

Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon* and its Relevancy for the Developing Opera Singer

by

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ABSTRACT

Aspiring opera singers receive training in many different areas including vocal technique, acting, foreign languages, and role preparation to help them prepare for the demands of the standard operatic repertoire. Many of the operatic roles within the standard repertoire are too demanding in their entirety for young singers who are still developing physically and intellectually. Vocal health is a great concern for young voice students and their teachers. An operatic role which demands more stamina or control than a student is currently capable of executing in a healthy way can result in vocal trauma. To avoid assigning repertoire to students which may push their limits, many undergraduate vocal students are not given the opportunity to perform an operatic role in its entirety until after they have graduated.

Pauline Viardot's operetta *Cendrillon* provides a solution to the often difficult task of giving experience to young singers without causing them potential harm. The knowledge Viardot gained by having a career both as an opera singer and a voice teacher resulted in a composition which contains full operatic roles that many young singers could capably perform. Viardot was sensitive to the issues that many young singers face, and as a result, she created an operetta which voice faculty can feel comfortable assigning to their students. In order to understand the demands of *Cendrillon* on young opera singers, this project included a performance of the piece with undergraduate voice students, many of whom had never been in an opera before. Through this process and a comparison of *Cendrillon* with some of the repertoire these singers will encounter later in their careers, it is clear that Viardot's insightful compositional style provided a smooth transition for these relatively inexperienced students.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Loren Battieste. You are the reason I continue to sing and strive to be the best singer and teacher I can be. Thank you for encouraging me to follow my passion and for showing me what perseverance and hard work can achieve.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have overwhelming gratitude to so many people who made this project possible. Thank you to my cast and the musical director of our production of *Cendrillon*. Your contribution of time, energy, and talent were invaluable, and a piece of every single one of you will always be in my mind when I return to this work. Thank you for trusting me and for bringing the best parts of yourselves to the stage.

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For my parents, I am so appreciative of all that you have done to support my career. How lucky that this only child got to have all of your love to herself. Thank you for the lessons, the love, and a passion for music (which came from both of you, whether you realize it or not). Thank you to my husband who is my sanity, my inspiration, and my favorite duet partner. To my incredible support system of friends and colleagues scattered all over the country... thank you for grounding me and for making so many places in the world feel like home.

And thank you to all artists who continue to challenge their audiences and test the limits of what is possible.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Students arrive at undergraduate music programs with varying levels of previous training and experience. Many voice students find that they are bombarded with new information about technique, vocal function, and music preparation in their first few years of an undergraduate music degree. While college voice students are incorporating new vocal technique, their voices are also continuing to develop as their bodies are maturing. The larynx doesn't fully develop until around the age of fifteen, requiring students to adjust any previous vocal training to suit their newly formed instrument. Additionally, the voice continues to mature until reaching its peak around the age of thirty. With this information in mind, selecting appropriate repertoire for singers with developing voices can be a difficult process, as voice teachers want their students to be challenged without the risk of assigning music which is too demanding, and may possibly cause future technical issues or worse, vocal damage.

Collegiate undergraduate classical singers, when given operatic arias at all, are assigned arias which are appropriate for their level of training and development and which they can perform in auditions and recitals. Frequently, college programs produce opera scenes performances to provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to work through the music and staging for a section of an opera without performing the entire role. While opera scenes provide a service by allowing the student to become familiar with the vocal and theatrical demands of a character, it does not allow them to have the experience of learning a role from start to finish, and fully immersing themselves in the dramatic and musical arc of their character in its entirety.

These students would undoubtedly benefit from having the experience of performing a complete operatic role before they graduate so that they learn the process of preparing, rehearsing, and performing a full opera. Unfortunately, much of the standard operatic repertoire poses great challenges for these students whose voices are still physiologically developing, and who are still working through technical issues in their vocal training. Thus, many students will graduate with a degree in vocal performance without being able to include a complete operatic role on their performance resumé.

While there are many resources for vocal exercises and art song that are appropriate for these singers, operatic repertoire continues to pose significant challenges for students. Seemingly, many of the standard operatic composers had limited concern for the issues that young singers struggle with. Such composers were presumably focused on producing their art at the highest level and trusted that a trained, vocally mature singer, would be able to navigate the demands of the repertoire. Thus, there are very few operatic compositions that can be performed in their entirety by undergraduate students without concern of causing strain on their still developing vocal mechanism. As a solution to the problem of finding suitable operatic repertoire for students, Pauline Viardot's compositional output provides a unique benefit for young singers.

As a renowned professional opera singer who worked closely with some of the greatest operatic composers of her day, Viardot became a noted voice teacher once she retired from the stage, and was therefore sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of the developing human voice. Although Viardot's greatest output was in the art song repertoire, it is her operatic contributions that are the focus of this document, specifically for the service they provide in the training of younger voices both technically and

dramatically. This research document focuses on the merits of her final operatic composition, *Cendrillon*, and its applicability for the student of opera.

This document is a companion to a performance of Viardot's *Cendrillon* which took place in 2016. The purpose of that performance was to test the functionality of this work for undergraduate singers. Understanding the context that Viardot brought to this composition provides important information for honoring the operetta in print and performance. To introduce this context, a biography of Viardot's life and work is included in the first chapter. The second chapter outlines the process and decisions that were made during the preparation for our production of *Cendrillon*. The final chapter compares the characters of Viardot's *Cendrillon* to some of the roles in the standard repertoire which these voice types may perform later in life.

Chapter 2

PAULINE VIARDOT: A BIOGRAPHY

The García Family Legacy

Pauline Viardot (born Pauline García, 1821-1910) was raised in a renowned family of singers and teachers of singing. Her father, Manuel García Sr., was a celebrated tenor, composer, director, and voice teacher. Her sister, Maria Malibran, was most well known for her contributions to the operatic stage. Known to her followers as “La Malibran,” she has become somewhat of a revered enigma even to modern singers and historians.¹ Viardot’s brother, Manuel Patricio García Jr., was also a singer, but is better known as a renowned voice teacher whose studies are still referenced in modern vocology research.²

Manuel García Sr.’s most notable collaboration was with Rossini, whom he assisted in the composition of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. He created the role of Almaviva for the premiere.³ García Sr. served as voice teacher to all three of his children at some point in their development, but following his death in 1832, their mother, Maria Joaquina

¹ Matthew Gurewitsch, “Voice from the Past Becomes an Obsession,” *New York Times*, January, 2008. In 2006, Cecilia Bartoli did a recital tour and released an album titled “Maria,” to pay homage to her great inspiration, Maria Malibran. The pieces she performed focused around the operatic roles that Malibran performed in her lifetime, including many of the ornamentations and substitutions that Malibran composed and performed during her operatic career. Bartoli also honored Malibran’s compositions by including some of her published art songs.

² Michèle Catellengo, “Manuel Garcia Jr: A clear-sighted observer of human voice production.” *Logopedics Phoniatics Vocology* 30, no. 3-4 (2005), 163-70.

³ Howard Bushnell, *Maria Malibran: A Biography of the Singer* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, ©1979), xiv. In fact, for the premiere of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Rossini had not yet finished Almaviva’s aria, so García inserted one of his own compositions for the performance.

Stiches di Mendi took over as voice teacher for Pauline.⁴ Manuel García Sr. was a respected voice teacher, and was known for using “the García method,” a style of vocal training whose tradition continued with his children as they grew into distinguished singers and teachers.⁵

Though he was undoubtedly an accomplished singer and performer, it is Manuel García Sr.’s work as a vocal pedagogue that ensures that his name will continue to be referenced in modern vocal study. In *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics* written by Berton Coffin, Coffin reviews the pedagogical publications by eighteen different voice instructors throughout history.⁶ He references some of the great contemporary opera singers and their connection to García Sr.:

What do Marilyn Horne, Joan Sutherland, Beverly Sills, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau have in common? Much of their art of singing can be traced to Manuel de Popolo Vicente García né Rodriguez (1775-1832), whose principles of singing were the roots of many outstanding teachers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. [...] Without the Garcías the art of song could not have achieved many of its highest moments.⁷

This quote from Berton Coffin is just one of many grand tributes to the patriarch of the García family and his timeless contributions to the art and science of the human voice.

⁴ Beatrix Borchard. "Viardot, Pauline." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* (Oxford University Press, accessed December 16, 2016) <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29283>.

⁵ Noel Goodwin, "Manuel Garcia," *The Musical Times* 96, no. 1345 (1955): , accessed December 20, 2016, JSTOR. Manuel Garcia Sr. is also credited with bringing the first Italian Opera Company to the United States and also reproduced the scores for “Don Giovanni,” Rossini’s “Otello” and “Il Barbiere di Siviglia” from memory when they were lost.

⁶ Ranging from 1723-1913.

⁷ Berton Coffin, *Historical vocal pedagogy classics* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 12-13.

Though Manuel García Sr. died when Viardot was young, his influence lived on in her older siblings who found great success in music. Viardot was thirteen years younger than her sister Maria, who had great operatic success in her own short life. Maria Malibran had a short but impressive operatic career. As a renowned mezzo-soprano during the bel canto era, Donizetti and Bellini were so enamored with Maria's performances that they adjusted some of their higher soprano repertoire in order to suit her voice. She had a powerful voice that was also flexible, allowing her to meet the demands of the many melismatic passages in roles such as Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and Elvira in Bellini's *I Puritani*. A muse for the bel canto composers, she premiered several operatic roles during her lifetime including many that were written for her, most notably the title role of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*.⁸ Sadly, Maria died at the young age of twenty-eight from complications following a horseback riding accident. A noticeable void was left within the opera community with the death of Maria, who contributed more to the music world than just her voice.

Music composition was also a prominent part of Maria's life. When she wasn't drawing in a notebook to keep herself busy during rehearsals, she was frequently seen composing "airs worthy of a first-rate composer".⁹ At social gatherings Maria would entertain guests with her own compositions as she accompanied herself on the piano. Since she performed many of her own compositions, it is no surprise that she composed

⁸ Elizabeth Forbes. "Malibran, Maria." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. (Oxford University Press, accessed December 16, 2016) <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/17547>.

⁹ María Las Mercedes De Merlin, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran, by the Countess de Merlin and Other Friends. with a Selection from Her Correspondence* (Ulan Press, 2012), 219.

exclusively for voice and piano. Frequently the compositions she played in social situations were improvisatory, a skill that was initially learned from her father, who stressed that singers should be able to improvise an infinite number of cadenzas in a given aria.¹⁰ Much of Malibran's music was written for salon performances, informal gatherings of musicians and music enthusiasts where composers would perform in the home of the host while the guests interacted over their shared love of music. Although that is not to say that her compositions were not noteworthy, as Malibran published an impressive forty-six pieces of music during her lifetime, quite a few of which are available in contemporary music collections and anthologies.

Viardot's brother Manuel García Jr. ended his operatic career at the age of 25 when he felt he had strained his voice,¹¹ although he continued working very closely with his father as he performed in amateur productions with his father's students. Perhaps as a result of the aforementioned vocal strain, Manuel García Jr. became interested in the science behind singing and he studied with a surgeon to understand the physiology and function of the larynx.¹² His greatest contributions were a treatise on the art of singing (1840-47), and his creation of the first laryngeal mirror which allowed him to demonstrate the anatomy and function of the vocal folds.¹³

¹⁰ Bushnell 4

¹¹ Goodwin.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Irwin Moore, "Laryngeal Mirror Used by Manuel Garcia, the Discoverer of Autolaryngoscopy; Also the Apparatus Used by Him to Demonstrate the Physiology of the Vocal Cords," *Proceedings of the Royal Society* (1917): 71-72.

Manuel García Jr. focused his life's work on teaching and was a professor at both the Paris Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Music in London. His teaching style, modeled after his father's, resulted in the production of many fine singers.¹⁴

The Musical Development of Pauline Viardot

Pauline Viardot was trained to be a singer and lived in the shadow of her sister for much of her life. She received vocal training from her mother and father, but also studied piano with Franz Liszt and composition with Anton Reicha, who also trained Hector Berlioz.¹⁵ At the age of fourteen, Viardot's skills as a pianist were developing and she began to accompany her sister during her recitals. She wanted to focus all of her energy on the piano, but on her fifteenth birthday she sang a Rossini aria, and when she finished her mother said, "Very well, I've made up my mind. Close the piano. From now on you are going to sing."¹⁶

Viardot initially followed very closely in her sister's footsteps. She made her operatic debut in London as Desdemona in Rossini's *Otello* at the age of eighteen, which is the same role in which her sister debuted. She quickly grew to be a celebrated interpreter of the great operatic roles of composers such as Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Verdi.¹⁷ Some of her most notable creations include the role of Fidès in Meyerbeer's *Le*

¹⁴ James Radomski and April Fitzlyon. "García." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/45707pg2>.

¹⁵ April Fitzlyon, *Price of Genius: a Life of Pauline Viardot* (NY: APPLETON-CENTURY, 1964), 30.

¹⁶ Ibid 36-37.

¹⁷ Beatrix Borchard. "Viardot, Pauline." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* (Oxford University Press, accessed April 19, 2015) <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29283>.

*Prophète*¹⁸ and a notorious adaptation of Gluck's *Orphèe*, where she performed the title role as it was adapted specifically for her voice by Hector Berlioz.¹⁹ Viardot also received great acclaim for her ability to perform both the role of Zerlina and Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, both of which she continued to perform interchangeably for nearly twenty years.²⁰

In addition to creating roles and acting as a muse for composers as her sister had, Viardot's ability to inspire artists extended beyond her vocal ability and stage presence. Viardot had lived in Paris with her husband, the writer Louis Viardot, for much of her operatic career. While in Paris, Viardot participated in another artistic interest her late-sister enjoyed: the music salon. Pauline Viardot was introduced to her first salon in 1838 when she performed at the salon of Madame Caroline Jaubert.²¹ The salons were an important aspect of musical life in Paris in the 1800s and were often the source of collaboration and great musical influence.

Viardot's interest in the music salon grew, and she eventually started her own tradition of hosting weekly salons. Although this was primarily a Parisian tradition, she would continue to host whether she was living in Paris, London, or Germany. These salons hosted by Pauline Viardot would become an important meeting place for aspiring

¹⁸ Mark Everist, "Enshrining Mozart: Don Giovanni and the Viardot Circle," *19th-Century Music* 25, no. 2-3 (2001): , accessed December 20, 2016, JSTOR.

¹⁹ Patrick Waddington, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia As Berlioz's Counselor And Physician," *The Musical Quarterly* LIX, no. 3 (July 1973): , accessed December 19, 2016, JSTOR.

²⁰ Everist 168-169. Viardot was also in possession of the autographed score of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for awhile which she purchased in London in 1855.

²¹ Fitzlyon 44-45.

composers and musicians throughout Europe. It was through these weekly meetings that Viardot established relationships with composers such as Gounod, Meyerbeer, and Fauré, who would later credit these salons with helping to launch their own careers.²² Her friendships with composers were often deeply rooted in a mutual love and respect of music, but also often involved collaboration. Viardot's collaboration with composers took many forms, in addition to creating characters in debut performances of new works, she was also a promoter of composers such as Massenet for whom she performed the title role of *Marie Magdeleine* in the premiere.²³ This performance was a catalyst for the growth of Massenet's career for which part of the credit certainly belongs to Viardot. She also arranged instrumental compositions by great composers for the voice, with her arrangements of twelve mazurkas by Chopin being one of the most notable examples. Chopin, Gounod, and Berlioz are a few of the many famous composers who have commented on her musical genius in addition to her assistance in their careers.

When she retired from the stage at age forty-two, she planned to focus her energy on teaching and composing. The Viardot family moved to Baden-Baden, Germany in 1863, and with her four children and husband there was a new addition to their home: the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev. Turgenev was one of the many artists with whom Viardot interacted and who ultimately became completely enamored with her.

²² Rachel M. Harris, *The music salon of Pauline Viardot: featuring her salon opera Cendrillon*, DMA diss., 2005.

²³ Fitzlyon, 436.

The three cohabitated in a seemingly unorthodox living arrangement until 1883, the year when both Louis Viardot and Ivan Turgenev passed away.²⁴

Although there is a great amount of scholarship and research into the speculation that Turgenev and Viardot had an affair, there is no absolute evidence that it was true. However, the relationship between Viardot and Turgenev did provide evidence of a fantastic collaboration that resulted in three operettas: *Trop de femmes*, *Le dernier sorcier* and *L'ogre*, all incredibly well-received in Baden-Baden. The operettas were all written with texts by Turgenev and music by Viardot, and were composed with the intention that Viardot's voice students would perform the roles. In the creation of these operettas, Viardot was continuing a tradition of composing for students that was established by her father, who himself had written six operettas for his students to perform, in addition to many vocal exercises and songs.²⁵ Prior to her retirement from the stage and her collaboration with Turgenev, Viardot published her first collection of songs in 1843.²⁶ Still, it wasn't until she moved to Baden-Baden that she truly dedicated her time to composition. Between the years 1864-1874, Viardot published fifty songs.²⁷ Most of her compositional output was limited to the styles with which she was most comfortable: piano and vocal music.²⁸

²⁴ Borchard.

²⁵ Nicholas G. Žekulin, *The Story of an Operetta: Le Dernier Sorcier by Pauline Viardot and Ivan Turgenev* (München: O. Sagner, 1989), 10.

²⁶ 1843 was also the year that Turgenev first saw Viardot perform on stage and became enamored with her.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Borchard.

Like most women composers during this time, Viardot did not initially intend to make a living as a composer, and her compositional output was primarily pedagogical as she wrote pieces for her own students to perform.²⁹ Despite continuing societal skepticism concerning the legitimacy of female composers, Viardot's compositions did make appearances in both public performances and publications.³⁰ Her compositional style is undoubtedly useful for teachers of singing, who can take advantage of these works which were written for younger voice students. Viardot's compositions are a great resource for teachers who are looking for repertoire for students who are continuing to establish technique and therefore may struggle with the demands of the standard repertoire.

Arguably Viardot's most notable composition is not found in her art songs or the operettas that she wrote with Turgenev, but instead her final operetta, *Cendrillon* (1904), with a libretto that she wrote herself based on the story of Cinderella. Setting the story of Cinderella as an opera was a concept that was not new to Viardot, as Rossini set the same story in his opera, *La Cenerentola* (1817). In fact, she was very well acquainted with

²⁹ Perhaps the most well-known woman composer during this time was Clara Schumann, who was also a close personal friend of Viardot. But any success Schumann achieved as a composer was largely the result of her marriage and partnership with Robert Schumann. Robert was very supportive of his wife's compositional output and often would publish her work in his own name so that it would receive greater attention.

³⁰ T.L. Krebs, "Women as Musicians," *The Sewanee Review* 2, no. 1 (1893): 76-97, JSTOR. This article is one of many sources of insight into the concept of women as composers. After mentioning composers such as Clara Schumann and Fanny Hensel, Krebs suggests that not only has a great female composer never existed, but that one never will. Krebs goes on to discuss the inferiority of women to men, beginning with the average weight of their brains (smaller than men's) and resulting in the differences of disposition between men and women as an explanation for the supposed inability for great women composers to join their male counterparts. Though an extreme example, this article demonstrates the overarching assumption at the time that composition was a masculine activity not suited for women at the time.

Rossini's setting as she had performed the title role during her years as an opera singer.³¹ Viardot would have also been familiar with Massenet's setting of the same story, in his opera of the same title, *Cendrillon* (1899).

Viardot's *Cendrillon* was revived in the early 21st century due in part to a recording of the opera by Opera Rara in 2000.³² Like so much of her other compositional output, recent performances of *Cendrillon* have taken place in educational institutions.³³ Just as the operettas she wrote with Turgenev, this operetta is appropriate for such a setting because it was written for her own students to perform. The entire operetta consists of a small cast: only seven roles and a small chorus, and a score which is written only for piano, which makes it easily adapted to the often-strained resources of a college-level music program.

³¹ April Fitzlyon, *Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot* (NY: APPLETON-CENTURY, 1964), 73.

³² Pauline Viardot, *Cendrillon*, conducted by Nicholas Kok, performed by Sandrine Piau and others, Opera Rara, 2000.

³³ Some recent performances of *Cendrillon* were at Ithaca College in 2009, <http://www.ithaca.edu/hs/depts/theatre/mainstage/gallery/2565/>, Fullerton College in 2015, http://www.laurislist.net/index.php?option=com_events&task=view_detail&agid=5438&year=2015&month=1&day=30&Itemid=192&catid=906|957|907|944|40, University of Hawaii in 2015 <http://hilo.hawaii.edu/news/view/9981>, just to name a few.

Chapter 3

CENDRILLON IN PERFORMANCE

The Project

Operatic singers are often revered for their ability to perform music that is technically difficult while managing dramatic challenges and navigating languages that are not native to the performers. Vocalists train for years with great effort and the assistance of voice teachers and coaches to achieve the stamina, control, and technical prowess required to be successful in these roles. In comparison to most operatic composers, whose work was written specifically for professional singers whose technique has been solidified and whose voices have fully developed, Viardot's repertoire, particularly her operatic compositions, are much more forgiving for younger singers who may not be ready for much of the standard operatic repertoire. Viardot's compositional output was written in consideration of the demands that developing singers may face, as she wrote with the knowledge of pedagogy and vocal development gained from her own experience and passed down by Manuel García Sr.

The expectation of singers during the bel canto era during which Manuel García Sr. and Pauline Viardot spent most of their careers was that they could navigate through the different vocal registers without noticeable effort or inconsistencies in their sound. Manuel García Sr., who achieved such great success for his own performances during the bel canto era, was also known for the exercises and instruction he provided for his voice students to assist them in their own attempts at the style. His book *School of Singing for the Medium Voice* is filled with exercises which are meant to help the singer achieve the goal of consistency despite negotiation of register and throughout difficult coloratura

passages.³⁴ Viardot also wrote a book of exercises for students which are filled with her own vocalises that can be used to find consistency, agility, and control for the singer who uses them.³⁵

This is just a small portion of the work created by the García family which so thoughtfully contributed to the study and development of the human voice. With an understanding of the care that was taken by Viardot in her vocal instruction, and the foundation of knowledge in vocal pedagogy which was passed on through her family, it should not be surprising that her compositions were sensitive in their construction for the benefit of the voice student.

To better understand the demands of this piece on developing voices, I produced and stage-directed a production of *Cendrillon* at Arizona State University, which featured undergraduate singers, many of whom had never had the opportunity to perform a role in an opera.³⁶ The music director for the production also served as pianist for the performance and provided invaluable support and instruction throughout the entire process. Students auditioned and were cast three months before rehearsals began so that they had an appropriate amount of time to learn the music and navigate the technical demands that their roles required before rehearsals started. The students were encouraged to bring their music to their own private voice teachers to receive assistance on any technical or musical difficulties that could not be addressed in the context of music

³⁴ Manuel García. *School of Singing for the Medium voice*. (London: Lamborn, Cock, Hutchings).

³⁵ Pauline Viardot, *An Hour of Study* (NY: G. Schirmer, 1897).

³⁶ The production took place on campus at Arizona State University on November 7th, 2016 in the Recital Hall of the music building.

rehearsals. The first rehearsal for the production was a complete read-through for the entire cast so that the music director and I could assess the areas which needed the most rehearsal time.

We determined that the first month of the two-and-a-half-month rehearsal process would be best spent on music rehearsals so that the cast members had sufficient time to become familiar with the music and could be completely memorized before staging began. This is unusual in the professional opera world, where most productions in the United States have a four to six-week rehearsal period, with only a handful of rehearsals dedicated to the music before staging begins. Even in an advanced educational institution such as Arizona State University,³⁷ the mainstage operas rehearse for around six to eight weeks total, with about a week spent specifically on music rehearsals, which is appropriate as those with roles are typically graduate students who have the skills necessary to prepare a role prior to the beginning of the rehearsal process. Because most of our cast was not very experienced in the operatic style and performance process, we felt that additional time would be necessary in order to bring the performance up to the highest level possible.

In regard to the language of the operetta, a decision was made to learn and perform the piece in an English translation. By allowing the students to sing the operetta in English, we did not have to worry about spending additional rehearsal time on diction and translation, which would have undoubtedly added more time to the rehearsal process. Not only did the translation simplify the learning process for some students who may

³⁷ Arizona State University is used as a specific example as I am most familiar with their rehearsal process as a student who participated in their operatic productions.

struggle with singing in the original French, but it would also make the production more accessible for audience members who were able to see the operetta performed in their native language, without the need for translation or supertitles. As Viardot wrote the libretto for *Cendrillon* in her own language, it seemed appropriate to allow the students in our production to have the same benefit.

Casting

The cast of characters as represented in the score that was used for our production is:³⁸

Cendrillon	Soprano
La Fée (fairy godmother)	Coloratura Soprano
Prince Charming	Tenor
Comte Barigoule (First Chamberlain to the Prince)	Tenor
Baron de Pictordu (stepfather)	Bass-Baritone
Maguelonne (stepsister)	Soprano
Armeline (stepsister)	Mezzo-Soprano

When it came time to audition and cast the roles for this production, a few adjustments had to be made based on the resources with which we were presented. None of the students who were given roles in the cast were identified by themselves or their teachers as mezzo-sopranos at the time of their audition, therefore sopranos with a warmer tone and greater control in the middle to lower parts of their range were chosen for Armeline, the mezzo-soprano stepsister (and her cover).

³⁸ Pauline Viardot, *Cendrillon (Cinderella)*, trans. Rachel M. Harris (Hammond, LA: Scena Music Publishing, 2013).

A casting-related issue within many college music programs throughout the United States is an overwhelming amount of female voices, and a limited number of male voices. Viardot's *Cendrillon* offers a solution to this problem, as it requires only female voices in the chorus, and there are only three male characters: Prince Charming, Count de Barigoule, and Baron de Pictordu. Unfortunately, within the cast of our production we only had one tenor available, and two tenor roles that needed to be filled: Prince Charming and Count de Barigoule. We were able to resolve this issue by replacing the role of the Prince with a soprano who, similar to our casting for Armeline, had a warmer tone and strength in her middle voice to compliment the higher, brighter tone quality of the student who would sing the role of Cendrillon.

It is not unusual in opera for younger male characters to be sung and performed by females. These types of roles are colloquially called *pants roles* in the opera community, and include the roles of Cherubino in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Stephano in Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Typically, *pants role* characters are younger males of high status, so we felt that it was appropriate to have the role of the Prince be performed by a female for the sake of our production. This decision served the purpose of honoring the tradition³⁹ while solving our casting dilemma, and giving a student the experience of playing a *pants role* character that they could put on their resumé as a type of role that they could be cast in for future productions.

³⁹ While it is not unusual for *pants roles* to exist in opera, typically these roles are designated by the composer as male roles that are meant to be performed by female voices. Viardot made no suggestions that the role of the Prince would be performed by a female, but it was a fitting solution for our issue of not having the necessary male voices to sing both tenor roles.

While this was not Viardot's intention for this role, the vocal line was suitable for a young soprano who sang the role an octave higher than written. The greatest difference between having a tenor singing this in the written octave and a soprano in her octave was the creation of moments of cross-voicing between Cendrillon and the Prince when they were singing together. In the large ensembles, it was less obvious, but in the Act II duet the proximity of their vocal lines resulted in a sweeter timbre and highlighted the give-and-take of their individual vocal lines resulting in a beautiful interpretation of the piece.

The rest of our casting was done traditionally with sopranos performing Cendrillon and Maguelonne, a coloratura soprano performing La Fée, a baritone⁴⁰ as the Baron de Pictordu, and a tenor as the Count Barigoule. Because of the duet between the Baron de Pictordu and the Count Barigoule, we decided that having our only true tenor voice perform the role of Count Barigoule would be most appropriate for blending purposes.⁴¹ This production had a women's chorus of eight, and an additional baritone voice to fill out the larger ensemble numbers. Because Viardot's compositional style was so insightful and generous to developing voices, none of the students in the production were cast in a role that demanded more than we felt they were currently capable of.

When I started planning for this production, I had decided to perform the role of La Fée in the performance. La Fée is a coloratura soprano role which is my fach, and the role requires both strong acting and technical ability. By casting myself in the role, I

⁴⁰ The student who performed the Baron de Pictordu did not identify as a Bass-Baritone as indicated in the score, but found that the material was a suitable fit for his voice. Discrepancies in interpretation of vocal fachs are not unusual in the opera world.

⁴¹ There are multiple scenes in the operetta where the Prince and Count Barigoule appear on stage together, so having the tenor perform both roles was not an option.

would be able to use the talented sopranos who auditioned in the other main roles. I was pleased that when I had such a large number of talented sopranos audition, including a coloratura with strong acting skills, I was able to give the role of La Fée to a well-deserving undergraduate.

In fact, we had so many talented singers audition that we could offer cover roles to three of the women who also sang in the chorus for the performance. The women covering these roles learned the music and attended every rehearsal for which their characters were called. The roles that were covered were Armeline, Maguelonne, and La Fée. Thankfully on the day of the performance there was no need for the covers to step in as the roles they had learned, but we did make sure to feature these hard-working singers during the Act II “grand ball” scene.

Viardot wrote a minuet to be performed during the “grand ball” while the guests are dancing, but a note in the score states that the choice of music for this moment is “left to the performers.”⁴² For this section we inserted “The Indes Trio” from Jacques Offenbach’s operetta *Christopher Columbus* in place of the minuet. The piece served many purposes: first and foremost, it was one of very few opera/opera pieces that is written to be performed by three sopranos, so it was an appropriate piece for the three women who were covering roles. In addition, the piece has a simple melody line, but allowed for both solo moments and harmony between the three singers, providing the perfect opportunity for them to be featured while still being supported by the other singers.

⁴² Ibid, 61.

Another important consideration for the “grand ball” scene was choosing a piece that would not interfere with the dramatic flow of the story. Thankfully, “The Indes Trio” is comedic and originally written in English so it fit with the context of the operetta. The only dramatic issue with inserting this piece into the scene was that it does not have a dance rhythm, so having the characters dance during the piece was problematic. To adjust for the difference in musical style, this section of the operetta was staged as a performance within a performance, giving all the other performers a moment to relax and watch while showcasing these three singers.

Staging Decisions

There were a few variables to consider while making directorial decisions for the production. As with any production, the location for the performance and overall setting of the piece had to be considered. Aside from showcasing the operetta and becoming familiar with the musical demands of the piece on undergraduate performers, I also wanted to make sure that my directorial decisions best showcased the strengths of the individual performers and created a story that would be both familiar to our audience while reinventing the popular fairytale.

The first consideration for this project was the performance space. As the operetta was written for salon performance, which would have been a more intimate performance in someone’s home, a traditional opera stage and set design seemed disingenuous and too formal for the piece. We decided to use one of the smaller stages, the Recital Hall, in the Arizona State University Music Building. The space seats 125 audience members and is much smaller and more intimate than the Evelyn Smith Theatre, which is used for

mainstage productions of the operas performed at Arizona State University, and the Katzin Concert Hall, which is frequently used for recitals, concerts, and chamber performances. An unanticipated benefit of the Recital Hall was that the hall is designed to imitate a theater in the round, so that the audience is seated on the three sides of the stage which protrudes forward, allowing those seated in the front of the house to be in very close proximity to the performers. Additionally, the side aisles that connect directly to the stage allowed the performers come out into the audience to “break the fourth wall” which brought the audience deeper into the action. Both of these elements were utilized in the staging to allow the performers to really connect to their audience.

The members of the cast came from a wide range of performance and stage training backgrounds. Some students had experience in straight theatre and musical theatre, very few of them had ever been in a full opera production, and some of the students had never been in a theatrical production of any kind before. In an attempt to make the piece feel more playful and break the stagnant style of staging so often incorporated with operatic performances, the story was reimagined as though the characters were children reading the story and acting it out. By allowing the students to get in touch with their “inner child,” we gave them permission to play, learn, and discover throughout the process of putting the piece together. It was my hope that by encouraging the students to approach their roles playfully, they would be able to release any physical tension which may inhibit them in regards to issues of vocal technique and overall stage presence.

Thankfully, Viardot’s libretto and composition of the Cinderella story was playful and comedic. Her style suggests an homage to the traditional operatic telling of the

Cinderella story established by Rossini in *La Cenerentola* and Massenet in *Cendrillon*. Both of these operas would have been familiar to Viardot's students and audiences and would have likely inspired their interpretations of these characters. For our production, having the characters reimagined as children who were retelling the story of Cinderella, allowed the students to approach these characters in a more playful manner.

Viardot's interpretation of the traditional Cinderella story⁴³ has a few differences from the original fairy tale. The wicked stepmother is replaced by an aloof stepfather who alludes to participating in some illegal activities earlier in life, through which he had established a relationship with the Count de Barigoule. Another departure from the familiar Cinderella story is that the Prince first arrives at Cendrillon's home disguised as a beggar, where he witnesses her kindness as she gives him bread and tea, much to the dismay of her stepsisters. When Cendrillon arrives at the ball, the Prince is disguised as the Count de Barigoule so that when they fall in love he knows that she is not in love with him because of his "Prince's title and crown."⁴⁴ Additionally, because the Prince meets Cendrillon before the ball in this production, it suggests that he falls in love with her because of her caring nature and kind personality, and not simply because of her beautiful appearance at the ball later in the story.

The set of the production was mostly bare except for the piano, a trunk full of clothes and toys, and a chair and small side table. The idea behind the barren set was that

⁴³ Charles Perrault and Marcia Brown, *Cinderella, or, The little glass slipper* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954). The original version of this story was written as a short story by Charles Perrault in 1697 and was then recreated with variations by the Brothers Grimm in 1857 and Disney (movie) in 1949.

⁴⁴ Viardot, 5.

the children were the ones who were creating this magical world out of their imaginations. The trunk of clothes was used to hold items that characters needed in order to transform into storybook characters. The trunk also held props that were useful for scenes such as the “transformation scene” which requires a pumpkin, mouse trap, six lizards, and a rat which transform into a golden carriage, horses, footmen, and the coach.⁴⁵

The score provides very little detail in regards to the set and staging of the operetta. The two major suggestions are at the beginning of the piece, when Cendrillon is meant to be seated by a fireplace (an homage to her namesake),⁴⁶ and a scene change for Act II, where the location shifts from the home of Pictordu to the Prince’s ballroom. Instead of having a dramatic change of scenery on stage, which would have been unrealistic in the performance space we were using, we chose to have the characters change into formal attire for the second act so that they were transformed from being children who were acting out a story, to fully becoming the characters they were portraying.

Building upon the concept that these children were playing make-believe, we did not need to worry about special effects when the story included “magic,” such as in the transformation scene; instead, we relied on the look of wonder on the “children’s” faces as they imagined these magical transformations occurring. A consideration while

⁴⁵ Ibid, 35-37.

⁴⁶ In making decisions about staging, I eliminated many details of the literal imagery from the story. For example, Cendrillon did not have golden slippers, and the Fairy Godmother did not have wings. Since the concept of the production was about imagination and the world that these children could create with their minds, I did not think it was important to recreate the fireplace among other suggested set pieces from the score or previous productions of this piece.

weighing the benefits of having the characters reimagined as playful children was the fickle nature of the relationship between the stepsisters, stepfather, and Cendrillon. In Viardot's version of the story,⁴⁷ Cendrillon is treated as a servant by her family, yet while she is preparing them for the ball they proclaim "Lovely child though spoiled we are, we are very fond of you!" suggesting self awareness and kindness not apparent in other incarnations of the story.

Another inconsistent moment occurs in the last scene of the operetta when the Prince is revealed and he and Cendrillon are going to live "Happily Ever After." In this moment the stepsisters and stepfather profess their love for Cendrillon and despite her apparent mistreatment, Cendrillon immediately forgives them for all of the pain they have caused her. In the end they sing of happiness together in the finale of the piece. Although this resolution is meant to illustrate the kind and forgiving nature of the Cendrillon character, it can be difficult for a skeptical audience to believe. Additionally, this ending is also different from the version of the story which our audiences would be most familiar with, the 1949 movie by Walt Disney.⁴⁸

It was important to consider the Disney version of Cinderella for the sake of our audience as well as our cast members who may not have been familiar with any of the other operatic variations of the Cinderella story. In the Disney version of Cinderella, her wicked stepmother and stepsisters are much crueler to Cinderella with no moments of

⁴⁷ Which is fairly similar to the Rossini *Cenerentola* libretto, especially in the end of the opera.

⁴⁸ *Cinderella*. By William Peed, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton S. Luske, Clyde Geronimi, Ben Sharpsteen, Ub Iwerks, C. O. Slyfield, Donald Halliday, Al Teeter, Oliver Wallace, Paul J. Smith, Mack David, Jerry Livingston, Al Hoffman, Joseph Dubin, Mac Stewart, Eric Larson, Don Lusk, Ilene Woods, Eleanor Audley, Verna Felton, Claire Du Brey, Rhoda Williams, and Luis Van Rooten. United States: Distributed by RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., 1949.

gratitude or kindness towards her. In the end of the movie the whole stepfamily is featured scowling while Cinderella puts on the glass slipper and it fits, proving that she is the one the Prince has come looking for. Cinderella's stepfamily members are never seen again in the movie, and in the final scene Cinderella is seen getting married to the Prince and embraces his staff members (instead of her own family members as we see in our version) symbolizing her connection to his new world while leaving her family behind.

The antagonistic portrayal of the stepfamily members within our culture's most widely accepted variation of this story presented difficulty with the differences in the reception of the Viardot libretto. The volatile nature of relationships between children combined with the lightheartedness and comedy of the Viardot libretto made the resolution at the end of our production more feasible to our audience.

Chapter 4

SELECTING REPERTOIRE FOR DEVELOPING VOICES

Voice Classification

The fach⁴⁹ system is a standard classification system that aids teachers and students in selecting appropriate repertoire. The benefit of using such a system is that it allows singers, teachers, and directors to be consistent in decisions that are made about which roles a particular singer should be studying. In her book, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System*, Pearl Yeadon McGinnis describes the fach system in great detail.

In the first chapter McGinnis addresses the hesitance of Americans who may not understand the purpose of using such a system:

Fach in German means specialty or category. In the opera world, *Fach* has more than one meaning. First of all, it refers to the system used to cast operas. It also refers to a voice type or vocal category -- not just soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, but what “kind” of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass (for example, soubrette soprano, or character tenor). [...] This idea of putting each singer into a specific category is seen by Americans as restrictive, but by European opera house directors as a sound organizational principle. Americans often resist being narrowly defined, even when it could help them find work. They feel that they should be able to sing their favorite arias or perform their favorite roles. They often resent being limited to a certain style of music or type of character based on their vocal or even physical characteristics.⁵⁰

She explains that though it may seem rigid to those unfamiliar with the system, establishing and selecting repertoire within their own fach is important for singers who are trying to present themselves to directors for the roles for which they should be cast.

⁴⁹ In its origin, the word “fach” is traditionally capitalized and italicized, but as its usage has found permanence within the English speaking opera community, this term will be presented in its lower-case format within this paper unless a quote presents a different format.

⁵⁰ Pearl Yeadon McGinnis and Marith McGinnis Willis, *The opera singer's career guide: understanding the European Fach system* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 2.

When determining the fach of a singer, there are many characteristics that must be considered. Frequently, the range of the voice is the first characteristic a teacher will observe in determining the fach of a particular student. The teacher will observe both how high and how low the singer is able to phonate, but will also take note of the area of the voice where the singer produces sound most comfortably. It is important to consider both of these aspects of range because although a singer may be able to produce sound in the higher or lower parts of the vocal range, they may not be able to produce a productive sound on one end or the other. Although two different operatic roles may have similar ranges in terms of how high and low the singer must be able to phonate, the part of the voice where the majority of the role is written may vary greatly, which is an important consideration in determining fach.

Another element of vocal sound that is considered when determining fach is the size of the voice. Voice size, or the amount of sound a singer is able to produce, can also be referred to as the “weight” of the voice, and is naturally a quality of sound that continues to develop as a singer physically matures. Because opera singers don’t reach full vocal maturity until they are in their mid-twenties to thirties, their classification may change as they age. McGinnis cautions against giving singers in larger fachs especially heavy repertoire too soon, noting that “a young soprano with the potential to be a young dramatic soprano should not be regularly singing arias in the fach until her mid-twenties at the earliest and thirty would be even better.”⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid, 49.

For example, a singer who will ultimately produce a large enough sound to be classified as a Dramatic or Wagnerian singer when their voices have fully matured will likely sing Lyric repertoire when they are younger.⁵²

The amount of sound a singer produces is an imperative consideration when casting stage repertoire. If the weight of one character's voice is much smaller than their colleagues in a production, the singer will struggle to be heard when more than one character is singing at the same time. Variance in the size of orchestration in different operas is also important to understand when casting voices that must be heard over the orchestra.

The timbre of a singer is another characteristic of sound which is used in determining their voice classification. Timbre, while very important in establishing fact, is more difficult to pinpoint as it can be more subjective. It is not measurable in the same way that range is measured by frequency or vocal size can be measured in decibels; timbre is defined by an individual's anatomy and resonance.⁵³ It is the individual timbre of the voice that distinguishes their sound from others who may sing the same repertoire.⁵⁴

⁵² Repertoire that is written for larger voices tends to utilize larger orchestras and have a fuller texture. If a singer tries to perform this repertoire before they are fully mature, they will potentially cause vocal damage by pushing their instrument beyond its current capabilities. Vocal health is another important consideration when selecting repertoire for singers at any point in their development.

⁵³ Some examples of descriptive words that are often used when discussing the timbre of a singer's sound are "warm," "dark," "bright," and "flute-like."

⁵⁴ Timbre is a very important aspect of all instruments and music making. To oversimplify, timbre is how we are able to differentiate between different instruments while they are playing the same pitch at the same volume. While their volume and frequency may measure the same at any given time, we are able to distinguish between a flute and a violin due to their differences in timbre, for example.

Thomas F. Cleveland goes into detail about this in his article: “The acoustic properties of voice timbre types and the importance of these properties in the determination of voice classification in male singers.”

Cleveland states that vocal timbre is “often defined as that particular attribute of a given voice which distinguishes that voice from another when the vowel and the pitch are the same.”⁵⁵ He further explains that it is vocal timbre which is used to divide singers into individual voice categories.

Standard Repertoire and *Cendrillon*

McGinnis states that there are twenty-five standard fach categories. In this paper, I will focus on some of the more common categories which are most relevant to our production of *Cendrillon*. The soprano who performed the title role in our production of *Cendrillon* sang Susanna’s aria “Deh vieni, non tardar,” from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* at her audition. McGinnis lists the role of Susanna under the Lyric Soprano (Lyrischer Sopran) category. The description of Lyric Sopranos in McGinnis’ book states that this fach is known for having a “voice with warm, beautiful color capable of long, seamless phrases and beautiful top notes.”⁵⁶ Much of the repertoire written for Lyric Soprano requires great control and stamina. *Le Nozze di Figaro* is relevant to many young singers due to the popularity of the opera in training programs and professional

⁵⁵Thomas F. Cleveland, "The acoustic properties of voice timbre types and the importance of these properties in the determination of voice classification in male singers," *STL-QPSR* 17, no. 1 (1976): , accessed February 25, 2017, http://www.speech.kth.se/prod/publications/files/qpsr/1976/1976_17_1_017-029.pdf, 18.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 22.

opera companies alike. As a result, many young Lyric Sopranos are given the opportunity to perform the role of Susanna because it is largely considered to be one of the lighter roles in the Lyric Soprano repertoire.⁵⁷ The soprano who performs the role of Susanna stays on stage for nearly all the three-hour opera, and while she only has two arias in the entire opera,⁵⁸ she must have a good deal of stamina and a large enough voice to cut through the larger ensembles of the opera.

Susanna is a very well-developed character which requires a performer with great range. She is intelligent, which is shown by her ability to manipulate many of the other characters. She is kind, as demonstrated when she takes care of Cherubino who has gotten himself into a great deal of trouble. She is sensual, as shown by her aria “Deh vieni, non tardar” where she tricks Figaro into believing that she would be unfaithful to him by seducing the Count. Performing this role requires great acting skills in addition to the vocal demands of the piece to portray such a complex character. This role also requires great command of the Italian language as her recitative passages are long, frequent, and difficult. Although a young singer may be able to perform her aria beautifully, she may not be prepared to perform the entire role until she has gained more experience.

The title role of Cendrillon in Viardot’s operetta is an appropriate project for such a singer to perform while her voice continues to develop and she hones her skills both on

⁵⁷ Despite McGinnis’ classification of the role, Susanna is frequently considered to be appropriate for a light lyric or soubrette soprano. As this role represents a bridge between the lighter soprano repertoire and many of the full Lyric Soprano roles that a singer will perform when they are fully developed, the characteristics of the role of Susanna are not strictly representative of the Lyric Soprano fach. However, the demands associated with this role are important skills for the Lyric Soprano to develop.

⁵⁸ One of Susanna’s arias, “Venite inginocchiatevi,” is frequently omitted during performance to cut the overall performance length.

stage and in the practice room. The entire operetta is only about an hour long, and while the character of Cendrillon is on stage throughout most of the piece, the piece is only a third of the length of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. The characterization of Susanna is fairly similar to Cendrillon: they are both servants to the higher class; both characters are in love with another character in the opera and have outside characters trying to separate them from their love. Additionally, both characters are kind hearted and require moments of comedy and genuine emotion from the singer.

Much like Susanna, Cendrillon only has two arias in Viardot's operetta. The first aria is an unaccompanied piece, "There was once a handsome Prince..." This first aria's greatest difficulty is the need for the singer to stay in tune without assistance from the piano despite interjections of dialogue. Although staying in tune while singing *a capella* can be difficult for any singer, the piece is only about two minutes long and the theme reappears throughout the operetta, so that the soprano who is singing the role becomes very comfortable with the melody.

Viardot's use of dialogue interjections, instead of the recitative which occurs at the beginning of Mozart's "Deh vieni, non tardar," allows the singer to communicate the text clearly without struggling with pitches and musicality. The range of "Deh vieni, non tardar" is A3-A5, which is within the range capable of most lyric sopranos, but requires the singer to be able to phonate in their chest register on the A3, followed by an ascending passage which takes the singer into their head register two measures later.



Fig. 3.1, “Deh vieni, non tardar” from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*, mm. 38-41.
 Source: *Arias for Soprano*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1991, 41.

Fig 3.1. illustrates the difficulty of Susanna’s aria by showing the proximity of a large register shift with little time for the singer to transition. Cendrillon’s first aria has a narrower range of a ninth, F4-G5, so she is not required to make such large register shifts, and can instead focus on the other aspects of producing a beautiful tone.



Fig. 3.2, “There was once a handsome Prince...” from Viardot’s *Cendrillon*, mm.23-24.
 Source: Viardot, Pauline. *Cendrillon (Cinderella)*. Translated by Rachel M. Harris. Hammond, LA: Scena Music Publishing, 2013, 4.

In Fig. 3.2 it is also apparent that the approach to the highest pitch, G5, is stepwise until the D5 on the words “true love” where Viardot provided the assistance of a grace note from D5 to G5 to smooth the transition into this head voice pitch.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ The edition that was used for our production is the same edition that is used for musical examples in this document. Therefore, all musical examples used are in English translation.

The demands of Susanna's aria in the context of the entire opera are also much greater when we consider that any technical difficulties within the aria are accentuated by the fact that the aria occurs in the fourth act. By this point in the opera, the soprano who is performing Susanna has been singing for over two hours. In *Cendrillon*, the title character's arias are in the short first act, ensuring that she will not already be fatigued by the time she sings these pieces. These are accommodations that Viardot likely considered in the composition of this piece for her own student.

While there is no surprise that the title character of *Cendrillon* has a great amount of stage time throughout the operetta, Viardot's writing for the character of La Fée (the Fairy Godmother) is especially interesting. The Fairy Godmother has a very small appearance in the original fairy tale, appearing only to transform Cinderella for the ball and never returning. In Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, with which Viardot was intimately familiar, the character is replaced by the bass role, Alidoro. In Viardot's operetta the Fairy Godmother appears not once, but three times. In fact the Fairy Godmother literally has the final word at the end of the finale when she sings "Now I must go farewell my love"⁶⁰ and holds a sustained G5 while the rest of the ensemble cuts off a full measure before her.

The Fairy Godmother in Viardot's operetta is undoubtedly meant to be sung by a lyric coloratura soprano. This is evident by the tessitura of the role, which sits much higher than *Cendrillon*, and the cadenza at the beginning of the final scene which requires agility comparable to other roles within the lyric coloratura soprano fach. The attention

⁶⁰ Viardot (Harris), pg. 99-101. Act III, Scene vi, mm. 26-30.

given to the Fairy Godmother suggests that Viardot had an affinity for coloratura sopranos in general, or possibly that she wanted to provide extra stage time for the particular student who was performing this role. While the Fairy Godmother spends more time on stage than the original fairy tale requires, the role is still fairly small in the scope of the standard coloratura repertoire. McGinnis lists Marie from Gaetano Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment* and Zerbinetta from Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* as examples of roles within the Lyric Coloratura Soprano (Lyrischer Koloraturasopran) repertoire. Like Mozart's Susanna, both of these roles pose technical challenges and require great amounts of stamina.

A trademark of the coloratura repertoire is the ability to move the voice quickly through difficult melismatic runs. As McGinnis states, the lyric coloratura soprano is known for "a high, bright, flexible voice that shines in the upper register."⁶¹ Many of the arias written for coloratura soprano are long and require great agility and comfort in the whistle register, in addition to great amounts of stamina and strong acting skills. Zerbinetta in Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* is a perfect example of the extreme demands that can be expected of a lyric coloratura soprano. Her aria, "Großmächtige Prinzessin," lasts around twelve minutes and is filled with difficult melismatic passages embedded within complex harmony. With fast moving rhythms, rapidly changing tempi, and through-composed melodic line which is neither simple nor intuitive, the musicianship alone which is required in order to learn this piece suggests that this piece is best left to those with a great deal of experience.

⁶¹ McGinnis, 20.

In addition to the musical difficulty of the piece, the tessitura sits especially high while moving rapidly through different registers.



Fig. 3.3, “Großmächtige Prinzessin” from Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos*, mm. 169.
Source: *Coloratura Arias for Soprano*. New York: G. Schirmer, 2002, 323.

It is difficult to select any single section from the piece which best illustrates the complexity of this aria, but Fig. 3.3 provides an example of an unaccompanied cadenza in the piece which requires great skill to navigate. Within a portion of this cadenza we can see that the range of the piece travels from the whistle register all the way to the middle of the singer’s voice and back up again.

An excerpt from the Fairy Godmother in Viardot’s *Cendrillon* presents similar challenges at the beginning of the final scene of the operetta.



Fig. 3.4, Fairy Godmother’s cadenza in Viardot’s *Cendrillon*, Act III, Scene vi, mm. 3.
Source: Viardot, Pauline. *Cendrillon (Cinderella)*. Translated by Rachel M. Harris. Hammond, LA: Scena Music Publishing, 2013, 93.

The cadenza shown in Fig. 3.4 is similar in style to the cadenza referenced in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In this excerpt we see that the fairy godmother must also execute an unaccompanied cadenza which crosses through different registers of the voice. However, this is the only moment within the operetta that the Fairy Godmother is tasked with

singing a passage which requires this level of agility, as opposed to roles such as Zerbinetta, which feature many such passages.

Similar to Cendrillon's music, the music which the Fairy Godmother sings is typically stepwise motion, making the notes which sit higher in her range much easier to access. Viardot also decided not to have the Fairy Godmother deal with negotiating the whistle register at any point in the operetta⁶² while in the Zerbinetta example it is clear that she is given multiple C#6 pitches and an E6 within this cadenza alone. Throughout the course of the entire aria, Zerbinetta sings at least eleven pitches that fall within the standard whistle tone range.⁶³

Pauline Viardot and her sister, Maria Malibran, were known for their agility and consistency throughout the different vocal registers when they were performing many of the coloratura roles in the standard repertoire. It is clear that Viardot considered the great deal of work required and overall difficulty of these roles for young coloraturas. The role that she created in *Cendrillon* allows a young coloratura to have some practice with the technical challenges they will face in the standard repertoire without being too strenuous for a developing singer.

While sopranos can begin to sing the repertoire from a variety of different fachs as their voice is continuing to develop, it is unusual for a young baritone to sing repertoire beyond the Lyric Baritone (Lyrischer Bariton) fach as a young singer.

⁶² The aria which is frequently added to the production during the Act II royal feast (a setting of La Fête by Chopin) does pose more technical difficulty which includes a cadenza with a C#6, but we chose not to perform this aria, and Viardot intended for the music for this section to be decided by the director. This allows the director to decide whether the piece is appropriate for the individual who is performing the role.

⁶³ The whistle register for sopranos is generally considered to be any pitch above C6.

As McGinnis explains:

(Lyric baritones are known for having) a smooth, beautiful, flexible voice with a bel canto line and effective top notes. Many a dramatic baritone started his career in this fach category. The beautiful vocalism required of this voice, combined with interesting and demanding character studies, ensures ample time for a young artist to develop artistic sensitivity and vocal stamina.⁶⁴

As previously mentioned, while a singer's voice is developing they may find that they move through fachs before settling in one of the heavier categories and as McGinnis mentions, the baritones are no exception to this.

In the quote from McGinnis above, she uses the term "bel canto" to refer to the lyrical line of many baritone roles. Within the "Bel canto" article in the Grove Music Online website the author explains that the term "bel canto" can be used to refer to both the style of singing and the era of operatic composition dominated by the composers Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini. In regard to the style which McGinnis is referencing, the article explains "the term 'bel canto' refers to the Italian vocal style of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the qualities of which include perfect legato production throughout the range, the use of a light tone in the higher registers and agile and flexible delivery."⁶⁵

During the bel canto era, the operas that were composed by the leading composers of that time, and with whom Viardot worked very closely during her operatic career, were the source of much of the well-known lyric baritone repertoire that is still performed

⁶⁴ Ibid, 37.

⁶⁵ Owen Jander and Ellen T. Harris. "Bel canto." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* (Oxford University Press, accessed February 19, 2017) <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02551>.

today. The bel canto composers created repertoire which allowed a skilled opera singer to showcase the most impressive qualities of their technique. McGinnis lists Belcore in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and Figaro in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* as two of the bel canto roles which are performed by lyric baritones. Both roles provide excellent opportunities for the baritone performing them to show off the beauty and skill that they have achieved in their study.

Viardot's association with the predominant bel canto composers is evident in *Cendrillon*, particularly in the music that was written for the male characters. Many of the standard bel canto arias begin with an introduction to the basic melody of the piece, which is then embellished either by the composer, the singer performing the aria, or both. The "Yesterday I saw a deliv'ry truck driving round..." aria is a fairly simple strophic aria that suggests the simplicity of a bel canto melody without the embellishments.



Fig. 3.5, "Yesterday I saw a deliv'ry truck driving round..." from Viardot's *Cendrillon*, mm. 64-67. Source: Viardot, Pauline. *Cendrillon (Cinderella)*. Translated by Rachel M. Harris. Hammond, LA: Scena Music Publishing, 2013, 24.

Fig. 3.5, though only showing a few measures of the aria, provides an accurate snapshot of the aria as a whole. The eighth note pattern and arpeggiating melody continue throughout the entire piece with no change to the overall structure.

The aria written for the Baron de Pictordu, which presumably was performed by a young lyric baritone at the premiere, shows great similarity to the simple melody introduced at the beginning of Belcore's aria in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*.

The image shows a musical score for the aria "Come Paride vezzoso" from Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, measures 9-11. The score is written for a baritone voice and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The lyrics are: "zo - so por - se il po - mo al - la più bel - la, mia di -". The music features a simple melody with some embellishments, including triplets and slurs. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

Fig. 3.6, "Come Paride vezzoso" from Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, mm. 9-11.
Source: *Arias for Baritone*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1991, 87.

The portion of the aria shown in Fig. 3.6 shows a similar shape and tessitura to the aria which the Baron de Pictordu sings. However, as opposed to Viardot's aria, Donizetti embellishes this simple melody throughout the course of Belcore's aria, growing increasingly more complex as the aria moves forward.



Fig. 3.7, “Come Paride vezzoso” from Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore*, mm. 43-44. *Arias for Baritone*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1991, 90.

Fig. 3.7 is an example of one of the embellishments that occur in Belcore’s aria and other similar bel canto arias, with the addition of sextuplets which move in narrow intervals throughout the phrase. The ability to sing difficult passages like these can be quite impressive to an audience. One must understand, though, that navigating a passage such as this could be quite difficult for a young singer who may find that they struggle with intonation of the close pitches, or that they may not be able to sing such a passage in time with the rest of the aria.

When preparing to work with a student who will ultimately sing Belcore’s aria or similar bel canto repertoire, great care must be taken in selecting appropriate repertoire to help them to prepare for these challenges. Having a student study an aria such as the one Viardot wrote for her own student would allow them to focus on any technical issues which may appear during the simpler sections of the aria, so that they are prepared to tackle the more strenuous portions of such an aria when they are ready.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Pauline Viardot's understanding of the need for aspiring opera singers to have performance opportunities without being given repertoire that is unsuitable for their current level of development resulted in an operetta which is both pleasing to the audience and the voice teacher. Viardot created a composition whose music has a foundation in the challenging repertoire that students will eventually face, but is simplified so that students of a certain level would not be pushed beyond their limits. In addition to the vocal line, she also considered the orchestration of the piece, knowing that her students would be heard more clearly over a piano than a full orchestra. She considered the acting challenges that are present for students with less stage experience and rectified this by having them portray familiar storybook characters. The length of the piece ensures that young singers will not be fatigued before the end of the performance. It is substantial enough to entertain audiences while challenging students who may not have the stamina yet to perform in a full-length opera, and yet need to understand how a character can develop over a complete dramatic arc.

Perhaps the most important discovery learned from the performance and analysis of Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon* is the service it provides for young singers and their teachers. The experience of Viardot as an opera singer, as well as being heir to the García family which shaped the study of vocal pedagogy, resulted in a compositional style which serves students of voice. There is no question that Viardot's operetta is an appropriate performance piece for the educational setting and will continue to live on through the voices of the next generation of opera singers.

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