following the completion of Stage I of participants' results obtained from the Changing FTM Singing Voice research.

The results, when compared to Cooksey scale, were significantly different depending on the method of hormonal administration. Those following an abrupt hormonal method of administration tended to compare less to the stages of the Cooksey scale. However, there were more reliable results obtained from the younger group (20-9 years of age) and also some singing ability retained (ranging from a sixth to an octave on average). The slow start-gradual increase group, however, compared better to the stages of the Cooksey scale, even though the achievements were incomplete in regards to those obtained from Cooksey's adolescent groups. None of the FTM voices were able to achieve the level of maturation exhibited during the final or Stage V of the adolescent results' scale. It was obvious that matters, such as range, strength, dynamics and other voice elements in trans-male vocal personae matured incompletely, even for those following the slow start-gradual increase regime. Nonetheless, this seemed to be the best achievable outcome for voices transitioning later in life. There was a clear element of comparability between the Cooksey stages of the two groups: the adolescent male and the low start-gradual increase trans-male. This particular indicated to me here that the method of abrupt hormonal administration should be the differentiating factor.

## Changing FTM Vocal Persona - Conclusion

Seven years of my own and students-related experience demonstrates that the loss of singing ability is far from inevitable for all FTMs. Even for those beyond their twenties at transition, a combination of the right gradual testosterone intake together with soft exercising of the voice may not only help the voice to retain its singing quality, but also to acquire a new and very aesthetically pleasing quality. Though most FTM bodies are incapable of supporting a masculine voice of operatic dimensions, there are many options, such as art songs, that should not be neglected.<sup>885</sup> Performing can be achieved easier by transposing songs so that they become suitable for the individual vocal centres of the FTM vocal persona as well as adjusting the performance dynamics equally in all sections. Some instruments, such as the guitar, are inherently friendlier to the male transvocality and may, perhaps, be preferred over other ones, such as the piano, which possess a naturally louder sound. However, a good quality discreet amplification should also be considered.

Transmale vocality, however, is not only challenged but also fascinating: not many bio-men, for instance, could claim to possess dual-sided gender experiences. Therefore, if the field were liberated from the clichés that describe transpeople as outcast and socially secluded, transvocal approach could prove to be a truly innovative instrument indeed.

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<sup>885</sup> One of the most obvious reasons for the above is that FTM thoraxes are on average smaller than those of bio-males and therefore have less capacity and strength.

Irrespective of how useful can be for singing FTMs to obtain knowledge and techniques via the general community, these inputs are likely to lack the insider's insight: how singing transmen function under hormones or in relation to 'binding' or surgery-related issues. Therefore, though it is useful seeking for help *ex cathedra*, singing FTMs are likely to be more successful should they obtain and develop the skill for themselves. Even though this can be unnerving, being oneself is 'a performance of internal visualisation.'<sup>886</sup> Therefore, experimenting, researching, and, consequently, discovering the particulars may be the most suitable way to reveal the new vocal personae, first to singing transmen, and then to the public. In other words, metaphorically as well as literally, 'it is (truly) up to (FTMs) to make (their) voices sing.'<sup>887</sup>

This research was carried out primarily from a singing teacher's perspective. As a researcher musicologist, however, established research and numerous related results were used to validate hypotheses. Nonetheless, the immediate scientific testing methods have been limited. The reason lies mainly in the international status of the participants, as demonstrated by the difference of locality in this research, which made any attempts for more systematic results impossible. For instance, as part of this programme and in order to assess the development, I frequently take laryngeal measurements obtained externally. When I tried in 2006, however, to obtain similar measurements from the non-local participants, I realised that there were

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<sup>886</sup> R. A. Wilchins. 1997. *Read my lips: Sexual subversion and the end of gender*. New York: Firebrand.

<sup>887</sup> Constansis. 2008: par. 32.

discrepancies in the methods followed, irrespective of the presence of detailed descriptions and accompanying pictures. These discrepancies made the results unreliable and, therefore, unusable in research reports. Ever since, only data both obtained and processed personally is used in this research.

## Graph 1 - Researcher's Personal Data (2003-4)<sup>888</sup>

Example of Testosterone Changes (Hz) on FTM Singing Voice (Low Start)

Start. Point

C3 (130.8Hz) – C6(1057Hz)

Three Months

B2 (123.5) – D5 (587 Hz)

Six Months

B2 (123.5Hz) – C5 (523.25Hz)

After One Year

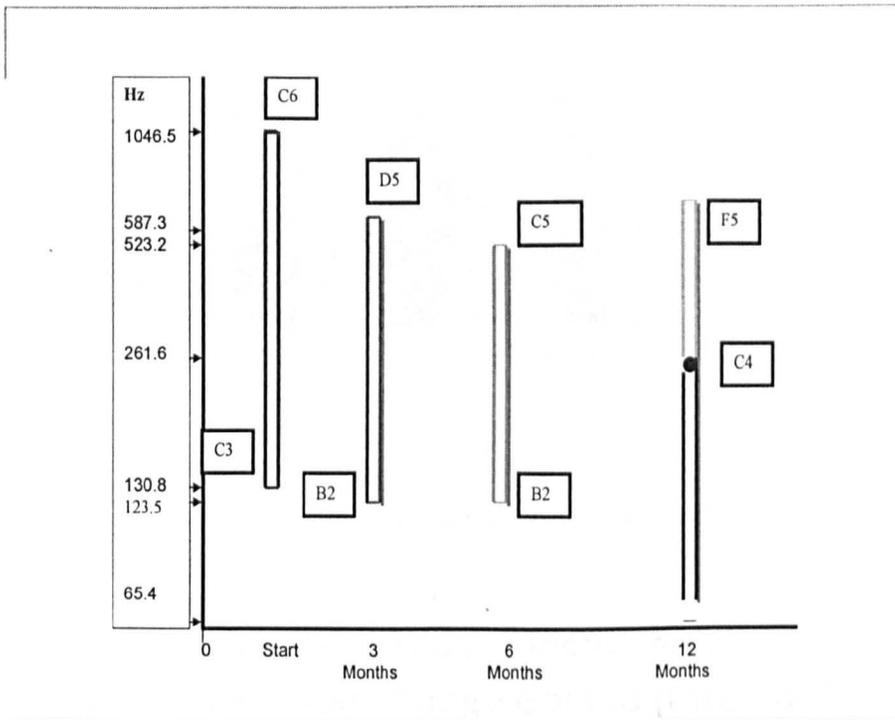
1. C2 (65.40Hz) – C4 (261.6Hz)

2. C4 (261.6Hz) – F5 (698 Hz)

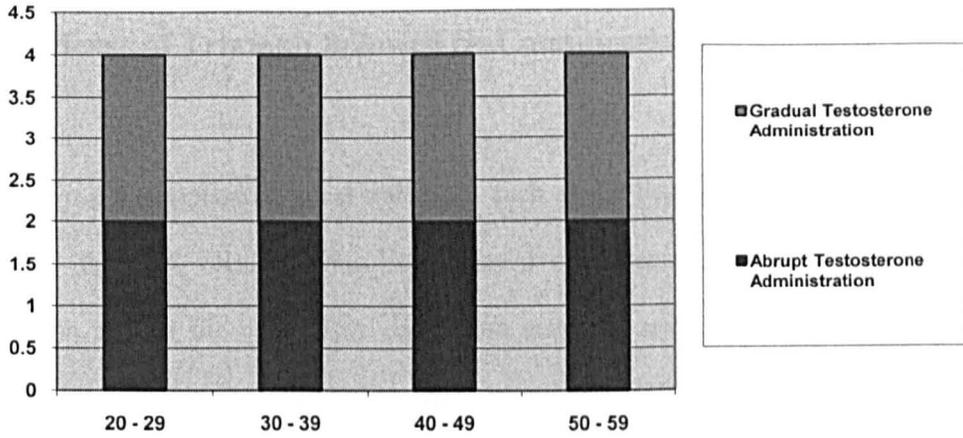
(see chart on next page)

<sup>888</sup> The notes mentioned are the following, according to Helmholtz' system: Starting point: *c* to *c'''*; Three months: *B* to *d''*; Six months: *B* to *c''*; After one year: (Low Range) *C'* to *c'* and (Higher Range) *c'* to *f''*.

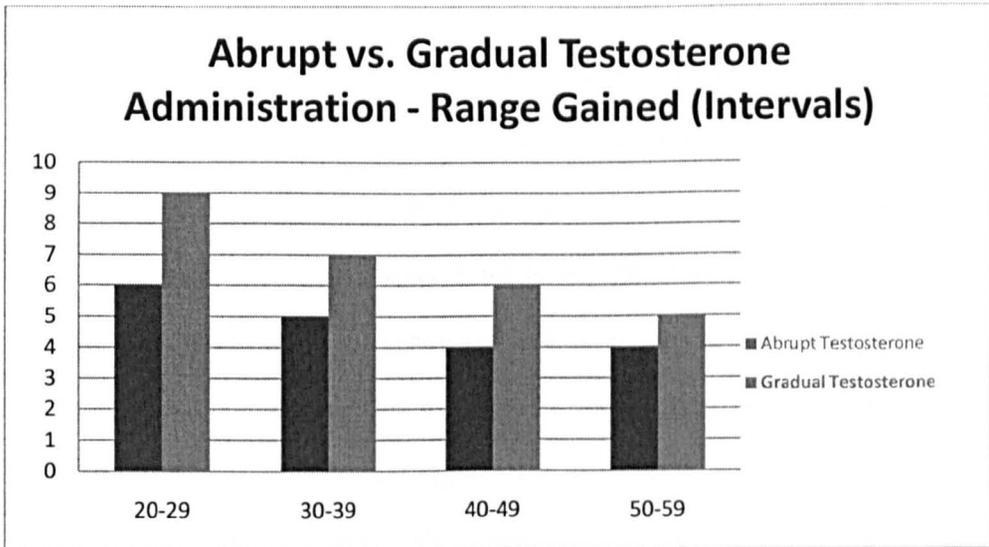
**Graph 2 - Researcher's Personal Data (2003-4)**



**Graph 3 - Participants' Data (incl. Researcher's material)<sup>889</sup>**



**Graph 4 - Participants' Results (incl. Researcher's material)**



<sup>889</sup> **Abrupt HRT:** 250mg bimonthly / **Gradual HRT:** 100mg bimonthly for 6 months, 200 - 250mg bimonthly for the remaining six months.

## **The Developing FTM Voice**

### **The Sense of Triumph followed by Complications**

Surviving a complicated vocal transition, such as the Female-to-Male one, makes the new vocal persona experience a clear sense of victory and triumph against the odds. This cannot but influence not only a person's vocal but also his general attitude. This, in my case, allowed the personal and professional life of the first five post-transitional years to revolve around teaching individuals, demonstrating in groups and discussing scientific hypotheses and results. It was not only a successful but also a very creative period, which allowed me to work on several projects. Some of them, such as academically-based research, were brought to fruition whereas others, such as the Trans-Choir, did not progress for a variety of reasons. Nonetheless, claiming the total absence of vocal problems would only be a fallacy. The singing voice tends to require constant attention by even the most professional and renowned singers. In my case the problems have been more complicated due to my particular medical history, which involved the change in hormonal regime and its varieties and methods of administration. Matters were also made worse by teaching and demonstrating constantly in a truly wide vocal range.<sup>890</sup> Both issues remain

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<sup>890</sup> For FTM, MTF and cisgender women's voices.

inadequately researched and documented and would benefit from further investigation.<sup>891</sup>

## **Change of Hormonal Regime – Nebido**

Following the doctors' recommended three-monthly testosterone undecanoate form, I abandoned Sustanon 250mg for Nebido on December 2007. The new injection, apart from being considered more user-friendly than the bi-monthly Sustanon ones, it is also considered to be better for the body for two significant reasons: it is characterised by less peak and trough in hormone levels and a chemical structure almost identical to bio-testosterone. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that most FTMs tend to either switch or start from it. Nonetheless, what is usually played down is our limited knowledge of its full effects due to being relatively recently introduced and not as long-term tested as other forms. Also, though there are known side-effects, these are frequently underestimated due to the kind of positive 'aura' surrounding the new slow-release injected solution.

## **A Personal Account**

My years on testosterone have been healthier in general than my pre-transitional days and with relatively few problems until 2007. Sustanon, in

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<sup>891</sup> Even though there are several participants taking part on the Developing Voice section of this research project, none of them has my years of constant data collection.

fact, had until then helped eliminate, among numerous other problems, my pre-transitional heavy anaemia. This had reached leucopenia levels in 1992, which coincided with the obtaining of my soloist singer's qualification recital in Greece.<sup>892</sup> Following my male gender affirmation of 2002/2003 and the hormonal change in 2003/2004, the blood counts, especially red blood cells, increased but had remained healthy and within the recommended limits until the middle of 2007. It was this worrying increase that made two endocrinologists, both in UK and abroad, to suggest the switch to Nebido. However, within six months on the new regime, which started in December 2007, both sides of medical professionals were becoming increasingly worried about the increased red cell levels and the developing relative, also known as secondary, polycythaemia. The term is defined as a 'relative increase in the number of red blood cells as a result of loss of the fluid portion of the blood.'<sup>893</sup> Since then and up to the present day, a never-ending series of tests has failed to reveal any reduction of the erythrocytes' number. I would need to underline here that I suffer from secondary and not primary polycythaemia, also known as *polycythaemia vera*, which is a far more serious condition.<sup>894</sup> Nonetheless, the persistently

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<sup>892</sup> The specific blood disorder, a decrease in the white blood cells' count, can leave the patient particularly 'susceptible to infections'. M. Howard and P.J. Hamilton. 2008. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. *Haematology*. Edinburgh, London and New York: Churchill Livingstone; 14.

<sup>893</sup> More completely, however, polycythaemia (or erythrocytosis) is defined as an 'increase in red cell count, haemoglobin and packed cell volume (PCV) above the normally accepted levels.' Howard and Hamilton; 64. 'Polycythaemia (has been) reported a rare complication in female-to male transsexual persons.' T'Sjoen; 49.

<sup>894</sup> 'Polycythaemia vera is an acquired myeloproliferative disorder, characterized by the presence of polycythaemia diversely associated with thrombocytosis, leukocytosis and splenomegaly.' Chloe James, Valerie Ugo, Jean-Pierre Le Couedic *et al.* 28 April 2005. 'A unique clonal JAK2 mutation leading to constitutive signalling causes polycythaemia vera.' *Nature*. Vol. 434: 1144-8; 1144.

high readings have forced both endocrinologists and general physicians to decrease the injection frequency from 12 to every 14 weeks as well as monitor the condition on a regular basis. The decrease, however, has so far only reduced the testosterone levels and not the erythrocytes' count. The lower than average hormonal levels have produced many unwanted effects, such as lower energy and moderate depression.<sup>895</sup> The negative vocal effects could be considered as the result of several combined elements and would need to be examined in detail.

### **The Vocal Account**

The change from Sustanon to Nebido did not prove kind to my voice. Within three months of the first injection I started noticing the combination of hoarseness with an unpleasant 'metallic' quality located on the *passagio* from middle to higher register of my bass range.<sup>896</sup> This was becoming increasingly noticeable and, therefore, problematic during the tuition of FTM participants. Since any change in medication and, particularly, in hormonal regime requires a period of body familiarisation and adjustment, the first period's side-effects, though unpleasant, were more or less expected. In that case, however, medical practitioners underestimated those secondary effects as temporary. In the mean time, my falsetto range

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<sup>895</sup>The troubling kidney stones, which have recently resulted to a colic, have been scientifically connected with elevated testosterone levels in non bio-males. This can be of particular importance and will be discussed in hypotheses' section. Cf. C. H. van Aswegen, P. Hurter, C. A. van der Merwe, and D. J. du Plessis. 1989. 'The relationship between total urinary testosterone and renal calculi.' *Urological Research*. Vol. 17: 181-3.

<sup>896</sup> The problematic third was from *A'* to *c*.

remained intact thus, most significantly, permitting the MTF and bio-female changing voices' research and teaching to continue unaffected.<sup>897</sup> This was particularly useful since a lot of new participants joined either the Changing or Developing MTF Voice programme during that period.

The next three months were particularly decisive in terms of my lower range. The problematic third, instead of disappearing, started affecting my voice as if permanent. Additionally, the problematic area seemed to be expanding and becoming increasingly a fifth. The general health issues, explained earlier, also reduced my breathing capacity as well as my ability for effective *appoggio*, especially when standing. By the end of the summer 2008, the odd 'metallic' sound was giving place to the muffled sound of a 'gap', typically appearing in an aging voice. Being forty-four at that time, this is not something usually expected or considered by singers of a similar age. I could never, of course, call my vocal route as typical. Similarly to the Changing Voice period, back in 2003, I needed to investigate the causes as well as assess the full extent of the problem. Therefore, once more, I started researching, recording data and developing hypotheses. This coincided with my vocal improvement, which started becoming more noticeable after May 2009. As part of a healing process, I attempted to have additional musical support in the form of coaching. However, even though I explained my vocal differentiation to two vocal coaches, there was a clear lack of consideration, for instance, in terms of adjusting the accompaniment dynamics for the session. The 'centres' of the FTM voice singing within

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<sup>897</sup> A limited number of FTM participants singing *falsetto* were also helped in this context.

lower male range, similarly to all hybrid vocal personae, tend to have a one to one and a half tone discrepancy from their biological equivalents. In the transmale, this is attributed to the inadequate development of vocal folds and larynx. In the FTM case-group, these vocal centres are proven to be situated mostly one and a half tone lower than in biomale voice categories, but without the presence of the expected additional lower range.<sup>898</sup> Also, the less developed FTM skeleton in general and, particularly, the chest structure and musculature can be a serious impediment when applying the proper *appoggio* or support. The first ‘proper’ vocal attempts post-transitionally tend to be astounded by the effects of a ‘heavy’ new voice on a small, already established, body.<sup>899</sup> This is an experience, unfortunately, rarely understood and mostly discredited by ‘outsiders’. However, this can truly explain why a ‘rich’ type of accompaniment writing can prove particularly testing for the FTM vocal persona. Especially, since no classical or art songs have ever been written with this kind of voice in mind. Therefore, if the coaching provided is either maladjusted or totally unadjusted for the individual needs, any attempts are likely to prove unsuccessful. This realisation confirmed my initial suspicions: the ideal vocal accompanist for the FTM vocal persona would need to be not only someone musically adept

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<sup>898</sup> This is assessed by listening to the vocal quality before and after transposing the music phrase or song.

<sup>899</sup> This effect is, understandably, aggravated when the voice is also affected by health and other similar issues.

but also in depth knowledgeable in terms of this particular vocal and general persona.<sup>900</sup>

## Discussion

In terms of my particular vocal complications, two major issues needed to be considered: the presence of premature vocal aging characteristics and how these related to those of other FTMs of a similar age. Firstly, even though FTMs are on testosterone, this does not preclude the presence of unwanted symptoms resulted from early oestrogen withdrawal. Most significantly and irrespective of negative psychological associations, this means that transmen can be still affected by menopause. Especially in my case, the current lower hormonal regime has not prevented some of well-associated vasomotor symptoms from appearing. For instance, rare 'hot flashes and night sweats' and more than common sleep disturbances are still present, though nowhere close to the expected climacteric frequency and levels.<sup>901</sup> Even though there are several FTMs who experience vocal decline, none of the participants of this research, apart from this writer, have been among them. However, it is obvious that no other participants had to employ their voices as extensively as this researcher / practitioner in order

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<sup>900</sup> Therefore, this musician would be easier obtainable from / within a trans-immediate or a closely-related environment.

<sup>901</sup> Myra Hunter, Rosie Battersby & Malcolm Whitehead. 2008. Relationship between psychological symptoms, somatic complaints and menopausal status. *Maturitas*. Vol. 61, Issue 1-2: 95-106; 99. The term climacteric, though truly meaning a critical point or a transition, usually, to older age, is wrongly being perceived as a synonym for menopause.

to demonstrate to singers using such a variety of ranges. Therefore, due to lack of comparable cases, the results remain inconclusive. There is a definitive need for a proper clinical investigation.

## Section B

### The Female Transvocality

Due to extensive vocal range as well as individualised approach, additionally to my work with FTM vocal personae, I have been allowed to work on the voices of a total of twelve transwomen ranging from absolute beginners to intermediate/advanced singing level. Even though this group teaching had truly commenced before my official transition, its profound phase could only begin around the end of 2004. This is when the results of testosterone started stabilising on my vocal instrument, thus allowing me to return back to teaching singing. By being privileged enough to view the MTF as well as the FTM vocality and perspective as a whole, I have been let to experience almost the entire transvocal spectrum.<sup>902</sup> I consider this a factor of utmost importance to both my academic research and viewpoint.

There is plenty of academic and non-academic work on the MTF vocality in terms of both quantitative and qualitative investigation.<sup>903</sup> The

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<sup>902</sup> As said, I have never worked with non-transsexual transgender singers.

<sup>903</sup> A range of early and modern works include: D. Boone. 1971. *The Voice and Voice Therapy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; M. Kalra. 1977. 'Voice therapy with a transsexual.' In R. Gemme and C. Wheeler. Eds. *Progress in Sexology*. New York: Plenum Press; R. Bralley, G. Bull, C. Gore, and M. Edgerton. 1978. 'Evaluation of vocal pitch in male transsexuals.' *Journal of Communication Disorders*. Vol. 11: 443-9; M. Pausewang Gelfer & K. J. Schofield. 2000. 'Comparison of Acoustic and Perceptual Measures of Voice in Male-to-Female Transsexuals Perceived as Female Versus Those Perceived as Male.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol.14, Issue 1: 22-33; Van Borsel, John, De Cuypere, Griet and Hilde Van den Berghe. April 2001. 'Physical Appearance and Voice in Male-to-Female Transsexuals.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 15, Issue 4: 570-75; K. Neumann and C. Welzel. 2004. 'The Importance of the Voice in Male-to-Female Transsexualism.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 18, Issue 1: 153-67.

reason can be attributed on the fact that, in transwomen, ‘the function of the voice remains the main obstacle to their finding a new sexual identity as ... hormone therapy does not make a significant difference to, or have a lasting effect on; the pitch of the voice.’<sup>904</sup> Due to the both the idiosyncrasy and complicity of the MTF speaking voice, however, the results of voice therapy are not always successful. At times, this is even addressed via phonosurgical treatment, which is considered to help transwomen with a masculine pitch ‘to be integrated into society and should facilitate their daily lives.’<sup>905</sup> Even in this case, however, ‘results revealed ... (the need for a) combined voice therapy (surgical therapy and voice training) in male-to-female transsexuals’.<sup>906</sup> As someone with a voice teaching and singing background, I cannot underestimate the effects of laryngeal surgery on future singing performance and would only recommend it as the final resource.<sup>907</sup> However, I cannot also underrate the individual needs of non-singing MTFs frustrated by their persisting and, thus problematic, masculine speaking vocalities. This, at times, cannot be addressed by voice therapy alone. In these cases, non-singing individuals may opt for phonosurgery. Nonetheless, for reasons I have already explained, I will focus here solely

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<sup>904</sup> K. Neumann and C. Welzel. 2004. ‘The Importance of the Voice in Male-to-Female Transsexualism.’ *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 18, Issue 1: 153-67; 154.

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>906</sup> *Op.cit.*: 158.

<sup>907</sup> For instance, the writers reported that in ‘77% of the patients, the range of the voice decreased... postoperatively, nearly all patients were restricted when speaking loudly... In most cases, preoperative readings were not recovered.’ Neumann and Welzel, 2004: 160. However, I cannot also underrate the individual needs of non-singing MTFs frustrated by their persisting and thus problematic masculine speaking voices. This, at times, cannot be addressed by voice therapy alone. In these cases, non-singing individuals may opt for phonosurgery.

on the singing female transvocality with the consideration of aspects of voice therapy.

In the past, the established approach on MTF vocality, mostly dedicated on the speaking voice, used to reveal a rather monodimensional approach. For example, works on MTF vocality tended to involve teaching individuals how to follow or imitate primarily a 'feminine' pitch and later patterns of speech. However, vocal femininity is established by more than a raised pitch or speaking fundamental frequency (SFF). In particular, other parameters include 'higher vowel formant frequencies for isolated productions of /i/ and /a/, a greater number of upward intonation shifts, and a greater range (in ST) of downward intonation shifts.'<sup>908</sup> This has been addressed by more recent academic accounts, which tend to present us with a far more balanced approach.<sup>909</sup> However, results thus obtained can still be predictable and do not present us with enough individuality of sound and patterns of speech. Moreover, like most transsexuals, I would like some patient-focused and over-medicalised terms on transsexualism being re-assessed in all relevant works. I will briefly examine the more traditional methods as opposed to the developments on MTF transvocality.

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<sup>908</sup> M. Pausewang Gelfer & K. J. Schofield. 2000. 'Comparison of Acoustic and Perceptual Measures of Voice in Male-to-Female Transsexuals Perceived as Female Versus Those Perceived as Male.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol.14, Issue 1: 22-33; 30.

<sup>909</sup> For instance, I. Georgiadou Hershberger. 2005. 'The effects of singing exercises and Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT) on the Male-to-Female Transgender Voice.' M.A. Thesis & R. K. Adler, S. Hirsch, and M. Mordaunt, Eds. 2006. *Voice Therapy and Communication for the TG / TS Client – A Comprehensive Clinical Guide*. San Diego, Oxford, and Brisbane: Plural Publishing.

## The 'Traditional' Approach

In the years following Christine Jorgensen's well-publicised transition in the 1950s, a limited number of medical practitioners headed by Dr. Harry Benjamin found themselves faced with a series of complex issues associated with 'treating' transsexuality.<sup>910</sup> Creating a more convincing voice for 'male transsexuals', as transwomen were still called in those days, became the third most important aspect of this treatment, after HRT and surgery.<sup>911</sup> However, even though a lot of advances in vocal techniques, such as the 'Chewing method' by E. Froeschels in 1952, had been produced and published during those years, these did not become associated with transsexual voices until the late sixties to early seventies.<sup>912</sup> This, however, does not mean that those transitioned did not eventually get help from

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<sup>910</sup> 'On December 1, 1952, readers of the *New York Daily News* were greeted with a banner headline: Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty: Operations transform Bronx youth. In the ensuing 18 months, more than half a million words about Jorgensen rolled off the world's presses. "Christine Jorgensen was arguably the most famous person in the world for a few short years nearly half a century ago," writes historian Susan Stryker in her introduction to the new edition of *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography* (Cleis Press). Jorgensen offers an intimate account of her groundbreaking life as the first world-renowned transsexual. "Nature made a mistake," she writes, "which I have corrected." An entertainer who played clubs from Las Vegas to Havana, Jorgensen was both "banned" in Boston and named "Woman of the Year" in New York City. She hobnobbed with Judy Garland, Tennessee Williams, Natalie Wood, and Truman Capote.' [http://cleispress.com/book\\_page.php?book\\_id=37](http://cleispress.com/book_page.php?book_id=37) (Accessed: 15.08.09). Christine Jorgensen's voice, which can be listened to in both her speaking and singing aspects, can be considered to be among the most successful of her era.

Harry Benjamin was not only a very forward thinking mind for his era but also the first one who claimed that transsexuality was not something treatable by counselling. He also stated that the condition is mainly explained by hormonal imbalance, especially during pregnancy.

<sup>911</sup> As already said, the existing research was entirely dedicated to the speaking voice.

<sup>912</sup> E. Froeschels. 1952. 'Chewing method as therapy.' *Arch. Otolaryngology*. Vol. 56: 427-34. If this has anything to do with a similar attitude I have experienced first hand when in Greece, then this work-period, which clearly existed but was not published for almost twenty years, is likely to indicate that none of the researchers of renown wanted to be linked with transsexuals at that stage.

practitioners; it only means that the works were not published until much later, in the early 1970s. My research so far has revealed that it was Money and Primrose who first included some aspects of voice therapy for transsexuals in their 1969 work.<sup>913</sup> However, the most specialised as well as cited early materials in voice therapy for transsexuals are those of Boone in 1971, Kalra in 1977, and Bralley *et al.* in 1978.<sup>914</sup> Even though the contribution of early researchers is valuable, there are problems associated with these early methods and approaches. The most prominent of them has to be associated with older perceptions about female vocality. For those early practitioners, the main approach was trying to help their clients establish a feminine pitch and tone. In particular, it has been recognised that 'early clinicians and researchers in gender / voice change reported selecting target Speaking Fundamental Frequencies (SFFs) for their male-to-female clients of approximately 200 Hz.'<sup>915</sup> The early practitioners' attitude was that of avoiding gender ambiguity in the clients' speaking result but the reliability of research results was rather limited since 'most of this (early) literature was based on single subjects engaged in treatment programs'.<sup>916</sup> This monodimensional attitude was, thankfully, re-evaluated by Wolfe *et al.* in 1980 and Gelfer and Schofield in 1988, who indicated, more realistically,

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<sup>913</sup> J. Money and C. Primrose. 'Sexual dimorphism and dissociation in the psychology of male transsexuals.' In R. Green and J. Money, eds. 1969. *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

<sup>914</sup> D. Boone. 1971. *The Voice and Voice Therapy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; M. Kalra. 1977. 'Voice therapy with a transsexual.' In R. Gemme and C. Wheeler. eds. *Progress in Sexology*. New York: Plenum Press; R. Bralley, G. Bull, C. Gore, and M. Edgerton. 1978. 'Evaluation of vocal pitch in male transsexuals.' *Journal of Communication Disorders*. Vol. 11: 443-9.

<sup>915</sup> Hershberger, 2005: 9. This can be even high for bio-women who are, for instance, altos.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*

that 'an individual's SFF must be at least 160-165Hz ... for the voice to be identified as belonging to a female'.<sup>917</sup>

The lack of adequate number of practitioners willing to work with transsexual voices in the early days was covered undeniably by clients treated and committed to transfer the 'knowledge' to others. Unfortunately, few of those transwomen possessed an in-depth understanding of the rules of voice therapy, so mistakes were perpetuated because of this fact. By today's standards, the principles of those 'methods' consisted mostly of a constricted high-pitched and overtly exaggerated projection, a superficial application of *falsetto* with posterior placement and breathy projection.<sup>918</sup> The results not only sounded unhealthy but also hardly convincing in terms of 'passing'.

## Breathy Vocal Attacks

Money and Primrose claimed in 1969 that 'breathy vocal attacks exemplify feminine gender.'<sup>919</sup> This is physiologically attributable, according to Sodersten, Hertegard and Hammarberg, to 'a posterior chink glottal configuration in 61% of their female subjects, (which)... may result in

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<sup>917</sup> *Ibid.* V.I. Wolfe, D.L. Ratusnik, and G. Northrop. 1980. 'Vocal characteristics of male transsexuals on a masculinity-femininity dimension.' In *The Proceedings of the Congress of the International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatrics*. Vol. 1: 469-74; M.P. Gelfer, K.J. Schofield. 2000. 'Comparison of acoustic and perceptual measures of voice in male-to-female transsexuals perceived as female versus those perceived as male.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 14: 22-33.

<sup>918</sup> My judgment is not only based on academic papers but also on the vocal results I have heard been produced by transwomen who transitioned in the early eighties.

<sup>919</sup> Money and Primrose. In R. Green and J. Money, eds. 1969. *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins. This is an attitude mostly persisting to this day.

acoustic attributes such as breathiness that are associated with... femininity in a voice'.<sup>920</sup> This view, however, appears to be anatomically debatable since it is known that the main part responsible for vocal production is situated at the front to middle of the *vocalis* muscle.<sup>921</sup> Examples of breathy projection occurring naturally are associated with the menstrual cycle or the menopause. More specifically, the 'oedema caused by a thicker mucous during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle, (which)... may cause changes in vocal quality, such as decreased flexibility, loss of high notes and breathy voice.'<sup>922</sup> In everyday life, breathy voice is used to mark versatile emotions ranging from sexual to negative behaviour: 'Breathiness (can be) ... the sound of weariness, of facing difficult decisions, of answering difficult questions under tension, ... of shock ... confusion ... anxiety, and dismissal'.<sup>923</sup> However, the exaggerated use of the breathy quality aspect tends to adhere mostly to older vocal stereotypes of femininity and far from represents the majority of modern female speech patterns.<sup>924</sup>

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<sup>920</sup> Gelfer & Schofield: 32. Cf. M. Sodersten, S. Hertegard, B. Hammarberg. 1995. 'Glottal closure, transglottal airflow, and voice quality in healthy middle-aged women.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 9:182-97.

<sup>921</sup> This can be viewed in the following trans-nasal fiberoptic stroboscopy examination produced by Dr. Christopher Chang, MD, an ENT Specialist:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajbcJiYhFKY&feature=related> (Accessed: 2.02.10).

<sup>922</sup> Luteal is 'the last phase of the menstrual cycle'. J. Abitbol, P. Abitbol & B. Abitbol. 1999. 'Sex hormones and the female voice.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol.13: 424-446. In Filipa Lã and Jane W. Davidson. 2005. 'Investigating the Relationship between Sexual Hormones and Female Western Classical Singing.' *Research Studies in Music Education*. Vol. 24: 75-87; 81. This is due to the similarity of both the tissues of the mucosa of the vocal folds and that of the cervix of the uterus.

<sup>923</sup> Fernando Poyatos. 1993. *Paralanguage: A Linguistic and Interdisciplinary Approach to Interactive Speech and Sound*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins; 207.

<sup>924</sup> Apart for that, from 'a functional perspective, incomplete vocal fold closure means that more energy is needed to produce greater airflow from the lungs to increase volume and projection and to sustain phonation, which creates a greater susceptibility to fatigue.' Yolanda D. Heman-Ackah. November / December 2005. 'Physiology of voice production: considerations for the vocal performer.' *Journal of Singing*. Vol. 62: 173-6; 174.

Even though the field's perspective still supports breathiness as 'one of the most relevant aspects of voice quality for the male-to-female transsexual', the need for further research on the subject is also noted.<sup>925</sup> This is also supported in the latest published research by Van Borsel *et al.*, where the need for 'replication in a study involving biological males and transgender clients is indicated.'<sup>926</sup> From another viewpoint, however, a breathy voice projection might be less physiologically-based and more culturally-induced. This has been projected by female film stars of the forties, fifties and sixties whose breathy voice qualities are believed to have 'simulated the effect of phonatory quality ... which takes place during sexual arousal'.<sup>927</sup> In modern terms, however, a woman in a position of power would be unlikely to underline this voice quality and articles 'advertising speech therapy for "problems" such as (breathy projection) are fairly common in the United States proving that for many people a professional sounding voice is very much a part of achieving business success.'<sup>928</sup>

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<sup>925</sup> G. Dacakis. 2002. 'The role of voice therapy in male-to-female transsexuals.' *Current Opinion in Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery*. Vol. 10, Issue 3:173-7; 173.

<sup>926</sup> J. Van Borsel, J. Janssens and M. De Bodt. 2009. 'Breathiness as a Feminine Voice Characteristic: A Perceptual Approach.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 23, Issue 3: 291-4; 293. 'Breathiness indeed may contribute to the perception of femininity'. *Ibid*.

<sup>927</sup> J. Laver. 1975. 'Individual features in voice quality.' PhD thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh; 298. Cf. D. Graddol, J. Swann. 1989. *Gender Voices*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd; 30.

<sup>928</sup> I. Navarro i Ferrando & N. Alberola Crespo, Eds. 2006. *In-roads of Language: Essay in English Studies*. Castellò de la Plana: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I, D.L.; 99.

## Perceptions of Trans Femininity

In the 1980s, Wolfe *et al.* recorded samples proving that the ‘mean fundamental frequency of transsexual speakers (93-202Hz) covered a broad range, overlapping those of male and female speakers’.<sup>929</sup> This range of potential is rarely assessed in full due to the perceived shock element of a transwoman’s speaking or singing voice beyond a socially-imposed acceptable or comfort zone. The common attitude is not helped by the frequently overt medicalisation of transsexualism, which rarely allows alternative approaches and considerations.<sup>930</sup> This might explain why ‘the current relationship between trans people and the medical / psychological communities (can be, at times,) fairly contentious’.<sup>931</sup> Even though professional terminology has recently become more ‘politically correct’, transsexuality is still being perceived as weird and ‘paradoxical’.<sup>932</sup> As a result, trans activists, such as Dallas Denny, have voiced their concerns or even disdain about ‘psychiatrists (who) exhibit attitudes of condescension, disrespect, and contempt for trans people in their “professional” publications’.<sup>933</sup> Thankfully, things continue improving and, as a result, we

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<sup>929</sup> V.I. Wolfe, D.L. Ratusnik, and G. Northrop. 1980. ‘Vocal characteristics of male transsexuals on a masculinity-femininity dimension.’ *In the Proceedings of the Congress of The International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatics*. Vol. 1: 469-74; 473.

<sup>930</sup> Until recently, for instance, several institutions did not provide treatment to those identified as ‘queer’ or non-straight (i.e. attracted to the opposite to newly-affirmed sex) transsexuals.

<sup>931</sup> W. Barnes. 12<sup>th</sup> February 2006. ‘The Medicalization of Transgenderism.’ [www.Trans-Health.com](http://www.Trans-Health.com) (via ‘Press for Change News’ Distribution); 8.

<sup>932</sup> Neumann & Welzel: 153.

<sup>933</sup> V. K. Namaste. 2000. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 192.

see rarely academic papers with insensitive choice of terminology, such as ‘male transsexuals’ and ‘female transsexuals’ when referring to MTFs and FTMs respectively.<sup>934</sup> However, many practitioners still appear to consider the MTF voice as *ersatz* (because of allegedly being the sole product of imitation) rather than multi-dimensional and, thus, exceptional. The above statements are in progress and, therefore, in need of further assessment and evaluation.

### The Particulars of Change

Both FTM and MTF changing vocal personae tend to suffer some sort of misuse, at least during the early stages.<sup>935</sup> This misuse is due to a variety of reasons but the basic motive behind it is the individuals’ need to ‘pass’ in the least possible time. As known, due to ‘differences in laryngeal size and mass, (the) average fundamental frequency (FO) for females is higher (220Hz) than for males (110Hz).’<sup>936</sup> Also, once the larynx has been enlarged and lowered and the vocal folds acquired their full length, these could never go back to their pre-pubertal status. The inappropriate kind of use, which is

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<sup>934</sup> The last use of similar terms known to me has been as recently as in September of 2007, during the works of WPATH Symposium (Chicago, IL) by a secluded team of surgeons. Strong opposition, in the form of letters, emails to the Board as well as presentations, made this offensive use of outdated terminology almost redundant by 2009 (WPATH Symposium - Oslo).

<sup>935</sup> ‘Vocal misuse is the more contemporary term used to describe these behaviours.’ R.K. Adler. ‘Vocal Misuse and Vocal Hygiene.’ In R. K. Adler, S. Hirsch, and M. Mordaunt, Eds. 2006. *Voice Therapy and Communication for the TG / TS Client – A Comprehensive Clinical Guide*. San Diego, Oxford, and Brisbane: Plural Publishing: 127.

<sup>936</sup> K. H. Mount and S. J. Salmon. 1988. ‘Changing the Vocal Characteristics of a Postoperative Transsexual Patient: A Longitudinal Study.’ *Journal of Communication Disorders*. Vol. 21, Issue 1: 229-38; 229.

accentuated by inadequate knowledge of the vocal instrument and technique, tends to produce strained and weak voices. Transwomen usually attempt to control their voices by raising the larynx. In initial stages and without training, this laryngeal lifting tends to be too high and can frequently result to muscular fatigue. Soon the vocal mechanism can become so tense that the produced outcome becomes inaudible within a noisy environment. Singing at this stage turns out to be impaired or even impossible. If the misuse is not corrected in good time, as Adler suggests, this can 'lead to tissue changes and the development of nodules, polyps, contact ulcers, or thickening of the vocal folds. Poor hydration and, therefore, dryness of the laryngeal tissues often increases the risk of laryngeal tissue damage.'<sup>937</sup> Spastic dysphonia can develop among other symptoms.<sup>938</sup>

## **Hormonal Intake**

A transsexual, as opposed to transgender, individual would almost certainly seek testosterone or oestrogen intake, in other words Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). In fact, beginning hormonal administration is the first moment of relief within gender dysphoric lives and when people finally start

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<sup>937</sup> R.K. Adler. 'Vocal Misuse and Vocal Hygiene.' In R. K. Adler, S. Hirsch, and M. Mordaunt, eds. 2006. *Voice Therapy and Communication for the TG / TS Client – A Comprehensive Clinical Guide*. San Diego, Oxford, and Brisbane: Plural Publishing; 128.

<sup>938</sup> Spasmodic or spastic 'dysphonia (SD), a focal form of dystonia, is a neurological voice disorder that involves involuntary "spasms" of the vocal cords causing interruptions of speech and affecting the voice quality. SD can cause the voice to break up or to have a tight, strained, or strangled quality.' <http://www.dysphonia.org> (Accessed: 27.11.09).

feeling at ease with themselves. Bowers *et al.* describe briefly the hormonal families used by MTFs as consisted of oestrogens (estradiol, estradiol valerate & estradiol cypionate), progesterones (progesterone, hydroxyprogesterone) and anti-androgens (spironolactone, finasteride).<sup>939</sup> More detailed information in terms of the UK regime has been provided in 2003 by Levy *et al.*, who stated that:

(The) typical regimen is Estraderm TTS 50 or 100 (delivering 50 or 100µg oestradiol/24h transdermally when applied twice weekly, reduced to 50 µg/24h post gender-reassignment surgery), oral ethinylestradiol 100 or 150 µg daily in divided doses (50 µg twice or three times a day, reducing to 50 µg daily post-surgery)... As insufficient oestrogen and possibly also excessive oestrogen may be associated with vasomotor symptoms, adjustment of the dose in both directions may be necessary... In some centres, Spironolactone 100 to 300 mg daily (Prior *et al.*, 1989) or cyproterone acetate 50 to 100mg daily (Van Kesteren *et al.*, 1997) is routinely added to transdermal or oral oestrogen treatment, whilst in others, the addition of cyproterone is thought to confer a risk of idiosyncratic severe hepatotoxicity while adding relatively little to the antiandrogenic effects of oestrogens alone.<sup>940</sup>

According to several academic sources, the combination of oestrogens and anti-androgens can be risky to MTFs, especially during the first year of

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<sup>939</sup> M. Bowers, R.K. Adler, S. Hirsch, and M. Mordaunt, with assistance from J. Muñoz. 'Endocrinology: Questions and Answers.' In Adler *et al.*: 92 (Table).

<sup>940</sup> Levy, Crown, and Reid, 2003: 409.

hormonal administration.<sup>941</sup> In particular, Van Kesteren *et al.* state that ‘a 20-fold increase in the occurrence of venous thromboembolism was recorded’ ... (In the majority of cases (36), this was) ‘most probably caused by the treatment with oestrogens and anti-androgens. The majority (21) of 36 cases occurred within the first year of hormone treatment (incidence 2.6%)’.<sup>942</sup> This is the major reason why oestrogen administration should be carefully prescribed and monitored by a medical doctor and assisted by a healthy lifestyle.<sup>943</sup> This is not always the case as many transwomen tend to overcome the usual delay in referral to gender clinics by obtaining hormones over the Internet as well as taking higher than the recommended doses. Unregulated hormonal administration and higher dosages, however, can be proven harmful or even fatal. The reasons are associated with ‘possible compromises in quality, purity, and a tendency ... (for the TS client) to avoid health monitoring and not receive advice from any health practitioners.’<sup>944</sup>

## The Nature of Female Transvocality

A vocal instrument, which has been developed under the influence of androgens, cannot but exhibit certain characteristics. These, in terms of

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<sup>941</sup> For example, in the article ‘Mortality and Morbidity in Transsexual Subjects treated with Cross-Sex Hormones’.

<sup>942</sup> P. J. M. Van Kesteren, H. Asscherman, J.J.A. Megens, and L. J.G. Gooren. 1997. ‘Mortality and morbidity in transsexual subjects treated with cross-sex hormones.’ *Clinical Endocrinology*; 47, 337-342.

<sup>943</sup> A total abstinence from smoking and alcohol consumption is recommended, especially during the first few years of starting treatment with oestrogens and anti-androgens.

<sup>944</sup> Bowers *et al.* In Adler *et al.*: 98.

immediate voice production, involve a big descended larynx and long vocal folds, thus resulting to a low Fundamental Frequency (FO). Furthermore, the same hormones are also responsible for a biomale person's strong skeletal structure and musculature as well as the mostly abdominal breathing pattern, even though this can lack in *appoggio* or support. A bio-male body, due to its very formation, is being noted to behave, in general, in a composed and almost rigid manner, especially when compared to that of a bio-woman. The noted 'differences in male and female gestures... (have been perceived to be that) evident that genders may be distinguished by gestures alone.'<sup>945</sup> However, I have my serious reservations about the generalisability of this binarian view, which seems from a modern perspective to be rather heterosexist and old-fashioned.<sup>946</sup>

When the bio-male vocal instrument becomes, later in life, supported by the hormonal family of oestrogens some changes should be expected. For example, the musculature of the whole body as well as the larynx appears to become suppler. This can explain why most transwomen singers, even in their forties and fifties, get to acquire extra notes in their mixed register after a few years on oestrogens. The new hormonal regime also tends to produce differences in a person's psychology and, therefore, in the way that a newly-affirmed woman sustains her voice with her posture. These changes may become more or less prominent, depending on various factors, such as individual qualities, age, amount of singing practice and quality of training

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<sup>945</sup> J.C. Pearson. 1985. *Gender and Communication*. Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown; 188.

<sup>946</sup> Pearson's view provides no answer, for example, in the case of gestures applied by so-called 'camp' men or butch women without gender identity issues.

that the singer receives. No matter how small the immediate effects on vocal instrument, these hormonal changes would need to be individually assessed in order for the vocal results to be improved.

## Two Case Studies

Singer A is a participant in her middle forties possessing an alto voice permitting her to perform in amateur operatic groups and choirs. After seven years on oestrogens, six years post-surgery, as well as two and a half years of weekly singing lessons, she has gained almost a fifth in her mixed register and more than an octave in her total range.<sup>947</sup> Contrary to her overall range, her gain in mixed register has been there from the time of her initial assessment and is not the result of training.

Singer B is a jazz musician and singer, possessing an alto vocal quality, and is in her early fifties. Similarly to Singer A, she has also gained about a fourth in her mixed register, even though her training has been limited to basic principles of singing. As a jazz vocalist, she does use her mixed register to full extent but her overall higher range is applied only in order to produce a dramatic effect. However, due to her incomplete training, singing style as well as admitted substance abuse in the past, her absolute

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<sup>947</sup> The singer used to be a bass. The previous top note was that of *e b*'. Currently, September 2009, she can sing *a*' or *b b*' on mixed register, if she wishes to, and her top notes are high *f*'# or *g*''. Since she is still trying to extend and secure her upper range, she is currently 'blending' her registers between *d*' and *e b*'.

top note is *d#''*.<sup>948</sup> She is almost twenty years on oestrogens and post-op. Both transwomen demonstrate a spontaneously induced extended mixed register, which appears to support the connection between vocal gains and oestrogen hormonal intake.<sup>949</sup>

## Realistic Expectations

Most transwomen singers I have worked with tend to possess or develop a good alto range. Nonetheless, depending on individual physiology, it is not unknown of trained gifted voices to extend within high mezzo-soprano range. There are a few new or established case-singers, which are currently advertised online. The most known of them is Tona Brown, an African-American violinist and mezzo soprano with an extensively high range. Her background is from Northern Virginia and she studied 'music in Northern Virginia and Rochester, New York.'<sup>950</sup> In late adolescence, she used to sing alto in church choirs and describes that this 'was very awkward, at the time.'<sup>951</sup> Most significantly, Brown encountered problems during her singer's training at the Shenandoah Conservatory of Music. The teacher's

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<sup>948</sup> The note sounds strained. The singer used to be a tenor before transition.

<sup>949</sup> Almost all MTF participants of this research demonstrate the minimum gain of the interval of a third in mixed register.

<sup>950</sup> However, the singer identifies as 'a dramatic soprano and a high mezzo ... That's really awkward, for a male. I always wore long hair, I was always androgynous. When I did decide to transition, it wasn't that hard for everyone.' Chris King. 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2006. 'Harmonizing her Gender.' [http://transgriot.blogspot.com/2006/06/harmonizing-her-gender\\_03.html](http://transgriot.blogspot.com/2006/06/harmonizing-her-gender_03.html) (Accessed: 20.05.09).

<sup>951</sup> *Ibid.*

attempts to make her sing tenor made her voice ‘always crack-upwards’<sup>952</sup>. The breakthrough came when the teacher finally allowed her to sing the role of Cherubino in Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*, a trousers’ role usually performed by a woman. This helped her find her natural and powerful voice. As Brown sums up, it takes ‘a lot of courage to get up, and use your God-given instrument, something as fragile as a voice, to continue to train and take ridicule and to develop your voice’ and your proper gender.<sup>953</sup>

### **The Viewpoints of Traditional and Current Exercise Regime**

Voice, when viewed strictly from a clinical perspective and sense, becomes both medicalised and ‘conceptualised as a multidimensional phenomenon that could be measured through auditory-perceptual, acoustic, and physiologic means’.<sup>954</sup> Irrespective of the rather impersonal approach, however, this attitude resulted to progress and ‘clearer rationales for therapeutic intervention were developed.’<sup>955</sup> For instance, around the late 1970s we have the wider introduction of speech-pathologists and therapists in voice treatment for transsexuals. Within less than twenty years, the focus of male-to-female voice therapy incorporated, apart from raising the fundamental frequency, the altering of ‘oral resonance via lip spreading (retraction of the corners of the mouth) and the use of a more anterior

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<sup>952</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>953</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>954</sup> Jennifer Oates. ‘Evidence-Based Practice in Voice Therapy for Transgender/Transsexual Clients.’ In Adler *et al.* 2006: 24.

<sup>955</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. R.J. Baken. ‘Foreword.’ In T. Harris, S. Harris, J.S. Rubin & D.M. Howard, Eds. 1998. *The Voice Clinic Handbook*. London: Whurr Publishers: xi-xiii.

tongue carriage during speech'.<sup>956</sup> By the nineties and noughties, academics and vocal practitioners in gender clinics or private practices, without abandoning the scientific approach, started viewing the voice more holistically.<sup>957</sup> The result was the introduction of an increasing number of singing technique patterns in voice therapy.<sup>958</sup> This was due to the realisation that this approach could produce better, safer, and quicker results than ordinary speech therapy.

## The Current Methodology

Between the early 80s and late 90s, we have had some important developments in singing technique. In terms of impact in modern singing, the most important of them were the Jo Estill and Accent Methods.<sup>959</sup> Both approaches dealt with aspects never studied before by traditional singing techniques, like singing on fricatives, tongue and lip trills, and ng-sirens. The Accent method also included a lot of useful material, especially suitable

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<sup>956</sup> M.H. Mount, S.J. Salmon. 1988. 'Changing the vocal characteristics of a post-operative transsexual patient: a longitudinal study.' *Journal of Communication Disorders*. Vol. 21: 229-38; D. Gunzburger. 1995. 'Acoustic and perceptual implications of the transsexual voice.' *Archives of Sex Behaviour*. Vol. 24: 339-48; J. Oates, G. Dacakis. 1997. 'Voice change in transsexuals.' *Venereology*. Vol. 10: 178-87; M.D. de Bruin, M.J. Coerts, A.J. Greven. 2000. 'Speech therapy in the management of male-to-female transsexuals.' *Folia Phoniatrica*. Vol. 52: 220-7. In L. Carew, G. Dacakis & and J. Oates. 2007. 'The Effectiveness of Oral Resonance Therapy on the Perception of Femininity of Voice in Male-to-Female Transsexuals.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 21, Issue 5: 591-603; 592.

<sup>957</sup> Voice as a whole incorporates far more than fundamental frequency or speech patterns and would need to take singing into consideration.

<sup>958</sup> For instance, Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT).

<sup>959</sup> R. H. Colton, and J. Estill. 1981. *Elements of Voice Quality: Perceptual, Acoustic and Physiologic Aspects*. Volume V: Speech and Language. New York: Academic Press; K. Thyme-Frokjaer, and B. Frokjaer-Jensen. 2001. *Accent Method*. New York: Speechmark Publishing Ltd.

for the recovery of the misused voice (mainly based on increasing the tempo on accented patterns, as the name implies). However, I disagree with the patient-focused or medicalised approach applied by some of these methods, especially when transferred to transsexuality.<sup>960</sup> Even though, neither the Estill nor the Accent methods were initially designed for transsexuals, aspects of them have been used extensively by trans-speakers and singers. The reason is that parts of these techniques have been applied by speech therapists as well as individual practitioners, and are now considered to be both safe and suitable for singing transvocal personae.

There is an intermediate stage to singing included in voice therapy for MTF transsexuals. The most characteristic of these works, whose principle is the combination of singing exercises with Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT), was presented by Hershberger in 2005.<sup>961</sup> The hypothesis behind MIT is that transcribing everyday speech into music notes, similarly to a recitative pattern, would produce a more realistically feminine tone for transwomen. This is based on earlier suggestions by Andrews stating that in MTF voices 'the pitch level is actually less important than is pitch variability or the musicality of the voice pattern.'<sup>962</sup> Even though Hershberger's method has contributed towards an effective, balanced, and modern management of the Male-To-Female voice, I remain suspicious

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<sup>960</sup> The field is unlikely to escape a partial medicalisation, due to matters of surgery and insurance (though this does not apply to most countries). However, it would be ideal if it was de-medicalised in the remaining aspects. Irrespective of the term (Gender Identity Disorder or GID), transsexuality is truly a matter of gender variance and not of a disorder.

<sup>961</sup> I. Georgiadou Hershberger. 2005. 'The Effects of Singing Exercises and Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT) on the Male-to-Female Transgender Voice.' M.A. Thesis. Greensboro: University of North Carolina.

<sup>962</sup> M.L. Andrews. 1999. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. *Manual of Voice Treatment: Pediatrics through Geriatrics*. San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group.

towards anything externally imposed onto something as inherently central to a person as is her or his voice and speech. Moreover, viewed from a classical singer's as well as modern speaker's perspective, one would also express reservations on other viewpoints, for instance, the writer's lack of questioning of the breathy vocal projection.

## **Personal Work and Approach**

Voice categorisation serves only research and study purposes. Otherwise, any gifted voice, *a priori*, remains individual and should not be dealt like any cases previously known to the teacher-practitioner. This has always been my principle as well as safeguard when teaching singing, even before my official transition in 2003. This motto appears to be yet more applicable to all modern hybrid vocal personae. In particular, anyone aspiring to teach transvoices cannot ignore realities associated immediately with gender dysphoria. For example, transwomen present themselves to outsiders frequently as overwhelmingly extrovert, usually in order to compensate for their actual lack of confidence. Singing tuition cannot progress without addressing first any prominent or underlying issues, such as body posture, insecurity (intonation-related issues are frequently associated with this), tension, distrust etc. Most importantly, this is the stage that the practitioner would need to find out the participant's background. A new participant's vocal health and singing level evaluation can consist, apart from the questions on health background, 'of as many ... vocal tasks as are deemed

necessary and appropriate for the individual'.<sup>963</sup> I believe, however, that the customary 'first report' approach of many modern teachers comes across as utterly confrontational, especially when dealing with transsexual singers. Singing teachers / practitioners would certainly need to be informed about underlying conditions so that they do not cause harm to the student / participant's voice and health. Nonetheless, as a practitioner as well as an insider, I find that this can be better discovered, without compromising the professional approach, via a less rigid conversation accompanying the usual questionnaire.

After discovering that it is safe to proceed, the optimal way to commence a singing session is by applying a breathing and relaxation exercising regime. This would be even more beneficial when applied as a component of a daily regime.<sup>964</sup> Even though, all practitioners tend to have their preferred methods of approaching breathing, rigidity in the teaching approach can produce only limited benefits.<sup>965</sup> For instance, there is no point of advocating advanced yoga-based relaxation techniques before singing to a participant characterised with limited bodily flexibility. Towards the end of the breathing-relaxation section, the practitioner/teacher can introduce minor singing patterns and 'sirens' in order to start assessing the voice. According to Kozan, these 'sirens', also referred to as 'glissandi', could be

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<sup>963</sup> A. Kozan. 'The TG/TS Singing Voice.' In Adler *et al.*: 378.

<sup>964</sup> There is a very efficient relaxation technique with a truly wide usage, which can range from western yoga to drama classes' contexts. This can be found in Adler *et al.*; 470-3.

<sup>965</sup> The simplest, but not the sole, example of the breathing regime I use for beginners can be seen in the FTM section of this chapter.

either 'demonstrated for imitation or requested for production' in the following four ways or steps:<sup>966</sup>

... a descending glissando from mid-range to the lowest end of the vocal range, an ascending glissando from the lowest end to the mid-range, a descending glissando from the highest end to the mid-range, and a descending glissando from the highest end all the way to the lowest end.<sup>967</sup>

This is certainly an effective way to assess the voice. Due to matters of safety, however, in my case, I only request from the singer/participant to go up to the highest or lowest end, as long as this is comfortably achieved. For the same reasons, I would start from downwards and upwards 'sirens' first on the interval of a fifth and then progress gradually further.

'Sirens' or 'glissandi' are a suitable way to start a lesson for any voice affected by misuse. Apart from them, the first sessions are usually consisted of singing exercising based on consonants, especially fricatives, and lip or tongue trill patterns. The need for the student / participant to be re-assured requires the use of some limited open exercises, even at this stage. However, due to being more flexible, MTF vocal personae are able to cope with open exercising sooner than FTM ones. At this initial stage, I work mainly on the centre of the newly-acquired vocal area and only temporarily test the singer's potential. Even though the main focus of this research is on the singing voice, the approach cannot but encompass all sides of vocality.

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<sup>966</sup> Kozan. In Adler *et al.*: 379. Both terms refer to 'slides across pitches'. *Ibid.*

<sup>967</sup> Kozan. In Adler *et al.*: 379.

Therefore, since any discrepancies in speaking voice are likely to arrest any singing progress, if I discover that the participant's fundamental frequency is too high or there is an unhealthy projection, I will work to bring the voice gradually to a healthier level. Vocal tuition should, of course, include a programme of vocal hygiene based on relaxation, daily diaphragmatic breathing regime, vocal preparation or 'easy onset' for speaking, decrease of caffeine intake and acidic juices and proper hydration.<sup>968</sup> Jaw and tongue relaxation is introduced. Depending on the progress, this first phase can last from three to six months.<sup>969</sup> This is undeniably the most testing period for the transitioning MTF vocal persona as well as the teacher who needs to be careful, understanding and patient.

The next stage (3-6 months in principle) involves more open exercising (*legato*) and I would usually begin with an Italian-like (ee) sound. The melodic patterns are simple and, as a rule, exhausted in descending fifths, and then ascending /descending thirds, fourths and fifths. Then I gradually introduce more vowels and easy patterns depending on the singer's general ability as well as individual characteristics.<sup>970</sup> Particular attention is paid to tongue and jaw relaxation.<sup>971</sup> Additionally to previous exercising, I carefully commence opening the main vocal area and going beyond the basic comfort zone. Fricatives as well as lip and tongue trills are

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<sup>968</sup> Cf. Adler. In Adler *et al.*: 132-3.

<sup>969</sup> The durations of different stages are only provided here as an indication. Gifted singers are known to advance much faster.

<sup>970</sup> For instance, facial and mouth shape are important elements in every singer and should be taken into consideration when devising an exercise regime.

<sup>971</sup> There are several good exercises for this purpose, such as the 'yawn-sigh' for jaw relaxation as well as resonance or the 'sticky toffee' for tongue relaxation. Cf. Adler and Van Borsel. In Adler *et al.*: 154-5.

once more the first to connect the previous to the new range. No matter how careful and methodical the approach, descending sequences are the ones to prove the most testing for an MTF singer. This is because going lower than the immediate comfort zone will almost certainly result to the dreaded drop to pre-transitional timbre. This needs very sensitive handling from the teacher / practitioner as the student will not only need technical instruction but also psychological re-assurance. However, the aftermath of that initial shock can potentially be the most prolific and rewarding period for both student and teacher. Learning, after all, how to blend the voice effectively is the first important achievement towards any artistic mastery. Furthermore, this proves to be crucially significant in a transwoman's everyday life for another reason: The knowledge about blending the singing voice will, in addition, reveal the major keys towards protecting her speaking voice from unwanted changes, especially in public situations. MTF singers with well-blended voices rarely lose control when speaking, even while stressed.

At stage 3, which can last for the minimum of one year, the singer is now able to deal with more intermediate Belcanto subject matters and, therefore, I tend to commence on enriching and extending the range, working on *staccato*, and thus creating a beautiful as well as interesting vocal tone.<sup>972</sup> Moreover, I also introduce extensive work based on the Vaccaj method (in English or Italian, if the student can deal with). The next

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<sup>972</sup> *Messa di voce* (1st stage – increasing volume) is one of the best exercises to assist towards this goal.

phase (4) depends entirely on the student's ability or aspiration. However, we would need to note that a transwoman's vocal instrument is more equipped to cope with advanced singing technique than that of a transman due to both issues of different mentality as well as flexibility. Also, in principle and as many falsettists would confirm, one can always learn to work with only a part of a given space, in this case that of an enlarged larynx and folds. The opposite task, which is that of creating a fully-male singing voice out of an underdeveloped laryngeal space and body, can be particularly testing or even impossible unless a different hormonal and vocal exercising regime is followed from the beginning. Even then, there are numerous setbacks and, without persistence, the outcomes are far from being guaranteed.<sup>973</sup>

Even though the MTF vocal persona has received an overwhelming amount of attention since the 1950s, this has mostly been dedicated to its speaking aspect. Until recently, most singing expressions had been rarely studied and pushed to become a part of societal as well as artistic *avant-garde*. This has thankfully changed and a new generation of academics, vocal practitioners, as well as general public have started to understand these voices' true potential. New singers -- mostly in jazz, folk, and pop styles -- can now appear in public and be respected as well as appreciated. However, there is still a long way for transvocality to go in order to be accepted as concert hall material and attain a mainstream status. The hope is that the newly-trained classical singers may be able to help in this direction.

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<sup>973</sup> Cf. Section on the FTM voice.

## Conclusions: Summarising Hybrid Vocal Personae

This thesis has investigated the theories and practices affecting hybrid vocality, a concept defined initially by the combination of non-binarian sound and endocrinology. The design of this work necessitated the studying of the best-known hybrid vocal personae throughout the western history of Common Era. The research, which was formed as a detailed and multidisciplinary journey, commenced from the Byzantine era, progressed to Baroque and reached up to a necessary completion by encompassing the most relevant aspects of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In particular, this expedition on alternative vocality, which incorporated the Byzantine and Baroque castrati as well as natural male sopranos and transsexual vocal personae of modern times, necessitated more than the examination of historic or musicological elements. Most importantly, apart from the scientific input needed to connect the chronologically diverse vocal personae and eras, this thesis examined these examples of alternative vocality under the light of two important philosophical / dogmatic elements: those of *Ad Honorem Dei* and 'Balance of Blame'. The first one, a strictly religious element in its conception, has been included in Byzantine documents as *EIS DOXAN THEOU* and been the justification / dedication of Papal Bulls also from early times.<sup>974</sup> This *quasi*-dogma, whose strict

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<sup>974</sup> Examples include: 'Si ergo, quod concepisti animo, effectu duxeris complendum, stude gentem illam bonis moribus informare, & agas tam per te quàm per illos, quos adhibes, quos fide, verbo, & vita idoneos esse perspexeris, ut decoretur ibi Ecclesia, plantetur & crescat fidei Christianæ religio, & quæ ad honorem Dei, & salutem pertinent animarum, per te taliter ordinentur, ut a Deo sempiternæ mercedis cumulum consequi merearis, & in terris gloriosum nomen valeas in sæculis obtinere.' Pope Hadrian II. 1155. 'Bull.' In *Magnum*

theological definition, implied that the castrati singers were to be employed on the provision that they served the glory of God in church, still tends to accompany most ecclesiastical encyclicals and other documents.<sup>975</sup> As such, *Ad Honorem* became the condition immediately associated with the official inauguration of the castrati singers by the Vatican. However, from the start the concept also contained secular dimensions associated with power; as such it has survived to this day. According to this thesis' definition though, the *quasi*-dogma has a lot of varied and undefined elements in it, usually hidden under its theological construct or, rather, facade. This can be seen more clearly in the history of the term. The deconstruction of a Christian term would need to be traced in its ancestry: the Hebrew tradition. In this case, 'the term for "glory" (*kābôd*, also "weight") has its basis in secular usage.'<sup>976</sup> More specifically, human 'glory consists of the "weight" carried in a community; that is, regard.'<sup>977</sup> On the contrary, Yahweh's glory is powerful, elevated and beautiful; thus idealised. Despite the Hebrew ancestry, the connection between the two types of glory was brought by Christianity. In this context, Irenaeus (c115 – c202) stated around 200CE that 'the glory of God is a living man.'<sup>978</sup> Irenaeus' thought influenced

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*Bullarium Romanum*. 1739. Vol. II; 351-52. Rome; 'Ad laudem, gloriam et honorem omnipotentis Dei': 1866, f. 112v.

<sup>975</sup> It was Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592–1605) who 'declared officially that the creation of *castrati* for church choirs was henceforth to be held "*ad honorem Dei*".' Francis Rogers. 1919. 'The Male Soprano.' *The Musical Quarterly*: 413-25; 414.

<sup>976</sup> Jan Milič Lochman. 'Glory.' In E. Fahlbusch, J. M. Lochman, J. Mbiti, J. Pelikan, Lukas Vischer, (Eds.) 2001. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Volume 2. Michigan/Cambridge, U.K. & Leiden/Boston/Koln: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Brill: 412-3; 412.

<sup>977</sup> Lochman: 412.

<sup>978</sup> *Adversus Haereses (AH)* 4. 20. 7. The whole extract reads: 'For the glory of God is a living man, and the life of man consists in beholding God: for if the manifestation of God

equally the Western and Eastern sides of the otherwise united Christianity of the early centuries. Therefore, his ideas were both prominent and formative of the early Byzantine Church. Though it would be almost impossible, due to lack of written evidence, to establish such a connection, it is most likely that the Vatican *quasi*-dogma – in the form of *EIS DOXAN THEOU* – was developed there in regards to eunuch cantors of *Saint Sophia* in Constantinople. Almost one and a half millennium later, around the time of the castrati singers' official inauguration by the Vatican, Amandus Polanus (1561 – 1610), 'one of the most significant dogmaticians of early Reformed orthodoxy', situated in Basel, complemented Irenaeus' saying in the extract "the glory of man is God".<sup>979</sup> From the above, it becomes clearer that the dogma can be more or less religiously orientated, depending on viewpoint. For instance, was it really the glory of God or the glory of Church implied by Clement VIII? Who defines the parameters of *Ad Honorem Dei*?

The Balance of Blame, an alliterated construct portraying the relationship between cause and effect, is connected equally with the observance and innate feelings of justice. Even though both the *Ad Honorem* and 'Balance' fundamentals remain individual concepts, the message they convey remains interconnected: unless the requirements of *Ad*

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through the creation affords life to all living on earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word give life to those who see God.' *Ibid.* In John Behr. 2000. *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*. Oxford: Oxford Early Christian Studies, Oxford University Press; 56. Irenaeus was an early father – Bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul – as well as an apologist of the Church, who produced important writings that formed the Christian theology of the early centuries. The *AH* ('*Against Heresies*'), mainly aimed against Gnosticism, remains the most prominent and influential of Irenaeus' writings.

<sup>979</sup> Robert Letham. 1990. 'Amandus Polanus: A Neglected Theologian?' *Sixteenth Century Journal*. Vol. 21: 463-76; 463 & Lochman; 412.

*Honorem 'Dei'* are observed, the Balance of Blame is expected to be reversed. This consequence again is not something restricted to Byzantine or Baroque castrati but truly encompasses all hybrid vocality. Focusing on the above common philosophical rudiments, however, does not mean that the current investigation on hybrid vocality and personae has been a purely-theoretical construct. This was due to issues, such as injustice and discrimination, which tend to be experienced by all hybrid vocal personae and, therefore, necessitated the application of a practical viewpoint throughout this thesis. For instance, the effects on the voice of a natural male soprano or a female singer with congenital adrenal hyperplasia had to be examined in association with the 'paternalistic surgery-centred model of intersex treatment (which) has been incisively critiqued in recent years. (Especially since)...first-person testimonies by patient advocates (as well as)... queer analyses have begun to show that the dichotomous ossification of a patient's gender identity — another clinical goal — is both unrealistic and politically objectionable.'<sup>980</sup> The successful or not observance of the delicate balance between theory and practice would eventually decide the general field's as well as this work's short and long-term value and use.

The Balance of Blame aspect tends to behave in a similar, though not obviously 'theocratic', way to that of *Ad Honorem Dei*. The concept's meaning is that inconvenient or dangerous difference, depending on viewpoint, remains always a person's fault, irrespective of actual

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<sup>980</sup> Iain Morland. 2009. 'Introduction: Lessons from the Octopus.' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Vol. 15, Issue 2: 191-97; 191.

occurrences. Even though the bearers of hybrid vocality are mostly characterised by congenital differentiation, this is rarely taken into consideration when discriminating or harassing a person. The disturbed analogy, or Balance of Blame, tends to contradict the supposedly-innate feeling of justice in humans and gets associated mostly with another equally 'eternal' association: that of scapegoatism. Since very old times, what is perceived to be 'different' within an ancient tribe or a modern context can never be held as either 'same' or 'own'. This outsider's gender or other status can make someone stand out positively, for example, by becoming the tribal shaman. This has been demonstrated in Schmidt (2000) and Holliman (2001), who 'have drawn attention to the transsexual or 'third-gender' role of shamans in North American and Siberian societies, the latter particularly among the Chukchi, which could be regarded as an elaboration of the more general notion of shamans representing both male and female genders.'<sup>981</sup> However, the stranger's rank can also lead a person to be perceived negatively as the cathartic scapegoat in any context.<sup>982</sup> As such the different serves a very important therapeutic element, be it ritualised or secular: it becomes a diversion or escapism for mainstream society's own problems and, thus, promotes feelings of good fortune and bliss in people. The

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<sup>981</sup> Geoff N. Bailey, Penny Spikins, eds. 2008. *Mesolithic Europe*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press; 50.

RA Schmidt. 'Shamans and northern cosmology: The direct historical approach to Mesolithic sexuality.' In RA Schmidt and BL Voss, eds. 2000. *Archaeologies of Sexuality*. London: Routledge; SE Holliman. 'The gendered peopling of North America: Addressing the antiquity of systems of multiple genders.' In N. Price, ed. 2001. *The Archaeology of Shamanism*. London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>982</sup> Cf. E.F. Vogel and N.W. Bell. 1960. 'The Emotionally Disturbed Child as a Family Scapegoat.' *Psychoanalytic Review*. Vol. 47B: 21-42 & RH Binstock. 1984. 'The aged as scapegoat.' *The Gerontologist*. Vol. 23:136-43.

fortune of the other side is not equally positive or escapist though. Scapegoatism usually affects the individual's life in a more or less negative way. From the times of Mayan or Aztecan sacrifices on pyramids to the modern 'queer-bashing' or transsexual murders, the human scapegoat is eliminated with an eerily similar and ritualistic manner, with or without the facade of religiosity: victims suffer an incredible amount of violence and are characterised by the perpetrators' intention to de-humanise and de-personalise them.<sup>983</sup>

Irrespective of the vast chronological differences of all four studied hybrid vocal personae, there is common ideological background, even though modern ones are not susceptible to the same ecclesiastic phraseology applied to vocal personae of yester years. Nonetheless, contemporary secular meanings can be revealed to be strikingly similar to religious ones. For example, when transvoices are involved, similarly-controlled principles of the whole hybrid vocality tend to apply: their existence, singing or not, has to be on certain terms, as dictated by powerful institutions. Unless the terms are observed, the 'voices' are ostracised and forced to become social

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<sup>983</sup> This can be viewed in the documentary "Two Spirits", which is currently being presented. It 'interweaves the tragic story of a mother's loss of her son with a revealing look at the largely unknown history of a time when the world wasn't simply divided into male and female and many Native American cultures held places of honor for people of integrated genders.

Fred Martinez was nádleehí, a male-bodied person with a feminine nature, a special gift according to his ancient Navajo culture. He was one of the youngest hate-crime victims in modern history when he was brutally murdered at sixteen by a young man who bragged to friends that he had "bug-smashed a fag." Two Spirits explores the life and death of a boy who was also a girl and the essentially spiritual nature of gender and sexuality. The film makes the case that in the twenty-first century we need to return to traditional values.' <http://www.youtube.com/user/TwoSpiritsOrg> (Accessed: 19.09.09).

pariahs.<sup>984</sup> Since singing is the culmination of all vocal qualities, this ostracism can also lead to the meaning of lost potentiality: the excluded qualities are never heard and only voices within binarian specifications are acknowledged. The remaining ones, such as that of a transwoman using the full of her vocal range, are either forced to silence or are vilified; or both. Though social urgencies, such as the protection of individuals from violent or, even, murderous attacks, dictate for a binarian kind of invisibility, other approaches have not been equally explored. For instance, a wide programme of training, as opposed to that of 'advertising' political correctness, would help more towards a social acceptance of variation. Moreover, this sort of training, which is likely to be more beneficial if started from early years, would, almost certainly, prove to be more functional for the protection of minorities of any kind than, for instance, a budget spent on informative posters and leaflets. However, my intentions here are not to provide some supposedly-easy solutions. After all, matters of visibility and invisibility can be both relative and deceptive and do not necessarily take on board the experiences of all transsexual and transgender people. For instance, this can refer to 'the MTF transsexual in prison who cannot access hormones; ... the fifteen-year-old female who identifies as a man, who wants hormones, and who is without resources; the transsexual who cannot change his legal

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<sup>984</sup> In other words, unable to dictate the rules by which the *Ad Honorem Dei* is defined.

identity'.<sup>985</sup> Unless there is a wider acceptance of variation, vocality would never be experienced as a whole and that is a detriment to everyone.

## **Restatement of Aims**

The purpose of the current study, particularly in musicological terms, has been to determine whether hybrid vocal personae should constitute a new vocal category, because of appearing to behave in a similar manner. The reason behind the potential new categorisation is, moreover, so that the present voices are helped to achieve their best. In order to reach a valid conclusion, the similarities and differences of both the theoretical and practical aspects would need to be addressed once more. Hybrid vocality in theory could be attributed to several aspects derived from more than one discipline: musicology, philosophy, theology and mythology being among them. These disciplinarian perspectives, however, cannot evade the attention of modern developments in gender-queer theory and social practice. Furthermore, far from being an undefined amalgam of characteristics, hybrid vocality appears to be consisted from an individually-defined non-binarian sound and body.

Hybrid vocal personae, according to this thesis' definition, are connected endocrinologically, because of being formed, irrespective of reasons, by more than one hormonal category. As a result, four

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<sup>985</sup> Viviane Namaste. 2000. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgender People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 268.

chronologically distant vocal categories can share incredibly similar physical characteristics. The most important of these bodily features are associated with a person's ability or not to experience puberty similarly to the majority. Differential pubertal experience can be distinguished into delayed and precocious development. The early or precocious growth, which tends to create intense masculinisation or feminisation, according to general standards, to the individual has mostly unknown aetiology as its basis. However, some of its known bases have been associated with 'brain lesions and hypothyroidism'.<sup>986</sup> Significantly, in many circumstances, both precocious and delayed variant adolescence have been connected with the presence of over or underdevelopment in the same body organs, for instance the adrenal cortex and glands.<sup>987</sup> Nonetheless, the effects of early feminisation or masculinisation on the voice exceed the definition of ambiguity or hybridity and, as such, they are not strictly related to this thesis.

Delayed puberty is a term 'usually applied to boys who develop more slowly than the average but who still eventually undergo full sexual development.'<sup>988</sup> These cases can be distinguished from the classic or incomplete forms of hypogonadotropic hypogonadism only after the person reaches the twentieth year of age. Treatment at this stage, consisted of human chorionic gonadotrophin (HCG), 'a hormone produced by the

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<sup>986</sup> Nicholas A. Romas & John Kingsley Lattimer. 'Reproductive system disease.' In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2009. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/498659/reproductive-system-disease> (Accessed: 14 Sep. 2009).

<sup>987</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>988</sup> *Ibid.*

placenta and secured from the urine of pregnant women', will reveal the true status.<sup>989</sup> In other words, if there is a case of delayed development, hormonal replacement therapy will, most likely, induce puberty more or less successfully. If not, this is not a true case of delayed puberty but rather that of hypogonadotropic – or another form of – hypogonadism. In vocal terms, hypogonadism would be likely to result in differentiatonal development, such as the one found in a natural male soprano or a female bass singing persona.

All four hybrid vocal categories present us with levels of endocrinological variation when compared to the vocal majority. The first two groups, both consisted of prepubertal castrates, could truly be considered as one category, if not for the chronological and cultural differences experienced by the singers of Byzantine and so-called Baroque eras. Nonetheless, the amount of uncertainty and obscurity surrounding the Byzantine cantors makes it more appropriate to treat them as predecessors of the Vatican castrati but not as the same group. Assuming that both groups were produced by the same method of castration, as described by Paulus Aegineta and, years later, by Ancillon, and at a similar age, then we can also assume that the resulted physiology of the singers must have been similar.<sup>990</sup>

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<sup>989</sup> Romas & Kingsley Lattimer, 2009. The need for treatment is because without it 'people with this condition will very likely be infertile and have an increased risk of developing osteoporosis ... With the correct diagnosis and treatment, fertility can be achieved in many cases and the risk of osteoporosis reduced.' 'Kallmann Syndrome: Information.' <http://www.kallmanns.org/> (Accessed: 1.09.09).

<sup>990</sup> Paulus Aegineta, before explaining the known methods, feels the need for justification: 'The object of our art being to restore those parts which are in a preternatural state to their natural, the operation of castration professes just the reverse. But since we are sometimes compelled against our will by persons of high rank to perform the operation, we shall

Physiologically similar bodies may produce similar vocal qualities. Nonetheless, musicological factors, such as the genre of music performed or the influences could not be possibly ignored. The uncertainty is accentuated by the fact that in Byzantine singers' case we could not have even the limited sound sample provided to us by Moreschi. Not only due to the overall greater antiquity factor but, particularly, because the last known point of the lost tradition in Byzantine chant has been located around the 1204 Sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders. The last point of reference could not be brought forward not only due to the oral transmission of Byzantine tradition but also because of the widespread dislike of the eunuchs' presence and sound within church and mainstream society of the reinstated Byzantine empire.<sup>991</sup>

The closest equivalent to the castrati can be considered to be the group of singers affected by naturally-occurring hypogonadism. However, since

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briefly describe the mode of doing it. There are two ways of performing it, the one by compression, and the other by excision.' Francis Adams, editor and original translator. 1843. *The Seven Books of Paulus Aegineta*. London: The Sydenham Society Instituted: Sect. 68: On Castration; 379.

<sup>991</sup> The dislike was established in Byzantine patristic texts (contained in *Patrologia Graeca*) since the early days. For instance, in *Ep.* 115 to Simplicia, Basil condemns the:

... utterly accursed race of eunuchs—yes I mean a race, not-feminine, not-masculine, woman-mad, envious, of evil wage, quick to anger, effeminate . . . at their very birth doomed to the knife. How can these possess true judgment, whose very feet are twisted? (Basil, trans. Roy J. Deferrari. 1928. *St. Basil: The Letters*. LCL. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. *Ep.* 115, 2: 230-3).

The meaning as well as phraseology is kept many centuries later in Cyril of Alexandria's *hom.* 19: they are not-feminine, not-masculine, androgynes, condemned to mutilation, and mad after women. To these, Cyril adds that eunuchs were 'ambiguous... with a despicable face ... and a spurious form. (Cyr., *Sermo steliteuticus adversus eunuchos* (PG 77:1105–1110, here cited at 1109B). This attitude, however, became mainstream, as demonstrated in Athanasius the Athonite's 10<sup>th</sup> century *typicon*, which remains current in Mount Athos: 'We must strictly enjoin that boys, beardless youths, and eunuchs who journey to the Mountain to be tonsured should not be received at all.' John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. *Typicon* 19, Issue 16; 238.

this sort of hypogonadism tends to occur due to variant aetiologies and at different stages in a young person's life, the resulted variation can be significant. All three above groups have been affected by a primary or secondary arrestment of pubertal development.<sup>992</sup> The fourth group of transsexual singers, however, unless for the presence of an underlying intersex condition or the administration of 'blockers', is the only of the above groups, which is most likely to be associated with post-pubertal variation. Moreover, we could say that the group have experienced not one but two pubertal inputs: before and after transition. This is a factor equally unique both among biologically-typical and hybrid vocal personae and thus will be discussed further below. Irrespective of this exception, however, there is a rule which remains intact for all four categories: they are characterised by infertility and proness to osteoporosis. Whereas reversal of infertility is possible only in cases of non-arrested pubertal development, the second effect can nowadays be counterbalanced by the administration of hormonal replacement therapy and calcium supplements. However, the effects of HRT on the voice can be both unpredictable and dramatic. This is the reason that there are singers who choose, at times, to refuse testosterone administration and accept calcium supplements instead. One of these singers is Javier Medina and this fact was revealed during the 2008 'Presentation and Interview' in York.<sup>993</sup> On the contrary, other singers, such as this writer, attempt to counterbalance the effects of testosterone with the method

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<sup>992</sup> In other words, congenital or imposed castration.

<sup>993</sup> A. Constansis. 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2008. 'Javier Medina: Presentation and Interview.' York: Music Department, University of York. [music.york.ac.uk/news/events/08-10-31.php](http://music.york.ac.uk/news/events/08-10-31.php) (Accessed: 12.08.09). Cf. Appendix 3.4.3.2.

of low start-gradual increase administration accompanied by a carefully selected exercising regime.

Due to either primary or secondary connection with eunuchism, all above case-singers bear common elements, which, depending on aetiology, can be more or less prominent in their entirety. For instance, the findings of 'osteoporosis, failure of closure of the epiphyses, reactive pituitary hyperplasia, shrinkage of the prostate, and development of gynecomastia have been (not only common in prepubertal castrates, but have been) confirmed subsequently by studies of individuals or small groups of individuals with various forms of hypogonadism.'<sup>994</sup> Nonetheless, different hypogonadal aetiologies and stages can make the above characteristics more or less prominent, as can be seen in the cases of singers with Kallmann and Klinefelter's syndromes. For instance, whereas the bodily proportions of individuals with Klinefelter's syndrome are similar in many ways to prepubertal eunuchs, Kallmann differentiation would not be likely to produce the characteristically tall stature, thoracic development or acromegalia seen in prepubertal castrates. Among the above cases of differential development, the most significant one singing-wise involves the physiology of the larynx and vocal folds, which remains closer to that of a male child or early adolescent.<sup>995</sup>

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<sup>994</sup> Jean D. Wilson and Claus Roehrborn. 1999. 'Long-Term Consequences of Castration in Men: Lessons from the Skoptzy and the Eunuchs of the Chinese and Ottoman Courts.' *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*. Vol. 84, Issue 12: 4324-31; 4330.

<sup>995</sup> The arrest of laryngeal development at around the age of 12 has been confirmed in most cases of modern natural male sopranos, such as those of Jorge Cano, Michael Maniaci and Javier Medina. Cf. Chapter III.

The differential factor becomes even more prominent in post-pubertal variant formation, as is the case of most transsexuals. Here, not only the physiological results are even less predictable, depending on age, receptors and other related factors, but also, depending on the stage in transition, even the element of infertility is not a certainty anymore.<sup>996</sup> As a result, the hybrid transsexual vocality, particularly in terms of singing development, behaves again in a unique way: the cisgender proportions are disturbed by the supposed contradiction of enlarged female over male larynx. However, in a way, the transsexual pattern of laryngeal and relevant growth could be perceived as hybrid *par excellence* or as an augmentation of the intersex prototype. This is because, like in transsexual vocality, female intersex singers bear bigger larynxes and folds and as a result lower fundamental frequencies and range than the majority of their male counterparts. The reversal of binarian vocal barriers bears far more than acoustically dissimilar consequences.

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<sup>996</sup> If on early age at transition, transsexual bodies tend to fit better within binarian standards and therefore become less 'visible'. Also, apart from the fact that in the early transitional stages, persons are almost certainly still fertile, advances in science have made this ability retained for longer. For instance, there are gender clinics that recommend that 'sperm and ovarian-tissue banking should now be discussed and offered to transsexual people undergoing gender reassignment therapy, so that future treatment may be possible if wanted.' P. De Sutter. 2001. 'Gender reassignment and assisted reproduction - Present and future reproductive options for transsexual people.' *Human Reproduction*. Vol. 16, Issue 4: 612-4; 614.

## Hybrid Vocality and Binarian Perspective: Exceeding Expectations

The implications of any vocality, including hybrid, tend to connect musicology to other disciplines. In hybrid vocal personae, however, traditional humanities as well as positive sciences need to cooperate with updates in gender/queer studies and sociology. The most important outcome is the disassociation of voice from the supposedly-traditional binarian gender concepts of masculinity and femininity. However, even though the terms ‘have a long history in psychological discourse ... both theoretically and empirically they seem to be among the muddiest concepts in the psychologist’s vocabulary.’<sup>997</sup> In fact, a ‘search for definitions related to some theoretical position leads almost nowhere except to Freud (1965) and Jung (1956) ... (and the most generalised of these descriptions) would seem to be ... more or less rooted in anatomy, physiology, and early experience ... which generally serve to distinguish males from females in appearance, attitudes, and behaviour.’<sup>998</sup> In hybrid vocality the terms of masculinity and femininity become more territorially-vague and flexible. As a result, audiences are allowed to experience a number of alternative options and possibilities. This has been clearly demonstrated in the unique qualities, for instance, of the castrato, whose voice and presence were allowed to express

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<sup>997</sup> Anne Constantinople. 2005. ‘Masculinity-Femininity: An Exception to a Famous Dictum?’ *Feminism & Psychology*. Vol. 15, Issue 4: 385-407; 387.

<sup>998</sup> *Ibid.* S. Freud, trans. J. Strachey, ed. 1965. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. New York: Norton & C.G. Jung. 1956. *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*. New York: Meridian Books.

roles beyond the gender and social boundaries. As such, the singer was equally expected to depict a young woman as well as a hero or a demigod. This kind of hybrid vocal ability was – and can still be – extended when dealing with ecclesiastical and hymnological concepts. Due to this, both Byzantine and Baroque eunuchs were allowed to go beyond human boundaries and, for ritualistic purposes, become revered as sexless and angel-like. As noted characteristically by Wassersug, in Christian iconography all ‘the physical traits of angels characterise males castrated before puberty.’<sup>999</sup> This is because both ‘eunuchs and angels have beardless faces. Both are non-reproductive. Both are depicted as taller than normal mortals.’<sup>1000</sup> However, iconography depicts symbols and rarely corresponds with human or other reality. Therefore, when a human being is viewed as a symbol, this projection only reflects the subjects’ individual or collective imagination. The dehumanised and idealised icon-voices, almost never responsible for the way they are perceived, are *a priori* been denied their human prerogative: freedom, ideology, sexuality. By expressing their human qualities, which is an attribute that tends to destroy mythmaking, the so-thought icons, most likely, would fall from grace. The religious audiences’ imagination would then transform the luminous eunuch-angels into fallen ones. The above traits, even with the absence of religiosity, are also reflected in modern hybrid reality. Voices and lives are idealised in order to be included. The shocking reality of the hybrid vocal persona still

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<sup>999</sup> Richard Joel Wassersug. 2009. ‘Passing Through the Wall: On Outings, Exodus, Angels, and the Ark.’ *Journal of Religious Health*. Vol. 48: 381-90; 383.

<sup>1000</sup> *Ibid.*

needs the input of mythmaking in order to exist: 'When he will come out in the world, he will have a sign. He will have something which another human being doesn't have.'<sup>1001</sup> This *quasi*-Messianic aphorism does not refer to either a religious personality or a cult leader but only demonstrates a family's mechanism of coping with a hybrid vocal idiosyncrasy: that of Radu Marian. This example is far from singular and extends beyond singing ability as can be seen in diverse examples, both positive and negative, such as in the Skoptsy and the Hijra communities. Some times negative connotations are used by these communities as means for survival.<sup>1002</sup>

As said, the dehumanised and idealised vocal persona is only accepted on specific terms and revered under certain conditions. If it were to demonstrate the full effects of its multidimensional hybridity, for instance, in terms of less than conventional sexuality, the voice would be deprived of its 'allocated' angelic qualities. Hybrid vocality is once more reduced to *Vox Ex Machina*: there only to produce the tragic catharsis and then disappear underground until the next time is needed. Before I close this section, I would need to underline that, even though there are plenty of examples

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<sup>1001</sup> *Details*, September 2005: 318. The aphorism is by the singer's older family members.

<sup>1002</sup> Engelstein notes that 'Not only Nadezhdin, but also Pelikan, the man of science, indulged extravagant fantasies on the subject of Skoptsy ritual practices, which bore a close resemblance to the myths that circulated about the Jews in Russia as well as Europe.' Engelstein, 2003: 14. And she continues that 'Pelikan ... did not relinquish his belief that "the mortification of infants and communion with their blood (by the Skoptsy) is a religious-historical fact".' Nadezhdin, *Issledovanie*: 349. In Engelstein: 14. Also, *Hijras* are traditionally known to 'earn their living by collecting alms and receiving payment for performances at weddings, births and festivals. The central feature of their culture is their devotion to Bahuchara Mata, one of the many Mother Goddesses worshipped ... for whom emasculation is carried out. This identification with the Mother Goddess is the source both of the *hijras*' claim for their special place in Indian society and the traditional belief in their power to curse or confer blessings on male infants.' Serena Nanda. 'The *Hijras* of India: Cultural and Individual Dimensions of an Institutionalized Third Gender Role.' In Richard Parker & Peter Aggleton, eds. 1999. *Culture, society and sexuality: a reader*. London and Philadelphia: Routledge; 226.

demonstrating the connection between unconventional voice and sexuality, there is a need for further and more specific investigation. However, in metaphorical terms, since voice has always been associated with self-expression, gay cultures, for instance, 'have equated vociferousness with the refusal to remain closeted... (Most importantly,) centuries before the era of sexual liberation, "voice" already carried the values that come with uncloseting: self-knowledge, self-portrayal, presence.'<sup>1003</sup>

### **Hybrid Vocal Personae: The Vocal Implications**

This thesis has suggested the need for hybrid vocal personae to be viewed as an individual vocal category. This necessity has been based on the appearance of common vocal elements in all mentioned singing groups and, therefore, would need to be evaluated primarily from the perspectives of both differential bodily and subsequent vocal development. The principle here is that bodies of different dimensions or variant stages of development, even if they sing in the same register, they would produce a diverse timbre. Even in more conventional vocal personae, a trained ear can immediately distinguish between 'neighbouring' voice-types, such as those of a soprano and a mezzo-soprano, singing the same aria and in the same key. This quality becomes more prominent when hybrid vocality is involved. For instance, the timbre of a natural male soprano is easily distinguished from

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<sup>1003</sup> Wayne Koestenbaum. 'The Queen's Throat: (Homo) sexuality and the Art of Singing.' In Diana Fuss, Ed. 1991. *Inside/out: lesbian theories, gay theories*. New York & London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc; 205.

that of a female soprano due to being produced from different human physiology. It is known that bodily dimensions as well as additional factors, such as sex and age of the individual, can influence the development of the vocal instrument significantly. For instance, we have discussed the changes occurred during male puberty and that such 'changes ... influence the acoustic properties of the voice source, i.e. the transglottal airflow produced when the vibrating vocal folds chop the air stream from the lungs.'<sup>1004</sup> In cases of pubertal arrestment, however, such as exhibited in the hybrid vocality of a castrato or a natural male soprano, singers exhibit an individual developmental pattern. These usually include laryngeal under growth, which may be accompanied by a simultaneous over growth in other areas, such as the arms and the legs as well as the chest. This, however, does not apply in all cases.<sup>1005</sup> The resulting voice of a castrato or a natural male soprano cannot be confused with more conventional vocality belonging, for instance, to a female soprano. A possible additional reason has been identified by Sundberg, who suggests that 'the castrato voice (might have)... possessed a singer's formant (and that)... the combination of a soprano pitch range and a singer's formant would have been quite unique for castrato voices.'<sup>1006</sup> This is even more important since Sundberg believes that 'female opera singers do not produce a singer's formant.'<sup>1007</sup> However, there are opposing views about what really happens in the female soprano voice projection that would require further study. For instance, it has been claimed that the PLP (Perceptual

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<sup>1004</sup> Johan Sundberg, Marianne Trovén, Bernhard Richter. 2007. 'Sopranos with a singer's formant? Historical, Physiological, and Acoustical Aspects of Castrato Singing.' *TMH-QPSR, KTH*. Vol. 49: 1-6; 3.

<sup>1005</sup> This applies mainly in the case of a castrato or, affected by Klinefelter's syndrome, natural male soprano but is unlikely to happen in a hybrid vocal persona affected by Kallmann Syndrome.

<sup>1006</sup> Sundberg, Trovén and Richter: 3.

<sup>1007</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. J. Sundberg. 2001. 'Level and centre frequency of the singer's formant.' *Journal of Voice*. Vol. 15: 176-86.

Linear Prediction) technique ‘demonstrates ... robustness in the analysis of sung vowels at high pitches and identifies a perceptual singer’s formant in soprano voices by representing the singer’s formant as a continuous band of acoustic energy in the upper auditory region.’<sup>1008</sup> Moreover, since the hybrid vocal personae of our times are a totally under-researched territory, the question on individual subgroups, such as FTM voices, to produce a singer’s formant would need a proper investigation.<sup>1009</sup>

Another very significant differentiation of hybrid vocalicity appears to be associated with the tonal centres in singing. These centres tend to be slightly lower in hybrid vocal personae as demonstrated, for instance, when female sopranos attempt to sing soprano castrato arias. Female sopranos tend to find the arias slightly low for them, whereas natural male sopranos find the keys exactly suited for their voices. The singing tonal centres’ lower differentiation tends to apply, according to this study, to hybrid vocalicity as a whole.<sup>1010</sup> These results have been obtained from participants of this research but have also taken into consideration the results from Medina’s individual research in Mexico.<sup>1011</sup> The repercussions of the above findings are very significant. Whereas hybrid vocal personae of the past, such as the Byzantine and Baroque era castrati, sung pieces especially written for their

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<sup>1008</sup> Thomas J. Millhouse & Frantz Clermont. ‘Perceptual Characterisation of the Singer’s Formant Region: A Preliminary Study.’ In Paul Warren & Catherine I. Watson, eds. *Proceedings of the 11th Australian International Conference on Speech Science & Technology*. Auckland: University of Auckland, New Zealand: 253-8; 253.

<sup>1009</sup> I am, of course, speaking here about the ‘supported’ FTM singing vocalicity. Unsupported singing in transmales becomes, in fact, the one that suffers most at transition. Making the new vocal personae change old habits, however, can prove testing at times.

<sup>1010</sup> The tonal centre discrepancy appears to be from one to one tone and a half lower than in voices singing in equivalent registers.

<sup>1011</sup> J. Medina Ávila. 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007. ‘I Castrati su Música: Quince obras interpretadas por Farinelli entre 1728 y 1737.’ BA Dissertation. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

voices, only limited compositions have been created for contemporary hybrid vocal personae. Therefore, apart from encouraging composers to produce new pieces, the singers should consider the possibilities of respectful and discreet arrangements of already-available compositions. These could include slight transpositions, so that the singing tonal centres work better for them, or the introduction of inconspicuous amplification so that the inappropriately positioned dynamics do not overwhelm the differently-centred voices. Moreover, it is important that education is promoted on the subject as a whole and new accompanists are trained. This would prove to be particularly important for transsexual vocalists, where issues of confidence and encouragement are almost of equal importance to the music preparation and support.<sup>1012</sup> However, every categorisation is there in order to serve the vocal personae first and should always support and underline their individuality.

### **Significance & Limitations of the current research findings – Recommendations for further investigation**

This thesis has explained why hybrid vocal personae (singing personalities of both past and present) need to be re-examined from a different viewpoint. This is not because of a love of categorisation, but, on the contrary, because of the actual need of it. The reason is the unexpected benefit that the wider

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<sup>1012</sup> As stated, 'Building confidence in the new ... voice is an important part of the therapy program.' Walter O. Bockting, Joshua M. Goldberg, eds. 2007. *Guidelines for Transgender Care*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Medical Press; 195.

introduction of the term is likely to bring to vocal personae and audiences alike. Apart from the physiological and vocological causes mentioned in previous sections, there are additional grounds for this justification. First, the proposed terminology, contrary to previously-used ones, tends to describe the artists more thoroughly as human beings and, therefore, seems to be fit for purpose, especially when viewed from a twenty-first century perspective. Second, instead of using variant vocality for artistic and scientific purposes, the term describes vocal personae as opposed to 'voices'.<sup>1013</sup> Therefore, because it deals with actual personalities in its entirety, it treats them with respect.<sup>1014</sup> As a result, the term 'hybrid vocal personae' does not contain negative or judgmental connotations. On the contrary, the different formation is being viewed throughout as a valued variation and not as a disorder.<sup>1015</sup> Therefore, if the proposed term becomes accepted more widely, this would lead towards a wider understanding of difference as a valuable aspect of life. No expression can convey this quality better than the human vocality.

The aspiration of this research is to serve as a basis for future studies and investigations. However, this writer recognises that there are a number of caveats that would need to be noted regarding the present study. First of all, irrespective of the amount of scientific input, my perspective remains

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<sup>1013</sup> Even though I find studies that attempt to re-create voices from the past, such as the castrati, to be scientifically fascinating, my true interest involves the whole personality of the artist as opposed to the sound produced.

<sup>1014</sup> In the past, people had suggested that hybrid might be perceived negatively. I hope that this thesis' introduction has alleviated this potential misunderstanding.

<sup>1015</sup> This takes the current DSD (disorders of sex development) debate into consideration and hopes that its need would be re-assessed in near future.

primarily that of a musicologist, singing teacher and vocal practitioner. Nonetheless, many aspects of this work, especially those referring to FTM vocality, would benefit from a thorough and potentially multi-team scientific investigation of the given samples.<sup>1016</sup> This study would be better replicated in the same environment, where, for instance, the measurements can be obtained by the same qualified practitioner or team in a reliable and thorough manner. Since the present samples are limited, the needs for this particular study to be replicated again in the near future are paramount.<sup>1017</sup> However, even with the limited sample, the participants' international rather than local character has added an amount of generalisability in the results. This factor should be retained ideally in future research studies.

### **Future Implications and Recommendations for practice**

In order for current and future hybrid vocal personae to achieve their full potential, the most important prerequisite would be a true dialogue among all interested parties. No party should be granted more power than the rest, if this is to work. This dialogue would need to involve, first, apart from the singers, all vocal teachers and health practitioners working with them. This would necessitate the practitioners to listen to the perspective of hybrid vocal personae and *vice versa*. Second, when all parties manage to achieve

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<sup>1016</sup> The multi-team would be useful in order to work with individual subgroups of expertise, e.g. natural male sopranos and transvocal personae.

<sup>1017</sup> It is in my plans to continue working on this study until the results become more scientifically substantiated.

the desired common ground, then the dialogue can progress to involve external organisations and audiences. This way a thorough understanding can be promoted among individuals, teachers, practitioners and health organisations working with them, which, at the moment, can still remain hindered by suspicion, mistrust as well as underestimation. Preconceived ideas, from all sides, would need to be abandoned in order for this relationship to be achieved.

In terms of specific music practice, there is the need, as said, for further education for singers as well as composers and coaches. The reason that I include the singers here is because many continue to ignore the parameters of their individual vocality and, therefore, use inappropriate standards of exercising or singing for their present status. For instance, one of the major difficulties for FTM singing personae is for them to realise the need to change their method of singing to a supported one in order to retain both their singing ability and improve their capacity.<sup>1018</sup> When the singers know the idiosyncrasies of their individual instruments, then the composers would be more likely to be involved and the coaches would be more willing to listen. Most importantly, however, this is the way that hybrid vocal personae would be able to achieve freedom from binarian standards and, therefore, respect for themselves and their audiences.

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<sup>1018</sup> The only loss of vocality I have been convinced of to be associated actually with FTMs is the unsupported 'pop' style of singing most used to apply before transition. The rest can be improved or even remedied with the correct initial HRT and continuing exercising regime.

# Appendices

## Chapter I

### 1.1. Byzantine Neumes<sup>1019</sup>

#### *Simple Signs*

	Oxeia
	Syrmatikē
	Bareia
	Kathiste
	Kremaste
	Apostrophos
	Synemba
	Paraklitike
	Teleia

#### *Compound Signs*

	Oxeiai
	Bareiai
	Kentemata
	apeso exo
	Apostrophoi
	Hypokrisis
	
	

<sup>1019</sup> Egon Wellesz. 1961 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*. London: Oxford University Press; 252.

Interval Signs and Most Important Hypostases<sup>1020</sup>

- Ison  Repeated Note
- A.
- (1) Somata
- Ascending Second
-      
- Oligon Oxeia Petaste Dyo Kentemata Pelaston Kouphisma
- Descending Second
-  
- Apostrophos Dyo Apostrophoi
- (2) Pneumata
- Ascending Descending
-    
- Kentema Hypsele Elaphron Chamele  
(third) (fifth) (third) (fifth)
- (3) neither Soma nor Pneuma
-   
- Aporrhoë (descending third) Kratemo hyporrhoon
- B. Bareia  Diple  Parakletike  Kratema  Kylisma 
- Gorgon  Argon  Antikenoma  Tzakisma 
- Xeron Klasma  Piasma  Apoderma  (—)
- Thematismos eso  Thematismos exo  Thema haploun 

<sup>1020</sup> Wellesz, 1961: 286.

## Simple Neume Signs - Explanation<sup>1021</sup>

*Ison*: Repeated note ... & *Apoderma* (or *Apodoma*): Another stationary sign, used mostly at the end of phrases to express a repeated and sustained note...

*Oxeia* & *Petaste*: Both ... denote an ascending second & *Kentema*: Never used alone, but adds an ascending second to some other sign. The result may be a leap of a third...or fourth.

*Kentemata* (δύο κεντήματα): Not used alone but adds an ascending second which is always taken by step.

*Hypsele*: Usually seems to have no-interval value but to indicate in combination with the ascending signs *oxeia* and *petaste* and *kentema* that a large upward interval, generally a fifth, may be sung instead of the third which was actually reckoned. This device was perhaps meant to aid inexperienced singers, who might, if they preferred, sing the smaller interval, ignoring the *Hypsele*...

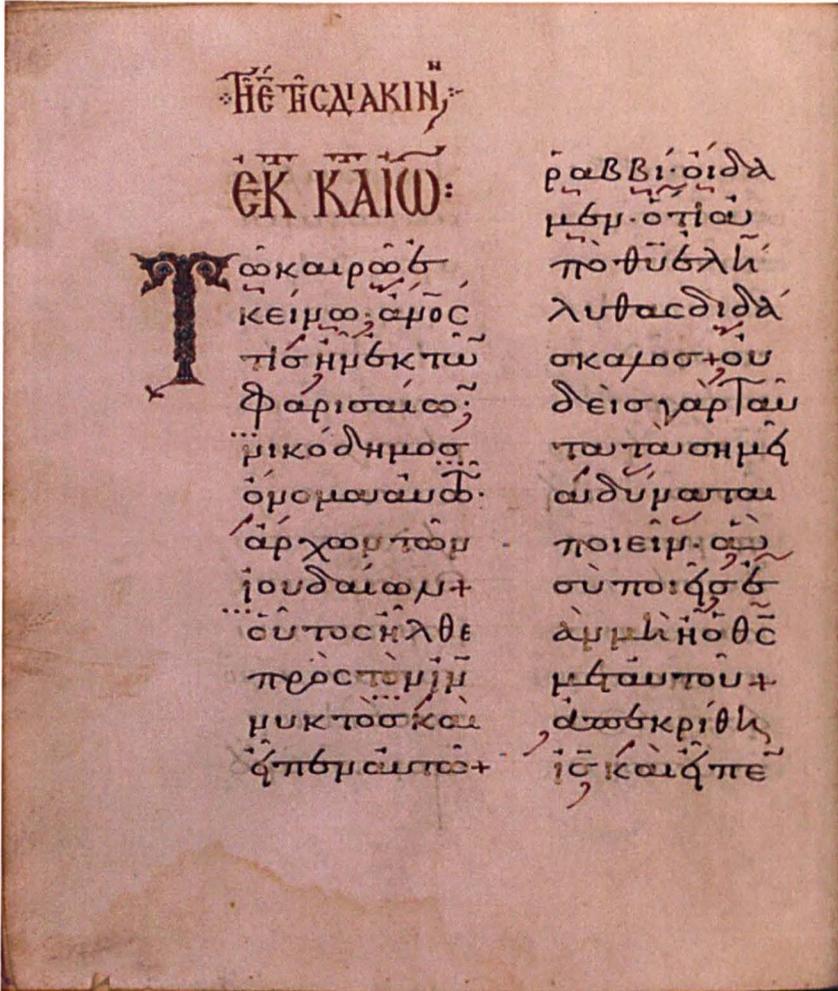
*Apostrophus* and *Bareia*: Descending second ... & *Hyporrhoe*: Two successive seconds downwards ... It cannot be the first symbol over a syllable.

*Chamele*: Usually in combination with *Apostrophus*. It turns the second into a fifth (or perhaps sometimes a fourth) without changing the interval value.

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<sup>1021</sup> H. J. W. Tillyard. Jan – Mar 1916. 'The Problem of Byzantine Neumes'. *American Journal of Archaeology*. Vol. 20, Issue 1: 62-71; 65. Also, an exegesis of the concept as well as rules of Byzantine music orthography can be obtained in detail from <http://www.stanthonysmonastery.org/music/NotationB.htm> (Accessed: 12.10.09).

## 1.2 Byzantine Neumes – Early and Modern Examples



Early Neumes are ‘marks that represent the melodic course of the voice for instinctive similarity, and that give few educations to the singer (of pitch), noted above the lines of the text.’<sup>1022</sup>

<sup>1022</sup> [www.molotro.com/resea/exp/digennaro/ecfoneticnotation.jpg](http://www.molotro.com/resea/exp/digennaro/ecfoneticnotation.jpg) (Accessed: 12.10.09).

Another example: slightly more complicated.<sup>1023</sup>



<sup>1023</sup> <http://www.schoyencollection.com/music.html> (Accessed: 12.10.09).

Middle Byzantine notation – 12th-15th century

ΤΟ ΚΟΝ Ο ΜΕΛΟΛΟΓΙΣΤΟΙ. ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣ  
 ΕΦ ΔΟΡΑ( ) ΕΙΡ. ΕΓΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΝ ΤΟΙ  
 ΟΜΗ ΜΙ Ε ΤΥ. Ο ΜΕΛΟΦΡΟΜΩΣ  
 ΜΕΛΑΛΩΟΥ ΟΙ. Δ ΜΩ Θ. ΠΑ  
**Μ**Η ΤΕ ΡΑ ΣΕ ΤΟΥ ΘΕ ΟΥ ΓΥ ΓΩ ΣΚΟΡ  
 ΤΟ. ΒΥ ΦΩ ΡΑ Ι Ο Α Σ Μ Π Ι Ο Υ Ο Ι ΚΙ  
 ΦΟΙ ΣΕ Μ Ε Γ Ο Λ Ι Ω Ο Μ Ε Μ. Δ Μ Ω Θ. Π Α  
**Α**ΛΙ Γ Α Τ Τ Ε Θ Ε Ο Τ Ο Κ Ε Π Α Ρ Θ Ε Ρ Ι  
 Σ Ε Μ Ε Γ Ο Λ Ι Ω Ο Μ Ε Μ.  
 Ε Σ Δ Κ Ο Χ Η Λ Ι Π Ρ Ι Δ Ε Ε Ι Κ Τ Ε Π Α  
 Η Μ Ε Ρ Ο Γ Λ Α Θ Α Ρ Ο Ν. Ω Α Χ Π Ο  
**Θ** Α Μ Μ Α Ο Ι Α Τ Α Ε Ρ Ι Α Σ Ο Υ Κ Υ Ρ Ι Τ.  
 Κ Α Ι Η Ψ Α Η Μ Ο Υ Γ Υ Γ Ω Σ Κ Ε Ι Σ Φ Ο Δ Ν Φ.  
 Ε Κ Α Λ Ψ Η Α Σ Γ Α Ρ Φ Α Ρ Α Ω. Κ Α Ι  
 Τ Η Ρ Δ Ω Α Μ Ι Γ Α Ν Τ Ο Υ Ε Ι Σ Θ Α Ι Λ Α Σ  
 Σ Α Γ Ε Ρ Ψ Θ Ρ Α Γ. Κ Α Ι Ε Π Ο Δ Η Ι Η  
 Σ Α Σ Λ Α - Ο Ο Ο Μ. Ή Μ Ε Ρ Ο Σ Ο Ι Μ Ο Ψ Μ

1024

<sup>1024</sup> Codex Grottaferrata (Cryptense) E. γ. II, fol. 274 r: Plate IV; 274. As noted, 'the writing of neumes is here much denser. Some syllables bear two or three neumes over them, while others are prolonged. The Codex is kept in the Library of the Greek Monastery of Grottaferrata, in the province of Rome, Italy. [www.athanassios.gr/byzmusic\\_notation.htm](http://www.athanassios.gr/byzmusic_notation.htm) (Accessed: 12.10.09).

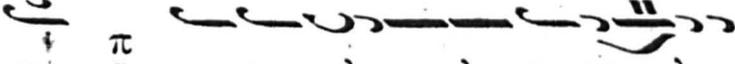
Post Byzantine notation (Chrysanthean): 19th-20th century - The  
 Reformation of 1814<sup>1025</sup>

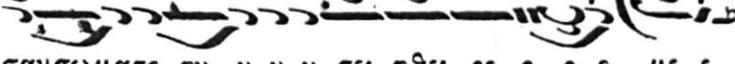
278

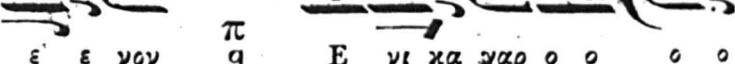
ΑΠΡΙΛΙΟΣ.

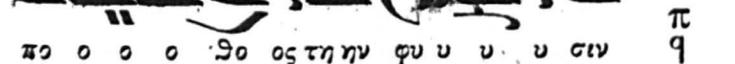

  
 ρου με ε νου <sup>6</sup> λ ε χαλ κευ σαν κιν θυ υ νοι <sup>Α</sup>


  
 και ε σο μω ω σα αν θα α α α σα α α α

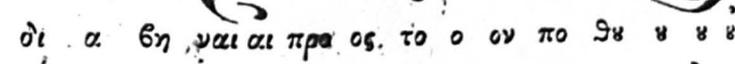

  
 νοι <sup>π</sup> και ποι κει λαι κο λα σεις αν η λω ω

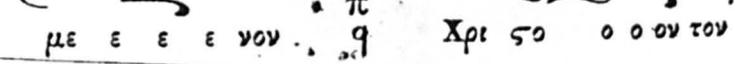

  
 σαν σω μα το φυ υ υ υ σει φθει ρο ο ο ο με ε


  
 ε ε νου <sup>π</sup> ε νι κα γαρ ο ο ο ο


  
 πο ο ο ο θο ος τη ην φυ υ υ υ σιν <sup>π</sup>

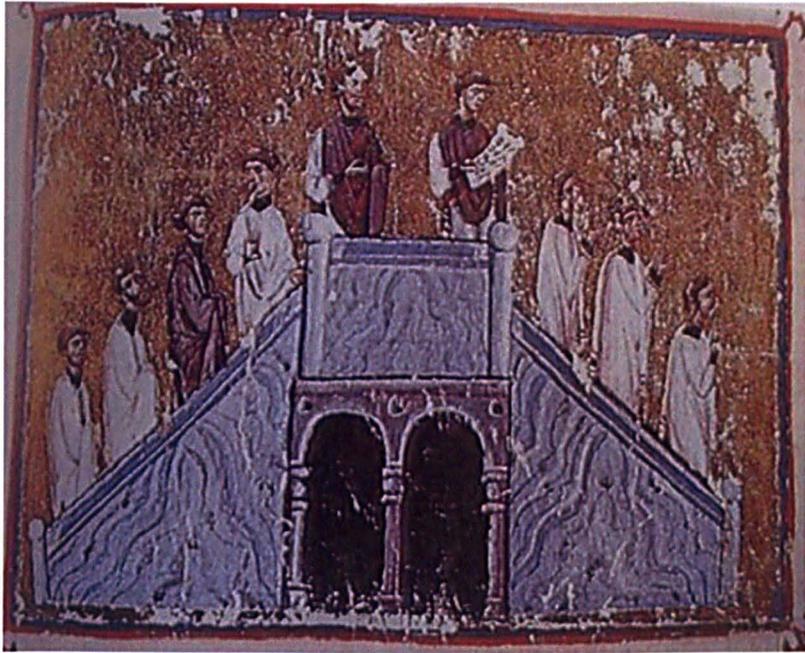

  
 δι α θα να τα κ πε θων του ε φα α σην


  
 δι α βη ναι αι πρα ος το ο ον πο θα κ κ κ


  
 με ε ε ε νου <sup>π</sup> <sup>9</sup> Χρι σο ο ο ον του

<sup>1025</sup> Peter the Peloponnesian. 1848. 'Doxastarion: Aprillios.' (sic). Vol. I. Constantinople; 278). [http://www.athanassios.gr/byzmusic\\_notation.htm](http://www.athanassios.gr/byzmusic_notation.htm) (Accessed: 12.10.09).

### 1.3. Byzantine Castrati in Icons<sup>1026</sup>



<sup>1026</sup> Top: 'Ambo scene with soloist and choir.' Codex Dionysiou 587m: fol. 43r (Dionysiou Monastery Library, Athos, Greece). Bottom: 'Leo V conducting *psaltai*.' Skylitzes MS.: fol. 23, Vitr. 26 – 2 (National Library, Madrid, Spain).

### 1.4. Bearded Eunuchs – Pictures from Topkapi and Janus Museums



9. Deaf-mute, f. 50<sup>r</sup>

B. Picture from:  
<http://www.janusmuseum.org/portraits/portrait.htm>



#### A. Topkapi

Deaf-mute eunuchs (the non-politically correct term is still in use in order to describe the above category) have been associated with darker roles, such as those of executioners. Cf. ‘Diltsis.’ In Denis Diderot & Jean D’Alembert, eds. 1754. *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*. Volume IV. Paris; 1007. A named example of this type of eunuch can be found due to funding the building of Hadum or Hadim Mosque in Djakova or Djakovica, Western Kosovo: ‘Dilsiz Süleyman Aga, or Suleyman Aga Bizeban, a deaf-mute eunuch who served in the harem of Murad III (1585-90s...)’ built the above mosque in his home town.<sup>1027</sup>

<sup>1027</sup> [http://www.archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.jsp?site\\_id=3300](http://www.archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.jsp?site_id=3300) (Accessed: 27.01.10).

## Chapter II

### 2.1. Innocent III to Bishops – Early February 1204

According to Alfred Andrea, the Reg. 6:231 (230) early February 1204 letter addressed by Innocent to the bishops is ‘severe in tone.’ And continues that, ‘Unlike the other three papal letters to Constantinople of early February, this one reviews how Innocent had explicitly forbidden attacks on Christians, how the crusaders had [already] violated that order, how the bishops had improperly absolved the crusaders after Zara, and how the pope had then explicitly forbidden , under threat of anathema, an attack on Constantinople.’<sup>1028</sup>

### 2.2. Nikitas Choniates

‘How shall I begin to tell of the deeds wrought by these nefarious men! Alas, the images, which ought to have been adored, were trodden under foot! Alas, the relics of the holy martyrs were thrown into unclean places! Then was seen what one shudders to hear, namely, the divine body and blood of Christ was spilled upon the ground or thrown about. They snatched the precious reliquaries, thrust into their bosoms the ornaments which these contained, and used the broken remnants for pans and drinking cups, precursors of Anti-Christ, authors and heralds of his nefarious deeds which we momentarily expect. Manifestly, indeed, by that race then, just as formerly, Christ was robbed and insulted and His garments were divided by lot; only one thing was lacking, that His side, pierced by a spear, should pour rivers of divine blood on the ground.’<sup>1029</sup>

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<sup>1028</sup> A.J. Andrea (contributions by B.E. Whalen). 2000. *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*. Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill; 92.

<sup>1029</sup> N. Choniates, trans. D. C. Munro. 1912. Rev. Ed. *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*. Series 1. Vol. 3; 1. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; 15-6.

### **2.3. Pope seeks to heal rifts with Orthodox and other Christians**

‘VATICAN CITY - Pope John Paul II, seeking to heal rifts with other Christians, on Saturday handed over the relics of two Orthodox saints that were brought to Rome from ancient Constantinople centuries ago.

The pope sat beside Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of the world’s Orthodox Christians, in St. Peter’s Basilica as the bones of the saints, resting on yellow velvet in crystal and alabaster reliquaries, were brought the altar.

The two religious leaders later blessed the relics, before the reliquaries were carried away by Vatican ushers in dark suits. The Vatican is retaining some small part of the relics.

During a visit to the Vatican in June, the Orthodox leader had sought the return of the relics of Patriarchs John Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzen, who were archbishops long before the split between the eastern and western churches nearly 1,000 years ago. In remarks read for him by an aide, the frail pontiff called it an occasion to “purify our wounded memories” and to “strengthen our path of reconciliation.” Bartholomew, speaking next, said the handover repaired “an anomaly” and “ecclesiastical injustice” and that it was a sign that there are no “insurmountable problems in the Church of Christ.” The Orthodox leader said the gesture also served as an example to those holding religious treasures sought by others.

A religious service attended by Orthodox and Catholic clerics was to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, later Saturday to mark the relics' return to the city that was formerly the Greek Orthodox Byzantine capital, Constantinople.

### Emphasis on reconciliation

Bartholomew and John Paul have both emphasized reconciliation between their churches, which split in 1054 over the growing power of the papacy.

The Orthodox say the relics were removed from Constantinople when Crusaders sacked the city in 1204.

The Vatican, however, says the bones of one of the saints, Gregory, were brought to Rome by Byzantine monks in the 8th century.

In a statement issued Saturday, papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls emphasized that Gregory's remains were brought to Rome in the earlier century and denied that the pope was "asking pardon" for the removal of the saints' remains.

"Without negating the tragic events of the XIII century," Navarro-Valls said, the gesture was intended to promote unity between Catholics and Orthodox.

The remains have been kept in St. Peter's Basilica.

In 2001, John Paul apologized for Roman Catholic involvement in the Constantinople siege.

The pope has made reconciliation among the divided Christian churches one of the major themes of his papacy, but progress has been limited. ... The Russian Orthodox Church has accused the Vatican of poaching for converts in traditional Orthodox territory, a charge the Vatican firmly denies.'

2.4. *Girolamo Rossini or Rosini*, one of the first two Italian castratos officially admitted to the Sistine Chapel<sup>1030</sup>



<sup>1030</sup> Bianca Maria Antolini. 'Il cantore perugino Girolamo Rosini.' In B. Brumana & F.F. Mancini eds. 1981. *Arte e musica in Umbria tra Cinquecento e Seicento*. Atti del XII convegno. Perugia: Centro di studi umbri: 357-66.

## 2.5. Metastasio and Farinelli – ‘I Gemelli’

‘L’affettuoso nome di *gemello*, usato fra il sig. Cav. Broschi e l’Autore è allusivo all’essere entrambi (per dir così) nati insieme alla luce del pubblico: poiché l’uno fu udito con ammirazione la prima volta in Napoli cantando in *Angelica e Medoro*, primo componimento drammatico uscito dalla penna dell’altro.’<sup>1031</sup> (The affectionate name ‘twin’, used between Signor Cav. Broschi and the author is alluding to being both (so to speak) born together in the light of the public, because the one was heard with admiration for the first time in Naples singing in *Angelica e Medoro*, [which was] the first dramatic composition that came from the pen of the other.)



Group portrait: (left to right) Metastasio, Castellini, Farinelli, the artist and a young man.<sup>1032</sup>

<sup>1031</sup> P. Metastasio, B. Brunelli, ed. 1953. *Tutte le opere di Pietro Metastasio*. Vol. III. Milan; 1220.

<sup>1032</sup> Painting (c 1750-52) by Jacopo Amigoni (1675-1752). Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria. Felton Bequest.

## 2.6. Depictions of Early Surgery (1500-1800)<sup>1033</sup>



<sup>1033</sup> D.A. Rew. 1999. 'Bimillennial Historical Review – Part II, Europe and Surgery from AD 1500 To 1800; the Modern World Is Shaped.' *European Journal of Surgical Oncology*. Vol. 25, Issue 3: 311-6; 316.

2.7. Castrati as depicted in Caricatures of their times<sup>1034</sup>



2. THE CASTRATO PORPORINO  
by a Roman caricaturist

**Porporino**



**Antonio Bernacchi (1731)**

<sup>1034</sup> Castrati History Archive.

## 2.8. A Rake's Progress by William Hogarth (1733) - Plate II – The Levée

‘The second scene sees Tom in his new palatial lodgings where he is holding a morning levée in the manner of a fashionable gentleman.

Amongst the assorted visitors who have come to offer their services is a jockey, a dancing-master (with violin), a music teacher (believed to be based on Hogarth's great rival Handel), a landscape gardener, a poet and a tailor...

It pictures Farinelli on a raised dais, with an altar burning before him. Several ladies rush to offer him their hearts. The banner above the women proclaims ‘One God, One Farinelli’. This blasphemous cry is said to have been actually shouted by Lady Rich at one of Farinelli's performances in the King's Theatre according to Ronald Paulson, the Hogarth expert.’<sup>1035</sup>



‘The Levée’ (*Cf.* missing detail below).

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<sup>1035</sup> <http://www.soane.org/rakesprogress.htm> (Accessed: 1.05.08).

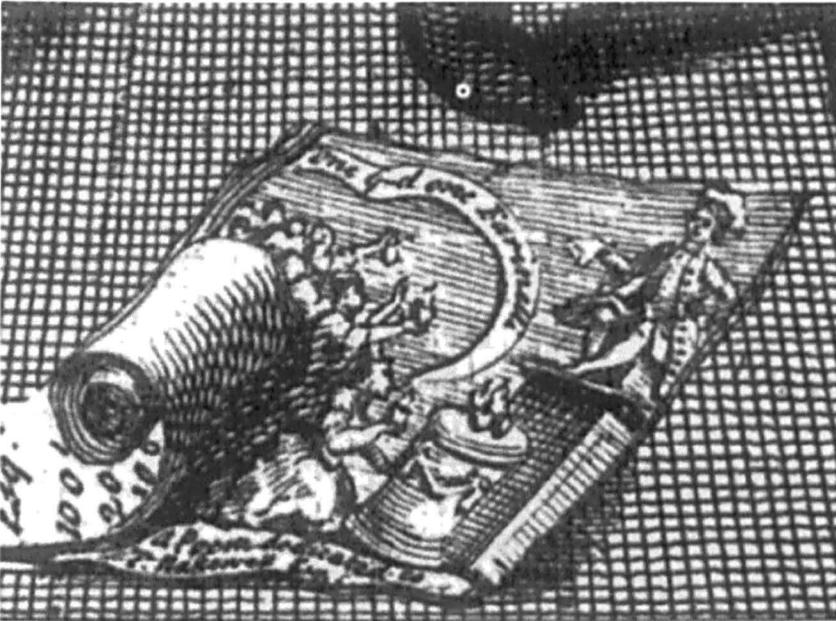


Plate Detail.<sup>1036</sup>

## 2.9. Voltaire – Candide on castrati and Farinelli

‘Je suis né a Naples on y chaponne deux ou trois mille enfants tous les ans, les uns en meurent, les autres acquièrent une voix plus belle que celles des femmes, les autres vont gouverner les Etats.’<sup>1037</sup> (‘I was born in Naples where they castrate two to three thousand children every year, some of them die whereas other of them acquire voices which are more beautiful to those of women; the rest go to govern (foreign) States.’)

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<sup>1036</sup> Daniel Hertz, John A. Rice. ed. 2004. *From Garrick to Gluck: essays on opera in the age of Enlightenment*. Pendragon Press; 128.

<sup>1037</sup> Voltaire. 1759. *Candide ou l'optimisme*. Paris: ch. 12.

## 2.10. Tenducci – Mozart’s Scena for the singer

‘On 27 August 1778 (a Thursday) Mozart wrote to his father from St. Germain, where he was staying at the palace of the Marshal de Noailles. After expressing his pleasure at the arrival in Paris of his beloved J. C. Bach and of the singer Tenducci, both of whom he had got to know during his stay in London in 1764-5, he explains that he is in a hurry as he has to compose a *scena* for Tenducci for performance on the following Sunday by the Maréchal’s own orchestra (“Germans, who play very well”). It was to be scored for piano, oboe, horn and bassoon. ... Burney’s report, which Barrington quotes *verbatim*, reads: “Mozart being at Paris, in 1778, composed for Tenducci a *scena* in 14 parts, chiefly obligati; viz. two violins, two tenors, one chromatic horn, one oboe, two clarinets, a Piano forte, a Soprano voice part, with two horns, and a base di rinforza. It is a very elaborate and masterly composition, discovering a great practice and facility of writing in many parts. The modulation is likewise learned and *recherchée*; however, though it is a composition which none but a great master of harmony, and possessed of a consummate knowledge of the genius of different instruments, could produce; yet neither the melody of the voice part, nor of any one of the instruments, discovers much invention, though the effects of the whole, if well executed, would, doubtless, be masterly and pleasing”.<sup>1038</sup>

## 2.11. ‘Against Marriage for Eunuchs’

‘Quam mulieres, quae eis nubunt, non ut caste vivant, sed ut carnaliter invicem coniugantur, prava et libidinosa intentione, sub praetextu et in figura matrimonii, turpes huiusmodi commixtiones affectare, quae cum peccati et scandali occasionem praebeant, et in animarum damnationem

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<sup>1038</sup> C.B. Oldman, Jan. 1961. ‘Mozart’s Scena for Tenducci.’ *Music & Letters*. Vol. 42, Issue 1: 44 – 52; 49.

tendant.’ (Pope Sixtus V to the bishop of Novara, 22 June 1587)<sup>1039</sup>  
(‘Women who marry [eunuchs] live not chastely but are instead joined carnally, with depraved and libidinous intention, under the pretext and in the form of matrimony, aspiring to these shameful unions, which offer an occasion for sins and scandals and make for the damnation of souls.’)<sup>1040</sup>

## Additional Material

### 2.12. From ‘The Yard of Wit’

‘The castrato is another example – here non-literary but brutally literal – of an inverse principle by which smaller or absent genitalia are offset by greater mental or creative power. Indeed, the castrato is not a product of Nature but a man-made instrument of exquisite music proving one of her underlying truths of the relationship of phallus to mind: the enchanting, mellifluous voice of a Carlo Broschi (Farinelli), Nicolò Grimaldi (Nicolini), Giovanni Grossi (Siface), Francesco Bernardi (Senesino), or Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci was a direct result of testicular loss, infantile penis, and by extension an absent phallicism.’<sup>1041</sup>

### 2.13. ‘The Queens Throat’

‘Homosexuality is a way of singing. I can’t *be* gay, I can only *sing* it, disperse it. I can’t knock on its door and demand entrance because it is not a place or a fixed location. Instead, it is a million intersections – or it is a

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<sup>1039</sup> Pope Sixtus V. 1587 / 1883. *Bullarum diplomatorum et privilegiorum sanctorum romanorum pontificum taurinensis editio*. Vol. 8. Naples: Henrico Caporaso; 870.

<sup>1040</sup> Translation provided in Freitas, 2003: 224.

<sup>1041</sup> Raymond Stephanson. 2004. *The Yard of Wit: Male Creativity and Sexuality, 1650-1750*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press; 64.

dividing line, a membrane, like the throat, that separates the body's breathing interior from the chaotic external world.'<sup>1042</sup>

## 2.14. Farinelli – Exhumation (Bologna, 2006)

'On Wednesday [July 12], Farinelli's body was exhumed by a team of experts led by the *Centro Studi Farinelli* and scientists from universities at Pisa and Bologna. Farinelli expert Carlo Vitali said that the singer's bones 'looked tall and sturdy, quite matching the impression collected from several contemporary portraits and caricatures of him.' Although Farinelli's skeleton is not in optimal condition, part of his jaw-bone, a couple of teeth and a few fragments of the skull have been identified. Vitali adds that 'the fairly good preservation of the major bones seems enough to perform most of the projected bio-medical tests about the singer's height, bodily countenance, life-style, nutrition habits, diseases, traumas and the like.'<sup>1043</sup>

### 2.15.1 La "difficile" sepoltura di Farinelli (Farinelli's Will)

'Il miserabile mio corpo, fatto che sia cadavere, voglio che sia avvolto nel mio manto dell'Ordine di Calatrava, secondo sta prescritto dalle Costituzioni del detto Real Ordine Militare e che le sia data sepoltura senza pompa con accompagnamento di poveri in numero di cinquanta con candela di cera alla mano d'ongie tre l'una, e che ad ognuno di detti poveri se li dia un paulo moneta per ciascheduno doppo di aver accompagnato il mio corpo

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<sup>1042</sup> W. Koestenbaum. 1993. *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*. New York: Poseidon; 156.

<sup>1043</sup> *Gramophone*. 12 July 2006.

<http://www.gramophone.co.uk/newsMainTemplate.asp?storyID=2595&newssectionID=1>

nella chiesa dei Padri Cappuccini dove eliggo lo mia sepoltura [...] voglio che siano celebrate per l'Anima mia nell'altari del Santissimo quattrocento messe cioè duecento nella detta chiesa dove sarò seppellito, cinquanta nella mia parrocchia di Bertalia, cinquanta nella parrocchia della Beverara, e le restanti cento messe nella chiesa dell'Ospitale (di S. Maria) della vita lungo il canale del Reno [...].'

*Testamento di mè D. Carlo Broschi detto Farinelli. Consegnato al Sig. Notaro D.n Lorenzo Gambarini questo dì 20 Febraio 1782. Bologna, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Notarile Gambarini.*

('My wretched body, when dead, I want it wrapped in my Order of the Calatrava cloak, as required by the Constitutions of that Real Military Order, and that is given burial without pomp accompanied by a number of fifty poor people holding wax candles in their hands in rows of three. To each one of those poor people (the bereaved) are instructed to give a 'paulo' coin to each after having accompanied my body from the church of the Capuchin fathers, up to where my grave is going to be [...] I want four hundred masses to be celebrated for my soul in the Altars of the Blessed, which means two hundred masses in that church where I will be buried, fifty in my parish of Bertalia, fifty in the parish of Beverara, and the remaining hundred masses in the church of the Life of Saint Mary's Hospital, along the Reno channel (in Bologna) [...] This is the testament of me, D. (this abbreviation, most probably, demonstrates his Order of the Calatrava title) Carlo Broschi called Farinelli, delivered to Signor Notary, Don Lorenzo Gambarini, on 20 February 1782. Bologna, State Archive, Gambarini Notarial Collection.')

## 2.15.2. The News of Farinelli's death

'Mori Farinello di febbre il giorno XVI di Settembre l'anno 1782, essendo egli quasi di anni 78. Conservò la memoria ferma, e i sensi vivi fino al penultimo giorno di vita. Accettò il male dalle mani di Dio, e pazientemente lo sostenne con Cristiana rassegnazione. Aggiunse un codicillo al testamento fatto più mesi innanzi, per remunerare la carità e la diligenza di chi gli assisteva e lo serviva nella malattia. E avendo chiesto agli stesso spontaneamente gli ultimi Sacramenti con molto esemplare pietà gli ricevette. ... Fu trasportato alla Chiesa de' Cappuccini posta sopra d'un colle vicino alla città, senza pompa alcuna, come ordinò egli stesso.'<sup>1044</sup>

('Farinello died of fever on the sixteenth of September of the year 1782, being almost 78 years of age. He preserved a firm memory and his senses alive until the penultimate day of life. Accepted the evil from the hands of God, and patiently supported himself with Christian resignation. Added a codicil to the will made several months before, to pay for the charity and the care of those who attended and served him in his illness. And, after having requested for the last sacraments spontaneously, he received them with exemplary piety. ... He was taken to the church of the Cappuccin brothers, situated on top of a hill near the city, without any pomp, as instructed by him.').

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<sup>1044</sup> G. Sacchi. 1784. *Vita del Cavaliere Don Carlo Broschi*. Venezia; 46-8. <http://www.paleopatologia.it/Ricerca/farinelli.php> (Accessed: 12.05.09).

## Chapter III

### 3.1. Photographs of the Last Castrati of Sistine Chapel Choir<sup>1045</sup>



Alessandro Moreschi (al centro della foto)  
con altri cantori della Cappella Sistina  
in una foto scattata il 4/3/1898.

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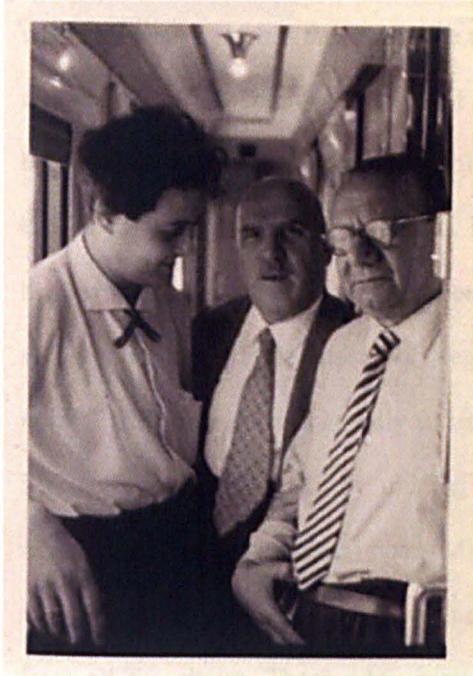
<sup>1045</sup> As stated, this is a photograph taken on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1898. Apart from Moreschi in the middle, we also see Domenico Mustafa, the Perpetual Director of the Choir on the left. On the left of Moreschi, we also see Giovanni Cesari, *soprano acuto*. Both this and next photograph were donated by the late Elsa Scamell to the Castrati History Yahoo Group.

3.1.1. Moreschi and other colleagues <sup>1046</sup>

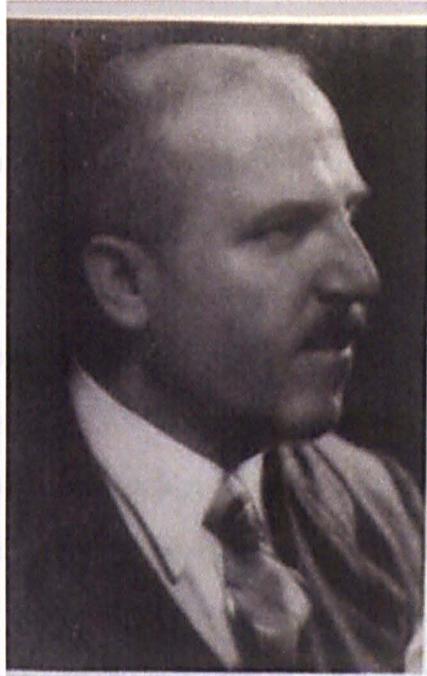


<sup>1046</sup> Castrati History Group Archive.

### 3.2. Domenico Mancini



Mancini in the middle - 1956



An Earlier Photograph –

Date Unknown

#### 3.2.1. Mancini Interview (Age 76)

‘As I had a good voice from a rather young age, I sang in my own church [and] in the cathedral of Civitacastellana. An aunt who came from Rome in the holidays said – this nephew of mine’s got such a lovely voice – he’ll have to be trained, so she went to Mass at St Peter’s, and ... approached Moreschi because they knew each other... An appointment was made, Moreschi listened to me, and told me that, after some preparatory work with him, he would take me along to Maestro Perosi’s school. I came to Rome on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1904, and

on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Moreschi having come back from his vacation (as the 18<sup>th</sup> was the Feast of the Dedication of St Peter's), another appointment was made, during which he listened to me again and subsequently began to give me lessons. And what superlative lessons they were! He always sang, and I had to imitate him. It was wonderful: I came under the spell of his outstandingly beautiful voice... I began my studies with Moreschi by imitating his voice with my own, since, as it hadn't yet changed, I sang as he did, in chest voice, passing from there into head voice. But then, at around fourteen, well, my voice became that of a man, and so, singing with the falsettists I began to use the type of head voice which normal adult men have; naturally to sing with it you have to train it, because it's a voice that is made by training and musicianship: you need to be a musician to use it... Because I had studied with Moreschi, Perosi thought that I was a castrato and didn't want me, since he had rooted out the castrato voices from all the choirs. Those who were there already were kept on until they finished – until their pensions were due. But if there were young ones, they weren't taken on and Perosi got it into his head, since I sang in Moreschi's way, that I was one of "those" voices. [Instead of to Perosi's school]...Moreschi put me to San Salvatore in Lauro, where I ... went back to elementary school (which I hadn't finished) and then to Conservatory, to study the double-bass.<sup>1047</sup>

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<sup>1047</sup> As described in Clapton, 2004: 131-2.

### 3.3. Skoptsy Photographs<sup>1048</sup>

Iwan Gregor was one of the four Russian Skoptzy examined in Bucharest. He is believed to have been castrated at age five. Here he is in 1907, aged twenty, four. Andrej, 28 is on the right. In all photographs, he remained with his eyes almost shut.



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<sup>1048</sup> Castrati History Group Archive.

**3.4.1. Javier Medina Interview 2004(11<sup>th</sup> January 2004 - via email)<sup>1049</sup>**

**1. At what age did you first start singing?**

I really do not know when I first started to sing. When I was a child my mother used to sing to me all day long. No matter the time of the day, she was always singing. When she was working at home, doing the washing up, cleaning the house, cooking. I learned to sing most of my country's popular music. She taught me to sing the style we call 'ranchero' (like the country, mariachi). Later, with the singer of my church, I learned 'Ave Maria'. I really did not know even the composer until I came to music school. I just used to sing it in weddings and everywhere else Don Chucho (the singer) did ask me to sing. At school there were some 'friends' that did not like my voice. Well, I have to say that they used to become really angry whenever I sang. Every time at school I was singing my songs. I remember that I used to work fast and I made my schoolwork 'in time' in order to have some free time to sing. But those 'friends' used to always cover my mouth and kick me. I learned my lesson and (avoided) singing at school. Now I can understand that they were jealous.

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<sup>1049</sup> The editing is minimal so that the singer's views are not compromised.

**2. Please could you talk a little about the environment that supported your progress?**

My mother was the world for me. She suffered my deceases so quietly. She always knew everything about me. Nowadays, that she has passed away, her sisters tell me how brave a woman she was and they respect her so much. We all of us missed her too much. She was like a rock to me, though so gentle and kind. She will always be like an angel to me. She loved me so much... I know she is well now. She suffered a long and debilitating decease. Her kidneys did not work, so you can imagine... However, she raised four lives (my 2 brothers, my sister and I) and she can be happy with the results. The doctors said that I would be dead by the time of my twelfth birthday. Now, thanks to God and her, I am thirty-four. She rescued me from the rough world and supported me against my father... He is a very good man, so nice with people and here everyone loves him, but to me he was never a 'kind man'. Now I know that he never knew about my leukaemia until I started talking about it at newspapers and TV. Then he understood why my mother was that caring with me. My father always wanted strong children, those who can fight and get dirty all the time or jump and play everywhere. Too bad for him I was not even a minimal part of those dreams. I started to lose my sight at six, when my leukaemia started, and this grew quite a lot for me to be considered almost blind. That was one of the reasons that first made me take testosterone at the age of 25. On that age I also had eye surgery. Now I can see well with my left eye (the

right eye is not that good), but each one helps the other and I can open my eyes and see. I am so happy. I did pay for my surgery, not my father. That is the reason that I tried to find the 'fatherly love' in priest or fathers of my friends. That was not a good idea. I suffered a lot. The priests were too cold and distant. I needed tons of love, so you can imagine. I was searching for love so I sang every time that people asked me to sing. At the secondary school (junior high) I was at the choir. Here the choirs are not like the ones you maybe know. Here we were only a group of children trying to sing in unison (or something like that). No technique or good ear was applied. However, that choir was necessary and unique for the school. It was too 'unique' in fact. I was the only man... They were just women over there. I used to be called 'the guy with the nice voice' and I was mocked a lot for that. The students can be so cruel but singing made me feel so happy and I was always supported by my mother. I was in that choir for the three years of the secondary school. When I graduated I still used to speak as a child and the environment became rough towards me. Here the machismo is too deep in the bones so I tried to speak lower. I used to sound (and still do now) like an old woman or a young drag queen (that makes me laugh)...

### **3. When did you first realise the uniqueness of your voice?**

At the preparatory school (high school) I used to be such a lonely man. No one wanted to be my friend. I used to be the centre of mocking and some pupils even used to spit at me; rough days. In the second year, I was

accepted to the 'rondalla'. This is a group of young people that play guitar, mandolin, psaltery (an instrument with metal strings, the box is like a square) bass, marimba, and sing. Well I was really afraid because some of the people started to talk to me, so I decided to play instruments instead of singing. Of course I was also singing there, but the funniest thing was that I use to sing the high notes of the tenors. These are my lowest notes. At the concerts it was funny that I was quiet and I did not opened my mouth until when the tenors were starting to feel strangulated. Then I used to open my mouth to sing 'just those high notes'. My teacher saw the condition and he asked me to sing with women. He made an experiment by asking a female friend of mine to sing a middle C, and he noticed her effort. Then he asked me to sing the same note, the pitch was the same and with the same effort. He was impressed and asked a man to sing that note as well. The sound that he produced was with the same effort but different pitch, i.e. an octave lower. He asked the man to sing the same pitch and when he tried he turned to falsetto. He was a baritone, so the teacher chose a tenor and asked the same thing (those few minutes made me feel afraid and sad. I was thinking how the students will then react towards me, and sad because I felt as a 'guinea pig'). But the sound of the tenor was too bright and the effort bigger. The teacher then asked my female friend to sing the octave of the middle C, and the effort for the female and the tenor was quite the same, so you can imagine his surprise when he asked me to sing the same and the effort was the same, but the colour was different. I sang it in chest voice and my friend in head voice. The teacher felt so intrigued. He stopped and began

the rehearsal, so no one understood why he did that 'experiment'... I was too afraid and decided to have 'comfort' with the mandolin... The next day he talked to me about the 'natural countertenor' he made this 'new word' to define me... He had heard about Mr. Deller, and he saw him as a countertenor, he knew about falsetto, and he noticed that my voice was not a falsetto. So he invented this definition. He told me about the music school. I went to audition and was accepted. I sang 'la Donna e mobile' but in female chest voice register, the teacher stopped and changed the pitch to a higher one. I tried to sing but was not easy, so she decided to change the pitch again to a lower key which was more comfortable, but not really easy. I only sang about 16 bars... She told me "you'll see your name in the accepted people". I did not understand until I saw the lists three months later.

**4. What were the immediate reactions? Did they tempt you into thinking about quitting singing at that time?**

At music school it was not easy. The teachers felt so intrigued by my case and they did not know what to do with me. They sent me to the doctor to have lots of blood and psychological tests... I lost about two years of my life like that. I started to sing and when I entered the school I could sing about an octave and  $\frac{3}{4}$ . When I finished the preliminary studies (four years) my register was only an octave, with no centre, no high notes and too uncomfortable]. Lots of dust and air in the sound. I decided to leave the

school. No one helped me and I lost what I thought would make me feel different. Some people (and teachers) said to me that I was a baritone who spoke in head voice. Some others told me “What are you? What kind of a man are you with a female voice? There are too many women, so why are you trying to become one of them? Are you nuts? You cannot be able to be considered as a man!’ Men singers hate me... I started to find help from countertenors but you know the rest of the story. Sometimes I feel so lonely. I lost about seven years of my life, and no one helped me. Even Mr. Nigel Rogers mocked me.

**5. What is the major medical condition behind your voice's difference?**

**(If you are uncomfortable, please feel free to correct the phrasing)**

I have no natural development as a man because of leukaemia. My larynx is not normal. It's like an 11-year-old boy's in size, and my vocal cords are quite medium. Not completely developed. In the past I used to have eunuchoid arms (longer than my body) but when I took testosterone this changed more or less, and I also started having bodily hair 'like other men'.

**6. Has the treatment for your condition affected your voice in any way?**

Yes, in 1977 leukaemia was considered as a virally transmitted condition. My mother was too afraid of that situation. I can only compare this to AIDS in the beginnings. I do not know if you remember how people refused to eat

with the sufferers or shake hands, because they were afraid of the viruses... All that stuff. My mother defended me and she decided to keep quiet and suffer my condition alone. I had radiotherapy and another doctor told me that possibly the radiologist did not have the sensitivity to cover and protect my sex when this happened. So I had something like a 'radio/chemical castration' or something like that... Sincerely I do not want to do anything else again in my life. I do not want to be ever again admitted in a hospital -- not even if someone wants to pay for it! I am sick of it.

**7. Has your unique voice ever made you consider your gender identity under a different spectrum?**

I always felt different. People have to be 'accustomed' to my voice. If I do not speak anything, I mean if nothing comes out from my mouth, people do not take notice (just lesbians).<sup>1050</sup>

**8. Many people treat the voice of a natural male soprano as asexual. Do you agree or disagree? Can you please give us your own point of view?**

I really prefer this situation. I do not like to be involved in troubles with sex. Here in Mexico is too difficult. I do not know about Europe, but here is too difficult. I was once invited in a TV show called 'Don Francisco Presenta' (Mr. Francisco Presents) like Mr. Letterman's show. I was invited to talk

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<sup>1050</sup> The singer believes that he looks like a lesbian.

about how from bad things new things can be born. However this was only a façade. When I was there he started asking me ‘what happens with you? Does the ‘thing’ rise when you see men? Or women? Would you like to have sex with men? Would you like to be treated as a female? I BECAME ANGRY!<sup>1051</sup> I chose in those moments to be an actor and pretended I didn’t know what he was talking about... Eh? That stupid man became mad at me because he wanted some answers that I only give to myself. I have had to learn to live with myself and I think there are things that no one but me needs to know. I was in a TV show that was potentially viewed by the whole of America... I was really fuming, but I protected and defended myself.

**9. Have you ever felt the history of the voice weighing too heavy on your shoulders? If yes, how has that affected your performance?**

At the beginnings it was too hard for me to try to sing property... Now I am afraid because I think people want to listen to a marvellous voice or ornaments and I do not have that kind of things. My voice was ‘touched’ when I started the school and took me long time try to sing better. I tried to find help everywhere. I knocked too many doors and some countertenors slammed those doors at my nose. I now only want to sing for people... I am a little frustrated because in the past I wanted to become a priest, but the directors kicked me in the back. ‘You speak too high, so the congregation

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<sup>1051</sup> Medina’s capitalisation.

might think badly about you'. So I decided to use this gift of God and sing to earn lots of money to help the poor people of my country instead. Nothing happened so far... Sometimes I am desperate.

**10. What is the modern audiences' reflection to your vocal persona, as perceived by you at present?**

Some like me. Some expect too much and I cannot offer that, so they can become angry with me.

**3.4.2.1 A. N. Constansis. 13th June 2008. 'Review & Interview: "Monsters and Prodigies".' Amsterdam: Stadsschouwburg.**

'Monsters and Prodigies' is a unique theatre production brought to us by 'Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes', an Oaxaca-based Mexican Theatre Company. The play is a result of the combined efforts of the late writer Jorge Kuri and director Claudio Valdés Kuri. I had the opportunity to attend the recent performance in Stadsschouwburg, Amsterdam, which was part of the 2008 Holland Festival. The subtitle of the play reveals the work's special focus as 'the History of the Castrati'. Supporting its presentation several more or less conventional theatre techniques are engaged. These start from early scientific works and clear operatic elements, which are then purposely – and rather iconoclastically – reduced into buffoonery and circus acts. We should also state that, similarly to the views expressed in his recent

interview with Marjan Terpstra, this is not a politically correct performed material. There Kuri mentioned about the presentation of his works in the United States and all the taboos that have to be observed. 'We can't say this because of the minorities and can't say that because of the university, and so on. That political correctness is abominable.'<sup>1052</sup> The director's intentions are obviously to assess the whole castrato phenomenon critically. Let us examine how this is achieved.

The play was first presented in Madrid in 2000 and has been created using a range of period as well as contemporary sources. The earliest of them, which even gives the work its opening lines, is derived from the homonymous monograph by Ambroise Paré (1510 – 1590); an official royal surgeon, anatomist and 'a keen observer of his society'. The material contained there had been revolutionary or even humanistic for the 16th century scientific knowledge and perspective. However, focusing on this and other similar works from a 21st century perspective, as the audiences undeniably do, bears reminders of a quite dark element and era. There, as a form of societal purgatory, humans of different formation were 'justifiably' treated either as monsters or prodigies and, depending on that, allowed to survive in dignity or not. The performance is successfully replicating that atmosphere to us.

The play though, has also been based on more contemporary to us resources; these are mainly three well-known books by Patrick Barbier: 'Histoire des Castrats', 'Farinelli: Le Castrat des Rois' and 'The World of

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<sup>1052</sup> <http://www.powerofculture.nl/en/current/2008/june/kuri> (Accessed: 12. 07.2008).

the Castrati'. This seems to be where 'Monsters and Prodigies' as a work owes most of its ideas about castration and the singers, including some less scientifically-based ones; for instance the reference to the numerous 'cases' of sexual prowess as seen from the traditional point of view.

The work presented, which in its initial stages could be easily referred to as a dramatised documentary, starts with Centaur, played by Miguel Angel Lopez in a manner rather underlining the character's animalistic, i.e. Ixionian, rather than Cheironian origin.<sup>1053</sup> He recalls and recounts to us in disdain that monsters, according to medieval peoples' perceptions, were 'phenomena out of the course of Nature that predict misfortunes or catastrophes that must occur (and) incarnate evil power and defy Divine wrath.' This phrase is very significant and appears to characterise the work till the end. Following that, the words and ideas of Ambroise Paré are used in Centaur's story telling. The early barber/surgeon and researcher had stated that monsters were 'born ... as a result of the excess of semen and copulation with animals.' After the character mentions examples of several medieval cases, he focuses on 'the most exceptional monster, within the realms of this chilling XVII century: a sort of androgyne or hermaphrodite

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<sup>1053</sup> The Greek tradition recognises two families of centaurs. The more numerous ones were those born of the union of Ixion and a cloud (Hera); they were known to be rather wild, without restraint and prone to inebriation. Chiron (or Cheiron), who resembled the Ixionian centaurs only in appearance, became the father of a different race of men-horses; self-controlled, learned and studious. He became a renowned physician and teacher. Also, he was a famous hunter and oracle as well as adept in music and medicine. Deserving pupil himself of Apollo and Diana, Chiron tutored among others Asclepius, Jason, Hercules and Achilles.

that is man, woman and child at the same time.' And Centaur continues, obviously shocked, by stating their bodily characteristics. They were, according to the script, notoriously fat and without a beard or moustache, disproportionate thoracic cavity. The singer had 'on occasion, a disproportioned head, regarding the rest of his enormous body which contrasts with a very high-pitched voice that reminds us of a heavenly bird.' That was the reason why his vocal prowess was so highly appreciated in the courts of Europe. 'His chant is the mystery of a voice that caresses the abyss between the monster and the prodigy', he exclaims. Before we proceed further though, it is important to emphasise that while Centaur accuses others of deformity, his variant -- below the waist -- formation remains firmly hidden behind the stable gate. Only the snorting and stomping sounds are there to betray his true nature to us. However, we would need to realise here that though the character is delivering his words in shock and semi-darkness, his tone is far from severe or gloomy. 'Monsters and Prodigies', in an attempt to make a heavy subject more palatable, frequently juxtaposes drama and parody. In this case, mixing dramatic or gruesome details carefully with sarcasm and ridicule becomes a successful way of questioning ideas about monstrosity and prodigiosity. Very soon we start to realise that all characters bear borderline characteristics and all accusers could easily become themselves accused. Within the first few minutes of this performance the audience would start questioning and wondering who the actual monsters and prodigies are.

The characters to follow are the Siamese-twin barber-surgeons Jean and Ambroise Paré, performed by Raúl Román and Gastón Yanes. Thus, the actual surgeon mentioned earlier, who ironically studied monstrosity in depth, is here being transformed into a kind of Jekyll / Hyde twin-persona, representing emotion and reason, exposed not only to open observation but also ridicule. The characters demonstrate to us, as if to surgery-lecture students, what the act of castration involved in those days. Again, as in Centaur's case, the audience is prevented from seeing the offending act of deformation. 'This is all: a potion with a high content of opium to neutralize the sensations of the child. The barber oppresses the carotid arteries to momentarily interrupt circulation. The patient then finds himself in a state close to a comma. He has been submerged in a bath of freezing milk to soften the genitals and to avoid the bleeding. The act itself has to be rapid: incision on the groin, pull of the strings, and the testicles. Proceed to a complete removal with a knife and tie the ducts.' Here the Siamese-twin barbers are swift to mix gruesome drama with caricature; sometimes excessively. Also, like good educators, they are keen to prevent the audience from confusing 'this practice with those barbaric ones from the Orient', which involved the removal of the whole external genitalia and bore high mortality rates. However, in Italy, on the other hand, we learn that 'the percentage of children's mortality oscillates between 10 and 80 percent, depending on who practices the Orchiectomy.'

Then the series of lectures continue with the new student or '*il puttino castratello*' being promoted by the barber/surgeons' dealings with the

Chapel Master, played by Luis Fernando Villegas. There is an actual full-size harpsichord played by the actor and situated on a lower level stage. The instrument is tuned at 415 HZ as it is accustomed nowadays when 'period' instruments are involved. This adds credibility to the whole sound and surroundings and creates a clear and multidimensional reference (private consultation between prospective student and Chapel Master, conservatoire, opera stage). Coming back to the plot, the boy, following his operation, is swiftly admitted to one of the major Conservatoires. Then, the young singer's training and life there is exposed in exaggerated detail. The most important message that the whole scene tries to convey is that the young student-singer, presented by Javier Medina, hardly enjoyed any freedom there. However, because of reasons of vocal preservation, he was admittedly treated better than his other non-castrated or '*integri*' colleagues. At least in terms of food and accommodation. By this moment, the way the audience experiences this work contains increasingly circus and American or Victorian freak shows. To support the above, the stage is being gradually upgraded to – or rather revealed to be – a proper sand-covered stage.

In the next scene, several cases of endocrinological castration or variation are discussed. As we are going to realise soon, this is not purely out of encyclopaedic interest. Then the focus moves on original Italian and French reviews for the performance of renowned castrati. For instance, the Italian composer Bontempi reviewing Ferri's concert said that there is 'no hyperbole, no excess of the poetic pen that can suffice to praise such merit. There isn't a mortal that can sing so divinely, it is as if an angel had taken

over Ferri's body'. On the other hand, the French were mostly critical on the phenomenon as a whole. Madame Goudar, for instance, stated in her column that 'hateful *castrati* are an example of Italian Opera's decadence; they strut all around Naples allowing themselves certain excesses in plain public road.' Nonetheless, she also admitted that, 'when one hears their singing, all vices and defects are forgotten. The great *castrati*, owners of masculine poise and feminine grace, elicit the chant of a prodigious bird that takes our breath...away'. We listen to Javier Medina performing 'Per la Gloria d' Adorarvi' by Giovanni Battista Buononcini. Even to those not adequately educated in voices, the singing actor's vocal timbre sounds naturally high. Apart from that we notice that this is also stronger and immediately different to that produced by a countertenor. Javier Medina is a natural male soprano and a great advantage of this production. According to the singer's own words, he has never experienced puberty due to complications in his leukaemia treatment; this happened around the age of seven. Because of the time that this occurred in his life, the vocal results have not only been dramatic but also uncannily similar to those experienced by the baroque *castrati*. His 12-year research and presence, as the interview with Claudio Valdes Curi will reveal soon, attribute unique qualities to 'Monsters and Prodigies'. Both of them also make the original concepts less abstract for the audience to understand and decode the references.

Soon after that moment, the lectures of Drs. Jean and Ambroise Paré continue with a flash-back to the days before a young singer had the

operation and was able to join a Conservatoire. We listen to the various, mostly fabricated, justifications as well as the claim that this had to be authorised by the child himself. Then we follow businessmen who come and compete with the courts of Europe in search of young *castrati*, 'so as to turn them into the most beautiful ornaments of their chambers or chapels.' As the last word suggests, the play soon focuses on the Church and the kind of prudent silence that was maintained by them. Most importantly, the audience follows their ambiguous attitude of condemning the practice yet embracing 'the best *castrati* for their *Sancta sanctorum*'. This scene was delivered with particular sarcasm.

Then the play focuses on the differences between Italian and French audiences; something particularly significant in the singers' survival as we will see soon. French audiences are significantly restrained and conservative when compared to the first. Therefore, 'the festive character of the Italian Opera appears to be somewhat extravagant' to them. The general misconceptions between the two national audiences have been included in several official and unofficial sources. A Frenchman, for instance, wrote in his journal: 'In France, we go to the theatre to listen to the play. In Italy, they go so as to visit each other from one box to the next.' On the other hand, the truth about Italian audiences remains: They have never been kind towards something they dislike. However, 'when a singer touches them, ... they applaud excessively, shouting praises to their favourite *castrato*, howling until they obtain the *encore*.' Immediately, the same audience remarks though: 'Poor thing... he doesn't know he is a monster.' The

distance between monstrosity and prodigiosity becomes increasingly unclear.

Subsequeny, the work deals with the various vendettas between the *primi uomini* and the famous female divas. We also focus on a few anecdotes about the male singers' debated sexual prowess. Following that the singer complains about Mr. Galuppi's *romanza* which did not have enough shine for his voice. Therefore, to demonstate the correct way, he had to sing it himself better. However, the play does not only give negative accounts or associate the singers with frivolity: very soon we hear about '... the night of the 17th of August 1762, in which Guadagni intoned *Orpheus* like the gods ... No one ever played that score's myth with such passion.' The theatrical balance has been carefully restored, though not for long.

The following is a relatively-unknown detail about opera-going in Venice of 1600 and 1700. There '... spectators on boxes compete to see who can spit farther on the downstairs' people, thus, this public chooses to wear not such good clothing, unlike the aristocracy, who strut their best galas at their immaculate heights. The habit of spitting food leftovers gives way to competitions of ability and aim, causing interruptions to the spectacle.' This particular is brought to life by creating an actual food-fight between the actors and the audience. The atmosphere of old-fashioned 'Monsters and Prodigies' exhibitions or freak-show acts is being used here to maximum effect. The audience cannot be safe anymore; everyone has become a part of the same circus.

In the next scene we briefly focus on the reactions of French philosophers, mainly Voltaire and Rousseau who called the castrati 'monsters whose existence is an offense to reason.' We then discuss how this was passed on and reflected on Napoleonic legislation (Napoleon is played by Luis Fernando Villegas and seen riding on an actual horse, Mexerico, on stage). This particular, most significantly, influenced the unified post-Napoleonic legislation in Italy.

We have now reached the final stages and we learn that Benedict XIV, from the Diocesan Synod, declared illegal the amputation of 'any part of the human body; except for the case of a medical necessity.' Another significant event which happened on 14 February 1798 is that the Pope revoked the decree preventing women from going onstage: 'The *castrati* face a fierce competition with the *prima donnas*.' Soon, the events start spiralling out of control. Bellini separates from Velluti, the last operatic castrato, declaring that '(the singer) has turned definitively into a page of the history of music.' This has an even more dramatic effect in England, where an opera performance is being interrupted by crowds screaming: 'Out of here you object of pleasure and shame for our nation! Britain won't be corrupted with your frivolous trills. Let your breed of singers go back where lust and dissolute ways prevail.'

As we are approaching the end, we return to Centaur, whom the reader might recall as the first presenter of this play and the foremost accuser of every monstrosity. That is about to change as it is obvious that the new times have no place for either myths or legends. The first accuser is soon to

be turned into the last to be accused. In no uncertain terms we hear that in 'ancient Greece, there was a belief in fabulous and fantastic beings: the Centaurs. Nowadays, it has been proven that they derive from aberrant customs, such as copulation with animals.' Before we finalise though, we would need to mention that the play focuses only on Paré and ignores slightly later works that they had already blamed monstrous phenomena on naturally occurring deformation. For instance, Edward Tyson's attitude, as Arnold I. Davidson suggests, 'stands at a great distance from Paré's'. He believed that 'either fiction or want of observation (had) made more monsters than nature ever produced.'<sup>1054</sup> As the Italian castrati were not a medieval or early renaissance phenomenon, works like Tyson's, as more contemporary to them, should have been more applicable to their learned audiences and attitudes.

Finally, the lights dim and we find ourselves watching action hidden somewhere in the Vatican vaults. We are having a look at the years between 1904 and 1914. The events covered are those surrounding the recordings of the last castrato, Alessandro Moreschi and reach up to his final singing moments in Sistine Chapel. The play's final words are loud and clear: 'The adventure lasted three centuries, defying all laws of moral and reason, to end the impossible union between the monster and the angel.' However, the echo for the audience remains listening to the 1904 recording of 'Ave Maria' by Moreschi whilst watching Javier Medina's lamenting a voice and

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<sup>1054</sup> Edward Tyson. 1669. A Relation of two Monstrous Pigs, with the Resemblance of Human Faces, and two young Turkeys joined by the Breast. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Vol. 21; 431.

an era. This, apart from being the most touching moment, is also the only instant in this play where the main character is allowed to demonstrate any actual views or sentiment. (A final pointless disruption of the powerful static action of the main character – in the form of a secondary character trying to calm him down with a fruit, a banana, which, as stated, was not meant to be suggestive – is thankfully not allowed to muddle the scene's strongly invoked images and emotions. However, this is still an unnecessary distraction).

'Monsters and Prodigies' is a distinctive theatre work bringing together various contrasting elements; from historical research dramatisation and baroque operatic atmosphere to Victorian shows and circus buffoonery. The final result is well-presented, balanced and touching at times; if not for the overt use of mockery. The playwright and director's intentions had been to replicate the previous centuries' atmosphere for modern audiences. This, understandably, works well up to a certain extent, because of the two eras' difference in attitudes. For instance, whereas old audiences used to be curious not only to observe but also to laugh at 'monsters and prodigies' shows', this leaves us feeling uncomfortable at times. The latter element becomes even more prominent because there is little insight on the characters' actual personae; they are allowed to be only caricatures. However, not all characters here are fictitious... As said though, political correctness is not among the intentions of this play. Withstanding any rather superficial take on human differentiation, 'Monsters and Prodigies' remains an original theatrical work with excellent presentation and musical

attributes. I would be more than glad to experience it again; this time in the U.K.

Materials, such as the scripted surtitles in English, have been kindly provided by the director Claudio Valdés Curi and the *Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes*.

### **3.4.2.2. Interview with Claudio Valdés Kuri – July 2008 (via email)**

**What was the inspiration behind the original play as composed by Jorge Kuri? Is ‘Monsters and Prodigies’ the result of a sole or a combined experimental idea?**

This project was born when Javier Medina and I were singing together in a music vocal ensemble called *Ars Nova*. We initially thought about making a didactic concert, sung by him. So we devoted ourselves to researching this subject and discovered a fascinating story. This took us to a four-century journey through music, theatre and man’s ideas in a certain part of the world. At that time, I met Jorge Kuri, with whom I discovered an enormous affinity for experimental theatre as well as music. I invited him to investigate more about this subject and we were both fascinated by a story

that has a tragedy within itself, in which there isn't a fictional thing worth adding.

We chose Patrick Barbier's text and adapted it in the way of a lecture, meaning that the original theatrical text has that structure. We were able to create dialogues through improvisation processes during which, each actor was taking for himself the texts he considered appropriate for his character. Another interesting source was the book *Monsters and Prodigies*, from surgery's father Ambroise Paré, since we considered that these elements of the monster and the prodigy are found within the castrato's figure.

**Could you please define the message that you, as the director of this work, have been trying to convey to audiences?**

More than a message, I think; this is an exhibit of facts. An exhibit that has as goal to make audiences reflect upon the subject and get to their own conclusions. However, there are several points which are of a special interest to me; polarity amongst them. With this, I talk about the extremes in which our thoughts oscillate, reflected through history: in baroque times, in a world devoted to beauty up to the point of allowing the mutilation of a person for beauty's sake, contrasting with the actual world, which is moved entirely by reason, I ideally think we should be able to synthesize and balance these two positions.

The play also talks about limits, which are human needs. To me, castrati are like pop-music artists or like sports people, who sacrifice everything in their bodies, just for achieving certain goals. All this makes me think in the ton of justifications we make for our actions, in the quest for something. The play also talks about this world, subjugated by that which is spectacular. Undoubtedly, there underlies a point of view, regarding music tastes, when comparing vocal fireworks accomplished by castrati, in comparison to today's music.

**What do the castrati represent to you and why do you believe they were chosen as the epicentre of this play?**

The play always orbits around the castrato's role; however every character is a metaphor of the main subject or core subject of the play: duality. The castrato is this monstrous being, in his physique, his whims and behaviours. At the same time he is also a prodigy in his vocal capacities. Doctor Paré, the conductor of this story is a two-headed monster, one of which (the Italian) is inclined to beauty, whereas the other (the French one) is inclined to reason. The Centaur is symbol of the struggle of our animal side with our human or rational side. The eunuch reminds us of the root of this practice, in Spain's harems. And the chapel master, who is apparently not a monster at all, has the monstrous capacity of deciding the fate of a boy.

**The presence of a Natural Male Soprano among the members of this cast adds an eerie quality and originality to this play. Did you know Javier Medina from the beginning of the original production? (Please elaborate)**

As I said before, Javier and I met several years before doing this theatre piece. For me, there would be no sense to present the play without him, since his presence and his natural voice grant a big sense of realism and an essential force to the play.

**Previous reviews have, among other things, treated this theatrical production as a 'comedy' and a 'lampoon'. However, the last scene, i.e. the Castrato's Lament when listening to Moreschi's 'Ave Maria', hardly constitutes a comedy finale. How would you characterise this work?**

I could tell you, as I've said before, that the play is originally a lecture whose content is merely a series of historical and chronological data, without a specific theatrical genre. With this material I approached the actors to begin working improvisations in a time slot of nine months. It was the blending of personalities the one that set the comedy tone for the play. Further reflections have led me to think that this had to do with the fact that all the cast members have such a natural flare for humour and it also turned out to be comedy for the necessity of taking a healthy distance so as to be

able to address such delicate and painful themes. It is clear that tragedy is felt, fortunately and unavoidably, at the exact moment in which we hear Moreschi's painful recording.

### **3.4.3.1. Javier Medina's Recital Review (31/10/08 – University of York)**

The programme on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008 was versatile and demanding yet inconsistent at times. The programme's most significant contributions had to do with acquainting the audience with both a rare vocal persona and original era compositions by the Spanish Juan Hidalgo (1614 – 1685) and the Mexicans Manuel de Sumaya (1678-1755) and Ignacio de Jerusalem (1707-69).

The programme, accompanied on the harpsichord by Pete Seymour, started with 'Bist du bei mir'; a work most probably composed by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel. This is, however, frequently mistaken for a Johann Sebastian Bach aria. Whereas performed by most voices, this is mostly associated with altos – with Kathleen Ferrier's recorded performance coming first to mind.<sup>1055</sup> Nonetheless, when performed in the key of C – instead of B flat – by a natural male soprano, the work can be used as an 'opening' for the voice centres piece. Even so, the aria remains a demanding piece of work asking for extended legato, frequent leaps of fifths and sixths

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<sup>1055</sup> This happened due to the piece's first inclusion in the 1725 *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach*.

and *messa di voce*. Therefore, its performance could be affected easily by a combination of less than adequate warm-up and unfamiliarity to cold weather as well as performer's nerves. The above resulted to some minor intonation issues.

The second aria, 'Disfrazado de pastor baja el amor', was the programme's first original-era work in Spanish. Composed by Juan Hidalgo, by many considered to be Spain's national composer of that era, the piece is a *villancico*. This, according to Susan K. Oetgen, 'was a poetic and musical form indigenous and unique to Iberia, which developed a recognisably distinct identity by the middle of the fifteenth century.'<sup>1056</sup> There are two types of Villancicos; the Spanish and Portuguese ones. In Spain, this developed to be the favourite genre during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Like in most Spanish works, the song here is structured in *coplas* (stanzas) and *estribillo* (refrain); many times without an introduction. The *estribillo* was frequently sung following two *coplas*. The key of *Disfrazado* is in F and whereas the stanza's tempo is in six eights the refrain is presented in four fours. However, the sense of rubato is crucial in its performance and this can vary depending on the performer's background. Additionally, the tessitura is slightly higher than that of 'Bist du bei mir' and therefore more within the centres of Medina's voice. The brilliance of his vocal performance was at times marred by a variant sense of rubato dividing the two musicians; the Latin American and European ones.

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<sup>1056</sup> Susan K. Oetgen. November/December 1999. 'A Short History of the Colonial Villancico of New Spain.' *Clave*. Vol.2, Issue 4.

The third piece of the programme, 'Alto Giove' from *Polifemo*, was composed by Nicolò Porpora who, among others, had taught and directed Farinelli in those days. Nonetheless, contrary to beliefs, the role of Acis, where the aria belongs to, was sung in 1735 by Senesino when *Polifemo* was first performed in London (Theatre Royal in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields). The aria is again higher in tessitura than the previous two works but only minorly. The most demanding aspects of this aria are, however, the long legato lines walking side by side with florid ornamentation and conspicuous use of *messa di voce*. An immensely developed breathing apparatus is not just a prerequisite but truly a *conditio sine qua non*. Medina's unique physical built, consisted of an enormous and round chest cavity as well as a small agile larynx and vocal folds, gave him a huge advantage. The aria, therefore, exhibited some great awe-inspiring moments with crystal clear ornamentation and brilliant high notes. However, his long phrases combined by *messa di voce* could go much further, considering his physique. This, provided that the singer receives breathing training especially devised for his own vocal persona, would free his singing ability and let it express itself in full. The same feelings, positive and wondering, influenced my appreciation of the next work, 'Como aunque culpa', by the Mexican composer Manuel de Sumaya as well as the final two pieces of the first part.<sup>1057</sup> Mirteo's aria 'Anche un Misero Arboscello' from *Nitocri* is by Giuseppe Sellitti or Sellitto, an Italian composer and organist (1700-77).

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<sup>1057</sup> Sumaya was perhaps the most famous Mexican composer of the colonial period of New Spain. His music has been called as 'the culmination of the Baroque style in the New World'.

This is characterised not only by long ornamented phrases but also the seemingly unavailable breathing points; unless someone possesses the so-called circular breathing or ability to breathe imperceptibly. ‘Che Chiedi Che Brami?’ by Carlo Broschi that ended the first part is also among the many significant works contained in *Die Kastraten und ihre Gesangskunst* by Franz Haböck.<sup>1058</sup> The Broschi-Farinelli aria is an emotionally charged piece, which demands from the performer an elegant (especially when dealing with the sequence of sextuplets) as well as passionate delivery. The latter aspect, however, could only be promoted if the singer feels secure enough with its technical demands.

The second part, accompanied this time on the piano by Peter Seymour, started with ‘Intorno all’ idol mio’ by Marco Cesti (1623-99) which perhaps would have been more suited to the first part. The next aria was the well-known ‘Voi che sapete’ from *Le nozze di Figaro* by W.A. Mozart (1756-91). This was not only a very suitable piece for the singer’s voice but also permitted him to demonstrate aspects of his acting. Gluck’s aria ‘O del mio dolce ardor’ from the 1770 opera *Paride ed Elena* followed. Even though the singer’s performance was effective, I found the aria slightly disconnected thematologically with the rest of his recital. This was especially true because of the highly virtuosic ‘Querubes y pastores’ with which the programme continued. This is a Mexican work by Ignacio de Jerusalem (1707-69) with a clear earlier era association.

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<sup>1058</sup> *Alto Giove* and *Anche un misero arboscello* are also obtained from the same collection.

The final two pieces of the recital were homage to Alessandro Moreschi and his era. Both 'Ideale' and 'L' ultimo canzone' were composed by Francesco Tosti (1846-1916). The first one was also numbered among the pieces recorded by the last Sistine Chapel castrato. This gave it an a priori eerie quality and the audience a sense of privilege. The works have not been performed in the UK for many years.

The singer is aware that his present vocal reality, just like that of his idol, could go against the audience's imaginary expectations. Therefore, for the *encore*, Medina decided to demonstrate his high chest / mixed voice qualities and range by singing 'Los pajaros perdidos', an Astor Piazzola (1921-92) characteristic *nuevo tango* song. Similarly to Moreschi, Medina's full vocal potential has yet to be realised.<sup>1059</sup>

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<sup>1059</sup> This is mainly due to inappropriate for his voice training.

**3.4.3.2. Interview with Javier Medina Àvila – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2008  
(Music Department, University of York)**

**How do you feel towards the castrati of 17 – 19<sup>th</sup> century?**

I have lived most of situations that castrati experienced in past. For example, my body has suffered the same changes as they did but for different reasons. Similar results you can also observe in all of us having different hormonal balances. From time to time, I used to feel so rare and different from others until I realized how hormones work in humans. Anyway, after reading books about castrati, I found the answer to my questions. For instance, why do I feel sad suddenly and without knowing the reason? Why whereas all my companions' interests have changed, mine have always remained the same? So, somehow, what I have in my body corresponds to what most castrati had too.

**I have known that you associate more with Moreschi. Could you please explain to us why?**

Well, most of people talk about Farinelli; even in some interviews some have compared me with him. I appreciate that, because it comes with good intentions, but he lived a different situation and (whereas) some of them made a good career, many remained unknown. I have felt mostly as Moreschi lived in his life, trying to fit in a place built for ordinary people.

When you are out of standards, you have to fight against too many things. For example, trying to find a knowledgeable singing teacher has been the most difficult thing that Moreschi and I have been through. For him, somehow was a little bit easier because they were still castrati alive. For me the struggle to understand my vocal system took more than 10 years of researching and rebuilding. Many time I thought about giving up and becoming a priest. My voice was again the issue. Alessandro experienced similar problems somehow.

When I listened to his CD for the first time in 1995, my life had a 180 degrees change. I finally found an example of the same sounds I could produce. Moreschi's singing helped me discover a new world and this gave me faith again. Because of this situation I want to make homage to him. For example, in both my recital and tonight's presentation, I have worn a copy based on the suit he used to wear in those days. I went to a specialised tailor and asked him to reproduce the suit in Moreschi's photo.

**Hybrid Vocal Personae behave in an unconventional way. Could you please tell us how does your voice compare to that of a female soprano?**

Many teachers tried so kindly to teach me, but they had experiences with women or men voices. However, I am not a woman (and not a child anymore). I cannot fit exactly to what those teachers wanted me to be. As Tosi said in his book, the castrati were able to sing more chest notes than a woman and a child. I produce naturally an octave higher than a man. When I

sing a middle C, you feel the same effort as that of a child or a woman. When a man tries to reach the same pitch, he has to use another mechanism. And the voice centres are different for women soprani and castrati. If a mezzo tries to sing a castrato piece she feels it a little bit high, whereas if a female soprano tries the same piece she feels it a little low for example Mozart's *Voi che sapete*. Although it was made for a woman, Mozart was taught by a castrato. Some Mezzos feel the piece slightly high. Another example is those 19<sup>th</sup> century pieces, where the keys are changed from soprano to mezzo or vice versa. This is usually a third between both tonalities. In my experience, if you change the key of a castrato piece to make it suitable to modern sopranos, you usually need to raise it by one tone and a half. If you want to transpose the same piece for a Mezzo, you would have to lower it by the same interval. However, when I try them in the original keys, the pieces are perfect to me.

### **Why is your voice different to that of a countertenor?**

Well, we sing different registers and characters. One well-known countertenor had told me once that his kind of voice was suitable 'for Senesino-like roles'. They mostly sing the parts of alto-castratos whereas I sing soprano-castrato. Another difference is our physiques and technique. As said, the natural centres of my voice are an octave higher from that of a tenor. Countertenors' technique is different because they have to do some changes in order to produce their sounds. As Tosi and Mancini said, a

soprano castrato can reach high notes in chest voice. This situation brought me a lot of trouble, because it confuses teachers. They assumed that since I was a man, I must sing in a manly register as a tenor. This was extremely frustrating and limiting to my voice. Eventually, the teacher who worked best for me taught me as a tenor who sang everything an octave higher than other tenors. A minor third is the first interval that babies understand, and that was the first interval that my teacher chose to have me sing. I still keep the same exercise as my first when warming up.

I can sing in chest voice as female belters do in musicals. My chest range is two octaves from *f* to *f*<sup>♯</sup> and above that my head voice range continues comfortably to a soprano high C. Also, similarly to a child, the high position of my larynx means that I can change register in the same phrase without people noticing.

**Could you please now talk to us about your research and your Thesis?**

Finding music in Mexico used to be quite difficult in the past but now the internet has changed things completely. When I started, nobody there knew much about castrati. The very first book about castrati I had in my hands was Angus Herriot's 'Castrati in Opera' and opened a new world to me.

Soon I had the opportunity to travel abroad with an ancient music group (Ars Nova). I used to go to any library I could find. Unfortunately, there were some librarians that used to mock me, but others were kind and got involved with my situation. In Brussels I had the opportunity to reach 15

pieces written for Farinelli, so I decide to make them known in my country. I based my graduate thesis on these pieces and I changed the keys to make them suitable to all kind of voices. I submitted one theory book, which included a chapter containing a brief history about castrati, another with extracts of Giovenali Sacchi's biography of Farinelli. The third chapter offered a suggestion on how to approach this music era using examples from works such as those of Mancini, Bernacchi, Agricola and many others. The fourth chapter is about the pieces and includes lyric translations for Latin-American speakers and phonetic translation for better pronunciation alongside a brief history of the Opera and the composer. The next chapter is about ornamentations based on the tables of Diego Ortiz and the way to use them. One of the appendices contains the very first translation to Spanish of the marvellous book written by Francesco Tosi. I wanted to make this book in order to make easier the way for my colleagues at school. I know how difficult is to get information; so some of what I managed to get I decided to make available to my community. I do not want others to experience the same troubles that I had to.

**What are you planning to do for your Master's?**

I intend to improve the first book by adding more pieces and all the stuff I could not include in my BA Thesis because of space.

### 3.5. Lisa-Lee album launch

Daniel Davies, Sep 13 2004, *The Western Mail*.

A SOPRANO who did not discover she was a woman until she was 19 is preparing to release her debut album.

Because of a rare medical condition Lisa-Lee Dark, from Swansea, thought she was a boy. Despite being a pupil at an all-boys comprehensive school, she only discovered her true gender after she left and doctors diagnosed congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH). But her condition and singing may be related.

The testosterone-boosting treatment she took in her teens could be the reason her voice is able to span eight octaves, she said. Now 27, Lisa-Lee will launch her debut album *Breath of Life* next month. (...) In females the excess of testosterone that people with CAH have can cause abnormal genital development before birth. CAH sufferers are often spotted through the low level of salt in the body, linked to a hormone called aldosterone.

“Nowadays most people are spotted, so if you’ve got a salt deficiency it’s picked up early in life, but I didn’t have that. But they don’t screen for CAH so people still fall through the net. People are more aware of it, but even now you still come across doctors who are not familiar with it at all. It doesn’t just affect female babies, it can happen the other way around. “I went to see a specialist when I was about 15 who gave me the wrong diagnosis. He told me I had a rare hermaphrodite condition and said my

body was trying to become female. So I took a lot of male hormones to try and make myself more male.”

Lisa-Lee has now accepted the diagnosis of CAH and her true gender. Named Lee at birth, she changed her name in her twenties, choosing Lisa to prove she was not intimidated by bullies who taunted her with the name for being so feminine at school.<sup>1060</sup>

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<sup>1060</sup> [http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/tm\\_objectid=14635278&method=full&siteid=50082&headline=lisa-lee-album-launch-name\\_page.html](http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/tm_objectid=14635278&method=full&siteid=50082&headline=lisa-lee-album-launch-name_page.html) (Accessed: 12.09.09).

## Chapter IV

### 4.1. The Changing Female-To-Male (FTM) Voice<sup>1061</sup>

#### Introduction

'At the end of last millennium', Stephen Whittle states when introducing *Reclaiming Genders*, '[...] transsexuals were rarely documented, except in myth and legend, or in documents from the church courts after their trials for blasphemy or sodomy.'<sup>1062</sup> Though this is not the case anymore, the new level of attention is, at most times, a mixed blessing. Largely derived from a non-transsexual perspective, be it medical, general academic or tabloid sensationalism, this is one of the rare cases when attention equates to less visibility. Those who get noticed are those least compliant to a binarian, male-female, perspective. Considering that the purpose of 'treatment'

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<sup>1061</sup> Constansis, Alexandros N. 2008. 'The Changing Female-To-Male (FTM) Voice.' *Radical Musicology*. Vol. 3: 32 pars.

<sup>1062</sup> Stephen Whittle. 'Introduction 2.' In Kate More and Stephen Whittle (eds.), 1999. *Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the Fin de Siècle*. London & New York: Cassell; 6.

provided to trans-individuals is to make them conform more easily within the binary, it is not surprising that insider views consider that '[...] transsexuals are continually and perpetually erased in the cultural and institutional world.'<sup>1063</sup> This attitude has only recently begun to be counteracted by the increasing number of transacademic or activist works. However, most of these works frequently succumb to broad generalisations. My research project, 'The Changing FTM Voice', since its very conception in 2002, has aspired to help the new transvocal persona to be recognised and treated as a rightful individual, neither a subcategory nor an inconvenience. The history of this work, like other experimental material, bore an initially personal character. This article will reflect this quality when referring to the author's own experience between 2003 and 2004.

Like most transsexuals, the writer started having clear indications of his gender dysphoria in early childhood. Gifted with an unusually deep speaking and singing voice as well as masculine manners from the start, he had to overcome issues of harassment and discrimination before reaching adolescence. Growing up in the transgender-unfriendly Greek capital during the late sixties and seventies, however, this led to introversion. The future author avoided the use of his voice in public. Fortunately, that struggle never turned him against his voice, which became his only solace until 1983 when he became a professional singer. Whether amateur or

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<sup>1063</sup> Viviane K. Namaste. 2000. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press; 2.

professional, though, his singing voice has always remained associated with his true self. Therefore, when in 2002 transitioning from 'female' to male became the only viable option, he became determined to take his voice with him on his journey. This article describes the methods and results of his own as well as other participants' transition to a vocal manhood. The initially personal account, when first presented in public in 2004 following the completion of a one year programme,<sup>1064</sup> challenged conventional views about the inevitability of the loss of singing FTM voices during transition. The author anticipated his own changes by initially focusing on academic works dealing with the closest possible equivalent – the vocal and general passage from childhood to adolescence and consequently to adult biomasculinity. However, other significant factors, such as age and laryngeal structure, started coming to the surface and needed to be taken into consideration. The challenge, as presented here in extended form, might be thought to have wider implications as well, to do with the relationships construed between constructions of gender, of voice quality and of the (vocalising) body; to do with – we might say – the 'biology of culture'; or, to put it another way, with conceptions of 'the natural'.

The present article might also be considered unconventional in basing its

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<sup>1064</sup> Alexandros N. Constansis. 2004. 'The Changing FTM Voice.' Unpublished paper. 6th International Congress on Sex and Gender Diversity: Reflecting Genders. Manchester Metropolitan University.

account to a substantial degree on autobiographical experience (though there are precedents for this in some branches of musicology) and, more radically, in founding itself in a method that could be described as an example not so much of a musicology of practice as one of practice *as* musicology. Is it possible that 'practice' might not only be informed by 'theory', but also work *as* theory?

### **Personal Account**

Anticipating my vocal changes, I had started research on changing voices based on *Working with Adolescent Voices* by John Cooksey. Nonetheless, attending my first FTM group meeting in August 2002 brought me face to face with two cases of what I now call 'entrapped FTM voice'. This, as will be explained in detail in the next section, implies the disturbed analogy between growing vocal folds and *the encasing* of them in an established laryngeal structure.

The two individuals were both over the age of fifty and had been on testosterone for an average of a year and a half. The speaking voices were characterised by permanent hoarseness, lack of control and colour, and limited power. Both resultant voices were in the end utterly unconvincing for transmen – singing was altogether out of the equation. At the end of the gathering, I managed to meet them in person and listen to their speaking

voices in more detail. I slowly started to realise the full extent of the problem. At the next meeting, I finally got the opportunity to have a brief ‘touch’ of their larynxes (which surprised them both). This is a technique I had first seen demonstrated during a vocal osteopathy workshop in the final year of my BMus studies. The sizes of their larynxes were only slightly greater than those of average sopranos but were less supple to the touch, a factor not necessarily associated with their ages. Also the laryngeal structures were not properly descended but were somewhere in between adult male and female positions. I more or less anticipated the outcome, but was still surprised by the extent of underdevelopment.<sup>1065</sup> In fact, the incident can now fairly be considered to be the starting point for this research.

The starting position for my 2004 paper was the statement that ‘most transmen report the loss of their singing voice, as well as of the effective use of their speaking voice, soon after the start of testosterone injections.’<sup>1066</sup> This was such a well-established truth within the field that it has rarely been scientifically challenged. For example, Gorton *et al.* clearly advised that ‘professional or amateur singers and speakers should be warned that frequently voice changes occur that may be significantly detrimental to vocal performance. These changes are both unpredictable and irreversible.’<sup>1067</sup>

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<sup>1065</sup> Both individuals’ voices are still exhibiting the same characteristics, even after speech therapy.

<sup>1066</sup> Constansis, ‘Changing FTM Voice’.

<sup>1067</sup> Ryan Nick Gorton, Jamie Buth & Dean Spade. 2005. *Medical Therapy and Health Maintenance for Transgender Men: A Guide for Health Care Providers*. San Francisco: Lyon-Martin Women’s Health Services; 59.

Though there are international variations in the prescribed hormonal regime, most FTMs are likely to start from the highest recommended intake. Even though the suggested hormonal preparation has been changed or amended since the days of my transition, the attitude supporting the abrupt testosterone start for FTM transsexuals has not been challenged sufficiently for a variety of reasons. These can include cost and waste, especially true when the transman is allowed to transition on Nebido, which is ‘a long acting testosterone undecanoate injection offered at 3 monthly intervals’.<sup>1068</sup> The remaining reasons, however, can be attributed mainly, as in the past, to inadequately individualised provision of care for transpeople worldwide.

During the days of my official transition in the UK, back in 2003, Levy *et al* stated that ‘the usual hormonal treatment [was] Sustanon 250mg intramuscularly every two weeks, or testosterone enanthate (Primoteston Depot) if the patient [was] sensitive to peanut (arachis) oil’.<sup>1069</sup> The reasoning was – and remains – that this will produce the testosterone levels able to quickly effect maximum masculinisation of the voice and body.<sup>1070</sup> After all, ‘the goal of treatment in female-to-male transsexuals,’ as Louis

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<sup>1068</sup> Rachel Smith, Niki Karavitaki & John Wass. 2008. ‘Clinical Experience of Nebido: Monitoring the Efficacy and Safety of Intramuscular Testosterone Undecanoate in Hypogonadal Men.’ *Endocrine Abstracts*. Vol. 15; 297.

<sup>1069</sup> Andy Levy, Anna Crown & Russell Reid. 2003. ‘Endocrine Intervention for Transsexuals.’ *Clinical Endocrinology*. Vol. 59: 409-418; 409.

<sup>1070</sup> Normal range for a biological male is 290 to 900 nanograms per deciliter (ng/dl). Around 500 ng/dl is the highest f-t-m achievable.

Gooren suggested, 'is to induce virilisation, including a male voice pitch', as well as produce general 'male physical contours'.<sup>1071</sup> Similarly, during the same period, in the Netherlands, 'the most commonly used preparations [were] testosterone esters in doses of 200 – 250 mg intramuscularly every two weeks'.<sup>1072</sup> In the US, Gorton *et al* indicated in 2005 that the regime had more variation and 'injected testosterone [was] started at a range of doses (25 – 125 mg / week depending on the patient and clinician) and titrated upwards based on clinical effects and trough levels.' And the above continued by mentioning that 'if lower doses are used initially, titration should probably be considered more frequently'.<sup>1073</sup> However, we have to understand that lower doses, either in the UK or abroad, are often associated (especially by the TS community) with medical bias. As the following citation shows, this has even been recognised by medical practitioners. Here the writers indicate that 'doubts about the integrity of transgender individuals and the authenticity of gender dysphoria as a diagnosis [...] may lead some members of the medical profession to withhold treatment or prescribe inadequate doses of cross-sex hormones on safety grounds'.<sup>1074</sup> The results for the transitioning transman can be socially and

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<sup>1071</sup> Louis Gooren. 2006. 'Hormone Treatment of the Adult Transsexual Patient.' *Hormone Research*. Vol. 64 [suppl. 2]: 31-36; 33.

<sup>1072</sup> *Ibid.* 33-34.

<sup>1073</sup> 'Titration: The gradual addition of one solution to another until the amount of the reactant being added stoichiometrically matches the amount of the reactant initially present.' <http://www.chemeddl.org/collections/ptl/PTL/glossary/t.html> (Accessed: 12.10.08).

<sup>1074</sup> Levy *et al.*, 'Endocrine Intervention': 416.

psychologically detrimental. However, the present author decided to transition on a lower than usual testosterone intake.

This different stance was based on research as well as vocal experience.<sup>1075</sup> Not only my professional singing background but also my teaching had revealed to me that abrupt changes are rarely beneficial to the vocal instrument. Even in a flexible adolescent laryngeal structure and with gradual hormonal changes, the voice is tendered uncontrollable and of limited use for a certain period of time. This process could not but be aggravated when transferred to an almost fully-developed laryngeal and bodily structure and accompanied by abrupt and maximum hormonal alteration. The choice for me to accomplish my changes gradually, apart from potentially advantageous vocal results, for which I had no proof until later in 2003, had many important consequences. The most significant of them was that I did not 'pass' and retained my visibility as a transperson for longer than usually expected. Many characteristics of the present work, especially its individual approach, are owed to this longer period of visibility. The methods described here were devised with the parameters affecting our voices in mind and then tested by me, a singing FTM in transition, during the years 2003 and 2004.

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<sup>1075</sup> I started singing ballads professionally at the age of twenty and, after years of performing in both styles, I obtained my Classical Singing Diploma in 1992, aged twenty-nine

## Voice Theory: Anatomy of the Vocal Tract

The vocal instrument truly involves almost the entire body, through mechanisms which include such factors as breathing, vibrations, *appoggio* (the muscular configuration underpinning breathing) and support. In fact, what we call vocal quality is associated with a variety of issues, such as the shape of the ribcage and lung capacity. Some of them can be highly differentiated by and dependent on a person's bio-gender. Larynx – in iconic terms, the voice production centre of the human body – is particularly gender-reliant. Depending on its biological and hormonal imprint, size, shape and behaviour, for instance in terms of lowering, it can present us with significant differences.

As we read in Gray's *Anatomy*, the shape of the human larynx 'presents the form of a triangular box above, which is flattened behind and at the sides'. It is then 'bounded in front by a prominent vertical ridge'. Below it the shape appears to be 'narrow and cylindrical'.<sup>1076</sup> The laryngeal structure consists mainly of nine separate cartilages. These 'comprise the single cricoid, thyroid, and epiglottic cartilages, and the paired arytenoid, cuneiform, and corniculate cartilages'.<sup>1077</sup> One very significant factor for the voice is that the cartilages behave differently during the ageing process.

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<sup>1076</sup> Henry Gray. 1995. *Anatomy of the Human Body*. New York: Churchill Livingstone; 1638.

<sup>1077</sup> *Ibid.*

More specifically, as a person ages, even though these cartilages are all part of a common structure (i.e., the larynx), some of them tend to ossify early (e.g., the thyroid), while those that consist of hyaline cartilage converted to fibro-cartilage (e.g., the epiglottis) do not. Also, the process of ossification occurs at different stages in the person's life for different laryngeal cartilages. For example, even though ossification starts only a few years after the full development of the larynx is completed (around age 25 for the thyroid cartilage and slightly later for the cricoid and arytenoids), these cartilages do not become truly osseous for most people until the person reaches the age of 60. By contrast, the corniculate cartilages (cornicula laryngis), which consist of fibro-cartilage, do not finally ossify until the person reaches about the age of 70.

Fundamentally, the larynx is the home of both the true and false vocal folds. A biological male's true vocal folds are longer (20-25 mm) (a fact which is responsible for producing the lower fundamental frequency [Fo]) and thicker on average than those of a biological female (15-20 mm). In addition to that, a typical bio-man's larynx is significantly bigger than that of a bio-woman.<sup>1078</sup> But what effect does the above information have on the FTM voice in transition?

As soon as an FTM person starts receiving testosterone treatment, he is

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<sup>1078</sup> For example, the vertical diameter is 44mm and the circumference 136mm in males, whereas in females the measurements are 36mm and 112mm respectively.

always warned about the dramatic effects that it will have on his voice. However, when I began my own experimental work in 2002-2003, I had not encountered any transman who had also been given some means to properly deal with his changing vocal instrument. The general consensus even relatively recently has been, as Shelagh Davies and Joshua Mira Goldberg characteristically state, that 'FTMs don't need speech services because testosterone will cause pitch to drop'.<sup>1079</sup> This, apart from being unfair to transmen, is also overtly simplistic as the writers admit very soon that 'testosterone doesn't always drop pitch low enough for FTMs to be perceived as male'.<sup>1080</sup> This had already been noted by Van Borsel *et al* in 2000 who reported that 'results from a sample survey involving 16 F-T-M individuals and longitudinal data from two clients suggest that the voice change [i.e. speaking] is not always totally unproblematic. A voice assessment and some counselling before the hormone therapy are recommended.'<sup>1081</sup> Even so, the general consensus remains unchanged due to lack of understanding of all the parameters influencing male transvocality. There was no research on singing FTM voices during my pre-transition days, and I had to look for material that described the closest equivalent: the changing voice of an adolescent biological male. I then augmented this with my own experimentation with medication and on

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<sup>1079</sup> Shelagh Davies and Joshua Mira Goldberg. 2006. *Changing Speech*. Vancouver: Trans Care Project; 18.

<sup>1080</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1081</sup> John Van Borsel, Griet De Cuypere, R. Rubens & B. Destaecke. July 2000. 'Voice Problems in Female-to-Male Transsexuals.' *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*. Vol. 35, Issue 3: 427-442; 427.

devising the best method from vocal techniques that I was already familiar with.

The starting assumption of my research was that I should try to imitate as closely as possible a male adolescent's vocal passage through puberty. The problems that I encountered were seriously aggravated by the fact that my body and subsequently the cartilages of my larynx no longer had that degree of flexibility at the age of 39 (I started on testosterone on 27 March 2003). My advantages were that I possessed an already-trained larynx that was larger than usual, as well as longer and thicker vocal folds than expected (my previous voice type was considered to be an alto with the capacity for very low notes, down to C3, an octave below Middle C).<sup>1082</sup>

Another essential principle that I had to consider in regard to the hormonal treatment was that the secretion of testosterone in bio-males does not suddenly commence at the highest level. The boy does not turn into a man within six months or a year. The reasons why FTMs usually try to do otherwise are mostly sociological: we need to 'pass', in other words, to live more easily in our acquired gender and everyday environment. Nevertheless, I am not sure that this approach is physiologically best for our bodies. After all 'it is well known that sex steroid treatment', especially in high doses, 'is associated with various side effects'.<sup>1083</sup> Vocally – here I

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<sup>1082</sup> A sizeable larynx is also the common characteristic of all my students with a good speaking and singing ability after transition.

<sup>1083</sup> Paul J.M. Van Kesteren, Henk Asscherman, Jos A.J. Megens & Louis Gooren. 1997. 'Mortality and Morbidity in Transsexual Subjects Treated with Cross-Sex Hormones.' *Clinical Endocrinology*. Vol. 47: 337 – 342; 337.

am more than convinced – this approach is definitely not in our best interest.

When testosterone levels increase within the body of an FTM person, both the larynx and, subsequently, the vocal folds begin to lose their bio-female characteristics. The vocal folds are attached, via the enclosed vocal ligaments, 'in front to the angle of the thyroid cartilage, and behind to the vocal process of the arytenoid'.<sup>1084</sup> Testosterone during bio-male puberty initially creates oedema on the folds. Then, due to accumulated collagen, the folds' thickening and elongation become permanent and the voice acquires a masculine fundamental frequency. The difference now in our case is that due to the fact that our 'second puberty', i.e. transition, is happening later than expected in life, an FTM's vocal folds can thicken but cannot become as long as a bio-male's.<sup>1085</sup> The reason is that the cartilage cannot grow enough at this stage in order to accommodate the changes. Moreover, testosterone is known to lead to early ossification of the cartilage. Specifically, Mupparapu *et al* have found that 'there was a preponderance of laryngeal cartilage ossification in men compared with women'.<sup>1086</sup> This perhaps gives to the fully-grown bio-male larynx added stability and power. However, in an FTM voice, this fact becomes an added detriment. What is more, it seems that the difference in development of the

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<sup>1084</sup> Gray, *Anatomy*: 1644.

<sup>1085</sup> Cf. Davies and Goldberg, *Changing Speech*: 15.

<sup>1086</sup> Muralidhar Mupparapu and Anitha Vuppalapati. 2005. 'Ossification of Laryngeal Cartilages on Lateral Cephalometric Radiographs.' *Angle Orthodontist*. Vol. 75, Issue 2: 192-7; 192.

non-ossified versus the abruptly ossified areas of the larynx is detrimental to the overall instrument's structural balance, especially when the immediate high levels of testosterone do not permit the cartilage to adjust gradually. In this case, the new male vocal folds can become entrapped within a less-than-adequately enlarged larynx. The resultant voice will sound weak and permanently hoarse and lack the right harmonics. By contrast, when the vocal tract is given time to adjust and when a programme of carefully selected exercises is followed throughout the vocal transition, the results are not only more predictable but also very encouraging. However, I cannot stress enough the necessity for the individual transman to respect his limitations when following this programme: there is a certain period during which only mild exercises should be allowed, since vigorous ones during this time risk damaging the developing voice.

## **Method**

### **Testosterone**

From the beginning, I had decided to start with a level of hormones that is lower than the usual level for transmen. After I had fully explained my research, the consultant agreed to prescribe the lowest possible level of testosterone for me. He warned me though that in this case the full

masculinising effects of the hormone would be seriously delayed. Because of my intention to preserve my voice, I considered that to be a risk worth taking. Due to the prohibitive cost of testosterone gel as well as the unavailability of lower than 100mg injectable testosterone forms, I initially started on 40 mg of oral testosterone (i.e. Restandol), administered daily. Within two weeks this amount was doubled, and I stayed on 80 mg for the rest of my first six months of hormone treatment. By the end of that period, my voice was clearly that of a tenor and had completely lost its pure head register. However, before I go any further, I would like to clarify here that I do not recommend the use of this specific drug to singing FTMs. My point here is to advocate the low start and gradual increase in testosterone intake as a method kinder to the whole vocal instrument. Oral forms of testosterone, in fact, can trigger heartburn and other stomach problems and much of the hormone is lost during the digestive process. Most important by far, though, 'this is the form [...] most likely to cause liver damage if used at doses high enough to be effective'.<sup>1087</sup> I knew that I was not going to use it for more than a year and never at its maximum dosage.

During the seventh month the consultant changed my medication to Sustanon 100, administered bimonthly, as well as one oral capsule (40mg), taken daily. Within two months, my 'mixed' register decreased to the point

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<sup>1087</sup> Alexander Blustin (ed.) with Andrew Levy, Russell Reid & Stephen Whittle. July 2005. *Current Treatment for Female-to-Male Transsexuals and Transgender People*. London: FTM London & FTM Network; 6.

where I was no longer able to sing tenor arias. My larynx felt more open and, according to the measurements that I could make externally, was truly wider as well.

The next stage of my treatment – bimonthly injections of Sustanon 100 as well as two capsules daily – caused my voice to ‘break’. Until that moment, even though I had noticed significant changes, my voice had nevertheless remained both manageable and musically usable to some extent. The next four months were very challenging, but also very rewarding, because the hormone treatment had finally started to produce my long-awaited masculine physical persona. Because of these gains in my masculine appearance, I used to pretend that I did not care about the loss of my voice. In any case, I knew that the next few months would be the moment of truth. I had taken a risk, and nobody could guarantee that what I had thought to be correct in the beginning about the FTM voice in transition would eventually be proven accurate; I only hoped that it would be so. In this frame of mind, accompanied by all my fears about the final loss of my voice, I finally switched to full potency injections (Sustanon 250) in March of 2004.

Within one month, I started to realise that my mild exercise regime was, strangely enough, producing two separate ‘voices’ instead of one. Though I could only explore them in a limited way at that moment, it was clear that I

was developing both a high voice (falsetto) and a low voice (chest only). My low register, which was revealing itself to be that of a bass-baritone then, was very weak, and there was no mixed range to it: as soon as the pitch reached middle C, I had to change immediately to falsetto. My newly acquired high voice, on the other hand – in contrast to my previous head or mixed chest register – was proving to be both strong and truly flexible. In particular, I was able to reach higher notes than my previous alto tessitura used to permit.<sup>1088</sup>

Appendices 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 contain the diary of my vocal transition, as recorded in 2004. Since then, my voice has acquired new dimensions and manageability. Now, in November of 2008 and for the last four years, I have been teaching both FTM and MTF singers as well as cisgender female voices. My own vocal persona, a genuine example of hybridity as explained in my paper, 'Hybrid Vocal Personae', currently covers a range of almost four octaves.<sup>1089</sup> In the following section, I would like to present some details of the vocal techniques I used during my transition. The daily programme is truly significant because gradual hormonal support alone cannot ensure that a voice will survive the 'break' (or maturation, as it is technically called), and be re-born in a new form.

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<sup>1088</sup> Cf. Appendices 4.2.1 & 4.2.2; the two 'voices' are denoted by two different colours.

<sup>1089</sup> Alexandros N. Constansis. 2006. 'The Hybrid Vocal Persona.' Unpublished paper. Winchester: BFE Conference.

## Technique

After the singer has finished his or her vocal studies and knows the basic mechanisms of the vocal instrument, there remains a principle that must be respected at all times: the singer must listen to and respect his or her voice's 'inner voice'. Abusing one's changing voice, for instance, by trying to stretch it unnaturally, will only produce ill effects. Thus, my first technical step when I began this process was to find exercises that would not only protect my voice from harm but also enhance it during its most difficult time. The most important safeguard for the FTM voice in transition – indeed, for any voice – is the development and use of the proper diaphragmatic breathing technique.<sup>1090</sup> All human beings breathe diaphragmatically when they are newborns and infants, and humans never cease to use this form of breathing during their sleep. The appropriate diaphragmatic breathing method is not only the most recommended for health, since it is the only one that utilises full lung capacity, but also has the advantage of better supporting the vocal change to a lower fundamental frequency (Fo). The reader can find detailed instructions suitable for FTMs in the appended Pedagogical Notes.

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<sup>1090</sup> Due to their well-known benefits, diaphragmatic breathing exercises have been included in the treatment for medical conditions such as COPD or asthma (e.g. by the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.). See also: M. Vitacca, E. Clini, L. Bianchi, & N. Ambrosino. 1998. 'Acute Effects of Deep Diaphragmatic Breathing in COPD Patients with Chronic Respiratory Insufficiency.' *European Respiratory Journal*. Vol. 11: 408 – 415.

I will now explain the combined method (i.e., both breathing and vocal exercising) that I myself used during my transition period, and which I consider to be both safe and rewarding for the changing FTM voice. As a trained singer, I had initially intended to try to follow my already-established practice regime, which I had been using for many years (this consisted of one and a half hours practice daily). When the changes in my voice were only subtle, I could still carry on with most of my regular practice. However I also had to accept the limitations of my changing vocal folds, as well as the accumulated fatigue in my lungs resulting from the prolonged use of a strong chest binder, which I had been wearing for almost three years (August 2002 - May 2005).

Soon after the modifications in my vocal folds became more prominent, though, I started finding 'open' exercises (i.e., exercises based on open vowels and sung in full voice) not only very demanding but also extremely disappointing in comparison to my previously established standards. Therefore, I soon stopped using them, and only occasionally continued to employ them to 'mark' or test some comfortable areas of my voice. Instead, I started approaching my voice for most of my practice time

through a set of exercises mostly based on consonants, especially fricatives. The Daily Practice exercises were selected from well-known contemporary sources, such as the Accent and Jo Estill methods, as well as more traditional material such as *Bel Canto* techniques.<sup>1091</sup> However, my own contribution has been to carefully combine and test their effectiveness with regard to the FTM voice. The reader can find the detailed method in the Pedagogical Note 2.

### **Students / Participants**

Even before the first presentation of this work in 2004, prospective participants had approached me and asked to participate in this research. In order to establish the necessary common ground, two conditions were stated: firstly, a commitment to one year's involvement (which I called Stage 1 – Changing Voice) and, secondly, a minimum of one year's previous singing experience. These conditions were followed rigorously but, as singing happened not to be among many transmen's priorities in 2004, one compromise had to be accepted: participants were to join this research programme at different stages and from different locations, using

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<sup>1091</sup> 'The Accent Method was developed by the Danish professor Svend Smith (1907-1985) [...]. It is a rational voice therapy that was developed to treat people with pathological or weak voices. The Accent Method helps the student to coordinate breath, vocal function, articulation, body movement and language.' (Klaus Møller, 'The Accent Method', <http://www.voicesource.co.uk/article/180> (17 December 2008). Jo Estill is a renowned educator, researcher and singing performer whose method assesses difficult technical aspects individually. More information on her extensive research can be found at [http://www.trainmyvoice.com/about\\_research.html](http://www.trainmyvoice.com/about_research.html).

a variety of communicational methods, such as Messenger or Skype. Nevertheless, they all followed exactly the same programme for the first year.

Participants exhibited from the start a wide age range (from early twenties to late fifties) as well as a range of transitional stages. Most importantly, they were divided into two major 'groups', according to methods of hormonal administration – abrupt or gradual (the lessons themselves were one-to-one: grouping existed only for study purposes). These groups (one following traditional hormonal administration, the other submitting to low start-gradual hormonal increase; eight in the first group, seven in the second plus my own results, which were treated in the same way as those of the other participants) were each subdivided in similar proportions according to age. Currently (August 2008), all participants in this first stage have completed the allocated time of one year, which, according to combined results, may indicate an FTM voice's successful singing transition. Fifty per cent have chosen to continue on to the second stage of this research – The Developing FTM Voice.

### **Ethical considerations**

Every contribution was anonymised and the progress, results and vocal samples appear only under code-names. Irrespective of variety of locations and participation methods, consent has been given and even when vocal

progress proved to be inferior to expectations, improvement always occurred and no harm was caused to any participant. Overall, the principles of 'autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice' have been observed throughout the various stages of this programme.<sup>1092</sup>

For study purposes only, the results were grouped according to participants' age and stage in transition. Other factors, such as laryngeal and bodily structure and size, and previous voice type, were also taken into consideration when studying subgroups. For the results reported in Appendix-Graph 4.3.2, the age groups were four (with age-ranges of 20-9, 30-9, 40-9 and 50-9 respectively), each subdivided into two by hormonal regime (traditional or gradual).

## Results

Though changing voices bear common characteristics, FTM transvocality behaves less conventionally than the rest. Some parameters, such as testosterone receptors and cartilage response in adult transitioning larynxes, can create further drawbacks. These had to be taken into consideration when putting the programme together as well as examining the results. Anyone dealing with FTM voices should understand that the vocal reactions to artificial testosterone are rarely

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<sup>1092</sup> T.L.Beauchamp and J.F. Childress. 2001. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 5th Ed. New York: Oxford University Press; 12-13.

stable or smooth, especially during the first year. The vocal practitioner needs to be able to anticipate these effects as well as any added obstacles.

In particular, in three out of four case-singers under the age of 40 who followed gradual administration, there was a gain in range of between a fifth and a ninth as well as an improved quality. However, there were some less predictable results within the same group. The most characteristic one was that of 'entrapped vocality', as defined above, which pre-existed in one of the four case-singers under 40 and, though there was improvement through exercise, the process reached a standstill due to constant hoarseness and the singer's inability to access and control certain vocal areas. The participant, in his late twenties, had approached me after one year of traditional testosterone administration. His larynx had not been particularly enlarged and resembled that of a hybrid mezzo-soprano. This example may indicate that testosterone administration instead of age alone can be another significant factor for the FTM transitioning voice.

On the other hand, singing participants over 40, who were not in their prime any more, might have been expected to produce less predictable results. Again, in all eight cases there was vocal range extension (from a fourth up to a sixth maximum). However, in four out of eight cases the

students' voices did not transition smoothly and had some percentage of entrapped vocality, significantly higher than for the younger singers. Here, even though the voice improved in all cases, the improvement was not significant enough to produce a reliable singing quality; especially in those following traditional testosterone administration. There was an unexpected result from one of the participants over 50, who had started on a gradual hormonal regime but, for personal reasons, had been unable to have lessons during that period. As a result he suffered entrapped vocality too. However, when we managed to start, the participant exhibited significant progress and in the first six months acquired more than an additional fifth to his range and a reasonable singing quality.

The first phase of this research has indicated that voices on a gradual hormonal regime behave in a way that is closer to average bio-voices and can be extended without harm. The results designate a preponderance of more predictable results among those following the gradual hormonal regime together with carefully arranged exercising.<sup>1093</sup> A second phase programme is currently in progress as well as the Developing Voice stage of phase one.

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<sup>1093</sup> Cf. Appendix-Graph 4.3.2.

## Conclusion

Even though the FTM speaking voice has been generally acknowledged to transition more convincingly than the MTF voice, male singing transvocality, to anyone who has seriously studied or worked with it, proves to be far more complex than its female counterpart. This is the reason why, whereas we nowadays have many examples of good quality MTF singers, there are so few singing transmen possessing voices of a semi-professional, let alone professional, standard. Nonetheless, after four years of my own as well as student-related experience, I can now demonstrate that a loss of singing ability is not inevitable for all FTMs. Even for those transmen who are beyond their twenties at transition, the work so far has shown that the combination of the right gradual testosterone intake together with soft exercising of the voice can help the voice not only to retain its singing quality, but also to acquire a new and aesthetically pleasing quality.<sup>1094</sup> Though the majority of FTMs do not possess bodies capable of supporting a masculine voice of operatic dimensions, there are many options that should not be neglected.<sup>1095</sup> After all, not many bio-men could claim that they have had a

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<sup>1094</sup> This work, because of advocating the lower testosterone intake for a start, has in the past been treated with suspicion by some members of the FTM community. I would like here to underline that what all papers reporting my research truly encourage is the importance of choice for those wishing to maximise their possibilities and retain their singing ability after transition.

<sup>1095</sup> One of the most obvious reasons for the above is that FTM thoraxes are on average smaller than those of bio-males and therefore have less capacity and strength.

transman's range of dual-sided gender experiences. Also, no matter how useful it can be for transmen to obtain knowledge and techniques via the general community, no one apart from singing FTMs could possibly have their insight, or claim to know exactly how transvocality functions under hormones, in relation to 'binding' or to surgery-linked issues. Therefore, though help *ex cathedra* is advisable, male transvoiced individuals should also ideally obtain and develop the skill for themselves. No matter how unnerving this can be, as Riki Ann Wilchins suggests, 'being oneself...is a performance of internal visualisation.'<sup>1096</sup> Experimenting, researching, and, consequently, discovering the particulars is the only way that true vocal personae can be revealed, first to the singing FTMs, and then to the general public.

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<sup>1096</sup> Riki A. Wilchins. 1997. *Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender*. New York: Firebrand; 155.

## Pedagogical Notes

### Retraining Ourselves on Diaphragmatic Breathing

For the novice, the best way to start is by relaxing in bed or on the floor. You can use either your hands or a book for a form of weight placed right after the end of your sternum, with your hands resting alongside your body if not in use. Since this exercise can take quite a while in the beginning, it is advisable for the beginner to raise the knees with two pillows to avoid straining the lower back. While trying to establish abdominal (diaphragmatic) breathing, it is also important to ensure that you are not slipping back into the old habit of using the upper chest to breathe. My own experience is that, unless you have a teacher actually overseeing your practice, you really need to create visible and audible warning signs that will be activated if your technique is not perfect. I myself remember using various noise-making-if-moved props attached to my upper chest as well as correctly placed mirrors.<sup>1097</sup> The second stage, after establishing the right type of breathing, is to attempt to control it. The best way to start is by fully exhaling and then letting your diaphragm do the inhaling “automatically.” Then try to hold your breath while initially counting to three, and then five, seven, ten etc. Once again exhale fully, and repeat as before. When this stage has been perfected, you should stand against

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<sup>1097</sup> See also: E. Peper, and V. Tibbetts. 1997. *Electromyography - Effortless Diaphragmatic Breathing*. San Francisco University: Institute for Holistic Healing Studies.

the wall with your legs forming a 45-degree angle to the wall and repeat the previous stage's instructions. When you feel comfortable enough, an upright chair can be used. Finally, you should stand unsupported and repeat the same exercise. Do not forget that during each stage you need to make sure that old incorrect breathing habits do not reoccur. Mirrors properly situated can be your best assistants for this task.

Those of us who are confident enough with our breathing technique not to need these exercises should take care because bad habits, especially during the most challenging times in the vocal transition, can easily go unnoticed. I certainly noticed my breathing and support patterns going berserk during that period.

### **Daily Practice**<sup>1098</sup>

A. Five minutes of simple freestanding breathing exercises, to relax and warm up the whole vocal instrument. You should exhale soundlessly through the mouth.

B. Perform the same exercise principle for five more minutes, with the difference that you should now exhale using the consonant V (formed

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<sup>1098</sup> This can – and should be – amended according to the individual needs; no two students are the same after all. However, the amendment should be preferably introduced by a voice tutor or specialist.

by the closed lips). The pace should be initially slow and gradually accelerate.

C. Perform ten minutes of rhythmic breathing exercising using the consonants S, Z, soft S, and finally soft Z. You are allowed to improvise in the choice of rhythmic patterns. For example, I have been using a lot of dotted, as well as triplets and semi-quaver values in my daily routine. It is extremely important to remember that, no matter how vigorous the exercises are, when the method of exhaling is proper, inhaling should happen automatically and with no signs of stress. If you notice otherwise, it is better to stop immediately and relax for a few minutes before completing the exercise (Alexander technique is very useful).

D. The next phase involves five minutes of exercising using pitch: initially this means the indefinite pitch, in the form of "sirens" with the mouth shut or "Ng - sirens" with the mouth open. Try to explore your full range---this exercise cannot harm you.

E. Perform exercises with definite pitch, involving rolling the letter R or doing lip trills on music patterns of easy to moderate difficulty. Please note: if the continuation "line" on the exercise is breaking that implies incorrect use of breathing patterns and *appoggio*/support.

F. Apply the previous principles and vocal placement to exercising with soft open and closed vowels. Do not try to produce loud or 'full' sounds--during the dramatic changes in an FTM voice, the pitch cannot be controlled if the dynamics are louder than *mezzo piano*.

Nevertheless, remember to keep the throat open and the soft palate raised! Do not be afraid to use your *falsetto* when it is finally acquired--it can actually help your singing ability a lot, and is not “effeminate.” That notion is truly a late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century idea in Opera that has little to do with the long history of the male voice.

G. Finally, apply the principles of the previous exercises in singing parts from simple folk songs and later pieces from the Niccolò Vaccaj method (Italian and English edition). It is better to obtain both high and low versions of the above book – your voice will change several times during your transition before reaching its final pitch. Therefore, feel free to transpose the pieces slightly if required!

H. Only when you reach the final stages of your vocal transition should you try to sing something more demanding!

#### 4.2.1. Researcher's Personal Data (2003-4)<sup>1099</sup>

Example of Testosterone Changes (Hz) on FTM Singing Voice (Low Start)

Start. Point

C3 (130.8Hz) – C6(1057Hz)

Three Months

B2 (123.5) – D5 (587 Hz)

Six Months

B2 (123.5Hz) – C5 (523.25Hz)

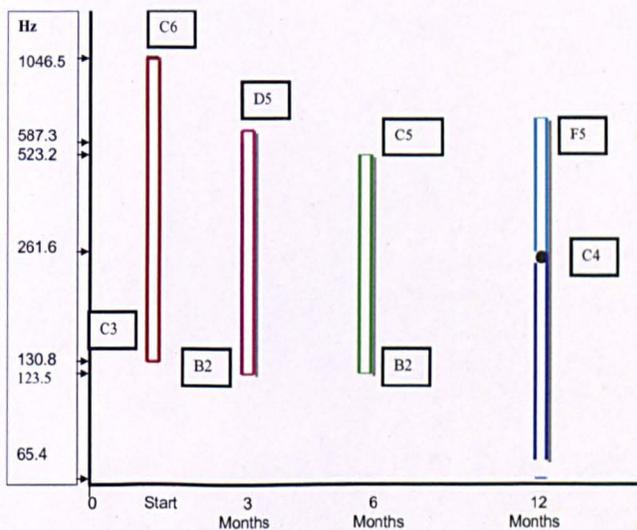
After One Year

1. C2 (65.40Hz) – C4 (261.6Hz)

2. C4 (261.6Hz) – F5 (698 Hz)

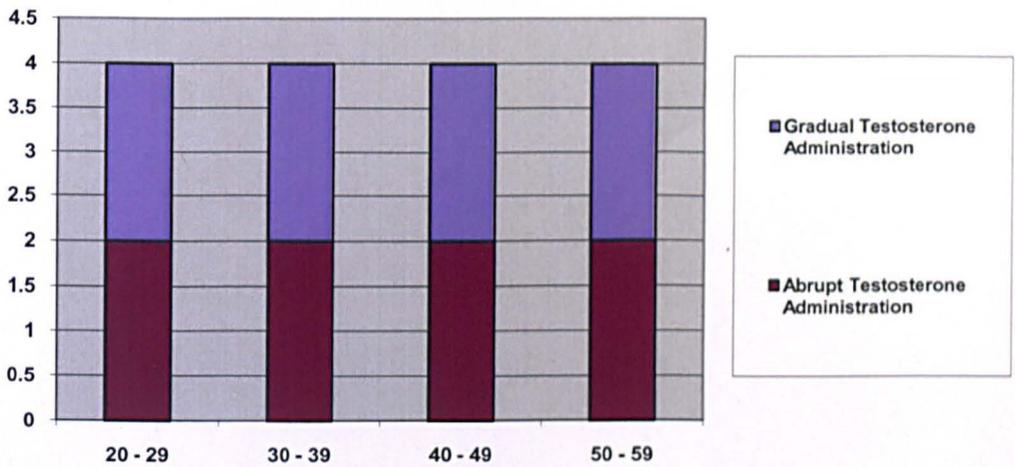
(see chart on next page)

#### 4.2.2. Researcher's Personal Data (2003 -4)

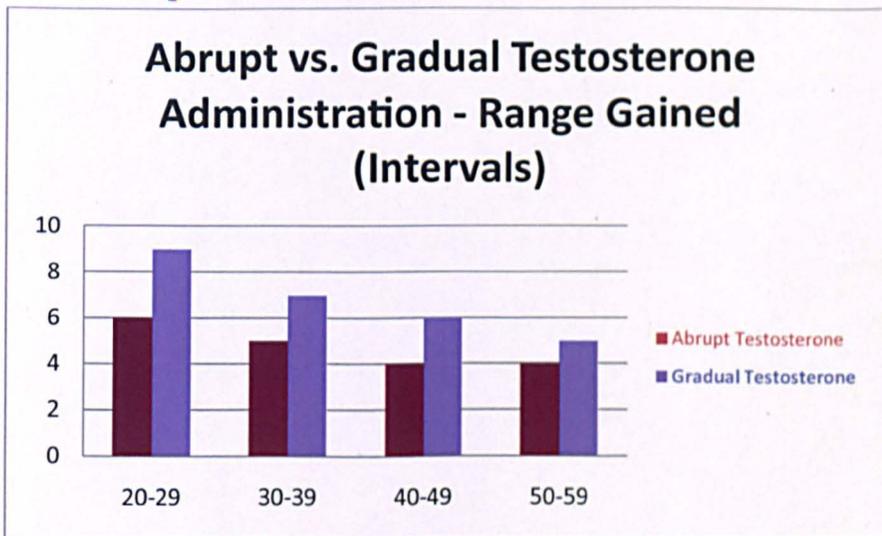


<sup>1099</sup> The notes mentioned are the following, according to Helmholtz' system:  
Starting point: *c* to *c'''*; Three months: *B* to *d''*; Six months: *B* to *c''*; After one year: (Low Range) *C'* to *c'* and (Higher Range) *c'* to *f''*.

### 4.3.1. Participants' Data (incl. Researcher's material)



### 4.3.2. Participants' Data (incl. Researcher's material)



### Participants' Results

**Abrupt HRT:** 250mg bimonthly / **Gradual HRT:** 100mg bimonthly for 6 months,

200 - 250mg bimonthly for the remaining six months

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