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OF REVIVALS AND DELAYED PREMIERES:  
PERFORMING THOMAS DUNHILL'S  
FORGOTTEN OPERA, SOMETHING IN THE CITY

CLARE REBECCA MARY WHEAT

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Volume 1 of 2

University of Huddersfield  
School of Music, Humanities and Media

May 2021

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## Abstract

Conceived in response to the discovery of a hitherto unperformed comic opera by Thomas. F. Dunhill and the consideration of performing practice issues surrounding a potential staging of this work, this thesis examines aspects of historically-informed performance relevant to the genres of British Light Opera. An investigation of vocal technique and style, including voice production, phrasing, breathing, pronunciation and rubato, as heard in recordings of singers known to have performed in comic operas by Dunhill and his contemporaries, will seek to establish a paradigm for vocal performance in this genre. Dunhill's unperformed opera, lacking an established performance tradition in the manner of the Savoy Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan, provides a valuable opportunity for the adoption of fresh perspectives in performance.

Much valuable research has been undertaken in recent years into nineteenth-century historical vocal performance. The present study, whilst informed by such research, will highlight similarities and differences between performance techniques in opera and the collaboration of genres which make British Light Opera. This will be done through the use of detailed analysis, drawing on audio and audio visual evidence, such as that available through Pathé films of performers such as Trefor Jones (tenor lead in Dunhill's *Tantivy Towers* under the composer's supervision) to comprehensively address issues of physicality in performance.

This thesis is accompanied by audio and video recordings of a concert version of the comic opera *Something in the City*, performed in St. Paul's Hall, University of Huddersfield on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019. These recordings provide examples of a performance of the opera using historically appropriate approaches to style and technique. Additional recorded material demonstrating experimentation with related vocal music is also included as a precursor to the opera.

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# Introduction

These operas are like magic mirrors into which we can all gaze and see the foibles of our fathers and grandfathers reflected with gentle satire and fluent musical grace for the amusement and joy of generations to come.<sup>1</sup>

British Light Opera (BLO)<sup>2</sup> occupies a place in the margins of many established performing disciplines. The professional concert and opera singer of today will occasionally visit the light opera repertoire in search of an encore or perhaps to take a role within a revisionist production of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera by a major opera company.<sup>3</sup> The musical theatre singer may occasionally find themselves in a role which references earlier genres of the ‘musical’.<sup>4</sup> Whilst both classifications of performers would be expected to have access to high-level coaching within their respective fields for each role they undertake, personal experience suggests that, in general, fundamental matters of established vocal technique and style changes little when they perform in light opera genres.<sup>5</sup> As the memory of the social, cultural, aesthetic and stylistic basis of BLO has largely faded from the collective musical consciousness, it is perhaps inevitable that, if performed at all, singers should project onto the bare framework of the scores their own established performing style.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1929), p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the various light opera genres written and produced in Britain between approximately 1870 and 1945 such as comic opera, light opera, operetta and musical comedy will be referred to collectively as British Light Opera and henceforth referred to as ‘BLO’.

<sup>3</sup> An example being Jonathan Miller’s production of *The Mikado* for English National Opera, set in a seaside town in the 1920s rather than in Japan.

<sup>4</sup> *The Boyfriend* and *The Drowsy Chaperone*, for example.

<sup>5</sup> This observation is based on the author’s experience of a wide range of current practice as both a listener to, and performer of British Light Opera. This opinion is also lent some credence by comments made by Marilyn Hill-Smith in a conversation with the Author, (Cheltenham, 5 April 2018).

Nevertheless, as this thesis aims to demonstrate, BLO genres have distinctive aesthetic and stylistic features, which, in performance, are most convincingly served by an understanding of the particular vocal techniques and interpretative concerns of those performers who were close to the creation of these works.

## **Background and Rationale**

BLO has featured significantly in my own performing career, particularly the music of Gilbert & Sullivan, Edward German and Ivor Novello. As a child and teenager I was a member of several local amateur operatic societies, often working with longstanding members with broad and varied performing experiences. I was fortunate to receive, on many occasions, music that they no longer required, much of which was sheet music by light music composers such as Wilfrid Sanderson and Haydn Wood and vocal scores of operetta and light opera which were no longer being performed, including music by Lehár, Edward German and Ivor Novello. As a young singer with a light and bright vocal timbre which was being developed through lessons, I was advised that my voice ‘would suit’ this type of music. Indeed I did enjoy singing this repertoire as the vocal range required lay comfortably in my head voice.<sup>6</sup> However, concurrently with this singing activity, I was also involved in musical theatre as a singer and dancer. The vocal demands of this repertoire (necessitating the almost exclusive use of chest voice due to the generally low tessitura)<sup>7</sup> were so far removed from that of the light music described thus far that for much of this period I effectively had two voices – a chest voice and a head voice. At this stage in my vocal development I had not learnt to combine the two, which often made choosing repertoire challenging. Singing with a chest voice was never part of my

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<sup>6</sup> Examples of such repertoire are often included in my solo vocal recitals, partly as an opportunity to sing music which sits gratefully in the voice and is musically rewarding, partly due to its rarity value and partly for its nostalgic audience appeal.

<sup>7</sup> Issues concerning vocal registers will be discussed in chapter 3.

formal training as a singer during my teenage years and this clearly demonstrated to me the fundamental differences of vocal technique and style between the contemporary musical theatre and that of the past.

My own initiation into the performance of operetta on the stage was in the role of *Margot* in Sigmund Romberg's *The Desert Song*<sup>8</sup> (at the age of sixteen). This show was (by 1998) already considered rather 'old fashioned' but the operatic society had chosen to perform it partly as a nostalgic exercise. The implications of such a choice for a society whose younger members were, by this stage, not generally classically trained quickly became apparent and through this, a generational divide in vocal experience and stylistic orientation became obvious. The demands of the principal role of *Margot* were not only vocal (with a high tessitura centred around F' to C''') but also included the need for agility and movement. Thus the unlikely scenario developed where I, as a sixteen-year-old principal was understudied (vocally) by a member of the society who was substantially older (and who on several other occasions had played the role of my Mother), purely on account of the vocal demands of the role.

Listening to recordings has been an important part of my process of preparing performances of light music, including recordings from the first half of the twentieth century. On first hearing historical recordings,<sup>9</sup> it is immediately apparent that there are approaches to portamento, rubato, breathing, vocal timbre and pronunciation that were clearly part of the expressive vocabulary of this music and need to be understood, but are quite different from those often heard in present day performances. Such recordings provide compelling evidence of stylistic approaches in terms of rubato, portamento, pronunciation and diction and this evidence has often directly contradicted my own preconceived perceptions of good practice in

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<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Romberg, *The Desert Song* (London: Chappell & Co. Ltd., 1926). [vocal score]

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, 'Historical Recordings' are those which date from the earliest extant examples to approximately 1945 and/or possess historical interest in terms of performing practice. Primary evidence, such as recordings by performers associated with productions supervised by the composer/librettist exists for the Gilbert and Sullivan canon of comic operas and most subsequent British Light Opera genres of the period covered in this thesis.

many aspects of performance and indeed that which is often taught in contemporary vocal pedagogy.<sup>10</sup> This would appear to make the situation regarding performing practices of light opera repertoire analogous to Sarah Potter's assertion regarding twenty-first century attitudes to the historically-informed performance of nineteenth century vocal repertoire:

A lack of collaboration between scholars and performers is evident in the approach currently accepted in performances that pertain to be historically-informed. This situation has been exacerbated by a failure to disseminate scholarly research effectively to professional performers and the institutions that train them.<sup>11</sup>

That the evidence provided by historical recordings is surely the most direct evidence we possess of past performance styles would appear to be a truism within the context of current historically-informed research. However, Robert Philip's relatively early (1992) *apologia* for the value of historical recordings as evidence seems relevant within the context of vocal performing practices in light opera genres which are situated outside of the mainstream of vocal research:

The [early twentieth-century] recordings have preserved the general performance practice of the period in great detail, and the detail includes habits which are scarcely mentioned, if at all, in written documents[...] The greatest value of this is that it forces us to question unspoken assumptions about modern taste, and about the ways in which we use it to justify our interpretation of earlier performance practice.<sup>12</sup>

Some aspects of performance, such as vocal timbre, pitch and tempo can be difficult to establish with absolute certainty due to the vagaries of recording and playback speeds of early recording equipment<sup>13</sup> but can be largely mitigated by adherence to c.A=440. In addition,

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<sup>10</sup> Whilst observing lessons and masterclasses at leading conservatoires it has often been said that the use of portamento is 'outdated', 'old fashioned' or 'un-stylish' even in the repertoire under discussion here.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2014), p. 2. For a similar assertion see Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Beardsley, 'Speeds and Pitching of 78rpm Gramophone Records', ([n.p.]: Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music, 2009) <[https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/history/p20\\_4\\_3.html](https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/history/p20_4_3.html)> [Accessed 23 May 2020]. Here, Beardsley usefully summarises issues such as variable recording/playback speeds in early recordings and discussed the huge variations of recording speed employed, from 68-70rpm for Caruso's recordings to over 80rpm for some pre-electrical (1925) recordings.

filmed performances provide important supplementary evidence, particularly from the late 1920s onwards with the commercial advent of film with synchronised sound.<sup>14</sup> The visual dimension is particularly useful in establishing corollaries between facial expression, breathing and voice production. A significant archive of filmed performances of British artists exists in the sound newsreels produced from 1930 by First National – Pathé. Newsreels incorporating synchronized sound were initially shown in cinemas from 1930 as *Pathé Gazette* – produced by the company ‘First National – Pathé’, a parent company of the present-day ‘British Pathé’.<sup>15</sup> These are ‘documentary’ in nature and often relatively straightforwardly filmed, with acceptable sound and synchronization which can give a useful representation of a performer’s manner, technique and vocal style. The proliferation of light opera recordings from the first years of the twentieth century onwards, in some ways compensates for a certain lack of written evidence such as the annotated editions which are central to much of the research undertaken into performing practices in nineteenth-century string music by Kate Bennett Wadsworth,<sup>16</sup> for example. Pedagogical literature does, however, form an important source of information, particularly with regard to prevailing notions of good practice and technique in the period under discussion, providing a context to the analysis of audio-visual evidence. Where possible, the pedagogical lineage of singers associated with BLO will be traced and evaluated. In addition to treatises and other primary sources which deal with matters of vocal technique, style and aesthetics, other related literature will also be consulted. Scholarly literature regarding language, including diction, phonetics and pronunciation also provide valuable insights into

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<sup>14</sup> Two systems which synchronized sound recordings with film images were developed in the late 1920s: Vitaphone’s ‘Sound-on-disc’, used by Warner’s for *The Jazz Singer* and subsequent talkies, synchronised gramophone recordings with the moving visual images. Lee de Forest’s ‘Sound-on-film’ process, initially known as *Phonofilm*, became standard practice in film studios of the 1930s. Sound was recorded optically on film during filming which, following processing, produced a sound-track which was synchronized with the visual footage. (Wheeler W Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *A Short History of Film* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008). p.89-90.)

<sup>15</sup> ‘History Of British Pathé – British Pathé And The Reuters Historical Collection’, *Britishpathe.Com*, 2020 <https://www.britishpathe.com/pages/history> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020].

<sup>16</sup> Kate Bennett Wadsworth, ‘‘Precisely marked in the tradition of the composer’’: the performing editions of Friedrich Grützmacher’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2017).

prevailing norms. The work of Daniel Jones in cataloguing the phonetics of English in the multiple editions of his *An English Pronouncing Dictionary (On Strictly Phonetic Principles)*<sup>17</sup> provides a useful reference point for understanding the changing nature of Received Pronunciation<sup>18</sup> and through this an understanding of vowel and consonant formation in BLO singing.

Light opera, operetta and musical comedy has hitherto received little attention in terms of a historically-informed approach to performance.<sup>19</sup> This is hardly surprising, considering the relative neglect of much of this repertoire in mainstream performance. The Gilbert and Sullivan canon of Savoy Operas alone has maintained a constant presence in the British musical consciousness throughout the twentieth century until the present day.<sup>20</sup> In order to recover lost meanings and relevance, Stephen Banfield, writing in 2000, enthusiastically espoused an historically-informed approach to this and related repertoires: ‘The performance practice of the twentieth century’s singing entertainers is a vital component of the mass culture of its period, and cries out to be analysed and interpreted’.<sup>21</sup> Evidently, such research was not forthcoming as Banfield, writing in 2016, reiterates this theme, making a similar plea for: ‘[...]another of those research projects begging to be undertaken: the study of performance practice’. Banfield

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<sup>17</sup> The first edition of this work is Daniel Jones, *An English Pronouncing Dictionary (On strictly phonetic principles)* (London; Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1917). Subsequent editions provide a useful record of changing linguistic practices in the English language from this date onwards.

<sup>18</sup> A term coined by A J Ellis in 1869 but becoming widely used after Daniel Jones adopted it for the 1924 edition of his English Pronouncing Dictionary. Jonnie Robinson, ‘Received Pronunciation’, 2019 <<https://www.bl.uk/british-accent-and-dialects/articles/received-pronunciation>> [accessed 6th April 2020]

<sup>19</sup> Derek B. Scott, in a keynote address at the biennial Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain conference, University of Birmingham, 28–30 June 2017 discusses musical comedy and the paucity of research and performance in this genre, for example. Derek B. Scott, ‘British Musical Comedy in the 1890s: Modernity Without Modernism’, *Victorianweb.Org*, 2018 <<http://www.victorianweb.org/mt/comedy/scott.html>> [accessed 18 February 2020].

<sup>20</sup> Whilst professional opera companies such as English National Opera do perform certain Gilbert and Sullivan operas, it is perhaps through amateur productions (such as the annual performances at the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival, Harrogate) that the works are most widely performed.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Banfield, ‘Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. by John Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 63.

is here discussing English musical comedy, 1890-1924, and perhaps articulates the crux of the present thesis:

Period recordings (and some later footage of one or two stars) offer ample scope for this [the study of performance practice], and the more alien or inexplicable a star's manner of speaking, singing, and projecting appears now, the further its semiotics have to be probed if anything at all is to be explained.<sup>22</sup>

The music of Thomas F. Dunhill (1877 – 1946) has long been of significant interest to me as a singer, initially through songs such as *The Cloths of Heaven* and *To the Queen of Heaven*, both of which I sang as a child either in ABRSM exams or local music festivals.<sup>23</sup> It was during the preparation and research for a song recital that it became apparent that Dunhill had a close connection to Scunthorpe, my hometown.<sup>24</sup> Further reading revealed the existence of an unperformed comic opera *Something in the City*.<sup>25</sup> The conception of the opera began in 1937 when Dunhill received an invitation to set a libretto to music:

[...]written by two men, FJ Whitmarsh and BW Smith, who worked in the publicity department of Shell (Anglo-Saxon Petroleum). Whitmarsh had contributed verses to *Punch* [magazine]. The opera was already called *Something in the City*. The first sketches were made in August and [Dunhill] was working hard on it for the rest of the year.<sup>26</sup>

Dunhill already had a close affinity with Light Opera – in addition to a lifelong enthusiasm for the Savoy operas of Gilbert and Sullivan which culminated in one of the earliest comprehensive studies of Sullivan's music.<sup>27</sup> Dunhill had a significant success in 1931 with

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen Banfield, 'English Musical Comedy, 1890-1924', in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 136-137.

<sup>23</sup> Dunhill was a frequent adjudicator within the competitive musical festival movement which proliferated during his career. His compositions (particularly for children) were regularly included in festival syllabi.

<sup>24</sup> Through his work as an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Dunhill had met and fallen in love with Isobel Featonby, a local Scunthorpe piano teacher, who became his second wife. He died during a visit to her Mother's house in 1946 and is buried in the graveyard of Appleby Church, just outside Scunthorpe. In 2016, I organised a weekend festival of the music of Dunhill's music in Scunthorpe with the aim of promoting his chamber, choral, vocal works and music written for children. The festival included performances from local choirs, children and professional performers. See Appendix 1, Dunhill Festival Programme.

<sup>25</sup> David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music* (London: Thames Publishing, 1997) pp. 99ff.

<sup>26</sup> David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music*, p. 99.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation*.

his comic opera, *Tantivy Towers*, which received live productions and radio broadcasts throughout the subsequent decade. The discovery of the unproduced comic opera *Something in the City* provided an opportunity to research appropriate historically-informed techniques and apply them to a work without an established performing history. The vocal score was published in 1940<sup>28</sup> and the orchestration exists in three volumes as part of the Dunhill Archive in the Royal College of Music library.<sup>29</sup> The libretto remained unpublished but the Dunhill Archive contains a typed and duplicated copy, together with correspondence between Whitmarsh, Smith and Dunhill regarding the project and Dunhill's diaries of the time. Enough extant material therefore exists to reasonably assume that the opera would have been produced but for a series of unfortunate circumstances. The principal reason for the project to be halted abruptly is likely to be the coincidence of the completion of the opera with the declaration of war by Britain in September 1939. In addition, Dunhill's increasing ill health might also account for the fact that it was not produced in his lifetime.

*Something in the City* proves to be an interesting hybrid work – the situation of the plot in a contemporary 1930s London is superficially reminiscent of many musical comedy plots of the Edwardian era. The 'city' office setting contrasting with suburban life and an avowedly witty libretto would seem, however, to reflect similar tropes within much mid- twentieth century British comedy of the post war era.<sup>30</sup> Discussion of the musical style of this work in chapter 4 uncovers affinities with Edward German's musical style, particularly in the solo and duet writing. There are, however, equally strong parallels in musical style and characterisation with Sullivan, (in the concerted numbers and the chorus writing of the finales, for example).

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Something in the City* (London: J.B. Cramer, 1940) [vocal score].

<sup>29</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Something in the City, A Comic Opera. Full Score (In 3 Volumes)' (London: Royal College of Music Library, Thomas Dunhill Collection. 11687).

<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, 'Something in the City' is also the title of a 1950 British film comedy, directed by Maclean Rogers. Whilst unrelated to the comic opera, the film's plot is similarly London-centric, contrasting suburban attitudes to working in 'the city'. (Maclean Rogers, *Something In The City* (Walton-on-Thames: Nettlefold Films Limited, 1950)).

As such, these apparently incongruous elements make this comic opera a suitable medium through which differing BLO performance traditions can be trialled. A variety of performing practices will be discussed within chapters 1, 2 and 3. The performing practices chosen for investigation and re-creation within the opera concentrate on the following which emerge as clear determinants of suitable contemporary style: flipped ‘r’, rolled ‘rr’,<sup>31</sup> anticipated consonants, use of clear diction, portamento, rubato, shortened phrases and the use of additional breaths. A period of reflection following the production of *Something in the City* and subsequent further research has raised new questions regarding the process undertaken in attempting to embody historically informed performance principles. A detailed explanation of the processes involved in creating a concert version of this opera, which forms the basis of the practical element of this thesis, is discussed in detail in chapter 5.

This thesis aims to identify the characteristics of the various BLO genres through an investigation of existing literature, recordings and reception history. The recorded legacy of performers associated with these genres<sup>32</sup> will be assessed and analysed for evidence of vocal performing practices, together with an investigation of relevant vocal pedagogies, with a view to understanding both the basis for their vocal techniques and the artistic decision making in performance which they encapsulate. A process of experimentation with historical performing techniques clarifies the impact on my own vocal performing practices. This in turn leads to the formulation of a methodology for the incorporation of such historical techniques in a first production of *Something in the City*. The planning, rehearsal, and performing process of this production is then analysed with recommendations for the possible future applications of this research.

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<sup>31</sup> The flipped ‘r’ refers to a single articulation of the tongue against the upper front teeth. Rolled ‘rr’ refers to an elongated articulation.

<sup>32</sup> Appendix 17 contains hyperlinks to online audio visual resources.

## Chapter One

# British Light Opera in Context

### 1.1. Historically-Informed Performance Contexts

Whilst there is a growing interest in historically-informed vocal performing practices (albeit lagging behind the well-established field of instrumental performance), this has tended to focus on ‘serious’ operatic and song-based genres. The various genres of light opera, including BLO, have been largely absent from such discussion. Sarah Potter’s 2014 PhD thesis *Changing Vocal style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century*<sup>1</sup> investigates historical vocal performing practices in mainly European operatic genres and proposes methodologies for harnessing such practices in contemporary performance. Robert Toft’s *Bel Canto: A Performer’s Guide*<sup>2</sup> seeks to understand performing practices associated with the ideals of the so-called *Bel Canto* school of singing, whilst John Potter in texts such as *Vocal Authority*<sup>3</sup> encompasses a broad range of vocal performance genres in his analyses of vocal style. Whilst the subjects of these studies are distinct from those addressed in this thesis, there are significant commonalities, particularly with regard to pedagogical approaches and analytical methodologies. Their importance to this study must therefore not be underestimated. Sarah Potter’s analyses of pedagogical literature, in particular those of Manuel Garcia and Mathilde Marchesi, are directly relevant to the vocal pedigrees of many light opera singers. Sarah Potter’s accounts of breathing techniques, both in terms of pedagogical advice and

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performer’s Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> John Potter, *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

practical experiences have informed much of the discussion regarding breath control and restrictive garments in this thesis. The methodologies of analysing vocal recordings and the observations drawn from them by Sarah Potter have been influential in the present study. In a similar way to the work that has been undertaken in the field of historically informed performance across many vocal and instrumental genres, an aim of this research is to gather appropriate stylistic knowledge to enable stylistically informed performances and productions of BLO.

An increasing number of Historically-Informed Performance (HIP) studies in recent years have analysed early recordings for evidence of performing practices. Kate Bennett-Wadsworth,<sup>4</sup> Neal Peres Da Costa,<sup>5</sup> Jung Yoon Cho,<sup>6</sup> David Milsom,<sup>7</sup> Sarah Potter,<sup>8</sup> Miaoyin Qu<sup>9</sup> and Anna Scott<sup>10</sup> analyse early recordings of nineteenth century performers which provide a tantalising glimpse of details of performing practices which otherwise elude the written word. In most circumstances, evidence from recordings supplement written sources such as treatises and scores annotated by editors and performers; with the exception of Sarah Potter, these studies deal with either string or piano repertoire, with Scott, Qu, Cho and Bennett-Wadsworth further concentrating on performing practices in Brahms' piano or string sonatas. Bennett-Wadsworth identifies a group of scholar-performers, including Milsom, Scott, Qu and Cho whose aim is to 'embody' historical performing practices within their own performances through the application of historical performance techniques evidenced in early recordings.

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<sup>4</sup> Kate Bennett-Wadsworth, 'Precisely Marked in the tradition of the Composer': the performing editions of Friedrich Grützmacher' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Jung Yoon Cho, 'Re-interpreting Brahms Violin Sonatas: Understanding the Composer's Expectations' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (Aldershot; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain During the Long Nineteenth Century'.

<sup>9</sup> Miaoyin Qu, 'Piano Playing in the German Tradition, 1840-1900: Rediscovering the Un-notated Conventions of Performance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Anna Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms: Early Recordings and the Reconstruction of Brahmsian Identity*. (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leiden, 2014).

These broadly fall into two categories: 1) The imitation of actual historical recordings which aim to (re)capture the nuances and interpretative characteristics of the original recording as closely as possible and: 2) The analysis of historical recordings which lead to an understanding of historical performance techniques which are then applied to other repertoire. Potter's 'Recorded Portfolio'<sup>11</sup> uses elements of both approaches, with the experimentation-through-performance of research findings, from treatises and other written pedagogical sources regarding larynx height, being particularly relevant to this rather intangible aspect of a singer's technique.

Questions of vocal style and performing practice issues are considered in Robert Philip's pioneering book *Early Recordings and Musical Style*.<sup>12</sup> Here, Philip usefully situates the advice of nineteenth-century vocal pedagogues such as Manuel Garcia II within the broader spectrum of other, mainly instrumental pedagogical sources. The use of gliding and slurring<sup>13</sup> and tempo rubato in singing is discussed with particular reference to the flexible vocal line above a strict accompaniment.<sup>14</sup> Both of these elements are amongst the most characteristic features of vocal performances in early recordings, including those of light opera. Philip analyses contrasting approaches to portamento in recordings of singers and instrumentalists of Dvořák's *Songs My Mother Taught Me*. Amongst the singers are two associated with light opera on the British stage: Richard Tauber<sup>15</sup> and Maggie Teyte.<sup>16</sup> Philip notes a generally more restrained approach by Tauber in comparison to Teyte but it is equally instructive to compare the approach of singers and instrumentalists as a whole, in an effort to understand the interface

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<sup>11</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain During the Long Nineteenth Century', pp. 141ff.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* p. 216.

<sup>14</sup> Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* p. 222.

<sup>15</sup> Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* p. 172-176.

<sup>16</sup> Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* p. 172-176. The performing practices of Maggie Teyte (1888-1976), as the soprano lead in the revival cast of *Tantivy Towers* in 1935, is discussed at length throughout this thesis.

between general stylistic features of historical performing practices and more specific vocal or instrumental characteristics. Whilst much of Philip's analysis has relevance to an understanding of light opera performance, aspects of the following assessment of the rate and direction of change in performance trends during the Twentieth Century are, when applied to light opera recordings, debatable:

By the 1930s there were clear trends away from these early twentieth-century characteristics: the spread of continuous vibrato on stringed instruments, its increasing prominence amongst singers[...] *the decreasing prominence and frequency of portamento on both strings and voice; a trend towards stricter control of tempo and slower maximum speeds; more emphatic clarity of rhythmic detail, more literal interpretation of note values, and the avoidance of rhythmic irregularity and dislocation* [my italics].<sup>17</sup>

The recordings of light opera investigated in this thesis do not, in general, exhibit the 'decreasing prominence' of portamento mentioned above, nor does there appear to be a noticeable trend towards the tempo and rhythmic characteristics identified. In *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*,<sup>18</sup> Philip is primarily concerned with instrumental performance but also includes general discussion of relevance to this thesis, such as the analysis of portamenti in string playing and vocal performance. Philip states that '[...]the fundamental ethos of period performance has far more in common with conventional modern music making than with the past'<sup>19</sup> and warns that the evidence of historical recordings can uncover uncomfortable truths regarding style and technique when matched against twenty-first century priorities in music performance.

Whilst few would argue that the musical texts of BLO have ever been imbued with the authority with which many canonic works of the classical repertoire have been in musicological and performing traditions, a comparison of historical and modern performances of BLO genres

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<sup>17</sup> Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* p. 229.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* p. 233.

would suggest that there has been a comparable change of attitude towards the interpretation of musical text by their performers as to that of the classical repertoire, albeit perhaps at a slower rate. According to José Bowen, ‘the idea of music as work (with the score as its inviolable sacred text) began to replace the idea of music as event (with the score as merely its blueprint).’<sup>20</sup> It would seem likely when comparing historical and present day recordings of BLO that a similar trajectory of the development of performing aesthetics occurred *after* World War 2 as has been identified in mainstream classical performance *before* World War 2 by Philip<sup>21</sup> viz. an increasingly literal interpretation of musical texts and a significant change in aesthetic priorities. Leech-Wilkinson, somewhat echoing Phillip as discussed earlier, observes a tendency amongst singers born between the 1850s and 1880s to shape phrases through broad tempo changes giving way to smaller scale rubati, which responded minutely to each harmonic twist and text-based image, as exemplified by Lotte Lehmann (born 1888). This highly inflected manner of performance was then itself superseded by a style of singing exemplified by Elizabeth Schwarzkopf (born 1915) and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (born 1925) which favoured wider and more prominent vibrato and dynamic variation as the principal expressive devices.<sup>22</sup> These observations are, nevertheless, highly generalised and give a rather one-dimensional impression of these artists’ manner of performance, who after all were noted for their minute attention to text, especially in lieder singing.<sup>23</sup> It is also interesting to note that Leech-Wilkinson, like Philip earlier, is here discussing ‘classical’ genres. A comparison of

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<sup>20</sup> José A. Bowen, ‘Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works’ in *Rethinking Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 429.

<sup>21</sup> Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, p. 229ff

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, ‘Recordings and Histories of Performance Style’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 246-262 (p. 253).

<sup>23</sup> See Gerald Moore, *Am I Too Loud?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), p. 178. Gerald Moore - the accompanist of choice for much of Schwarzkopf and Fischer-Dieskau’s careers - observed Fischer-Dieskau’s rhythmic ‘freedom and elasticity ...not only influenced by the words he is singing but by a poignancy of feeling for the music itself’. See also ‘Elisabeth Schwarzkopf Discusses Her Roles and Interpretation; Part 1’, *The WFMT Studs Terkel Radio Archive*, 2020 <<https://studsterkel.wfmt.com/programs/elisabeth-schwarzkopf-discusses-her-roles-and-interpretation-part-1>> [Accessed 18 April 2020]. Here Schwarzkopf, in a 1962 radio interview, emphasises the primacy of text in both lied and opera.

Schwarzkopf, for example, reveals a tendency when performing Lehár<sup>24</sup> to employ more of the performance characteristics associated by Leech-Wilkinson with the inter-war period of lieder singing, particularly regarding tempo flexibility and portamento than is evident in her other repertoire such as Mozart and Strauss operas.

The interpretation of texts within a knowledge of pre-existing concepts is discussed by George Kennaway, who suggests that ‘sets of instructions are best understood in terms of an overall concept of their intended object [*Gestalt*]’.<sup>25</sup> The scores in BLO do not generally constitute a detailed ‘set of instructions’ into performing practices in the way that the annotated scores of Friedrich Grützmacher do in Bennett Wadsworth’s research into cello performing practice, for example, but rather provide a framework to hang a set of vocal performing practices on. The possibility of a *Gestalt* for BLO genres, which is distinct from other vocal genres and which may have different aims and objectives will therefore be addressed. A particular set of performative expectations and requirements for BLO performance will be developed through an understanding of the cultural and social milieu of these genres and the observation and aural analysis of audio visual recordings. Current research into vocal performing practices and pedagogical texts which constitute ‘sets of instructions’ for other vocal genres will therefore be considered within the context of BLO *Gestalt* concepts.

### **1.1.1. Vocal Contexts**

The ‘classical’ voice continued to remain central to the vocal performing practices and expressive world of light opera at least until the Second World War in its British, European

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<sup>24</sup> Franz Lehár, ‘Vilja-Lied’ from *Die Lustige Witwe* (*Elisabeth Schwarzkopf: A Viennese Evening* (Radio-Canada: VAI International, VAI 4390)) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2jRkp6Ucho>> [Accessed 15 July 2020].

and American incarnations. Stephen Banfield, writing in 2016, summarises a commonly accepted narrative of BLO genres in this period thus:

Two men, Arthur Sullivan and William Schwenk Gilbert, created England's approved musical theatre, in the form of the Savoy comic operas, between the years 1875 and 1889. When they fell out[...]their tight cultural rein was loosened and a riot of 'gaiety' overtook the West End, as befitted the 'naughty nineties' and the frivolous, heartlessly capitalist Edwardian era that followed.<sup>26</sup>

The longevity of musical comedy, the principal forum for 'gaiety' which succeeded the Savoy Operas in the domination of London's West End theatres from the 1890s and throughout the Edwardian era, suffered due to a number of factors:

[...] musical comedy, nurtured above all by the impresario George Edwardes, was served by an extraordinary welter of talent, names to conjure with that nonetheless blew away like thistledown after or in some cases before the First World War[...] The cuckoo in the nest was Broadway, first importing British musical comedies from which its creative practitioners such as Jerome Kern and the producer Charles Frohman learnt their trade, but by the 1920s exporting its own to the West End[...] American superiority coupled with the built-in generic obsolescence of topic musical comedy (as opposed to that of the later 'integrated' musical) wiped the 'gaiety' years and its products clean from the slate.<sup>27</sup>

Subsequent genres such as revue and the romantic musical comedies of Ivor Novello have suffered to a greater or lesser extent a similar fate. There has been some interest in recent years in recording light opera repertoire, particularly those with connections to Sullivan and his circle often receiving their first recording under the auspices of the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society, for example Alfred Cellier's *The Mountebanks*, Sullivan's *The Beauty Stone* and *Haddon Hall*, François Cellier's *Captain Billy* and Ernest Ford's *Mr Jericho*.<sup>28</sup> The society

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Banfield, 'English Musical Comedy, 1890-1924', in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 117-142 (p. 117).

<sup>27</sup> Banfield, 'English Musical Comedy, 1890-1924', p. 117.

<sup>28</sup> 'News - Sir Arthur Sullivan Society', *Sir Arthur Sullivan Society*, 2020  
<<https://sullivansociety.org.uk/news/?v=79cba1185463>> [Accessed 3 April 2020].

also had an input into a recent recording of Alfred Cellier's *Dorothy*, conducted by Richard Bonyngne.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, fully staged productions of this repertoire remain a rarity.

If the study of BLO and musical comedy in particular has been somewhat neglected in academic circles, critical appreciation of the music and its performance is even scarcer. Scott is one of the very few commentators to address performance traits in nineteenth century popular music, such as yodelling and the legitimacy of this and other techniques within the context of developing expectations within 'serious' music performance.<sup>30</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson argues that previously legitimate expressive devices, such as portamento in lieder singing, were rendered obsolete by a rapid change in aesthetic, brought about by the societal upheaval of the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> Mark Katz proposes an alternative line of thought which may have implications for vocal as well as instrumental performance. Katz argues that a decline in portamento usage in violin playing in the early 1930s is attributable to recording technologies, where a portamento 'may create a sense of impulsiveness or spontaneity in concert',<sup>32</sup> but on a recording, 'robust sliding (which was common in the early twentieth century) may sound calculated or contrived when heard repeatedly[...]'.<sup>33</sup> The naivety which may be seen as implicit in such devices as portamento, Leech-Wilkinson argues, found no place in a post-war aesthetic which tried to make sense of the horrors of their recent past by searching for quasi-Freudian subtexts and darker themes in repertoire which had previously been characterised as:

[...] a simple communicative world in which everything means exactly what it seems to, in which trust is absolute. Portamento brings to performances precisely these qualities: sincerity, and depth of feeling and, by implication, a context in which it is safe to express these things.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Alfred Cellier, *Dorothy: A Pastoral Comedy*, Victorian Opera, cond. by Richard Bonyngne [on CD] (Naxos, 8.660447).

<sup>30</sup> Derek B Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Portamento and Musical Meaning', *Journal Of Musicological Research*, 25.3-4 (2006), 233-261 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01411890600859412>>.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Katz, 'Portamento and the Phonograph Effect', *Journal Of Musicological Research*, 25.3-4 (2006), 211-232 (p. 211) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01411890600860733>>.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Katz, 'Portamento and the Phonograph Effect', p. 211.

<sup>34</sup> Leech-Wilkinson, *Portamento and Musical Meaning*, p. 249.

The commonalities between Leech-Wilkinson's analysis and the evidence of performing practices in light opera before the Second World War are many and the relationship between vocal genres: light opera; grand opera; lieder may be considered, at this period, to a certain extent symbiotic. Many singers of the early twentieth century who were eminent in grand opera and song genres were able to translate their performing techniques and personas into light opera genres successfully; in Britain, singers such as Maggie Teyte, Steuart Wilson, Gwen Catley and Gladys Parr were all established concert and opera singers who appeared in productions and recordings of Dunhill's *Tantivy Towers*, for example.

In *Origin and Development of Light Opera*,<sup>35</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay (1876-1952), a pupil of Manuel Garcia II with professional experience on the West End light opera stage, situates BLO genres within a discourse of the international historical development of light opera. From the perspective of its authorship in 1926, this source provides useful insights into perceptions of the genre as it stood in the first decades of the twentieth century and his predictions for the future. The passing of a phase in which 'An attempt to turn all singers into dancers of the first rank, all dancers into singers of the first rank'<sup>36</sup> is welcomed by Mackinlay. Although not explicitly stated, this is likely to be a criticism of aspects of musical comedy practice of the time of the First World War. It is perhaps significant that Mackinlay makes no mention of the musical comedy *Chu Chin Chow* or of its composer, Frederic Norton despite the huge commercial success of the show.<sup>37</sup> In describing the show, Kurt Gänzl quotes *The Stage*, describing it as 'a combination of musical comedy and Christmas pantomime'.<sup>38</sup> *The Times*, in a review following the opening night, describes the show thus: 'It is continuously

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<sup>35</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1927).

<sup>36</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 280.

<sup>37</sup> See Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986), p. 48: *Chu Chin Chow* opened in August 1916 at His Majesty's Theatre and ran for 2235 performances before closing in July 1921.

<sup>38</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 33.

musical[...] always rhythmical and rather sugary[...] There is perpetual gyrating and posturing and madcap dancing.’<sup>39</sup> It is this characteristic to which Mackinlay appears to object; the dissipation of performance energy between both singing and dancing. The ‘Dance-Comedy’ which Mackinlay observed in 1926 as the successor to the earlier musical comedy featured ‘a troop of eight highly specialised dancers’<sup>40</sup> with only ‘a little light singing’ which satisfied ‘the public delight in elaborate dancing[...] without the high vocal standard of the romantic music-drama being lowered or destroyed.’<sup>41</sup> Mackinlay may also have had in mind a related but distinct theatrical genre in his criticism of ‘Dance-Comedy’ - West End revue (revue) - which had also been developing as an alternative theatre culture in parallel to the Edwardian musical comedy.

Characterised by an edgier, more satirical tone, revue embraced the emerging Jazz idioms from America and developed into dance and musical spectaculars which: ‘incorporated many performance forms, styles and diverse expressive elements.’<sup>42</sup> By contrast, the ‘Romantic-Music drama’ - a broad term coined by Mackinlay to differentiate between Ballad Opera and Comic Opera which incorporates works of perhaps a more serious or musically ambitious nature - was the area of light opera in which Mackinlay saw most hope for the future of light opera. This was particularly developed by Ivor Novello whose shows maintained a vocal tradition from earlier musical comedy, reflected in the casting of Zena Dare, a star of the Edwardian musical comedy scene was cast in *Glamorous Night* in 1935 and Mary Ellis, Novello’s favoured leading lady. Ellis had a career at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and created the role of the Novice in Puccini’s *Suor Angelica* before turning to musical

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<sup>39</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p280.

<sup>41</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p280.

<sup>42</sup> David Linton, ‘English West End Revue: The First World War and After’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 143-168 (p. 145).

comedy.<sup>43</sup> Novello's early experience in revue (sometimes in collaboration with Jerome Kern) and Ellis' career in American musical comedy (creating the title role in Rudolf Friml's *Rose Marie*)<sup>44</sup> in many ways mirrors the changing musical comedy scene of the 1920s onwards, in which American musical comedy became both competition and influencer for native West End shows.

Stephen Banfield identifies two distinct developments in the vocal properties of stage and screen entertainers in the twentieth century, which he terms 'shifts'.<sup>45</sup> The first 'shift' occurs when American musicals such as *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946) are introduced and is described as '[...]the technically pure, secure, trained, 'integrated' use of the singing voice giving way to the Broadway belt.'<sup>46</sup> Banfield characterises the change as 'replacing an elite with a vernacular or folk voice',<sup>47</sup> whilst warning against a simplistic view of the change: '[...]for them to be reconciled necessitates a deeper layer of distinction, not just between (culturally) 'high' and 'low' musical voices but between the actorly truth of speech and the singerly enchantment of song.'<sup>48</sup> The characterisation of the 'trained' voice against the 'belt' voice in terms of high and low culture is, however, problematic. Banfield acknowledges this, observing that: 'the vast bulk of the [New York Stage]<sup>49</sup> recordings points between 1890 and 1920 to only two types of musical entertainer: comedians and singers'<sup>50</sup> and comments on the almost universal acceptance of the 'trained' voice:

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century there was never any problem with a low- or middlebrow audience accepting a 'pure' soprano voice, though because of its

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Webb, 'Ellis [Elsas], Mary', *Grove Music Online*, 2009  
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.48351>> [Accessed 31 July 2020].

<sup>44</sup> Webb, 'Ellis [Elsas], Mary'.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. by John Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 64.

<sup>46</sup> C. Osborne, 'The Broadway Voice: Just Singin' in the Pain', pp. 57-65 and 53-6 in Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 64.

<sup>47</sup> Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 65.

<sup>48</sup> Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 65.

<sup>49</sup> *Music from the New York Stage: 1890-1920* [CD] (Wadhurst: Pavilion Records, 1993) in Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 65.

<sup>50</sup> Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 65.

lightness the operetta or musical comedy soprano, best thought of as soubrette tended to sound higher than it was.<sup>51</sup>

Mackinlay recalls a slightly richer mix of experience in a light opera cast of this period. In addition to singers from varied backgrounds, there were high and low brow elements *within* comedy roles: '[...]there was an artist brilliant in high comedy, polished, pointed, and "chic"; while a contrast was provided by another who had a fund of genial low comedy, and a long record behind her as "principal boy" in countless pantomimes.'<sup>52</sup>

Whilst the second 'shift', as identified by Banfield, occurred in the latter part of the twentieth century and therefore falls outside the chronological parameters of this thesis, these developments are worth noting. They may help to explain in part the current perspectives of singers in Musical Theatre and the removes at which the performative requirements of light opera might exist for them should they engage with this repertoire. The second 'shift' references a changing vocal aesthetic which capitalises on the possibilities offered by close microphone placement for female singers as a 'belt mix', or, 'belt with legit',<sup>53</sup> characterised as either 'stack[ing] a soprano block on top of a belt block' or 'alternate belt and legit sounds in the same range.'<sup>54</sup> For male singers, it is exemplified by the incorporation of elements of rock singing, such as the roles of 'Jesus and Judas in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970-72).'<sup>55</sup> Banfield also identifies the use of parody of previous vocal styles,

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<sup>51</sup> Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 74.

<sup>52</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *Light Opera* (London: Hutchinson & Company Ltd., 1926), p. 40. The range of singing styles and competencies which these elements encompass, from 'singerly enchantment' (Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 65.), to 'low comedy' will be discussed further in chapter 2.

<sup>53</sup> 'Legit' in this context refers to singing based on a generic 'classical' technique and aesthetic, incorporating the use of head voice.

<sup>54</sup> C. Osborne, 'The Broadway Voice: Just Singin' in the Pain', *High Fidelity* (January- February 1979), p. 62 in Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> Banfield, 'Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century', p. 79.

such as *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) where ‘the vocality and stance of operetta and the classic musical are back with a vengeance, however wry the inverted commas’.<sup>56</sup>

The post-war musical (in Britain and particularly the United States) has increasingly become the subject of scholarly interest and debate. Academics such as Dominic McHugh and performers such as John Wilson have actively engaged with this genre in performance, often reconstructing or reviving lost or neglected works,<sup>57</sup> in many cases reintroducing the genre to contemporary audiences. It is notable, however, that here and in most of the light opera genres discussed thus far, little attempt appears to have been made to investigate relevant historical vocal performance styles and use them in performance. A comparison between John Ieuan Jones’ performance of the song *Queen of my Heart* from *Dorothy* in Bonynges’s 2018 recording and Alan Turner’s 1908 performance<sup>58</sup> reveals a markedly freer approach to rhythm in Turner’s performance and noticeable portamenti. This is in contrast to the more regular rhythmic approach of Jones together with a noticeable lack of portamento except isolated instances over small intervals. Similar observations are made when comparing performances of later repertoire. The performances of *Make Believe* by Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel in the 1951 MGM film of *Showboat*<sup>59</sup> and that of Sierra Boggess and Julian Ovenden in a 2012 performance by John Wilson at the BBC Proms<sup>60</sup> reveals significant differences of technical and stylistic vocal approach. Grayson employs liberal portamenti and rubato which is notably

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<sup>56</sup> Banfield, ‘Stage and Screen Entertainers in the Twentieth Century’, p. 80.

<sup>57</sup> McHugh has produced musicals by Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Loewe, Leonard Bernstein, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, and Jule Styne at the University of Sheffield, whilst John Wilson has built a significant reputation in the performance of operetta, musicals and move scores.

<sup>58</sup> Alfred Cellier, ‘Queen of my Heart’ from *Dorothy* sung by Alan Turner [sound recording] (Victor 16289, 1908) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LJSDJBJ8Js>> [Accessed 14 November 2019].

<sup>59</sup> Jerome Kern, ‘Make Believe’ from *Showboat* sung by Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel [sound film] (dir. by George Sidney, Metro-Goldwin-Mayer Corp., 1951) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VvpDE87b7E>> [Accessed 14 November 2019].

<sup>60</sup> Jerome Kern, ‘Make Believe’ from *Showboat* sung by Sierra Boggess and Julian Ovenden, ‘Prom 59: John Wilson on Broadway’, *BBC Proms 2012*, 1 September 2012 [television broadcast] (dir. Jonathan Haswell, BBC TV, 2012) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGqdHXLr04I&t=570s>> [Accessed 14 November 2019].

absent from Boggess' performance. There are also significant differences in vocal timbre and approach to vibrato.<sup>61</sup>

### 1.1.2. Approaches to the Analysis of Recordings: Issues and Methodologies

The act of analysing early recordings for evidence of past performing practices and style with a 'period ear' is usefully problematised by Laura Tunbridge in *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*. Tunbridge demurs from attempting to assess the aesthetic qualities of recordings of lieder singers of the inter-war era due to their being 'desperately compromised by the limitations of technology and current tastes'.<sup>62</sup> This view seems overstated and unduly pessimistic, although perhaps understandable - written as it is within the context of a study which concentrates on the 'motivations and contingencies'<sup>63</sup> of the singers discussed by Tunbridge. Shai Burstyn offers a more hopeful picture of the validity and interpretation of earlier performing practices:

If 'historical listening' is a chimera, the only sensible, indeed, realistic approach is to realize that as listeners we encounter the vast musical treasures of the past from the one vantage point available to us - our aesthetic experience. If, however, we wish to understand better the ways past listeners may have perceived their music, we can enlist the combined resources of our historical knowledge and musical sensitivity to construct a hypothetical musical-mental model of listeners in a given place and time.<sup>64</sup>

In many ways, the aural analysis of vocal performing practices suffers less from the limitations of technology to which Tunbridge alludes. It is well documented that the singing

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<sup>61</sup> See Christopher Morley, 'Conductor John Wilson is back at Symphony Hall Reconstructing Lost Film Scores from Hollywood', *Business Live*, 17 November 2014 <<https://www.business-live.co.uk/economic-development/conductor-john-wilson-back-symphony-8119467>> [Accessed 3 April 2020]. This observation appears to be contradicted by John Wilson, however, in this 2014 interview, in which Wilson discusses the process of recreating the musical scores of the MGM Studios' musicals. He briefly addresses the rehearsal process with singers, stating 'Luckily, the singers we work with are all stylists, know what's needed...'

<sup>62</sup> Laura Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety: Lieder Performances in New York and London Between the World Wars*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*, p.11.

<sup>64</sup> Shai Burstyn, 'In Quest of the Period Ear', *Early Music*, 25(4) (1997), 693-701 [Accessed July 15 2020] <[www.jstor.org/stable/3128413](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3128413)> p. 695.

voice recorded particularly successfully in pre-electrical recording processes and certainly accounted for a significant proportion of commercially released recordings. David Patmore suggests that ‘the repertoire recorded for this period [pre 1907] was largely dictated by what would record well for the process then in use’.<sup>65</sup> This, in addition to commercial viability, may account for the fact that catalogues of record companies in the first years of the twentieth century therefore consisted mainly of recordings of ‘military bands, music hall artists who were used to projecting in the rowdy conditions of the Victorian and Edwardian theatres and halls, and opera singers, also fully experienced in vocal projection’.<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, the performers of BLO often seem to encompass both Music Hall and Opera definitions employed by Patmore. It is also fortunate that the commercial success of BLO (particularly in the early twentieth century) made it economically viable for record companies to actively record their artists. This was despite some suspicion of the gramophone in the early years of recording by the pioneer in musical comedy and powerful theatre manager George Edwardes, who reputedly did not ‘[allow] his artists or productions to be recorded if he could prevent it.’<sup>67</sup>

Nicholas Cook provides a useful overview of analytical methodologies associated with the evidence of recorded music. Cook acknowledges the value of musicological work with recordings which uses equipment ‘no more specialised than a record or CD player, a pencil, and perhaps a stopwatch, coupled with the capacity for close listening that comes with experience’<sup>68</sup> This approach forms the basis of analyses of recorded evidence in the present thesis and will hitherto be referred to as *close critical listening*. Nevertheless, Cook is particularly keen to outline the ways in which technology can ‘create an environment that

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<sup>65</sup> David Patmore, ‘Selling Sounds: Recordings and the Record Business’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 120-139 (p. 122).

<sup>66</sup> Patmore, ‘Selling Sounds: Recordings and the Record Business’, p. 122.

<sup>67</sup> Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Musical Comedy: A Story in Pictures* (London: Peter Davies, 1969), p. 32.

<sup>68</sup> Nicholas Cook, ‘Methods for analysing recordings’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 221-245 (p.222).

makes it easier to listen effectively'<sup>69</sup> Sonic Visualiser<sup>70</sup> is discussed in terms of its functionality which facilitates the comparison of multiple recordings, the ability to annotate sound files and to align multiple recordings giving a visual representation of the wave forms of each.<sup>71</sup> Cook alludes to the pioneering work by Carl Seashore<sup>72</sup> in which he analysed sound sources through the visual evidence of oscillograms, which were the result of filming an oscilloscope during performance.<sup>73</sup> Using this method, Seashore analysed vibrato in voices and instruments and proposed, on the evidence of such analysis, criteria for an understanding of the factors which constitute 'good' and 'bad' vibrato.

Seashore's work is instructive, not only in terms of the evaluation of vibrato in relation to his evidence, but also as an indicator of attitudes towards vibrato in vocal performance in the 1930s and therefore with clear implications for the present study, in terms of providing a comparative tool for evaluating the performance characteristics and vocal timbres heard in BLO recordings.

Other analytical methods such as a 'tapping' technique which was a physical reaction by the analyst to the music being heard by tapping a pulse, beat or bar into a computer which logged the temporal patterns,<sup>74</sup> are discussed by Cook as useful for gathering data relating to mapping rubati, but are questioned with regards to the accuracy achieved.

This analytical method and the others discussed so far belong to the realm of data gathering, where quite detailed information may be collected. The problems of the interpretation of this data are discussed by Cook, particularly regarding approaches which

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<sup>69</sup> Cook, 'Methods for analysing recordings', p. 222.

<sup>70</sup> Chris Cannam, Christian Landone, and Mark Sandler, 'Sonic Visualiser: An Open Source Application for Viewing, Analysing, and Annotating Music Audio Files' in Proceedings of the ACM Multimedia 2010 International Conference <<https://sonicvisualiser.org/>> [Accessed 12 December 2019]

<sup>71</sup> Cook, 'Methods for analysing recordings', pp. 222-223.

<sup>72</sup> Cook, 'Methods for analysing recordings', p. 228.

<sup>73</sup> Carl Seashore, *Psychology of the vibrato in voice and instrument* (Iowa: The University Press Iowa City, 1936), p. 12ff.

<sup>74</sup> Cook, 'Methods for analysing recordings', p. 231.

‘[work] *from* a score-based analysis *to* a recording [which] basically declares off limits all those aspects of performance that cannot be directly related to notational categories’.<sup>75</sup> Cook warns that the ‘page to stage’ approach negates the impact of ‘all the rhetorical, persuasive, or expressive effects that contribute so much to the meaning of music as performance’.<sup>76</sup> This is a significant observation in formulating methodologies of performance analysis in BLO genres, as they are particularly prone to deviate, sometimes quite significantly, from notated scores.

Analyses of recordings which have close links with the present topic have been undertaken by David Milsom and Sarah Potter. Milsom analyses vocal performances within the context of a study of nineteenth-century violin performing practices, the principal analytical method being ‘to catalogue the various features through the medium of the present author’s personal reaction and tabulation.’<sup>77</sup> Features such as portamento and rhythmic modifications are analysed, therefore, through close critical listening. Tempo and tempo rubato are, however, analysed using computer-aided research techniques. Potter adopts a close critical listening approach in the production of annotated scores which form the basis for experimentation in her own portfolio of performances, which aim to reconstruct performing practices gleaned from the analysis of historical recordings. In assessing the success of her study, Potter acknowledges the relative dearth of existing research in this area and the need ‘for more detailed enquiry, particularly in the dedicated study of early recordings’.<sup>78</sup> The analyses by both Potter and Milsom provide a useful insight into nineteenth-century vocal performing practices which have clear relevance to forming an understanding of possible contexts for the evidence of recordings of BLO, particularly those relating to the recordings of performers associated with the original productions of the Gilbert and Sullivan Savoy operas. There are, however, significant

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<sup>75</sup> Cook, ‘Methods for analysing recordings’, p. 233.

<sup>76</sup> Cook, ‘Methods for analysing recordings’, p. 233.

<sup>77</sup> Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain During the Long Nineteenth Century’, p. 166.

differences in the recorded evidence offered by BLO performers and those represented by Potter and Milsom's studies. The widely varying background, training and timescale of the singers associated with light opera means that the range of technical and aesthetic features is potentially much wider. BLO performers, particularly those with an acting, Burlesque and Music Hall background often lack the documentary evidence of their vocal training (if any)<sup>79</sup> and prior experience which can be a useful contextual tool when considering the aural evidence of recordings. More positively, many of the singers who recorded BLO repertoire, particularly those associated with musical comedy of the early 1900s onwards were in their fully active performing careers when they were recorded. Because of the nineteenth century focus of both Milsom and Potter's studies, many of the singers analysed by them are in their mid to late career or beyond the usual retirement age of performing singers.<sup>80</sup>

## 1.2. British Light Opera in Cultural and Social Contexts

The broader culture of opera is discussed in *Everyday Arias – An Operatic Ethnography*.<sup>81</sup> The basis of this book is a study of the rehearsal and performance processes of particular productions by Welsh National Opera. Elements of performance, such as operatic acting 'larger than life and slower than life';<sup>82</sup> the 'repertoire of gestures'<sup>83</sup> and a discussion of

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<sup>79</sup> This does not necessarily apply to some of the original D'Oyly Carte singers on record, especially those with an operatic training such as Esther Palliser, who was a pupil of Pauline Viardot Garcia and Mathilde Marchesi or Scott Russell who was a student of Gustave Garcia. See John Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record* (Chichester: Headlions, 1985), p. 20 and p. 25.

<sup>80</sup> Adelina Patti was, for example 62 years of age when she recorded *Home Sweet Home* in 1905 and Emma Albani made records at the age of 67. The average age of singers in the recordings analysed by Sarah Potter is 48.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Atkinson, *Everyday Arias: An Operatic Ethnography* (Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> Atkinson, *Everyday Arias*, p. 84.

<sup>83</sup> Atkinson, *Everyday Arias*, p. 86.

the differentiation between Musical Theatre and Opera<sup>84</sup> could be of specific interest in the development of the production of Dunhill's *Something in the City*.

As a social anthropologist, Atkinson is particularly concerned with questions of changing attitudes to taste and the roles played by all of the production team. In rehearsals he observes character traits and roles expected of professionals in an opera company and enacted by them in life and on the stage. One of his themes is that of the performer who plays a character on stage as dictated by the composer and librettist and plays the role of a professional singer on stage, with all the associated expectations and pressures. In the development of the production of *Something in the City*, these fundamental characteristics of performers and the account of successes and failures within the development of operatic productions may become relevant and a source of information and guidance in the direction and management of those involved in the production of Dunhill's opera.

In a similar vein is *Amateur Operatics – A social and cultural history*.<sup>85</sup> The amateur music scene developed significantly during the first half of the twentieth century. Whilst not perhaps at the cutting edge of innovation in the genre, the amateur operatic movement acted as a reliable barometer of taste through this period. The early years of many societies (often the first decade of the twentieth century) are dominated by Gilbert and Sullivan, which in turn gradually gives way to late Victorian and Edwardian shows such as *Floradora* and *The Quaker Girl*.<sup>86</sup> Lowerson dates the development of the movement back to the 1870's and explores the geographical, gender and class aspects, placing particular emphasis on music making in the

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<sup>84</sup> Atkinson, *Everyday Arias*, p. 96.

<sup>85</sup> John Lowerson, *Amateur Operatics: A Social and Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

<sup>86</sup> Mackinlay claims that in Amateur Operatic Societies 'Out of pre-war productions some 90 per cent were Gilbert and Sullivan...at the end of ten years the percentage of Gilbert and Sullivan operatic performances had dropped to 60 per cent. Since then this decline has continued until, by the spring of 1927 the percentage of Gilbert and Sullivan operas had dropped to 40 per cent.' Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, pp. 277-278.

provinces which provides an alternative to the rather London-centric discussion of professional performances.

One of the inevitable consequences of the under-appreciation of BLO which was alluded to in the introduction is a lack of literature specifically dealing with this genre. *The Oxford Handbook of The British Musical*<sup>87</sup> provides an overarching narrative for the genre (or rather collection of genres under the umbrella term ‘Musical’), from eighteenth-century ballad opera; through nineteenth-century theatre music towards the collaboration of Gilbert and Sullivan; musical comedy; the English operettas of Ivor Novello; the so-called ‘American invasion’ of *Oklahoma*, followed by the British reaction to this in works such as *Oliver!* and finally the ‘Epic Musical’ such as *Les Misérables* (admittedly French in origin but included here presumably due to its overwhelming impact on the culture of British Musicals and Cameron Mackintosh’s role in this), *Phantom of the Opera* and other Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals and finally ‘Pop’ and ‘Jukebox’ musicals such as *Mamma Mia!*

Reference books include a series by Kurt Gänzl. *Gänzl’s Book of the Musical Theatre*<sup>88</sup> contains synopses of many light operas with details of first performances. *The Encyclopedia of the Musical Theatre*<sup>89</sup> contains biographies and synopses in three volumes. *The British Musical Theatre*<sup>90</sup> provides a chronological account from 1865 to 1914 (Vol 1) and 1915-1984 (Vol 2). This is perhaps Gänzl’s most significant contribution through his commentary on almost all musical theatre activity of these periods. Richard Traubner’s *Operetta – A Theatrical History*<sup>91</sup> provides a chronological account of the major schools of operetta. Of particular

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<sup>87</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>88</sup> Kurt Gänzl and Andrew Lamb, *Gänzl’s Book of the Musical Theatre*. (London: The Bodley Head, 1988).

<sup>89</sup> Kurt Gänzl, *The Encyclopedia of the Musical Theatre*, 2nd edn (New York: Schirmer Books, 2001).

<sup>90</sup> Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Volume 1 1865-1914* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1986) and Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Volume 2 1915-1984* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1986).

<sup>91</sup> Richard Traubner, *Operetta – A Theatrical History*. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1984).

relevance are the accounts of the Savoy tradition and the Edwardesian Era<sup>92</sup>. The earlier chapters do, however, provide a useful contextualisation of British operetta through accounts of its Viennese and Parisian predecessors.

Philip L. Scowcroft<sup>93</sup> discusses a broad range of light music genres with an account which, whilst making ‘no attempt to make a lofty historical or musical survey’,<sup>94</sup> nevertheless provides much useful contextual information and some evaluative analysis regarding relevant but sometimes obscure light opera practitioners. Amongst these are figures such as Alfred Reynolds (1884-1969), the musical director of the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith during Sir Nigel Playfair’s tenure as actor-manager and at the time of the first production of Dunhill’s *Tantivy Towers* in 1931.<sup>95</sup> Scowcroft’s account of Reynolds’ career provides a useful overview of the musical activity at this theatre, and, by concentrating on the musical activity, complements Playfair’s own account of his time running the Lyric Theatre, in his book *Hammersmith Hoy*.<sup>96</sup> There is much useful information regarding the details of the artistic direction taken by Playfair, particularly regarding the production processes of various musical revues and light/comic opera undertaken, of which *Tantivy Towers* was one such production. Amongst other composers in light opera genres discussed by Scowcroft are:- G. H. Clutsam, the creator of *Lilac Time*,<sup>97</sup> which ‘ran for 626 performances after its premiere at the Lyric on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1922’;<sup>98</sup> Harold Fraser-Simson (1878-1944 - the composer of *The Maid of the Mountains*); Edward German (1862-1936 – described by Scowcroft as ‘Sullivan’s heir’)<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> A term which denotes the heyday of the impresario George Edwardes (1855-1915).

<sup>93</sup> Philip L. Scowcroft, *British Light Music: A personal gallery of 20<sup>th</sup>-century composers* (Binsted: Dance Books, 2013).

<sup>94</sup> Scowcroft, *British Light Music*, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Scowcroft, *British Light Music*, pp. 88-92.

<sup>96</sup> Nigel Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy: A Book of Minor Revelations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1930).

<sup>97</sup> An English version of the operetta *Die Dreimadlerhaus* by Heinrich Berté (1858 – 1924) which used Schubert’s melodies. See Scowcroft, *British Light Music* p. 31.

<sup>98</sup> Scowcroft, *British Light Music* p. 31.

<sup>99</sup> Scowcroft, *British Light Music* p. 50.

and Montague Phillips (1885-1969 – the composer of *The Rebel Maid* and husband of the light-operatic soprano Clara Butterworth).

Alexandra Wilson<sup>100</sup> discusses opera within the context of the emerging 1920s British Jazz scene in terms of perceptions of high and low culture. Whilst light opera is infrequently addressed, this is nevertheless a useful contextualisation of 1920s attitudes towards - and appetites for - widely differing genres at this significant time for British light opera.

There has been a certain amount of scholarly interest in Gilbert and Sullivan's work but in general light opera genres have been somewhat neglected in academic study. An exception is Derek B. Scott's *Sounds of the Metropolis*<sup>101</sup> which investigates popular music forms, including light opera, within the context of the popular music revolution of the nineteenth century. In Chapter 4 – *The Rift between Art and Entertainment*, Scott addresses the often complex coexistence of Light Music and Serious Music, and the 'friction between art and entertainment and its effect on aesthetic status'<sup>102</sup> within the cultural milieu in which they existed. Particular attention is paid to the potential for parody, which such a context generates and the ways in which 'stock situations or clichés of opera, and the artifices of the genre'<sup>103</sup> are parodied in the works of Sullivan and Offenbach: 'the ridiculousness of private confessions before an audience; [...]the inquisitive or commenting operatic chorus, a body of people who somehow manage to think up identical questions simultaneously and pose them in a perfectly synchronised manner'<sup>104</sup> and 'vocal pyrotechnics, extended melismas, and cadenzas.'<sup>105</sup> Scott's commentary provides a useful context for the consideration of the manner of performance appropriate in light opera; the irony embedded in much of this repertoire operating

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<sup>100</sup> Alexandra Wilson, *Opera in the Jazz Age: Cultural Politics in 1920s Britain*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>101</sup> Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis*.

<sup>102</sup> Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis*, p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis*, p. 101.

<sup>104</sup> Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>105</sup> Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis*, p. 105.

not – as in serious opera – through the ‘irony of situation’ but rather, ‘irony communicated through music[...][where] The “wrong” musical sign is used to great ironic effect; in other words, a song or aria may be double coded’<sup>106</sup>

### 1.2.1. Gilbert & Sullivan

The partnership of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, and particularly their collaboration in the Savoy Operas, has been the subject of numerous studies from the reminiscences of Savoyards<sup>107</sup> in later life to scholarly texts in recent years. The largely autobiographical texts of the partnership prove useful in establishing a context for understanding the performative decisions made during the creation and production of the Savoy Operas, whilst also, in varying degrees, mythologising the partnership for twentieth and twenty-first century audiences. *The Gilbert & Sullivan Book*,<sup>108</sup> in addition to a comprehensive account of the partnership, reflects on the fortunes of the Savoy operas following the deaths of W.S. Gilbert in 1911 and Helen D’Oyly Carte in 1913.<sup>109</sup> Baily’s later book *Gilbert & Sullivan and their world*<sup>110</sup> is a more condensed and conventional narrative. The biopic *The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan* (1953)<sup>111</sup> was co-written by Baily and based on *The Gilbert & Sullivan Book*.

*Gilbert & Sullivan – The Creative Conflict*<sup>112</sup> explores the nature of their partnership and seeks to understand the source of the conflicts which arose and directly affected the outcome

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<sup>106</sup> Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis*, p. 106.

<sup>107</sup> Although the term ‘Savoyard’ is frequently used to denote a G & S enthusiast and/or performer in contemporary Musical Theatre culture, the term here is borrowed from John Wolfson’s survey of singers who made records and were associated with the original productions of the Savoy operas or otherwise associated with Sir Arthur Sullivan himself. Therefore ‘Savoyard’ in this thesis refers to a singer who worked with Gilbert and/or Sullivan themselves. See Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*.

<sup>108</sup> Leslie Baily, *The Gilbert & Sullivan Book* (London: Cassell and Company, 1952).

<sup>109</sup> Baily, *The Gilbert & Sullivan Book*, p. 403.

<sup>110</sup> Leslie Baily, *Gilbert & Sullivan and their world* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973).

<sup>111</sup> *The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan*, dir. by Sidney Gilliat (London Film Productions, 1953).

<sup>112</sup> David Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan – The Creative Conflict* (Cranbury, NJ; London; Mississauga, Ont.: Associated University Presses, 1989).

of the operas through their respective personalities: David Eden characterises Gilbert as having ‘the psychological make-up of an infant; [...] rigid, mechanical and domineering’<sup>113</sup> whereas Sullivan is characterised as a ‘man of Shakespearean humility’.<sup>114</sup> The overarching theme of Eden’s argument appears to be to reassess Sullivan’s standing as a musician and his specific contribution to the Savoy Operas. Eden makes a case for renouncing the commonly-held opinion of Sullivan as a second-rate composer, despite some rather hyperbolic statements (‘With a talent greater than Brahms’ he *should* have been a thundering egotist’),<sup>115</sup> whilst attributing Sullivan’s low critical status to the difficulty critics have had in ‘reconcil[ing] his obvious gifts with his equally obvious failure to use them according to the prescribed romantic formula’<sup>116</sup> and asserting that ‘the dominance of Gilbert is the Pathetic Fallacy of Savoy Opera, the artistic unity of which is actually the composer’s achievement’<sup>117</sup>

Jane W. Stedman discusses the partnership within the broader context of Gilbert’s life and career, offering a rather more nuanced view of Gilbert’s personal and professional relationships.<sup>118</sup> Alan Hyman’s *Sullivan and His Satellites – A survey of English Operettas 1860-1914*<sup>119</sup> is in a similar vein but also addresses the contemporaries and immediate successors to the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership, including a comprehensive account of the challenges that Gilbert and Sullivan faced in the changing musical theatre landscape of the late 1880s – a gradual shift of taste which began with *Dorothy* and would develop into the musical comedy of the Edwardian Era and beyond.

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<sup>113</sup> Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan – The Creative Conflict*, p. 196.

<sup>114</sup> Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan – The Creative Conflict*, p. 182.

<sup>115</sup> Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan – The Creative Conflict*, p. 162.

<sup>116</sup> Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan – The Creative Conflict*, p. 162.

<sup>117</sup> Eden, *Gilbert & Sullivan – The Creative Conflict*, p. 196.

<sup>118</sup> Jane W. Stedman, *W.S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>119</sup> Alan Hyman, *Sullivan and His Satellites: A survey of English Operettas 1860-1914* (London: Chappell and Company, 1978).

Thomas F. Dunhill's study of Sullivan's music<sup>120</sup> within the Savoy opera canon is the most thorough study of Sullivan's compositional processes in terms of the characterisation of Gilbert's texts through melodic shape and character, orchestration, and form. Gervase Hughes<sup>121</sup> provides a more general (and conventional) analysis of Sullivan's music *in toto*, whilst William Cox-Ife<sup>122</sup> is concerned primarily with performative issues which are only very occasionally addressed by Dunhill. Carolyn Williams has investigated the cultural impact of parody and satire in Gilbert and Sullivan in which she identifies the role of parody in terms of the 'forms and foibles of social life' and parody as 'artistic or literary works, aesthetic features, or generic conventions of the past or present'.<sup>123</sup> Whilst Williams does provide an occasional commentary on musical style, such as identifying the Handelian parody of 'All Hail, great Judge!' in *Trial by Jury*<sup>124</sup> and the quasi-Verdian parody in *The Pirates of Penzance*, the main thrust here is to understand the social contexts and impact of the operas within late Victorian society and challenge current, often revisionist, perceptions of these works. Regina B. Oost discusses the constitution of the Savoy audiences in *Gilbert and Sullivan: Class and the Savoy Tradition, 1875-1896*.<sup>125</sup>

A prolific Sullivan scholar, David Eden is a co-editor (with Meinhard Saremba) of perhaps the most comprehensive single text regarding the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership and works, *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*.<sup>126</sup> Containing commentaries on historical, musical and aesthetic context, reception and analyses of the music, this text

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<sup>120</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation* (London: Edward Arnold & Company, 1929).

<sup>121</sup> Gervase Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan* (London: Macmillan, 1959).

<sup>122</sup> William Cox-Ife, *How to Sing both Gilbert and Sullivan* (London: Chappell & Company, 1961).

<sup>123</sup> Carolyn Williams, 'Comic Opera: English Society in Gilbert and Sullivan' in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 91-115 (p. 91). See also Carolyn Williams, *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, Genre, Parody* (New York; Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>124</sup> Williams, 'Comic Opera: English Society in Gilbert and Sullivan' p. 95.

<sup>125</sup> Regina B. Oost, *Gilbert and Sullivan: Class and the Savoy Tradition, 1875-1896* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>126</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan* ed. by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

nevertheless skirts the issue of performing practices, preferring textual hermeneutics, in a manner reminiscent of Hughes' analyses.<sup>127</sup> The film maker and playwright Mike Leigh, in *Topsy-Turvy: a personal journey*<sup>128</sup> perhaps comes closest to addressing performative matters in his commentary to his 1999 film,<sup>129</sup> although these tend to concentrate on directorial matters of historical accuracy in terms of production, rather than musical matters. Leigh in the DVD release of *Topsy-Turvy*, provides some useful insights in a scene by scene commentary to the film which supplement his chapter. Useful primary sources regarding the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership and subsequent developments in musical comedy include the 'recollections and anecdotes of D'Oyly Carte and other famous Savoyards' by François Cellier and Cunningham Bridgeman<sup>130</sup> and Rutland Barrington's 'A Record of Thirty-Five Years' Experience on the English Stage (1908)'.<sup>131</sup> Cellier's text forms a detailed account from his perspective as musical director of the D'Oyly Carte Company from 1878, whilst Barrington, who created many roles in the Savoy operas, recounts his experiences of these and subsequent forays into musical comedy. Barrington in particular offers a colourful picture of late nineteenth and early twentieth century theatrical life, in addition to information regarding attitudes to performance and casting.

The contribution to Gilbert and Sullivan research by enthusiasts is significant. In addition to the work of the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society in the promotion of Sullivan's music through recordings, their periodical also contains analytical and scholarly articles by David

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<sup>127</sup> See Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan*.

<sup>128</sup> Mike Leigh, 'Topsy-Turvy: A Personal Journey' in *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan* ed. by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 153-176.

<sup>129</sup> *Topsy-Turvy*, dir. by Mike Leigh (Thin Man Films, 1999) [on DVD].

<sup>130</sup> François Cellier and Cunningham Bridgeman, *Gilbert and Sullivan and their Operas: with Recollections and Anecdotes of D'Oyly Carte & other famous Savoyards* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1914).

<sup>131</sup> Rutland Barrington, *Rutland Barrington, A Record of Thirty-Five Years' Experience on the English Stage* (London: Grant Richards, 1908).

Eden, Martin Yates and Stephen Turnbull.<sup>132</sup> *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan*<sup>133</sup> provides the complete libretti of their operas with commentary on the variations between editions and the stage directions of the prompt books. The author, Ian Bradley, an academic in the field of church history and practical theology, is an amateur Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiast. As such, his 2005 book *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture!: The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan*<sup>134</sup> assesses the influence of Gilbert and Sullivan on twentieth century culture and the professional and, it pays particular attention to amateur performing contexts from the 1960s to the present day. Bradley also surveys scholarship in both Britain and North America, noting a propensity for Gilbert to be the subject of research in North America and Sullivan in Britain.<sup>135</sup>

The concept of “tradition” has been a recurring theme of Gilbert and Sullivan performance, both amateur and professional, especially regarding the ‘authority’ of the performances of the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company. Gayden Wren makes a particularly telling statement in the light of an investigation into vocal performing practices regarding the period following the loss of exclusivity of professional performance rights by the D’Oyly Carte Company in 1961: ‘[...]while the generation of fans bred on the 1920s and 1930s complained that the newer singers weren’t up to their predecessors, the [D’Oyly Carte] company didn’t suffer unduly from this loss of exclusivity’<sup>136</sup>. Although a general tendency towards nostalgia for the past is perhaps inevitable amongst long-standing enthusiasts in any discipline, this would seem to point to some tangible change of vocal approach which an older audience might register, however subconsciously.<sup>137</sup> There emerges from various sources much discussion of

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<sup>132</sup> An archive of the quarterly magazine of The Sir Arthur Sullivan Society can be found at <<https://sullivansociety.org.uk/magazine-archive/issues/80-84/>> [Accessed on 12 December 2019]

<sup>133</sup> Ian Bradley, *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>134</sup> Ian Bradley, *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture!: The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

<sup>135</sup> Bradley, *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture!* pp. 179-191.

<sup>136</sup> Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert & Sullivan* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 293.

<sup>137</sup> The author remembers conversations with her late father-in-law who was himself a singer briefly taught in the 1950s by Edgar Herbert-Caesari and subsequently an amateur and semi-professional performer of light

‘tradition’ in Gilbert and Sullivan performance which offers a complex mixture of perspectives, memories and perhaps prejudices. These will be explored in Chapter 2 with a view to understanding how changing perceptions of tradition may relate to vocal performing practices.

### 1.2.2 Musical Comedy

In contrast to the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire, musical comedy, which proliferated between 1890 and 1940<sup>138</sup> has received much less scholarly attention until relatively recently, although momentum appears to be gathering in the acceptance of the genre as being of cultural importance. The actual music of this genre has received very little attention, apart from isolated examples such as Banfield’s brief analysis of extracts from *The Arcadians*.<sup>139</sup> The significance of this genre in sociological terms was first addressed by Len Platt as late as 2004,<sup>140</sup> who identifies in British musical comedy’s concern with modernity and contemporary themes an important identifying characteristic of this sub-genre of light opera as well as providing a window on late nineteenth and early twentieth century British society. In addition to Banfield’s work is that of John E. Degen,<sup>141</sup> Brian Singleton,<sup>142</sup> and Ben Macpherson.<sup>143</sup> Further social contextualisation is offered by Jim Davis and Victor

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opera which effectively had a theme of ‘the trouble with modern singers is that they sing with little feeling or individuality...’

<sup>138</sup> The term ‘musical comedy’ has often been applied in many contexts, both in Britain and the USA, but for the present thesis (unless otherwise stipulated) it refers to the British genre initially developed by impresario George Edwardes which reached its peak of popularity in the West End with shows such as *The Arcadians* (Lionel Monckton, 1909) and *Chu Chin Chow* (Sidney Jones, 1916).

<sup>139</sup> Stephen Banfield, ‘English Musical Comedy, 1890-1924’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) pp. 123-129.

<sup>140</sup> Len Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>141</sup> John A. Degen, ‘The Evolution Of The ‘Shop Girl’ And The Birth Of “Musical Comedy”’, *Theatre History Studies*, 7 (1987), 40-50.

<sup>142</sup> Brian Singleton, *Oscar Asche, Orientalism, and British Musical Comedy* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004).

<sup>143</sup> Ben Macpherson, *Cultural Identity in British Musical Theatre, 1890-1939: Knowing One’s Place* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 2.

Emeljanow<sup>144</sup> in their discussion of audiences in the Victorian and Edwardian era, described as: ‘so diverse that it is impossible to consider a generic audience for this period.’<sup>145</sup> Davis and Emeljanow’s work is referenced by Oost in her study of Gilbert and Sullivan, mentioned earlier, but Davis and Emeljanow have a broader chronology with theatregoing in the heyday of musical comedy discussed. In quoting Michael Booth, they make a convincing case for the importance of considering this aspect of theatrical life as part of an attempt to establish historical performance paradigms: ‘Such information[...]is essential if we are fully to understand the repertory or style of a theatre at a particular time in history, and ultimately the character and content of the drama itself.’<sup>146</sup> The notion of ‘Britishness’ as outlined by Platt and nostalgia as embodied in musical comedy is further developed by Macpherson.

Postlewait claims that ‘Far more than Henry Irving, Oscar Wilde or Bernard Shaw, Edwardes defines an entertainment era in London theatre’<sup>147</sup> and proposes that musical comedy is deserving of scholarly attention, highlighting the essential quality of the product itself:

Musical Comedy, phenomenally successful and appealing, was a major artistic development[...] The librettists and composers were very good at their artistic jobs. The productions achieved high artistic standards in design and performance. The charming and clever performers were the best of their types.<sup>148</sup>

Macpherson (2018), whilst acknowledging a scarcity of scholarship as identified by Banfield, observes that

[...]there have been a number of works published that have considered discrete aspects of this story. These are often disparate, compartmentalised, or removed from a sense of broad cultural context, but together they do provide compelling evidence that musical comedy is worthy of the detailed attention Banfield champions.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, ‘Victorian and Edwardian Audiences’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. by Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 93-108.

<sup>145</sup> Davis and Emeljanow, ‘Victorian and Edwardian Audiences’ p. 93.

<sup>146</sup> Michael R. Booth, ‘East End and West End: Class and Audience in Victorian London’ (Theatre Research International 2, 2, 1977), pp. 98-103 in Davis and Emeljanow ‘Victorian and Edwardian Audiences’ p. 93.

<sup>147</sup> Postlewait, ‘George Edwardes and Musical Comedy’, p. 87.

<sup>148</sup> Postlewait, ‘George Edwardes and Musical Comedy’, p. 94.

<sup>149</sup> Macpherson, *Cultural Identity in British Musical Theatre, 1890-1939*, p. 2.

### 1.2.3. Revue, Operetta(e), Romantic Light Opera and Romantic Music-Drama

The changing fortunes of musical comedy during the 1920s and 1930s and the reasons behind them have been the subject of debate. Platt identifies a decline in its popularity and influence during these decades – despite ‘periods[...]that saw musical comedy resurfacing to make an impact, notably in the mid- to late 1930s[...]this patchy performance was a long way from the Edwardian heydays when musical comedy had dominated the West End stage and beyond.’<sup>150</sup> For Platt, the ‘long-term trend for the musical comedy, at least in its ‘British’ variety, was now down’<sup>151</sup> and refutes claims by commentators such as Sheridan Morley that this could be attributed to the growing advent of radio and television or the increasing economic privations of this period. Despite struggles for all theatres at this time, Platt observes that ‘musical comedy struggled more than most’.<sup>152</sup> The topicality and ‘modernity’ which had been the hallmark of musical comedy began to be challenged, according to Platt, by revue, with ‘its eagerness to incorporate American musicality and chic, revue was, above all, a culture able to maintain a modern styling’. That revue might appeal to a different audience, with the ‘critical exploration of modernity, which had at the centre of its world, London’ and a satirical edge was not new: Platt, referencing two revues: *Kill That Fly* (1912) and *By Jingo if We Do* (1914) asserts that revue had long offered the chance to ‘escape from musical comedy, an opportunity not just to try out new ideas, but also to establish distance from the ongoing culture[...]The makers of musical comedy were frequently referred to and even represented in revues as figures from a bygone age’.<sup>153</sup> Platt speculates that a typical audience for a revue would have been ‘[...]a younger audience, at least initially, with a sense of its own sophistication’<sup>154</sup>. According

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<sup>150</sup> Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939*, p. 142.

<sup>151</sup> Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939*, p. 142.

<sup>152</sup> Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939*, p. 143.

<sup>153</sup> Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939*, p. 132-3.

<sup>154</sup> Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939*, p. 139.

to David Linton, '[...]revue's popularity in part stemmed from situating itself in direct opposition to musical comedy and its mainstream status.'<sup>155</sup>

The 1920s proved to be a fallow period for British light opera, especially of the Romantic/Lyric forms, where few achieved significant runs. In contrast, American musicals (or operettas) were much more commercially successful: Rudolf Friml and Herbert Stothart's *Rose-Marie* ran for 851 performances at the Drury Lane Theatre from 1925, for example.<sup>156</sup> Both Ivor Novello and Noel Coward had been involved in revue and musical comedy in their early careers but by the 1930s they had also turned their attention to operetta forms, often referencing, as did the American musicals of Friml et al, the musical and plot tropes of Viennese operetta in an often 'romantic plot set in a mythical romantic Ruritanian country'.<sup>157</sup> Platt identifies a sense of nostalgia in Coward's work: an attempt to escape from 'Twentieth Century Blues',<sup>158</sup> a sense of disillusionment with the modern world which places this genre in contrast to the forward-looking optimism and modernity of musical comedy in its early years and later, revue. Nichols notes the common device in Novello's operetta plots, that of 'an operetta-within-an-operetta',<sup>159</sup> where the genre becomes almost a parody of itself, together with an almost formulaic approach to casting: '*Glamorous Night* (1935)[...] introduced what would consequently become the basic set up of almost every Novello operetta: a starring non-singing role for himself, a soprano as the female lead, a small contralto role (always played by Olive Gilbert), [and] a comedic non-singing female'.<sup>160</sup> With Mary Ellis often cast as the female lead, Novello built a regular quasi-company around himself, leading to a creative

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<sup>155</sup> Linton, 'English West End Revue: The First World War and After', p. 144.

<sup>156</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 239.

<sup>157</sup> Stewart Nicholls, 'West End Royalty: Ivor Novello and English Operetta, 1917-1951' in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 202.

<sup>158</sup> The phrase 'Twentieth Century Blues' is quoted by Platt from Coward's lyrics from his 1931 show *Cavalcade*. Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939*, p.145.

<sup>159</sup> Nicholls, 'West End Royalty: Ivor Novello and English Operetta, 1917-1951', p.202.

<sup>160</sup> Nicholls, 'West End Royalty: Ivor Novello and English Operetta, 1917-1951', p.202.

practice very similar to that of Gilbert and Sullivan: ‘Throughout his career he wrote with singers, or actresses, in mind, creating roles and melodies to suit their individual style.’<sup>161</sup> James Agate, in a review of *Glamorous Night* in 1935, recognises the referential manner adopted by both Novello and Coward towards earlier light opera forms and practices:

Militza [played by Mary Ellis] is a light-opera singer, and as this is Drury Lane and Mr Coward in *Cavalcade* had a fragment of musical comedy, Mr. Novello presumably feels impelled to give us as slab of operetta[...] the attempt signally fails and is bound to, because Mr. Coward has a remarkable flair for parody and Mr. Novello a less bountiful gift for serious operetta.<sup>162</sup>

Many of the leading British composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century wrote works which have light opera associations or allusions but are generally either of a more serious nature or have greater musical ambitions than is usual in light opera. Mackinlay gathers together works such as Sullivan’s *Ivanhoe* (1891) and *The Beauty Stone* (1898); Ethel Smyth’s *The Boatswain’s Mate* (1916); Gustav Holst’s *The Perfect Fool* (1923) and Ralph Vaughan Williams’ *Hugh the Drover* (1924) into a genre he calls ‘Romantic Music-Drama (the English equivalent of the French Opera-Comique)’,<sup>163</sup> a term borrowed from Sullivan’s description of his stage work *The Beauty Stone*.<sup>164</sup>

With the exception of *The Perfect Fool*, all of the Romantic Music Drama works discussed here have received recent complete recordings.<sup>165</sup> A recording including members of the original 1924 cast of *Hugh the Drover* exists<sup>166</sup>. Trefor Jones played ‘Hugh the Drover’

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<sup>161</sup> Paul Webb, ‘Novello, Ivor’ *Grove Music Online*, 2001

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.20146>> [Accessed 2 August 2020].

<sup>162</sup> James Agate, *Immortal Toys: A Survey of Light Entertainment on the London Stage, 1920-1943*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1945), pp. 104-105.

<sup>163</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 254.

<sup>164</sup> Arthur Jacobs, ‘Sullivan, Sir Arthur’ *Grove Music Online*, 2001

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27100>> [Accessed 2 August 2020].

<sup>165</sup> The BBC did record, however, a complete performance of *The Perfect Fool* for radio broadcast in 1995 (Gustav Holst, *The Perfect Fool*, BBC Radio 3, 25 December 1995.). The role of ‘The Wizard’ in this performance was played by Richard Suart, who also created the role of ‘The Commissionaire’ in Dunhill’s *Something in the City*, University of Huddersfield 2019 (Discussed in Chapter 5).

<sup>166</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Hugh the Drover*, cond. by Malcolm Sargent (HMV D922-926, 1924).

for the first ‘private dress rehearsals’ at the Royal College of Music but Tudor Davies, who sings the role of ‘Hugh’ on the recording, sang the role in the first professional production at His Majesty’s Theatre in July 1924.<sup>167</sup>

### 1.3. Thomas F. Dunhill and British Light Opera

The English composer Thomas Frederick Dunhill (1877-1946) was, amongst members of the British musical establishment of the early twentieth century, a rare evangelical voice for the comic operas of Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900). Dunhill himself was a significant author and his *Sullivan’s Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation*<sup>168</sup> is the first serious appreciation of Sullivan’s music in the comic operas. According to Nigel Burton:

Dunhill's little book Sullivan's comic operas (London, 1929) remains the first of two great watersheds in restoring Sullivan's reputation in the twentieth century. Here, at last, was one fine musician writing about another, with qualified admiration, sanity, competence, and objectivity (tempered with the right amount of subjective warmth)<sup>169</sup>

Dunhill specifically refers to Sullivan’s comic operas, in the quotation at the beginning of the introduction to this thesis, as part of a vigorous defence of the inherent musical and dramatic qualities of these works against a prevailing attitude of denigration and hostility amongst his peers.<sup>170</sup> This idea could, however, equally well apply to many works within the various BLO genres. Dunhill’s analyses of the Savoy Operas are informed by the knowledge of a composer and the influence of Sullivan’s music is clear in his own comic operas.

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<sup>167</sup> Michael Kennedy, ‘Hugh the Drover’ [CD Sleeve notes] (Hyperion, CDA66901/2, 1994) <<https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/notes/22049-B.pdf>> [Accessed 14 April 2020].

Trefor Jones created the role of ‘Hugh Heather’ in Dunhill’s *Tantivy Towers* (1931).

<sup>168</sup> Dunhill, *Sullivan’s Comic Operas*.

<sup>169</sup> Nigel Burton, ‘Sullivan Reassessed: See How the Fates’ *The Musical Times* (2000), 141(1873), 15-22. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1004730>> [Accessed 3 August 2020].

<sup>170</sup> Burton, ‘Sullivan Reassessed: See How the Fates’ p. 20-21. Dunhill particularly remonstrates with views expressed by Ernest Walker (1870-1949) in his *A History of Music in England* (1907). Dunhill quotes Walker, who describes Sullivan’s operatic music as ‘mere froth... for his positive qualities ...we have to look elsewhere’.

Dunhill's reputation during his multi-faceted career was established by his compositions in many genres, writings, adjudicating, teaching and pedagogical compositions for children, particularly piano pieces written for the Associated Board of Music practical examinations<sup>171</sup>. Whilst somewhat overshadowed by his contemporaries such as Ralph Vaughan Williams and John Ireland, who were perhaps writing in a more 'distinctive and personalised idiom',<sup>172</sup> Dunhill was a prolific composer of over one hundred acknowledged works in many classical forms, comic opera occupying a small but significant place in his compositional oeuvre.<sup>173</sup> Dunhill's posthumous reputation has continued in his educational compositions and writings, such as his 1913 book *Chamber Music: a Treatise for Students*,<sup>174</sup> whilst his more substantial compositions, including the light operas, have received only infrequent performances. Unsurprisingly, Dunhill's career and output has largely been overlooked in scholarship. Musicologists and enthusiasts for British music in recent decades, such as Lewis Foreman,<sup>175</sup> Beryl Kington,<sup>176</sup> Matthew Brent Swope<sup>177</sup> and Philip L. Scowcroft<sup>178</sup> have advocated a reappraisal of various aspects of Dunhill's oeuvre, but these have generally been isolated enterprises.

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<sup>171</sup> Notable acknowledged works include the *Symphony in A Minor* (1913-18) and *Phantasy Trio in E Flat Opus 36* (1911), recorded by Albert Sammons, Lionel Tertis and Frank St.Leger. Amongst numerous pedagogical compositions, typical are *First Year Pieces* for piano, which are still (in 2020) published by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and songs suitable for children such as *Grandfather Clock* and *The Frog*.

<sup>172</sup> Lewis Foreman, 'The Music of Thomas F. Dunhill' in David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music* (London: Thames Publishing, 1997), p. v.

<sup>173</sup> *The Thomas Dunhill Connection* <<http://www.thomasdunhill.com/td/dunhills-published-works-music-and-books/>> [accessed 21 February 2020].

<sup>174</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Chamber Music: A Treatise for Students*. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913).

<sup>175</sup> Dunhill, *Chamber Music: A Treatise for Students*.

<sup>176</sup> Beryl Kington, 'Thomas F. Dunhill and Sibelius 7' in *British Music: The Journal of the British Music Society* Vol 18 (1996), p. 54. Kington discusses a proposed project to typeset Dunhill's unpublished quintet in C minor Op 20 using the Sibelius 7 music notation programme. Lewis Foreman refers to a project by Kington to write a 'full-scale study of Dunhill's music' as a companion book to David Dunhill's biography (Foreman 'The Music of Thomas F. Dunhill', p. vii.) However, in email correspondence with Dunhill's Grandson, Paul Vincent, it was explained that this project was, unfortunately, abandoned at some stage (email to the author on 31 March 2020).

<sup>177</sup> Matthew Brent Swope, 'Thomas F. Dunhill and the unsung song' (unpublished master's thesis, Penn State University, USA, 2006).

<sup>178</sup> Scowcroft, *British Light Music*, p. 124. See also Philip Scowcroft 'English Composers for Amateurs No 3 – Thomas Dunhill' (n.d.) <<http://www.musicweb-international.com/amateurs/Dunhill.html>> [accessed 2nd April 2020].

*Tantivy Towers* Op.73 (1931) was Dunhill's only commercially successful comic opera<sup>179</sup> during his lifetime, with a critically-acclaimed initial run at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith<sup>180</sup> and subsequent revivals during the following decade on stage and radio.<sup>181</sup> The success of *Tantivy Towers* built upon previous efforts in the light opera genres which include the early operetta *Princess Una* (1896) and the one act opera *The Enchanted Garden*, Op.65 (1924), produced at the Royal Academy of Music in a triple bill with Holst's *Savitri* and Mozart's *Bastien and Bastienne*.<sup>182</sup> Following *Tantivy Towers*, the comic opera *Happy Families* (1932) was produced by amateur companies but not professionally.<sup>183</sup> Lewis Foreman considers this work to be 'really a fairy play with music, though the music is in the comic opera style', aligning Dunhill's work with that of Elgar in his incidental music to Algernon Blackwood's children's play *The Starlight Express*.<sup>184</sup> Another 'fairy' opera was *Alicia, or The Magic Fishbone*, Op.88 (1937), premiered at St. Margaret's School, Harrow.

Dunhill's final work in the light opera genre is *Something in the City* Op.90, (1939) a Comic Opera in three acts. According to David Dunhill, writing in 1997,<sup>185</sup> this work remained unperformed, although the vocal score was published the following year by J.B. Cramer and Company. Matthew Brent Swope claims that two numbers from this work; *Keeping Secrets* and *Catch about Love* were published separately by J.B. Cramer and received performances.<sup>186</sup> Thus far it has been possible to verify neither the publication of individual numbers, nor the performances referred to by Swope.<sup>187</sup> The principal sources of information regarding

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<sup>179</sup> *The Enchanted Garden* (1925) and *Happy Families* (1933) are other notable operettas. (Scowcroft, *British Light Music*, p. 124).

<sup>180</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Volume 2 1915-1984*, p. 358. *Tantivy Towers*' 1931 run of 170 performances made it one of the most successful musical theatre pieces in Britain of that year.

<sup>181</sup> David Dunhill *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music* (London: Thames Publishing, 1997), p. 81ff.

<sup>182</sup> David Dunhill *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music* p. 71.

<sup>183</sup> David Dunhill *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music* p. 91.

<sup>184</sup> Foreman, 'The Music of Thomas F Dunhill' in David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music*, pp.xx-xxi.

<sup>185</sup> David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music*, p. 99.

<sup>186</sup> Swope, *Thomas F. Dunhill and the unsung song*, p. 20

<sup>187</sup> Swope references David Dunhill in these assertions but no reference is made to them in the source given. The publisher Cramer Music Ltd. have also confirmed that they have no reference of individual pieces in their archives (Email to the author, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020).

*Something in the City* are the letters received by Dunhill from the lyricist F.W. Whitmarsh and the librettist Bernard Smith<sup>188</sup> and Dunhill's diaries.<sup>189</sup>

### **1.3.1. Tantivy Towers in context: Nigel Playfair and The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith**

*Tantivy Towers*, as performed at the Lyric theatre, Hammersmith and produced by its actor-manager Sir Nigel Playfair, provides useful information for the development of a production of the unperformed *Something in the City*.

A perspective on the musical stage of the 1920s to the 1940s is offered by James Agate.<sup>190</sup> In his review of Playfair's 1920 production of *The Beggar's Opera* at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, Agate alludes to high production values whilst noting that it perhaps missed the earthier elements of *The Beggar's Opera*.<sup>191</sup> This production was a notable forerunner of Dunhill's *Tantivy Towers* at the same theatre and with the same producer in 1931 and Agate's review gives a contemporary insight into Playfair's production style. Playfair himself gives a comprehensive account of his role as a producer in this and other productions at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith,<sup>192</sup> and recalls the process of directing singers, most of which, in his production of *The Beggar's Opera*, originated from the Beecham Opera Company.<sup>193</sup> Of particular relevance are his views on the 'preposterous antics which are usually known as acting on the Grand Operatic Stage'<sup>194</sup> and interestingly infers that these were part of a stock operatic style of acting at this time, not only in Grand Opera but also in

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<sup>188</sup> London: Royal College of Music Library, Letters to Thomas Dunhill. 9051. 69).

<sup>189</sup> London: Royal College of Music Library, Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. 8763.

<sup>190</sup> Agate, *Immement Toys*.

<sup>191</sup> Agate, *Immement Toys*, pp. 17-24.

<sup>192</sup> Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy*.

<sup>193</sup> Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy*, pp. 222ff. Playfair states that the disbandment of Beecham Opera Company [in 1920] provided the opportunity to engage many of their singers in his venture.

<sup>194</sup> Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy*, p. 226.

musical comedy.<sup>195</sup> Playfair also describes opera singers' approach to delivering text thus: 'very good at singing when they speak, but very bad at speaking when they sing'.<sup>196</sup> Agate's criticism of *The Beggar's Opera* is echoed somewhat in Playfair's observation of the audiences' initial reaction to the first act which was to regard it as 'a quaint pretty thing'.<sup>197</sup> Whether this was a general characteristic of Playfair's directorial style or confined to *The Beggar's Opera* is open to question, but Playfair's attention to detail as described in his account of this production is likely to have been a feature of his 1931 production of Dunhill's *Tantivy Towers*. An indication of the general perception of Playfair's approach may be gleaned from a review of the first production of *Tantivy Towers*: 'This is a Nigel Playfair production[...]and therefore an entertainment for people who like a dash of art with their pleasures'.<sup>198</sup>

Playfair also describes the challenges of the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith at this period in terms of its size and capacity: '[...] a theatre which can dress twelve people with difficulty and give bowing room to an orchestra of 14 at a pinch.'<sup>199</sup> This appears to have been a significant factor in staging light opera in this theatre. *Derby Day*, a 1932 successor to *Tantivy Towers* and also one of a series of 'English Operas'<sup>200</sup> produced by Playfair at the Lyric, Hammersmith, was reviewed in *The Observer* and quoted by Gänzl: '[...] the show was 'a Drury Lane piece offered in pocket-sized dimensions''<sup>201</sup> This did not necessarily undermine musical standards in the theatre and, according to Playfair, there was a tradition to 'have an orchestra that really does know how to play, however small it may be.'<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy*, p. 226. The 'methods and conventions of acting used in Opera and Musical Comedy' were, Playfair felt, unsuitable for *The Beggar's Opera*.

<sup>196</sup> Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy*, p. 232.

<sup>197</sup> Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy*, p. 233.

<sup>198</sup> McN, 'Tantivy Towers', *Musical Times*, 72.1056 (1931), 166-167 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/917233>> [Accessed 4 August 2020].

<sup>199</sup> Playfair, *Hammersmith Hoy*, p. 223.

<sup>200</sup> Gänzl, *The British Music Theatre: Volume II 1915-1984*, p. 345.

<sup>201</sup> Gänzl, *The British Music Theatre: Volume II 1915-1984*, p. 365.

<sup>202</sup> Gänzl, *The British Music Theatre: Volume II 1915-1984*, p. 197.

The 1931 production of *Tantivy Towers* received generally favourable reviews, with the ‘through-composed’ score being particularly noteworthy. ‘McN’ in *The Musical Times* found that: ‘Under analysis, it is a new form - an all-singing piece that is largely revue and largely musical comedy. Had it been spaced out with passages of spoken dialogue and scenes of farce it would have made a first-class musical comedy of the recognised order.’<sup>203</sup> Dunhill’s music was admired, although some commentators imply a certain lack of individuality in the score: ‘If he has not earned immoderate praise it is because no strong sense of personality emerges from his score to stand beside that of the author; that is to say, he is not in the company of Mozart and Sullivan.’<sup>204</sup> There is an implication that Dunhill, as a ‘serious’ composer and educator was perhaps more stylistically inhibited than the genre required. David Dunhill felt that a review in the Manchester Guardian: ‘A model of tact and good artistic breeding’ was a double edged phrase<sup>205</sup> whilst the librettist A. P. Herbert later referred to Dunhill as ‘a scholarly musician who was no Puccini but had a good sense of the stage and wrote some good tunes.’<sup>206</sup> Hugh Ottaway noted in Holst’s setting of Shakespeare in *At the Boar’s Head* that ‘the music, however skilful, witty and entertaining, does not sufficiently enlarge upon the words’<sup>207</sup> and it may be a similar issue that ‘McN’ noted in Dunhill’s music:

The author is A. P. Herbert, a rather difficult partner to stand up to in talent and, sometimes, to co-operate with in the technical business of words and music. His sentence-forms are apt to be too literary for the musician to handle them with freedom. The musician hankers after a certain amount of verbal raw material to do as he likes with; Mr. Herbert too constantly provides the finished product. So there are excuses for Mr. Dunhill if, in order to take some opening as a composer, he gives the words a little less than their due.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> McN, 'Tantivy Towers', p. 166.

<sup>204</sup> McN, 'Tantivy Towers', p. 166.

<sup>205</sup> David Dunhill *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music*, p. 83.

<sup>206</sup> David Dunhill *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music*, p. 84.

<sup>207</sup> Ottaway, ‘Holst as an Opera Composer’, p. 474.

<sup>208</sup> McN, 'Tantivy Towers', p.166-167.

Alec Rowley offers a vigorous rebuttal of criticism against the work, however. Rowley, a composer who, like Dunhill, specialised in educational music is perhaps defending his own position as well as Dunhill's when he writes:

In England the label counts far too much, - and we are all a bundle of prejudices. If a man writes music of an educational nature . . . it is considered impossible that he should also be able to compose in large form. But Dunhill is too distinguished a musician to be dismissed in this way.<sup>209</sup>

Rowley elsewhere asserts that Dunhill's approach provides 'something to supply the needs of the intelligent musical public whose mind is above the conventions of musical comedy and American importations'<sup>210</sup> and that Dunhill's approach is progressive rather than staid: 'Tantivy Towers,' comes with a breath" of fresh air, and blows away the cobwebs of mediocrity that inspired 'Rebel Maids ' and similar conventions.'<sup>211</sup>

*Something in the City* is perhaps a more conventionally structured work than *Tantivy Towers* within BLO genres due to the use of spoken dialogue between numbers. Nevertheless, it is evident from correspondence between librettist Bernard Smith and Dunhill that A. P. Herbert's approach to the libretto of *Tantivy Towers* would serve as a model at least in terms of style.<sup>212</sup> The BLO scene in the late 1930s was, as has been demonstrated, a complex mixture of threads of development which had their origins in the late nineteenth century and would, within a few years, undergo radical change through political upheaval in Europe and the rapidly developing influence of American culture.

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<sup>209</sup> Alec Rowley, 'Tantivy Towers' and the Music Critics', *The Musical Times*, 72.1057 (1931), 253 <[www.jstor.org/stable/914864](http://www.jstor.org/stable/914864)> [Accessed 4 August 2020].

<sup>210</sup> Rowley, 'Tantivy Towers' and the Music Critics', p. 252.

<sup>211</sup> Rowley, 'Tantivy Towers' and the Music Critics', p. 252. The *Rebel Maid* (1921) was Montague Phillips' only Romantic light opera.

<sup>212</sup> London: Royal College of Music Library, Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (16 July 1937) 9051.58a.

## Chapter Two

# Towards an Understanding of Current Perspectives on British Light Opera Performing Practices 1870-1945

### 2.1. Performing Practices in Light Opera Genres

In order to understand and codify the distinctive characteristics of vocal performing practices in BLO, it is necessary to ascertain whether the performance style of light opera can really be considered as a homogeneous entity or whether it really is an umbrella term born of a collaboration of varying styles, experiences and techniques. It is also useful to contextualise the genre in relation to other vocal genres. The recorded evidence of some performers associated with BLO includes examples from such related but distinct genres such as European light opera or operetta; musical comedy, grand opera, solo song covering the spectra of European Art Song forms such as lieder, *melodié* and English/American song to popular forms of ballad, Burlesque and Music Hall songs. In addition to enriching the discographies of these performers, these recordings covering multiple vocal genres also afford the opportunity of comparing and contrasting approaches to performance which may enable specific BLO performing practices to be more clearly identified.<sup>1</sup>

Although BLO is the primary focus of this study, many sources deal with a broader definition of light opera which may include the German *Singspiel*, French *opéra bouffe*, Viennese, English and American operetta and Spanish *Zarzuela*. Lister (2018) typifies an

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 2.

approach to understanding light opera which prioritises an appreciation of the social context and message embodied in the plot, the historical significance of the genre in terms of music history and a more general understanding of the conventions of stagecraft over historical vocal performance characteristics.

Inhabiting the realm between opera and music theatre, light opera is both progeny and progenitor but stands alone in terms of its distinctive style...Light opera essentially encompasses a particular historical era, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. From Hervé to Leonard Bernstein, composers of light opera were commenting on the times in which they lived[...]Thus, to sing light opera successfully, one should explore the relevant historical context and any antediluvian references and its performance tradition on stage and screen.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst these matters are of undeniable importance in understanding and performing light opera and by extension BLO, it is manifestly important to understand historical vocal practices within the context of a truly historically-informed performance.

A common perception of the vocal performance style of light opera is that there have been few significant changes from the earliest recordings to the present day. Any notable changes tend to be attributed to the use of Received Pronunciation and early recording sound characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

Some commentators have, however, alluded to significant stylistic differences as evidenced on early recordings. In discussing early recordings of the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire, Wolfson states:

More than a hundred years passed between the formation of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and its dissolution. During this time the performing traditions of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera were supposed to have been sacrosanct, with little change being intentionally introduced into their presentation. Nevertheless, during the course of a century, changes in taste, style, personnel, training and attitude will invariably result in differences of interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Linda Lister, *So you want to sing Light Opera: A Guide for Performers* (Lanham; Boulder; New York; London, Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Cast members of *Something in the City* (Chapter 5) expressed surprise at the number of differences between their own practice and the historical techniques required when these were pointed out to them and developed during rehearsals.

<sup>4</sup> John Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record* (Chichester: Headlion, 1985). Despite an occasional comment on particularly notable performing characteristics (such as Rutland Barrington's 'laconic' singing which 'employs

## 2.2. Theatrical Origins of the Gilbert & Sullivan Tradition

‘Above all it should be understood that their [Gilbert & Sullivan’s] ancestry does not lie in ‘opera’ as the term is generally used, but in the popular London alternatives to it.’<sup>5</sup> The ‘popular London alternatives’ were the Burlesques and Extravaganzas of the ‘illegitimate’<sup>6</sup> theatres. Gilbert and Sullivan’s first collaboration, *Thespis* was modelled along Burlesque lines, as was *Princess Ida*. Burlesque underwent a process of gentrification in an effort to attract the suburban middle classes who were increasingly afforded ‘access [to the London theatres] provided by omnibus and railway services’.<sup>7</sup>

Mackinlay (1927) usefully defines Burlesque:

It is a joke or banter, a ludicrous representation, or contrast. This is to say, it is a composition in which the contrast between the subject and the manner of considering it renders it ludicrous, as when trifling matters are treated seriously, and serious matters (or rather mock-serious) with levity...Burlesque distorts and caricatures, and its final aim is to bring incongruities into stronger relief[... ]It aims at turning to ridicule the false greatness, the sham nobility, the pretended goodness.<sup>8</sup>

This was achieved through word play and punning, often in rhymed couplets. Mackinlay’s definition of Burlesque could, however, equally apply to the plot of many of the Gilbert and Sullivan’s operas. Whilst eighteenth century comic opera such as those by Thomas

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much parlendo’ (p.7)), there is little analysis here of the distinctive elements of the performance style as evidenced in the recordings.

<sup>5</sup> David Eden, ‘Savoy Opera and its Discontents: The Theatrical Background to a Quarrel’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan* ed. by David Eden and Meinhard Saremba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘illegitimate’ theatre has its origins in the granting of patents to a small number of ‘legitimate’ theatres whose favoured repertoire included ‘Shakespearean drama and tragedy, spoken comedy, and opera, normally Italian opera.’ (See Eden, ‘Savoy Opera and its Discontents’, p. 4.). Therefore, ‘illegitimate’ theatre or ‘minor’ theatres tended to concentrate on parodies, or Burlesques of the legitimate theatre.

<sup>7</sup> Eden, ‘Savoy Opera and its Discontents’, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1927), p. 202. It should be noted that the term ‘Burlesque’, as defined above did not include striptease and other risqué elements. These were a later development, particularly in America.

Arne were indeed ‘composed’, this practice of the ‘legitimate’ theatre was an innovation when combined with Burletta<sup>9</sup> and Burlesque elements which traditionally used existing popular songs and music. It is perhaps useful here to contrast Comic Opera with Ballad operas such as *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) which belonged to the Burletta form, with its use of popular and familiar (to contemporary audiences) musical numbers.

Opera itself was often the subject of parody:

...for its convoluted plots, for the way in which characters sing different things simultaneously, and for the way in which trains of private thought are expressed in extravagant public fashion. A prime example of this ridiculing – which reveals long-standing British suspicion of the art form as a faintly preposterous cultural import- was the genre of the Victorian Burlesque, which combined humorous texts with well-known operatic arias’.<sup>10</sup>

Sullivan, whilst refraining from mocking opera and its traditions in a ‘pantomimic’ way nevertheless frequently requisitions operatic clichés in order to sharpen characterisation. Pooh-Bah’s pomposity in the finale to Act 1 of *The Mikado* is demonstrated to the audience by the words ‘long life to you’ through the increasingly elaborate cadential decorations which recall generic operatic practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Figure 2.2):

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<sup>9</sup> “‘Burletta,” that is to say, “a little Burla,” was a label frequently employed in the earlier “palmy” days in place of “Burlesque.” (Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 202.)

<sup>10</sup> Alexandra Wilson, *Opera in the Jazz Age: Cultural Politics in 1920s Britain*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 100.

Figure 2.2: Sullivan, *The Mikado*, Extract from the Act 1 Finale<sup>11</sup>:

have to live As fel-low-ci-ti-zen, This toast with three times three we'll give—'Long  
 eres - - cen - - - do  
 life, long life to you, long life to you, long life to you— till  
*a tempo*

It may be that the eclecticism of cast within light opera finds its origins in the Burlesque tradition, whereas the need for trained, ‘operatic’ voices to fulfil the musical requirements is a development by Sullivan of previous comic opera practice. The development of a native English Comic Opera genre by Gilbert and Sullivan was partly a response to the popularity (and perhaps to the perceived improprieties) of imported comic opera genres. Gilbert, in a speech given in 1906 stated:

When Sullivan and I began to collaborate English Comic Opera had practically ceased to exist. Such musical entertainments as held the stage were adaptations of the plots of the Operas of Offenbach, Audran, and Lecoq. The plots had generally been so ‘Bowdlerised’ as to be almost unintelligible. When they had not been subjected to this treatment, they were frankly improper[... ]We resolved that our plots, however ridiculous, should be coherent; that the dialogue should be void of offence: that on artistic principles no man should play a woman’s part, and no woman a man’s.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Sullivan, *The Mikado* (London: Chappell and Company, [n.d.]) [vocal score].

<sup>12</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 227.

French operetta in its various forms had been increasingly popular in London: ‘With such witty librettists as Burnand, Albery, and Gilbert: with such masters of melody as Sullivan, Frederick Clay, and Alfred Cellier, surely the time had come to take up arms against the sea of French writers, and by opposing end them.’<sup>13</sup> The vogue for Opéra Bouffe, and particularly Offenbach’s works in London began in earnest in 1867 when Offenbach’s *La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein* was produced at Covent Garden.<sup>14</sup> This followed the retirement of one of Burlesque’s leading librettists James Planché and a subsequent change in taste and direction.<sup>15</sup> Sullivan alludes to direct competition from Offenbach and others: ‘We are doing tremendous business at the Op. Comique I’m glad to say...*another nail in the coffin of Opéra Bouffe from the French*’.<sup>16</sup> (My italics).

The developing successful portfolio of work from Gilbert and Sullivan and the desire from the public and D’Oyly Carte to develop the English Comic Opera genre, led to the formation of the ‘Comedy Opera Company’ in 1876 and *The Sorcerer* was the first work to be performed. Rutland Barrington,<sup>17</sup> in recalling the development of *The Sorcerer* states that:

The great initial idea was that every soul and everything connected with the Venture should be English. It was to be a home of English talent, and so strong was this feeling that two choristers, whose names were never likely to appear on the programme, renounced their Italian titles and became Englishmen for the express purpose of being associated with such an enterprise.

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<sup>13</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 230.

<sup>14</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 202.

<sup>15</sup> Planché is credited with introducing stage revues and extravaganzas into England which ‘to define the subject matter of the Victorian light musical stage, and looked forward to the Savoy operas of Gilbert and Sullivan.’ Jane Stedman, ‘Planché, James Robinson’ *Grove Music Online*, 2002 <<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000009761>> [Accessed 12 August 2020].

<sup>16</sup> Leslie Baily, *Gilbert & Sullivan and their world* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 47. The ‘Op. Comique’ referred to is the theatre, demolished in 1902 in Westminster, London where *The Sorcerer* was produced in 1877. Dunhill’s earlier reference was to the genre with its origins in the early eighteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> Rutland Barrington (1853 – 1922) created the leading baritone G & S roles of Dr Daly (*The Sorcerer*, 1877), Captain Corcoran (*H.M.S. Pinafore*, 1878) and Pooh-Bar (*The Mikado*, 1885).

Whether such attitudes translated into a substantive requirement for performers to renounce or avoid vocal performance characteristics of French or Italian operetta/opera in this and subsequent productions is open to question. Carolyn Williams states that ‘The singing style of Savoy opera was decidedly not-Italian.’<sup>18</sup> The veracity of such a claim is perhaps tested most effectively through an analysis of recordings by performers associated with the original Gilbert and Sullivan productions. Certainly, Barrington’s only recording (admittedly of a non-G & S comedy song)<sup>19</sup> suggests a vocal technique and style far removed from Italian *Bel canto* ideals, though this is perhaps to be expected as his metier was acting and comedy.<sup>20</sup>

*The Sorcerer* was pivotal in the development and consolidation of Gilbert and Sullivan’s requirements for performance:

The work was quite out of the metier of the ordinary operatic singers who belonged either to the melodramatic or to the Coloratura class. “That these were clever and accomplished actors and singers of their kind none will deny, but they had become too saturated with the obsolescent spirit of Victorian Burlesque and extravaganza ever to become capable exponents of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera”<sup>21</sup>

This desire for change did not relate to singers alone but also to comedians, whose style of dressing in ‘absurd costumes’ and ‘doing absurd things’<sup>22</sup> was not what Gilbert wanted for his characters. In order to obtain the performers and performing styles that they required, Gilbert, Sullivan and Carte ‘[...]founded a new school of acting by casting to their own unusual

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<sup>18</sup> Carolyn Williams, ‘Comic Opera: English Society in Gilbert and Sullivan’ in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*, ed. by Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> Rutland Barrington, ‘The Moody Mariner’, *The Art of the Savoyard* (Pearl, GEMM CD 9991, 1993), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xstTJO5YH3I>> [Accessed 5 February 2020] (see also Appendix 3).

<sup>20</sup> Rutland Barrington, *Rutland Barrington, A Record of Thirty-Five Years’ Experience on the English Stage* (London: Grant Richards, 1908). Barrington is rather self-effacing regarding his own vocal accomplishments. In recalling his initial audition for *The Sorcerer* in 1877, he recalls only Gilbert being in attendance: ‘To the best of my recollection, I was not called upon to display my vocal acquirements to Sullivan, which perhaps was as well.’ p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> François Cellier and Cunningham Bridgeman, *Gilbert and Sullivan and their Operas: with Recollections and Anecdotes of D’Oyly Carte & other famous Savoyards* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1914), p. 35 in Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 231.

<sup>22</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 231.

perceptions, disregarding the merits of West End stardom; in due course their own recruits became the distinctive stars of Savoy Opera'<sup>23</sup> This was to have a direct impact on the creative process of later collaborations: 'Having obtained a company and trained it to their standard, they were eventually able to build a part to the model already possessed by them, instead of having to search high and low as they did in the case of "The Sorcerer" to discover the right artist to embody the part designed.'<sup>24</sup> It is likely that the distinctive stock characters of the Savoy Operas and the performing traditions associated with them were established during this period, based on the performing personas of the original casts. A long standing practice in the D'Oyly Carte Company was to engage principal cast members for 'blocks of parts'<sup>25</sup> such as 'The 'patter' parts, The 'Mikado' roles and 'Pooh-Bah' roles, as well as the 'dame' character contralto parts'<sup>26</sup> This production model, in the form of successive D'Oyly Carte Opera productions with relatively stable casts, provided the opportunity to hear in the earliest extant recordings of the Savoy operas individual performers associated with the triumvirate's own productions.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.2.1 Performing Practices and the Concept of Tradition in the D'Oyly Carte Company

The Savoy operas therefore offer an attractive prospect for the study of such performing practices due to an apparently continuous and unbroken tradition as exemplified by

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<sup>23</sup> Baily, *Gilbert & Sullivan and their world*, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Mackinlay, *Origin and Development of Light Opera*, p. 231.

<sup>25</sup> Roberta Morrell, *D'Oyly Carte: The Inside Story* (Kibworth Beauchamp: Matador, 2016), p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Morrell, *D'Oyly Carte: The Inside Story*, pp. 34-35. The grouping of roles could, according to Morrell, '[lead] to occasions of unsuitable casting, but that was the way it had always been and the principals had to accept it as part of the job.' This was often, in Morrell's experience of performing with the D'Oyly Carte company between 1972 and its closure in 1982, a vocal issue of varying tessitura between roles. The 'Sergeant of Police' (Pirates of Penzance) was one of the 'Pooh-Bah' roles and the range of the vocal line was often found to be too low. Morrell recalls long-standing principal Kenneth Sandford (1924-2004) experiencing such difficulties.

<sup>27</sup> An example is the 1907 Odeon Mikado recording, which includes the Savoyard Walter Passmore amongst a cast of studio singers not associated with the D'Oyly Carte Company. See Marc Shepherd, 'The 1907 Odeon Mikado', *Gilbert and Sullivan Discography*, 2001 <<http://gasdisc.oakapplepress.com/mik1907o.htm>> [Accessed 5 September 2019].

the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. A comprehensive series of recordings (and re-recordings) by the company of the core canon of Savoy Operas, from the early years of the twentieth century until the demise of the original D'Oyly Carte company in 1982, provide the prospect of solid evidence of the development of vocal performing practices from Gilbert and Sullivan's own time to within living memory. Caution needs to be exercised, however, when considering the concept of 'tradition', especially in matters of vocal style and technique. Wolfson, quoted earlier,<sup>28</sup> draws attention to the changes in vocal performing practices on record which sit uneasily with a concept of an unbroken tradition in vocal performing practices. In general, references to the 'D'Oyly Carte tradition' appear to have favoured matters pertaining to the *production* process of their comic operas, such as costumes, stage business and dialogue. It may be argued that the whole notion of a meaningful continuity of tradition which is often attributed to the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company has much less to do with vocal or, indeed, musical practices than stage business and other production matters. One of the very few texts specifically dealing with the *performance* of Gilbert and Sullivan states the following on the dust jacket:

Apart from the merit of the operas there must be something in the performances which captivate the audiences. It is well known that the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company is famous for sticking to tradition. What is this "tradition?" *It surely means a reasonably strict adherence to the pattern of production as laid down by Gilbert himself.* [my italics]<sup>29</sup>

The strictness of Gilbert's directorial methods and his 'passion for control over every aspect of production' have been attributed to 'the condition of the Victorian stage as Gilbert found it'.<sup>30</sup> This prompted an innovative approach to acting in which Gilbert aimed to replace '[... ]the English theatre's slap-stick Burlesque [with] subtler methods of acting and

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<sup>28</sup> Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*, p. viii.

<sup>29</sup> William Cox-Ife, *How to Sing both Gilbert and Sullivan* (London: Chappell & Company, 1961).

<sup>30</sup> Jane W. Stedman, *W.S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 217.

wording'.<sup>31</sup> The 'parade-ground methods' which Gilbert employed to achieve this change, founded on 'Gilbert's fixed opinion that acting *can* be taught by repetitive drill, like soldiering' would, as David Eden suggests, have been unacceptable to established artists and therefore further necessitating the recruitment of 'obedient novices' for *The Sorcerer* as mentioned above.<sup>32</sup> Gilbert's strong personality and rather punctilious attitude towards the process of writing and producing the Savoy Operas (in contrast to Sullivan's approach: 'His every suggestion came with such grace and courtesy'<sup>33</sup>) set the tone for the D'Oyly Carte Company throughout its existence and may explain why 'tradition' in the D'Oyly Carte Company is more particularly stamped with Gilbert's production aims and ideals than Sullivan's interpretative ideas.

The D'Oyly Carte Company had a monopoly on public performances of Gilbert and Sullivan from its formation in 1875 to the expiry of copyright on Gilbert's works in 1961. Towards the end of the copyright monopoly, a small number of analytical and pedagogical texts appeared which offer valuable insights into the prevailing attitudes towards this repertoire. Gervase Hughes offers an analytical view of Sullivan's music, though it is not exclusively devoted to the comic operas. Of particular interest here are Hughes' analysis of Sullivan's vocal writing,<sup>34</sup> where the impact of Sullivan's compositional technique (the principal concern in Hughes' study) impacts on practical issues of performance. An example is the criticism of the often unorthodox tessitura of many of the roles in the Savoy operas, such as that of *Pish-Tush's* Act 1 song in the *Mikado* and soprano roles such as *Mabel* in *Pirates of Penzance*.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps the passage which reveals most clearly Hughes' perspective on performance matters concerns the soubrette parts, in which he states that: 'A wide range of two octaves or

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<sup>31</sup> Baily, *Gilbert and Sullivan and Their World*, p. 88.

<sup>32</sup> Eden, 'Savoy Opera and its Discontents' p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Cellier and Bridgeman, *Gilbert and Sullivan and their Operas*, p. 150.

<sup>34</sup> Gervase Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan* (London: Macmillan, 1959), p. 84ff.

<sup>35</sup> Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan*, pp. 92-93.

so is of less consequence; an actress with a pleasant music-comedy voice can get away with them if she has an attractive appearance and personality.’<sup>36</sup> This comment may be seen as indicative, perhaps, of changing attitudes towards voice types in post-war Britain, and particularly the *soubrette*,<sup>37</sup> which appears to have fallen out of favour somewhat. John Amis, in a review of a Sadler’s Wells performance of *The Seraglio* in 1958, described June Bronhill’s performance as *Blonde* as ‘like a parody of a soubrette with a voice like a squeaking mouse.’<sup>38</sup> Bronhill, a noted performer of light opera, appeared concurrently in *The Merry Widow* at Sadler’s Wells in 1958.<sup>39</sup> Bronhill’s recording of the *Merry Widow* from this production reveals a timbre and stylistic approach not dissimilar to Rita Streich’s 1954 recording of *Blonde*’s aria ‘Durch zertlichkeit und Schmeicheln’ from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.<sup>40</sup> Cox-Ife (1961) also outlines his opinion regarding the casting of light opera: ‘It is probably more difficult to cast a light opera satisfactorily than any other form of stage production, for the requirements that go to make the ideal performer in this type of work are so many.’ In addition to vocal requirements there is the need to ‘...have an equal degree of achievement as an actor, which includes a controlled body and some ability as a dancer.’ Echoing Hughes, Cox-Ife also identifies the need, ‘...especially in the case of the juvenile parts,[for] age and appearance, looks and height [to be considered].’<sup>41</sup>

Audrey Williamson<sup>42</sup> discusses D’Oyly Carte traditions not only from the production perspective but is also, to a certain extent, willing to address the musical and vocal performative

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<sup>36</sup> Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan*, p. 93.

<sup>37</sup> ‘A Young soprano with a bright, flexible voice who appears energetic and youthful on stage’ Pearl Yeadon McGinnis, *The Opera Singer’s Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 20.

<sup>38</sup> John Amis, *My Music in London 1945-2000* (London: Amiscellany Books, 2006), p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> ‘The Merry Widow - BBC Television - 7 April 1958 - BBC Genome’, *BBC Genome Project*, 2020 <<https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/fb090c62003946bcacbf11ac2a7c7693>> [Accessed 2 May 2020].

<sup>40</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, ‘Durch zertlichkeit und Schmeicheln’ from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Rita Streich, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, cond. by Ferenc Fricsay (Deutsche Grammophon, 457730, 1954).

<sup>41</sup> Cox-Ife, *How to Sing both Gilbert and Sullivan*, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Audrey Williamson, *Gilbert and Sullivan Opera: An Assessment* (London: Marion Boyers, 1982).

aspects of these works. Writing in 1953, Williamson surveys both historical and contemporary vocal performing practices in the Savoy operas, providing some insights into the manner of vocal performance prevalent during the early to mid-twentieth century. These include criticisms of vocal standards within the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. Whilst praising the performances by Winifred Lawson<sup>43</sup> in the 1920s for her 'voice of flute-like limpidity'<sup>44</sup> in roles such as *Phyllis*, Williamson observes that:

Unfortunately voices of this nature, perfectly trained, are very rare in the D'Oyly Company, and too often the parts are sung, prettily but without polish, by very young and incompletely trained singers who are closer in style to romantic operetta of the Ivor Novello type.<sup>45</sup>

Cox-Ife (1961) identifies the vocal requirements for this repertoire as: '[A] voice, both for singing and speaking[...] of, at least, good quality and strength, and the owner *must* have a sound technique.'<sup>46</sup> It is perhaps necessary to understand, or at least surmise the varied perspectives taken by these writers. Williamson's stated aim is 'to re-evaluate the operas from a modern critical standpoint',<sup>47</sup> whilst Cox-Ife (1961) is more focused on giving practical advice to *performers*. Although not explicitly stated, Cox-Ife appears to be addressing the inexperienced performer, perhaps the amateur young singer and/or musical director of G&S. Williamson, despite the criticism of vocal standards quoted earlier, acknowledges the particular importance attached to diction in the D'Oyly Carte Company and offers an opinion as to how this is achieved:

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<sup>43</sup> The soprano Winifred Lawson (1892- 1961) played *Phyllis* in *Iolanthe* in the 1925 D'Oyly Carte tour and subsequently recorded the role in 1929-30.

<sup>44</sup> Williamson, *Gilbert and Sullivan Opera: An Assessment*, p. 116. Gerald Moore described the singing of Lawson's almost exact contemporary Isobel Baillie (1895 -1983) with the epithet 'flute-like' (Gerald Moore, *Am I Too Loud?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), p.119). A comparison of Baillie's 1928 recording of *Hear Ye Israel* (Mendelssohn) and Lawson's performances in the 1929-30 *Iolanthe* recording show marked similarities of vocal timbre and phrasing.

<sup>45</sup> Williamson, *Gilbert and Sullivan Opera: An Assessment*, p. 116.

<sup>46</sup> Cox-Ife, *How to Sing both Gilbert and Sullivan*.

<sup>47</sup> Williamson, *Gilbert and Sullivan Opera: An Assessment*, p. xi.

Generally speaking, it must be admitted that the D'Oyly Carte Company exhibits a standard of diction unequalled in other branches of opera to-day. A certain sharpening of consonants, especially at the end of words, helps chorus and principals to achieve this. There is no need, however, for distorted vowel-sounds to make the words clear, like the over-refined 'neam' and 'cleam' (for 'name' and 'claim') indulged in by one popular tenor.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.2.2 Observations of Vocal Characteristics in D'Oyly Carte Performances

Williamson's observation of the 'sharpening of [end] consonants' aligns with Cox-Ife (1955), who observes that final consonants are likely to be missed, leading to unintelligible words, although he does not extend this caveat to words where the final consonant is an 'r'. Here, Cox-Ife is definite in his opinion that 'Final "r"s are always mute.'<sup>49</sup> Whether he is referring only to the chorus, or to all singers is debateable.<sup>50</sup> There are many instances of final rolled or flipped 'r's in historical recordings, including some from Cox-Ife's period with the D'Oyly Carte Company. This seems to be the case for example in the 1955 recording of *Princess Ida*,<sup>51</sup> a fleeting example of a flipped (single) 'r' on the word 'are' in No. 5 Trio<sup>52</sup> with Donald Adams in the role of *Arac*. More prominent are those in the Finale to Act I (No. 7), where Fisher Morgan (in the role of Hildebrand) flips 'r's on 'here', 'disappear' and rolls the 'r' on 'fear'. This may be in part attributable to a generational difference of approach between Adams (born 1928) and Morgan (born 1908). A comparison between the 1955 and 1924 D'Oyly Carte recordings show, in the earlier recording, a much more prominent use of

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<sup>48</sup> Williamson, *Gilbert and Sullivan Opera: An Assessment*, p. 282.

<sup>49</sup> William Cox-Ife, *Training the Gilbert and Sullivan Chorus* (London: Chappell & Company, 1955), pp. 2-3. Cox-Ife was the chorus master and assistant musical director of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company between 1950 and 1961.

<sup>50</sup> Cox-Ife, *Training the Gilbert and Sullivan Chorus*. Here, Cox-Ife is specifically concerned with matters pertaining to the chorus.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur Sullivan, *Princess Ida*, D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, cond. by Isadore Godfrey (Decca, LK 4092/3, 1955) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaMaj3IvsEA>> [Accessed 19 September 2019].

<sup>52</sup> Appendix 4.

final rolled ‘r’s in this passage, when Leo Sheffield even rolls both final ‘r’s in the linguistically challenging phrase ‘never\_fear’.<sup>53</sup>

Surprisingly, Cox-Ife (1961), dealing more specifically with solo singing in the Savoy operas<sup>54</sup> rarely mentions diction *per se*, and never comments on pronunciation although here accentuation and phrasing, in both verbal and musical senses, is frequently scrutinised. This, together with a concern for the accurate reproduction of Sullivan’s notated rhythms; musical phrasing derived from ‘the verbal sense’,<sup>55</sup> with appropriate textual accentuations and an avoidance of an oversentimental or histrionic approach, forms the basis of Cox-Ife’s advice. Between 1950 and 1961, Cox-Ife worked as Assistant Musical Director and Chorus Master with the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company<sup>56</sup> and, presumably, was responsible for much of the coaching of singers, both principals and chorus in preparation for performances and recordings during this time. It is therefore reasonable to assume that his 1961 book reflects to some degree his concerns and working practices during his time with the company, whilst acknowledging that his didacticism in the text may be aimed principally at the reader who is inexperienced in performance. It is therefore unsurprising that, in common with many didactic and pedagogical sources, advice concerning the need for precision, application and an intelligent approach is offered. Nevertheless, accounts of Sullivan’s own compositional processes and characteristics in performance testify to the fundamental importance of rhythm in Sullivan’s creative process. Henry A. Lytton, in reporting François Cellier’s account of Sullivan’s compositional process, thereby perhaps validates Cox-Ife’s views:

With Gilbert’s words before him, he set out first to decide, not what should be the tune, but the rhythm. It was this method of finding exactly what metre best suited the sentiment of the lyric that gave his music such originality. Later, having decided what the rhythm should be, he went on to sketch out the melody [...]<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Appendix 5.

<sup>54</sup> Cox-Ife, *How to sing both Gilbert and Sullivan*.

<sup>55</sup> Cox-Ife, *How to sing both Gilbert and Sullivan*, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Morrell, *D’Oyly Carte: The Inside Story*, p. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Henry A. Lytton, *The Secrets of a Savoyard* (London: Jarrolds Ltd, 1922), p.61.

Many of Cox-Ife's utterances do appear, however, to perpetuate a general mid twentieth-century attitude favouring textual fidelity over wilful individualism in interpretation. As an example of this, Cox-Ife's commentary on a short extract from the recitative No. 4a in *The Mikado* may be considered within the context of recorded performances by the D'Oyly Carte Company 1926-1992. All annotations are Cox-Ife's; the vocal score lacks any indications of phrasing, articulation and dynamics (except for an initial *p* marking in the piano reduction). The dotted crescendo and decrescendo marks 'do not imply a change of dynamics but an increase and decrease of intensity':<sup>58</sup>

Example 2.2.2a: Sullivan, *The Mikado* No. 4a, annotated by William Cox-Ife.

legato

And have I jour-ney'd for a month, or near - ly, To learn that Yum-Yum,

*p* *mf*

(despairingly)

non legato

whom I love so dear - ly, This day to Ko - ko is to be u - ni - ted!

(with resentment)

In addition to his annotations, Cox-Ife comments that: 'It is with despair that Nanki-Poo sings this recitative, and *if Sullivan's note-values are observed and there is also intelligent syllabic stress in the singing, this emotion will be apparent to the listener*'<sup>59</sup> (my italics). A further note to this passage states that: 'If the notes are given their exact value and the recitative

<sup>58</sup> Cox-Ife, *How to Sing both Gilbert and Sullivan*, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Cox-Ife, *How to Sing both Gilbert and Sullivan*, p. 11.

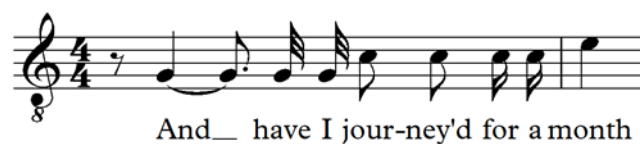
carefully phrased the music will flow. Any alterations in note-values will result in a jerky performance.<sup>60</sup> This approach is certainly borne out in the 1957 D'Oyly Carte recording with Thomas Round as Nanki-Poo:<sup>61</sup>

*Example 2.2.2b: Thomas Round, 1957.*<sup>62</sup>



As can be seen, the rhythms are indeed fairly accurately reproduced, with only a brief, localised hurrying (as indicated by a dotted arrow) and marked textual accentuations on the words (or syllables) ‘and’, ‘jour...’, and ‘month’. This certainly follows Cox-Ife’s precepts for good performance in this passage but proves to be an exception to the general practice in the other recordings under scrutiny. A rival recording, also from 1957, issued by EMI and conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent, illustrates a different approach. Here, Richard Lewis introduces much more rhythmic variety into this passage, but offers less textual accentuation:

*Example 2.2.2c: Richard Lewis, 1957.*<sup>63</sup>



<sup>60</sup> Cox-Ife, *How to Sing both Gilbert and Sullivan*, p. 11.

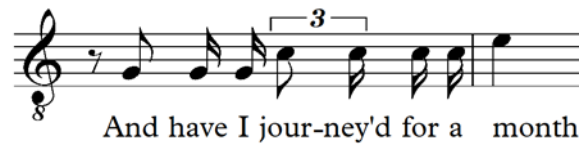
<sup>61</sup> Arthur Sullivan ‘And Have I Journeyed...’ from *The Mikado*, Thomas Round, D’Oyly Carte Opera Company, cond. by Isadore Godfrey (London (Decca), OSA 1201, 1958) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Y1q8Vn44bs>> [Accessed 2 October 2019].

<sup>62</sup> The musical examples which follow are intended as a guide to understanding rhythmic characteristics. Therefore, note values should be taken as indications of note duration only and not generally as part of particular rhythmic groupings.

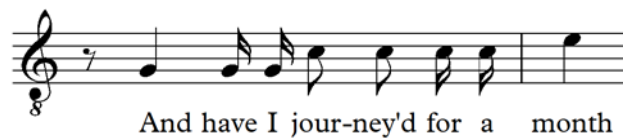
<sup>63</sup> Sullivan ‘And Have I Journeyed...’, Richard Lewis, Pro Arte Orchestra, cond. by Malcolm Sargent (EMI, ASD 256/7, 1958) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v39XjHsBid8&list7>> [Accessed 2 October 2019].

A comparison of the following D'Oyly Carte performances demonstrates a broadly similar approach to that by Lewis/Sargent over the period 1926-1992, with Round's 1957 D'Oyly Carte performance emerging as anomalous to a broadly common practice:

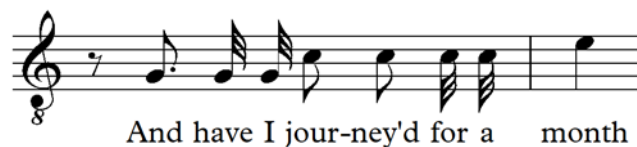
*Example 2.2.2d:* Derek Oldham - D'Oyly Carte recording, 1926.<sup>64</sup>



*Example 2.2.2e:* Leonard Osborn – D'Oyly Carte recording, 1950.<sup>65</sup>



*Example 2.2.2f:* Phillip Potter - D'Oyly Carte film, 1966.<sup>66</sup>



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<sup>64</sup> Sullivan 'And Have I Journeyed...', Derek Oldham, D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, cond. by Harry Norris (Pearl, GEMM CDS 9025, 1993) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uVoWGMuoHc>> [Accessed 2 October 2019].

<sup>65</sup> Sullivan 'And Have I Journeyed...', Leonard Osborn, D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, cond. by Isadore Godfrey (Naxos, 8.110176-77, 2001) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SV2dKnBCdXg>> [Accessed 3 October 2019].

<sup>66</sup> Sullivan 'And Have I Journeyed...', Phillip Potter, D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, cond. by Isadore Godfrey <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AtEIuagK-k&t>> [Accessed 3 October 2019].

Example 2.2.2g: Colin Wright – D’Oyly Carte recording, 1973.<sup>67</sup>



Example 2.2.2h: Julian Jensen – The New D’Oyly Carte recording, 1992.<sup>68</sup>



If the smooth evenness of rhythm in Round (1957) and the over-dotting of Phillip Potter (1966) are at the extremes of practice in this small survey, the other performances occupy a position generally closer to Phillip Potter than to Round. Whilst acknowledging that a recitative passage by its nature may invite a certain freedom of approach, it is instructive to acknowledge the performative choices made. It is also interesting to speculate whether the over-dotting of Potter (1966) and the triplet, almost *notes inégales* inflection in the 1973 and 1992 performances, may owe something to changing approaches to vocal recitative performing practices in Baroque music during this period.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Sullivan ‘And Have I Journeyed...’, Colin Wright, D’Oyly Carte Opera Company, cond. by Royston Nash (London (Decca), OSA-12103, 1973) <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOEr\\_PdVLsM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOEr_PdVLsM)> [Accessed 3 October 2019].

<sup>68</sup> Sullivan ‘And Have I Journeyed...’, Julian Jensen, D’Oyly Carte Opera Company, cond. by John Owen Edwards <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2TW90OEU-U>> [Accessed 3 October 2019].

<sup>69</sup> The early influence of texts such as Robert Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963) may be a factor here.

### 2.2.3 The ‘Irresponsibilities’ of Musical Comedy

A change of emphasis in production philosophy is evident from the D’Oyly Carte productions when considering the emerging musical comedy genre in the 1890s. George Edwardes, an impresario who had earlier in his career managed theatres for Richard D’Oyly Carte,<sup>70</sup> succeeded John Hollingshead at the Gaiety Theatre, where from 1885 he developed the ‘New Burlesque’: a form of entertainment which developed previous Burlesque forms into a more substantial and unified theatrical experience, which significantly often included an original musical score as opposed to the previous common practice of using existing popular songs. Within a decade the New Burlesque format had morphed into a slightly different form, the *musical comedy*. ‘[...]the cheerful, topical comedy, the bright songs and dances, the lively display, the popular performers[...]instead of being set in an incongruous fairytale story decked out in fantastical costumes, were used to decorate a straightforward wisp of an up-to-date, London tale.’<sup>71</sup> Whilst many of the elements of Gilbert and Sullivan’s operas appear to be present in the emerging musical comedy - such as an eclectic cast of comedians and singers which are characteristic of Burlesque performing traditions - there is a fundamental change of tone and working methods. Some D’Oyly Carte performers such as Rutland Barrington and Amy Augarde transitioned to musical comedy with the demise of Gilbert and Sullivan’s partnership. Barrington refers to his transition from his last role in *The Grand Duke* at the Savoy Theatre into the ‘troubled waters of Musical Comedy’<sup>72</sup>

Interest in BLO which predates the ‘American Invasion’ has generally been maintained by enthusiasts, both as audience and amateur performers, but particularly the latter, and there

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<sup>70</sup> Arthur Jacobs, ‘Carte, Richard D’Oyly (1844–1901), theatre impresario.’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32311>> [Accessed 19 October 2019].

<sup>71</sup> Kurt Gänzl, ‘Edwardes [formerly Edwards], George Joseph (1855–1915), musical theatre producer.’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2016 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/38669>> [Accessed 19 October 2019].

<sup>72</sup> Barrington, *Rutland Barrington, A Record of Thirty-Five Years’ Experience on the English Stage*, p. 105.

is evidence to suggest that the Gilbert and Sullivan canon, particularly, continues to find such willing performers and audiences.<sup>73</sup> This is, however, a relatively isolated phenomenon and the broader BLO genres are often totally ignored. This is particularly true of musical comedy, which began to flourish towards the end of Gilbert and Sullivan's partnership and shared many of the same performers in their later careers, carrying forwards certain performance characteristics. Consequently, there is a certain unity of development within the BLO genres which encourages their performing practices to be considered together. This is not to say that subtle distinctions cannot be drawn between these genres and many commentators highlight differences of approach, aesthetic and performative practices. Some of the performers who moved from the Savoy Operas to Musical Comedies (and in some cases back again) describe musical comedy unfavourably in comparison with the Savoy Operas, with different priorities and working methods for the performers. Rutland Barrington<sup>74</sup> describes his initial reaction to his involvement in the 'irresponsibilities' of musical comedy as involving a 'certain sense of insecurity, owing to the absence of boundary marks in the shape of lines written by the author.'<sup>75</sup> This he credits to his 'Savoy training',<sup>76</sup> with an almost improvisatory approach to productions, encouraged by producer George Edwardes. The inclusion of 'gags'<sup>77</sup> and 'topical songs'<sup>78</sup> was a significant change from the more structured D'Oyly Carte productions. Derek Oldham remembered a criticism levelled at his own performance as *Marco* in *Gondoliers* in the D'Oyly Carte Company following a period of seven years appearing in musical comedy

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<sup>73</sup> See Bradley, *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture!*, Chapter 6, pp. 115ff. Len Platt also acknowledges the work of 'enthusiasts' in musical comedy scholarship and appreciation, although the use of the term here relates to individuals such as theatre historians Kurt Gänzl and J.P. Wearing who have provided comprehensive works of reference for the genre. (Len Platt, *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 17-18).

<sup>74</sup> Rutland Barrington (1853-1922) created the role of *Pooh-Bah* in *The Mikado* (1885) and other roles in the Savoy Operas before appearing in Musical Comedies and eventually reappearing with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in 1908.

<sup>75</sup> Barrington, *Rutland Barrington, A Record of Thirty-Five Years' Experience on the English Stage*, p. 109.

<sup>76</sup> Barrington, *Rutland Barrington, A Record of Thirty-Five Years' Experience on the English Stage*, p. 109.

<sup>77</sup> Barrington, *Rutland Barrington, A Record of Thirty-Five Years' Experience on the English Stage*, p. 109.

<sup>78</sup> Barrington, *Rutland Barrington, A Record of Thirty-Five Years' Experience on the English Stage*, p. 116.

where the chief producer of the time, J.M Gordon<sup>79</sup> observed that it was ‘thoroughly common’.<sup>80</sup> It appears from Oldham’s recollection that this was a response to an ‘easy and free’<sup>81</sup> approach to the part which had been informed by his musical comedy experience. Oldham also credits Gordon with giving him ‘diction, much solid stage technique and nursed the passion and sincerity for my job’,<sup>82</sup> which, by implication, may be taken as a manifesto for the virtues of the D’Oyly Carte approach in contrast to those pertaining in musical comedy of the time.

Mackinlay observed a change in the demands made on performers during the early Twentieth Century and particularly during the heyday of musical comedy. The increasing spectacle of the post-Savoy Musical Comedies demanded versatile performing skills, as did the emerging film industry in which many star performers from the stage would also be employed. Established performers such as Marie Tempest and Ruth Vincent had diverse performance outlets in their later careers. Tempest, in addition to her established singing prowess was considered by Playfair to be one of the ‘two[...]greatest actresses of this century’.<sup>83</sup> This perhaps accounts for her long career which encompassed the eponymous role of *Dorothy* in Cellier’s Comic Opera, through the musical comedies of Sidney Jones, such *The Geisha* and *San Toy*, to acting roles in Noel Coward’s *Hay Fever*.<sup>84</sup> Mary Ellis, a generation younger than Tempest, also benefited from possessing an acting ability which lengthened her

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<sup>79</sup> Gordon had been stage manager for Gilbert and had continued during Rupert D’Oyly Carte’s management of the company, which began in 1913. See Baily, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book* pp. 431-432.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Derek Oldham Remembers’, *Memories of The D’Oyly Carte Opera Company*, 2020 <<http://pinafore.www3.50megs.com/remembers.html>> [Accessed 30 March 2020]. Oldham was the principal tenor in the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company from 1919-20; 1929-30 and 1934-37. This chronology makes it likely that Oldham’s recollection recounted here dates from 1929.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Derek Oldham Remembers’

<sup>82</sup> ‘Derek Oldham Remembers’

<sup>83</sup> Nigel Playfair, *The Story of the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith*. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1925), p.171.

<sup>84</sup> Kurt Gänzl, ‘Tempest [née Etherington], Marie’, *Grove Music Online*, 2002

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O004707>> [Accessed 9 August 2020].

performing career after retiring from singing.<sup>85</sup> Ruth Vincent had a similarly wide-ranging career, spanning the Savoy Operas, grand opera, musical comedy (including Edward German's *Tom Jones*) and, from 1912, until her retirement in 1930 appearances at the Palladium and variety theatres.<sup>86</sup>

Occasionally, singers began their careers in light opera genres before serious vocal study. One such singer was the American Mary Lewis who, having performed in cabaret, musical shows, operetta and the Ziegfeld Follies in New York underwent training with Jean de Reszke<sup>87</sup> for a career in grand opera.<sup>88</sup> Lewis' 1924 recording of Vaughan Williams' *Hugh the Drover* provides a useful comparison with her fellow Jean de Reszke pupil Maggie Teyte. Gertrude Lawrence, a contemporary of Lewis and Ellis, was a child actress in pantomime and musicals and later, revues in London including those by Noël Coward. Whilst several musicals were written especially for Lawrence, such as George and Ira Gerswhin's *Oh Kay!* and Weill's *Lady in the Dark*, the technical quality of her voice was questioned, including an observation by Richard Rodgers that she had 'an unfortunate tendency to sing flat'.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, her recordings demonstrate aspects of style and technique in common with Lewis, Ellis and other contemporaries. For her work in both London and New York, her versatility was described as

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<sup>85</sup>Paul Webb, 'Ellis [Elsas], Mary', *Grove Music Online*, 2009

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.48351>> [Accessed 31 July 2020].

<sup>86</sup>Fredric Woodbridge Wilson, 'Vincent, Ruth', *Grove Music Online*, 2001

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.46776>> [Accessed 9 Aug. 2020].

<sup>87</sup>'Students of Jean De Reske (e.g. Maggie Teyte, Bidu Sayão)', *Classical Music and Musicians*, 2020

<<https://classicalmusicandmusicians.com/2018/09/23/students-of-jean-de-reske-maggie-teyte-bidu-sayao/>> [Accessed 9 August 2020].

<sup>88</sup>See John Steane, 'Lewis, Mary'. *Grove Music Online*, 2002

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O002667>> [Accessed 9 August 2020] and 'Opera Today: Who Was Mary Lewis?', *Operatoday.Com*, 2020

<[http://www.operatoday.com/content/2009/01/who\\_was\\_mary\\_le.php#:~:text=Mary%20Lewis](http://www.operatoday.com/content/2009/01/who_was_mary_le.php#:~:text=Mary%20Lewis)> [Accessed 26 October 2020].

<sup>89</sup>Deane L. Root, 'Lawrence, Gertrude' *Grove Music Online*, 2001

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.45730>> [Accessed 9 August 2020].

‘a unique phenomenon – a superb performer in any medium, exuberant, supple, and animated, a formidable craftsman in the arts of the stage’.<sup>90</sup>

### 2.3 Pedagogy, BLO and the concept of *bel canto*

The characteristic sound of light opera performances heard in early recordings has hitherto been found to be seldom discussed. There is, however, significant literature related to concepts of vocal technique and training. Whilst this thesis is not primarily concerned with the mechanics of vocal production but rather questions of vocal style and performance issues, it is nevertheless useful to understand something of the pedagogical methods which may have influenced (directly or indirectly) some of the singers of light opera under discussion.

As the performances heard on BLO recordings of the first decades of the twentieth-century owe their origin and training to the late nineteenth century, accounts of pedagogical methodologies from this period will be investigated in the thesis. Information regarding Manuel Garcia II’s teaching and his impact on vocal performance of the nineteenth century onwards can be found in John Potter and Neil Sorrell’s *A History of Singing*.<sup>91</sup> There are also useful accounts of style and technique in ‘Historical Voices’<sup>92</sup> and more specific discussion of singing in the recording age in ‘Classical singing in the twentieth-century: recording and retrenchment’.<sup>93</sup> Further discussion on many aspects of vocal technique of this period is discussed by Sarah Potter within *Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century*.<sup>94</sup> The Garcia influence is addressed in detail in ‘The Rise and Fall

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<sup>90</sup> B. Atkinson in Root, ‘Lawrence, Gertrude’.

<sup>91</sup> John Potter and Neil Sorrell, N, *A History of Singing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>92</sup> John Potter and Sorrell, *A History of Singing*, Part II, pp. 35ff.

<sup>93</sup> John Potter and Sorrell, *A History of Singing*, Part III, p. 193ff.

<sup>94</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’.

of the Larynx: Trends in Voice Production'.<sup>95</sup> This is an important aspect of vocal technique in this period as the nature of the sound produced is significantly influenced by Larynx position. Sarah Potter suggests that the low larynx produces the characteristic operatic timbre of contemporary classical singers and is a relatively recent development in vocal technique and pedagogy. She equates the characteristic high larynx sound (weakening in the upper registers and lacking 'ring') to the untrained amateur choral singer of today and argues that this is perhaps closer to the vocal production of the early nineteenth century. Sarah Potter discusses the changing ideals from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries with reference to Garcia's own *Traité complet de l'Art du Chant* (1841).

Sterling Mackinlay brings to his writings the experience of training with Manuel Garcia II; a subsequent professional performing career which included experience on the light opera stage and a later career as a vocal pedagogue in which Garcia's methods feature prominently. *Light Opera*<sup>96</sup> (1926) discusses in detail the elements of staging and performing in light opera. Contemporary attitudes to Acting (chapter 3), Emotion and Expression (chapter 4), and approaches to Musical Numbers (chapter 6) are all covered in some detail. Voice (chapter 5) is of particular interest in forming an understanding of vocal technique in relation to light opera and Garcia's influence in terms of Laryngeal position is evident. More detailed consideration of these and other matters of vocal technique is found in *The Singing Voice and its training*<sup>97</sup> and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

James Stark provides an overview of pedagogies which aims to 'reconcile historical and scientific descriptions of good singing'<sup>98</sup> and in the process offer a definition of *bel canto*, a term he identifies as coming into general use only in the late nineteenth century, as a label to

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<sup>95</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 15ff.

<sup>96</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *Light Opera* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1926).

<sup>97</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *The Singing Voice and its training* (London: Routledge and Sons Ltd. 1910).

<sup>98</sup> James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), abstract.

identify an Italian model of singing in opposition to the Wagnerian ‘declamatory style’.<sup>99</sup> Stark defines *bel canto* as:

...a concept that takes into account two separate but related matters. First, it is a highly refined method of using the singing voice in which the glottal source, the vocal tract, and the respiratory system interact in such a way as to create the qualities of *chiaroscuro*,<sup>100</sup> *appoggio*,<sup>101</sup> register equalization, malleability of pitch and intensity, and a pleasing vibrato. The idiomatic use of this voice includes various forms of vocal onset, *legato*, *portamento*, glottal articulation, crescendo, decrescendo, *messa di voce*,<sup>102</sup> *mezza voce*,<sup>103</sup> floridity and trills, and *tempo rubato*.<sup>104</sup>

All of these characteristics occur in the recorded performances of BLO repertoire. Indeed, it could be argued that the *bel canto* ideals as defined above were more consistently applied in BLO genres in the twentieth century than many other parallel vocal genres.

The concept of *bel canto*, is, however, largely dismissed by Sarah Potter as a term ‘without an appropriate definition’<sup>105</sup> and by inference, largely illusory. John Potter, in addressing the development of ‘institutionalised scientifically based pedagogy’ refers to the ‘myth of Bel Canto’, which he feels developed to legitimise pedagogies which ‘disagreed with

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<sup>99</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, p. xviii.

<sup>100</sup> *Chiaroscuro* – Stark defines this as ‘‘bright-dark’ tone. Every sung note was supposed to have a bright edge as well as a dark or round quality in a complex texture of vocal resonances... *Chiaroscuro* is a tone quality so distinctive that even a casual listener will quickly associate it with operatic singing’ Stark, p. 35: Herbert-Caesari describes it as ‘the *ideal timbre* in vocal emission...essentially a tone that is not light nor too dark...it meant invariably a light basis with an appropriate admixture of dark’ (Herbert-Caesari, p. 69).

<sup>101</sup> *Appoggio* – literally ‘support’ or ‘leaning’, defined by Stark as ‘the balance of inspiratory and expiratory muscles...vocal onset and glottal pressure, position of the vocal tract, airflow and breathn pressure, legato the *messa di voce*, and even good intonation. Thus, *appoggio* became an inclusive term for breathing dynamics, and a useful catch-word in vocal pedagogy’ Stark, p. 102

<sup>102</sup> *Messa di Voce* – ‘The singing or playing of a long note so that it begins quietly, swells to full volume, and then diminishes to the original quiet tone. The *messa di voce* is one of the most important techniques of 17th- and 18th-century Italian singing style, first as an ornament and then as a pedagogic tool.’ Ellen T. Harris, ‘Messa di voce’, *Grove Music Online*, 2001 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.18491>> [Accessed 13 August 2020].

<sup>103</sup> *Mezza voce* – literally ‘half-voice’ ‘A direction in both vocal and instrumental music to produce a quiet, restrained tone’. ‘Mezzo, mezza’, *Grove Music Online*, 2001 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.18567>> [Accessed 13 August 2020].

<sup>104</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, p. 189.

<sup>105</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, p. 64.

(or could not understand) the science'<sup>106</sup>. The science versus tradition debate was of long standing. Garcia was perhaps the epitome of the 'institutional pedagogue', having taught at the Royal Academy of Music for some forty seven years (1848-1895) during which time he developed the Laryngoscope<sup>107</sup> in order to 'elucidat[e] the action of the larynx during vocal effort'<sup>108</sup> and which formed the basis of his paper "Physiological Observations of the Human Voice" which was submitted to the Royal Society of London on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1855.<sup>109</sup> Wesley Mills is clear that 'the time has come [1908] when sense and science must replace tradition and empiricism',<sup>110</sup> whilst Edgar Herbert-Caesari (1936)<sup>111</sup> attempts to reconcile a concept of the ideals of 'that grand school of singing, called the Old Italian'<sup>112</sup> with a scientific approach. Herbert-Caesari credits Caccini as 'the first exponent of artistic singing known subsequently as *bel canto*'<sup>113</sup> and explores these principles in terms of physiology and acoustics with the stated aim of halting 'the gradual decline of the most glorious of all arts'<sup>114</sup>. Whilst Garcia and Herbert-Caesari's claims regarding the scientific basis to their work may be questioned in modern scientific terms,<sup>115</sup> the concept of *bel canto* as a vocal ideal, often as a totem for past glories now lost, remains a strong factor in pedagogical writings of widely varying eras and

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<sup>106</sup> John Potter, *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 193.

<sup>107</sup> James Radomski and April Fitzlyon, 'García family', *Grove Music Online*, 2001

<<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.45707>> [Accessed 12 August 2020].

<sup>108</sup> Malcolm Stirling Mackinlay, *Garcia the Centenarian and His Times: Being a Memoir of Manuel Garcia's Life and Labours for the Advancement of Music and Science* (Edinburgh; London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1908), p. 205.

<sup>109</sup> Mackinlay, *Garcia the Centenarian*, p. 205.

<sup>110</sup> Wesley Mills, *Voice Production in Singing and Speaking based on Scientific Principles* (London: J. Curwen & Sons., Ltd., 1908).

<sup>111</sup> Edgar Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone* (London: J. M Dent and Sons Ltd, 1936).

<sup>112</sup> Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone*, p. xix. Herbert-Caesari identifies the 'Old Italian school of singing' as being that of the Roman Schola Cantorum (p. xx).

<sup>113</sup> Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone*, p. 2. Giulio Caccini (1551-1618).

<sup>114</sup> Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone*, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> Helena Daffern, in assessing the emerging scientific approach of Manuel Garcia II states that 'Whilst the MRI images and spectrograms now available to voice scientists allow facilitated clarification of, for example, the manipulation of the acoustic space of the vocal tract, Garcia could only describe his findings in text and pictures. This allowed his reader a large margin for misinterpretation or over-simplification.' Helena Daffern, *Distinguishing Characteristics of Vocal Techniques in the Specialist Performance of Early Music* (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of York, 2008).

shall therefore form an important frame of reference for the analyses of BLO vocal performance characteristics in the next chapter. In attempting to understand the *voices* of the BLO genres, Stark's criticism of a musicological approach which considers only 'words and notes, not voice qualities'<sup>116</sup> confirms an approach in this thesis which places the manner of singing as central to an understanding of BLO genres: 'Expressive singing is based upon a word-note-tone relationship, in which the voice itself plays a significant role. This, too, is crucial for an understanding of *bel canto* [and, by extension, of BLO].'<sup>117</sup>

Further confirmation of the relevance of *bel canto* principles in BLO performing practice may be gleaned from Robert Toft's *Bel Canto: A Performers Guide*,<sup>118</sup> which offers detailed practical instruction in various performing practices identified as characteristic of *bel canto*. Of particular interest are Toft's discussions of the singer's relationship with notation, which assumed a creative agency in terms of 'Latitude to the Performer [which] may be greatly assisted therein, by his 'Perception of the Powers of Expression'.<sup>119</sup> Such latitude is attributed in part to the link between 'the spoken and sung word', especially (but not exclusively) in recitative, where the 'approach required accents, emphases, and pauses of normal speech, as well as the length of syllables, to be as keenly observed in singing as they were in speaking.'<sup>120</sup> Airs also needed to be 'liberated from their notation' as they 'came to life only if performing traditions that remained latent in the notation were made manifest'.<sup>121</sup> The use of vibrato is considered by Toft to be ornamental rather than intrinsic to a singer's voice in *bel canto* traditions. This has also been noted by David Milsom in relation to nineteenth century violin

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<sup>116</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, p. xxv.

<sup>117</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, p. xxv.

<sup>118</sup> Robert Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performers Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>119</sup> Charles Avison, 'An Essay on Musical Expression' (1753) quoted in Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performers Guide*, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performers Guide*, p. 12.

<sup>121</sup> Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performers Guide*, p. 13.

playing<sup>122</sup> and for both Toft and Milsom, there are multiple species of vibrato depending on the expressive context. Early BLO practices on record demonstrate a wide variation in vibrato use from the minimal vibrato of Gertie Millar (1910) to the intrinsic vibrato of Florence Smithson (1912). Subsequent recordings, for example Binnie Hale (1929) and Mary Ellis (1935) feature a more consistent vibrato and this appears to follow a similar trajectory to that outlined by Milsom regarding twentieth century violin playing: from an ‘ornamental’ vibrato (which has similarities to Toft’s description of the *bel canto* ideal of expressive, local vibrato) towards a pervasive ‘modern, continuous vibrato’ which forms ‘an intrinsic tonal constituent’.<sup>123</sup> The various permutations of vocal vibrato can lead to rather complex semantics: Milsom quotes H. Deacon’s definition of vocal *vibrato* as ‘...an alternate partial extinction and reinforcement of a note’<sup>124</sup> whereas vocal *tremolo* is ‘an undulation of the notes...a more or less quickly reiterated departure from true intonation’<sup>125</sup> Milsom characterises the former as ‘intonational vibrato’,<sup>126</sup> whereas Carl Seashore refers to this as ‘pitch vibrato’.<sup>127</sup> Seashore also describes the latter as ‘intensity vibrato’,<sup>128</sup> in a study which aims to analyse vibrato types and applications through the analysis of sound wave patterns.<sup>129</sup>

### 2.3.1 The Pedagogical lineage of BLO

The vocal pedigree of many singers associated with BLO can be traced to some of the leading pedagogues of the nineteenth century who wrote treatises. Amongst the Savoyards<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (Aldershot; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 111ff.

<sup>123</sup> Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, p. 113.

<sup>124</sup> Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, p. 111.

<sup>125</sup> Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, p. 111.

<sup>126</sup> Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, p. 112.

<sup>127</sup> Carl Seashore, *Psychology of the Vibrato in Voice and Instrument* (Iowa: The University Press Iowa City, 1936), p. 35.

<sup>128</sup> Seashore, *Psychology of the Vibrato in Voice and Instrument*, p. 35.

<sup>129</sup> Seashore, *Psychology of the Vibrato in Voice and Instrument*, p. 12ff.

<sup>130</sup> Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*.

who recorded, Sir Charles Santley studied with Manuel Garcia II; Scott Russell with Gustave Garcia; Esther Palliser with Pauline Viardot Garcia; two studied with Francesco Lamperti and three studied with Mathilde Marchesi. Less well known as a pedagogue, but with a significant number of pupils who subsequently performed in light opera, is Alberto Randegger. The pedagogies of Garcia and Marchesi have been investigated by Sarah Potter<sup>131</sup> in some detail with references to Francesco Lamperti, although the work of his son, Giovanni Battista Lamperti is more thoroughly discussed. Berton Coffin<sup>132</sup> surveys, summaries and reviews a range of vocal pedagogies from Tosi through to Lilli Lehmann and including Manuel Garcia I and II; Marchesi; Francesco and Giovanni Battista Lamperti. “The teaching of Jean de Reszke” by William Johnstone-Douglas is also reviewed by Coffin.<sup>133</sup> De Reszke’s influence is particularly relevant to an understanding of the pedagogical background to some of the performers in productions of Dunhill’s *Tantivy Towers* in 1931. Maggie Teyte, who sang the role of *Lady Ann Galop* in the first revival (1935) at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, was a pupil of De Reszke’s. In addition, a substantial proportion of the chorus in the original 1931 production at the same theatre consisted of students of the Webber-Douglas School of Singing. The founders of the school, Walter Johnstone-Douglas and Amherst Webber, were close associates of De Reszke; Johnstone-Douglas as ‘student, accompanist, and assistant teacher’, and Webber as ‘de Reszke’s associate for 30 years’<sup>134</sup> The programme to the 1931 production

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<sup>131</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’.

<sup>132</sup> Berton Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press).

<sup>133</sup> Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics*, p. 104. N.B. There appears to be some discrepancy between the title of Johnstone-Douglas’ article as referenced by Coffin: (Johnstone-Douglas, W. (1925). “The Teaching of Jean de Reszke.” *Music and Letters*. July) and an article in the same edition of *Music and Letters* referenced thus: Johnstone-Douglas, W. ‘His Principles of Singing’ in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Jul., 1925), pp. 202-209. Coffin quotes verbatim extracts of this article, albeit with some additions and emendations. Johnstone-Douglas’ article is preceded by a biographical sketch of de Reszke by Amherst Webber under the title ‘His Manner of Life’, which is briefly quoted from by Coffin, and followed by ‘A Lesson with the Master’ by Johnstone-Douglas and not quoted by Coffin.

<sup>134</sup> Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics*, pp. 104-105.

sports a full-page advert for the school, which declares its allegiance to De Reszke's methods (Fig.2.3.1a):

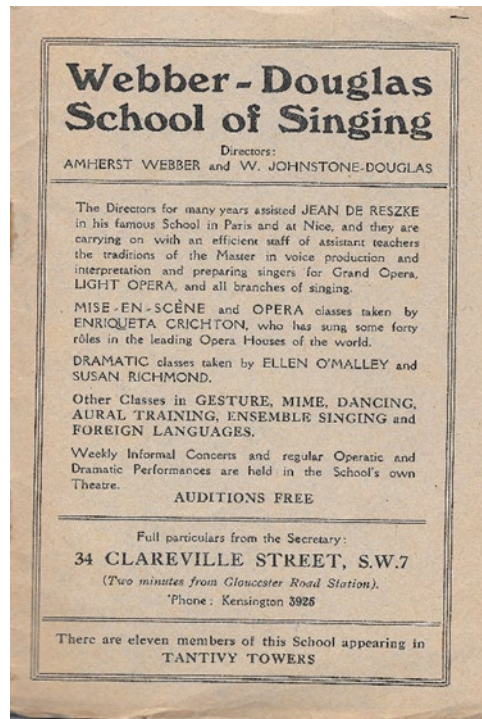


Figure 2.3.1a: Taken from the Programme for the 1931 production of *Tantivy Towers* at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith.

Coffin distils Johnstone-Douglas's account of de Reszke's pedagogical approach under the categories of 'Breathing', 'Voice Placement and Diction', 'Resonance and Sonority', 'Colors of the Voice' and 'Posture'. The influence of Jean de Reszke's life, singing and teaching career and pedagogy on his contemporaries is evident through the various detailed accounts available. Edith de Lys, in her lesson note books, gives a detailed account of forty one lessons (1915-1917) with de Reszke. Recurring themes in these accounts are breathing, the use of the diaphragm for support and the lowering of the larynx.<sup>135</sup> In addition to the work of de Lys, Coffin, Webber and Johnstone-Douglas; Maggie Teyte, in a letter to Grace Vernon

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<sup>135</sup> Edith De Lys, *Jean de Reszke Teaches Singing to Edith de Lys*. (San Francisco: Leon Volan, 1979).

in 1937,<sup>136</sup> carefully wrote out the vocal exercises she remembered from lessons with de Reszke.<sup>137</sup> The commentary which accompanies the exercises provides a useful insight into Teyte’s priorities in the technical development of student singers. The advice is clearly differentiated between voice types and pays particular attention to the registers of the voice, referred to as ‘head tones’ and ‘chest tones’ in addition to ‘covered tone’.<sup>138</sup> Teyte’s advice regarding the negotiation of the transition between chest and head tones refers to de Reszke’s teaching: ‘We had a special exercise, to eliminate the passage from chest to head - those dangerous four notes of the medium F F# G G# (soprano)’.<sup>139</sup> This is very similar to Johnstone-Douglas’s recollection of de Reszke’s teaching for sopranos, in which de Reszke would ‘rarely allow [chest tones] to be carried above E above middle C, never above F’.<sup>140</sup> There is clear parity between Teyte’s and Johnstone-Douglas’s recollections of de Reszke’s teaching, the following examples recalling exercises with characteristic embellishments:

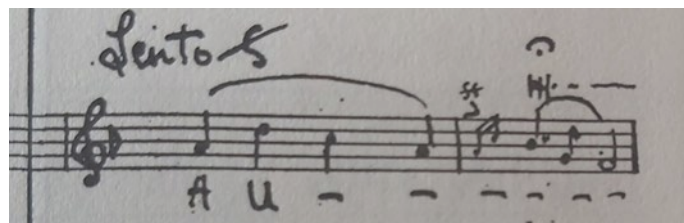


Figure 2.3.1b: Vocal exercise by Jean de Reszke transcribed by Maggie Teyte.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Vernon was for many years effectively Teyte’s teaching assistant, although together they established the “Teyte-Vernon School of Singing” see Garry O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1979), p. 205.

<sup>137</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection*, Appendix B, pp. 283ff.

<sup>138</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 285.

<sup>139</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 285.

<sup>140</sup> Walter Johnstone Douglas, ‘His Principles of Singing.’, *Music & Letters* (1925) vol. 6, no. 3, 202–209.

<[www.jstor.org/stable/726682](http://www.jstor.org/stable/726682)> [Accessed 9 February 2016], p. 207.

<sup>141</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte*, p. 287.

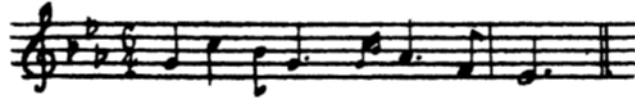


Figure 2.3.1c: Vocal exercise by Jean de Reszke transcribed by Walter Johnstone Douglas.<sup>142</sup>

Teyte speculated that de Reszke’s exercises were ‘based on operatic phrases’, with the ‘*pp* exercise[...]taken from “Don Carlos”’.<sup>143</sup> Johnstone-Douglas states that ‘The object of his whole teaching was primarily the operatic stage, but was by no means confined to that.’<sup>144</sup> The importance of the use of the diaphragm in both Teyte and Johnstone-Douglas’s account attests to the notion of de Reszke’s teaching as being concerned primarily with developing voices for the opera stage: ‘he knew that in the theatre one wanted all kinds of resource and colour in the voice, but primarily power’<sup>145</sup>

Teyte’s performing commitments and personality as recounted by her biographer Garry O’Connor perhaps informs his rather mixed opinion of her teaching: ‘She was not a steady teacher; she taught what de Reszke taught her, but not with the experience de Reszke had had of his voice failing him and his efforts to re-educate himself’.<sup>146</sup> O’Connor gives a clue to the influence de Reszke exerted on his pupils, including Teyte, whilst comparing the teaching aspect of Teyte’s career unfavourably with de Reszke: ‘[...]as a teacher, he had been something of a genius, and she fell far short of this.’<sup>147</sup> Jean de Reszke was not the only influence on Teyte at this time. According to O’Connor, Teyte’s musical education, as a

<sup>142</sup> Johnstone Douglas, ‘His Principles of Singing.’, p. 211.

<sup>143</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte*, p. 286. This is corroborated by Johnstone-Douglas who states that ‘with him voice-production, diction and interpretation were inseparable: the very earliest lessons, after vowel sounds pure and simple, would be on phrases from operas in any language, to exemplify the technical point that was being studied.’ p.203

<sup>144</sup> Johnstone Douglas, ‘His Principles of Singing.’, p.203.

<sup>145</sup> Johnstone Douglas, ‘His Principles of Singing.’, p.203.

<sup>146</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte*, p. 227.

<sup>147</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte*, p. 227.

member of the de Reszke School, involved classes with the singer and composer Reynaldo Hahn and Jean de Reszke's assistants Amherst Webber, Johnstone Douglas and Maurice Noufflard in addition to lessons with 'the master three or four times a week.'<sup>148</sup> Teyte's pupil, Estelle Spottiswoode (née Johnstone) was strongly of the opinion that Jean de Reszke's wife, Marie, initially taught Teyte French repertoire and 'how to sing French...It was a school and she was 15...so it was drilled into her'.<sup>149</sup>

Reid suggests that 'Few vocalists who are successful performers have either the time or the inclination to carry out a thorough investigation of the history and development of voice training methods.'<sup>150</sup> The problem that Reid proposes is that great performers-turned-teachers are often 'merely duplicating a pedagogic procedure they themselves had experienced as students'<sup>151</sup> which, due to their innate ability is 'not generally applicable and, as such, ha[s] a decidedly limited value.'<sup>152</sup>

Nevertheless, there were positives in Teyte's teaching methodology according to O'Connor: '...she was always colourful. Her revelations or judgement would suddenly illuminate a singer's work.'<sup>153</sup> Spottiswoode makes a similar observation as she recalls her first encounter with Teyte as a teacher: 'when I heard her do her masterclass at Juilliard, which I went to, I was just stunned[... ]she hit the nail on the head every time.'<sup>154</sup> There were clearly aspects of de Reszke's pedagogy which transferred through Teyte to Spottiswoode. Clara Leiser recalls Adelina Patti, who had already 'achieved international renown as a very great artist and who was then past sixty'<sup>155</sup> taking instruction in the Jean de Reszke method from a

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<sup>148</sup> O'Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte*, p. 49.

<sup>149</sup> Interview between the author and Estelle Spottiswoode, London 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

<sup>150</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, p. 162.

<sup>151</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, p. 162.

<sup>152</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, p. 163.

<sup>153</sup> O'Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte*, p. 227.

<sup>154</sup> Estelle Spottiswoode interview.

<sup>155</sup> Clara Leiser, *Jean de Reszke and the Great Days of Opera* (New York: Minton, Balch and Company, 1934), p. 274.

pupil of his, a Miss Stevens in 1905.<sup>156</sup> In a letter from Patti to Miss Stevens, Patti thanks Stevens for her help following a successful tour and says “I sing my scales every day and of course think of you all the time. *Open your mouth*. My mouth has become so large that I can hardly shut it up properly after I have done singing”.<sup>157</sup> That the ‘open mouth’ was a feature of the de Reszke method is confirmed by Teyte in 1937: ‘Jean made us open our mouths on F and upwards’<sup>158</sup> and by Spottiswoode in 2016, quoting Teyte in lessons: ‘Don’t fabricate or hold. Open your mouth, damn you!’<sup>159</sup>

Following her selection by Debussy to succeed Mary Garden as Mélisande in 1908,<sup>160</sup> Teyte’s reputation as a singer was particularly strong in French repertoire. When asked whether Teyte approached operetta differently, Spottiswoode replied, ‘I think it didn’t matter what she sang – I think it did not matter: English, French – she tried singing German [...]’<sup>161</sup> Shawe-Taylor notes that ‘In England, between the wars, she appeared a good deal in operetta and musical comedy (*Monsieur Beaucaire*, *A Little Dutch Girl*, *Tantivy Towers*) and was even in some danger of being regarded as a lightweight artist’<sup>162</sup>. Spottiswoode noted that ‘she did a lot of lighter [repertoire], well, that was because she was here in England and she could do it. And she did it in Paris. When she was in America she was doing French. She had all those records – Duparc, Chausson, - that’s what got her to America’.<sup>163</sup> It would seem that Teyte’s approach to singing in terms of voice production remained fairly constant throughout her varied repertoire, emphasising freedom and seeking to establish technical security, and then ‘being

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<sup>156</sup> Leiser, *Jean de Reszke and the Great Days of Opera*, p. 274. This date is based on a letter from Marie de Reszke (Jean de Reszke’s wife) to Miss Stevens dated August 8 1905.

<sup>157</sup> Leiser, *Jean de Reszke and the Great Days of Opera*, p. 275.

<sup>158</sup> O’Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte*, p. 287.

<sup>159</sup> Estelle Spottiswoode interview.

<sup>160</sup> Desmond Shawe-Taylor, ‘Teyte [Tate], Dame Maggie’, *Grove Music Online*, 2009 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27761>> [Accessed 16 August 2020].

<sup>161</sup> Estelle Spottiswoode interview.

<sup>162</sup> Shawe-Taylor, ‘Teyte [Tate], Dame Maggie’

<sup>163</sup> Estelle Spottiswoode interview.

able to play with it'.<sup>164</sup> According to Spottiswoode: 'the Jean de Reszke method teaches you to allow your voice that you have [to be] free'<sup>165</sup>. When asked whether in her own lessons with Teyte matters such as posture or acting were addressed, Spottiswoode answered 'No, no, no [...] we just got on [...] to use your core.'<sup>166</sup>

### 2.3.2 Current Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Pedagogies

It is clear that some of the leading nineteenth century pedagogues, whose treatises and other pedagogical writings remain influential in contemporary vocal pedagogy, have a direct teacher-pupil relationship with certain pioneering performers of light opera genres. Richard Miller addresses the continuing relevance of two *bel canto* ideals in contemporary vocal pedagogy: '*sostenuto* and *coloratura*',<sup>167</sup> which is essentially the development of sustained legato singing and vocal agility. According to Miller, 'Whoever the singer may be, unless he or she learns the technical skills essential to both moving and sustaining the voice, success will be limited. The two poles of *bel canto* are essential to a complete vocal technique.'<sup>168</sup> There is no doubt that Miller's 'two poles' form an essential part of the vocal characteristics of much of light opera performing practice. The relevance to succeeding generations of singers during the twentieth century of the aesthetics of *bel canto* has been questioned, however by Michael Scott:

By 1914 these mighty pedagogues [Garcia, Sbriglia, the elder Lamperti and Mathilde Marchesi] were all dead and the best years of their pupils passed by; their successors [...] abandoned the attempt to impose the classical virtues on a generation which despised its traditions and had no use for its graces.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Estelle Spottiswoode interview.

<sup>165</sup> Estelle Spottiswoode interview.

<sup>166</sup> Estelle Spottiswoode interview.

<sup>167</sup> Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 101.

<sup>168</sup> Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, p. 103.

<sup>169</sup> Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume 2: 1914-1925* (London: Duckworth, 1993), p. 1.

It may well be that the recurring theme in pedagogies of ‘a golden age of singing long past’ is actually one of changing tastes and ideals, rather than an actual deterioration in the inherent quality of voices or technique, which is so often implied. Perspectives such as these will be considered in the analysis of BLO performances in the next chapter, where the complex interaction of aural and visual evidence, pedagogical background and genre characteristics shall be addressed.

## **Chapter Three**

# Analysis of Performing Practices

This chapter aims to explore and analyse stylistic features as evidenced in recordings within the context of relevant pedagogical sources and develop a working understanding of the performing practices required to create a historically informed performance of *Something in the City*. The terms ‘Principals’ and ‘Supporting Cast’ are used henceforth as a shorthand for the categorisation of evidence according to its relevance to *Something in the City*. They do not imply an intrinsic value judgement on the relative merits of the performers or performances.

## Principals

- Performers associated with the first production and subsequent stage and radio performances of *Tantivy Towers* in sound film and audio recordings between 1931 and 1942;
- Sound film footage of singers from the period of *Tantivy Towers* and *Something in the City*, in related vocal genres which most clearly illustrate the link between visible aspects of vocal technique and the sound of the vocal performance;

## Supporting Cast

- Audio recordings of performers associated with a range of BLO genres between 1900 and 1930;
- Audio recordings of ‘Savoyards’ between 1904 and 1930.

In addition to the above categories, a small selection of French and German light opera recordings were analysed for comparison, as were three recorded performances of Dunhill's *The Cloths of Heaven* between 1935 and 1982.

Dunhill's perspective on BLO was, as recounted earlier in this thesis, very much rooted in the Gilbert and Sullivan canon. He acknowledged that 'Opinions may differ as to the musical adequacy of the performances [...] which were given at the Savoy Theatre'<sup>1</sup> but credits the members of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company as having '[...]all learnt one lesson thoroughly- the necessity for clarity of diction in song as well as in speech[...]'.<sup>2</sup> For Dunhill, the 'interaction of word-phrase and music-phrase is the whole problem of operatic composition' and in his opinion '[...] the consummate art of Sullivan, in creating English music which was absolutely at one with an English text, leads the way, and must in due course exercise its influence'.<sup>3</sup> Dunhill himself is clearly one of those influenced in his comic opera writing and therefore the performing practices of the Savoy Theatre and D'Oyly Carte Opera Company must in turn influence the realisation of Dunhill's *Something in the City* in performance.

### **3.1. Methodology for the Analysis of Recorded Sources**

The methodology adopted in the analysis of recordings was primarily informed by the work of Milsom and Sarah Potter.<sup>4</sup> Recordings (visual and/or audio) were subjected to close scrutiny using a system of aural and visual analysis which noted (in prose) and notated (on printed scores) personal reactions and observations of performance characteristics in as much

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1929), p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas*, p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas*, p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Discussed in 1.1.2 'Approaches to the Analysis of Recordings: Issues and Methodologies'

detail as possible – to use Milsom’s phrase ‘personal reaction and tabulation’.<sup>5</sup> Rhythmic features such as localised rubati, tempo changes and rhythmic alteration have also been assessed using personal reactions rather than making an attempt to quantify these against metrically regular patterns. Whilst mindful of analytical methodologies (such as the tapping technique) which may ostensibly yield more mathematically precise data, Cook’s warning<sup>6</sup> regarding the interpretation of such data, and especially of a ‘page to stage’ approach which can miss many ‘rhetorical, persuasive, or expressive effects’ has encouraged an approach which considers such factors holistically with other performance characteristics. Rather than an approach which views the score as the blueprint for performance and the apparent quirks of recorded performances notated as deviations, it was deemed more effective to give primacy to the recorded performances as evidence of standard performing practices in this repertoire, with the aim of understanding all aspects of performance as communicated through the recorded media available. Thus a ‘stage to page’ approach has been adopted.

As evidenced in the table,<sup>7</sup> the cast of the first performance of *Tantivy Towers*<sup>8</sup> (1931) is an eclectic mix of performers whose métiers span film and theatre acting, the concert platform, grand opera and variety.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, this is also common in the revivals and radio broadcasts of the production.<sup>10</sup>

The availability of recorded and filmed material of performers listed in appendix 6 is, unfortunately, sporadic and often surprising. Where possible, priority was given to recorded and filmed performances by performers directly connected with the original production

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<sup>5</sup> David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (Aldershot; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Discussed in 1.1.2 ‘Approaches to the Analysis of Recordings: Issues and Methodologies’.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 7.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 6.

supervised and coached by Dunhill himself.<sup>11</sup> Subsequent touring, revival and radio casts of *Tantivy Towers* were also considered as primary sources as they were all undertaken during Dunhill's lifetime (with the exception of a 1975 BBC broadcast). Maggie Teyte,<sup>12</sup> who sang in the 1935 revival of *Tantivy Towers* has a comprehensive discography and, through Jean de Reszke, a clear pedagogical background. Yet, frustratingly, no filmed performances of her have yet been discovered. In an attempt to mitigate such omissions it has been occasionally necessary to use filmed footage of other performers, some of whom are noted BLO specialists contemporaneous with but not involved in *Tantivy Towers*,<sup>13</sup> others in related genres<sup>14</sup> and some with a pedagogical link to *Tantivy* performers.<sup>15</sup>

The eclectic cast list of the 1931 (and subsequent) performances of *Tantivy Towers* indicates that not all performers in Light opera came from an operatic background.<sup>16</sup> Mackinlay (1926) identifies that some performers within a typical Light opera production were well known actors, whilst others appear to have been connected with Burlesque performances - each performer, singer, actor or comedian joining the company with their individual strengths and weaknesses and together creating a unified whole. According to Mackinlay, some of the singers had experience mainly on the concert platform with little to no experience on a

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<sup>11</sup> David Dunhill, 'David Dunhill Talks About the Work of his Father Thomas Dunhill and Recalls the First Performance of *Tantivy Towers*', *Tantivy Towers*, 19 June 1975 [radio broadcast] (BBC Radio 3, 1975 [transcription from a private collection]). See also: <<https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/search/0/20?adv=0&q=tantivy+towers&media=all&yf>> [Accessed 13 February 2020]. In a radio interval feature, David Dunhill recalled the rehearsal process involving Thomas Dunhill rehearsing personally with the cast.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendices 8f and 8i.

<sup>13</sup> Such as Martyn Green (1899-1975) who appears in *The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan*, dir. by Sidney Gilliat (London Film Productions, 1953).

<sup>14</sup> Examples include Vera Florence and Ann Burgess

<sup>15</sup> Bidu Sayão (1902-1999) and Leo Slezak (1873-1946) for example were pupils of Jean de Reszke and as such provide a visual record of his pupils singing in the absence of film footage of Maggie Teyte. Examples discussed later in this chapter include Sayão appearing in excerpts of operatic arias and Slezak in German operetta.

<sup>16</sup> Appendix 6.

theatrical stage, others came from the world of Grand Opera, whilst others ‘[...] had come from a fine schooling of Gilbert and Sullivan operas at the Savoy Theatre’.<sup>17</sup>

Valuable primary evidence of historical performing practices of light opera exists in the many recordings by performers associated with its composers, through the creation of roles in first productions or subsequent productions supervised by the composer or close associates and, where possible, these have been chosen for analysis. In addition, recordings of repertoire which does not fall into any light opera genres has been included where the performers have close links to light opera, provide useful stylistic comparisons, or are contemporary with light opera genres discussed in this thesis.

Existing research into performing practice styles using historical recordings emphasises key considerations and potential limitations in analysing early recordings. Many commentators have discussed the unusual and often fraught circumstances under which performers recorded in the acoustic era.<sup>18</sup> Whilst acknowledging the limitations of recording technology and audio quality in recordings from the early part of the twentieth century, which may cast doubt on factors such as pitch, tempo and tone quality and given a reasonably stable recording and playback speed and sufficient audio clarity, there is little doubt from such evidence of the nature of rubati, portamenti, inflection, ornamentation, pronunciation, phrasing and textual fidelity.

### **3.1.1 Dramatis Personae: Supporting Cast**

Recordings by singers personally associated with Sullivan’s musical direction and singing the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire on their recordings are represented by Walter Passmore (1867-1946)<sup>19</sup>, the principal comedian at the Savoy Theatre between 1894 and

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<sup>17</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *Light Opera* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> The acoustic era for these purposes is pre 1925.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 9d.

1903;<sup>20</sup> Sir Henry Lytton (1860-1936),<sup>21</sup> who replaced George Grossmith in *Ruddigore* (1888) and subsequently became one of the longest serving, versatile and eminent D'Oyly Carte Company members<sup>22</sup> and Amy Augarde (1868-1959)<sup>23</sup>, who debuted in the D'Oyly Carte chorus in 1884, and thereafter understudied Jessie Bond in the 1888 revival of *H.M.S Pinafore*. Augarde appeared as a soubrette at the Savoy but her recordings are of contralto roles, made twenty years later.<sup>24</sup> Isabel Jay (1879-1927)<sup>25</sup> became the leading soprano at the Savoy upon the departure of Ruth Vincent (1873-1936) in 1899<sup>26</sup> in the production of *The Rose of Persia*.<sup>27</sup>

Rutland Barrington (1853-1922), the creator of Pooh Bah in *The Mikado* (1885) and many other Gilbert and Sullivan roles made only one recording, a comic song of his own composition, *The Moody Mariner* in 1905<sup>28</sup>. Whilst this has intrinsic interest in terms of Barrington's centrality to the Gilbert and Sullivan enterprise, the analysis is of the recorded performance alone as no vocal score has thus far been located. Contrastingly, Ruth Vincent recorded relatively prolifically between 1906 and 1920. However, none of her recordings are of the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire so an early recording, *Home Sweet Home* (1906) was chosen for analysis due to its proximity in time to her Gilbert and Sullivan involvement and the interest this recording affords in terms of non-notated melodic decoration and cadenzas<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> John Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record* (Chichester: Headlion, 1985), p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendices 9e and 9f.

<sup>22</sup> Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 9c.

<sup>24</sup> Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 9a.

<sup>26</sup> Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*, p. 29: 'When Miss Vincent learned that there were to be *two* leading sopranos in the cast she was far from pleased, especially as the *other* soprano was the American, Ellen Beach Yaw, for whom Sullivan was writing special music. One week before the opening, Miss Vincent walked out! One of the few times anyone ever walked out at the Savoy. "Miss Vincent threw up her part, silly girl," Sullivan wrote in his diary [29 November 1899] "so we put Jessie Rose into it."'

<sup>28</sup> Rutland Barrington, 'The Moody Mariner', *The Art of the Savoyard* (Pearl, GEMM CD 9991, 1993), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xstTJO5YH3I>> [Accessed 5 February 2020].

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix 9g.

In the years following the active partnership of Gilbert and Sullivan, all of the singers mentioned above had careers in Musical comedy and their discographies reflect this.<sup>30</sup> Singers whose careers blossomed in Edwardian musical comedy include Marie Tempest (1864-1942),<sup>31</sup> W. Louis Bradfield (1866-1919),<sup>32</sup> Ellaline Terriss (1871-1971),<sup>33</sup> Gertie Millar (1879-1952),<sup>34</sup> Florence Smithson (1884-1936)<sup>35</sup> and Phillis Dare (1890-1975)<sup>36</sup>. Tempest created the role of ‘O Mimosa San’ in *The Geisha* (Monckton) and Terriss the role of ‘Bessie Brent’ in *The Shop Girl* (Ivan Caryll), credited with being the first musical comedy.<sup>37</sup> Millar created the role of ‘Prudence Pym’ in *The Quaker Girl* (Monckton) and Dare the role of ‘Eileen Cavanagh’ in *The Arcadians* (Monckton) and recordings of these singers in numbers from these roles have been analysed. Florence Smithson created the role of ‘Sombra’ in *The Arcadians* (Monckton) but no recordings of her in the role appear to exist. Her recording of *The Waltz Song* from *Tom Jones* has therefore been analysed as an example of her singing in this genre. W. Louis Bradfield created the role of ‘Dick Cunningham’ in *The Geisha* (Monckton) but it is a recording of *I want to be a Military Man* from *Floradora* (Stuart) that is analysed.

Examples of performers of Opera Comique and French operetta include Hippolyte Belhomme (1854-1923),<sup>38</sup> who created ‘Crespel’ in *Les contes d’Hoffmann* (Offenbach) and Charles Dalmores (1871-1939),<sup>39</sup> who created the role of ‘Julien’ in *Louise* (Charpentier). Both singers had significant careers in other operatic genres including Wagner (Dalmores) as

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<sup>30</sup> John Wolfson usefully provides comprehensive discographies for all singers on record who worked with Gilbert and Sullivan. (Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*)

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix 9n.

<sup>32</sup> See Appendix 9r.

<sup>33</sup> See Appendix 9h.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix 9b.

<sup>35</sup> See Appendix 9q.

<sup>36</sup> See Appendices 9o and 9p.

<sup>37</sup> C. M. P. Taylor, ‘Terriss, Ellaline [real name (Mary) Ellaline Lewin; married name (Mary) Ellaline Hicks, Lady Hicks]’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2011 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40483>> [Accessed 23 August 2020].

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix 9i.

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix 9l.

well as French and Italian Opera. Louis Cazette (1887-1922)<sup>40</sup> spent the majority of his short career at the Opéra-Comique, singing a wide range of repertoire.<sup>41</sup> The repertoire analysed represents facets of the French Light opera tradition including the Opéra-Comique genre of *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Offenbach, sung by Dalmores) and *Haydée* (Auber, sung by Belhomme) and the Comédie lyrique genre of *Fortunio* (Messager, sung by Cazette). It is perhaps unfortunate that none of the recordings analysed represents roles that the singers themselves created. This is partly due to the timescale of the operas (the Auber premiered in 1847 and the Offenbach in 1881) but also perhaps due to a career path for many French singers of light opera which differed from that of their English counterparts. Representatives of the German operetta tradition include Fritz Werner (1871-1940)<sup>42</sup>, Mizzi Günther (1879-1961)<sup>43</sup> and Louis Treumann (1872-1942)<sup>44</sup>. Günther and Treumann were respectively the creators of the roles of 'Hanna Glawari' and 'Danilo' in Lehar's *Die Lustige Witwe* of 1905.<sup>45</sup> Whereas the French singers represented were fundamentally singers of grand opera, many of the singers analysed of the English repertoire were specialist light opera performers.

### 3.1.2. Dramatis Personae: Principals

Of the singers associated with *Tantivy Towers*, the most comprehensive audio-visual material exists of the tenor Trefor Jones.<sup>46</sup> Jones created the role of 'Hugh Heather' in the 1931 premiere production, reprised the role on radio under Dunhill's baton later the same year

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix 9j.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume 2: 1914-1925* (London: Duckworth, 1993), p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Ashot Arakelyan, 'Fritz Werner (Tenor)', *Forgottenoperasingers.Blogspot.Com*, 2020 <<https://forgottenoperasingers.blogspot.com/2016/05/fritz-werner-tenor-18-november-1871.html>> [Accessed 3 September 2019]. See Appendix 9t.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix 9s.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix 9u.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Lamb and Robert J. Dennis. 'Lustige Witwe, Die' *Grove Music Online*, 2002 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O003026>> [Accessed 13 September 2019].

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix 8e.

and maintained a connection with Dunhill by singing the song cycle *Wind Among the Reeds* in a wartime National Gallery lunchtime concert on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1940. Dunhill had previously rehearsed the work with Jones and referred to this in his diary: ‘We had quite a long practice & did everything very thoroughly. I think it will be a fine performance on Monday - & I shall go to hear it.’<sup>47</sup> Dunhill was appreciative of the actual performance, commenting that Jones: ‘[...] did them awfully well’<sup>48</sup> *Something in the City* was certainly on Dunhill’s mind at this time, as his diaries attest – the entry for the next day (20<sup>th</sup> February 1940) states: ‘After supper I corrected proofs (I have a big batch of “Something in the City” which will take some time to do).’<sup>49</sup> It therefore seems reasonable to speculate that Jones may have been approached by Dunhill for the role of ‘Henry Jones’ had a production taken place. Jones was by this time an established performer with a varied career.

During his student years at the RCM, where he was taught by Gustave Garcia and H. Arnold Smith,<sup>50</sup> Jones had begun to attract attention, the clarity of diction which is a notable feature of his singing in recorded performances evidently already established: ‘He sang English clearly, with a Welsh accent. This young man will certainly have a successful career, for no one can resist such a good voice used so spontaneously and buoyantly’.<sup>51</sup> Jones gave the first performance of Bartók’s *Cantata Profana* in 1934,<sup>52</sup> was a regular at the Three Choirs Festival between 1927 and 1937 and at Covent Garden, and listed his ‘special subjects’ in ‘Who’s Who in Music’ as ‘Opera, Oratorio and Recitals’.<sup>53</sup> Light opera featured prominently in Jones’

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<sup>47</sup> London: Royal College of Music Library, Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (16 February 1940), 8763.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 19 February 1940.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 20 February 1940.

<sup>50</sup> Information supplied by Maira Canzonieri, Assistant Librarian at the Royal College of Music, London.

<sup>51</sup> C., ‘Students in Opera’ *The Musical Times*, 67(1002), (1926) 739-740. <doi:10.2307/912022> [Accessed 9 January 2020].

<sup>52</sup> Elliott Antokoletz and Paolo Susanni, *Béla Bartók: A Guide to Research, Second edition* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> *Who’s Who in Music (1949-50)* ed. by L. G. Pine, (London: Shaw Publishing and Company, 1949), p. 117.

career throughout this period, from his stage debut in *Tantivy Towers*<sup>54</sup> to perhaps reaching his widest audience in the film adaptation of Ivor Novello's *Glamorous Night* (1937) in which Jones reprised his stage role of *Lorenti*.<sup>55</sup> A singer of Jones' training and experience was considered worthy of comment in reviews of *Tantivy Towers*, which twice refer to Jones as a 'real tenor'.<sup>56</sup> His casting in *Tantivy Towers* was despite his 'resources as an actor [being] utterly unknown'<sup>57</sup> and was subsequently described as 'a gamble [...] which came off':

Numerous well-known musical comedy matinée idols had to be rejected because their voices, considered "good enough" by hysterical Shaftesbury avenue galleries packed with girls, simply could not cope – not, at least, with pleasure-giving results – with the difficult songs allocated to the hero [Hugh Heather]<sup>58</sup>

In the 1940 radio broadcast of *Tantivy Towers*, the role of 'Hugh Heather' was played by Webster Booth. A member of the D'Oyly Carte Company at the beginning of his career,<sup>59</sup> Booth subsequently achieved widespread popularity in a duo with soprano Anne Ziegler, often singing light opera repertoire together. A 1936 Pathé film provides clear evidence of Booth's manner and voice production<sup>60</sup>. Another singer involved in radio broadcasts of *Tantivy Towers* was Dennis Noble who sang in the broadcasts of 1940 and 1942.<sup>61</sup> Whilst primarily known for a career in Opera and concert which included the first performance of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*,<sup>62</sup> Noble undertook roles in the musical comedy *Head Over Heels*<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> G. Roberts, 'Gamble With A Welsh Singer Which Came Off', *Western Mail And South Wales News*, 10 July 1934, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986), p. 422. Gänzl, in discussing the casting of *Glamorous Night* in 1935, refers to 'Trefor Jones from *Tantivy Towers*' (p. 420), implying that this was hitherto Jones' most significant stage role.

<sup>56</sup> *The Times* January 17 1931 and *The Times* April 9 1931.

<sup>57</sup> Roberts, 'Gamble With A Welsh Singer Which Came Off', p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, 'Gamble With A Welsh Singer Which Came Off', p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth, *Duet* (London: Stanley Paul and Company 1951), p. 34ff.

<sup>60</sup> Webster Booth, 'The Word is Mine Tonight' (Pathé Film ID 1656.15, 1936) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/webster-booth>> [Accessed 19 June 2020].

<sup>61</sup> Appendix 6.

<sup>62</sup> Alan Blyth, 'Noble, Dennis' *Grove Music Online*, 2009 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.19999>> [Accessed 20 August 2020].

<sup>63</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 215.

(Adelphi Theatre, 1923); *White Horse Inn*<sup>64</sup> (London Coliseum, 1931); *The One Girl*<sup>65</sup> (Touring production, 1933) and *Trevallion*<sup>66</sup> (Palace Theatre, 1956). It is fortunate that several short films exist of Noble singing. The repertoire, often of a patriotic or sentimental nature, consists of solo songs, similar in style to nineteenth century ‘drawing-room’ ballads. There is also a film along similar lines by Roy Henderson<sup>67</sup>, who performed in the same radio broadcasts of *Tantivy Towers* as Noble. Henderson was less frequently associated with light opera, with a reputation for English music including premieres of works by Delius, Dyson and Vaughan Williams. On the operatic stage, Henderson was particularly associated with Glyndebourne from its inception as an opera festival.<sup>68</sup> He frequently broadcast extracts from light opera and ballads for BBC radio.

Of the female performers involved in *Tantivy Towers*, only Anne Ziegler is represented on film singing<sup>69</sup>. These are usually in partnership with Webster Booth and together they performed in the 1940 broadcast of *Tantivy Towers*. A celebrated duo, especially during the Second World War, Zeigler and Booth were frequent broadcasters and appeared in various feature films of this period. The visual evidence these films offer of performing practices are somewhat compromised, however, by camera angles and production which can obscure technical features of the singing. Where a clear view is available, however, an apparent lack of physical activity which might reasonably be expected in the act of singing, such as chest or

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<sup>64</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 342. Although Gänzl mentions Noble’s involvement in this production, he is not credited on the 1931 London Coliseum Programme for this show.

<sup>65</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 372.

<sup>66</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 689.

<sup>67</sup> Roy Henderson, ‘Sylvia’ (Pathé Film ID 1305.24, 1933) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/roy-henderson>> [Accessed 19 June 2020].

<sup>68</sup> John Steane, ‘Henderson, Roy Galbraith’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2006 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/73912>> [Accessed 20 August 2020].

<sup>69</sup> ‘Webster Booth and Anne Ziegler: So Deep is the Night’ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFOv73b0GKo>> [Accessed 3 September 2019].

abdominal expansion and modification of mouth shape leads the author to suspect that sound dubbing may have taken place.<sup>70</sup> More movement is evident in Booth's 1936 film.

The sopranos Ann Burgess,<sup>71</sup> Vera Florence<sup>72</sup> and Elsa Stenning<sup>73</sup> provide clear visual evidence of the management of their technique in filmed performances. The evidence of Burgess' performing and radio career is limited, but suggests that she had a career in light music of limited duration. Most of the available evidence dates from 1931, the year of the Pathé film.<sup>74</sup> Florence had a long broadcasting career with the BBC, appearing as a singer in a wide variety of genres including light opera, English song and lieder between 1925 and 1955.<sup>75</sup> References to Florence in live performance generally refer to seaside summer seasons, particularly on the South Coast or light music concerts with Spa orchestras.<sup>76</sup>

Stenning had experience in her native Australia of singing Gilbert and Sullivan before coming to England, where she appeared at Covent Garden.<sup>77</sup> Her broadcasts for the BBC span a huge range of genres, from the role of Helmwig in Act 3 of *Die Walkure* by Wagner conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler<sup>78</sup> to an appearance in pantomime as Robinson Crusoe.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.2. Observations from the analysis of recordings

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<sup>70</sup> This theory is as yet uncorroborated by documentary evidence.

<sup>71</sup> See Appendix 8a.

<sup>72</sup> See Appendix 8b.

<sup>73</sup> See Appendix 8g.

<sup>74</sup> Burgess broadcast with the BBC Quintet and Herbert de Leon (Baritone) on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1931 (*The Derby Daily Telegraph*, 30 September 1931) and Albert Sandler and the Park Lane Hotel Orchestra on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1931 (*Leeds Mercury*, 17 October 1931). The only other reference to Burgess performing on stage was at the Regent Theatre, Brighton on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1931 (*Mid Sussex Times*, 9 June 1931).

<sup>75</sup> *Radio Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1938, Issue 767, p. 50.

<sup>76</sup> *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer*, 12 September 1931; *Worthing Gazette*, 10 April 1935; *Gloucestershire Echo* 31 March 1944.

<sup>77</sup> *Radio Times* 10<sup>th</sup> June 1938, Issue 767 p. 48.

<sup>78</sup> *Radio Times* 17<sup>th</sup> May 1937, Issue 711 p. 26.

<sup>79</sup> *Radio Times* 29<sup>th</sup> January 1939, Issue 800 p. 60.

Using the methodologies described above, film and audio recordings were analysed for commonly occurring performing practices which would be considered remarkable in current vocal performing practice. Initial reactions to the recordings were noted with a view to formulating broad areas of investigation. Informed by parallel reading of pedagogical sources, it was decided to consider the following factors: the use of language, melodic shape, stylistic features, tone quality and technique. Within these broad areas of investigation, further subsets suggested themselves. These are noted in the Observations of Performing practices, appendices 8, 9 & 10 and form the basis for the subsequent identification of trends in performing practice.

### **3.2.1. Breathing**

Breath management is without doubt among the most examined elements of singing pedagogy and voice science. Breathing is a central tenet of nearly every book and treatise ever written about the art of singing, and countless articles and studies on the topic have appeared in scholarly journals. Nonetheless, consensus on optimal breath management technique proves elusive.<sup>80</sup>

This statement neatly captures the existence of a plethora of views regarding breathing and correctly identifies this as one of the most discussed elements of singing technique: views on breathing epitomise the position of most pedagogues of the nineteenth century as they do in much subsequent pedagogical research. Whether in pedagogical styles of the late 1800s or the present day, an understanding of the ‘correct’ method of breathing proves to be varied and somewhat perplexing. Anderson proposes that pedagogical perspectives, which place

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<sup>80</sup> Scott McCoy, ‘Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers’, *Folia phoniatrica et logopaedica*, 57. 246-54. (p. 246), (2005) <10.1159/000087078> [Accessed 23 April 2018].

breathing, as a fundamental necessity for singing are not supported by the evidence of nineteenth century pedagogues:

In many a nineteenth century explanation of singing, breathing would get a small mention, sometimes just in passing. This is in complete contrast to today when ‘breathing’ (in its many different meanings, along with ‘support’ and ‘diaphragm’) seems to be singing’s main aspect for many in the industry.<sup>81</sup>

There may be some superficial justification for this view, based on the relative infrequency of such discussion by, for example, Manuel Garcia II.<sup>82</sup> There are somewhat conflicting accounts of Garcia’s attitude to breathing. Jenny Lind, who took some remedial vocal lessons from Garcia in 1841, stated that ‘[...] he is very particular about the breathing.’<sup>83</sup> Sir Charles Santley, a pupil of Garcia who recorded Sullivan’s ballad *Thou’rt Passing Hence, My Brother* in 1903<sup>84</sup> is quoted by Anderson: ‘There is no mystery or difficulty about the art of breathing’.<sup>85</sup> Santley is particularly dismissive of the concept of ‘abdominal breathing’: ‘I have tried in vain to discover whereabouts in the abdomen there exists a storeroom for breath’.<sup>86</sup> Trefor Jones’ breathing appears to follow the precepts of his teacher, Gustave Garcia, who (quoting his father, Manuel Garcia II)<sup>87</sup> states that ‘the development of the lungs in the act of inspiration may be affected (sic) [Manuel Garcia II says ‘effected’] simultaneously from above, downwards, by the contraction of the diaphragm, and laterally by the distention of the ribs [...] perfect inspiration appears to depend on this united action’. The majority of movement connected with ‘inspiration’ in Jones’ filmed performances appear to be in the thorax,<sup>88</sup> with very occasional

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<sup>81</sup> James Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol I, How We Sang* (Barcelona: Beuthen Press, 2012), p. 38.

<sup>82</sup> Manuel Garcia, *New Treatise on the Art of Singing* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1847). There is less than half a page dedicated to the discussion of ‘The Breath’ (p. 10) in this book which is 86 pages long.

<sup>83</sup> Malcolm Stirling Mackinlay, *Garcia the Centenarian and His Times: Being a Memoir of Manuel Garcia’s Life and Labours for the Advancement of Music and Science* (Edinburgh; London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1908), pp. 144-146.

<sup>84</sup> Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record*, p. 51.

<sup>85</sup> Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol I, How We Sang*, p. 49.

<sup>86</sup> Charles Santley, *The Art of Singing and Voice Declamation* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1908), p. 63.

<sup>87</sup> Gustave Garcia, *The Actor’s Art: A Practical Treatise on Stage Declamation, Public Speaking, and Deportment, for the use of Artists, Students and Amateurs, including A Sketch on the History of the Theatre, from the Greeks to the Present Time* (London: Messrs Simpkin, Marshall, & Company, 1888), p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Trefor Jones, ‘Here’s to the best of us’ (Pathé Film ID 1166.09., 1938)

<<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/trefor-jones-3>> [Accessed 19 June 2020]; ‘Shine Through my Dreams’ (Pathé Film ID 1656.10, 1936) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/trefor-jones-1>> [Accessed 19 June 2020].

movement visible in the abdomen. Potter, S, highlights inconsistencies in Garcia's advice regarding the use of the thorax and diaphragm, noting that in 1872, advice to 'lower the diaphragm without jerking' was inserted into a passage regarding inhalation<sup>89</sup> whilst later (1894) appearing to advocate thoracic breathing.<sup>90</sup> A similar mixture of thoracic and abdominal breathing is evident in films of Dennis Noble,<sup>91</sup> whereas Webster Booth's breathing is at times almost visually undetectable.<sup>92</sup> Only Roy Henderson appears to employ a significantly lower, abdominal breathing technique.<sup>93</sup>

There is some excellent footage available of John McCormack in performance showing him in contrasting performance contexts.<sup>94</sup> His breath control was renowned (heard to great effect in his recording of Mozart's *Il mio Tesoro*)<sup>95</sup> and can be observed at close quarters in this film. There is often very little to see in his breathing, although at times he takes what might be considered a high breath, involving very occasional raising of the shoulders. Whether this is due to his habit of crossing his arms in performance, either in holding an *aide memoire* notebook in the recital sequences or casually leaning against a chair is unclear. Both McCormack and Jones, in their stance, appear to concur with Garcia's advice that 'the head be erect, the shoulders thrown back without stiffness, and the chest expanded.'<sup>96</sup> As a Garcia disciple, Mackinlay offers a variation on the same theme: 'For proper breathing it is necessary to stand erect with the chest out. There must be no motion of chest or shoulders, no heaving up and down; neither must there be any pushing out of the abdomen.'<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2014), p. 54.

<sup>90</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 55.

<sup>91</sup> Dennis Noble, 'Island of June' (Pathé Film ID 1104.05, 1934) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/dennis-noble-4>> [Accessed 19 June 2020].

<sup>92</sup> Booth, 'The Word is Mine Tonight'

<sup>93</sup> Henderson, 'Sylvia'

John McCormack, *Song O' My Heart*, dir. by Frank Borzage (Fox Film Corporation, 1930)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lMyrvNjwV4Y>> [Accessed 19 June 2020].

<sup>95</sup> Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume 2: 1914-1925*, p. 178.

<sup>96</sup> Garcia, *New Treatise on the Art of Singing*, p. 11.

<sup>97</sup> Mackinlay, *Light Opera*, p. 76.

Both Garcia and Alberto Randegger observe specific approaches to breathing for female singers, but it is debatable whether either is actually advocating these approaches or adopting a pragmatic approach to the nineteenth century status quo, of which restrictive dress for females would have been a significant factor in considerations of vocal technique.

Mackinlay recalls Marie Tempest's first meeting with Manuel Garcia:

When Miss Etherington, as she was known in those days, came for her first interview with the maestro [...] she was wearing a very tight-fitting dress of Stuart tartan, cut in the princess style, which showed off her figure to advantage and drew attention to the nineteen-inch waist of which she was the proud possessor.<sup>98</sup>

After hearing Tempest sing, Garcia told her to 'go home at once, take off that dress, rip off those stays and let your waist out to at least twenty-five inches!' Mackinlay recalls Tempest's later thoughts: 'He was quite right [...] no one can sing when laced in as tightly as that. I went home, and [...] I've never had a nineteen-inch waist since'.<sup>99</sup>

Randegger, a singing teacher at the Royal Academy of Music in London from 1868 who taught many singers associated with BLO<sup>100</sup> makes clear the importance he places on breath: '[...] the fundamental law which principally regulates the healthy production of the voice is the *skilful management of the breath* [...] BREATHING WELL is the foundation of the true art of singing'<sup>101</sup>. This is not, according to Randegger, the same for male and female singers. He describes the 'full breath' as when the 'lungs are quite filled with air, and the chest,

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<sup>98</sup> Mackinlay, *Garcia the Centenarian*, pp. 247-8.

<sup>99</sup> Mackinlay, *Garcia the Centenarian*, p. 249. It was, according to Mackinlay, Alberto Randegger who suggested that Tempest should go on the stage, noting Tempest's subsequent career within a variety of genres: 'light opera, concert and comedy'

<sup>100</sup> George Grove, rev. by John Warrack and Rosemary Williamson, 'Randegger, Alberto', *Grove Music Online*, 2001 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22872>> [Accessed 7 August 2020]. Many of Randegger's pupils were associated with Sullivan's music during their career including Liza Lehmann, Andrew Black, Ellen Beach Yaw and Darrell Fancourt. In addition to teaching and conducting, Randegger was a composer of comic opera including *The Rival Beauties* (1864) and a collaboration with W.S Gilbert in 1871 on the 'Musical Play' *The Creatures of Impulse*. (see Ian. C. Bond, <<https://gsarchive.net/gilbert/plays/creatures/creature.pdf>>)

<sup>101</sup> Alberto Randegger, *Singing* (London:Novello, Ewer & Company, 1893), p.8.

ribs (*and in males the abdomen also*), completely expanded'<sup>102</sup> (my italics). This description appears to be describing abdominal breathing for male singers, but *clavicular*, or high breathing for females. Whether this is because of commonly restrictive modes of dress, physiological or aesthetic differences is not stated. Elsewhere, Randegger appears to be advising against clavicular breathing:

[...] clavicular respiration, is the most fatiguing, because a great expenditure of strength is required to sustain during the whole time of the expiration the numerous bony and muscular parts, which having been raised by the inspiration tend to return as soon as possible to their former state. The resulting fatigue causes the veins and the muscles of the neck to swell; the voice becomes stifled, and the inspiration, growing more and more difficult, ends by producing the "dramatic hiccough " (sob). Nothing like this characterises abdominal respiration, which is accomplished by a contraction of the diaphragm, and only causes displacement of the intestines.<sup>103</sup>

The term 'clavicular breathing' is often used to describe high chest breathing, often in negative terms.<sup>104</sup> Rockstro is uncompromising in his opinion that clavicular breathing is a legitimate technique only for the singer to replenish a full breath. His terminology for a full breath is 'costal', whereas he defines clavicular breathing as 'a gentle inhalation, confined to that portion of the organ [i.e. the lungs] which lies immediately beneath the *claviculae*, or collar-bones.'<sup>105</sup> In his discussion of Jenny Lind's technique, Rockstro observed that her 'extraordinary sustaining power'<sup>106</sup> was not attributable to any 'abnormal capacity of the lungs' but rather based on a costal breathing technique which was aided by clavicular breathing when necessary. This would appear to align with the concept of the *Mezzo Respiro* as observed by W.J. Henderson in the performances of Marcella Sembrich:

Madame Sembrich, who is a past mistress of sustained and smooth delivery, is a firm advocate of the use of the half breath in singing [...] By this method

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<sup>102</sup> Randegger, *Singing*, p. 15.

<sup>103</sup> Randegger, *Singing*, p. 188.

<sup>104</sup> Brian David White, 'Singing Techniques and Vocal Pedagogy' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Surrey, 1985), p. 38: White describes clavicular breathing as 'the ultimate in high chest breathing [...] condemned by most authorities on singing.'

<sup>105</sup> William Smyth Rockstro, *Jenny Lind: A Record and Analysis of the "Method" of the Late Madame Jenny Lind Goldschmidt* (London; New York: Novello, Ewer and Company, 1894), p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> Rockstro, *Jenny Lind*, p. 15.

a series of sustained phrases may be sung without any apparent break in the continuous flow of tone. The interruption of the stream of sound required for half a breath is very brief and will not convey any noticeable stoppage to an audience. The muscular effort needed to take half a breath is very small [...] [& has little] possibility of disturbing the poise [...] <sup>107</sup>

It is not clear from this account whether the *Mezzo Respiro* (half breath) is taken costally or clavicularly but one may speculate that in order not to disturb the poise, the breath would have had at least elements of clavicular breathing.

Sarah Potter<sup>108</sup> investigates the use of *Respiro* ('slow and complete inspiration') and *Mezzo Respiro* ('slight and hurried inspiration, which gives the lungs a slight supply, merely sufficient for a moment [...]') in annotated scores by Corri (c.1780s) and Garcia (1890). These annotations highlight the apparent frequency and irregularity (by modern standards) of breaths suggested. Mackinlay,<sup>109</sup> as a disciple of Garcia, also describes the use of full and half breaths. Half breaths 'can be taken downward with rapidity and without effort, while the diaphragm moves but the ribs remain unchanged in position.'<sup>110</sup>

Accounts of the singing of Melba (1861-1931), Germaine Lubin (1890-1979), Titta Ruffo (1877-1953) and Sembrich (1858-1935) attest to a common practice of not filling the lungs to capacity as a matter of course during singing.<sup>111</sup> Economy of breath in singing, both in inspiration and exhalation, appears to be a common feature at this time and this may be considered holistically as part of a performance aesthetic which prioritises poise and elegance. Anderson quotes Patti: ' [...] I try to use as little breath as possible'<sup>112</sup> and Mattia Battistini who ' [...] if anyone asked him how much breath he needed to sing [...] answered 'No more than what it takes to smell a rose.'<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Henderson, *The Art of the Singer: Practical Hints About Vocal Technic and Style* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 39.

<sup>108</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', pp. 60-61.

<sup>109</sup> Mackinlay, *Light Opera*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>110</sup> Mackinlay, *Light Opera*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>111</sup> Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol I*, pp. 44-48.

<sup>112</sup> Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol I*, p. 40.

<sup>113</sup> Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol I*, p. 41.

Rockstro is clear, however, that clavicular breathing is not a method on which to base the whole breathing technique. This view is largely shared by Mills<sup>114</sup> who advocates a breathing technique which incorporates both diaphragmatic and clavicular breathing. Mills identifies variations in the meaning of the term ‘clavicular’: ‘[...] some mean upper chest breathing, and others a form of respiration in which the shoulders (clavicles, or key-bones [sic]) are raised with inspiration in an objectionable manner.’ He even advocates, exceptionally, the use of the latter technique when:

‘[...] a tenor of excellent training may feel that he can, under the circumstances of the hour, reach a certain tone very high in his range only by the utmost exertion [...] Under these circumstances such a singer might be justified in a momentary use of every resource of what physiologists term forced respiration, including clavicular breathing; but in general any raising of the shoulders should be absolutely avoided.’<sup>115</sup>

Mills appears to echo Rockstro’s concept of clavicular breathing in the high-chest sense as being useful for short rapid passages which ‘[...] require to take breath, and the only way in which they can really meet the case is by a short, more or less superficial action of the respiratory apparatus, in which the upper chest must play the chief part.’<sup>116</sup> A similar ‘integrated’ method of breathing is also advocated by Herbert-Caesari who attributes pedagogies which favour either diaphragmatic or costal breathing at the expense of the other to the ‘pet and fancied fads of theorists advocating unilateral breathing.’<sup>117</sup>

Cornelius Reid, writing in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is less accommodating of the concept of clavicular breathing as a legitimate aspect of good vocal practice. He expands somewhat the definition of clavicular breathing in that he describes the raising of the upper parts of the chest while the ‘diaphragm is drawn in’.<sup>118</sup> Such a practice, according to Reid, is the ‘least

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<sup>114</sup> Wesley Mills, *Voice Production in Singing and Speaking based on Scientific Principles* (London: J. Curwen & Sons., Ltd., 1908), p. 118.

<sup>115</sup> Mills, *Voice Production in Singing and Speaking based on Scientific Principles*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>116</sup> Mills, *Voice Production in Singing and Speaking based on Scientific Principles*, p. 120.

<sup>117</sup> Edgar Herbert-Caesari, *The Science and Sensations of Vocal Tone* (London: J. M Dent and Sons Ltd, 1936), p. 17.

<sup>118</sup> Cornelius Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*. (New York City: Joseph Patelson Music House, 1950), p. 147.

desirable [of three possible techniques of breathing] and must be avoided at all costs.’<sup>119</sup> Reid’s principal objections are that the act of ‘raising the chest and lifting the shoulders [cause] the muscles of the neck [to be] brought into tension.’<sup>120</sup> Reid then states that:

the tension of the neck muscles soon spreads until the entire upper portion of the anatomy becomes rigidly inflexible. All sense of tonal ‘support,’ body poise and control is speedily lost and, wanting this, the voice ‘grips’ instead of ‘holds’ and the technique gradually becomes throaty.<sup>121</sup>

This appears to be echoed by Melba’s advice that ‘[...] it is always wrong to lift the chest and shoulders. Why? Because real control is impossible if we breathe in that way. Moreover, we are sure to tighten the throat muscles and cramp the voice.’<sup>122</sup>

It is interesting to note that Reid concurs with Santley and appears to underplay the role of breathing in good singing: ‘There has never been even a suspicion of proof that mastery of singing is in any way dependent upon a correct system of breathing.’<sup>123</sup> According to Reid, ‘the earliest theoretical writings [of the so-called Bel Canto school] on voice support this contention and the subject of breathing is treated with almost complete indifference.’<sup>124</sup>

The proliferation of treatises and pedagogies which placed breathing technique as central to their author’s concept appears to be a rapidly developing phenomenon of the 19th century. Rutherford identifies a noticeable shift in attitude during the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial era from a ‘personal tailoring of approach’ exemplified by Manuel Garcia I who would ‘strike a chord on the piano, and say [to a pupil] ‘now sing any passage you please’’. This, according to a former pupil of Garcia’s, the Countess de Merlin, had the effect of giving the pupil a ‘perfect mastery over his voice by dint of exercising his own inspirations, and that he was at

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<sup>119</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, p. 147.

<sup>120</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>121</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, p. 148.

<sup>122</sup> Nellie Melba, *The Melba Method* (London: Chappell and Company, 1926), p. 10.

<sup>123</sup> Cornelius Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* (New York City: Joseph Patelson Music House, 1950), p. 145.

<sup>124</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, p. 146.

liberty to follow the dictates of his own taste without fear or hesitation'.<sup>125</sup> Rutherford identifies the 'increasing competition within the marketplace of musical education' during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a potential factor in the proliferation of methodologies – the development of an often "one size fits all" attitude'<sup>126</sup> the inevitable outcome of the promotion by pedagogues of marketable, distinctive methods, which 'became weapons in the war to attract students'.<sup>127</sup>

Anderson suggests that the increasing significance of breathing in vocal pedagogies during the mid-nineteenth century was due to the growing involvement of 'some closed-minded scientists [...] By the 1850s singing was being invaded by doctors and physiologists, many of whom kicked off a kind of argumentation in this arena.'<sup>128</sup> A key contributor was Dr Louis Mandl who believed that the diaphragm was the most important area that singers should concentrate on. 'Other doctors came in, strongly supporting Mandl or adamantly offering alternative views, hurling criticisms at each other and trying desperately to pigeon-hole existing singers, such as whether they were 'clavicular', intercostal, 'abdominal', etc, etc.'<sup>129</sup> The diaphragm is by far the most frequently addressed aspect of breathing in the pedagogy of Jean de Reszke as related by his pupil Edith de Lys.<sup>130</sup> Frequent reference is made to the manipulation of the diaphragm, for example, in securing high notes: 'Take a deep breath and hold the diaphragm [sic] firm. Do not let it move.'<sup>131</sup> An increase in tone is achieved through 'push[ing] the diaphragm [sic] up [...] but, never down!'<sup>132</sup> De Lys summarises de Reszke's approach thus:

There are three places to use in singing – and these must always be combined. They are – head – chest – and diaphragm. Never try singing from chest position alone. Remember that for the velvet quality of the voice, one must use the diaphragm [...] In finding the resonance, raise the chest high in singing. That is – when taking breath, as

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<sup>125</sup> Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera 1815-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 96.

<sup>126</sup> Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera 1815-1930*, p. 97.

<sup>127</sup> Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera 1815-1930*, p. 97.

<sup>128</sup> James Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol. 2, Why It Was Better* (Barcelona: Beuthen Press, 2012), p. 18.

<sup>129</sup> Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol. 2, Why It Was Better*, p. 18.

<sup>130</sup> Edith De Lys, *Jean de Reszke Teaches Singing to Edith de Lys* (San Francisco: Leon Volan, 1979).

<sup>131</sup> Lys, *Jean de Reszke Teaches Singing to Edith de Lys*, p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> Lys, *Jean de Reszke Teaches Singing to Edith de Lys*, p. 9.

we take breath, the ribs must expand, like a fan – and the diaphragm be held firm but also, straight. It must not, under any conditions, swell out!<sup>133</sup>

Bidu Sayão, a pupil of de Reszke appears to demonstrate some chest expansion together with a firm abdomen although this may be due to restrictive clothing.<sup>134</sup> De Reszke's advice is similar to the concept of *appoggio* as described by Lamperti: 'The support afforded to the voice by the muscles of the chest, especially the diaphragm, acting upon the air contained in the lungs.'<sup>135</sup> Miller attributes the concept of *appoggio* to the 'eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italian School' and describes the process thus: '[...] the muscles of inspiration must not surrender too early to the muscles of expiration; this *dynamic muscular balance* results in the *lutte vocale* (the vocal contest) of international classical vocalism.'<sup>136</sup> Miller warns that the action of the diaphragm in vocal pedagogy is often misrepresented and misattributed:

Clearly, the diaphragm and the intercostals are major actors in respiration, but much of what is assumed to be the work of the diaphragm during sustained singing is caused by concerted actions involving muscle groups of the anterolateral abdominal wall and of the chest wall.<sup>137</sup>

The majority of Elsa Stenning's breathing activity appears to be centred around the abdominal wall, with relatively deep breaths taken, the muscles of the abdomen then seemingly set as described by de Reszke and Miller which provides sustaining support. Very occasionally, Stenning takes a rapid, high breath similar to the *mezzo respiro*.<sup>138</sup>

Whilst it is undeniable that the diaphragm plays an important part in the production of the voice and breath control, it may be argued that corsetry inhibits the full, natural function of a singer's diaphragmatic breathing potential. The significant and often rapid developments of

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<sup>133</sup> Lys, *Jean de Reszke Teaches Singing to Edith de Lys*, p. 10.

<sup>134</sup> 'Bidu Sayão - *Manon*' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4LJIuNgjxg>> and 'Bidu Sayão - O Mio Babbino Caro' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNHf26uNfok>> [Accessed 4 September 2018].

<sup>135</sup> Francesco Lamperti, *The Art of Singing* (New York: Schirmer, 1890), p. 10.

<sup>136</sup> Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 77.

<sup>137</sup> Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, p. 76.

<sup>138</sup> Elsa Stenning, 'Love is a Duet' (Pathé Film ID 1252.44, 1938) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/elsa-stenning-2>> [Accessed 19 June 2020].

women's fashion, including societal expectations and technological innovation during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is a significant factor in attempting to understand the context of pedagogical advice of the period.

McCoy (2005) suggests three primary schools of thought about breathing and breath support:<sup>139</sup>

1. Breathing as an activity centred in and controlled by actions of the thorax, epigastrium and/or middle back. (e.g. Manuel Garcia II, Lilli Lehmann, Mathilde Marchesi and James McKinney).
2. Breathing as an activity centred in and controlled by actions of the lower thorax, hypogastric region, lower back and pelvis. (e.g. Meribeth Bunch, Barbara Conable and Clifton Ware).
3. Observations of patterns [used] in breathing without stating pedagogical preferences by voice scientists and researchers such as, Ingo Titze, Leanderson and Sundberg. Examples include 'keeping the rib cage high and stable [...] the softer tissues underneath the rib cage do[ing] the pumping of air' and 'the pair-shape-down approach [with] less emphasis [...] placed on rib cage movement (or position), but more emphasis [...] placed on maintaining stable abdominal pressure.'<sup>140</sup>

McCoy observes that the majority of pedagogues favouring the first approach are male, or women that would have worn, or have been familiar with wearing corsets which would have 'effectively prevented them from engaging their lower abdominal musculature',<sup>141</sup> whilst 75% of those favouring the second approach are female.<sup>142</sup> The clear implication is that women

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<sup>139</sup> McCoy, 'Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers', p. 247.

<sup>140</sup> Ingo Titze, *Principles of Voice Production* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1994) in McCoy, 'Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers', p.248

<sup>141</sup> McCoy, 'Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers', p. 247.

<sup>142</sup> McCoy, 'Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers', p. 247.

who have full physical freedom (i.e. unencumbered by corsetry) find the concept of ‘low’ breathing most effective, whilst men and women restricted by corsetry favour higher breathing. The sources used in formulating this conclusion are, by McCoy’s own admission, ‘representative, not exhaustive’.<sup>143</sup> They represent, however, only a small proportion of pedagogies relevant to these and other viewpoints and, in the case of approaches 2 and 3 are heavily reliant on contemporary American academics and vocal pedagogues. McCoy references a study by Cowgill<sup>144</sup> into links between body types and breathing technique in female singers which ‘found that subjects with endomorphic body types tended to expand lower in their bodies for respiration than did women in other categories’<sup>145</sup> and concludes that ‘For men, muscular activity for breath support tends to be concentrated in the lower thorax and epigastrium. Women engage these areas as well, but also find the pelvic floor and hypogastric regions to be very important.’<sup>146</sup>

This view of contemporary practice is challenged by the lyric soprano, Renée Fleming (b.1959). Fleming favours the ‘abdominal wall open, out and expanded, along with as much of the rest of my torso as possible [...] Another crucial part of this formula is to keep the intercostal muscles out as well, and to prevent the chest from collapsing.’<sup>147</sup> Fleming’s imagery is more aligned with McCoy’s first approach. She refers to learning much about these techniques through the observation of filmed performances by singers of the generation of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (b.1925), Birgit Nilsson (b.1918) and Leontyne Price (b.1927).<sup>148</sup> Fleming notes the ‘importance of chest expansion’<sup>149</sup> in Fischer-Dieskau’s performances. ‘He looked like a pigeon when he sang late in his career, with his chest puffed up to the extreme.’<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> McCoy, ‘Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers’, p. 247.

<sup>144</sup> Jennifer Griffith Cowgill, ‘Breathing for Singers: A Comparative Analysis of Body Types and Breathing Tendencies’ (unpublished doctoral treatise, Florida State University School of Music, 2004).

<sup>145</sup> McCoy, ‘Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers’, p. 249.

<sup>146</sup> McCoy, ‘Breath Management: Gender-Based Differences in Classical Singers’, p. 253.

<sup>147</sup> Renée Fleming, *The Inner Voice: The Making of a Singer* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 41.

<sup>148</sup> Fleming, *The Inner Voice*, p. 65.

<sup>149</sup> Fleming, *The Inner Voice*, p. 65.

<sup>150</sup> Fleming, *The Inner Voice*, p. 65.

This would appear to find a corollary with McCoy's first approach regarding male singers. However, Fleming makes no such gender distinction: 'From watching videos, I came to realize that all the great singers of that generation sang with very big, high chests'.<sup>151</sup> This approach is verified through Fleming's own teaching in various filmed masterclasses available online.<sup>152</sup>

In considering the relevance of such evidence to the performing practices of BLO, it may be argued that McCoy is assuming that all corsetry is restrictive in the same way, implying a uniformity of style and effect which is perhaps over-simplistic. The overwhelming effect is highlighted by Potter who, paraphrasing Sundberg states:

'[...] efficient (diaphragmatic) breathing is vital to maintaining a consistent tracheal pull, and the visible expansion of the abdomen has been observed to signify the active use of the diaphragm in inspiration; abdominal expansion is not possible when a singer is significantly constricted by their clothing, and therefore consistent larynx-lowering and corset-wear are physiologically incompatible.'<sup>153</sup>

An examination of corsets, girdles and other body sculpting items of clothing from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s highlights the radical changes in idealised body shape during this period. The garments respond to changing demand through fundamental re-designs and the introduction of modern materials which offer greater flexibility both in terms of manufacture and to the wearer. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw corsetry reach 'cruel and lunatic extremes'.<sup>154</sup>

### **3.2.2. Observations of Breathing from Analyses of Filmed Performances**

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<sup>151</sup> Fleming, *The Inner Voice*, p. 65.

<sup>152</sup> An example of Fleming's pedagogical approach to breathing which favours chest expansion can be found in a masterclass at the Aspen Music and School with the mezzo-soprano Hannah Ludwig: 'Hannah Ludwig 2016 Masterclass with Renée Fleming' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMahAGNJHWo&t=926s>> [Accessed 28 September 2019].

<sup>153</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 58.

<sup>154</sup> Béatrice Fontanel, *Support and Seduction: The History of Corsets and Bras*, trans. by Willard Wood (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), p. 58.

The opportunity to observe singers in filmed performances and the information this provides in terms of observable breathing techniques and methods of tone production must be approached with caution.

In the film extract of *An Old Violin*, it appears that the dress being worn by Vera Florence<sup>155</sup> could be restrictive with regards to breathing as it is fitted around the waist and rib cage. Vera Florence rarely appears to take low abdominal breaths and some activity is visible in the chest and clavicular area. Whilst her dress does not appear to be corseted the fitted style seems to relate to the writing of Steele<sup>156</sup> who states that ‘even a moderately tight corset restricts the respiration, causing a reliance on upper diaphragmatic [thoracic] breathing.’ However, the clothing worn by Ann Burgess<sup>157</sup> does not appear to be restrictive, yet her performance seems more precise and static, with small shallow breaths featuring throughout as previously discussed.

It is important to note however, that Ann Burgess’ performance comes at a critical time in the development of women’s fashion generally, ‘with a change in women’s fashion from flat chested tubes of the 1920s to a natural feminine silhouette, women’s 1930s lingerie played an even more critical role.’<sup>158</sup> Corsetry using bone or steel – common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - was diminishing in popularity during the 1920s. The prevailing ideal of the feminine figure as a slim ‘boyish figure’<sup>159</sup> prompted corset manufacturers to produce long corsets which replaced stiff bone and similar materials with newly-developed Lastex, a ‘tradename for strips of rubber covered with silk, cotton, wool or rayon to form a

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<sup>155</sup> Vera Florence, ‘An Old Violin’ (Pathé Film ID 1548.27, 1942) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/vera-florence>> [Accessed 12 April 2018].

<sup>156</sup> Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 21.

<sup>157</sup> Ann Burgess, ‘The Little Brown Owl’ (Pathé Film ID 1032.22, 1931) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/ann-burgess>> [Accessed 12 April 2018].

<sup>158</sup> *Vintage Dancer* ‘1930s Lingerie Styles – Bra, Underwear, Girdle, Stockings’ <<https://vintagedancer.com/1930s/1930s-lingerie-styles/>> [Accessed 27 September 2019].

<sup>159</sup> *Vintage Dancer* ‘1920s Lingerie History – Underwear, Slip, Bra, Corset’ <<https://vintagedancer.com/1920s/lingerie-history/>> [Accessed 27 September 2019].

yarn'.<sup>160</sup> This sculpted the figure whilst offering greater freedom of movement. '[...] in the 1930s it was required that underwear fit like a glove from bust to thigh.'<sup>161</sup> However, some ladies were still wearing boned corsets throughout this period as suggested in the advertisement below.<sup>162</sup> The text of the advert on the left of the picture is worth quoting in full as it describes, despite inevitable advertising hyperbole, both the aims and methods of the manufacturer's body-sculpting aesthetic:

Mis Simplicity" sculpts the figure to perfect princess lines [...] The secret of this garment's unique moulding qualities lies in the clear straps that cross and button in back! The diagonal "cross-pull" of the straps scientifically uplifts the bust to a natural curve, *flattens the diaphragm and abdomen*, slenderizes the waistline and firmly persuades the body to correct posture! The model photographed is of fine peach batiste and hand-loomed elastic, with modified uplift bust of matching lace. Lightly boned in front [...] '[my italics]



<sup>160</sup> Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History*, p. 155.

<sup>161</sup> *Vintage Dancer* '1930s Lingerie Styles – Bra, Underwear, Girdle, Stockings'.

<sup>162</sup> *Gossard* <<https://www.gossard.com/About-Gossard/Heritage>> [Accessed 27 September 2019].

*Figure 3.2.2a: Gossard advertisement*<sup>163</sup>

In the 1920s ‘Pretty camisoles of linen or silk were worn to cover the corset or corselet hiding any bumps and lines made by the corselet. Camisoles were loose sleeveless tops, drawn into the waist with a ribbon or elastic.’<sup>164</sup> With the increasing popularity of longer dresses developing in the 1930s, the ‘slip’ was necessary to ensure that the dress hung correctly without clinging to the figure.<sup>165</sup> Due to the fluidity of the dress worn by Ann Burgess, it appears that some form of camisole or slip is being worn under her dress with some form of girdle beneath. Research undertaken by the author at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London concluded that whilst Lastex ‘dramatically reduce[d] the need for boning and lacing, and allowing a diversification of styles’<sup>166</sup>. Styles included ‘Roll-ons’, ‘Step-ins’ and ‘wrap-arounds’.

The amount of elasticity in a wrap-around girdle was demonstrated to the author and revealed small Lastex panels at the front and down the sides of the girdle. Some effort was needed to stretch the Lastex material and the amount of stretch available was limited. The girdle also had steel boning which restricted movement further. The shape of the girdle below and date of manufacture suggest a possible style worn by Ann Burgess:

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<sup>163</sup> *Gossard*.

<sup>164</sup> *Vintage Dancer* '1930s Lingerie Styles – Bra, Underwear, Girdle, Stockings’.

<sup>165</sup> *Vintage Dancer* '1930s Lingerie Styles – Bra, Underwear, Girdle, Stockings’.

<sup>166</sup> Eleri Lynn, *Underwear Fashion in Detail* (London: V & A Publishing, 2010), p. 102.



Figure 3.2.2b: Ann Burgess (1931) Figure 3.2.2c: Wrap-around girdle 'Excelsior' 1930s<sup>167</sup>

A newspaper article in 1931 observed that 'A corset specialist recommends all women to have four corsets – one for games, one for everyday wear, one (very brief and supple) for rest at home, and one for evening'.<sup>168</sup> However, it is not clear what occasion the above corset is designed for.

Whilst the 1940s saw the invention of the *Corselette* (a bra and girdle combined), 1939 saw the return of the *Crinoline* dress and with it the *wasp-waist* girdle. 'The 'waspie' was a belt-girdle designed to cinch the waist and create an exaggerated hour-glass figure.'<sup>169</sup> In observing the dress worn by Vera Florence, it is quite probable that she could be wearing a *waspie* which may have restricted movement around the abdomen due to it creating an hour-glass figure in the wearer.

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<sup>167</sup> *Wrap-around girdle 'Excelsior'*, Richard Cooper & Co. Ltd., Britain, Ashbourne, 1930s, (V & A: T.168-1998), viewed at the Victoria and Albert Museum 30<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

<sup>168</sup> 'Practical Underwear', *The Times*, 4 March 1931 in Lynn, *Underwear Fashion in Detail*, p. 102.

<sup>169</sup> *Waspie* [online] Available at: <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O144146/waspie-unknown/>> [Accessed 28 October 2020].



Figure 3.2.2d: Vera Florence



Figure 3.2.2e: The 'Waspie'

Luisa Tetrazzini acknowledges the conflict between prevailing fashion (1909) and the requirements of diaphragmatic breathing techniques – ‘From the girls to whom I am talking especially I must now ask a sacrifice—the singer cannot wear tight corsets and should not wear corsets of any kind which come up higher than the lowest rib.’<sup>170</sup> She later goes on to state:

Another word on the subject of corsets. There is no reason in the world why a singer should not wear corsets, and if singers have a tendency to grow stout a corset is usually a necessity. A singer's corset should be especially well fitted around the hips and should be extremely loose over the diaphragm. If made in this way it will not interfere in the slightest degree with the breath.<sup>171</sup>

### 3.2.3. Breathing, Phrasing and Expression

Investigation of the recorded extracts highlights the use of breath as an expressive device. Rarely does it seem to be the case that singers engage in feats of breath control for their own sake. Vera Florence<sup>172</sup> takes a breath after ‘pleadingly’, which is half-way through

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<sup>170</sup> Enrico Caruso and Luisa Tetrazzini, *Caruso and Tetrazzini on the Art of Singing* (New York: Metropolitan Company, 1909), p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Caruso and Tetrazzini, *Art of Singing*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>172</sup> Vera Florence, ‘An Old Violin’

a short phrase that most modern singers (whether through an assumption of a four-bar phrase structure or as a demonstration of technical prowess) might sing in one breath:

Example 3.2.3a: Howard Fisher, *An Old Violin* as performed by Vera Florence (1942).

18 **[Moderato]**  
with feeling

18 Ten - der - ly, plead - ing - ly, so the notes fall, Just for the

23 love of the mu - sic, that's all

It is unlikely that she would have required a breath at that point but in doing so she ensures that the marked *tenuto* on ‘fall’ can be managed and sustained before ‘sliding’ to the following note (indicated by a slur). This also heightens the rhetorical impact of the list of adverbs (‘tenderly’, ‘pleadingly’) The following phrase is approached in much the same way, as whilst there is a comma (bar 24), which may be interpreted as a point to breathe, most modern singers would simply use a hiatus rather than a breath and sustain the following held note by preserving the breath flow using dynamic change (*crescendo* or *diminuendo*). It may be noted, however, that despite taking a breath before ‘that’s all’ (bar 24-25) she shortens the overall length of the final note. Similar breath patterns can be observed throughout the song.

The eighteenth century actor and elocutionist Thomas Sheridan<sup>173</sup> suggests that ‘written texts contain many commas, colons, and periods, but in order for a speaker to communicate the sense of a sentence fully, additional pauses are often necessary’.<sup>174</sup> An example of this is found

<sup>173</sup> Thomas Sheridan, *A Course Of Lectures On Elocution* (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1991), p. 80.

<sup>174</sup> Robert Toft, ‘The Expressive Pause: Punctuation, Rests, And Breathing In England, 1770-1850’, *Performance Practice Review*, 7.1 (1994), 1-32 <<https://doi.org/10.5642/perfpr.199407.01.02>> [Accessed 14 January 2018] p. 207.

in bars 47 and 48. Here Florence follows the written comma after ‘agony’ but adds another after ‘laughter’:

Example 3.2.3b: Fisher, *An Old Violin* as performed by Vera Florence (1942).

46 *con passione*

Rap - ture and a - go - ny, laugh - ter and tears. \_\_\_\_\_

Not only does this enable the sense of the words to be articulated, it also provides additional breath to support the sustained ‘tears’.

However, it may be suggested that Vera Florence’s decisions regarding breath may indicate a wish to avoid an overly-regular phrase structure. The relentless four bar phrases of this song are mitigated in this performance by the irregular breath patterns. The extra breaths give Florence the opportunity to shape *rubati* at will. The *rubati* in this performance often exceeds the expectations of modern performance in terms of the amount of time taken and the expressive weight attached to it. Roy Henderson simultaneously acknowledges details of punctuation whilst also taking an opportunity to vary the phrasing. The breaths also prepare for the *portamenti*:

Example 3.2.3c: Oley Speaks, *Sylvia* as performed by Roy Henderson (1933).

25 **[Andantino espressivo]**

*p* Syl - via just the e - cho - ing Of her voice brings back to me, \_\_\_\_\_

Maggie Teyte<sup>175</sup> seems to take a similar approach in Dido’s Lament, where she breathes before ‘create no trouble [...]’:

*Example 3.2.3d:* Purcell, ‘When I am laid in earth’ from *Dido and Aeneas* as performed by Maggie Teyte (1950).

6  
When I am laid, am laid in earth, may my  
10  
wrongs cre - ate no trou - ble, no trou - ble in thybreast.

thereby diverging from the obvious phrase structure and sense of the words but providing ample breath to shape the melodic phrase that follows. Similarly, in *Philomel* from *Monsieur Beaucaire*,<sup>176</sup> Teyte facilitates the joining of two phrases by a portamento from the second ‘Ah’ by delaying taking a breath until after the first “Phil-o-mel”:

*Example 3.2.3e:* Messenger ‘Philomel’ from *Monsieur Beaucaire* as performed by Maggie Teyte (1944).

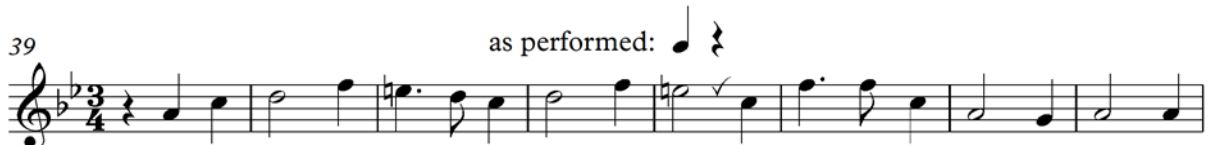
56  
Ah! Ah! Phil - o - mel, Phil - o - mel,

Teyte frequently alters note values to accommodate breaths, most often by shortening note lengths at the end of phrases:

<sup>175</sup> Maggie Teyte, ‘Dido’s Lament’ (BBC Broadcast, c1950)  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6WuE1jvZwQ>> [Accessed 9 September 2018]

<sup>176</sup> ‘Concert hall with Maggie Teyte and Vera Brodsky’ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xR-Ep-GyyFo>> [Accessed 9 September 2018].

Example 3.2.3f: Messenger, 'Philomel', Maggie Teyte (1944).

39 as performed: 

Till the night - in - gale in the dus - ky dale Gave word that the gods were com - ing,

But also by delaying an entry, thereby shortening an anacrusis:

Example 3.2.3g: Messenger, 'Philomel', Maggie Teyte (1944).

33 as performed: 

...of daf - fo - dils The gold - en bees were hum - ming,

Gertie Millar, occasionally breaks a phrase with a breath in an unexpected place:

Example 3.2.3h: Lionel Monckton, 'O a Quiet Quaker maid' from *The Quaker Girl* as performed by Gertie Millar (1910).

15 

Two lit - tle sweet - hearts ✓ we used to be  
No - bo - dy seems ✓ to care a - bout me

This may be to ensure sufficient scope for shaping the second half of the phrase and in particular the final held note. A slight wavering on the final note suggests a lack of support although control is quickly regained, facilitated by the recent breath perhaps. A very late breath to feed the final notes of a song is regularly encountered in historical BLO performances and

is a feature of Ruth Vincent's *Home Sweet Home* (1906)<sup>177</sup> and Elsa Stenning's *Mighty Lak' a Rose* (1939).<sup>178</sup> Vincent breaks the ornamented final line<sup>179</sup> in two places, either side of the word 'like', facilitating a significant slowing down and consequent lengthening of notes. The frequent breaths Stenning takes in the final four bars appear to be motivated by an expressive 'motherese' approach as described by Leech-Wilkinson: 'Motherese [...] typically involves higher pitch than normal speech (just like lullabies) and a wider range, shorter phrases and longer pauses'.<sup>180</sup>

Example 3.2.3i: Bishop, *Home, Sweet Home* as performed by Ruth Vincent (1906).

(N.B. Notated at sounding pitch).

20

rit.

port.

There's no \_\_\_ place like\_ home,\_\_\_ There's no \_\_\_\_\_ place like\_ home.

Example 3.2.3j: Ethelbert Nevin, *Mighty Lak' A Rose* as performed by Elsa Stenning (1939).

22

Look - in' at his Mam - my Wid eye so shin - y blue,

24

Me'k you think that heav'n\_\_\_\_\_ Is com - in' clost ter you!

<sup>177</sup> Ruth Vincent, 'Home, Sweet Home' (Columbia 30002, 1906) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sk2C8bhG1RE>> [Accessed 9 October 2018].

<sup>178</sup> Elsa Stenning, 'Mighty Like a Rose [sic.]' (Pathé Film ID 1266.35, 1938) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/elsa-stenning-1>> [Accessed 14 April 2018].

<sup>179</sup> Vincent's melodic decorations in the final two lines of the song are remarkably similar to Patti's 1905 recording as annotated by Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 191. As there have been no printed copies found with the same variants, it would seem reasonable to assume that Vincent was familiar with Patti's performance of this song.

<sup>180</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Portamento And Musical Meaning', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 25.3-4 (2006), 233-261 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01411890600859412>> [Accessed 17 March 2018].

The short phrases are a feature of the musical and poetical structure of the song, but Stenning amplifies the effect of these, particularly in the final bar already noted, which breaks an already short final phrase.

The facilitation of sustained notes is also a feature of Dennis Noble's performance.<sup>181</sup> Once again breaths are taken before long notes and additional to the regular phrase structure. Noble elongates some phrases and then takes unexpected breaths in the following phrase, for example 'A pathway// that leads to the island// of June'.<sup>182</sup> Similar examples can be found in John McCormack's *I Hear You Calling Me*.<sup>183</sup> An early breath with the comma after 'I came,' propels the phrase through to 'you', singing through the notated rest after 'remember'. The breath after 'kiss' is a rapid *mezzo respiro* which enables McCormack to elongate the end of the phrase:

Example 3.2.3k: Charles Marshall, *I Hear You Calling Me* as performed by John McCormack (1930).

9 [Allegretto] I came, do you re - mem - ber? back to you For one last

13 kiss be - neath the kind stars' light.

Likewise, Trefor Jones<sup>184</sup> incorporates additional breaths into some phrases, whilst ignoring the written phrase structure in others:

<sup>181</sup> Dennis Noble, 'Island of June' (Pathé Film ID 1104.05., 1934) <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/dennis-noble-4>> [Accessed 20 September 2018].

<sup>182</sup> Dennis Noble, 'Island of June'. This is heard at 1 minute, 3 seconds.

<sup>183</sup> John McCormack, 'I Hear You Calling Me' *Song O' My Heart*, dir. by Frank Borzage (Fox Film Corporation, 1930) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ra0kNnhPFSI>> [Accessed 25 June 2020].

<sup>184</sup> Trefor Jones, 'Shine Through My Dreams'.

Example 3.2.3l: Ivor Novello, ‘Shine Through My Dreams’ from *Glamorous Night* as performed by Trefor Jones (1936).

**[Moderato - Più animato]**

24 Ev - 'ry re - gion that I wan - der, sleep - ing, wak - ing,

28 Makes my wea - ry heart grow fon - der, weep - ing, ach - ing.

The image shows two staves of music in 3/4 time. The first staff starts at measure 24 with the lyrics 'Ev - 'ry re - gion that I wan - der, sleep - ing, wak - ing,'. The second staff starts at measure 28 with the lyrics 'Makes my wea - ry heart grow fon - der, weep - ing, ach - ing.' Both staves feature a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Performance markings include a 'port.' (portamento) over the notes 'sleep - ing' and 'ach - ing', and checkmarks above the notes 'der,' and 'ing,' in both staves. An arrow above the first staff indicates a tempo change from 'Moderato' to 'Più animato'.

As in the example of Teyte (example 3.2.3f), Jones alters rhythms to enable these additional breaths:

Example 3.2.3m: Ivor Novello, ‘Shine Through My Dreams’ as sung by Trefor Jones (1936).

**[Moderato]**

24 As performed:

...turn our dark - ness to light;

As written:

...turn our dark - ness to light;

The image shows two staves of music in 4/4 time. The top staff is labeled 'As performed:' and shows the phrase '...turn our dark - ness to light;' with a checkmark above the note 'ness' and a fermata over the final note 'light;'. The bottom staff is labeled 'As written:' and shows the same phrase with a different rhythmic structure for the final note 'light;', which is a half note instead of a quarter note. Both staves feature a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

The use of a *Mezzo Respiro* is evident twice in the following extract – early in the phrase to make a localised *ritenuto* possible and as an additional breath which feeds the end of the phrase:

Example 3.2.3n: Ivor Novello, ‘Shine Through My Dreams’ as sung by Trefor Jones (1936).

**[Moderato]**

(mezzo respiro) (full breath)

17 Make all my dreams re - a - li - ty, That I may

19 hold you in my arms to night.

Ann Burgess<sup>185</sup> frequent breaths punctuate the phrase structure, seemingly dictated by the narrative style of the song. Additional breaks, or breaths are evident which would not generally be included in a performance by a modern singer. An example of this is in bar 17 where a breath/break is included after the word ‘single’, breaking an already short phrase:

Example 3.2.3o: Wilfrid Sanderson, *The Little Brown Owl* as sung by Ann Burgess (1931).

**[Allegretto]**

As performed:

16 For as long as you're sin - gle 'tis

As written: *cresc.* *f*

For as long as you're sin - gle 'tis

18 ne - - ver too late

ne - - ver too late

<sup>185</sup> Ann Burgess ‘The Little Brown Owl’.

In the case of Ann Burgess, it is very difficult to establish whether she takes half breaths (*mezzo respiro*) or whether every breath taken is shallow and high as it appears in the visual example.<sup>186</sup> Burgess certainly demonstrates Mackinlay’s definition of ‘proper breathing’ quoted earlier in this chapter.

Gertie Millar (1910),<sup>187</sup> on the evidence of her recording of *A Quaker Girl* seems to be the least polished singer investigated. Breaths are clearly audible (unlike in the recordings discussed thus far) and they tend to be taken frequently, following the words and creating short phrases. This is perhaps understandable in a character piece and the breaths become part of the expression. Similarly, Walter Passmore’s comedic performance of *Tit Willow* (1912)<sup>188</sup> does not display the characteristics of a ‘trained’ voice and he takes a breath unexpectedly (in terms of poetical or musical structure) after ‘little’, perhaps out of necessity following an expressive portamento. It may, however, be that this coincided with a piece of stage ‘business’ which has left a musical imprint:

*Example 3.2.3p:* Sullivan ‘On a Tree by a River’ from *The Mikado* as sung by Walter Passmore (1907) and Martyn Green (1937).

**[Andante espressivo]**

15 Passmore (1907):

Green (1939):

<sup>186</sup> Ann Burgess ‘The Little Brown Owl’.

<sup>187</sup> Gertie Millar ‘A Quaker Girl’ (1910) <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvT129\\_RDy4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvT129_RDy4)> [Accessed 9 October 2018].

<sup>188</sup> Walter Passmore, ‘Tit Willow’ (Columbia 326, 1912) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1gWkscJaAk>> [Accessed 27 September 2018].

Martyn Green, in the 1939 film of *Mikado* by the D'Oyly Carte company takes a breath after 'head', which he used to add verbal and musical emphasis to 'he replied'. The performances of Savoyards Henry Lytton (1930), Isabel Jay (1904) and Amy Augarde (1908) contain few unexpected breaths. This is perhaps inevitable in Lytton's case as the patter songs have relatively short phrases. However, it may also be reflective of a more restrained approach, which lacks the elongated *rallentandi* for effect, noticeable in the performances of later BLO singers.

### 3.2.4. Tone Quality

The link between breathing and larynx height has been comprehensively discussed by Sarah Potter: 'Most modern singers would advocate the combination of middle- and low-torso breath control [...] in order to uphold a consistent tracheal pull and lowered larynx.'<sup>189</sup> This 'creates a peak in sound energy at around 3kHz that is often referred to as 'the singer's formant.'<sup>190</sup> Potter states that 'modern singers use a variety of terms to allude to the additional resonance produced by a low-larynx technique ('ring', 'blade', 'brilliance', or 'spin', for example)<sup>191</sup> and quotes Sundberg: 'The singers formant thus seems to facilitate our hearing of the singer's voice when the orchestral accompaniment is loud'<sup>192</sup> and observes that in order to achieve this there needs to be:

A consistent gravitational (tracheal) pull – effectively anchoring the larynx in the lowered position – [which] requires the singer to inhale a greater volume of air than the average person needs for general respiration (much like an athlete), hence preoccupation with breath control strategy in modern vocal discourse.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 57.

<sup>190</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 40.

<sup>191</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 41.

<sup>192</sup> Johan Sundberg, *The Science of the Singing Voice* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1987), p. 123 quoted in Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 41.

<sup>193</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', pp. 41-42

Mackinlay recommends that the singer of light opera should ‘inculcate a desire to sing to those in the dress circle’.<sup>194</sup> Certainly, the majority of performers on film appear to project according to Mackinlay’s advice and with voices generally displaying characteristics of the singer’s formant. Observations suggest that Trefor Jones (Figure 5) used an open throat when breathing and a lower larynx with a combination of some ‘belt’ when singing.<sup>195</sup> Sundberg identifies the need for a wide pharynx when clustering the higher formants (the singer’s formant)<sup>196</sup> but characterises the vocal conditions for ‘belt’ as ‘a narrow pharynx, a raised larynx and high lung pressures’.<sup>197</sup> The ‘belt’ appears to be characterised by him throwing his head slightly back and suggests a larynx usage which is not always consistently low.



*Figure 3.2.4a.* Trefor Jones (1936) *Shine Through My Dreams*  
(from Pathé Film ID 1656.10.).

Whilst Jones’ teacher, Gustave Garcia does not specifically refer to the conscious lowering of the larynx, much of his advice concerning the avoidance of undesirable timbres

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<sup>194</sup> Mackinlay, *Light Opera*, p. 86.

<sup>195</sup> These observations are the result of discussions between the author and Professor Lynne Dawson (Head of the School of Vocal Studies and Opera at the Royal Northern College of Music) following close viewing of and listening to a selection of recorded performances on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

<sup>196</sup> Johan Sundberg, ‘Where Does the Sound Come From?’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. by John Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 231-247 (p. 243).

<sup>197</sup> Sundberg, ‘Where Does the Sound Come From?’, p. 246.

suggests a low larynx outcome: ‘The way to correct [nasal timbre] is simply to raise the soft palate by inhaling deeply, with the mouth well opened [...] Of all the qualities of voice the most objectionable is that which is open, and yet has no brilliancy.’<sup>198</sup> Throughout the period covered by the recordings analysed, a general increase in an apparently uniform and consistent vibrato is evident. The influence of larynx lowering on vibrato is discussed by Potter in a comprehensive survey of the various species of ‘vibrato effects’: a term used by Potter which includes pitch vibrato (*tremolo*) and intensity vibrato (*vibrato*).<sup>199</sup> Potter equates a low larynx approach with ‘the involuntary fluctuation of intensity (vibrato) that occurs when a trained singer sings at high frequency with a lowered larynx’.<sup>200</sup> Seashore, writing in 1936 observed in a soprano’s performance:

vibrato [...] present in every tone throughout the song, whether the tone is long or short, high or low, weak or strong. It is present in the portamentos of the legato rendition, and in the attacks and releases of the tones.<sup>201</sup>

Further observations included ‘[...] the width of the pulsation of pitch averages about a semi-tone [...] the form of the pitch pulsation is fairly smooth and constant’ and Seashore noted that the extent and rate of pulsation of pitch was similarly constant.<sup>202</sup> In contrast, the intensity vibrato was found to be ‘very small and often insignificant [...] observable in about one-third of the time’ and Seashore concluded that the intensity vibrato was ‘incidental and subordinate to the pitch vibrato, which is dominant.’<sup>203</sup> This suggests that Seashore’s sample performance did not display the characteristics of a lowered larynx approach as discussed by Potter above.

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<sup>198</sup> Garcia, *The Actor’s Art*, p. 10.

<sup>199</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, pp. 67ff.

<sup>200</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, p. 78.

<sup>201</sup> Carl Seashore, *Psychology of the vibrato in voice and instrument* (Iowa: The University Press Iowa City, 1936), p. 32. The repertoire analysed by Seashore was the aria *Come unto Him* from *Messiah* (Handel).

<sup>202</sup> Seashore, *Psychology of the vibrato in voice and instrument*, p. 34.

<sup>203</sup> Seashore, *Psychology of the vibrato in voice and instrument*, p. 35.

The observations made by Seashore reflect some of those noted in the performances of Stenning, Teyte, Burgess and Florence from the 1930s and 40s, but also apply to Dare (1909) and Smithson (1912). Smithson employs a constant vibrato which is rapid and even throughout her performance except for a final pianissimo E'''. A fine vibrato characterises Marie Tempest's performance (c1900) which sounds less controlled on long notes than the others discussed thus far. Ruth Vincent (1906) displays a similarly fine vibrato and occasionally employs a straight tone. Comedians such as Gertie Millar, Henry Lytton, Rutland Barrington and Walter Passmore similarly have fluctuating vibrati evident, whilst the majority of male singers employ and noticeable and constant vibrato.

Maggie Teyte's recording of Dido's Lament<sup>204</sup> suggests that she negotiates the registers of her voice, moving between the head and chest voice whilst maintaining a distinct timbre for each. There is little evidence of the voice mixing through registers but rather that she swaps from one range to the other throughout phrases. This is particularly true in a phrase such as 'Death is now a welcome guest' which has a tessitura similar to that which Maggie Teyte described as 'those dangerous four notes of the medium F F# G G# [for a] soprano'.<sup>205</sup> For this exercise she explained that 'I shall have to demonstrate it for you – high palate is acquired by the sensation of surprise.'<sup>206</sup> However, Teyte describes the following exercise where the first note is sung in the chest voice and then the remainder in head voice with a 'fortissimo diaphragm to the 6<sup>th</sup> note + the remaining two, very lightly in head':<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Maggie Teyte, 'Dido's Lament'.

<sup>205</sup> Garry O'Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection: A Life of Maggie Teyte* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1979), p. 285.

<sup>206</sup> O'Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 286.

<sup>207</sup> O'Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 286.

Example 3.2.4a: Transcription by Maggie Teyte of a vocal exercise by Jean de Reszke<sup>208</sup>



Coffin refers to Garcia's opinion that chest voice, 'ordinarily [...] in women does not exceed g to g1'.<sup>209</sup> From personal experience, singing as a soprano, the inclusion of G or G# within the chest voice seems very high. More comfortably would be to sing in the chest until F at the highest. This is corroborated by Mills who states that the chest register should not be carried above F<sup>210</sup> and Lynne Dawson who commented that Teyte's chest voice was rather high.<sup>211</sup> Marilyn Hill Smith, however, appears to concur with Teyte and de Reszke whilst acknowledging that her use of chest voice is perhaps somewhat unusual.

I actually take my chest voice much higher than most sopranos do – it can sometimes be up to the A above middle C. But this feels natural to me, and I'm aware you don't hear my break, so my teacher has never stopped me from doing it.<sup>212</sup>

Lynne Dawson suggests that the sound Teyte produces in general is that of a 'high, soft palate'<sup>213</sup> and the use of a high palate is corroborated by Teyte herself, who advises that this is 'acquired by the sensation of surprise'.<sup>214</sup> Edith de Lys indicates that Jean de Reszke advocated a high palate only in high notes: 'Never use high palate in middle voice, as it makes tones characterless – and is a great fault Lilli Lehman [sic] had.'<sup>215</sup>

<sup>208</sup> O'Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 286.

<sup>209</sup> Berton Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press), p. 20.

<sup>210</sup> Mills, *Voice Production in Singing and Speaking based on Scientific Principles*, p. 160.

<sup>211</sup> Discussion with author 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

<sup>212</sup> Andrew Palmer, *Divas In Their Own Words: Fifty Sopranos and Mezzo-Sopranos Talk About Their Voices and Careers* (Nottingham: The Vernon Press, 2000), p. 218.

<sup>213</sup> Discussion with author 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

<sup>214</sup> O'Connor, *The Pursuit of Perfection*, p. 286.

<sup>215</sup> Lys, *Jean de Reszke Teaches Singing to Edith de Lys*, p. 5.

A clear example of moving between the head and chest voice is in *Philomel* from *Monsieur Beaucaire* where Teyte can be heard using her chest voice for the first ‘ah’ and head voice for the second:

Example 3.2.4b: Messenger, ‘Philomel’, Maggie Teyte (1944).

56

Chest voice      Head voice

Ah!      Ah!      Phil - o - mel,

Nevertheless, de Reszke actively encouraged larynx lowering in high notes, linking this with an open throat, high hard palate, and diaphragm support.<sup>216</sup>

Little, if any chest voice is apparent in Vera Florence’s singing.<sup>217</sup> This may be partly accounted for by the generally high tessitura but the timbre of the voice appears to suggest a neutral or high larynx approach, which would be consistent with the frequent, often high breaths. Similar observations apply to Ann Burgess.

In contrast, Elsa Stenning appears to mix registers, with a chest tone quality to the middle register which creates a more homogenised sound than either Teyte, Florence or Burgess. There are distinctive features to Stenning’s head voice, particularly apparent on the final note of *Love is a Duet*<sup>218</sup> which possesses some of the ‘fluty and bird-like quality’ which William Shakespeare identifies as characteristic<sup>219</sup> whilst not sounding as stable as the other registers.

<sup>216</sup> Lys, *Jean de Reszke Teaches Singing to Edith de Lys*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>217</sup> Vera Florence, ‘An Old Violin’.

<sup>218</sup> Stenning, ‘Love is a Duet’.

<sup>219</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Art of Singing* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1910), p. 37.

In ‘character’ numbers, there are far fewer instances of vocal characteristics which are consistent with a generally low larynx approach. Gertie Millar employs a range of ‘voices’ in the characterisation of *A Quaker Girl*<sup>220</sup> but rarely, even on sustained notes, displays consistency in terms of vocal timbre. The comedians Rutland Barrington<sup>221</sup> and W. Louis Bradfield display vocal characteristics which align with Potter’s description of neutral larynx position: ‘[...] that of healthy speech or untrained singing’<sup>222</sup> although Bradfield in sustained notes does display a consistent vocal tone.<sup>223</sup> Phyllis Dare in *Bring Me a Rose*<sup>224</sup> displays a vocal quality similar to Maggie Teyte but also demonstrates a significant difference in tessitura between her singing voice and her surprisingly low speaking voice:

*Example 3.2.4c: Monckton, ‘Bring me a rose’ from The Arcadians as sung by Phyllis Dare (1909).*

**[Allegro commodo]**

Repeat of Refrain as performed:

Refrain as written and performed (first time):

If my heart you would win, And you want to be - gin,...

<sup>220</sup> Millar, ‘A Quaker Girl’.

<sup>221</sup> Barrington, ‘The Moody Mariner’

<sup>222</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, p. 144.

<sup>223</sup> W. Louis Bradfield, ‘I Want to be a Military Man’ (c.1900)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIPWhBR7jV4>> [Accessed 13 September 2018].

<sup>224</sup> Phyllis Dare, ‘Bring Me a Rose’ (1909) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FV6bSmzwW4>> [Accessed 13 September 2018].

### 3.2.5. Phonology

Gustave Garcia, writing in 1888 states:

Neatness of articulation in speaking or singing is of the first importance. A singer or public speaker who is not distinctly understood wearies his auditors, and destroys almost all the effect of the music or of the sentiments he has to express, by obliging the hearers to make continual efforts to catch the sense of the words.<sup>225</sup>

Renée Fleming, writing in 2000, describes a very different contemporary perspective:

The style [of singing] changed even during the last century: from recordings that one can hear, people sang more brightly, certainly in Strauss' and this was partly for the projection of the text. One could always understand the words. Today, in addition to singing with a fuller, richer sound, and very often with a darker timbre, there's less emphasis on diction. The public is very familiar with the words, we have super-titles to help us, and we're often singing in foreign languages in our own country, where most of the audience doesn't understand us anyway.<sup>226</sup>

Within my own singing lessons over the past twenty years there have been contrasting views about the importance of diction. Whilst all teachers have highlighted the importance of being understood, there has been some discrepancy as to whether the words or the vocal line and tone are more important. It is interesting to note, however, that two of the teachers who favour the importance of clear diction were pupils for some considerable time of Roy Henderson. Within my own performances my aim is always to combine the two, with clear diction whilst maintaining vocal line and tone. Anderson suggests that:

Another feature of the older singers is a consistent emission of sound. The best of them can produce a line of sound, and within it encompass the markings or nuances or ornaments given by the composer – but without breaking the final impression of a 'spun' line.<sup>227</sup>

The majority of recordings analysed adhere broadly to pronunciation which aligns with Kathryn LaBouff's definition of British Received Pronunciation (RP) as 'standard upper-class

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<sup>225</sup> Garcia, *The Actor's Art*, p. 12.

<sup>226</sup> Palmer, *Divas In Their Own Words*, p. 77.

<sup>227</sup> Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol. 2, Why It Was Better*, p. 106.

English.’<sup>228</sup> LaBouff states that ‘[...] until the 1950s [...] RP was traditionally used on stage, for public speaking, and by the well educated.’<sup>229</sup>

Many examples can be found in historical recordings of the use of a rolled ‘rr’ [R] at the beginning or end of a word and a ‘flipped’ [r] (or single roll) ‘r’ in the middle, or end of a word. The context of the ‘r’ within the word often dictates which version is used as does the tempo and note duration and the use of the flipped and rolled ‘r’ appears to be interchangeable. However, LaBouff, states one should ‘Flip all intervocalic r’s within a single word or in an adjoining phrase in Baroque, Classical and Romantic Repertoire’.<sup>230</sup> LaBouff lists Butterworth, Elgar, Holst, Ireland and Finzi as examples of Romantic composers which would broadly align her advice with the period under discussion, but the recorded evidence suggests that her advice is overly prescriptive and does not take account of the use of the ‘r’ for expressive effect. Roy Henderson, for example, adopts a flipped ‘r’ on ‘drifts’ but rolls the ‘r’ on ‘dreams’ which coincides with a tenuto mark and the climax of the musical phrase:

*Example 3.2.5a: Oley Speaks, Sylvia as sung by Roy Henderson (1933).*

**[Andantino espressivo]**

37

*p* Such a face as drifts thro' dreams, This is Syl - via to\_\_\_ the...

'r' 'rr'

*ten.*

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. It is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo/mood is marked '[Andantino espressivo]'. The score starts at measure 37. The lyrics are 'Such a face as drifts thro' dreams, This is Syl - via to\_\_\_ the...'. Below the lyrics, there are phonetic annotations: a single quote 'r' under 'drifts' and a double quote 'rr' under 'dreams'. Above the 'dreams' note, there is a tenuto mark (a horizontal line with a wedge) and the abbreviation 'ten.'. There is also a checkmark above the 'via' note.

It is interesting to note that often every effort is made in recordings to articulate ‘r’s wherever possible. This contrasts with the usual practice today where ‘r’s, particularly at the end of words, are silent. LaBouff concurs: ‘In current Modern RP, rolled and flipped ‘r’s are

<sup>228</sup> Kathryn LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer’s Guide to English Diction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 207.

<sup>229</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, p. 207.

<sup>230</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, p. 232.

never used. That was not the case when British Received Pronunciation was codified in the 1920s.<sup>231</sup> Although LaBouff advocates the use of rolled and flipped ‘r’s in the repertoire discussed above, she warns against the use of intervocalic flipped ‘r’ in late twentieth-century literature ‘because their usage sounds too dated and affected.’<sup>232</sup>

Evidence of the use of a flipped ‘r’ can be found in Gertie Millar’s performance.<sup>233</sup> Instead of singing ‘For I’, clear pronunciation is made on the ‘r’ creating ‘Forr I’<sup>234</sup>. This idea is repeated in the pronunciation of ‘trees’ (‘trree’)<sup>235</sup> however this time the ‘r’ is emphasised towards the beginning of the word. An example of the use of a rolled ‘rr’ is clear in the word ‘friend’<sup>236</sup>

Ann Burgess<sup>237</sup> demonstrates the inclusion of both flipped (single) ‘r’ and the rolled ‘r’. Whilst examples are consistent throughout the song, an example of each can be identified within the first seven bars of the song, on ‘brown’<sup>238</sup> when a rolled ‘rr’ is used and ‘far’ where a flipped ‘r’ is used.<sup>239</sup>

Once again various examples of the flipped and rolled ‘r’ are evident in An Old Violin<sup>240</sup>. As in previous examples the flipped ‘r’ is used in the middle and end of a word, for example ‘garret’<sup>241</sup> and ‘years’.<sup>242</sup> Florence also incorporates a rolled ‘rr’, perhaps as a form of word painting and emphasis when singing ‘Rapture’.<sup>243</sup> Similar patterns are evident in

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<sup>231</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, p. 231.

<sup>232</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, p. 232.

<sup>233</sup> Millar, ‘A Quaker Girl’.

<sup>234</sup> Appendix 9b, bar 4.

<sup>235</sup> Appendix 9b, bar 27.

<sup>236</sup> Appendix 9b, bar 9.

<sup>237</sup> Ann Burgess ‘The Little Brown Owl’, Appendix 8a.

<sup>238</sup> Appendix 8a, bar 5.

<sup>239</sup> Appendix 8a, bar 7.

<sup>240</sup> Vera Florence, ‘An Old Violin’.

<sup>241</sup> Appendix 8b, bar 11.

<sup>242</sup> Appendix 8b, bar 45.

<sup>243</sup> Appendix 8b, bar 46.

Stenning's *Mighty Lak' a Rose*<sup>244</sup> and Wilson's *The Keys of Canterbury*.<sup>245</sup> Wilson highlights key words, (often at the end of a phrase) with the use of the flipped 'r', for example 'Bury'<sup>246</sup> (at the end of Canterbury) 'merry',<sup>247</sup> and 'dear',<sup>248</sup> whilst 'anywhere',<sup>249</sup> sounds to alternate between flipped and rolled 'r's.

The 1935 recording of John McCormack singing 'Cloths of Heaven'<sup>250</sup> demonstrates perhaps the most frequent use of the pronounced 'r' and 'rr' in the majority of the words within the song. Examples of the flipped 'r' are 'silver',<sup>251</sup> and 'embroidered'.<sup>252</sup> Whilst the inclusion of the rolled 'rr' can be heard in the word 'spread',<sup>253</sup> and 'dreams',<sup>254</sup> and at the end of words e.g. 'your',<sup>255</sup> The use of a flipped 'r' is also evident in McCormack's recording of *I Hear You Calling Me*<sup>256</sup> when he sings 'For',<sup>257</sup> 'stars',<sup>258</sup> 'hear',<sup>259</sup> and 'your',<sup>260</sup> for example. It is important to note that the use of the flipped 'r' is evident within words as well as at the start or end. This is also true of the use of the rolled 'r', for example when he sings 'words'.<sup>261</sup>

Trefor Jones, clearly uses the flipped 'r' in *Shine Through my Dreams*.<sup>262</sup> Here, once again is evidence of the use of the flipped 'r' at the start, during and at the ends of words, along with using the 'r' in collaboration with portamento to link words together (e.g. far apart top of

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<sup>244</sup> Elsa Stenning, 'Mighty Like a Rose [sic.]'

<sup>245</sup> Steuart Wilson, 'The Keys of Canterbury', *I Love My Love* (Albion ALBCD032, 2017) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51X9SBqm7fU>> [Accessed 12 February 2019].

<sup>246</sup> Appendix 8c, bar 6.

<sup>247</sup> Appendix 8c, bar 10.

<sup>248</sup> Appendix 8c, bar 14.

<sup>249</sup> Appendix 8c, bar 17.

<sup>250</sup> John McCormack 'The Cloths of Heaven' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqXAr7AqpCA>> [Accessed 14 May 2018].

<sup>251</sup> Appendix 10a, bar 8.

<sup>252</sup> Appendix 10a, bar 6.

<sup>253</sup> Appendix 10a, bar 13.

<sup>254</sup> Appendix 10a, bar 22.

<sup>255</sup> Appendix 10a, bar 14.

<sup>256</sup> John McCormack, 'I Hear You Calling Me'.

<sup>257</sup> Appendix 8d Score, bar 12.

<sup>258</sup> Appendix 8d, bar 14.

<sup>259</sup> Appendix 8d, bar 17.

<sup>260</sup> Appendix 8d, bar 20.

<sup>261</sup> Appendix 8d, bar 21.

<sup>262</sup> Trefor Jones, 'Shine Through My Dreams', Appendix 8e.

p 43). Another example of this use of the flipped ‘r’ is heard by Noble.<sup>263</sup> Here he uses the ‘r’ to connect ‘summer’ to ‘ocean’. Daniel Jones calls this ‘r-linking’ and notes that (in speech) this can take place where a ‘word has a close or fairly close grammatical connection with the word following’.<sup>264</sup> Noble paints the words ‘life holds more dear’<sup>265</sup> with an extended rolled ‘r’ followed by a breath.

Though more dramatic in its operatic genre, Dido’s Lament, as sung by Maggie Teyte<sup>266</sup> provides clear examples. Whilst the use of the rolled ‘r’ is evident in its usual position at the beginning of the word ‘rest’<sup>267</sup>, its inclusion to enhance the word painting on the word ‘trouble’ is also clear.<sup>268</sup> A combination of both ‘r’s (flipped and rolled) creates a feeling of importance on the words ‘Remember me’<sup>269</sup> which when sung at a moderate pitch are pronounced ‘**R[r]emember[a] me**’ (Example 3.2.5b) with a shadow vowel<sup>270</sup> following the final ‘r’. When repeated at a higher pitch, the final ‘r’ is abandoned ‘**R[r]ememba ma**’ (Example 3.2.5c):

*Example 3.2.5b:* Purcell, ‘When I am Laid in Earth’ from *Dido and Aeneas* as sung by Maggie Teyte (1950).

27



**RRe mem-ber [a] me**

<sup>263</sup> Dennis Noble, ‘Island of June’ (heard at 2 minutes).

<sup>264</sup> Daniel Jones, *An English Pronouncing Dictionary (on Strictly Phonetic Principles)*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1919), p. xvii.

<sup>265</sup> Dennis Noble, ‘Island of June’ (from 1 minute 34 seconds).

<sup>266</sup> Maggie Teyte, ‘Dido’s Lament’.

<sup>267</sup> Appendix 8f, bar 5.

<sup>268</sup> Appendix 8f, bars 12 and 13.

<sup>269</sup> Appendix 8f, bars 25-26 and 27-28.

<sup>270</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, p. 137.

Example 3.2.5c: Purcell, ‘When I am Laid in Earth’ from *Dido and Aeneas* as sung by Maggie Teyte (1950).



A general characteristic of the recordings under discussion is the effort made to pronounce where possible all consonants including ‘r’s and to differentiate vowel sounds. Trefor Jones, demonstrates this within his recordings although there are exceptions. For example, the word ‘darkness’ loses the ‘r’ but has two distinct and almost equal syllables ‘da-kness’ rather than ‘**dark**nes’ with a falling away second syllable.<sup>271</sup> Jones sings with wide vowels, almost as if he is singing in an Italian style and additional shadow vowels appear to be added to the ends of some words, for example ‘love’ is pronounced ‘lova’ as it almost glides into the next word ‘to’.<sup>272</sup> ‘Though’ has a very closed sound, again almost like singing a diphthong with ‘ah’ to ‘oh’ being sung.<sup>273</sup> An apparent change of pronunciation is also clearly evident in recordings of John McCormack. In *I Hear You Calling Me*<sup>274</sup> the first word, ‘I’ sounds more like two vowels of almost equal length: ‘li-ee’, rather than the form advocated by Ellis<sup>275</sup> and MacKinlay: ‘The “ah” is long, the “i” is short [...] if the diphthong is sung to a long note or passage of notes, the “i” will appear at the very end of the note, or on the last note of the passage.’<sup>276</sup> Ellis advocates a further modification from ‘aa [as in ‘baa’] to a’ [as

<sup>271</sup> Trefor Jones, ‘Shine Through My Dreams’, see Appendix 8e, bar 15.

<sup>272</sup> Appendix 8e, bar 8.

<sup>273</sup> Appendix 8e, bar 13

<sup>274</sup> John McCormack, ‘I Hear You Calling Me’.

<sup>275</sup> Alexander Ellis, *Speech in Song: Being the Singer’s Pronouncing Primer* (London: Novello, Ewer and Company, 1878), p. 69.

<sup>276</sup> Mackinlay, *Light Opera*, p. 89.

in ‘ask’] [...] making *a*’ the principal vowel, before gliding to *i* as in [‘knit’]’<sup>277</sup> which has a similar range of vowel sounds to McCormack’s performance. McCormack also modifies ‘your’ to ‘yoor’. Mention has already been made of reports of Jones singing with a Welsh accent in the early part of his career and it may be suggested that some of the alterations to pronunciation highlighted in recordings of Jones and McCormack are due to their native accents. In Jones’ case this seems unlikely as there is little evidence of a Welsh accent in his recordings whilst McCormack’s Irish accent could be considered an essential part of ‘a multi-faceted performing identity’<sup>278</sup> and one which was emphasised both by McCormack himself and by the film industry.<sup>279</sup> Notwithstanding McCormack’s pronunciations discussed thus far, there appears to be an Italianate colouring to vowel sounds, particularly of the ‘a’ vowel, most noticeable in the performances of Jones and McCormack.

It has been noted that within the recordings analysed there is often a modification of vowel sounds, although this is not always consistent. The ‘Liquid U’ is identified by Kathryn LaBouff as characteristic of Historic RP<sup>280</sup> but is by no means universally applied in singing. Ann Burgess, for example, sings the word ‘suitable’<sup>281</sup> as ‘sootable’ rather than a pronunciation which approximates to ‘syewtable’ as implied by LaBouff and Daniel Jones.<sup>282</sup>

Notwithstanding character songs which require a particular accent, for example Phyllis Dare’s Irish accent in *The Girl with the Brogue*<sup>283</sup>, examples of vowel modification

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<sup>277</sup> Ellis, *Speech in Song*, p. 69.

<sup>278</sup> Laura Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety: Lieder Performances in New York and London between the World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 26.

<sup>279</sup> Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety*. Laura Tunbridge implies that McCormack adapted his identity according to circumstances, citing the ‘assumed nationality’ of American citizenship, whilst ‘at other points in his career McCormack would stress his Irishness’. McCormack’s identity as an Irish singer is central to the plot of the film *Song o’ my Heart*. (p. 83).

<sup>280</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, p. 228. The term ‘Liquid U’ refers to a pronunciation of ‘U’ which approximates to vowel in ‘New’.

<sup>281</sup> Appendix 8a, bar 16. Ann Burgess ‘The Little Brown Owl’.

<sup>282</sup> Jones, *An English Pronouncing Dictionary*, p. 360. Jones uses the phonetic letter ‘j’ as characteristic of the ‘Liquid U’, hence: ‘sju:təb|l’.

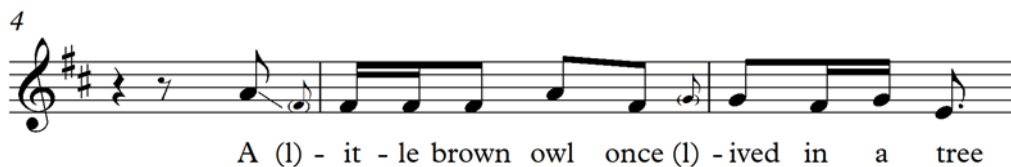
<sup>283</sup> Phyllis Dare (1909) ‘The Girl with the Brogue’ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnzcIAzccxw>> [Accessed 25 March 2018].

include ‘Once’<sup>284</sup>, ‘Whispered’ becomes ‘Whispared’<sup>285</sup> ‘I do’ almost becomes ‘Ah do’,<sup>286</sup> ‘garret’ becomes ‘gerret’,<sup>287</sup> ‘June’ sound like ‘Jön’<sup>288</sup> and so on. As is apparent in the examples given, the modifications are not dependant on gender with examples provided from both male and female singers analysed.

### 3.2.6. Placement and Characterisation of Words

Analysis has evidenced that voiced consonants such as ‘f’, ‘[s]h’, ‘l’, ‘m’, ‘n’, ‘r’, ‘s’, ‘v’, ‘w’ and ‘z’ are often anticipated ahead of the beat, particularly on the first beat of the bar or phrase, inextricably linking with the observations on rubato. *The Little Brown Owl*<sup>289</sup> clearly demonstrates this with many words anticipated from the start of the song.

Example 3.2.6a: Sanderson, *The Little Brown Owl* as sung by Ann Burgess (1931).



*A Quaker Girl*<sup>290</sup> includes similar examples of anticipation on the letter ‘l’, such as ‘loves’. Another example is highlighted with the anticipation on the word ‘used’.<sup>291</sup> This adds weight to the word and acts as a form of word painting. The use of anticipation not only lends emphasis to important words but can also make the vocal line feel dislocated from the accompaniment. Such dislocation can create a feeling of forward movement, or rushing

<sup>284</sup> Appendix 8e, bars 6 and 45. Trefor Jones, ‘Shine Through My Dreams’.

<sup>285</sup> Appendix 9b, bar 10. Millar, ‘A Quaker Girl’.

<sup>286</sup> Appendix 8a, bars 40-43.

<sup>287</sup> Appendix 8b, bar 11. Vera Florence, ‘An Old Violin’.

<sup>288</sup> Dennis Noble, ‘Island of June’.

<sup>289</sup> Appendix 8a, bars 40-43. Ann Burgess ‘The Little Brown Owl’.

<sup>290</sup> Appendix 9b, bar 10.

<sup>291</sup> Appendix 9b, bar 7.

through the phrase before ‘settling’ towards the end of a phrase. This is apparent in Henderson’s performance of *Sylvia*.<sup>292</sup> Whilst in compound time, Henderson anticipates the final notes in the first and second sung bar (bars 5 and 6) joins the tempo set by the orchestra at the start of bar 7 by incorporating a breath at the end of bar two before anticipating the final beat in bar three and regaining the given speed at the end of the phrase (bar 8), even using the plosive ‘b’ or ‘beams’ to delay the final note:

*Example 3.2.6b: Oley Speaks, Sylvia as sung by Roy Henderson (1933).*

N.B. The inflections above the staff are a visual indication of an imagined regular ictus. The positioning of the notes relative to the inflections indicate their placement relative to the imagined ictus in the performance.

5  
8  
Syl - via's hair is like the night, Touched with glan - cing star - ry beams,...

It has been suggested that ‘The colour of the vowels denotes the emotion, and the strength of the consonants the strength of the emotion’; [...] this implies increased length in “m”, “l” or other “permanents,” so called’<sup>293</sup> The requirement of the unamplified voice to be heard clearly necessitates the requirement of the strong consonant in order for the words to be clearly heard.

‘Strength of consonant saves the voice and gets the effect. It will also be borne in mind that a large building will require stronger consonants than a smaller one if the words are to be clear.’<sup>294</sup>

<sup>292</sup> Roy Henderson, ‘Sylvia’.

<sup>293</sup> Mackinlay, *Light Opera*, p. 90.

<sup>294</sup> Mackinlay, *Light Opera*, p. 90.

### 3.2.7. Tempo Rubato and Rhythmic Alteration

The presence of distinctive rhythmic features in historical recordings has been identified and discussed in many studies of a range of musical genres which have been of interest to scholars of historically informed performance. Hudson identifies two broad definitions of tempo rubato, which he labels ‘the earlier rubato’ and ‘the later rubato’: the latter form ‘involv[ing] tempo flexibility, but usually of a more subtle and expressive nature than the retards and accelerations marked in a score [...] it is one of the musical elements that we still understand and still employ in our art music today.’<sup>295</sup> The earlier rubato consists of the ‘alter[ation of] the durational values of some of the notes’<sup>296</sup> whilst maintaining a relatively consistent pulse. Peres da Costa labels this ‘metrical rubato’<sup>297</sup> and Milsom ‘Rhythmic Modification’.<sup>298</sup> It is this form of rhythmic alteration which is perhaps the most significant element of rubato observed in the recordings under discussion. Anderson suggests that: ‘On [...] older records you cannot fail to be impressed by how very in charge of their own rhythms the singers are, and how very clearly they come over.’<sup>299</sup> This would appear to be borne out by analysis of light opera recordings, with patterns of practice emerging which suggest established stylistic and musical practices which serve a particular performance aesthetic based on the imaginative communication and clarification of the substance and meaning of a sung text to an audience.

The language generally used to describe these phenomena in HIP literature often evokes a dichotomy between the perceived ‘facts’ of the score and the ‘freedom’ with which performers interpret them. Sarah Potter suggests that ‘One only has to listen to early acoustic

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<sup>295</sup> Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>296</sup> Hudson, *Stolen Time*: p. 2.

<sup>297</sup> Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 189.

<sup>298</sup> Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, p. 161.

<sup>299</sup> Anderson, *We Sang Better: Vol. 2, Why It Was Better*, p. 104.

recordings of celebrated singers to glimpse the *relaxed* attitude that both singer and accompanist(s) had to strict ensemble (in the modern sense of simultaneous onset and regular tactus) at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>300</sup> (My italics). This appears to be true only if we consider a metronomically accurate rendering of notated rhythms and their precise alignment as they appear on the page to be markers of good practice in performance; any deviation from this is a ‘relaxation’ from this ‘ideal’. Milsom suggests that in the nineteenth century the “‘text’ which, rather than being regarded as sacrosanct, was considered to be the ‘starting point’”.<sup>301</sup> It may be argued that this continued to apply in light opera genres, to a greater or lesser extent, throughout the period investigated in this thesis.

The influence of text on the shaping of rhythms and phrases in historical recordings of light opera is highly significant and a majority of rhythmic decisions (if they can be considered as conscious decisions) appear to be at least partly text-driven.

### **3.2.7.1. Transposed rhythms**

Many performances of comedic songs recorded in the early years of the twentieth century display a characteristic rhythmic feature of transposing notated rhythms, for example Passmore (1907), Millar (1910), Bradfield (c1900) and Terriss (1932).<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, p. 133.

<sup>301</sup> Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, p. 162.

<sup>302</sup> N.B. These and subsequent score examples in this section do not adhere to the convention of unbeamed notes in vocal scoring. Beamings have been chosen to aid visual clarity in relating beat groupings to each other and identifying rhythmic discrepancies.

Example 3.2.7.1a: Sullivan, 'On a Tree by a River' from *The Mikado* as sung by Walter Passmore (1907).

**[Andante espressivo]**

As performed:

1. On a tree by a river a little tom-tit

As written:

1. On a tree by a river a little tom-tit

Example 3.2.7.1b: Monckton, 'Oh a Quiet Quaker Maid' from *The Quaker Girl* as sung by Gertie Millar (1910).

**[Moderato]**

As performed:

Oh a quiet Quaker maid From my baby-hood I've been, For I...

As written:

Oh a quiet Quaker maid From my baby-hood I've been, For I...

Example 3.2.7.1c: Leslie Stuart/Paul Rubens, 'I want to be a military man' from *Floradora* as sung by W. Louis Bradfield (1900).

**[Tempo Quick Step.]**

104

As performed:

If you stroll down Piccadilly In the...

As written:

[v.2] If you stroll down Piccadilly In the...

Example 3.2.7.1d: Wm. H. Penn, *The Honeysuckle and the Bee* as sung by Ellaline Terriss (1932).

[Moderato]

The image shows two staves of music for the lyrics "On a summer afternoon, Where the...". The top staff is labeled "As performed:" and shows a melody with a 7-measure rest at the beginning, followed by notes for "On a summer afternoon, Where the...". The bottom staff is labeled "As written:" and shows a melody that starts with a quarter note on "On" and continues with "a summer afternoon, Where the...". Both staves are in 4/4 time and have a key signature of one flat.

This is often connected to speech rhythm, for example ‘sum-mer’ (Terriss); ‘qui-et’ (Millar); ‘[Picca]-di-lly’ (Bradfield) where the iambic rhythm of the words is adopted rather than the notated rhythm. This often occurs near the beginning of a song and helps to establish a conversational feeling, which is particularly appropriate to a narrative song. Stenning adopts a similar rhythm for ‘tip-toe’:

Example 3.2.7.1e: Ethelbert Nevin, *Mighty Lak’ A Rose* as performed by Elsa Stenning (1939).


The image shows two staves of music for the lyrics "Den dey comes on tip - toe Ter...". The top staff is labeled "As performed:" and shows a melody starting at measure 16 with a half note on "Den", followed by "dey comes on tip - toe Ter...". The bottom staff is labeled "As written:" and shows a melody that starts with a half note on "Den" and continues with "dey comes on tip - toe Ter...". Both staves are in common time (C) and have a key signature of three sharps.

Rhythmic alteration is not confined to BLO performances and Treumann and Werner display similar characteristics in very different emotional contexts:

Example 3.2.7.1f: Franz Lehar, ‘Pallikarenlied’ from *Das Fürstenkind* as performed by Louis Treumann (1910).

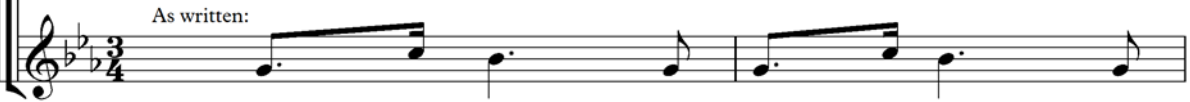
**[Moderato (sinnend [*musing*])]**

As performed:



Lan - ge Jah - re, ban - ge Jah - re...

As written:




Lan - ge Jah - re, ban - ge Jah - re...

Translation: Long years, anxious years...

Example 3.2.7.1g: Franz Lehar, ‘Ich bin der Graf von Luxemburg’ from *Der Graf von Luxemburg* as performed by Fritz Werner (1910).

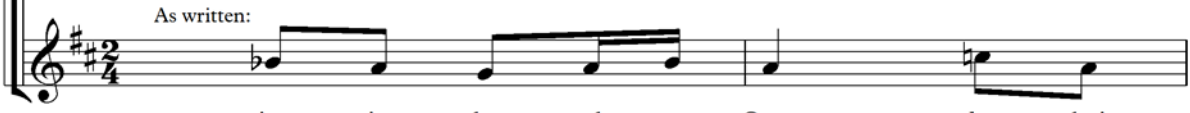
**[Allegretto non troppo.]**

Fig. 7: b11 As performed:



...einst in schwachen Stunden, bei...

As written:



...einst in schwachen Stunden, bei...

Translation: once in weak hours

Treumann flattens out the notated rhythms in ‘Pallikarenlied’, perhaps to give a sense of ‘long years’ and the anxiety of ‘Bange Jahre’ is communicated through a ‘scotch snap’. Treumann’s practice appears more closely aligned with Millar, Bradfield and Terriss’s in the adoption of an alternative ‘speech rhythm’ for ‘Stunden’.

### 3.2.7.2. Shortening of unstressed words

In order to give full and, in some cases, exaggerated emphasis to important words or syllables, time is taken away from unstressed words. This may be to accommodate breaths, as discussed earlier in this chapter (see Examples 3.2.3f and 3.2.3m) but at other times this appears to be a musical and textural decision. Trefor Jones allows himself longer on ‘dreams’, ‘once’ and ‘Soft [...]’ by a corresponding shortening adjacent words (and their notes):

*Example 3.2.7.2a: Ivor Novello, ‘Shine Through My Dreams’ as sung by Trefor Jones (1936).*

[Moderato]

The image shows two staves of music for the song 'Shine Through My Dreams'. The top staff is labeled 'As performed:' and the bottom staff is labeled 'As written:'. Both staves are in common time (C) and start with a treble clef. The 'As performed' staff has a '5' above the first measure, indicating a fingering. It shows a triplet of eighth notes for 'dreams' and a triplet of eighth notes for 'sec-ret-ly...'. The 'As written' staff shows a different rhythmic arrangement for the same words, with a longer note for 'dreams' and a different triplet for 'sec-ret-ly...'. The lyrics are: 'Shine thro' my dreams and once a-gain Soft - ly and seec - ret - ly...'. The word 'seec' is a typo for 'see'.

Similarly, McCormack makes the following line more personal by drawing attention to ‘my’ and ‘heart’ in his rhythmic scheme whilst emphasising the positive thrust of the line by underplaying ‘longing’. The added dotted rhythm for ‘rejoice’, recalling Handel’s similar treatment in *Messiah*<sup>303</sup>:

<sup>303</sup> The same rhythmic fingerprint is heard throughout the soprano aria ‘Rejoice Greatly’ from *Messiah*.

Example 3.2.7.2b: Charles Marshall *I Hear You Calling Me* as performed by John McCormack (1930).

[Allegretto]

As performed:

The words that made my long-ing heart re-joice You spoke,...

As written:

The words that made my long-ing heart re - joice You spoke,...

The overall effect is to create an almost three-dimensional perspective to the communication of the text in performance which could be missing from more regular realisations of rhythms. By giving space and emphasis to important words whilst allowing others to recede, the audience is potentially spared the need, in Gustave Garcia's phrase, 'to make continual efforts to catch the sense of the words.'<sup>304</sup>

### 3.2.8. 'Tripletised' Rhythms

Henderson and McCormack both adapt evenly notated rhythms into triplets:

Example 3.2.8a: Oley Speaks, *Sylvia* as sung by Roy Henderson (1933).

As performed:

From the depths of mem - o - ry,...

As written:

From the depths of mem - o - ry,...

<sup>304</sup> Garcia, *The Actor's Art*, p. 12.

Example 3.2.8b: Charles Marshall *I Hear You Calling Me* as performed by John McCormack (1930).

The image shows two staves of music in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The top staff is labeled 'As performed:' and shows a melodic line with lyrics: ...wea - - ry length be - tween,... The notes for 'wea' and 'ry' are grouped with a '3' above them, indicating a triplet. The note for 'length' is a dotted quarter note, and 'be - tween,...' consists of a quarter note followed by a quarter rest. The bottom staff is labeled 'As written:' and shows the same melodic line with lyrics: ...wea - ry length be - tween,... The notes for 'wea' and 'ry' are beamed together as a single eighth-note pair, and the note for 'length' is a dotted quarter note. The lyrics are aligned with the notes in both staves.

Both singers appear to adopt this rhythmic feature to illustrate images in the text. Henderson recalls the ‘depths of memory’ in a heavily swung rhythm, whereas McCormack appears to depict ‘weariness’ through an elongation of the first syllable and the word ‘length’. Both examples introduce a sense of inertia into the rhythmic scheme without altering the basic tempo.

### 3.2.9. Structural Rubato

The employment of Hudson’s ‘Later Rubato’ in the light opera repertoire under discussion often takes the form of ‘structural rubato’. Instances of tempo modification vary from the slight pressing forward of the piano interludes in Ann Burgess’ performance of *Little Brown Owl* to the frequent fermate of McCormack’s performance. Unsurprisingly, the most frequently encountered instances of structural rubato occur in the approach towards significant cadence points. The proportions of such rubati can appear rather exaggerated to the modern ear, which may be accustomed to more subdued use. Vera Florence, for example, uses both

‘earlier’ and ‘later’ rubati in the following extract but the extent of a localised form of ‘later’ rubato in bar 45 is noteworthy<sup>305</sup>:

Example 3.2.9a: Howard Fisher, *An Old Violin* as performed by Vera Florence (1942).

The image displays a musical score for the song 'An Old Violin' by Howard Fisher, as performed by Vera Florence in 1942. The score is presented in two parts: 'As performed' and 'As written'. Both parts are in 3/4 time and G major. The lyrics are: 'Sweet, half for - got - ten things out of the years, Rap - ture and a - go - ny, laugh - ter and tears.' The 'As performed' version includes tempo markings: a quarter note equals approximately 96 (♩ = c.96) at the start, a quarter note equals approximately 40 (♩ = c.40) above a slur over bars 44-45, and '(a tempo)' with an arrow pointing right above bars 46-47. The 'As written' version includes '(con passione)' above bars 46-47. The score shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for bars 42-47.

There are generally fewer examples of extreme ‘later’ rubato in the recordings of the Savoyards. An exception is Ruth Vincent in *Home Sweet Home*, which feature quite extreme broadenings of tempo, especially in the final decorated cadence.

<sup>305</sup> Vera Florence, ‘An Old Violin’, Appendix 8b.

Example 3.2.9b: Bishop, *Home, Sweet Home* as performed by Ruth Vincent (1906).

(N.B. Notated at sounding pitch).



The influence of Adelina Patti's recording of the same song is clearly heard in Vincent's recording, both in terms of pacing and melodic decoration. It therefore seems unlikely that Vincent would have had the opportunity for such radical tempo changes in her work at the Savoy.

### 3.2.10. Melodic variation

Perhaps the most frequently encountered form of melodic variation in the recorded examples is the portamento. Sarah Potter has comprehensively addressed this subject regarding its application in nineteenth century singing and there are clear parallels to be drawn with the present thesis. It is clear from the analysis of recordings that portamento was an important expressive device for most light opera performers, throughout the period under discussion. Phillip's assertion that 'the decreasing prominence and frequency of portamento on both strings and voice'<sup>306</sup> was evident by the 1930s may be true of recordings of mainstream 'serious' repertoire but is not generally supported by the evidence of recordings of the performers of light opera. Nevertheless, the evidence does suggest that vocal portamento practices had undergone some development in light opera genres throughout this period.

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<sup>306</sup> Philip. R *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, p. 229.

Potter relates Leopold Auer’s preference for the descending portamento in his 1921 treatise on violin playing but states that ‘this opinion does not appear to have been widespread’<sup>307</sup> and that the performances analysed by Potter do not reflect Auer’s opinion. In contrast, the performances from this period and beyond by light opera performers *do* generally corroborate Auer and the overwhelming majority of instances of portamenti are on descending intervals, often heightening the impact of a tenuto, rallentando or other rhythmic adjustment. Typical examples include those by Millar, Jones, Booth and Teyte.

Example 3.2.10a: Lionel Monckton, ‘Oh a Quiet Quaker Girl’ from *The Quaker Girl* as sung by Gertie Millar (1910).

17(35)

He was such a dear lit - tle Qua - ker!  
 Life is ve - ry dull for a Qua - ker!

The musical score for Example 3.2.10a shows a vocal line in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The melody starts on a half note G4, followed by quarter notes F4, E4, and D4. A descending portamento (marked 'port.') is indicated by a curved arrow above the notes, connecting the G4 to the D4. The phrase continues with quarter notes C4, B3, and A3, followed by a half note G3. The lyrics are: 'He was such a dear lit - tle Qua - ker!' and 'Life is ve - ry dull for a Qua - ker!'.

Example 3.2.10b: Ivor Novello, ‘Shine through my dreams’ from *Glamorous Night* as sung by Trefor Jones (1936).

56

Make all my dreams re - a - li - ty, That I may...

The musical score for Example 3.2.10b shows a vocal line in common time. The melody starts on a half note G4, followed by quarter notes F4, E4, and D4. Three descending portamenti (each marked 'port.') are indicated by curved arrows above the notes, connecting G4 to F4, F4 to E4, and E4 to D4. The phrase continues with quarter notes C4, B3, and A3, followed by a half note G3. The lyrics are: 'Make all my dreams re - a - li - ty, That I may...'.

<sup>307</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, p. 115.

Example 3.2.10c: [composer unknown] ‘The world is mine tonight’ as sung by Webster Booth (1936).

[N.B. Transcribed from recording]

The world \_\_\_\_\_ is mine to -  
 night, \_\_\_\_\_ and mine each sil-ver star that shines a-bove in the blue...

Detailed description: This musical score is for the song 'The world is mine tonight'. It consists of two staves of music in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature (C). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note G4 with a slur over it, then a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4. A 'port.' (portamento) marking is placed above the D4 note. The second staff continues the melody with a half note D4, a quarter note C4, a quarter note B3, and a quarter note A3. Another 'port.' marking is above the A3 note. This is followed by a triplet of eighth notes: G4, F4, E4. The piece ends with a half note D4.

Example 3.2.10d: André Messager, ‘Philomel’ from *Monsieur Beaucaire* as sung by Maggie Teyte (1944).

56

Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ Ah! \_\_\_\_\_ Phil - o - mel, Phil - o - mel, \_\_\_\_\_

Detailed description: This musical score is for the song 'Philomel' from the opera 'Monsieur Beaucaire'. It is marked with the number 56. The score is in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a treble clef. The melody starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note G4. A 'port.' marking is above the second G4. This is followed by a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, and a quarter note D4. A checkmark (✓) is placed above the D4 note. The piece ends with a half note D4.

Recordings which feature orchestral accompaniment often display an interesting paradox between the treatment of in string instruments (particularly the violin) and the voice. Roy Henderson<sup>308</sup> rarely employs ascending portamenti but the solo violin accompanying him frequently uses this device:

Example 3.2.10e: Oley Speaks, *Sylvia* as sung by Roy Henderson (1933).

19

Violin obbligato

And the au - tumn fills the land. \_\_\_\_\_

Detailed description: This musical score is for the song 'Sylvia' from the opera 'Sylvia'. It is marked with the number 19. The score is in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Violin obbligato' and features a treble clef. The melody starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. A 'port.' marking is above the A4 note. This is followed by a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. Another 'port.' marking is above the B4 note. The piece ends with a quarter note G4. The bottom staff is in a bass clef and provides accompaniment with a half note G3, a half note G3, and a half note G3.

<sup>308</sup> Roy Henderson, ‘Sylvia’.

Potter discusses two forms of vocal portamenti and word underlay which are identified by Nicola Vaccai (1832), Manuel Garcia and Albert. B. Bach (1883).<sup>309</sup> The first (and generally preferred) form is the use of the ‘home’ syllable or vowel to travel to the next pitch which then is sung to a new syllable or vowel:

*Example 3.2.10f:* Ivor Novello ‘Shine Through My Dreams’ from *Glamorous Night* as sung by Trefor Jones (1936).

5

*port.*

Shi - - ne thro' my dreams

Detailed description: This musical notation shows a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). A fermata is placed over the first note, which is a half note on the pitch corresponding to the syllable 'Shi'. A horizontal line with a wavy underline, labeled 'port.', extends from this note to the next note, which is a quarter note on a higher pitch. Below the staff, the lyrics 'Shi - - ne thro' my dreams' are written, with the 'i' in 'Shi' underlined. The two dashes between 'Shi' and 'ne' indicate the duration of the portamento.

The second involves anticipating the next syllable or vowel in the glide between pitches. This form is rarely found in descending portamenti but occurs occasionally in ascending portamenti:

*Example 3.2.10g:* Novello, ‘Shine Through My Dreams’ as sung by Trefor Jones (1936).

5

*port.*

Shi - ne thro' my dreams and once a-gain

Detailed description: This musical notation shows two measures on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The first measure contains a half note on the pitch for 'Shi' (underlined) and a quarter note on a higher pitch for 'ne thro' my dreams'. A portamento line labeled 'port.' connects these two notes. The second measure is enclosed in a rectangular box and contains a quarter note on the same pitch as the first note of the second measure, followed by a quarter note on a higher pitch for 'once' and a dotted quarter note on the same pitch for 'a-gain'. A portamento line labeled 'port.' connects the first note of the second measure to the 'once' note. The lyrics 'Shi - ne thro' my dreams and once a-gain' are written below the staff, with the 'i' in 'Shi' underlined.

<sup>309</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, pp. 113-114.

Example 3.2.10h: Wilfrid Sanderson, *The Little Brown Owl* as sung by Ann Burgess (1931).

9

A bach - e - lor fowl and lone - ly \_\_\_\_\_ was he,

Florence Smithson uses the first form of vocal portamento on an ascending phrase:

Example 3.2.10i: Edward German, 'Waltz song' from *Tom Jones* as sung by Florence Smithson (1912).

74

I \_\_\_\_\_ am - dazed \_\_\_\_\_

In general, the earlier recordings analysed display more instances of ascending portamenti which appear to carry expressive weight, such as Isabel Jay (1904), Phyllis Dare (1909) and Louis Treumann (1910):

Example 3.2.10j: Sullivan 'Poor Wand'ring One' from *The Pirates of Penzance* as performed by Isabel Jay (1904).

27

True peace of mind, why, take \_\_\_\_\_ it, it \_\_\_\_\_ is thine.

Example 3.2.10k: Lionel Monckton/Howard Talbot, 'The Girl With A Brogue' from *The Arcadians* as performed by Phyllis Dare (1909).

41

Ah now, stop your phi - lan - der - ing

Example 3.2.10l: Franz Lehar, 'Pallikarenlied' from *Das Fürstenkind* as performed by Louis Treumann (1910).

Ich bin Pal-li- kar, wie je ei-ner war! Hei-a!  
 Translation: I am Pal-li- kar, like ev - er one was! Hei-a!

The rhythmic treatment of waltz rhythms occasionally militates against ascending portamenti where delayed third beats make a clean attack on an ascending interval necessary:

Example 3.2.10m: Howard Fisher, *An Old Violin* as performed by Vera Florence (1942).

Potential ascending *portamenti* in square brackets (rhythms as they appear in the score) below:

42

Up in the gar - ret, a - way from the din

Approximate rhythmic realisation in performance which makes *portamenti* unfeasible:

Up in the gar - ret, a - way from the din

The expressive effect of portamento in the recordings analysed appears to be to heighten specific or prevailing emotions, making the communication of them more ardent. Thus, Sarah

Potter's observation that '[...] singers were to take the effects of emotion upon the speaking voice as a model for expressive singing'<sup>310</sup> seems particularly valid for light opera performers.

A vocal characteristic related to portamento but distinctive in its expressive effect, application and technique has been noted which is often found in recordings of female performers, particularly of the early twentieth century. It is characterised by a rapid, upward 'portamento flick'<sup>311</sup> which appears to end on an indeterminate pitch apparently near the upper limit of the singer's vocal range. It has been most often noted in soprano, and particularly soubrette repertoire of a coquettish or comedic character and is employed by Gertie Millar, Phyllis Dare, Florence Smithson and Maggie Teyte, for example:

*Example 3.2.10n:* Edward German, 'Waltz Song' from *Tom Jones* as sung by Florence Smithson (1912).

**[Allegro molto]**

22 As performed:

For to - night, \_\_\_\_\_ for to - night. \_\_\_\_\_ Let me

As written:

For to - night, \_\_\_\_\_ for to - night. \_\_\_\_\_ Let me

27

dream out my dream of de - light, Tra la la \_\_\_\_\_ la la la la...

dream out my dream of de - light, Tra la la \_\_\_\_\_ la la la la...

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for 'Waltz Song' from Tom Jones. It is in 3/4 time and marked 'Allegro molto'. The score is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 22 to 26. It shows two versions: 'As performed' and 'As written'. The 'As performed' version features a 'portamento flick' on the notes for 'night' and 'night', indicated by a sharp upward inflection on the notes. The 'As written' version shows the original notation without these inflections. The lyrics are 'For to - night, \_\_\_\_\_ for to - night. \_\_\_\_\_ Let me'. The second system covers measures 27 to 31. It also shows two versions: 'As performed' and 'As written'. The 'As performed' version features a 'portamento flick' on the 'la' notes, indicated by a sharp upward inflection. The 'As written' version shows the original notation without these inflections. The lyrics are 'dream out my dream of de - light, Tra la la \_\_\_\_\_ la la la la...'. The score is written for a single melodic line on a grand staff.

Similar vocal inflections have been heard in recordings of Music Hall performers, such as Marie Lloyd<sup>312</sup> which may indicate that it was part of a mildly risqué *lingua franca* in

<sup>310</sup> Sarah Potter, 'Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century', p. 123.

<sup>311</sup> The term 'portamento flick' has been adopted in the absence of an accepted term for this effect.

<sup>312</sup> Marie Lloyd, 'A little of what you fancy does you good'

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq6LKARJYZc>> [Accessed 6 July 2020].

theatrical performance. No reference has been found to this device in any pedagogical source or discussion of its effect in literature more generally.

The use of non-notated ornaments occurs most frequently in earlier recorded performances. Grace notes are sometimes added, particularly in the anticipation of a pitch following a portamento. As a melodic decoration in waltz songs, the mordent is frequently encountered for example in performances by Isabel Jay, Florence Smithson and Maggie Teyte and sometimes closely connected to the portamento flick.

*Example 3.2.10o:* Sullivan, ‘Poor wand’ring one’ from *The Pirates of Penzance* as performed by Isabel Jay (1904).



The mordent is also found in recordings by non-BLO light opera performers such as Hippolyte Belhomme.<sup>313</sup>

### 3.2.11 Summary

The most universal characteristics observed in the performances of the ‘Principals’<sup>314</sup> are the use of the flipped ‘r’, the rolled ‘r’ and clear diction. This is often, though not exclusively evidenced by the use of Received Pronunciation. However, the phrase ‘clear diction’ is a somewhat broader term in this context than simply adhering to accepted concepts of Received Pronunciation (RP). It is used to describe a performance where the author could

<sup>313</sup> Hippolyte Belhomme, ‘A la Voix Séduisante’ (Pathé Saphir 4557, 1907) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gh5eMV11M70>> [Accessed 8 January 2020].

<sup>314</sup> Appendix 8.

hear and understand the words clearly without the aid of a printed score and it was felt that the communication of the words by the singer was a performative priority. This is, of necessity, a subjective assessment. A significant number of singers appear to modify pronunciation. Sometimes, as in the case of Trefor Jones, this is connected to certain vowels which seem to be modified for the sake of vocal timbre. John McCormack<sup>315</sup> had a famously distinct Irish accent when singing which is evident in the recorded examples, whereas an apparently extreme use of RP (to modern ears) accounts for some observations of unusual pronunciation.

Almost as common are the occurrences of portamenti and additional breaths. The context for this observation varies somewhat and can refer to breaths taken in addition to those suggested by the punctuation of the text. It may also refer to breaths taken to enhance vocal display or effect. These and other contexts will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Rubato and the anticipation and/or delay of individual notes is also a notable feature of these performances. This refers to a metrical freedom which nevertheless adheres to the shape of the notated rhythms. Equally prominent are altered notated rhythms, often apparently suggested by the text, which generally fit into the existing metrical scheme. Less frequent but significant are changes of notated pitch, which often appear to be prompted by the opportunity for vocal display (for example, ending on a high note at the end of a number). A generally bright vocal timbre is evident in the recordings which, whilst making due allowances for the vagaries of recording processes and reproduction, nevertheless suggests patterns of voice placement and production which are noteworthy.

Analysis of performing practices by the BLO performers of the ‘Supporting Cast’ (SC)<sup>316</sup> reveals a generally similar profile to that of the ‘Principals’ (P).<sup>317</sup> There are, however

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<sup>315</sup> See Appendix 8d.

<sup>316</sup> Appendix 9.

<sup>317</sup> Appendix 8.

significantly more instances of a change of notated rhythms in SC than P. Paradoxically, there have been found to be *less* frequent instances of rubato in SC than P and this is also true of the anticipation and/or delay of individual notes. The use of the rolled ‘r’ is less frequently used than flipped ‘r’ in SC and this is particularly noticeable amongst the Savoyards. There are noticeably more instances of a lack of clarity of diction in SC than P, although this may be accounted for by the often-variable recording quality. This is probably true of Isabel Jay’s performance of *Poor Wand’ring One*,<sup>318</sup> which may be reasonably regarded as anomalous within the context of the universal good diction of the Savoyard recordings analysed. A more variable picture emerges with singers who specialised in musical comedy, with generally better diction for the ‘comedians’ than singers. Of the singers, Marie Tempest’s recordings, despite their early date (1900) appear to display a willingness to sacrifice the clarity of words for vocal effect. Florence Smithson is somewhat clearer but the recording by W. Louis Bradfield, singing a comedy song from the same year places clarity of diction at the centre of his performance.

There were more instances of certain non-notated vocal inflections including scoops or yodel effects, mordents or grace notes and extended non-notated cadenzas in SC than P. There were surprisingly fewer instances of portamento in SC than P. This may be partly due to the comedians amongst Savoyards and in musical comedy such as Henry Lytton and W. Louis Bradfield rarely employing portamento in their vocal delivery and the more generally lyrical nature of the repertoire in P. Instances of additional breaths in SC occur most frequently in the more lyrical repertoire and are less evident in comic numbers.

The European recordings, consisting of examples of French opera comique and German operetta in general mirror the features noted in SC. Predictably, due to the nature of the

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<sup>318</sup> Appendix 9a.

languages, flipped and rolled ‘r’s were present in all of these recordings. Similarly all of the European recordings contained examples of freedom or change of notated rhythm, and portamento was also almost always encountered. In general, the German recordings displayed more freedom from notation, with the anticipation and delay of notes, additional breaths and changes of pitch being significant factors in these performances. The French performances had more frequent instances of rubato, clear diction, mordents or grace notes and extended non-notated cadenzas.

### **3.3. Experimental Recordings**

A series of experimental recordings were undertaken with a view to understanding the challenges of embodying research findings into performing practices. The process began with an exploration of the gap between current practices (so far as they exist) and those suggested by historical models. In the first session on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Vera Florence’s performance of an extract from *An Old Violin* provided the model for emulation and experimentation.

#### **3.3.1. Experiment 1: An Old Violin (Appendix 8b)**

##### **Experimental Recording No. 1 (Audio Track ER #1)**

In this recording I attempted to document a performance which adhered as closely as possible to the score directions. The employment of rubato and portamento was therefore minimised. This approach was untypical of my usual manner of performance in this repertoire, which would usually include elements such as rubato, dynamic inflection and more overall

freedom in the phrasing. On reviewing the recording I noticed that a rather static and unmusical effect was produced.

### **Experimental Recording No. 2 (Audio Track ER #2)**

Following the annotation of the printed score, with the observations of Vera Florence's performance following analysis by close critical listening, I attempt to produce a performance which reacted to these markings but did not use the recording itself as a template. After the recording, but before listening back, I felt that *tenuti* were not held sufficiently and that perhaps the accompaniment needed to broaden the tempo in bar 21. I also felt that the portamento in this bar was not sufficiently defined. The frequent rhythmic inflection created by the anticipation of the first beat and elongation of the second beat (especially noticeable in the first line) did not at this stage feel natural. On reviewing the performing before comparing to Florence's performance, I felt that the rhythmic flexibility was not yet idiomatic, particularly in the opening line 'Up in the garret'. I also perceived my reluctance to move the phrases on to the extent that Florence does. The *tenuto* marking (bar 21) had more of an effect than first thought. When this performance was finally compared to Florence's own, I was felt the need for a smoother delivery which included small scale portamenti to maintain legato, as well as the need to review pronunciation, including a more distinct flipped 'r' in 'garrett'.

### **Experimental Recording No. 3 (Audio Track ER #3)**

Following the observations above, another recording attempt was made. After listening back to it, some words were closer to Florence's in pronunciation although the flipped 'r' was not yet sufficiently distinct. The rhythmic inflections in the phrase 'just for the love [...]' sounded rather contrived and needed a more rhapsodic inflection as evidenced by Florence. At

this stage in the experimental recording process, I paid attention to the support offered by the accompaniment in Florence's performance, and whether this was a more significant factor in Florence's musical decision making than previously thought in terms of structural rubato.

#### **Experimental Recording No. 4 (Audio Track ER #4)**

Improvements were noted in this performance although the attempt to move the phrase forward at 'tenderly, pleadingly' resulted in a rather stilted dotted rhythm. I also felt that the rhythm of 'just for the love' did not yet achieve the flexibility of Florence's performance. Inadvertently, the portamento on 'fall' had been lost.

#### **Experimental Recording No. 5 (Audio Track ER #5)**

This performance sought to address the issues in the previous take. The portamento was more prominent on 'fall', with a more convincing shape for 'just for the love [...]'.

#### **Experimental Recording No. 6 (Audio Track ER #6)**

At this stage in the experiment, I decided to attempt to sing along with Florence's recording. This was to confirm or otherwise the success of the mimetic experimentations thus far. There was an obvious vocal difference in that the recording plays a tone higher than the score, which possibly accounted for a vocal colour closer to that of Florence in this recording. Despite the now frequent attempts to reproduce Florence's phrasing and rubato, it was obvious that there were still inflections which I had missed. Perhaps most significantly, the whole performance felt broader in tempo and rubato than was comfortable and certainly broader than my own performance would have been without this model. The phrase which had given most

trouble during the experiment, ‘just for the love [...]’ was particularly challenging to align with Florence, which may suggest this phrase as being furthest removed in terms of natural musicality from my own current practice.

### **Experimental Recording No. 7 (Audio Track ER #7)**

This was the final take of this experiment which demonstrated a more fluid, rhythmic approach. Although the majority of my attention in rehearsal and recording had been directed towards rhythmic factors, a comparison of Take 5 with Take 1 reveals a tone and pronunciation closer to Florence’s. No conscious manipulation of larynx height or breathing was undertaken. This may lead one to conclude that the repetitive, memetic activity brought about technical solutions of which I was not consciously aware. The experience of this process suggests that the rhythmical factors, and particularly rubati, are the most demanding elements to master at this stage.

### **3.3.2. Experiment 2: Breathing and Larynx Height**

Following the experience of Experiment 1 which concentrated on rubato, phrasing and phonology, I decided to seek supervision for the next experiment which would investigate the practicalities of singing using some of the breathing techniques encountered during research. Influenced by Johnstone-Douglas’ assertion that Jean de Reszke ‘ [...] would have preferred that all work should be done under his supervision’,<sup>319</sup> early experiments with the techniques

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<sup>319</sup> Walter Johnstone Douglas, ‘His Principles of Singing.’, *Music & Letters* (1925) vol. 6, no. 3, 202–209. <[www.jstor.org/stable/726682](http://www.jstor.org/stable/726682)> [Accessed 9 February 2016], p. 203.

of clavicular breathing and high larynx use had been uncomfortable and I thought it wise to undertake the experiment under expert vocal guidance.<sup>320</sup>

**Performing ‘There’s Always a Catch about Love’ from *Something in the City* (1939)  
(Appendix 11):**

**Experimental Recording No. 8 (Audio Track ER #8):**

The first take recorded, **ER #7**, was sung as far as possible in a manner that reflects general current practice and, to a certain extent, my own practice uninfluenced by the research undertaken. It must, however, be acknowledged that the findings of research undertaken over a number of years may have inadvertently influenced this performance. This number, lacking an established performance tradition or recordings which may serve as models, provided the opportunity to freely apply techniques acquired through research and experimentation thus far. The stylistic affinities between this waltz song and others analysed such as the ‘Waltz song’ from *Tom Jones* by German as sung Florence Smithson, ‘Love is a duet’ as sung by Elsa Stenning, ‘An Old Violin’ as sung by Vera Florence and ‘Philomel’ by Messenger as sung by Maggie Teyte are clear and inform the performance decisions I made in these recordings.

**Experimental Recording No. 9 (Audio Track ER #9):**

This performance aims to incorporate elements of the singing styles of Vera Florence and Ann Burgess, amongst other singers of the 1930s, which had been suggested by research. These included clavicular breathing and a high larynx position, in addition to portamenti, rolled and flipped ‘r’s, period pronunciation and rubato including rhythmic alteration. Examples of

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<sup>320</sup> I am grateful to Professor Lynne Dawson for her assistance and guidance in this experiment.

portamenti can be heard in bars 54-55 ('daydreams') and particularly from letter B, bar 45 where descending intervals such as bar 79 ('think all is well') are convincing in the manner of Webster Booth (Example 3.2.10c) and Maggie Teyte (Example 3.2.10d). After playback, it was felt that further opportunities for portamenti existed but that these had been missed due to the concentration on other performance characteristics. Rhythmic changes occur in bars 11 and 59 where a 'Scotch snap' rhythm replaces even quavers on the words 'mir-age' and 'ever'. This was a natural development of the learning process and did not require undue attention in rehearsal. A late breath in the phrase at bar 86 'There's always a catch //about love' is demonstrated in Example 3.2.3b. Aspects of phonology, and particularly rolled and flipped 'r's were challenging, depending on the context. The line 'Changing to dark despair' in bars 18-22 would ideally have been flipped and rolled. The 'r' in despair was successful but 'dark' proved more problematic. It is likely that the conjunction of the 'r' and 'k' make this more difficult to articulate clearly. The anticipated 'l's in bar 7 ('love') and bar 32 ('luring') were more easily achieved.

### **Performing *Little Brown Owl* (Appendix 8a)**

#### **Experimental Recordings No. 10-14 (Audio Tracks ER #10-14)**

Once again, the first track attempted (ER #10) was a performance aligned as closely as possible to general contemporary practice. In experimenting with high larynx and clavicular breathing in subsequent recordings of this song (ER #11 and ER #12), I noted a significant amount of fatigue. Before listening to the recording of ER #12 I felt that breaths were being taken far more frequently than in Burgess' performance. On reflection, this was not so and the perception of frequent breathing may have been engendered by an unfamiliar manner of performance. Nevertheless, altering my breathing technique away from an abdominal

approach towards a costal and sometimes clavicular approach did have a significant effect on breath efficiency (**ER #13**). Sarah Potter notes that ‘ [...] breath efficiency was reduced when using the neutral larynx technique<sup>321</sup> and Randegger’s warning about the fatiguing nature of clavicular breathing was born out by experience.<sup>322</sup>

It would appear that Rockstro’s observation of Jenny Lind’s breathing technique as ‘an artfully studied combination of [...] “costal” and “clavicular” breathing’<sup>323</sup> is more practical than one based purely on clavicular breathing. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Rockstro considered clavicular breathing a legitimate technique, but supplementary. The appearance of clavicular breathing in the analysis of film sources may therefore be deceptive. This prompted experimentation which retained the historical features discussed thus far whilst reverting to abdominal breathing techniques and a consequent lower larynx position (**ER #14**). This was largely successful although an expected change of vocal timbre occurred with the lower larynx technique. However, it was observed that many of the bright vowels employed by Burgess, Florence et al appeared to bring the larynx slightly higher than in my usual practice.

The evidence presented above, and the experience of attempting to ‘embody’ this evidence in performance suggests that in the performance of BLO repertoire, close attention should be given to matters of breathing, diction, pronunciation, phonology, phrasing and rhythmic and melodic variation. The (re)learning process requires significant time and patience if a consistent and viable level of mastery is to be achieved.

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<sup>321</sup> Sarah Potter, ‘Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century’, p. 143.

<sup>322</sup> Randegger, *Singing*, p. 188.

<sup>323</sup> Rockstro, *Jenny Lind*, p. 15.

## Chapter Four

# *Tantivy Towers and Something in the City:* Background and Reception

### 4.1. *Tantivy Towers*: Performance History

It was conductor Claud Powell who brought together A. P. Herbert and Thomas F. Dunhill to collaborate on *Tantivy Towers*, early in 1928.<sup>1</sup> The *Radio Times* printed a short summary by Dunhill of the work as an introduction to a radio broadcast of a reduced version of the opera:

This light opera in three acts was produced by Sir Nigel Playfair at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, on January 16, 1931. It proved one of the most successful productions of his management, and the box-office receipts broke all records for that theatre. After a run of several months it was transferred to the New Theatre in the West End, where it flourished far into the summer months, and afterwards it went on tour to the principal towns in England and Scotland with great success.<sup>2</sup>

The success of the opera prompted much press speculation as to whether the partnership of Herbert and Dunhill would prove to be comparable to Gilbert and Sullivan. Dunhill himself alludes to this concept in a lecture in 1932, in which he finds ‘the English musical public[...]waiting at present for someone to provide the musical stage of the country with

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<sup>1</sup> David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music* (London: Thames Publishing, 1997), p. 74ff. Also see "'Tantivy Towers' at Guildford", *The Surrey Advertiser & County Times*, 14 January 1933, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, ‘Suggested Version of “Tantivy Towers” for Broadcasting’, *Miscellaneous Reports and Papers* (London: Royal College of Music library 9059a, 1940). This document is a handwritten, undated draft in Dunhill’s hand of the plan for the broadcast on the BBC Home Service, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1940. It includes details of cuts made to the music and introductory and linking narrations.

something that would show the characteristics of the time, that would live as Sullivan's work had lived.'<sup>3</sup> The success of *Tantivy Towers*, which had only recently been produced in London and was touring the provinces in 1932, would have been fresh in Dunhill's mind, whilst an advertisement for the touring production states that the opera was '[...]such a success in London that the author, A.P. Herbert and the composer, Thomas F. Dunhill, had their work compared with Gilbert and Sullivan'.<sup>4</sup> A review of the initial run in 1931 clearly views *Tantivy Towers* as bearing a family resemblance to Gilbert and Sullivan: 'There is only one thing for it – "Tantivy Towers", the new English light opera[...]must be included in the D'Oyly Carte repertory at once.'<sup>5</sup> The music generally receives praise: 'Mr Thomas Dunhill's music is melodious and (as one would expect of a Stanford pupil) neatly scored. There are more fine songs and ballads in "Tantivy Towers" than in any other English opera since the great Gilbert and Sullivan.'<sup>6</sup> But there are some dissenting voices:

[...] *Derby Day* [a comic opera by Alfred Reynolds produced at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith in 1932] seems to me quite as good entertainment as *Tantivy Towers*. Where *Derby Day* is definitely superior to its predecessor is in the music and the company[...]well, when *Tantivy Towers* was being produced, I said that some day we should be talking about Herbert - and - Somebody operas, and now it is plain that the somebody will certainly be Reynolds.<sup>7</sup>

Herbert himself is occasionally singled out for praise without mention being made of Dunhill: 'The praise bestowed on A.P. Herbert's *Tantivy Towers* was lavish, and portions of the libretto were reproduced in the papers in order to show that nothing like Mr. Herbert had been known since W.S. Gilbert',<sup>8</sup> whilst another commentator felt that 'Mr. Herbert[...]notoriously a humourist with a flair for ridicule' had 'too great a sense of fun to

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<sup>3</sup> 'Chance for a Modern Sullivan: A Rub for the Highbrows', *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 December 1932, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> 'New Musical Comedy for Birmingham: "Tantivy Towers" at the Prince's', *Birmingham Gazette*, 30 January 1932, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> "'Tantivy Towers" at the Lyric, Hammersmith', *Illustrated London News*, 7 February 1931, p. 232.

<sup>6</sup> 'New English Light Opera', *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 17 January 1931, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Farjeon, 'Herbert and Somebody Operas', *The Graphic*, 5 March 1932, p. 362.

<sup>8</sup> "'Tantivy Towers" Relay from Lilliput To-night', *The Nottingham Journal*, 20 November 1931, p. 6.

write ordinary sentimental operatic stuff'.<sup>9</sup> This leads this particular reviewer to label the work 'A burlesque set to music'<sup>10</sup> which may in itself bring Herbert closer to Gilbert in recalling a genre which boasted 'the literary quality, the wit, the neatness of versification, and the absence of coarseness which made Gilbert brother to the great burlesque writers who had preceded him'. Gänzl identifies a musical burlesque element which:

treat[s] the ridiculous little story of love *not* levelling all ranks with a breadth of phrase worthy of grand opera before demolishing such pretensions with something silly, tuneful and simple fitted to Herbert's most foolish lines.<sup>11</sup>

The subject matter of *Tantivy Towers* - a contemporary (1930s) plot which contrasts a Bohemian 'Chelsea' set with fox-hunting Yorkshire landed gentry and was generally regarded as having an anti-hunting message – is likely to have prompted this observation in its (for the time) rather controversial subject matter. Dunhill makes similar observations about the subject matter, but comes to a different conclusion and firmly places the work in context: 'The music of *Tantivy Towers* is continuous; there is no spoken dialogue. Although it is a real comic opera, and full of wit and satirical humour, the subject has its serious side, and some of the incidents are very dramatic.'

The continuity of music in the opera, to which Dunhill refers, was an innovation which, apart from Sullivan's much shorter one act 'Trial by Jury', had few precedents in comic opera genres. This element was noteworthy for many commentators, but met with a mixed response, generally depending on their musical point of view. Professor F.H. Shera<sup>12</sup> writes that '[...]the music is continuous[...]this is an enormous gain. The whole book is versified, so the unnatural

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<sup>9</sup> 'Tantivy Towers', *The Scotsman*, 17 January 1931, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> 'Tantivy Towers', *The Scotsman*.

<sup>11</sup> Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre: Volume II 1915-1984* (Basingstoke and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1986), p. 348.

<sup>12</sup> From 1928, Shera was the first full-time resident professor of music at the University of Sheffield. See Nigel Fortune, *Hadow, W(illiam) H(enry)*, *Grove Music Online*, 2001 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12140>> [accessed 28 September 2020].

effect of prose—recitative is avoided’.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere, Shera commends Dunhill’s ‘genuine flair for the comic opera Style’ whilst observing that Dunhill’s success in this field is ‘far greater than one would be inclined to expect from a[...]Professor of Composition at a great school of music’. By contrast, Vernon Woodhouse, considers that the wholly sung score ‘[...]puts rather too great a strain on the most attentive audience’.<sup>14</sup> That the strain of such a score was not only confined to the audience but also the cast as evidenced in the following notice: ‘Claud Powell announces that, in view of the considerable strain occasioned by singing the elaborate score of “Tantivy Towers” at the Lyric, Hammersmith, he has decided for the present to cancel the matinees (Wednesday and Saturday)’.<sup>15</sup> An amateur group had clearly underestimated the challenge that the music presented when it admitted in a letter postponing their production: ‘perhaps we were a little optimistic in thinking that such an up – to – date and difficult work could be produced in the short time at our disposal’.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to a professional touring company which retained Trefor Jones and Doris Woodall from the original cast,<sup>17</sup> amateur companies rapidly adopted *Tantivy Towers*, with the Walton Operatic Society claiming to be the first as reported in September 1932.<sup>18</sup> Claud Powell’s own amateur repertory company at Guildford was acclaimed by both Herbert: ‘It is magnificent and in many ways better than the original performance’ and Dunhill: ‘The orchestra is wonderful, and the show, from the musical point of view, splendid.’<sup>19</sup>

Some commentators identify ‘Englishness’ in the opera:

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<sup>13</sup> F.H. Shera, 'Musical Topics: Tantivy Towers II', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 June 1931, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Vernon Woodhouse, 'Haymarket Theatre', *The Bystander*, 28 January 1931, p. 151.

<sup>15</sup> “‘Tantivy Towers’”, *The Stage*, 27 June 1935, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> 'Letter from Redhill and District Amateur Light Opera Society', *The Surrey Mirror and County Post*, 10 October 1937, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Birmingham Gazette*, 30 January 1932, p. 9. New members of the cast included Kathleen Lafla, who had broadcast songs by Arnold Bax with the composer at the piano in the 1920s (Radio Times 1 April 1926 Issue 131); George Bishop and Leonard S. Daniels

<sup>18</sup> “‘Tantivy Towers’”, *The Surrey Advertiser & County Times*, 24 September 1932, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> “‘Tantivy Towers’[...]Ambitious Effort That deserves Success’, *The Surrey Advertiser & County Times*, 28 January 1933, p. 9.

The music has a native flavour all its own and difficult to define[...]in sentiment, in expression, in healthy gaiety, it cannot be otherwise described than as English - English in boisterousness, English in its sentimental strains. In its way, it is as light as Lehar or Oscar Strauss, but the lilt is different.<sup>20</sup>

Gänzl refers to Dunhill's 'habitual strong English melodies' which were 'staunchly in the light operatic vein' whilst admitting that 'Dunhill's swingingly English music had neither the pure melody nor the sparkle of Sullivan'.<sup>21</sup> Others adopt a rather chauvinistic tone, which perhaps belies insecurities in the contemporary musical culture and the threat posed by the 'American invasion', sometimes making controversial musical observations along the way:

As for Mr Dunhill, though it must be admitted that the interpolation of "John Peel" was the outstanding musical feature, we have the satisfaction of knowing that he resisted the temptation to paraphrase that old classic and steal its thunder, as nine out of ten American composers would have done. That, fortunately, is not our English way, and I do sincerely congratulate Mr Dunhill on maintaining, at some cost to himself, our British traditions.<sup>22</sup>

The reviewer above does not elucidate on the manner of the alleged paraphrasing by American composers, but the assessment of Dunhill's incorporation of the well-known hunting song *D'ye ken John Peel*<sup>23</sup> is confirmed by audience demands for Trefor Jones to encore it on the opening night.<sup>24</sup> The portrayal of the 'young Chelsea set' was generally considered less successful, largely attributed to Dunhill's avoidance of the jazz idioms then current. Dunhill's obituary writer in *The Times* felt that *Tantivy Towers* 'contains one error in Dunhill's refusal to write jazz for his scene in a Chelsea studio of the 1920s, an error both of style, social comment, and of period'.<sup>25</sup> David Dunhill recalled that Dennis Arundell, who created the role of Charles Viscount Harkaway in the first production and subsequently produced the revival at

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<sup>20</sup> J.T.Grein, 'Criticisms in Cameo', *The Sketch*, 28 January 1931, p. 165.

<sup>21</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 348.

<sup>22</sup> "'Tantivy Towers" at the Lyric, Hammersmith', *Illustrated London News*, p.232.

<sup>23</sup> The text by John Woodcock Graves and the tune based on a Border Rant 'Bonnie Annie'. See *The Songs and Ballads of Cumberland*, ed. by Sidney Gilpin (London: Geo. Routledge & Sons, 1866), p. 416.

<sup>24</sup> David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music*, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> 'Dr. T. F. Dunhill: Distinguished Composer', *The Times*, 14 March 1946.

the Lyric, Hammersmith in 1935, considered that ‘it [the Chelsea party] was far too tame when it first appeared’. David Dunhill continues: ‘[...]after all, Ellington and Fats Waller were in their heyday and some people suggested my father should at least have been aware of their existence!’<sup>26</sup> Dunhill’s diary entry for 27<sup>th</sup> January 1931 (eleven days after the opening night) suggests that other aspects of the score were felt to be wanting in excitement: ‘Am planning a new overture for “Tantivy,” as the one I’ve already done, [Playfair says,] wants more ‘fizz-bang’ (especially if it’s played while the lights are up.)’.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.2. *Something in the City* - work biography

Dunhill appears to have made a concerted effort to address some of the criticisms of the music of *Tantivy Towers* when writing *Something in the City*. The Chelsea party music in the earlier opera finds a parallel in the music played by a dance band near the end of act two of *Something in the City*. Dunhill’s diary entry states ‘I got the Dance Band piece done, & began scoring it. I don’t know if it is really *vulgar* enough! But I’m going to use saxophone & a muted trumpet to give the right atmosphere – horrible thought!’<sup>28</sup> Criticism such as that Playfair levelled at the overture of *Tantivy Towers* were tempered by a different set of priorities in other quarters:

[Went to] Shaftsbury Avenue . . . to the theatrical agents, G.W. Direction . . . Discussed the “City” & played some of it to them. How I hate this job – because these people never know anything about an opera – & asked me just to play the ‘feature tunes!!’ . . . They seemed only to want to hear sentimental things! – the lively things passed almost unnoticed!<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> David Dunhill, ‘David Dunhill Talks About the Work of his Father Thomas Dunhill and Recalls the First Performance of Tantivy Towers’, *Tantivy Towers*, 19 June 1975 [radio broadcast] (BBC Radio 3, 1975 [transcription from a private collection]).

<sup>27</sup> London: Royal College of Music Library, Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (27 January 1931), 8763.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (19 October 1939).

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (11 May 1940).

The first mention of *Something in the City* in Dunhill's diary is on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1937,<sup>30</sup> 'Mr. Whitmarsh came to see me. I saw a delightful thing of his in Punch - & so wrote to him. I thought he might do a good libretto for me.' There appears to be some ambiguity as to whether Dunhill initially approached Whitmarsh or vice versa. David Dunhill states that, 'He [Dunhill] had[...] received a libretto, which he much liked, for a comic opera written by two men, FJ Whitmarsh and BW Smith, who worked in the publicity department of Shell (Anglo-Saxon Petroleum).'<sup>31</sup> Smith, writing to Dunhill on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1937, indicates that discussions had taken place to the effect that Smith would now write the 'book' and Whitmarsh the lyrics.<sup>32</sup> It is clear from this letter that Dunhill is considered the senior and experienced 'man of the theatre' in this collaboration, whose advice Smith seeks stating that, 'You [Dunhill] are in a far better position to judge the merits of theatrical writing than I am.'<sup>33</sup> Whilst both Whitmarsh and Smith were employed in literary work as the editor and assistant editor/business manager respectively of the 'Shell Magazine', it would appear that neither had professional experience of the stage. That *Tantivy Towers* was a significant factor in the development of this project for Whitmarsh and Smith is clear from the correspondence, as is their willingness to learn from the writing of A.P. Herbert as evidenced by the request for a copy of the book of *Tantivy Towers* so that Whitmarsh 'may obtain an idea of A.P. Herbert's technique'.<sup>34</sup>

The topic of the three-act libretto perhaps owes something to Whitmarsh and Smith's own working experiences. Set in a typical office environment of the late 1930s the story revolves around two typists (Sally and Stella) who are both in love with the same man, slick salesman Kenneth. Sally's love for Kenneth is secret and only discovered in Act 3 after she has cunningly managed to persuade Stella to marry Henry Jones, a junior clerk who has been

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (30 June 1937)

<sup>31</sup> David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music*, p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> London: Royal College of Music Library, Letters to Thomas Dunhill. 9051. Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (16 July 1937).

<sup>33</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (16 July 1937).

<sup>34</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (16 July 1937).

in love with Stella for a long time.<sup>35</sup> The full list of characters as represented in the vocal score<sup>36</sup> are (in order of appearance):

BAYLIS, Commisionaire (Bass)  
MR. CHANDLER, Chief Cashier (Baritone)  
NOAKES, Office Boy (Baritone)  
STELLA SMITH, Typist (Soprano)  
SALLY SPICER, Typist (Mezzo-Soprano)  
HENRY JONES, A Junior Clerk (Tenor)  
KENNETH CAMBER, A Salesman (Baritone)  
MR. FROGNAL, Managing Director (Baritone)  
MRS. FROGNAL, his wife\* (Mezzo-Soprano)  
BOB ARMITAGE (alias 'The Great Cosmo') (Baritone)\*  
KITTY BARLOW (alias 'Madame Zelma') (Contralto)\*  
BETTY, Maidservant to the Frognals (Mezzo-Soprano)\*  
A WAITER. (Speaking Part)\*<sup>37</sup>  
Chorus of Clerks, Typists, etc.

The setting of Act I is the general office of Frognal & Finch Ltd. Act II is set at a garden party at the Hampstead home of Mr. Frognal and his wife, whilst Act III is set in the assembly rooms at a City Hotel.

The development of the libretto can be traced through the letters from Smith to Dunhill. It is notable that Smith responds to a request by Dunhill for 'at least two more serious, romantic songs to be included in Act I – I think one each for Stella and Henry – and I will bear in mind the need for this element in Act II.'<sup>38</sup> The requested Act I songs do not appear in the published vocal score. It is understandable why Dunhill would have made such a request as there is a

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<sup>35</sup> This brief synopsis is adapted from the programme notes of the performance of *Something in the City* on 27 January 2019. See Appendix 12.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Frederick Dunhill, *Something in the City: A Comic Opera in Three Acts* [Vocal Score] (London: J.B. Cramer & Company Ltd., 1940).

<sup>37</sup> Those characters marked with an asterisk were not included in the performance mentioned above.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (21 July 1937).

surprisingly only one solo number each for Stella (the only soprano character amongst the principals) and Henry, and these are next to each other in Act II. Smith refers to Henry as ‘the lead tenor’<sup>39</sup> although it is possible that Henry’s character was felt to be too unromantic for such a song at this stage in the plot: elsewhere Smith describes Henry as ‘serious’<sup>40</sup> and suggests that Henry’s character ‘[...]will become more romantic in Act II’.<sup>41</sup>

There is evidence of at least some influence of the Savoy tradition on Smith’s part in his request for Kitty to ‘have a solo as the jilted lover of Kenneth on Bertha Lewis lines’.<sup>42</sup> Kitty’s solo, No.19 “The Fortune Teller”<sup>43</sup> as it appears in the vocal score, despite a *ma solenne* marking in the score, retains little of the typical Bertha Lewis role in the Savoy operas. Act II appears to have been the subject of most revision. This is ongoing in August 1937, with Smith suggesting an ‘al fresco’ concert as part of the garden party scene which would provide ‘scope for burlesque of the typical concert ballad in the music.’<sup>44</sup> Dunhill’s reaction is not recorded although such music does not feature in the vocal score. It seems highly likely that Dunhill’s friend and regular musical collaborator Claud Powell would have been involved in a production of the new opera as he had been with *Tantivy Towers*: ‘Claud Powell came to lunch. [We discussed] the new opera. He approved of the idea of the libretto, & the dialogue, & lyrics . . . I played him some of the tunes I had made!’<sup>45</sup> That concerted efforts were made to promote the new opera to potential producers is evidenced by Dunhill’s visit to the theatrical agent G.W. Direction on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1940<sup>46</sup> (quoted above) and references to discussions earlier in the writing

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (21 July 1937).

<sup>40</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (31 August 1937).

<sup>41</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (21 July 1937).

<sup>42</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (31 August 1937). Bertha Lewis was the D’Oyly Carte’s principal contralto from 1914 until her death in 1931 (John Wolfson, *The Savoyards on Record* (Chichester: Headlions, 1985), p. 67). It is likely that Smith is referencing Lewis’s performances in roles such as Katisha (Mikado), which is a typical example of the controversial Gilbertian characterisation of the wronged older women in the Savoy Operas.

<sup>43</sup> Omitted from the performance on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (26 September 1937).

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (11 August 1937).

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (11 May 1940).

process: ‘We [Smith and Whitmarsh] were both greatly interested to learn that there may be some chance of Cochran producing the show’.<sup>47</sup> C.B. Cochran, one of the leading impresarios in London, had produced most of Noël Coward’s successes during the 1920s and would go on to produce the successful collaborations between A.P. Herbert and Vivian Ellis such as *Bless the Bride* (1947).<sup>48</sup> No evidence has come to light which suggests that any firm plans were made with Cochran, however. The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, was now no longer an option for staging the new opera. Sir Nigel Playfair had by 1932 ceased to manage the Lyric and had died in 1934<sup>49</sup> and the theatre had evidently changed out of all recognition since the Playfair and *Tantivy Towers* days as Dunhill writes in 1935: ‘Had a look at the old Lyric – now a cheap music-hall! Sad.’<sup>50</sup> A new relationship with a figure such as Cochran would therefore have been necessary – Cochran’s ‘magic touch’<sup>51</sup> would almost certainly have given the opera a chance of commercial success.

Whitmarsh wrote to Dunhill on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1940 to acknowledge receipt of the newly published vocal score of *Something in the City*. The tone of the letter is valedictory: ‘Whatever happens to the operetta – and its prospects of performance are of course very remote in the present circumstances – I shall always look back with intense pleasure to my personal place in it and to our very friendly association.’<sup>52</sup> The theatrical scene in London during these war years was in a state of flux. When Dunhill visited theatrical agents in May 1940 with a view to producing *Something in the City*, there was still perhaps some hope that such a scheme might be possible. The situation was to change significantly soon afterwards:

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<sup>47</sup> Letter from B.W. Smith to Dunhill (8 August 1937).

<sup>48</sup> James Harding, ‘Cochran, Sir Charles Blake (1872–1951), impresario.’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2005 < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32471> > [Accessed 30 September 2020].

<sup>49</sup> Robert Sharp, ‘Playfair, Sir Nigel Ross (1874–1934), actor and theatre manager.’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2011 < <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35540> > [Accessed 30 September 2020].

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946 (6 April 1935).

<sup>51</sup> Sharp, ‘Playfair, Sir Nigel Ross (1874–1934), actor and theatre manager’.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from F. J. Whitmarsh to Dunhill (3 June 1940).

Not surprisingly, the early years of the war saw little in the way of new musicals produced in London. After the first short closure of all West End theatres immediately following the declaration of war, London's entertainment world attempted to get itself back to normal but an increase in the level of German air raids in September, 1940 forced a virtually complete shutdown of the capital's theatrical activity.<sup>53</sup>

It is therefore understandable that Dunhill should write in October 1941: 'I amused myself playing through "Something in the City" - & wondering if it would ever see the light.'<sup>54</sup>

Gänzl writes of the resumption of theatrical activity:

What production there was when activity returned was not in the field of musical plays. The staple diet in the way of light musical entertainment was revue with its songs, girls and comedy sketches, a loose arrangement of easy, interchangeable parts, colourful, topical and lively, requiring little concentration or comprehension from its audience – a thing of the moment.<sup>55</sup>

In this transitional period for the London musical stage, *Something in the City*, whilst newly written, may therefore have appeared to promoters as rather old fashioned.

Elements of the score of *Something in the City* reflect the overt influence of the Savoy operas. These often appear to be prompted by a Gilbertian turn of phrase in the lyrics such as 'As you will see, The essence of propriete!'<sup>56</sup> which mirrors Gilbert's similar treatment: 'To marry two at once is Burglaree!'<sup>57</sup> This prompts Dunhill to adopt a Sullivan-esque approach to the chorus writing here, which is reflected particularly in the Act 1 finale of *The Pirates of Penzance*.<sup>58</sup> Similarly the chorus 'Come to the luncheon' in *Something in the City*<sup>59</sup> bears a strong resemblance in subject matter and musical treatment to 'Now to the banquet we press' from the finale to Act 1 of *The Sorcerer*.<sup>60</sup> No.2 'Punctuality', a song for Chandler with Noakes

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<sup>53</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 508.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (28 October 1941).

<sup>55</sup> Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre Vol II 1915-1984*, p. 508.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix 11, Finale: Act 1, bars 198-201.

<sup>57</sup> Ian Bradley, *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 103.

<sup>58</sup> Arthur Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance* (London: Chappell and Company [n.d.]), pp. 75-77.

<sup>59</sup> See Appendix 11, 'The Wedding Presentation', bars 323ff.

<sup>60</sup> Arthur Sullivan, *The Sorcerer* (London: Metzler & Company [n.d.]), pp. 53ff.

and Baylis is recognisably similar to ‘Young man despair’ from *The Mikado*<sup>61</sup> in the contrasting of solo writing for the leading protagonist with the other two subordinate characters singing a refrain which has a forthright character, combining sharp rhythmic outlines with simple, homophonic writing harmonised in parallel thirds. Elsewhere, especially in the writing for solo voices, there appear to be similarities of musical language and writing for the voice with that of Ivor Novello. The two romantic songs in Act 2, No.16 ‘Love and Friendship’ and No.17 ‘Catch about Love’<sup>62</sup> share a similar rhythmic and melodic profile to ‘Shine through my dreams’ from *Glamorous Night*<sup>63</sup> and ‘Waltz of my Heart’ from *The Dancing Years*<sup>64</sup> respectively. The reassurance from Smith in his correspondence with Dunhill that the character of Henry becomes more romantic in Act 2 and Dunhill’s own reference to the theatrical agents who only ‘wanted to hear sentimental things’<sup>65</sup> suggests that for a light opera written in the late 1930s, this was considered an essential element for success.

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<sup>61</sup> Arthur Sullivan, *The Mikado* (London: Chappell and Company [n.d.]), p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> Appendix 11, ‘Love and Friendship’ pp.76-78 and ‘Catch About Love’, pp.80 – 82.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Ivor Novello Song Album’ (London: Chappell; International Music Publications [n.d]) pp.42ff.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Ivor Novello Song Album’, p. 24ff.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Dunhill: Diaries, 1893-1946. (11 May 1940).

## Chapter Five

### Preparing and performing *Something in the City*

It is self-evident that reviving a work without a performance history confers challenges and potential advantages in equal measure from the perspective of conscious attempts to invoke historical performing practices.

Whilst in some respects it might have been a more straightforward task to perform an established work in the genre, I felt that the weight of established performing traditions might hinder the open-minded adoption of unfamiliar performing practices. An example of this is *The Yeomen of the Guard* which ‘[...] has suffered terribly from what are called ‘traditions’ – from a slavish adherence to methods of interpretation which have grown up imperceptibly around it and have gradually come to be regarded as authoritative.’<sup>1</sup> The ‘clean slate’ afforded by an unknown and unperformed work therefore appeared to offer greater opportunities for experimentation and creativity, without an inherent weight of expectation.

The issue of what the purposes of the performance would be was one of the first to be considered and conceptualised. Having made the production decision to revive the work with conscious attempts to incorporate historical performing practices, it became necessary to consider how the knowledge accrued would be satisfactorily disseminated to and understood by a cast.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1929), p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 13a and Appendix 13b.

Correspondence and other available documentation relating to the genesis and composition of *Something in the City* between the librettists and composer do not address issues of performance or casting.<sup>3</sup> The performance history of *Tantivy Towers*, as discussed in Chapter 4, therefore provides the most direct evidence available regarding possible casting choices for this work, in addition to tracing a potential lineage through some of the performers to the pedagogical teachings and performance traditions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The choice of cast members reflects the common practice of this period whilst balancing artistic ideals with practical necessities. The performing practices of BLO were, in large part, defined by the variety of performers engaged in the activity, unlike perhaps grand opera where, despite the challenges facing touring companies and the general operatic scene of the early twentieth century,<sup>4</sup> the musical demands of the repertoire would most likely necessitate a cast of greater coherence of performance prowess and style.

Mackinlay, when reminiscing of his engagement in a new Light opera production in London in the early 1900s, explains that the cast included performers from a variety of backgrounds:

The English comedian was a provincial actor who had been playing “Willie Edouin” and other eccentric parts on tour for years [...] Another come fresh from the concert platform without any stage experience[...] Then there was a grande opera basso, immensely tall, immensely stately, with a magnificent voice[...] The soprano had come from a fine schooling of Gilbert and Sullivan operas at the Savoy Theatre[...] Then there was an artist brilliant in high comedy, polished, pointed, and “chic”; while a contrast was provided by another who had a fund of genial low comedy, and a long record behind her as “principal boy” in countless pantomimes. An eighteen year old American girl had been engaged on her strength of her success in Pelissier’s “Follies,” and brought with her a fund of fun, energy and alacrity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the correspondence between Smith, Whitmarsh and Dunhill. See Letters to Thomas Dunhill (London: Royal College of Music Library. 9051. 58 and 69).

<sup>4</sup> Alexandra Wilson, *Opera in the Jazz Age: Cultural Politics in 1920s Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *Light Opera* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 36, and pp. 40-41.

In the production of *Something in the City*, experienced professional and semi-professional singers from grand opera, light opera, operetta and the concert platform were engaged in principal roles whilst the chorus consisted of experienced singers from amateur choirs and operatic societies.<sup>6</sup> Whilst this is not an exact replication of the casting of *Tantivy Towers*, the diversity of vocal experience and formal vocal training represents the diversity of cast at Dunhill's disposal. The involvement of amateur performers in professional contexts was a notable feature of operatic life for some professional opera companies: 'The B[ritish] N[ational] O[pera] C[ompany][...] supplemented a small chorus with local singers when on tour because the costs of employing a large professional chorus were prohibitive'.<sup>7</sup>

The materials exist to stage the complete opera in terms of the music (vocal score) and libretto. Given the resources of an opera company capable of staging Gilbert and Sullivan operas, this would be a relatively straightforward task in line with the normal production techniques of directing, casting, staging, lighting and costumes. In order to optimise the resources available, however, I decided to present scenes, linked where appropriate by narration to maintain the continuity of the plot and sufficiently demonstrate historical performance techniques whilst rationalising the number of cast members and resources required.

Dunhill's own opinions on the legitimacy of the omission of musical numbers in light opera appear contradictory: regarding Sullivan's operas he approves of the strictures imposed by the copyright holders<sup>8</sup> on performances, which include the forbidding of cuts being made.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The crucial role that the amateur operatic society movement has had in the development and propagation of light opera in Britain is extensively covered in John Lowerson, *Amateur Operatics: A Social and Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *Opera in the Jazz Age*, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Until 1961, when copyright expired, strict conditions were applied to the performances of Gilbert & Sullivan Operas. Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas*, p231.

<sup>9</sup> Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas*, p231.

When faced with the realities of staging his own *Tantivy Towers*, he appears to reluctantly agree to modifications being made, the most significant being the omission of a significant chorus number by the producer just before the first performance<sup>10</sup> and the production of a shortened version of *Tantivy Towers* for a radio broadcast.<sup>11</sup> Sullivan, in a letter to the musical director of *Haddon Hall*, François Cellier suggested that Cellier should ‘ [...]cut the scene with Manners altogether – ballad, duet and dialogue. This will be in exact accordance with what I have always desired.’<sup>12</sup> Dunhill may therefore be making the distinction between a light opera’s initial production - a fluid process of moulding the material into the most effective dramatic form, and an established light opera which has already undergone this process and takes the form of a settled, canonic work. It would therefore seem possible that *Something in the City*, whilst published commercially as a vocal score might have undergone significant structural changes, including the deletion or addition of numbers and scenes during a first production process.

My decision as to which aspects of the opera to perform was thus predicated upon the following criteria:

- a) Material that would allow for the plot to be adequately conveyed, albeit in abridged form;
- b) Material that would convey performing practices identified in chapter 3 as characteristic of this style;
- c) Sufficient variety of musical styles such as lyric, romantic and humorous solos, ensembles and chorus numbers as well as some evidence of patter to reflect the breadth of characterisation within the opera.

On closer examination of the opera I realised that to abridge Act 1 would be to weaken the introduction of principal characters and thematic material which run throughout the opera. I

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<sup>10</sup> David Dunhill, *Thomas Dunhill: Maker of Music* (London: Thames Publishing, 1997), p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> François Cellier and Cunningham Bridgeman, *Gilbert and Sullivan and their Operas: with Recollections and Anecdotes of D'Oyly Carte & other famous Savoyards* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1914), p. 150.

therefore decided to perform Act 1 in its entirety. Act 2 could be comprehensively abridged as it did not include music that was significantly contrasting in musical content or style from that in Act 1. This act did introduce additional cameo roles, but these were not essential to the progress of the plot and were acknowledged within the linking narration. The only music to be included from Act 2 in the performance were the soprano and tenor solo songs, as they are the only examples of such in the opera.

Act 3 contains two substantial ensemble numbers, Number 23 *The Wedding Presentation* and 25 the Finale. These numbers demonstrate clear parallels with Sullivan's compositional technique and as such their inclusion afforded the opportunity of experimenting with performance techniques associated with Sullivan's Comic Operas. The alternation of chorus, ensemble and solo writing which propels the story in No. 23 'The Wedding Presentation'<sup>13</sup> is clearly influenced by Sullivan in, for example, the Act 1 finale of *Mikado*.<sup>14</sup> Both examples commence with the chorus singing in unison before the parts split into groups or solos respectively. The unison writing in both examples greatly enhances the audibility of the text in performance and reinforces the impact of the melodic outline of the vocal writing. Dunhill alludes to the tradition of good diction at the Savoy:

In one of his [Gilbert's] later librettos (not set by Sullivan) he makes the stage crowd assert that

“No single word  
Is ever heard  
When singers sing in chorus!”

Even at the Savoy, where good diction was the rule rather than the exception this may have been a half-truth.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 11.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 14.

<sup>15</sup> Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas*, p. 165.

Number 24, the duet between Kenneth and Sally *Let life begin anew* was an essential inclusion for the plot development as it thematically recalls Kenneth’s attempts to seduce Stella in No. 5 the duet *Enticement*.

*Table 1: Overview of Musical Numbers included in the performance of Something in the City (Appendix 11).*

Number	Character/s	Genre
1 I’m the Commissionaire	Baylis	Character introduction song
2 Punctuality	Chandler with Noakes & Baylis	Quasi Recitative; fast text driven introductory song
3 Monday Morning Blues	Chorus & Ensemble	Broad tempo chorale like chorus; patter solo and small ensemble; rapid patter whole cast
4 The Song of the Weekend Sahib	Kenneth	Character introduction song – flexible use of rubato
5 Enticement	Duet, Kenneth & Stella	Love duet; moderate tempo; flexible use of rubato and portamento
6 Watching the Clock	Noakes	Quasi Musical Hall; comedy number
7 Bluff	Sally	In the manner of <i>When maiden loves</i> , Yeoman of the Guard; moderate tempo
8 Jolly Good Joke	Stella, Sally, Henry & Noakes	Madrigal; patter; comedy
9 Finale, Act I	Principals & Chorus	Many Act 1 finale features as seen in G & S operas. Rapid alternation of styles and solo/ensemble/chorus involvement.
16 Love and Friendship	Henry	Lyrical romantic song; rubato; portamento
17 There’s always a catch about love	Stella	Lyrical song; rubato; portamento; alternating moods
23 The Wedding Presentation	Ensemble, Principals & Chorus	Quasi Grand Opera chorus interspersed with solo plot-driven phrases
24 Let Life begin anew	Duet, Kenneth & Sally	Reprise of No. 5 with alterations
25 Finale Act III	Chorus	Reprise of music from Finale Act I (Rejoice, Rejoice) and thematic material from Henry’s song No. 16

As the music of Act 1 was to be performed in its entirety, the libretto for this Act needed no emendation. A policy of minimal editorial intervention was adopted towards the libretto and lyrics apart from where historical references may have caused offence. In order to maintain the narrative flow, I composed a narration which summarised the missing plot developments and introduced new characters from the early part of Act 2.<sup>16</sup> Following this the libretto resumed just before Henry's song number 16 'Love and Friendship'<sup>17</sup> and the act ended with another narration.<sup>18</sup> A scene change before the beginning of Act 3 was covered by Number 20 'Music played by Dance Band behind the scenes'<sup>19</sup> and a final narration set the scene for Act 3. Following No 23 'The Wedding Presentation'<sup>20</sup> the libretto resumes complete until the end of the opera, with the exception of a single line from Mrs Frogmal which was omitted as was the character.<sup>21</sup>

Finding the narrator's 'voice' was crucial. My initial thought was to include a narrator to tell the story from the beginning of Act 2 and interweave the songs within the narration. On reflection I felt that the storyline would lose something by introducing a separate figure. It was apparent when studying the opera that the character Frogmal was key to the storyline, and whilst his character is introduced in Act 1 and features within a substantial amount of the Act 1 Finale, he had very little dialogue in Act 1. His main dialogue is in Act 2 but as this had been cut I decided to assign the narration to Frogmal, speaking from his own point of view.

The primary research focus for this production had always been to encapsulate appropriate historical vocal styles and techniques. Whilst an orchestration for the opera does

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<sup>16</sup> See appendix 15.

<sup>17</sup> See appendix 11.

<sup>18</sup> See appendix 15.

<sup>19</sup> See appendix 11.

<sup>20</sup> See appendix 11.

<sup>21</sup> See appendix 11.

exist<sup>22</sup> I felt that to expend resources on an orchestra was superfluous to the research aims. Dunhill's piano reduction as found in the published vocal score<sup>23</sup> was used in both rehearsal and performance. The répétiteur for this production was Jonathan Gooing who has extensive experience of historically informed piano performance, including performances of Dunhill's chamber music with piano. The piano accompaniment in the performance can therefore be heard to incorporate techniques associated with a HIP approach to Romantic piano performance such as the arpeggiation of chords and melodic dislocation through the combination of, for example, strict tempo accompaniment with rhythmically freer melodic material.<sup>24</sup> It was decided in production discussions that such features would underpin the HIP vocal techniques and styles attempted; instances of the interaction between piano accompaniment and vocal writing will be discussed later in this chapter.

The discussion of performing practices in Light opera in chapter 3 clarified the key features that I needed to consider within the performance of *Something in the City* in order to ensure a historically informed performance. These were: rolled and flipped 'r'; Received Pronunciation/phonology; anticipation on words beginning with consonants; rubato; portamento; breathing and phrasing and larynx height.

Observations of the breathing techniques exemplified by film performances of Ann Burgess, Vera Florence and others discussed in chapter 3 led to a hypothesis that clavicular breathing was at least in part employed by these singers. The physiological effects of adopting this technique within my own initial experimental practice were, generally negative. Common effects included: tension in the body (particularly the neck and shoulders); dizziness; a feeling

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Something in The City, A Comic Opera. Full Score (In 3 Volumes)' (London: Royal College of Music Library, Thomas Dunhill Collection. 11687). Orchestral parts do not, however, appear to exist.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Frederick Dunhill, *Something in the City: A Comic Opera in Three Acts* [Vocal Score] (London: J.B. Cramer & Company Ltd., 1940).

<sup>24</sup> Neal Peres da Costa explores these issues in detail. See Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

of tightness in the throat and more frequent breaths required. White (1985) appears to concur in his own experimentations but also quotes accounts by Rockstro (1894) of Jenny Lind's opinion of clavicular breathing as "indispensable".<sup>25</sup>

These observations raised questions as to the feasibility of attempting to incorporate historical breathing techniques into the performance. Informed by my own practical experimentation and the resulting physiological effects, I decided not to actively pursue the modification of cast members' existing breathing techniques during the rehearsal process. Breathing technique has been shown to have a concomitant effect on larynx height and tone quality, and these factors were considered in making this decision. Despite the potential for weakening the historically-informed credentials of the performance, this decision was felt to be necessary both for the wellbeing of the cast and for the broader benefit of the performance. Multiple pedagogies consulted in this thesis consider breathing to be fundamental to the singer's technique and the potential for the destabilisation of the cast in both technique and confidence was felt to be too great a risk.

The distinctive manners of phrasing observed in historical recordings, often articulated by breaths which can seem to modern ears either overly-frequent or misplaced, provided the opportunity for a compromise which maintained the manner of phrasing whilst not requiring the cast to adopt historical breathing techniques *per se*. The cast were therefore encouraged to adopt historical breathing *patterns* in rehearsal tailoring their existing breathing technique to manage this.

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<sup>25</sup> Brian David White, 'Singing Techniques and Vocal Pedagogy' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Surrey, 1985), p. 38.

## 5.1. Theory into Practice

Table 2 below constitutes a detailed account of instances where performing practices, as discussed in this thesis, may be applied in the performance of *Something in the City*. This information formed the basis for the process of planning the form and content of rehearsals in terms of the inclusion of historically-informed performing practices. It also provided me with a point of reference during the rehearsal process itself.

Bar numbers and rehearsal letters refer to those in the vocal score (Appendix 11)

Key: *Rr* – initial strongly rolled ‘r’

*rr* - rolled ‘r’ at the end of a word (or exceptionally for emphasis in other circumstances)

*r* - single flipped ‘r’ in the middle of a word (or exceptionally at faster tempi in other circumstances).

Table 2: The Application of Performing Practices in *Something in the City*.

Number	Character/s
1 I’m the Commissionaire	Baylis
<b>Performing practices</b>	
<b><u>Phonology and the Use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>	
<p><i>rr</i> at the end of a word from B bars 41-43. Placement of <i>rr</i> according to the rests. <i>Rr</i> bar 46 ‘stripling’ appears to be in the middle of the word but is really part of the initial group of consonants, therefore rolled not flipped. Also bar 52 ‘prose’, bar 66 ‘proudly’            Bar 47 ‘warrior’ <i>rr</i> twice. Bar 48 ‘yore’ <i>r</i>, also bars 51, 52 ‘verse’.            Strong <i>Rr</i> bar 55 ‘Rud-dy-ard’, also bar 65.</p>	
<b><u>Anticipation</u></b>	
Bar 127: ‘I love commissionairing!’	
<b><u>Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato</u></b>	
<p>Bar 41 slightly delayed and shortened quavers but generally from B to C little rubato emphasising the military aspect of the character.            Letter C <i>Poco meno mosso</i> more reflective and potentially freer rhythmically. However, the notated rhythm is carefully calibrated to follow natural speech rhythms. Shortening slightly ‘of’ bar 65 and ‘Up-’ bar 66. Rhythmical typographic error bar 74 ‘cower’.</p>	
<b><u>Portamento</u></b>	
The military character of the song suggests that portamento should be minimal. Reminiscent of Henry Lytton’s performance of ‘When I was a Lad’ from <i>HMS Pinafore</i> .	
<b><u>Breathing and phrasing</u></b>	
B to C short phrases but lift or breath at ‘yore’ bar 48 and ‘knows’ bar 50. Similarly ‘chest’ bar 68 and ‘ago’ bar 70 for example.	

2 Punctuality	Chandler with Noakes & Baylis
<p><b><u>Phonology and the use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>  Many examples of ‘r’ e.g. bar 3, 4. Noakes’ character is anticipated as cockney therefore less emphasis on rolled ‘r’s.  <i>rr</i> bar 16 ‘ear’. Bar 17 ‘ear’ <i>r</i> as short note. Bars 19 – 22 at performer’s discretion due to density of ‘r’s.</p> <p><b><u>Anticipation</u></b>  Bar 14 -15 (A) ‘Then lend’.</p> <p><b><u>Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato</u></b>  <i>Quasi Recitativo</i> in bar 2 implies some rhythmic freedom although the characterisation suggests that maintaining an air of formality, both in expression and rhythm would be appropriate. Nevertheless, some rhythmic alteration may be effective in sharpening the text. Bar 15 ‘lend’ could be elongated and consequently shorten the subsequent syllables (‘<b>an at-</b>tentive ear’). Bar 17: over dot the rhythm (‘Fix your eyes’). Bar 21 ‘priv-i-lege’ shortened note values. <i>Allegro Vivace</i> – few alterations needed although occasional dottings could point the text. For example, bar 35-36 and bar 38 ‘head cash-ier’.</p> <p><b><u>Portamento</u></b>  Descending intervals such as bar 15 ‘at-<u>ten-tive</u>’. Otherwise, small localised ‘glides’ possible in <i>Allegro Vivace</i>.</p> <p><b><u>Breathing and phrasing</u></b>  Generally short phrases with regular breaths.</p>	
3 Monday Morning Blues	Chorus & Ensemble
<p><b><u>Phonology and the use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>  Particular attention to be paid to the chorus’s final ‘r’s which will require careful rhythmic placement (e.g. bar 25 ‘ten till <u>four</u>’ and bar 38 ‘<u>bore</u>’, with the ‘r’ on the 4<sup>th</sup> beat). The text is challenging for the chorus to enunciate at times (e.g. bar 33ff ‘life is <u>dreary</u>’). Bar 38 rolled ‘r’ on ‘<u>crashing</u>’. <i>Allegro Moderato</i>: the tempo suggests brief flipped ‘r’s where possible, although the alliteration of the patter suggests emphasis in bar 52 ‘<u>tra</u>-vel by <u>tram</u>’ and bar 64 ‘<u>R</u>om-ford and <u>R</u>ei-gate’. Bar 88-89 will link ‘<u>exterior</u>’ with ‘<u>regions</u>’ by a single rolled ‘r’.</p> <p><b><u>Anticipation</u></b>  Bar 33-36 ‘<u>L</u>ife is dreary, <u>far</u> from cheery’; Bar 38: ‘<u>cr</u>ashing’ anticipated to elongate the rolled ‘r’. Similarly, bar 120 to end.</p> <p><b><u>Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato</u></b>  Broad structural rubato in the expansive chorus sections. Some opportunity for rhythmic alteration in the solo parts of the <i>Allegro Moderato</i>.</p> <p><b><u>Portamento</u></b>  Descending intervals (soprano 1 chorus) beginning at bar 33 ‘Life is dreary’. Similarly, bar 120.</p> <p><b><u>Breathing and phrasing</u></b>  <i>Andante Doloroso</i> generally 2 bar phrases, except bar 29-30 ‘Keeping ledgers, // typing letters. <i>Allegro Moderato</i>: notated breath bar 46 replicated in bar 49 and elsewhere where possible. <i>Allargando</i>: ‘crashing’ bar 127 shortened for breath before the final <i>fff</i> ‘bore’ (bar 128).</p>	

<b>4 The Song of the Weekend Sahib</b>	<b>Kenneth</b>
<p><b><u>Phonology and the use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>  The character of Kenneth suggests an affected RP pronunciation. ‘A’ vowels generally closer to ‘E’. ‘R’s flipped where possible.</p> <p><b><u>Anticipation</u></b>  Few required.</p> <p><b><u>Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato</u></b>  6/8 rhythm allows for frequent dotting of straight notated rhythms, particularly with a view to shortening notes on unstressed words, such as ‘and’ and ‘who’ in bars 42-43 (‘I and my friends, who between you and me’). Both verses are notated to contrasting rhythmic schemes which somewhat negates the necessity for rhythmic alteration for variety between verses. Notated <i>ad lib</i> in bars 28 and 77 to be observed with a relaxation of tempo; otherwise little structural rubato.</p> <p><b><u>Portamento</u></b>  Some descending intervals for expressive purposes, such as bar 17: ‘languid’; bar 72: (2<sup>nd</sup> verse descending octave on ‘easy’). Possible upward portamento bar 48 (or 2<sup>nd</sup> verse bar 97), ignoring the quaver rest.</p> <p><b><u>Breathing and phrasing</u></b>  Generally, breaths taken every 2 bars. Bar 47 (and 2<sup>nd</sup> verse bar 96) – a possible breath after the comma, to prepare for portamento, if desired, bars 48/97 as above.</p>	
<b>5 Enticement</b>	<b>Duet, Kenneth &amp; Stella</b>
<p><b><u>Phonology and the use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>  Flipped ‘r’s on ‘attractive’ (bar 4) and other similar places would be appropriate, but the intimate nature of this song suggests that consonants should be clear but not unduly emphasised.</p> <p><b><u>Anticipation</u></b>  The seductive tone of this romantic duet and the proliferation of examples of voiced consonants on the first beat of bars suggest that anticipation could be liberally used, for example in bars 3-5: ‘You’re a <u>most</u> attractive person, but to <u>me</u> it’s pretty clear’ would be appropriate.</p> <p><b><u>Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato</u></b>  Structural rubato is marked in the penultimate bar of each verse (<i>poco rit.</i> bars 18,36 &amp; 54) but otherwise rhythmic alteration would be appropriate throughout for textual emphasis (bar 22 ‘ri-ver’), including transposed rhythms (bar 24-25 ‘cap-tiv-<u>a – ting</u> creature’ and bar 44 ‘pu-pil’ for example).</p> <p><b><u>Portamento</u></b>  A gentle gliding to maintain <i>legato</i> would be appropriate throughout, but particularly expressive portamenti could be employed, such as bars 9-10 (‘fear_I’ll show’) and bars 35-37 (‘But I’ll fall for an-y-<u>thing you</u> want <u>me too</u>’).</p> <p><b><u>Breathing and phrasing</u></b>  Breaths can be taken as part of rhythmic alteration (see bar 22 above) to enable the occasional elision of the ends and beginnings of lines to vary the scansion of the verses. Examples of extra breaths to support rubati and the ends of phrases may include bars 13-15 ‘I know I shouldn’t want to, // but I do. _ ) in verse 1 and the same music in verses 2 and 3.</p>	

<b>6 Watching the Clock</b>	<b>Noakes</b>
<p><b><u>Phonology and the use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>  A cockney accent is suggested by the text for the character ‘Noakes’. The form this will take in rehearsals has been influenced by Louis Bradfield in his recording of ‘I want to be a Military Man’. Therefore, consonants are still articulated carefully but there are fewer rolled ‘r’s and vowels are modified accordingly.</p> <p><b><u>Anticipation</u></b>  Generally, anticipation is not suggested in this song, although the <i>più tranquillo</i> section (bar 49) could be characterised by anticipating ‘<u>p</u>leasures’</p> <p><b><u>Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato</u></b>  Many opportunities for dotting and rhythmic alteration according to the text are possible, for example bar 13 ‘Hurry up boy’ and similar.</p> <p><b><u>Portamento</u></b>  Bars 31ff, marked <i>dreamily</i>, suggest a brief upward portamento, facilitating the elision of the ‘l’s in ‘<u>til lunchtime</u>’ on the ascending octave.</p> <p><b><u>Breathing and phrasing</u></b>  Generally short phrases with many rests for breathing. To maintain legato in bars 21-24 through a harmonically rich progression, no breath after ‘clear’ (bar 22).</p>	
<b>7 Bluff</b>	<b>Sally</b>
<p><b><u>Phonology and the use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>  The ‘r’s are generally lightly flipped (‘<u>per</u>mit’ bars 11-12). A rolled ‘rr’ would be effective on ‘<u>r</u>ule’ (bar 13).</p> <p><b><u>Anticipation</u></b>  <i>Poco meno mosso</i>: most strong beats begin with voiced consonants which are illustrative and would benefit from anticipation (for example bars 21-‘Don’t be <u>n</u>ervous! Don’t be <u>sh</u>y! Look the <u>l</u>ady in the eye[...])’</p> <p><b><u>Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato</u></b>  Over dotting of ‘loves a maid’ (bar 5) and similar places would help to point the text. Dunhill’s rhythmic variety in this song anticipates the manner in which a performer might apply rhythmic alteration to simple notated rhythms (for example bars 6-8 ‘To stammer or blush is absurd’). The rubato instruction in the <i>Poco meno mosso</i> could be treated very freely.</p> <p><b><u>Portamento</u></b>  Descending intervals bars 22 (‘shy’) and 32 (‘loves’). The <i>tenuti</i> markings and <i>poco rit.</i> In bar 38 could be emphasised by gliding between note pitches (cf. Trefor Jones ‘Make all my dreams reality’)</p> <p><b><u>Breathing and phrasing</u></b>  Some breaths are marked in the score, but additional breaths in bars 24-25 (‘Tell her plainly//she must answer Yes or No’) and bar 38 (‘win her//’) would elongate the phrases giving emphasis to the conversational nature of the text.</p>	
<b>8 Jolly Good Joke</b>	<b>Stella, Sally, Henry &amp; Noakes</b>
<p><b><u>Phonology and the use of rolled &amp; flipped ‘r’</u></b>  Rolled ‘rr’ on ‘<u>P</u>rincipal’ (bar 6); ‘<u>r</u>ather’ (bar 9) and similar places to aid the clarity of the rapid patter.</p> <p><b><u>Anticipation</u></b>  The diction will be helped by some anticipation in the patter section in bars 5-6 ‘One’s <u>p</u>rincipal[...]’ and bars 8-9 ‘As ‘<u>r</u>ather[...]’ for example as above.</p>	

### **Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato**

There is some scope for slight rhythmic alteration (bar 39 ‘**an** – **ec**-do-tal’) to clarify the text. A dotted rhythm in bar 19 ‘good enough for Punch!’ and bar 52 ‘don’t know what you mean!’ would vary the rhythmic shape as these phrases are repeats. Bar 71-72 could be rehearsed with the ensemble as a scotch-snap rhythm on ‘silly’ to give emphasis in the phrase ‘Silly old trout!’

### **Portamento**

Few needed, although in bars 49-50 the descending phrase ‘And say demurely’ could be emphasised by portamenti.

### **Breathing and phrasing**

Extra breaths added in bars 28 and 61 ‘[...]chuckle// and choke; // And the senior[...]’ which gives a cleaner attack to the next phrase taken in one breath. Optional breaths in bars 16 and 49 before ‘And say’; also bar 25 and 58 after ‘chaff’.

## **9 Finale, Act I**

## **Principals & Chorus**

### **Phonology and the use of rolled & flipped ‘r’**

Noakes’ cockney accent means that the alliteration in bars 9 and 10 of ‘Rally round!’ does not unduly suggest rolled ‘r’s. The chorus will be encouraged to roll ‘r’s on ‘Pray expound’ in bars 20-21. Clear enunciation of ‘Wh’ in ‘What the devil’ bar 27. Many flipped ‘r’s for the chorus, for example, ‘**ad**dress’ (bar 59); at the end of ‘**dear**’ and ‘**clear**’ bars 62-63. Rolled ‘rr’ bar 60 ‘Will he **r**eward us?’ and at ‘**Re**joice’ bar 158-160. Bars 167-168 the ‘r’s of ‘our ranks’ will be elided with the rolled ‘rr’. Bar 200ff ‘**pr**o-**pri**-et-ee’ has a flip on the first ‘r’ but a roll on the second.

### **Anticipation**

Slight anticipation in bar 20 ‘**Pr**ay expound’ for the chorus and release the vowel on the beat. Similarly, ‘Wh’ as above bar 27. Voiced consonants anticipated in bar 134ff ‘A **m**ale or a **f**eminine friend’. Bar 158-160 ‘**Re**joice’ anticipated.

### **Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato**

Bar 29ff ‘Something is going to happen’ could have a dotted rhythm on ‘Something’ and a scotch-snap on ‘happen’. Occasional dotting in Frogna’s solo bar 83ff ‘The Firm is enjoying’ may be effective but the rather formal character and notated rhythmic variations suggest that few interventions would be required.

### **Portamento**

Descending interval bar 46 ‘Ladies and gentlemen’ and similarly bar 76 could have a measured portamento to emphasise an element of pomposity in the character.

### **Breathing and phrasing**

Bar 37 breath after ‘face’; bar 43 after ‘see’, bar 63 after ‘clear’ to prepare for the crescendo and held note on ‘suspense’ (bar 64-65). In general, rests indicate breath marks in this number. The notated breath at bar 213 may be supplemented by a *mezzo respiro* after ‘be’ (bar 215).

## **16 Love and Friendship**

## **Henry**

### **Phonology and the use of rolled & flipped ‘r’**

Bright ‘A’ and ‘O’ and closed ‘I’ vowels in the manner of Trefor Jones and John McCormack. A light shadow vowel might be useful to maintain legato and the *espressivo* marking at the peak of the phrase in bar 3-4 ‘I am, I know, No-thing/**e**/to you’. Similarly bar 10-11 ‘With-out/**e**/de-lay’.

### **Anticipation**

‘**N**othing’ (bar 4); ‘**l**ove’ (bar 14); ‘**l**ive’ (bar 17). The sense of yearning in this song could also be expressed by bringing in certain phrases in earlier, for example ‘One thing to say.

**S**ay it I must[...]’ (bar 8-9).

### **Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato**

Frequent opportunities for rhythmic alteration according to the sentiments of the song and to clarify and intensify the language. Examples include elongating the middle note of triplet rhythms such as ‘No-**thing** to’ (bar 4) and ‘What **can** I’ (bar 6). As the *Poco meno mosso* is set syllabically, speech rhythm could influence the treatment of notated straight rhythms. For example, a scotch-snap rhythm on ‘[...]all suf-**fic-ient** prize’ in bar 40 and other similar places. Similarly, ‘stead-i-**ly en-dure**’ the second time this phrase occurs in bar 35.

### **Portamento**

The many falling intervals suggest frequent portamenti, but would be particularly useful for melodic variety, for example the second time the phrase ‘What-e’er may **be-fall**’ (bar 32-33) occurs.

### **Breathing and phrasing**

A breath after ‘so’ (bar 5-6) would give the opportunity to shape ‘What can I do’ (bar 6) with the rhythmic alteration suggested above. Breath at the comma in bar 13 will help the phrase to go through in bar 14: ‘Whate’er may befall, // my love for you Will steadily endure[...]’

### **17 There’s always a catch about love**

Stella

### **Phonology and the use of rolled & flipped ‘r’**

The ‘A’ vowels will be kept bright – almost ‘**cetch**’ instead of ‘**catch**’ (bar 6) and similar. Many words contain an ‘r’ within them which could be lightly flipped, for example ‘**mirage**’ (bar 11); ‘**cherish**’ (bar 15); ‘**Perish**’ (bar 17). Also the final ‘r’ on ‘**dispair**’ needs to be flipped (bar 22). Although an inconsistent application of the ‘Liquid U’ as identified by LaBouff<sup>26</sup> has been identified in recorded sources, this appears to be a characteristic phonetic characteristic of the text in this song and would therefore benefit from its application here, with the pronunciation of ‘persue’ approximating to ‘**persyew**’ (bar 28-29). Many other examples abound, such as ‘**Luring**’ (bar 32); ‘**disillusion**’ (bar 48-49) and ‘**lute**’ (bar 52).

### **Anticipation**

Frequent expressive use of anticipation on voiced consonants: (‘**love**’ in bar 24 will help to place the voice on a relatively high note); ‘**Luring**’ (bar 32) and ‘**Mockingly**’ (bar 34).

### **Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato**

Words such as ‘**mirage**’ (bar 11) which are notated to even 3/8 quavers could be rhythmically altered to shorten the first syllable, creating a scotch-snap rhythm. Similarly in the phrase ‘Love is a **will o’ the wisp**’, although in general the staccato markings could be interpreted with ‘straight’ quavers which would differentiate between the generally pliant rhythmic treatment of the notation otherwise. Ascending intervals could be rhythmically shortened: ‘None of them **ev-er** bear fruit’ in the manner of Vera Florence et al.

### **Portamento**

Many examples possible, with frequent gliding in descending melodic figures, such as: ‘The **se-quel to** love’s dis-il-**lus-ion**’ (bar 45-49). Also descending intervals where expressively justified, for example ‘**luring**’ (bar 32);

### **Breathing and phrasing**

Dunhill appears to suggest some irregular breath patterns, including the elision of sentences in a single breath through the placement of rests, for example bar 10-17: ‘It’s a mirage that’s falsely **fair. Hopes** that we cherish [rest] Flicker and perish [rest]’. An additional *mezzo respiro* at bar 32; ‘**Luring**, // **beguiling**’ will help to articulate the implied

<sup>26</sup> Kathryn LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer’s Guide to English Diction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 228.

list through the comma, and differentiating this from the musically similar single statement ‘Mockingly smiling’ (bar 34-35).

### **23 The Wedding Presentation**

### **Ensemble, Principals & Chorus**

#### **Phonology and the use of rolled & flipped ‘r’**

The rather archaic language of the first section will need clear diction. The frequent ‘r’s need clear articulation in bar 15-16: ‘Here in subterranean regions, Where the air with grease is laden,[...]’ where a rolled ‘rr’ in ‘subterranean’ and ‘grease’ is contrasted with flipped ‘r’s in the other words. In order to communicate potentially unintelligible words, such as ‘am’rous’, a *legato* approach will be recommended to the chorus in the *Maestoso, ma vivace* section (bar 43ff).

#### **Anticipation**

The eagerness of Frogmal’s announcement could be underlined by the anticipation of ‘**L**adies and Gentlemen’ (by now a familiar *leitmotiv* in the opera) in bar 164-165.

#### **Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato**

Most of the chorus writing will be rehearse as notated. Solo interjections occasionally suggest rhythmic freedom, especially Henry’s hesitant reply to the toast in bars 196ff which could be treated freely with elongated pauses for effect at the rests.

#### **Portamento**

Much of this number is of a forthright character suggesting the need for few instances of portamento. Stella’s solo (bar 262ff) is more lyrical and some descending intervals would be effective with a glide on bar 272 ‘[...]now we’ and portamento on ‘bid **you a**-dieu’ (bar 276-277).

#### **Breathing and phrasing**

Breathing for the chorus from letter A (bars 10-18) will be on the commas to articulate the text, with an elision between bars 12-13. The waltz theme for the whole ensemble (bar 320ff) will generally have breaths on the rests. For expressive purposes the phrase ‘Old brandy we’ll savour Of exquisite flavour’ (bar 352-356) will be taken in one breath.

### **24 Let Life begin anew**

### **Duet, Kenneth & Sally**

As this duet echoes much of No. 5 ‘Enticement’, the audience’s recognition of Kenneth’s now familiar ‘serenade’ will be enhanced by the exact reproduction of his inflections from No. 5 in the present duet. Although it is appropriate for Sally to have a distinctive inflections from those of Stella in No.5, the broad outline of ideas will still apply here.

### **25 Finale Act III**

### **Chorus**

The first section is a direct repeat of part of the Finale Act I and similar advice holds for the present number.

#### **Phonology and the use of rolled & flipped ‘r’**

The chorus will be encouraged to roll ‘r’s whenever they occur, although the high tessitura in the final line: ‘May happiness be showerred[...]’ in bar 77 could be challenging for the sopranos. The ‘r’ on the final word ‘pairr’ will be articulated rhythmically (bar 79-83).

#### **Anticipation**

Occasional anticipated voiced consonants, but in general a stable and rhythmically regular treatment would perhaps be most effective.

#### **Rhythmic Alteration and Rubato**

No undue rhythmic alteration of rubato is suggested in this concerted finale. Observe marked tempo changes.

#### **Portamento**

Some of the downward intervals in the chorus (‘once they are un-**i**-ted[...], bar 73 and similar) could benefit from portamenti.

### **Breathing and phrasing**

Frequent breaths in the final *Andante con moto* will help to maintain stamina in the climax to the opera. Additional breaths in bar 77ff and an unmarked pause on the penultimate syllable whilst a structural *rit.* takes place could be effective: ‘May happiness be showered//on each well deserving //pair.\_\_\_\_\_’.

#### **5.1.1. Initial Preparation and Rehearsals**

I produced performance guidance sheets containing detailed explanations of the historical techniques to be incorporated into the performance. Informed by the teaching strategies for Historically Informed Performance formulated by Mateos-Moreno and Alcaraz-Iborra<sup>27</sup> through the use of Grounded Theory, the guidance sheets aim to provide information which offer the cast ‘a practice edition[...] in which characteristics of performance are reflected in an explicit way, so that they can be assimilated naturally.’<sup>28</sup> Appendix 13a shows the advice sheet for principals, which linked techniques with audio examples. Appendix 13b shows the advice sheet for the chorus, which concentrates on specific issues of diction and breathing. Additionally, audio learning tracks which featured highlighted voice parts were made available to the chorus as a supplement to the printed score. Both guidance sheets and scores were distributed to the cast in advance of initial rehearsals to facilitate personal preparation. The scores for principals consisted of the selected extracts of the published vocal score,<sup>29</sup> with the libretto interspersed to facilitate fluency in rehearsal and performance,<sup>30</sup> whilst for the chorus the score consisted of chorus numbers only with occasional cues. As the performance guidance

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel Mateos-Moreno and Mario Alcaraz-Iborra, ‘Grounded Theory as a Methodology to Design Teaching Strategies for Historically Informed Musical Performance’. *Music Education Research*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2013) 231–248 <doi:10.1080/14613808.2013.788139> [Accessed 29 August 2020].

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Mateos-Moreno and Mario Alcaraz-Iborra, ‘Grounded Theory as a Methodology to Design Teaching Strategies for Historically Informed Musical Performance’ p. 245.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Frederick Dunhill, *Something in the City: A Comic Opera in Three Acts* [Vocal Score] (London: J.B. Cramer & Company Ltd., 1940).

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix 11.

sheet had already been distributed to the performers, it was envisaged that even at the first rehearsal they would already have assimilated some of the techniques required.

Initial rehearsals took place in various locations with individual principals and small groups. By rehearsing in this way, I was able to discuss the requirements and key features of the project in more detail within an informal atmosphere. As the principal roles carry the burden of performing practice traits it was important that they fully understood what was required and why, with the opportunity of practical experimentation without the pressure of a full company rehearsal.

### **5.1.2. Issues within Rehearsals and Key Elements of Performing Practices**

The initial rehearsals were very exciting, as this was the first time that I had heard the cast in their roles. Whilst all of the performers had been primed as to the requirements of the work, it was interesting to note that there was some apprehension from some of the principals. I had thought very carefully about who would be suitable for the different roles and approached people accordingly but I had not considered the fact that some singers find rolling their 'r's very difficult, until the matter arose at one of the initial rehearsals.

During the initial rehearsals with some of the principals it quickly became apparent that I was naïve to think that the inclusion of the rolled 'r' would be simple. Firstly, not all of the singers could roll their 'r' easily, secondly we needed to determine when it was not appropriate to use a rolled 'r', for example if there were many 'r's' in succession or if the pace of the music was too fast to adhere to them without losing the sense of the words, and thirdly, it would appear that unless the vowels around the 'r' are performed using RP the performer sounds Scottish.

The diversity of performing experience which characterised the cast as a whole necessitated a broad range of coaching and teaching styles. Yeadon proposes a range of pedagogical approaches in the coaching of an undergraduate early music ensemble,<sup>31</sup> identifying ‘a continuum of formal and informal ways of learning, individual and social constructivism, and collaborative peer learning.’<sup>32</sup> During the rehearsal process, all of these learning approaches featured, depending on the stage of the rehearsal process and the particular cast members being rehearsed. In addition to those mentioned by Yeadon, the early part of the rehearsal process, particularly with the chorus, featured some rote learning. This factor - necessary for the learning and consolidation of the music and to establish a common approach - also offered the opportunity to embed historical performing practices simultaneously, becoming intrinsic to the music, rather than being external elements *applied* to the music. This initial rehearsal stage was replicated where necessary with some of the principals, although in general, rehearsals rapidly developed into an exploratory, practice-led process of adapting to the technical and musical requirements of the historical performing practices. Such an approach was adopted with Richard Suart, who, as well as having a distinguished international career in many operatic genres, also coaches diction for English National Opera. His understanding of the techniques and processes of establishing clear diction were highly informative at our initial rehearsal.

Some performers were initially reticent during rehearsals, as the requirements of the opera tended to take people out of their comfort zones and away from what they felt to be normal practice. This was particularly noticeable amongst the experienced semi-professional Gilbert and Sullivan performers. It was interesting to note that although requirements were

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel Yeadon, ‘The Sydney Conservatorium of Music Early Music Ensemble: An Activity-Theoretical Study of the Impact of Period Instruments, Historically-Informed Performance and a Unique Pedagogy on Tertiary Group-Learning Experiences’ (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Yeadon, ‘The Sydney Conservatorium of Music Early Music Ensemble: An Activity-Theoretical Study’, p. 211.

discussed in detail and marked into scores during rehearsals, the performing practices were not always immediately evident when sung. Despite further discussion, reiterating the information and further rehearsal, the result was often the same. Whilst the approach adopted was aligned with the constructivist approach of ‘build[ing] a deeper understanding of phenomena through a more active participation in practice-based learning situations’,<sup>33</sup> the experience of this rehearsal process suggests that developing secure and reliable historically informed approaches in performance (which may conflict with pre-existing practices) can be a longer term proposition than a stand-alone project such as this one might allow.

It should be emphasised that not all the performers found the process arduous, or that this was a feature of all rehearsals. Nevertheless, some challenge was often experienced and this led me to consider whether my explanations were unclear; whether the performers did not feel comfortable adopting these stylistic features, or if they needed to ensure that they were comfortable with their mastery of the music before they could incorporate the techniques into their own performances. It would appear that this was the case for the majority of the performers and this highlighted the differing ways that we all learnt the music for our roles, with some needing to consolidate their understanding of the music before considering historically informed practices, whilst others, (myself included) liked to incorporate them from the beginning of the learning process. It therefore became clear that contrasting approaches in these matters existed within the cast. Subsequent reflection suggests that the speed of the assimilation of new information, such as historical techniques is directly related to musical fluency and strategies to address this factor in HIP practice, especially amongst amateur or inexperienced performers, would be worthy of further research.

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<sup>33</sup> Yeadon, ‘The Sydney Conservatorium of Music Early Music Ensemble: An Activity-Theoretical Study’, p. 18.

The use of Received Pronunciation in BLO has been discussed at some length earlier in the thesis and its application, together with other appropriate forms of pronunciation was considered for the performance of *Something in the City*. Some differentiation of pronunciation between the characters which reflected their status within the office hierarchy was considered. The vocal score and libretto clearly demonstrates Noakes' use of a form of Cockney vernacular<sup>34</sup> and this was adopted in the production. The often colloquial language of Baylis' dialogue suggested a similar approach for this character would also be appropriate. Informed by LaBouff's observation of RP being the standard stage pronunciation of the period of *Something in the City*<sup>35</sup> and considering the evidence of recordings such as those by Gertie Millar and Phyllis Dare, it was decided to adopt a general approach to pronunciation for the remaining characters which aligned with historic RP. Some variations were adopted: Kenneth at times effected an exaggerated form in order to portray his conceit, whilst Frogal and Chandler occasionally adopted a measured and precise approach to pronunciation in their dialogue according to their authoritative characters.

## 5.2. Stage Design and Direction

The production was designed primarily with the aim of providing a suitable dramatic context for the presentation and demonstration of historical vocal techniques. Using fewer resources than would be necessary for a full production, and without unduly distracting from the research aims, it was nevertheless imperative that the production should convey the plot and enhance the audiences' understanding and experience of an unfamiliar work. Emerson

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<sup>34</sup> For example, phrases such as 'I said to him "Old cock..."' (No. 6 Song, Noakes "Watching the Clock") bars 74-76 in the director's score/libretto (Appendix 11).

<sup>35</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, p. 207.

Taylor, writing in 1916, suggests that minimal resources can be effective in devising appropriate staging and scenery:

The most keenly active and intelligent managers[...]with great simplicity, but with bold drawing, definite effects of light, and a few carefully chosen constructed shapes,[...]suggest the locality of an act. They use symbols only. They use just enough to supply decoration, and to let the imagination play freely.<sup>36</sup>

My intention was therefore to ‘dress’ the stage, using enough scenery and props to give the impression of a 1930’s city office for Act 1, Frogmal’s country retreat for Act 2 and a city tavern lounge for Act 3. I also wanted to adhere to some of the stage directions from the original libretto and include movement for the cast, rather than a static, ‘concert version’, as this would more closely replicate the ‘stage’ experience for the cast and may potentially have had implications for the outcome of the adoption of historical vocal techniques. The occurrences of the cast’s entrances and exits were preserved from the original stage directions but rationalised to minimise the number of ‘office spaces’ necessary. During initial rehearsals in the venue, it was discovered that the raised stage area had poor lighting and was acoustically ineffective in terms of vocal clarity for the audience. As this impinged on the fundamental research aims of the project, it was decided to move the main stage area to the floor immediately in front of the audience seating.

As the piano was also situated on the floor level of the venue, a compromise was reached in its positioning which aimed to maintain contact with the performers but did not unduly affect audience sightlines. This was generally successful although chorus members, especially at a distance, may have had difficulty in seeing cues and hearing the piano, resulting in occasionally untidy ensemble. Such difficulties occurred in rehearsal during the first chorus and principals’ number, No 3. ‘Monday Morning Blues’. On this occasion, one of the cast members who was not involved in the opening ensemble number acted as conductor.

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<sup>36</sup> Emerson Taylor, *Practical Stage Directing for Amateurs: A Handbook for Amateur Managers and Actors* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1916), p. 163.

Three stage entrances were available: upper stage right; lower stage right and lower stage left. Plotting for the principals was based around eight music stands which remained generally static throughout the performance and marked particular stage positions.<sup>37</sup> In order to develop suitable stage directions I made a plan of the stage layout of the venue including appropriate scenery and props. This included typewriters, a telephone, tables and chairs which were ‘not try[ing] to be exactly *representative*, but vitally *suggestive*.’<sup>38</sup> Props were used for more than one act if suitable, to reduce the amount required, as space to store the props was minimal. Such restrictions recall Playfair’s recollections of producing *The Beggar’s Opera* in the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, where elaborate scenery was found to be logistically and financially unviable, resulting in a ‘model which suggests (though it makes no attempt realistically to reproduce)[...]’<sup>39</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that similar strictures of a ‘little stage and purse’<sup>40</sup> would have applied to the production of *Tantivy Towers* and, presumably, to *Something in the City* had a production taken place in the same venue and under similar conditions.

### 5.2.1. Costumes

As the performance was semi-staged I decided that the cast would be responsible for supplying one costume to be worn throughout the opera and that these should be broadly suggestive of the period for reasons of local colour but without making undue claims to historical accuracy. Related to the decision discussed earlier in this chapter, not to pursue historical breathing techniques with the cast, the wearing of historical restrictive corsetry or undergarments was not a requirement of this project.<sup>41</sup> This, however, would be worthy of

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 16.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor, *Practical Stage Directing for Amateurs*, p. 150.

<sup>39</sup> Nigel Playfair, *The Story of the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1925), p. 99.

<sup>40</sup> Playfair, *The Story of the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith*, p. 192.

<sup>41</sup> Cast members may of course have chosen to wear modern variations of corsetry which may have some impact on their breathing techniques.

further research. Photographs of appropriate office wear for the 1930/40s were given to the performers for them to use as guidance when organising their costumes and on the whole they were appropriate, at least hinting at the styles of the time but not necessarily as described in the libretto.

### **5.2.2. Recording Formats and Issues**

The performance was recorded in audio using a single Edirol R-09HR Wave/MP3 recorder, which was mounted on a tripod and placed centrally in the third seating row of St Paul's Hall. This placement was decided upon, following experimentation, to gain the maximum clarity whilst encompassing the whole stage area. The intention was to capture a realistic representation of the sound such as might be heard by an audience member in a good seat in the auditorium. The performance was filmed using a single Zoom Q3HD video recorder, also mounted on a tripod and placed to encompass the performing area visually whilst maintaining as much audio clarity as possible. Both recorders were unattended during the performance.

Whilst it is felt that the audio element of the performance is sufficiently well captured by both the recorders, the visual quality of the Zoom recording is compromised somewhat due to the lighting system in the venue. Nevertheless, it is useful as a visual record of the performance as a whole and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the directoral impact on the performance.

## **5.3. Performance Evaluation**

A single performance of the opera took place in St Paul's Hall, University of Huddersfield in the evening of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The following evaluation uses the audio-

visual recordings taken at this performance as the primary source of performative evidence,<sup>42</sup> together with reference to the planning and rehearsal process as outlined earlier in this chapter and referring to the performing edition in Appendix 11. The evaluation aims to address the extent to which historical performing practices as identified in Table 2 were realised in the performance, together with additional performing characteristics which developed through the rehearsal process.

### **No.1 I'm the Commissionaire (Audio Track SitC 1)**

Baylis anticipates his initial entry 'I'm', with rolled 'r's clearly enunciated. In bar 47 there is an elided 'r' 'warriorIn', although the rolled 'rr' as suggested in the planning table was omitted. A rolled 'rr' is evident in yore. 'Immortalised' (bars 50-51) has a rhythm change. Extra breaths 'when//long years ago//' (bar 69ff). 'Cower' (bar 74) as suggested (quaver, dotted crotchet); 'and' spoken/sung 'I'm the commissionaire' in bar 103 displaying some melodic alteration. There is a rhythm change in 'dash or daring' (bar 114); portamento (daring) and an additional breath at 'I'm well content with life'. Letter E displays some structural rubato, with a broadened tempo. There is also a melodic change at 'commissionairing': (E/F becomes G/A).

### **No.2 Punctuality (Audio Track SitC 2)**

Chandler displays a rolled 'r' at 'Secret' (bar 3), whilst there is an extra breath following 'Success' in bars 3-4. A slight anticipation on 'I thought' in bar 9 is evident though he observes the suggested rhythm change and portamento in bar 15 as per score – eliding 'yor eyes' and portamento at 'eyes on'. In the faster tempo of the *Allegro Vivace*, the rolled 'r's are

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<sup>42</sup> The Portfolio of Recordings includes the complete filmed performance and the complete performance as an audio recording. Additionally, for ease of use, each number from the opera is extracted from the performance and included as a separate mp3 file in the Portfolio of Recordings. It is these that are referred to in the evaluation. *N.B. In order to maintain consistency of numbering, the audio extracts are numbered according to the vocal score and not consecutively.*

not generally observed, though the suggested portamento is observed in bar 46: ‘re-ward the youth’. The dotted rhythm as suggested in bar 49 ‘in fact preferred’ is observed, with ‘dil-i-gence’ and ‘mere-ly’ displaying portamenti (bars 59 and 60). There is also a portamento on ‘virtue’ (bar 66) and Chandler adds an extra breath at ‘way//to make’ (bar 67). Noakes and Chandler add a portamento to ‘Punc-tu-al-i-tee’ (bar 74).

### **No.3 Monday Morning Blues (Audio Track SitC 3)**

There is a clear flipped ‘r’ at ‘prospect’ from Stella in bar 19 – similarly on ‘store’ in bar 20 and also ‘four’ b.25. Additional breaths are also observed after ‘store’ and ‘four’, as they are in bars 29-30. Stella employs a portamento on ‘life’ in bar 33 and the ensemble observes rolled and flipped ‘r’s on ‘drreary’ in bar 34. This pattern is repeated in the next two bars. ‘Bore’ has *some* flipped ‘r’ but the note is longer in duration than anticipated. *Allegro moderato* has generally observed additional breaths and articulated ‘r’s. These elements, together with some rhythmic modification to create space for breaths and enunciation, results in very clear diction in this section. An example of this is Henry’s negotiation of ‘Clapton and Croydon’ (b.81). From the *Vivace* section, although many of the cast are observing rolled ‘r’s and other phonological features, the effect is muted in the recording. This may be due to the greater distance between the rows of singers when the whole ensemble is singing and the effects on the resultant clarity of the resonant acoustic of the venue. Alternatively, there may be a ‘diluting’ effect of some member of the cast not observing these practices. Similarly, the ‘r’ is not heard to be articulated in ‘morning’ (b.108), possibly for similar reasons. The most clearly heard examples occur when there is a precise alignment of the ensemble, for example ‘crashing bore’. It therefore seems likely that these features are most effective in ensemble situations when there is unanimity of attack and release.

#### No. 4 The Song of the Week-End Sahib (Audio Track SitC 4)

There are noticeable portamenti on ‘lan-guid air’ in bar 17, ‘road-house’ and ‘Wode-house’ (bars 20 and 24). Articulation of all ‘r’s in ‘ev’ry roadhouse’ bars 19-20. The vowels are not as bright as anticipated, particularly noticeable in ‘a’ vowels such as ‘Sahib’ and ‘pukka’ (bars 28 and 30). ‘[...]with the heads of the firm’ (bars 34-35) features a comedic voice which is effective in lightening the vowels. This is also employed in bars 44-45 (‘Oh definitely!’). There is some melodic alteration in the phrase ‘You can keep that under your hat’ (bars 35-36). Rhythmic alteration in bars 41-43 ‘For I and my friends’ consists of a dotted rhythm as suggested. For a’ in bar 66 has an articulated ‘r’ which elides with the ‘a’. There is an *ad lib* pause on the first syllable of ‘ea-sy’ (bar 73) with a featured portamento to the second syllable. There is no upward portamento in either bar 48 or 97 as proposed. This is due to a breath being taken in the notated rest.

#### No.5 Enticement (Audio Track SitC 5)

Kenneth employs a portamento in bar 11 ‘Ex-pect-ed’. The suggested portamento in bar 9 is not observed due to a breath. Stella takes a suggested breath in bar 14, with an additional agogic accent: ‘want to//but[...]I do’. Additional breaths (the second at a comma) are also taken in bars 18-19: ‘want//I’m wanting,//too.’. There is a noticeable portamento in bar 18: ‘ev’-ry-thing you[...]’. In general, ‘r’s are rolled or flipped as appropriate and possible in this number. In verse 2 there is an anticipated ‘l’ from Stella on ‘little’ (bar 35). A portamento is on a later descending interval than in the first verse (‘want me’ bar 36) which responds to a different phrase structure. Kenneth provides an example of historic RP in the pronunciation of ‘most’, with a liquid ‘o’ approximating to Daniel Jones’ phonetic interpretation from 1917 of

‘mous|t’<sup>43</sup>. Stella rhythmically alters bar 53 by dotting ‘Spider **and the** Fly’. Bar 54 is broadened significantly which gives space for a breath (‘Spider//’) and a broad portamento (‘for you’).

### **No.6 Watching the Clock (Audio Track SitC 6)**

Noakes adopted a Cockney accent throughout as suggested, including slight changes to the text (for example the addition of a colloquial ‘s’ to the phrase such as ‘Then I keeps on eyeing it[...]’ in bar 40. Some metrical freedom is adopted with occasional pauses on notated breath marks and a transposed rhythm in bar 68 (‘...**is-n’t** strong’). There could be further opportunities for rhythmic alteration, such as that suggested in bar 13, for example. A slight upward portamento is evident with the elided and anticipated ‘l’ in the phrase ‘[...]till **l**unchtime’ in bars 32-33. Structural rubato, by broadening the tempo in bar 94 to paint the word ‘dreamy’ and an extra breath after ‘peace’ in bar 102, facilitates a generally broader treatment of tempo and space given between phrases in the *più tranquillo*.

### **No.7 Bluff (Audio Track SitC 7)**

Sally slightly anticipates ‘**l**oves’ in bar 5 as suggested. Rhythmic alteration is adopted on ‘stammer’ in bar 7, changing notated semiquavers to quavers. There is a portamento on ‘**sh**ow **he’s** a man of his word.’ in bar 11. Additionally, there is some evidence of a ‘portamento flick’ (see Chapter 3: 3.2.10.) in bar 19 on ‘must’, which is an accented note much higher in pitch than the preceding notes. The suggested inflections in the *Poco meno mosso* were generally adopted, such as the anticipation on the voiced consonants of ‘**n**ervous’ and ‘**sh**y’ and a portamento between ‘**shy!** **L**ook’ in bar 22. There was also an additional breath after

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<sup>43</sup> Daniel Jones, *An English Pronouncing Dictionary (on Strictly Phonetic Principles)*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1919), p. 253.

‘plainly’ in bar 24. Notable portamenti in bar 28 (‘[ex]cuse me’) and ‘loves you’ in bar 32. This performance is particularly successful in conveying rubato, through rhythmic alteration and subtle elongation and diminution of the beat within bars. There are also instances of structural rubato in the pauses between phrases in this section. The *tenuti* markings and *poco rit.* in bar 38 were observed by gliding between note pitches as suggested and an additional breath: ‘win her by//a little[...]’ which replaces the suggestion of ‘win her//by a little[...]’. This is considered more vocally effective when combined with the preceding gliding portamenti.

### **No.8 Jolly Good Joke, Sir! (Audio Track SitC 8)**

Henry observes historic RP pronunciation in the liquid ‘o’ and ‘ie’ vowel groups (bar 7). There was a rhythmic alteration to accommodate a breath which shortened the following note value on ‘To’: ‘Ex-per-ience shows,//To look on those[...]’ (bars 6-7). Sally takes a breath at ‘And say,//’ which sharpens the attack on ‘Ha! Ha!’ in bar 16, whilst Henry melodically alters the phrase ‘Which is absurd’ in bar 19-20 from D,D,D,D to B,C,C#,D which pre-empts the following melodic outline. In verse 2 (bar 52) the notated melody is restored (‘As we prefer’). Sally does not include a portamento on ‘demurely’ (bars 49-50) as suggested. ‘Oh No!’ (bar 51) is spoken within the sung context, although when compared to Phyllis Dare’s recording in which a wide variation of tessitura between the spoken voice and singing voice is evident,<sup>44</sup> the tessitura of Sally’s speaking and singing voices are much more aligned. There was an agreed rhythmic modification for the ensemble ‘Silly old trout!’ in bars 71-72.

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 3, Example 3.2.4c.

### No.9 Finale, Act 1 (Audio Track SitC 9)

Baylis anticipates and elongates the rolled ‘rr’ on ‘**T**rouble’ in bar 12. There is some very clear diction from letter B. Noakes does not include additional breaths suggested from letter C but adds a similarly placed one after ‘brow’ (bar 38). Similarly, the suggested breath at bar 43 after ‘See’ is not observed but after ‘phrase’ (bar 44). This may be because the breaths are later in the phrase and cause less discomfort than a *mezzo respiro* earlier in the phrases. The rolled ‘r’s in the *Allegro molto* are not all clear, possibly for reasons already addressed, viz. unanimity of ensemble. Froggall observes the second flipped ‘r’s in ‘prosperrity’. He also adopts historic RP particularly on ‘a’ vowels which are brightened, for example ‘and’ (**ea**nd) bar 91. There is some rhythmic alteration in bar 97 by dotting ‘**me...rit** the treat’ and anticipation evident at ‘I should say residing’ (bars 102-103). There are also additional breaths after ‘note’ (bar 128) and ‘male’ (bar 132). Rolled or flipped ‘r’s are not evident in the chorus from letter H. In general, however, the tenors and basses produce clearer examples than the sopranos and altos from letter K. A clear example of this is in bar 177 (‘**d**ressed’) by the tenors and basses of the chorus and principals.

### No.16 Love and Friendship (Audio Track SitC 16)

Henry anticipates ‘**n**othing’ (bar 4) and ‘**l**ove’ (bar 14), whilst some metrical rubato is heard in bar 5: (‘That being[...]), with a hurrying of the quavers compensated by an elongation of ‘so...’. The ‘scotch-snap’ rhythm suggested for ‘sufficient’ occurs in bar 20 and 40. There is a portamento on ‘**I aimed** too high’ (bar 25) and structural rit on ‘Mis-**guid-ed** man!’ (bar 26). Metrical rubato is evident in bar 29 where time is taken at ‘All came to nought’ against the regular pulse of the accompaniment, which leads to a slight dislocation between the voice and piano. The suggested portamento on ‘Whate’er may **be-fall**’ is observed in bar 33. An additional, unnotated breath after ‘cherish’ (bar 39) anticipates a similar notated breath in

bar 42. There are noticeable portamento glides in ‘Your friendship I shall cher-ish’ in bar 41. Bar 43 contains examples of portamento as suggested (‘all suf-fi-cient’); rhythmic modification as before on ‘sufficient’ and a breath immediately following to feed the long-held note on ‘prize’ (bar 44-46) which has a rolled ‘rr’.

### **No.17 There’s Always a Catch about Love (Audio Track SitC 17)**

Stella’s ‘a’ of ‘Catch’ (bar 6) could have been brightened further according to historic RP. Rhythmic alteration of ‘mirage’ into a scotch-snap rhythm as suggested is evident in bar 11. Also in bar 28, a dotted rhythm on ‘Vain...to’ and a historic RP liquid ‘u’ on ‘pursue’; similarly ‘luring’ (bar 32) and ‘lute’ (bar 52) as suggested. Flipped ‘r’s are generally evident throughout. Metrical rubato in bar 36 (‘ever’). Bars 47-48 features portamento glides together with an anticipated ‘l’ in the phrase ‘The se-quel to love’s dis-il-lusion’. There is metrical rubato and portamento evident in the phrase ‘Day-dreams all end in con-fus-ion’ (bar 54-57) and similarly in bars 66-67 (‘Clouds veil the...’). Rolled ‘r’s in bars 59-62 could have been clearer (‘None of them ever bear fruit. Romance[...].’). There is a portamento glide in bar 73-73 ‘shattered to-mor-row’, together with the notated *poco rit.* followed by a notated breath, and rhythmic alteration to a scotch snap in ‘ne-ver... can tell’ (bar 81). Although there is an additional breath at bar 80 after ‘well’, the suggested one after ‘catch’ in bar 86 is not taken.

### **No.23 The Wedding Presentation (Audio Track SitC 23)**

The cast in general roll and flip ‘r’s in bars 15-16 ‘Here in subterranean regions, Where the air with grease is laden,[...]’, as suggested. A similar opportunity at ‘air’ was not observed and neither was ‘Marrried’ (bar 21). Frogal employs rhythmic alteration to accommodate a breath at ‘[...]turtle doves I notice, //haven’t[...]’ in bar 27. There is a small rhythmic and melodic alteration at bar 29-30: at ‘Why on earth’ the first two words are

rhythmically ‘telescoped’ from two quavers to two semiquavers and the notes are altered from Bb, Bb, Db to Bb, C, Db. The cast produces a noticeable rolled ‘rr’ on ‘rend’ (bar 54), also a clear flipped ‘r’ on ‘pry’ (bar 78). Henry takes an extra breath after ‘state’ (bar 59) and adopts historic RP vowel modification on ‘no one’ (bar 71). Frogmal incorporates some additional breaths, for example in bar 114 (familiar//), bar 123 (‘rash,//’) and bar 164 ‘clicked//after tennis’ which also results in the shortening of the unstressed word ‘after’. Rhythmic alteration is evident by dotting rhythms on ‘**Jones keeps a** ledger; with **ov-er-seas** sales’ (bars 142-143). Similarly at ‘**trust they’ll ac-**cept’ (bar 173) which matches the immediately following rhythm. At letter N following, the cast’s ‘r’s are not always clear. There is some rhythmic alteration evident from Henry in the *Allegro animato e grazioso*, such as a scotch-snap in bar 197 ‘stammer’. Clear articulation of ‘r’s are evident throughout this section. Rhythmic alteration in bar 222 ‘[as-]**sure you such a** to-ken’ where ‘such a’ are rhythmically telescoped as above. There is a Portamento on ‘plea-sure’ (bar 225) and ‘trea-sure’ in the following bar. A flipped ‘r’ is observed on ‘true’ (bar 265). Portamenti are observed on ‘[...]**now we fin-al-**ly part[...]’ (bars 272-273), and there is an emphasised one on ‘bid **you a-**dieu’ (bar 276). An upward portamento followed by gliding is evident in bars 285-286: ‘Chief is **a[n] ab-so-lute** dear.’. Extra breaths are added after ‘sweet//’ and ‘Greet//’ (bars 290 and 292). A historic RP liquid ‘o’ from Frogmal is heard on ‘What ho!’ (bar 312-313). Portamento is also evident at ‘ad-journ’ (bar 319-320). The cast employ generally audible ‘r’s in the *Tempo di Valse* section, bars 320ff.

#### **No.24 Let Life Begin Anew (Audio Track SitC 24)**

Kenneth takes an additional breath at ‘much//neglected’ in bar 6. Metrical rubato is evident from Sally in bar 14, with a localised rit and compensation later in the bar. Portamento is heard at ‘[...]quite con-**tent to** jog a-long **with you**’ in bar 18. Kenneth employs rhythmic alteration at ‘[...]berries ‘neath the’ by straightening the notated dotted rhythms on ‘berries’

and elongating ‘neath’ which then has the effect of shortening the unstressed ‘the’ (bar 26). Portamento is heard on ‘weath-er’ in bar 29 and rhythmic alteration by dotting at ‘**life be**-gin a-new’ (bar 31). Towards the final cadence, there is much metrical and structural rubato from Sally and elongation of breaths, particularly in bar 18.

### **No.25 Finale, Act 3 (Audio Track SitC 25)**

The cast display noticeably clear enunciation of ‘r’s in the first entry (bar 4ff). Most suggested breaths were observed, including one immediately preceding ‘pair’ (bars 79-83).

## **5.4. Research Conclusion**

The act of critically listening to (and watching) the recordings of the performance was a salutatory lesson in acknowledging and understanding the effect of differing circumstances on our perceptions of a performance. My own recollection of the process of learning, rehearsing and performing in *Something in the City* was that the details of performing practice, which had previously been identified, were assiduously applied and fulfilled in the eventual performance. It was therefore surprising to hear in my own performance that a significant number of opportunities for the application of HIP techniques had been missed, including those which had been carefully rehearsed. The most frequently occurring lapse in this regard was the use of historic RP, particularly the vowel modifications necessary such as ‘catch’ becoming ‘cetch’. Other historical techniques were more consistently audible in my own performance, particularly portamento and phonology such as rolled and flipped ‘r’s and anticipated voiced consonants. The effectiveness of rolled and flipped ‘r’s appears to be dependent on the tessitura, both in terms of the technical challenge of enunciation and in the intelligibility for the listener.

The limitations of the recording equipment and the nature of the acoustic in the venue, may in part account for a less clearly defined enunciation from the chorus than I had remembered as part of the cast in performance. Factors such as the distance between the recording equipment and performers (in general the chorus was set further upstage than the principals) and the concomitant blurring of detail, in what is in effect a large church acoustic may be at least partly responsible. The cast demonstrated a willingness from the outset to take seriously the historical techniques which I asked them to use in their performance and to persevere in mastering the sometimes counter-intuitive techniques. The evaluation above clearly demonstrates the wealth of detail incorporated into their collective performance, and in general the adoption of historical techniques was felt to be beneficial to the eventual performance.

It is perhaps inevitable that the most experienced cast members displayed noticeable facility in adapting to and adopting historical performing techniques in their performances. For some, the instances of the application of such techniques far exceeded those envisaged during the planning process. There were also notable instances where an unanticipated practical necessity made a planned effect unworkable, but the spirit of it remained through a modified application. It is also evident, and perhaps inevitable, that the most successful adoption of historical techniques in chorus or whole-cast numbers occurred where there was a general feeling amongst the cast of security with the musical material. Instances of rhythmic ambiguity or tempo changes occasionally led to a diminution of effect, whereas rhythmic certainty (such as the first entry in the Act III Finale (bars 4-5, p. 116) resulted in a unanimity of purpose which produced very clear enunciation according to historical principles.

Amongst the comments received from members of the cast, the work done on diction was most often referenced. Most felt that the rolled and flipped 'r' benefitted the clarity of diction, with comments such as: 'The adjustments we were required to make to diction made

it much clearer than current practice, in my opinion'; 'it [rolled 'r'] helps keep the line flowing in an Italianate sense[...] [and] help[ed] the ensemble and diction in the performance space.' Some reservations were expressed regarding the technical challenge of rolled and flipped 'r's: '[it] can become cumbersome if the music is faster (especially if the 'r' is in the middle of the word)'; 'I found remembering to insert the rolled and flipped 'r's quite challenging', whilst others were familiar with the technique but not perhaps the frequency with which it was employed: 'We often roll 'r's for G & S though perhaps not quite as many'. Portamento and rubato was also commented on, sometimes perhaps reflecting a certain inhibition which may reflect current attitudes: 'I've always found a tasteful portamento tricky', whilst some comments suggest a sense of musical liberation: 'The portamento and rubato, strangely enough, come quite naturally when you just give yourself permission'; '[The] use of rubato was of interest, allowed (sic) for the creation of something that was quite fresh, stylised but also quite individual'.

It has already been acknowledged that some aspects of historical performance style, which have been discussed in this thesis and may be relevant to the performance of this opera, were not included on this occasion. Future experimentation may make this a possibility and it is likely that the fundamental changes to vocal tone and production, which would ensue, would create a more obvious sense of 'otherness' within the context of contemporary mainstream vocal practices than the present project might appear to do. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the value of a historically informed performance should not be assessed solely on the extent to which it radically departs from notions of modern-day practices. The consensus for those involved in this project was that the historical practices adopted benefitted the performance in terms of musical distinctiveness and textual clarity and therefore, it may be hoped, also benefitted its communicative power to its first audience.

## Conclusion

A snapshot of musical taste in 1932 is provided by a page of the *Radio Times* for Thursday, July 21<sup>st</sup> <sup>1</sup>, advertising that evening's radio entertainment on the Daventry National Programme. The longest radio programme of the evening is described thus: 'In this programme are items which together illustrate in rough outline the changes which the London musical stage has experienced in the thirty odd years of this century.' The repertoire does indeed span a range of Light opera genres and periods, beginning with the Overture to *The Arcadians* (Monckton and Talbot arr. Wood) which, according to the anonymous writer in the *Radio Times*, '...represents an era that is past. It was almost the last of the naïve, dainty, unsophisticated musical comedies invented and stereotyped by George Edwardes in the eighteen-nineties...'. Immediately following this item from 1909 is the Waltz from *Tantivy Towers* (1931). The writer feels that Dunhill's work, 'delightful as it is, is not a new form, nor even a personally remembered one.' The core of this radio programme has music by for example Romberg and Rubens; Schubert (arranged by Clutsam in *Lilac Time*) and Montague Philips, which presumably represents 'a ruthless invasion by Viennese composers, followed by a still more devastating conquest by American jazz-kings, [which] swept the pretty-pretty from the stage, and for years we settled down to a sequence of a new kind of three R's—Ruritania, Revue, and Racket'. This, together with 'occasional lapses into a sentimental relief of which *The Rebel Maid* [Philips] and *Lilac Time* were typical examples...' almost completes the picture for the *Radio Times* writer.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Daventry National Programme, 21 July', *Radio Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1932  
<<https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/a16b46213ec247868f7839c4490c3fdb>> [Accessed 13 September 2020].

However, with *Tantivy Towers*, there are apparently ‘signs that we are turning on our tracks and completing the circle, or rather the ellipse, for we are going back farther than seemed possible a few years ago.’ When the *Radio Times* writer ends with the question ‘Could any development be more promising?’<sup>2</sup>, the inference would appear to be that *Tantivy Towers* represented a new direction for BLO genres which in some way addressed a perceived lack of musical and/or artistic quality in the products of the previous decades. It is certainly true that spectacle may have outshone musical content at times, but this frequent reordering of priorities, most obviously in the transition from the Savoy tradition to musical comedy and thence to Revue, meant that when the wheel had turned again towards *Tantivy Towers*, the reestablishment of ‘English Comic Opera’ in the early 1930s with an implied prioritisation of musical values seemed to be a possibility.

In the event, the centrality of BLO genres as entertainment which is evident in 1932 rapidly diminished, and one of the themes of this thesis has been how a subsequent collective ‘forgetting’ of most light opera genres over time has left much of this repertoire relatively unexplored by modern singers. Excepting the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire and isolated BLO recording projects, much of the BLO repertoire has remained side-lined, the victim of rapid developments in the culture of the musical stage which gained momentum during the Second World War and which rendered BLO genres as irrelevant and emblematic of an era which was past.

From our current historical perspective, some eighty years after Dunhill wrote *Something in the City*, a reappraisal of BLO genres therefore seems both timely and necessary. That which appeared old fashioned now has an historical interest and this thesis proposes how an understanding of BLO performing practices might rehabilitate this repertoire for modern

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<sup>2</sup> ‘The Daventry National Programme, 21 July’, *Radio Times*.

singers and audiences, whilst also enhancing our understanding of more general developments in vocal performing practices during the early part of the twentieth-century. The introduction to this thesis identified approaches to the performance of BLO genres by modern singers which - where they happened at all - often appeared to be technically and stylistically undifferentiated from current 'mainstream' operatic performing practices. The challenges to such practices by Sarah Potter et al have provided convincing arguments for a reappraisal of modern vocal performing practices in nineteenth-century operatic repertoire. Similarly, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the historical performing practices of BLO genres belong to a performative world closely influenced by nineteenth-century pedagogy and practices. As we have seen, many of the distinctive features of nineteenth-century vocal practice such as portamento and rubato remain, broadly, fundamental to BLO performances in historical recordings, suggesting that the divide between current and historical vocal practices is a more recent phenomenon than previously thought. Future research into vocal performing practices after the Second World War using HIP principles would further expand our knowledge and understanding of the processes of change towards modern mainstream practices.

The attention paid to diction and the communication of text by the performers investigated in this thesis is perhaps the overarching feature of their recordings, irrespective of time, genre or recording technology. Investigations into the ways in which this is achieved have revealed multiple constituent elements of vocal technique which combine to produce the effects noted. Much modern vocal pedagogy considers diction as primarily a matter of the articulation of consonants, with vowels a secondary consideration. The combined evidence of the historical BLO recordings analysed, however, suggests that carefully enunciated consonants are only one factor: clearly differentiated vowel shapes, often but not exclusively following the characteristics of Historic RP as outlined by Jones, Ellis and LaBoeuff and other phonological features also serve to reinforce the intelligibility of the sung text.

Distinctive approaches to breathing and phrasing patterns also contribute to the communication of the text, with breathing patterns which allow for much more extreme emphases than might be expected in current practice and which, to the modern listener at least, can sound somewhat exaggerated. This has been observed, for example, in the commonly occurring practice of the taking of an additional breath immediately before a final held long note, or one which will require a significant pause or tenuto. Similarly, the use of *mezzo respiro* breaths to ‘feed’ the vocal line at important moments and additional breaths which contradict the notated phrase scheme but which serve a textural matter have also been observed.

Whilst diaphragmatic and costal breathing is generally promoted in the vocal pedagogies associated with BLO performers, audio and visual evidence (supported by some pedagogical sources) indicates that clavicular breathing was indeed for some singers a significant aspect of their breathing technique. Whilst there is some argument regarding the influence of corsetry or restrictive clothing on the use of clavicular breathing, evidence presented in this thesis supports the conclusion that this may have been a factor for much of the period covered by the research. Discussions with leading vocal practitioners and practical experimentation with clavicular breathing have also corroborated this, along with the use of the high larynx. This concurs with previous research by Sarah Potter et al regarding earlier vocal genres.

Practical experimentation with a range of vocal practices associated with BLO genres reveals that some, such as rolled and flipped ‘r’s, are generally familiar to the modern classically-trained singer, but their application in historic BLO practice reaches far beyond common modern practices, especially in English-language repertoire. The placement of ‘r’s at the end of words has been challenging and initially counter-intuitive both in my own performances and those who participated in the production of *Something in the City*. Similarly, the adoption of breathing techniques which approximate to those observed in some filmed

performances – particularly clavicular breathing – have been found to be challenging and uncomfortable. The eventual decision not to use clavicular breathing in the production of *Something in the City* was one of practical expediency. The scope of the project and resources available for the production necessitated the prioritisation of performing practices indicated by the research, which would achieve maximum effect within the parameters described. The research findings of this project suggests that the adoption of clavicular breathing as part of a historically informed approach to performing requires long term and careful management for the singer and may be usefully pursued in future research projects.

One of the most distinctive outcomes of the investigation of historical BLO productions generally has been the discovery of a diverse range of performing styles, traditions and experiences of the cast. The career mutability of singers such as Maggie Teyte and Trefor Jones which encompassed art song, opera, light opera and musical comedy demonstrates a close affinity between these genres in terms of vocal and performing styles on the one hand, whilst the same stage would be shared by comedians and dancers with a much more variable singing experience. Accounts of the recruitment processes of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and the first cast of *Tantivy Towers* suggests that amateur and professional performers existed in a blended performing environment as necessity demanded.

These factors have highlighted how BLO genres may be an ideal forum for the amateur performer to profitably engage with HIP concepts in a practical way. *Something in the City* encompassed an unusually wide spectrum of performing experience and demonstrated how such projects can involve all in a common goal. Useful further developments of this project, in addition to the ramifications of the implementation of breathing techniques as previously discussed would be a more detailed investigations of vocal tone and vibrato.

By a careful assessment of historical evidence, the most beneficial and practical performance techniques can become part of the ‘tool kit’ of a performer’s practice. Of the historical practices investigated in the present thesis, the most valuable additions to my own current practices, and those of the cast in the *Something in the City* project, have been an increased awareness of the subtleties and possibilities of phonology in the communication of text; a new awareness of the types of historical rubato employed, which goes far beyond prevalent generalised concepts of rhythmic ‘freedom’ by establishing a distinctive rhetorical manner of interpreting notated rhythms, and the recognition of particular forms of portamento and melodic alteration. The ‘portamento flick’ in earlier BLO recordings is a distinctive characteristic of coquettish female characters in these genres which gradually becomes less prominent in later BLO genres. This, together with the gradual elimination of the upward portamento in BLO vocal practice throughout the period under investigation, offers the modern singer the possibility of differentiating performing practices in this area between the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire and subsequent genres up to the music of Dunhill and Ivor Novello.

The singer’s communicative success in BLO genres has been shown to be aided by the adoption of historical performing techniques investigated in this thesis. There may also be the opportunity for a broader application of this research in the more general performance of vocal music in English. The performance priorities, techniques and style of singers as observed in historical BLO recordings, may also prove to be a useful pedagogical addition to the singer’s training in the development of clarity in communication. The investigation of performing practices in this repertoire has revealed that musically and dramatically, much of this repertoire can be rewarding to sing and entertaining for audiences. It has also become evident that understanding the appropriate *manner* of performance is crucial to communicating this repertoire effectively.

Many cast and audience members expressed enthusiasm for the idea of a fully staged and complete production of *Something in the City* in the future. This is a tribute to Dunhill, Whitmarsh and Smith's work first and foremost, but it is also encouraging to those who feel that neglected BLO genres, in addition to the Savoy Operas, have something to offer modern performers and audiences. The 'modernity' of much BLO repertoire which so quickly dated in its own time could become a virtue by situating these works in their historical context, thereby freeing the inherent musical and entertainment qualities to be enjoyed again by contemporary audiences. It is also the contention of this thesis that the adoption of appropriate historically-informed vocal techniques in the performance of this repertoire contributes significantly to getting it 'over the footlights'.

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