

**The Journey of a Versatile Singer:
An Autoethnographic Study of Preparing and Performing
Five Different Vocal Genres and Styles**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the partial requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Music at the Odeion School of Music in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State

Submission date:

November 2022

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Declaration

I, Albertus Engelbrecht, declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the Degree of Philosophy in Music at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work and I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

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Albertus Engelbrecht

Acknowledgements

Quite a number of people accompanied, inspired and motivated me on my journey towards the accomplishment of this Ph.D. project. It would be too substantial a list to name them all here, and I apologise to those not mentioned – you know who you are and that I value all of your efforts.

I start by thanking my supervisor, Matildie Wium, for her continuous engagement of my undertaking and her expert guidance in writing this thesis. I am forever grateful to my practical supervisors, accompanists and the Head of Department of the Odeion School of Music, who walked the path of performing the five examination concerts with me – thank you, Jan Beukes, Anneke Lamont, Christine Crouse, Alex Fokkens and Magdalena Oosthuizen. A special word of gratitude must go to Kobie van Rensburg and the UMCULO incubator project for enabling me to be part of the production, *Passion*, in Soweto. Singing the Evangelist in this production was a wonderfully informative experience which also had an immense impact on my view of the performance of Western art music in South Africa. I am also indebted to Jacobus Kloppers and Hendrik Hofmeyr, who shared their knowledge of performing their music with me. Finally, I would like to thank members of my immediate family and my dear friends, without whom this journey would have been a desolate one – thank you Johannette Conradie, Annaria Engelbrecht, Cornie and Sarah Groenewald, Hermann Gurlinger, Desmond Haman, Gé and Vanessa Voges, Erna and Willem van Deventer, Annie Senekal and Frelét de Villiers.

Abstract

This project is an autoethnographic study aimed at developing the vocal–technical versatility required to perform various Western art music styles and genres appropriately while maintaining a singer’s vocal health. Vocal quality is mainly dependent on glottal closure (also known as glottal adduction), which can be categorised into firm and loose glottal adduction. Vocal registration is strongly interrelated with glottal adduction: simply put, firm glottal adduction corresponds to heavy registration and loose glottal adduction to light registration. Furthermore, vocal registration influences the vertical laryngeal position and subglottal pressure and its varying degrees ideally relate directly to different approaches to styles and genres. I came to realise during my professional career that different vocal registrations are appropriate to different vocal styles of Western art music. These considerations led me to my research question: How might a singer develop the vocal–technical versatility needed to meet the demands of performing diverse vocal genres and styles?

The existing scholarly literature does not provide singers with concrete advice regarding vocal–technical adjustment for singing across all the major vocal styles and genres of Western art music while at the same time maintaining vocal versatility. Consequently, my goal with this project was to generate these answers through praxis and making explicit the tacit knowledge embedded in my five examination performances, namely: (1) Bach oratorio; (2) verismo opera; (3) Viennese operetta; (4) 19th-century Lied; and (5) 20th- and 21st-century art song. This project resides in the field of artistic or practice-based research in which I, the performer, became the researcher and used my practical

experience as a research tool. In order to describe the personal sensory experiences of my singing, I decided to follow an autoethnographic approach within the paradigm of practice-based research. Central to this investigation was the documentation of the physical processes at play during the preparation period; in producing this documentation, I aimed at describing, in written form, the tacit knowledge of the ways I adapted vocal–technically to the different styles and genres. The data were collected in three ways: (1) by keeping a journal and/or using annotations of my preparation process; (2) informal recordings of my rehearsal period; and (3) video recordings of the actual performances. Critical self-reflection constituted the basis of the data analysis, a process that was conducted as follows: close listening to the examination video recordings in which I analysed the outcomes of my preparation period and compared my findings of the examinations with those of the examiners by consulting their reports. My enquiry revealed that I was able to develop vocal–technical versatility across the five vocal styles and genres by focusing consciously on the appropriate configuration of heavy and light registration. The use of *voix mixte* played a significant role in the colouration of the voice, which necessitates using light registration (regardless of whether the relevant performance situation gravitates more towards mainstream or historically informed performance). I conclude that my findings suggest that it is possible for singers to adjust their vocal technique convincingly to interpret the different performance practices and styles applicable to the genres which are discussed in this thesis.

Key terms: performance practice, vocal registration, vocal technique, HIP, autoethnography, practice-based research, modern singing technique, oratorio, art song, verismo opera, operetta

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale and background

My journey as a professional classical singer began in Germany 22 years ago at the age of 25 as a young lyric tenor performing mostly oratorio, Baroque opera and Mozart roles. Furthermore, I had always had a passion for the romantic German Lied and I tried to sing as many Lieder concerts as possible. At first, I was engaged in an opera chorus with solo obligations. However, after a while the solo obligations and the additional oratorio and Lied concerts became overwhelming, in addition to the chorus workload of the opera house. I therefore decided to audition for a permanent solo engagement at an opera house. As a South African citizen, I needed a permanent working contract to qualify for residency and to earn a steady income.

During my audition period and conversations with stage agents, it became apparent that I could not specialise only in Baroque music (opera or oratorio) or in Mozart tenor roles if I wanted to obtain a permanent solo contract: I was compelled to broaden my horizons of the vocal repertoire. The reason for this was that the opera landscape in Germany changed significantly during the first two decades of the 2000s, in the sense that theatres needed to save money as a result of reduced government funding. For this reason, singers who were to be appointed to the permanent ensemble of an opera company had preferably to cover a large spectrum of different repertoires, that is, be versatile performers. I observed that this was especially the case in middle- to small-category opera houses, where most young singers would start their career singing Baroque to Romantic opera in addition to operetta and/or musical theatre roles. This implied that, first, I had to find Romantic opera roles to sing and, secondly, that I was

required by my managing agent also to sing operetta and musical theatre roles. Being a young singer at that time, I thought that this versatility – that is, singing different genres and *Fächer* – would ruin my voice.¹ However, I needed the contract at an opera house and I commenced my first season with caution and maintained good vocal health.

I managed to retain my solo contract, which was renewed annually. In the fourth season as permanent solo ensemble member, I found myself singing a *Liederabend*, a Monteverdi leading role (Ulisse in *Il Ritorno d'Ullisse in Patria*), a leading role in an operetta (Danilo in *The Merry Widow*) and a leading role in a Rossini opera (Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*). During that season, I came to reflect on the remarkable diversity of the repertoire that I had sung in a mere ten months and also on the immense vocal challenges one faces in shifting between these distinctive styles of singing. I will never forget what a quantum leap it was to sing Ramiro (with his constant high B4's and C4's) the one evening after having rehearsed Ulisse (with a tessitura almost an octave lower than that of Ramiro) for a whole week.² Singing those first three tones that night was frightening in the sense of not knowing 'where my voice was'. That performance of *La Cenerentola* taught me the lesson of a lifetime: I had to adjust my vocal technique to meet the demands of the musical style and genre I was singing at the moment. I simply could not sing Rossini the way I would sing Monteverdi, or even Schumann's

¹ *Fächer* is the plural of the German word *Fach*, the term for 'voice-category'. German-speaking opera houses in particular 'have systematically distinguished between the various types of singing voice and have stipulated which opera roles are suitable for each of them. The main categories (soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, bass) each have their own subdivisions' (Steane 2002). Such subdivisions of the tenor voice, for example, are *Spieltenor* (lyric comic tenor) *Lyrischer Tenor* (lyric tenor), *Jugendlicher Heldentenor/tenore spinto* (lyric dramatic tenor) and *Heldentenor* (heroic tenor).

² The naming of octaves in this thesis is presented according to the Scientific Pitch Notation, where middle C is the beginning of the octave. In this system, C4 is middle C (C3 is an octave lower than middle C, for example).

Dichterliebe. These kinds of situation would repeat themselves only in the years to come – there were oratorio performances, the annual operetta production and opera productions that ranged from Baroque to Romantic opera.

In addition, I was introduced to historically informed performance practice (hereafter HIP) of Baroque opera when I collaborated in several productions with conductor Wolfgang Katschner and director/singer Kobie van Rensburg. The style of singing in these productions differed from the ‘modern’ singing technique I was used to³ and contrasted with the historically informed style preferred by Katschner and Van Rensburg. The main difference for me resided in the kind of glottal adduction which affected subglottal pressure and the vertical position of the larynx. I felt that glottal adduction was looser and felt lighter when singing Baroque music according to HIP, especially the manner in which I approached the ascending scale in the upper range of the voice. This looser glottal adduction resulted in lower subglottal pressure levels and a relatively neutral position of the larynx. Conversely, glottal adduction felt firmer with higher subglottal pressure levels and a lower position of the larynx when I sang, for instance, Romantic opera with the ‘modern’ singing technique. I concluded that firm and loose glottal adduction correlate with what I would call heavy and light registration, respectively. I realised that, to maintain good vocal health, I had to adjust consciously the vocal registration for different styles and genres according to the performance practice of a production.

I returned to South Africa in 2016, where I now hold a position as lecturer in vocal studies at the University of the Free State (UFS) and still maintain a performing career

³ I shall elucidate on this term below in section 2.1.3.

as lyric tenor in all the vocal style periods and genres of Western art music. When I decided to enrol for this Ph.D. study, I was at a point where I could look back upon my career and I realised that the practical experience I had gained constituted valuable knowledge about the profession: I had acquired significant skills for coping with different styles or genres of singing, so that I am still in good vocal health today. The 'integrated Ph.D.' at the UFS, designed for performing artists, requires a practical component of five examination performances, which should culminate in a thesis. I felt the need to refine and articulate in written form this practical knowledge and the vocal–technical skills which lay hidden in my bodily experiences and physical processes when singing in different styles and genres.

As I discuss more extensively in Chapter 2, the scholarly literature that describes vocal style and performance practice and which may serve as guidelines to the singer can be found in the volumes by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (1985), John Potter (1998, 2000), James Stark (1999), Martha Elliot (2006), René Jacobs and Silke Leopold (2015), and Thomas Seedorf (2019). Studies that situate the 'modern' singing technique against historically informed singing and underline the shift in vocal technique around the 1830s are represented in Potter's *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology* (1998), Stark's *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (1999), Richard Wistreich's chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing* (2000) and Jacobs and Leopold's *René Jacobs im Gespräch mit Silke Leopold: Ich Will Musik Neu Erzählen* (2015). The literature that focuses more on vocal performance practice and simultaneously advocates vocal–technical versatility includes Fischer-Dieskau's *Töne Sprechen, Wörter Klingen* (1985), Elliot's *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practices* (2006) and

Seedorf's more recent and comprehensive textbook, *Handbuch Aufführungspraxis Sologesang* (2019).

Very few scholars have compared vocal genres and styles with each other in Western art music and simultaneously discussed vocal production, that is, the different vocal approaches that these genres and styles might demand. To my knowledge, this kind of research has been conducted only in the field of Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM), where the CCM styles are also compared to vocal production in classical singing to some extent.⁴ I therefore concluded that the existing scholarly literature does not provide singers with concrete advice regarding the vocal–technical adjustment needed to sing across all the major vocal styles and genres of Western art music and at the same time still to maintain vocal versatility. Consequently, in this project, my goal was to generate these answers through praxis and to make explicit the tacit knowledge embedded in my five examination performances.

1.2 Research problem and objectives

The considerations I have outlined in the previous section led me to formulate the research question of this thesis as follows: 'How might a singer develop the vocal–technical versatility to meet the demands of performing diverse vocal genres and styles?' In my research project, I attempted to enquire about ways of developing vocal–technical skills so as to differentiate between different styles, periods and genres – avoiding the production of only one kind of sound production for all styles and genres, and simultaneously maintaining vocal longevity. Furthermore, the research question suggests that singers should acquire specific knowledge regarding

⁴ The most comprehensive publication is Rachel L. Lebon's *The Versatile Vocalist: Singing Authentically in Contrasting Styles and Idioms* (2006).

different vocal style periods and genres and therefore the discipline of performance practice was incorporated into my project. This study investigated exclusively the performance of different styles and genres of Western art music and did not include the so-called vernacular vocal styles of CCM.

My main objective in this research was to describe the artistic process at play when preparing for five different performances: those of (1) Bach oratorio; (2) verismo opera; (3) Viennese operetta; (4) 19th-century Lied; and (5) 20th- and 21st-century art song.

1.3 Research methodology and design

As I shall describe at greater length in Chapter 3, this project resides in the field of artistic research. My preparation process leading to the five performances constituted my research, and in this thesis I documented the original knowledge (vocal–technical adjustment required to achieve versatility across different styles) which I have obtained in this process. I, the performer, also became the researcher in the sense that I used my practical experience as a ‘research tool’. This practical experience of performing music translates into knowledge of how to do something, which is also described as procedural knowledge that forms an important foundation of artistic research. This procedural knowledge is generated through artistic practice and can contribute significantly to research in the academic system (Borgdorff 2012:124; Stolp 2021:96). Artistic research is often referred to as practice-based research (Borgdorff 2012:39). When practice-based research is conducted in the discipline of music, ‘musical practice is an integral part of the research’ and the outcomes (performances or compositions) are subject to academic discourse for the purpose of contextualisation (Borgdorff & Schuijjer 2015:16). I chose to use the term ‘practice-based research’ because, in my own study, practice formed part of the research project and results –

generating new vocal–technical knowledge through my practice, which was then documented in my thesis.

In order to describe the personal, sensory experiences of my singing, I decided to follow an autoethnographic approach within the paradigm of practice-based research. Steven Pace (2012:2) describes autoethnography as ‘a qualitative research method that combines characteristics of ethnography and autobiography’. He states that an autoethnographic study ‘commonly takes on the form of an evocative narrative written in the first-person style such as a short story or novel’ and explains that it has become popular in the creative and performing arts because it allows writers, artists, performers and others ‘to critically reflect upon their personal creative experiences’ (Pace 2012:2). As an alternative to this often quite emotional style of autoethnography, Leon Anderson (2006:388) introduced analytical autoethnography; this is characterised by its ‘value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also transcending that world through broader generalization’. Similarly, Mitch Allen (in Ellis et al. 2011) argues that autoethnographers need to be able to analyse their personal experiences and position them against existing knowledge so as to clarify the contribution of their research.

My study as a performing artist rested upon the practical element of performing; the new knowledge was developed through my study and documentation of the process leading up to my own performances, my contextualisation of this new knowledge within existing research and, ultimately, my critical self-reflection on the process, so that my autoethnographic study draws on Anderson’s and Allen’s contributions.

Numerous publications of practice-based research in the arts and performing arts already exist, but only a few are written by singers with an autoethnographic approach. Conductors Brydie-Leigh Bartleet (2009) and Malcolm Brooks (2013) and singer Miroslav Manovski (2014) describe the process of becoming professional musicians and teachers over a long period of time and their studies are examples of evocative autoethnography. Singers Päivi Järviö (2006), Elizabeth Belgrano (2011), Kathleen Baughman (2014), Jessica Aszodi (2016) and Barbara Gentili (2018) use their performance experience to enquire more about vocal performance practice. Aszodi (2016) combines practice-based research and autoethnography, which allows her embodied experience, or physical processes at play (when preparing and performing modern vocal music), to be examined and measured against theoretical sources and existing secondary literature. Gentili (2019) describes her professional experience as singer and analyses and interprets early 20th-century recordings to illuminate changes in vocal technique and performance around the turn of the 20th century. However, none of these researchers touches on the versatility of a singer, singing different genres and styles, that is, the autoethnographic methodology that has been applied to my research question has not been applied in the existing literature.

Like the above-mentioned authors, I collected data from my own experience as I prepared and performed my examination recitals. This implies that I investigated how to maintain vocal health on my journey to vocal versatility with a performance–practice approach, and how vocal registration played a vocal–technical role in this process. Cardinal to this investigation was the documentation of the physical processes at play during the preparation period, in which I aimed to describe in writing the tacit

knowledge of the ways in which I adapted vocal–technically to the different styles and genres.

The data were collected in three ways, namely: (1) by keeping a journal and/or the use of annotations of my preparation process; (2) informal recordings of my rehearsal period; and (3) video recordings of the actual performances. Critical self-reflection constituted the data analysis, and this process was conducted as follows: close listening to the examination video recordings in which I analysed the outcomes of my preparation and then comparing my findings of the examination with those of the examiners by consulting their reports. The original knowledge I would gain and produce through this process was attained through practice. Because I put onto paper what I had learned and had written my personal story in the first person, my research was therefore distilled in the format of an autoethnographic study within the paradigm of practice-based research.

The present introduction will be followed by a literature review (Chapter 2) and a chapter describing the methodology in greater detail (Chapter 3). Chapters 4–8 describe the five recitals in turn. In each of these chapters, I attempt to articulate the vocal–technical adaptations necessary for me to perform according to the stylistic demands of the given genre, and to reflect critically on the artistic outcomes of my efforts in order to evaluate the success of those vocal–technical adaptations (that is, to evaluate whether the vocal–technical adaptations enabled an aesthetically convincing interpretation of the music at hand). Chapter 9 offers a conclusion in the form of a summary of the insights derived from the five recitals, a meta-reflection on vocal versatility and recommendations for further research.

1.4 Ethical considerations

In this autoethnographic study I was the only research participant and therefore my enquiry did not imply the same ethical considerations as in traditional ethnographic research, which typically focuses on writing about a group of other people. Writing about the self and personal experiences is a subjective process which potentially puts the researcher in a vulnerable position and opens the door to outside criticism. This vulnerability is exactly what I experienced when I had to write about my own vocal–technical adjustments and how my text might have been perceived by others in my field. The biggest challenge was to apply a critical self-reflexion authentically to the outcomes of my examination performances, which were not always as positive as one would have hoped for. I often felt that my writing was too subjective in nature and that I risked exposing myself – as both artist and researcher – to criticism from experts in my profession and members of the academic sphere. However, I reached a point in the writing process where I became at peace with my findings, because I was able to contextualise them with existing scholarly literature in my field and with the perspectives of the practical examiners of my performances. This point I reached was crucial to ‘unveiling the vulnerable self that can free the mind of self-deception without self-deprecation’ (Hughes & Pennington 2018:22). Contextualising the knowledge I gathered from my personal experiences allowed me to draw generalised conclusions (about the possibilities of how to differentiate vocal–technically between the styles and genres discussed in this thesis). I found that the risks and psychological tensions that arose within myself while conducting this autoethnographic study were mitigated by the potential advantages this project could hold. These advantages are seated within the notion of sharing that tacit knowledge of vocal performance which singers do not always verbalise.

1.5 Value

Through the process of critical self-reflection on the data gathered from my preparation and its implementation in the performances I was able to distil the vocal–technical knowledge I had developed through practice. The outcome of my enquiry would hopefully contribute new knowledge to singers, vocal teachers and coaches about how to approach vocal–technically different styles and genres and, furthermore, to inform singers about becoming versatile performers.

Chapter 2: Literature review

My research question as formulated in Chapter 1 implies an enquiry into the development of different vocal–technical approaches on the part of a singer in order to meet the demands of performing diverse genres and styles. The crux of my project is, first, how to develop the vocal–technical means to differentiate between different genres and periods stylistically (i.e., the goal is to avoid an identical sound for all genres and period styles) and, second, simultaneously to maintain vocal health and longevity as a singer in the midst of pursuing these different vocal approaches. The research question also implies that a singer should possess specific knowledge of diverse vocal genres and styles; therefore, the discipline of historically informed performance practice (HIP) also has a bearing on my project. In this chapter I discuss the existing literature relevant to my study. In section 2.1 the focus is on performance practice in general, its definitions and its historical background. In section 2.1.2, my discussion covers the so-called authenticity debate and the importance of the performer’s choice between HIP and ‘mainstream’ performance (hereafter MSP). Section 2.1.3 considers HIP vs MSP performance from singer-scholars’ perspectives, with reference to their respective publications. In section 2.2, I focus on vocal–technical versatility with reference to the perspectives of professional singers. Section 2.2.2 highlights the technical implications of the differential approach to styles and genres. Section 2.2.3 deals with my own contribution to this study and the practical implementation of a pragmatic and aesthetic choice.

The interest in performing and recording early music had already emerged in the mid-20th century and was identified as the Early Music Movement in the 1970s. This

interest elicited a great amount of secondary literature on HIP. At first, scholars focused on music before 1750, but during the 1980s scholars extended their research to the Classical, Romantic and even 20th-century performance practice. General overviews of HIP are those of Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (1989), probably the most extensive publication covering all historical periods (including the 20th century), and Dieter Gutknecht (1994). To this list should be added the basic yet practical introduction to HIP by Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (1999), and Clive Brown (1999) covering the Classical and Romantic periods. The ethos behind HIP and the early music debate during the last quarter of the 20th century is best represented by Richard Taruskin (1995), Peter Kivy (1995) and John Butt (2002). The performance style differences between HIP and MSP during the 20th and 21st centuries are represented by Dorottya Fabian (2003, 2015), who investigated the performance practice of J.S. Bach's music.

According to Fabian (2003), fewer studies of HIP in vocal music exist because vocal production was considered only later within the Early Music Movement. This becomes evident in the limited outputs devoted to voice in the general overviews mentioned above. A number of secondary sources include sections on vocal style elements and articulation and on the musical structure of a specific genre or period, including those by authorities such as Butt (1990, 1994, 2010) and Fabian (2003) on J.S. Bach. Will Crutchfield's essays in Brown and Sadie (1989) contain some valuable insights into Classical and Romantic vocal performance practice and the development of a 'modern' vocal technique. More detailed outputs on vocal style and the different perspectives of singers on HIP and MSP with reference to certain aspects of vocal technique are represented in Fischer-Dieskau (1985), Potter (1998, 2000), Wistreich

(2000), Elliot (2006), Jacobs and Leopold (2015), and Seedorf (2019). Among these sources, Fischer-Dieskau (1985) focuses more on style elements in the word–tone relationship rather than HIP. Potter, Wistreich, Jacobs and Leopold place their main emphasis on historically informed singing of Baroque music, whereas Elliot and Seedorf provide a more general discussion of both performance practice from a variety of periods and genres and the various possibilities of vocal performance. Unlike Elliot, Seedorf’s textbook incorporates the genre of opera performance, which makes his volume the most complete and up-to-date textbook on vocal performance practice.

On the topic of the implications of HIP for vocal technique, Stark (1995; 1999) poses the notion of a word–note–tone relationship which should play an integral part in the analysis and assessment of vocal music and performance. Potter (1998) and Wistreich (2000) explored the vocal production of earlier style periods in what they call ‘pre-Romantic’ vocal technique and applied their findings mainly to Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque vocal music. The dissertations of singers Sarah Potter (2014) and Gentili (2018) underline changes in vocal technique in conjunction with style changes during the 19th century and point out the differences between ‘modern’ singing technique and that which predates the mid-1800s.

Very few scholars have compared vocal genres and styles with each other in Western art music and simultaneously discussed vocal production, that is, the different vocal approaches that these genres and styles might demand. To my knowledge, this kind of research has been conducted only in the field of Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) and to an extent compared to the vocal production of classical singing.⁵ I could

⁵ The most comprehensive publication being that of Rachel L Lebon (2006).

therefore identify a gap in the scholarly research according to an area of my enquiry, as stated earlier, namely, the maintenance of versatility across all major vocal styles and genres in Western art music. Moreover, I aim to provide a roadmap for singers to enable them to manoeuvre across different styles and genres and to investigate how this could be achieved vocal-technically.

2.1 Performance practice and style: definitions and debates

All professional performers of Western art music make certain informed choices when preparing a performance of a specific work, which choices then result in the musician's personal interpretation of the work. Moreover, a performer ideally familiarises themselves with the style of the music and how that style should be executed or performed. Here we are immediately dealing with two terms which are related to each other, but also signify matters of discourse, namely, style and performance practice.

2.1.1 Definitions

According to Grove Music Online,

Style manifests itself in characteristic usages of form, texture, harmony, melody, rhythm and ethos; and it is presented by creative personalities, conditioned by historical, social and geographical factors, performing resources and conventions (Pascall 2001).

Familiarisation with style goes beyond the musical text and language of the composer and it includes historical considerations. Since style is also related to the performance of music, it includes a knowledge of the performance practice and conventions of the past and present. Moreover, the versatile artist must be able to differentiate between the stylistic characteristics of various genres and style periods. An enquiry into performance practice can be complicated because it points to different concepts and

terminology that might be confusing with regard to what performance practice represents. According to Brown et al. (2001), performing practice entails 'all aspects of the way in which music is and has been performed, and its study is of particular importance to the modern performer concerned with historically informed performance'.

Gutknecht (1997) also reiterates the involvement of all aspects but adds that performance practice also aspires to achieve a reproduction of the musical text that conforms as closely as possible to the intentions of the composer, including external aspects such as instruments, events and space.⁶

What transpires from the respective definitions is the link between early music and HIP. However, such definitions may lead to the misconception and presumption that performance practice equals early music and HIP. It is therefore important to understand how the terminology originated and the possible shifts in meaning.

The concept of 'early music', *Alte Musik* or *musique ancienne* has its origins in the early 18th century in England, Prussia and France and continued into the 19th century. The main incentive was to revive and preserve music from the past (Haskell 2001). It is noteworthy that the prerogatives behind these endeavours were to perform early repertoires not according to their contemporary period style but 'as a repository of living art that each generation could – indeed should – reinterpret in its own stylistic idiom' (Haskell 2001). However, this concept began to change gradually at the end of

⁶ The emphasis on the composer's intentions today is arguably an outdated perspective and succinctly questioned by Taruskin (1995:98) who maintains that 'composers do not usually have intentions such as we would like to ascertain' and the 'appeal to intentions is an evasion of the performer's obligation to understand what he is performing'.

the 19th century with a growing interest in reconstructing the original instruments for performing the early repertoires according to the conventions of the style period.

This change in concept was mainly initiated by instrument-builder and performer Arnold Dolmetsch, who is seen as one of the pioneers of the Early Music Movement (Haskell, 2001). At the same time, academics at universities, the so-called *Collegia Musica*, also concentrated on the study and performance of early repertoires.⁷ These initiatives resulted in the first surveys on *Aufführungspraxis* (performing practice) by Dolmetsch (1915), Robert Haas (1931) and Arnold Schering (1931). Gutknecht (1997:10) remarks that the title of Schering's volume, *Aufführungspraxis alter Musik* (1931), clearly indicates the link and interrelation of the terms 'performance practice' and 'early music', and the 'problematic nature' of defining its chronological borders which Schering set between the medieval period and mid-18th century. The idea that music from different style periods could sound different if performed according to the conventions of their time gained new momentum immediately after World War II. However, Fabian (2003:2) elucidates that 'the study of performance *style* still often remained restricted to research communities and written communications' and even in the mid-1960s 'it was not regarded as an indispensable and integral part of practical training'. Furthermore, the focus generally was on reviving early music repertoire (especially research regarding new notational editions and also forgotten compositions) and 'only to a lesser extent was it concerned with historical performance styles or the details of historical information' (Fabian 2003:3, 4).

⁷ In the 1900s, *Collegia Musica* was the name given to groups of musicology students in Germany (Leipzig, Freiburg, Halle, Heidelberg, Jena and Marburg) who focused on 'historical awareness' with the intention of performing 'Baroque instrumental music' and 'publishing that music' (Platen & Fenlon 2001).

The shift in importance from repertoire towards performance practice became noticeable during the 1970s and simultaneously the term Early Music Movement came into general use to describe the group of performers and scholars supporting similar ideas. In England especially, this cultural phenomenon could be observed during period from the late-1960s until the 1980s. Musicologists and performers were seeking 'historical correctness' (authenticity) based upon the *Werktreue* concept in the performance of music. The motif was to break with 'tradition', returning to the score and historical sources to close the gap between composition and performance. Almost a decade later, critical discussions on the theory of authenticity began to dominate the field of performance practice in the British-American literature (Fabian 2003:4, 5). Significant proponents of this critique included Laurence Dreyfus, Taruskin, Kivy and Butt, as is discussed in the following section.

2.1.2 HIP vs the 'Mainstream'

Although an in-depth discussion of the HIP debate would extend beyond the scope of this thesis, a number of key issues that emerged from the critique of 'authenticity' in HIP during the 1980s and 1990s are relevant to my argument. As I show below, these criticisms centred on the puritanical, prescriptive ethos of the Early Music Movement, encapsulated in the term 'authenticity' and the exploitation of this term for commercial purposes.

Both Taruskin (1995:34) and Butt (2002:148) explain that the success of historically 'authentic performance' of the 1970s and 1980s was made possible to a great extent by public broadcasting and recording companies that harnessed the label 'authentic' as a lucrative money machine. This machine was further supported by commercial press propaganda and music critics who 'educated' their readers and audiences about

what constituted so-called 'correct' historical performance. Fabian (2003:13, 25) points out that the popular press and its 'haphazard' use of the term 'authenticity' contributed to the misconception of and critique against HIP during the 1980s and 1990s without taking stock of the 'different status of artistic activities and goals represented by the various performances'.

Dreyfus (1983) was one of the first to elucidate the divide and conflict between scholars and performers of the Early Music Movement and MSP. He states that 'as a regulative ideal, authenticity expresses a supposed opposition to the self-aggrandizing individualism prevalent in Mainstream praxis' (Dreyfus 1983:299). For Dreyfus this stems from a generalisation that 'mainstream' performers are not true to the music because of their self-expression, that is, their subjective, personal interpretation of the score; therefore, they do not prioritise the intentions of the composer. The authentic performer 'willingly' serves the composer and commits to 'truth' (ibid.). Dreyfus (ibid.) further identifies a social practice of people and things resembling what he calls 'objectivism' in early music, which had lost its experimental phase of re-imagining the past and was now 'following the textbook rules' of HIP to achieve authenticity.

Dreyfus's statements resonate with the recurring main objections by Taruskin (1995:70), who argues that the limits of authenticity rest within 'the attitudes of textual critics' who fail to see the difference 'between music as tones-in-motion and music as notes-on-page' and therefore reducing the 'act', the performance, to 'text'. Taruskin (1995:62, 70, 71) maintains that although scholarship can inform and stimulate performers and vice versa, the emphasis on 'musicological realization' inhibits the performer from implementing their personal 'choice and taste' in interpreting a work and ultimately robs a performance of personal expression. Furthermore, Taruskin

(1995:90) considers the reason for the debate and authentic performance's superior attitude when he poses the question whether 'we really want to talk about "authenticity" any more? [sic]' and stated that authenticity 'simply cannot be rid of its moral and ethical overtones [...], being used to privilege one philosophy of performance over all others'. This implies that authentic performance leaves no room for other performance practices and 'threatens the status of artists not trained in "historically appropriate instruments or styles of playing"' (Taruskin 1995:92). This is the reason why 'the "classical music scene" [...] has taken on the appearance of a "battlefield", and why we are fighting it out, in this book and elsewhere' (ibid.).

Kivy (1995:272) shares Taruskin's and Dreyfus's sentiments regarding the loss of the performer's freedom of expressivity and the collapse of performance into text when he asserts that for the 'historically authentic' performer, the ultimate goal is 'a matter of "textual authority", not artistic choice'. Furthermore, he argues that the 'gap between "text" and performance' is a legitimate one that allows more freedom for interpretation, a gap the MSP performer fills and for which they are admired by the audience. Opposed to this, historical performance wants to close that gap as much as possible with knowledge from the composer's intentions, original sound and/or practice (ibid.). For the sake of 'artistic choice', Kivy (1995:6–7) introduces four different 'authenticities' which translate into different approaches to performance in which performers can be true (authentic) to different ideals. These four 'authenticities' are

- (1) faithfulness to the composer's performance intentions;
- (2) faithfulness to the performance practice of the composer's lifetime;
- (3) faithfulness to the sound of a performance during the composer's lifetime;
- and (4) faithfulness to the performer's own self.

Subsequently, Kivy arrives at his pivotal argument and advocacy of a pluralistic approach to music performance. Moreover, Kivy (1995:285) defends MSP against what he identifies as the Early Music Movement's 'musical puritanism' and asserts that personal interpretation (personal authenticity) can and should exist in combination with or parallel to other aspects of historical performance.

Butt (2002:xi) points out that Dreyfus and Taruskin acknowledged the more innovative and liberal scholar-performers of the movement and the possible benefits of HIP. A central argument of Butt's is to show that the debate, especially the 'sheer force' of Taruskin's outputs, paved the way to new insights 'and has reformulated the issues concerned with the discussion of HIP' (ibid.). This 'reformulation' of issues could be observed already in the early 1990s as the term 'authenticity' was discredited and replaced with period performance or HIP (with the latter probably the most prominent since Butt began using it as an acronym). For this reason, Butt (2002:31) objects to Kivy's diagnosis of HIP, which appears to be 'a total ignorance of the actual practice of HIP during the 1980s and 1990s' and the overall assumption that the HIP performer does not 'deviate from the notation [...] while the MSP performer may creatively depart from it'. Butt (2002:32) points out that the most prominent scholar-performers, such as Gustav Leonhardt and Nikolaus Harnoncourt, who were, among others, singled out by Taruskin and Dreyfus as 'good' HIP performers, never associated with the ideology of authenticity, which to them was unattainable. He also reminds us of Harnoncourt's statements that performers should, in the first place, be musicians and not scientists, that we should prioritise what constitutes successful interpretation and that period instruments alone do not guarantee good interpretation. Furthermore, he asserts that 'there is now [in 2002] more freedom and latitude in interpretation within HIP than there

has been in virtually all “mainstream” performances’ (ibid.). The HIP style Butt refers to has been studied and articulated further by Fabian (2003, 2015).

Fabian (2003:5) succinctly observes that the ethos and performance style of the Early Music Movement on the European continent during the 1970s and 1980s differed from the ethos and style of the Early Music Movement in Britain, because the public debate between scholars and performers (especially in German-speaking countries) had already occurred during the 1950s. She also refers to Leonhardt and Harnoncourt, who both went through a phase of literalistic performance style, but rejected the notion of authenticity, and by the 1980s, displayed a much different and more expressive style than their English counterparts in the performance of Baroque music. Fabian (2015:29) also states that this different and novel style has become known as ‘the historically informed way of performing music’. Fabian (2015:122) concludes that there are two main trends of Baroque performance practice, namely, HIP, which influenced MSP, and ‘a gradual shift towards a more flexible way of playing’.

With regard to performance style, Michelle Dulak (1993:50) had already observed ‘a pluralism of [performance] styles’ in the early 1990s, stating that ‘so many players now cultivate the ability to switch into and out of “period” style at will’ with the result that style becomes ‘less a historical “given” than a large set of sonic resources, from which the musician selects whatever he (or she) feels to be appropriate to the situation at hand’.

In summary, we see that the Early Music Movement and authentic performance came under scrutiny because of the limitations it placed on performers through its insistence on following historical ‘textbook rules’ (Dreyfus 1982:299), reducing the act of performance to the realisation of a text. The Early Music debate gave rise to the term

HIP that represents a more flexible and expressive approach to performance. Furthermore, the writing of Taruskin and Kivy in particular paved the way for a pluralism of performance styles. As I show in the next section, present-day singers may alternate freely between, and even combine aspects of, HIP and MSP in their vocal delivery.

2.1.3 HIP vs MSP: singers' perspectives

When we consider vocal performance, beginning with music before 1800, it is impossible not to be confronted with the concepts of HIP vs MSP. Since the development of the Early Music Movement in England and its influence on the European and American scene, singers too have been influenced by the idea of thinking 'historically'.

We have established that since the beginning of the Early Music Movement, a great deal of research and experimentation has led to a more relaxed view of HIP. More recently, musicologists have observed that HIP and MSP have influenced each other when it comes to music, especially before 1800.

As early as 1985, German baritone and pedagogue Fischer-Dieskau asserted in his monograph *Töne Sprechen, Wörter Klingen* that singers should have a certain '*Wissen*' (knowledge) about the interpretation of any composition, which should ideally not be copied from other artists but gathered through 'analysis and experience, a renewal in itself' (Fischer-Dieskau 1985:462, 463).⁸ This *Wissen* could be 'forgotten in the moment of the performance' but is of the utmost importance in the preparation process (Fischer-Dieskau 1985:465). Although Fischer-Dieskau did not see himself as

⁸ All the translations from Fischer-Dieskau's monograph are my own.

an HIP singer, he did value HIP in so far as the historical information was evidence-based.⁹ Moreover, Fischer-Dieskau believed in vocal versatility (as his creative output certainly proves) and in his writing he advised singer-specialists to learn from other styles.

The influence of the Early Music Movement in England on vocal performance during the 1970s and 1980s can be observed in the various publications of Potter (1998, 2000) and Wistreich (2000, 2002; Wistreich & Potter 2013), who started their careers as singers (mostly early music and *Avant Garde*) and have become respected researchers and academic scholars in the past two decades. Their respective collaborations with groups such as David Munrow's *Early Music Consort* or Michael Morrow's *Musica Reservata*, and also their own ensemble established in 1989 (*Red Byrd*), inspired these two singers to enquire more about historically informed singing and to extend the enquiry beyond the area of style. Subsequently, their years of experimentation and studies of historical vocal style resulted in their careful descriptions of the way singers may and/or should differentiate between period styles, which in turn implies vocal–technical adjustments.

Both Potter (1998) and Wistreich (2000, 2002) argued around the turn of the 21st century that, historically, vocal sound production for music of the 17th and 18th centuries was different from the norm of 'modern' classical singing. This 'modern' classical singing technique is based on developments in vocal pedagogy that

⁹ Dieskau in an interview with KlassikAkzente.de: 'Ja, wenn man denn "informed" ist, dann ist ja alles gut! Wenn allerdings die Informationen aus ganz neuen Quellen stammen oder gar selbst erfunden sind, dann zögere ich, ihnen zu folgen. Und bis auf einige frühe Erfahrungen mit Harnoncourt und dessen Mozart-Interpretation fallen mir keine weiteren ein' (Fischer-Dieskau 2000). 'Yes, if you are "informed", then everything is fine! However, when the information comes from entirely new sources or is even one's own invention, I hesitate to follow it. And apart from a few early experiences with Harnoncourt and his interpretation of Mozart, I cannot think of any more' (own translation of Fischer-Dieskau 2000).

crystallised during the 19th century (especially thanks to the contribution of Manuel Garcia II, 1805–1906), as is set out by Stark (1999:189) in his history of bel canto, which he defines as follows:

Bel canto 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*, *appoggio*, register equalization, malleability of pitch and intensity, and a pleasing vibrato.

Potter (1998:53) provides an insightful description of vocal production in this present-day norm of singing when he writes:

When a modern classical singer sings, [the sound] is enhanced in several ways [...], the principal one being the lowering of the larynx [...] which significantly increases the length of the vocal tract. The effect of this is to shift downwards all the formant frequencies with a marked effect on the first formant, which is associated with the larynx and the initial production of the vowel sounds. This phenomenon, known as the singers' formant [sic], produces additional resonance at the cost of no extra physical effort, to the extent that a solo singer can easily project his or her voice over a large orchestra.

Conversely, the main characteristic of what Wistreich (2002) calls 'pre-Romantic' singing technique is the use of a free-floating, relatively higher larynx position, which in turn allows clearer enunciation of the words, a more precise and fast articulation of *passaggi* and differentiation of the registers with their 'proper' blending, that is, fuller modal (chest) voice, which becomes lighter in the higher register. The ideology of reconstructing the authentic sound and playing techniques of period instruments therefore had found its way into vocal sound production and the application of stylistic

elements. In his entry on 'voices' ('The Classical Era: Voices') in *Performance Practice: Music After 1600*, Crutchfield (1989b:295) maintains that (in the Classical era) 'many features of performance practice arise directly from the technical disciplines that were pursued' and that

any account of Classical performance style must begin with the acknowledgment that many Classical practices are impossible to achieve [...] except by vocal discipline resembling that of the period.

Crutchfield (ibid.) further asserts that modern singers 'vary markedly in their ability to follow these practices' and maintains that singers should decide which aspects of the performance practice they can achieve vocal–technically. In reference to the Romantic period, Crutchfield (1989a:424) shows that the trend towards greater vocal power had an 'increasing, multifaceted influence on technique and style'. Furthermore, the 'breakdown of conventional forms' led to a decline in 'quasi-improvisatory skills', which were still practised during the Classical period. Crutchfield (1989a:425) further maintains that due to the many stylistic changes of the 19th century, 'it is far more necessary for the Romantic period than for the Classical to distinguish performance practices chronologically, almost decade by decade.'

More recently, Wistreich and Potter engaged in a conversation published in *Early Music* (Wistreich & Potter 2013), in which questions are raised about the status quo of HIP in singing regarding its validity and teaching. Reflecting upon almost 40 years of experience as singers, musicologists and pedagogues, they revealed remarkable new insights. Wistreich (Wistreich & Potter 2013:23) remarks that for him there was no point in performing music 'just in order to reveal and demonstrate "historical correctness" [...] or simply make a new case for the existing canon' and that their

research was underpinned by a 'genuine experimental process' instead of claims of authenticity. Wistreich (Wistreich & Potter 2013:26) adds to the argument by asserting that there should not be a 'professional definable specialism called "early music singer"'. Moreover, he calls for a broader approach to pedagogy in which young singers should rather collaborate and work with HIP musicians instead of specialising as 'Early Music singer[s]', advocating greater versatility among singers and the approach to teaching vocal students (ibid.). In this regard, Wistreich (Wistreich & Potter 2013:26) opines that the 'concepts of "opera singer" or "musical theatre singer" are [...] other anachronisms that need to be prised out of the curriculum of conservatories'.

From Wistreich and Potter's 2013 conversation we clearly notice a more relaxed view of HIP which tends to discard the use of the term HIP, or 'Early Music' singer, advocating instead versatility among singers who are inspired by research and history and therefore make informed choices. Elliot's volume, *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practices* (2006:3), deals with exactly this matter and aims to provide present-day singers with 'tools for a wide variety of situations in which singers might find themselves'; therefore, she does not direct her book specifically at the 'early music singer'. Her views are not 'meant to transform modern singers into authentic recreations of historical personalities' (ibid.). Elliot, a singer herself, observes that in the years predating 2006, tastes in choice of singers and voice types changed a great deal. Moreover, the opportunities for a performance approach to certain genres or periods had proliferated, ranging from a so-called HIP approach with smaller vocal ensembles and period instruments to a more operatic approach with opera singers

and full modern orchestra and chorus, or 'with any kind of combination of elements in between' (ibid.).

In line with the latest advocacies and the views of Wistreich and Potter are also the two latest publications on vocal performance practice from Jacobs and Leopold (2015) and Seedorf (2019). Both these publications elucidate the problem with the concepts of 'early music' or HIP in discussions of vocal performance. Jacobs, a renowned HIP conductor and singer, also points out that the tension between MSP and HIP has gradually been resolved over recent years and holds that 'the performance practices have approached each other with mutual respect' (own translation from Jacobs & Leopold 2015:57). In this sense 'traditional symphony orchestras have incorporated playing and interpretation methods of HIP and, on the other hand, 'HIP has developed its own traditions within a few decades' (ibid.). Furthermore, Jacobs asserts that because of HIP's own tradition, it is now confronted (similarly to MSP) with the 'danger of confusing tradition with interpretive sovereignty (*Deutungshoheit*)' (ibid.). This notion of Jacobs implies a similar sentiment to that expressed earlier by Taruskin (1995) and Kivy (1995), namely, an appreciation of singers' and musicians' agency to make informed interpretive choices of their own rather than being expected to follow tradition or dogma strictly.

Although Jacobs (Jacobs & Leopold 2015:65) does not approach vocal versatility as directly as Wistreich and Potter, he does caution young singers who want to specialise in early music because they assume that their voices are suitable for the repertoire. In addition, he rightly argues that 'the repertoire suitable for a specific voice cannot be confined to a specific musical time period' but depends on whether the voice is lyric or dramatic (ibid.). Within such standardised categorisations of voice types, however,

Jacobs advocates that singers have the freedom to implement a greater variety of vocal colour than was the norm among singers during his career – a topic which I return to in section 2.2.2 on the vocal–technical implications.

In the introduction to his textbook, *Handbuch Aufführungspraxis Sologesang* (2019), Seedorf deliberately uses the term ‘performance practice’ (*Aufführungspraxis*) and not ‘historical performance’ or ‘historically informed performance’ in approaching concepts of vocal performance practice. Seedorf argues that all music, even the recent compositions, require some knowledge that goes beyond the notion of how to realise the score. In this sense, the term ‘performance practice’ should not be confined to historically distant periods but should describe ‘a certain knowledge of sonic realisation which complements the notation of music over all epochs’ (Seedorf 2019:13).¹⁰ Seedorf therefore dismisses the idea that performance practice points towards a specific time period or a movement’s ideologies and aims to provide information not specified in the score, by composers of all style periods and genres. His notion resonates well with the consensus expressed by Potter, Wistreich, Elliot and Jacobs. Seedorf (2019:18) remarks that HIP has ‘once more created an awareness that a lot of information is not written in the notes’. However, for Seedorf (2019:1820), while singers may carefully emulate such aspects of performance practice as have solidified into an established HIP singing style (including embellished melodic lines, the use of appoggiaturas, weight or accent on strong syllables of the text, and quasi-improvisatory cadenzas at fermata signs), ‘far from everything [i.e., up-to-date knowledge of historical singing technique and style] has been incorporated in vocal performances of the present’. In fact, Seedorf’s opinion is that singers seldom deviate

¹⁰ All the translations from Seedorf’s *Handbuch Aufführungspraxis Sologesang* (2019) are my own.

from the 'modern singing technique and aesthetics' in order to try new ways of singing based on historical evidence (ibid.).

Also in the past decade, studies by Potter (2014) and Gentili (2018) elucidate the changes in vocal performance style during the 19th century, such as portamento, vibrato and rubato and their vocal–technical implications. Like Potter (1998) before them, they date the development of the 'modern' singing technique to the 19th century but assert on the basis of analyses of recordings of 19th-century singers that the transition was finally accomplished in the 20th century. Again, in accordance with John Potter, they identify the characteristics of 'modern' technique as consistent larynx lowering, which influences *chiaroscuro* and singer's formant (I elucidate this term below in section 2.2.2). Sarah Potter has raised the question whether modern singers would be able to deviate from the 'modern' technique to meet the requirements of HIP productions of 19th-century works. Her findings propose a 'neutral' position of the larynx which 'presents an instrument of much more delicate capabilities [defined as stylistic aspects such as portamento, *messa di voce* and selective vibrato use] than currently imagined' (Potter 2014:164). However, the question remains open (including for Potter herself) as to what extent this 'neutral approach of the larynx' theory can withstand the test of audibility in the performance of 19th-century opera. Gentili (2018:205) links the shift to the 'modern' singing technique to the rise of verismo opera and how singers at the turn of the 20th century adapted to 'heavier systems of vocal registration'. She argues that this heavier vocal registration hinders 'a supple phrasing style' and makes it difficult – for male voices especially – to execute clean portamento and embellishments. This insight had also been shared by John Potter (1998:53) and by Sarah Potter as quoted above (2014:164). Gentili (2018:205) further observes that

'heavily registered voices cannot play with dynamics with the exceptional degree of freedom enjoyed by voices with lighter registration'.

The perspectives regarding vocal performance practice articulated by the above-mentioned authors therefore all point away from singing all vocal repertoire with the same generic, 'modern' singing technique. 'Modern' singing technique remains an inescapable requirement for a present-day professional singer; however, the research findings recounted in this section imply that 'modern' technique should be one approach among several in the professional 'classical' singer's arsenal: specifically, the skillset of 'modern' technique should be complemented by approaches that de-emphasise the constantly lowered larynx and elongated vocal tract, in keeping with HIP ideals. To achieve such versatility, singers need to be informed so as to make intelligent performative choices. As Elliot remarks, the possibilities of performing practice styles are many, and knowledge of style and performance practice helps the present-day professional singer to adjust to different circumstances. These circumstances can vary from HIP to MSP or various combinations of them. The above-mentioned authors argue that singers should be able to adjust their vocal technique according to a given performance practice, especially when singing in a concert or production following an HIP approach. This correlates with my personal argument regarding vocal versatility, which holds that the singer should be able to differentiate vocal–technically between different period styles and genres, avoiding the uncritical or unquestioned application of generic 'received classical vocal production' to all repertoire (Wistreich 2002:25–26).

2.2 Vocal–technical versatility

2.2.1 Professional singers' perspectives

Professional singers hold a range of views regarding my notion of vocal–technical adjustment for different styles and genres. While some singers find, as I do, that vocal–technical adjustments are called for, depending on style and genre, there are also well-established singers who assert that the same technique is applicable to all professional singing. In their book *Master Singers: Advice from the Stage* (2015), singer Donald George and pianist Lucy Mauro interviewed renowned opera singers on different topics of stage performance and artistry. On the question of the demands of recital singing compared to opera, and the possible vocal–technical and interpretive differences, tenor Jonas Kaufmann firmly asserts that when he sings recitals, he uses ‘the exact same instrument and technique’ as when singing opera (George & Mauro 2015:73). Kaufmann (ibid.) also admits, however, that he ‘may change slightly depending on the style’ and furthermore states that ‘[y]ou can’t do a Bach cantata as you would do Wagner or an art song. I mean all the *smorzando* and the *portamenti* – you shouldn’t use that, as they are inappropriate.’

Tenor Joseph Calleja, on the other hand, argues that when singing Lied as opposed to opera, there is a difference of style, but ‘not a difference in technique or approach’ (George & Mauro 2015: 75). Furthermore, he explains that, whether one sings in Mozart style or Verdi style, ‘you sing with your voice but change the style, inflections and nuances’ (ibid.).

Baritone Simon Keenlyside indicates a change in vocal approach and remarks that he uses less of ‘the iron’ (or ‘*squillo*’) in song recitals and applies a greater ‘palette’ of sounds and *mezza voce* than in opera (George & Mauro 2015:73). Mezzo-soprano

Denyce Graves answers the question as follows: '[...] healthy fundamental technique is always required no matter the genre and style, operatic singing tends to be “bigger” and can employ a certain vibratory pattern' (George & Mauro 2015:71). Both Keenlyside and Graves refer to changing or adjusting vocal–technically between opera and Lied/oratorio. These vocal–technical adjustments refer to vocal idioms such as, the presence or intensity of the singer's formant, different kinds of glottal adduction and varying degrees of subglottal pressure, to which I return later.

Elsewhere, a similar observation on the importance of differentiation in vocal approach within the fundamental technique,¹¹ and the ability to handle a variety of repertoire is made by lyric tenor, Christoph Prégardien. From a pedagogical point of view, he states (in an interview for the Bärenreiter website) that young singers should be:

technically able to sing everything from chamber music to grand opera.
With the same vocal technique, of course, but with a different approach.
If you sing in a chamber music hall of 200 or 300 seats, you obviously use your voice differently to how you would in a large opera house.
Moreover, young singers should have a wide repertoire these days to be able to earn a living, given that the competitive situation is very difficult
(Prégardien nd).

The pedagogical perspective of teaching singers to 'learn' from different genres was argued earlier by Fischer-Dieskau in *Töne Sprechen, Wörter Klingen* (1985). Fischer-Dieskau (1985:462), probably one of the most versatile singers of the 20th century (although generally renowned for his Lied performance), argues that the study of opera

¹¹ It is difficult to speculate on exactly what Kaufman, Graves and Prégardien mean when they refer to a basic and unchanging technique within which vocal approach may vary. Presumably, they mean that certain aspects of what Potter (1998) calls 'modern' singing technique and what Stark (1999) calls 'bel canto' remain useful, no matter what adjustments are mandated by a specific style.

roles can enhance the scope of expression and vocal power for the Lied singer; and, vice versa, that the opera singer can learn from ‘vocal–technical challenges which he will never have had experienced’, and that genres should be pedagogically treated with equal importance.

In addition, Fischer-Dieskau (1985:467) remarks that the Lied genre offers ‘an abundance of possibilities in dynamic range; however, as opposed to opera, the Lied is based on finer nuances’. To achieve these fine dynamic nuances, Fischer-Dieskau (1985:444) hints at the vocal technique of the bel canto school¹² in which all tones should originate from a *piano* vocal onset; in Fischer-Dieskau’s explanation, a *forte* tone must begin from the placement of the *piano* tone in the mixed register of head and chest. He maintains that the softer nuances and different colourations could be achieved through the head voice (register) (*Kopfreister*) which should ‘always be mixed with the natural middle voice’ (ibid.). Furthermore, the *voix mixte*¹³ is ‘most important for vocal beauty, development and longevity, and of course also for the vocal colouration in expressive singing’ (Fischer-Dieskau 1985:445).

Although Fischer-Dieskau does not elaborate on vocal–technical differences, he does cover some aspects of vocal performance practice which do indicate a differentiation of style in connection with vocal approach. With reference to oratorio, Fischer-Dieskau (1985:186) asserts that as with Lied, ‘it too requires a high level of vocal versatility because the genre demands all the different aspects of vocalisation [such as declamation, cantabile lines and coloratura].’ Concerning the *Passions* of J.S. Bach,

¹² See my brief citation of Stark’s definition of bel canto vocal technique above in section 2.1.3.

¹³ I discuss this term and its technical implications in section 2.2.2 below.

Fischer-Dieskau (1985:200) maintains that ‘the use of idiosyncratic opera voices would be inappropriate because of the stylistic demands of the composer’.

Daniel Behle (2019) is a German tenor who represents the singer ideal described by Prégardien and Fischer-Dieskau above, and who advocates vocal versatility (and whose list of recordings and performances ranges from Bach to Wagner) when he alludes to the fact that ‘as an artist one is more enthralling if one can juggle between different genres’ (own translation from Behle 2019). Earlier in his career, Behle (2011) also raised the matter of vocal versatility, stating that ‘the parallelism [in performance] of Lied, oratorio and opera’ is important to ‘train lightness, long lines and powerful sound production’ (own translation from Behle 2011). Behle also shares the vocal–technical stance of Fisher-Dieskau. His advice on singing various style periods and genres, and from lyric to more heroic music, is to cultivate the head voice ‘which you gradually connect with the chest register’ (own translation from Behle 2020). Behle maintains that Wagner’s music needs an almost continuous build-up of pressure which poses the danger of applying too much chest voice (register). On the other hand, he finds Bach’s vocal music an ideal way to ‘come from above’ with the head register, since ‘singing Bach with only chest will cause problems’; he therefore indicates that singers should strive for a high degree of blending head register with the chest register (ibid.).

Tenor, vocal pedagogue and scholar Richard Miller (1996:106) states in *On the Art of Singing* (1996) that ‘stylistic considerations determine performance practice’ and that ‘a skilful singer does not use identical degrees of vibrancy and vocal intensity in the *B Minor Mass* [Bach] and the Verdi *Requiem*’.

He further maintains that ‘even in the nineteenth-century operatic literature [...] one does not sing Donizetti like Verdi [...] or von Weber like late Wagner’ and ‘to apply a single singing style to the lieder of Schubert, Brahms and Wolf is to misunderstand the musical and romantic progression of a century’ (Miller 1996:106). Miller (ibid.) warns against implementing the *voce finta*¹⁴ and nonvibrant [sic] singing, as well as ‘dynamic altering of each note and syllable’ when the text is stressed in performance of Lieder. The latter hinders the flow of the music and subsequently the legato line and is a ‘misconception of the *messa di voce* principle so essential to phrase shaping and dynamic control’ (ibid.). It should be mentioned here that as one of the most renowned vocal pedagogues, Miller (1996:130, 131) outspokenly criticises what he – writing in the 1990s – calls ‘authenticity’, which he associates with straight tone singing, asserting that ‘it is impossible to conceive of nonvibrant singing of *bravura* tenor arias’. He welcomes the ‘new professionalism [which] has modified the practices of the past few decades regarding authentic Baroque vocal style’, noting that ‘the emasculated treatment of Handelian vocal literature in recent decades was perhaps one of the more painful developments of mistaken “authenticity” in performance of vocal music from the past’ (ibid.).

In summarising the different perspectives of the above-mentioned singers, most of them acknowledge the need to differentiate vocal–technically between styles and genres, although some of them, such as Kaufman and Calleja, do not believe in adapting vocal technique to any meaningful extent. On the other hand, those such as Keenlyside, Graves and Behle, indicate certain vocal–technical adjustments or

¹⁴ Miller (1993:160) defines this term as follows: ‘feigned voice; a timbre in the upper-middle range of the male voice that reduces the *voce piena* quality of the fully “supported” voice; at times confused with falsetto.’

differences applicable to various genres and style periods, although they do not describe what the differentiation in approach consists of in detail. This might be because of the brevity of the interviews and lack of time and space, or because singers generally do not indulge in describing finer details of singing technique, which is normally reserved for the vocal pedagogues and scientifically orientated authors. However, from the perspectives of singers such as Keenlyside, Graves and Behle, we can conclude that less 'iron' (or *squillo*) refers to utilising less singer's formant for Lieder and oratorio as opposed to opera singing (Keenlyside). For Graves, opera singing bears higher vocal intensity with a change in vibratory pattern, which for me points towards higher subglottal pressure, firm glottal adduction and intense singer's formant. For Lied and Baroque music, Keenlyside and Behle both refer to implementing *voix mixte* which is ultimately important for the colouration of the voice and longevity (also mentioned by Fischer-Dieskau). The notion of cultivating the head voice and mixing it with the chest voice (Behle & Fischer-Dieskau) most probably refers to the implementation and cultivation of a light vocal registration as a complement to the practices of heavy vocal registration to achieve vocal versatility. The following section explains the concepts of heavy vs light vocal registration from relevant vocal-pedagogical sources.

2.2.2 Implications for technique

A major conceptual contribution to more precise vocal-technical terminology regarding registration is Stark's notion of 'vocal idioms' or 'the specific vocal techniques used in the performance of particular styles of music', 'characteristic combinations of vocal technique' (1995:70). Stark (*ibid.*) points out that the 'historical treatises' such as those of Giulio Caccini (1551–1618), Pier Francesco Tosi (1654–

1732) and Garcia had already 'linked vocal techniques with the musical styles of the day'. Stark suggests that the assessment of successful performance of vocal music should take the shape of a 'word–note–tone' relation in which sound production (and therefore the use of vocal idioms) plays an integral part in expressive singing. The two main categories of technique or vocal idiom are vocal quality and vocal articulation. According to Stark (1995:72), vocal quality is 'determined by different glottal settings, subglottal breath pressures, breath flow rates, vertical laryngeal positions, acoustical formants, registers, vibrato and dynamic gradations', whereas vocal articulation comprises pitch onset, legato singing, portamento, floridity, embellishments and tempo rubato.

Stark holds voice quality as the most important vocal idiom; it mainly depends on glottal settings, that is, the type and strength of vocal fold closure. He identifies two types of glottal adduction, as described also by Garcia: 'loose closure' and 'firm closure' (Stark 1995:73). The latter 'generally requires higher subglottal breath pressures than loose closure' (ibid.). Stark (1995:74) defines the difference between firm and loose glottal closure as follows:

The former [firm glottal closure] is characterized by complete glottal closure during each cycle of vibration; the rate of closure of the vocal folds is faster than in loose phonation, and the vocal folds remain closed a larger percentage of the time during each vibratory cycle. This creates a source spectrum which is rich in high-energy partials, thus providing a better signal for the vocal tract to work upon. A bright edge to the voice has been recognized by many names over the centuries. [...] In contrast, a loose glottal setting results in a higher rate of breath flow, lower subglottal pressure, and weaker energy to the upper partials.

In line with Stark's observation above and the coherency of glottal adduction and vocal registration, voice scientists Christian Herbst and Jan Švec (2014:302) point out that the main registers, such as chest and falsetto register, are 'mainly controlled via the thyroid arytenoid (TA, vocalis) muscle' and that a 'contraction of the TA [thyroid arytenoid muscle] increases the vertical phase delay in vocal fold vibration and results in a longer closed phase (and thus a larger closed quotient)'. The acoustical result is an enhancement of 'the output of high-frequency energy, thus creating a "brighter" or more "resonant" timbre' which is 'perceived as a "heavier" registration by both singers and listeners' (ibid.). Stark (1995:74) notes that firm closure ensures the 'vocal power necessary to be heard over full orchestra in a large hall without amplification'. Loose closure, on the contrary, is characterised by a less intense sound and is 'probably also the setting for early singing styles associated with medieval song as well as most choral singing' and also vernacular vocal styles (ibid.). Moreover, vertical laryngeal position is closely related to glottal settings. Firm glottal adduction results in higher subglottal pressure, which in turn requires more muscle effort. Lowering the larynx helps to compensate this muscle effort and avoid strenuous sound production (Stark 1995:75). Another result of lowering the larynx is that it darkens the sound by diminishing the lower formants; on the other hand, it enhances the higher formants, which contributes to the 'ring' of the voice, also called the singer's formant. This quality of dark and bright vocal colour is what most opera singers strive for and refer to as *chiaroscuro*. Stark (1999:49–50) explains the acoustic origins of the singer's formant as follows:

The so-called *singer's formant* [...] is a band of high-frequency resonance that occurs at about 2 500–3 500 Hz. It can occur on most notes in the singer's range, although it is generally more apparent in male

voices than in female and is often stronger on loud notes than on soft. [...] It can be explained acoustically as a clustering F_3 and F_4 , or F_4 and F_5 , or in some cases F_3 , F_4 , and F_5 , in which the distance separating these formants is narrowed. The intensity of the singer's formant is dependent upon the presence in the source spectrum of high-energy partials that are created by abrupt and complete glottal closure in each glottal cycle.

Although his comparison of the two glottal settings is arguably over-simplified (i.e., firm glottal closure as the technique for opera singing vs loose closure for early music, choral singing or vernacular styles), Stark (1999:29) does mention the ability which singers should possess to vary the degree of glottal adduction according to the stylistic demands of the music, stating:

A well-trained singer can control the adduction, closed quotient, and airflow rates to create a variety of tone qualities to meet the stylistic requirements of different musical styles. Depending on the musical circumstances, firm adduction and a brilliant tone quality may not always be desirable.

In the foregoing discussion, I have included passing references to breath pressure and airflow rates in connection with glottal adduction. It will be useful to explain the relationship between these concepts and singers' practice of breath management in more detail. While I do not intend to make these relationships explicit at every turn in my autoethnographic observation of my vocal–technical practice, it should be taken as read that adjustments to subglottal pressure depend profoundly on breath management. Miller (1993:15) asserts that the techniques

of breath coordination should be uniform among singers, yet registration and vowel modification requirements of specific vocal categories determine changing levels of

airflow and subglottic [subglottal] pressure during the mounting scale. Learning to manage airflow and subglottic pressure demands a subtle coordination of aerodynamic-myoelastic factors (airflow and muscle responses) that is the foundation of cultivated singing.

Relatedly, Johan Sundberg proposed a useful typology of phonation types where 'flow phonation' represents the optimal functioning of breath flow and adduction. Reflecting on his earlier research with Jan Gauffin, Sundberg (2003:17) writes:

[A]long the phonatory dimension that ranges from hypofunctional/breathy to hyperfunctional/pressed, there was a special mode, where glottal adduction seemed reduced to the minimum that still produces a complete glottal closure. For this mode, seemingly used as a kind of baseline in classical singing, we proposed the term flow phonation, since it was characterised by particularly generous airflow.

The approach to breath management which I prefer to use, and was taught, is the *appoggio* technique, as described by vocal pedagogues such as Stark (1999) and Miller (1993, 1996). The term *appoggio* 'derives from the Italian verb *appoggiare*, which means to lean against, to support, and to sustain' (Miller 1993:25). The *appoggio* technique constitutes a delicate balance between the muscles of the torso and the abdomen or, as Stark (1999:92) puts it more precisely, 'between the inspiratory and expiratory breathing muscles.' However, the functionality of this technique is not 'solely a breath coordination device'; it also entails the use of 'muscles and organs not directly associated with breathing' (Miller 1993:25). Stark (1999:93) states that the term 'to lean' also refers to

the role of the larynx in 'holding back' or 'damming' the breath by means of glottal resistance, and by intentional lowering of the larynx against the upward-bearing pressure of the breath.

The *appoggio* technique 'depends on axial alignment' of the body in which the 'head, neck and torso are in line with the pelvic and hip regions', a postural condition which may also be described as 'the noble posture' (Miller 1993:25). Once these postural conditions are set up, inhalation can take place (which is quicker and deeper than in normal breathing) in which the diaphragm travels downward 'and presses the abdominal viscera forward, causing the abdominal wall to expand slightly outward' (Miller 1993:17). Miller (*ibid.*) states further that

[w]hen this action is complete, the abdominal viscera form a steady base so that the muscle fibers of the central tendon of the diaphragm can assist in elevating the ribs so that 'lung volume increases'.

In the (controlled) exhalation phase, and therefore when phonation takes place,

the abdominal muscles must retain their antagonistic relationships (counteracting, not tensing), remaining as long as is comfortable near the inspiratory position' and therefore 'the expiratory gesture of the breath cycle is delayed (Miller 1993:16).

Stark (1999:92) remarks that '[t]he critical parameters of breath management are subglottal pressure and airflow rates which are affected both by the respiratory muscles and glottal resistance to the breath'. Stark (1999:120) elucidates this notion of 'glottal resistance to the breath' by advising that 'at the end of inhalation, the glottis should be quickly and firmly closed and the larynx should be at the same low position it assumed during inhalation'. Subsequently, 'the expiratory muscles contract to elevate the subglottal pressure to a level commensurate with the intensity desired'

(ibid.). The singer physically experiences subglottal pressure ‘as “pent-up” breath energy, and sometimes described as held-back breath, compressed breath, or breath damming’ (ibid.). Subglottal pressure levels can vary significantly between different singers, but also within one singer, and it ‘can be generated with a variety of abdominal and intercostal configurations’ (Stark 1999:115). Airflow rates (or the flow of air through the glottis) are closely related to subglottal pressure and, according to Stark (ibid.), they are ‘equally variable’. He points out that ‘falsetto singing often uses higher airflow rates than chest voice, and that airflow rates decrease with strong glottal closure and a large closed quotient’ (Stark 1999:116). I concur with Stark (1999:119) that the *appoggio* technique is a complete system of ‘coordinated physical adjustments’ and that this ‘form of vocal coordination can be both felt and heard by the singer’. Stark (ibid.) usefully explains how breath management (as part of an interconnected system of vocal technique) undergirds possibilities for fine gradations in vocal colouration, which have been central to my preparation for the recitals in this artistic project:

The effect of *appoggio* on voice quality goes beyond *chiaroscuro* by adding a finely wrought buoyancy and malleability of colour and intensity to the voice, and by giving the voice ‘projection’.

In my discussions of my artistic processes in Chapters 4–8, I shall refer often to adjustments to subglottal pressure and glottal adduction. My own experience was that my breath management was well established by the time I undertook this project and that the adjustments I describe to subglottal pressure and glottal adduction cohered with a judicious and pliable application of breath management without specific ‘problematization’ of the breath mechanisms.

In section 2.1.3 above, I explained how the vertical position of the larynx is a crucial aspect of reconstructing a historically informed vocal technique, as is evident from studies by Potter (1998), Wistreich (2000), Potter (2014) and Gentili (2018). Similarly to the findings of Stark, the above-mentioned authors argue that ‘modern’ singing technique is mainly identified by a low laryngeal position, which results in the lengthening of the vocal tract and subsequently the enhancement of the singer’s formant, which in turn allows the voice to carry over the orchestra. However, a possible result of maintaining this low laryngeal position at all times is a certain stiffness of the vocal mechanism, which can hinder the agility of singing florid passages. In addition, this kind of singing makes it difficult to execute the declamatory style of singing such as that found in Monteverdi – and, I would add, Bach recitative (Potter 1998:53; Wistreich 2000:179, 180). Wistreich suggests a vocal–technical approach based on the flexible rise and fall of the larynx, allowing the singer to adjust the vocal registration comfortably within the spectrum of light to heavy registration.¹⁵

The importance of vocal registration, as indicated by Fischer-Dieskau and Behle (in section 2.2.1), to singing different genres and styles resonates in Gentili’s recent study, *The Invention of the Modern Voice* (2018). Gentili locates the origins of the ‘modern’ singing technique in that of the turn of the century, or verismo singing. She identifies a shift in vocal registration, introducing the ideal that the voice should maintain equal tonal quality from the lowest to the highest tones, ‘an aesthetic principle that was completely alien to the voice culture of the previous centuries’ (Gentili 2018:iii). According to Gentili (2018:173), the ‘modern’ technique derives from the verismo style

¹⁵ In this regard, as I have shown above, Potter (2014) suggests a ‘neutral’ position of the larynx for pre-verismo repertoires.

of singing in which the heavier chest register is carried upwards in the vocal range, represented by tenors such as Enrico Caruso (1873–1921), ‘who defined a “modern” type of singer’ and ‘has since then set the bar of the international standard in mainstream operatic repertoire’. My experience as a professional singer has confirmed this statement of Gentili’s: the expectation in the present-day professional opera circuit is that singers will use ‘modern’ singing technique as described by Gentili, especially for the Romantic and post-Romantic opera repertoire. In this thesis, I often refer to Romantic operatic singing technique or sound; when I do so, I mean to imply all the aspects of the ‘modern’ singing technique as I have summarised them in this chapter (section 2.1.3 and the present section) from findings by Stark, Wistreich, Potter and Gentili.

As mentioned above in section 2.1.3, Gentili (2018:205) concludes that the ‘modern’ technique displays a heavier registration, which in turn does not allow ‘clean and neat’ portamento or flexible dynamics to the extent that lighter registration does. From my experience with the lyric and more heroic repertoire, I found that the greatest difference between heavy and light registration lies in how the tenor negotiates the ascending scale, going into the upper range. There are two approaches: (1) singing in a light registration which allows the head voice to be more prominent and mixed with chest voice in the *zona di passaggio* and above the second *passaggio*; and (2) applying a heavy registration in which the chest voice quality is more prominent in the *zona di passaggio* and above.¹⁶

¹⁶ The transitional point between registers can consist of several tones where chest and head register intersect and is mainly described with the Italian word *passaggio* (passage). Miller (1996:115; 1993:3) refers to the *passaggio* as *zona di passaggio* (the passage zone) which lies between the first transitional point, the *primo passaggio*, and the second transitional point, the *secondo passaggio* which lies about a fourth above the first transitional point in male voices.

Negotiating the ascending scale with light registration is documented in treatises and writings about tenors from the 18th to the mid-19th century, which all advocated that the head voice should be cultivated for the high notes. In his widely influential treatise *Opinioni de'cantori antichi e moderni* (1723), Tosi taught that the ascending scale should be sung more and more softly as it enters the upper range head voice in order to blend the chest and head register smoothly. He also advised that the student should avoid sustaining the 'forced chest voice in the upper register' (Baird 1995:10). In Johann Friedrich Agricola's (1720–1774) translated and annotated version of Tosi's *Opinioni*, published in 1757 as *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, he followed the same direction but went on to advise students to sing the highest of the chest voice and lowest of the head voice 'with 'both kinds of voices' – in other words, in chest and head (falsetto) voice (Agricola 1995:77). Johann Adam Hiller (1728–1804) concurred with Tosi and Agricola in his *Anweisung zum musikalisch richtigen Gesange* published in 1774. Hiller instructed that the 'delicate tones in the higher register move into a kind of falsetto voice' and 'that the natural voice [chest voice] can be extended by the addition of certain falsetto tones' (own translation from Hiller 1774:10, 11). Hiller (1774:12), moreover, pointed out that for the vocal music of his time singers preferably had to command a vocal range of two octaves and indicated c to c (C3 to C5) for the tenor voice. He reiterated that because the 'natural voice [chest voice] seldom reaches this high', the union between falsetto and natural voice should be practised by all prospective singers (Hiller 1774:12). The theory of blending the registers in the ascending scale, as described by Tosi, Agricola and Hiller, persisted into the very early 19th century and it was generally expected that male voices use the head voice (also referred to as falsetto) for the upper range and to ensure a smooth blending between

the chest voice and falsetto/head voice (Potter & Sorrell 2012:98). This was to be achieved without taking the chest voice quality above its natural range.

In contrast, singing the ascending scale with heavy registration was a later vocal-technical development. Potter and Sorrell (2012:117) note that in the first quarter of the 19th century, 'a more robust breed of tenor' emerged who, instead of changing to the falsetto or head voice around E4 or F4, would sing 'in chest voice to A or even higher'. The bigger sound that had a darker quality was something new that was possibly best exemplified by Gilbert-Louis Duprez (1806–1896), whose famous C5 (*ut de poitrine*) in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* caused a sensation in 1837 (Potter & Sorrell 2012; Rosselli 2000; Stark 1999). Garcia was one of the first pedagogues who referred to the *sombre timbre* at the *Académie des Sciences* in 1840 (Stark 1999:41). He described, in both parts of his *École de Garcia: Traité complete de l'art du chant*, the *sombre timbre* or what he also named *metallo oscuro*, or *coperto*, referring to bright and dark,¹⁷ or 'covered' sound; he maintained that it is 'produced when the tube was deep and bent at the right angle by lowering the larynx' (Garcia 1975:152). Garcia, then, was one of the first pedagogues to describe the heavier emission (*sombre timbre*), which requires low larynx position, firm glottal closure and higher subglottal pressure (1975:162, 163). Garcia (ibid.) stated that the use of the *sombre timbre* was 'especially striking'; however, he warned against its frequent use because 'exhaustion and paralysis of the organ are the inevitable and unfortunately too frequent result of the use of this procedure'. Stark (1999:74, 75) observes that Garcia described the lighter way of singing high notes with a 'weak glottal closure, low larynx and a relaxed

¹⁷ One can infer from Garcia's description of the terms *metallo oscuro* and *sombre timbre* that he is referring to the concept of *chiaroscuro*.

pharynx with as little muscular engagement as possible' and maintains that Garcia would have preferred 'a *mezza voce* approach to the high notes', given his 'affinity for the traditional way [i.e., the earlier vocal–technical approach] of singing Mozart and Rossini'. The head–voice-based approach to singing high notes for male voices, and especially the tenor voice, was also reiterated later in the century by vocal pedagogue Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839–1910) (son of Francesco Lamperti). In reference to the tenor voice, Lamperti (1905:25–26) noted that 'on the tones b, c, d and d# the head-resonance mingles with the chest-voice carried on from below so that the singer sings with but half the chest resonance'. We therefore see that in the 19th century the 'old' tradition co-existed with the novel and more powerful sound production of taking the chest register beyond its natural range. The contemporaries of Duprez, tenors Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794–1854) and Adolphe Nourrit (1802–1839), were both singing their upper range in the traditional manner, using the head voice (Potter & Sorrell 2012:117; Stark 1999:41). These tenors were renowned for their portrayal of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini roles. With the development of grand opera, such as those of Meyerbeer, the size of orchestras and opera houses grew quite substantially so that more volume and vocal power was called for (Rosselli 2000:101).

Moving on to the 20th century, Gentili (2021) argues that the 'modern' singing technique at the turn of the 20th century – exemplified, as we have seen, by Caruso, who developed his technique to suit the style of the emerging verismo operas – has become the norm in today's operatic singing. Gentili (2021:452) asserts that contrary to 'the older style', verismo singing required the 'complete equalization of the vocal compass within a heavy system of vocal production'. In present-day vocal pedagogy, the term 'cover' is often used to describe the procedures needed to negotiate the

ascending scale using heavy registration. In this regard, Stark (1999:84) remarks that in the 21st century, the modern voice literature tends to focus on the term ‘covered singing’ in reference to the ‘role of the vocal tract [...] while paying little attention to the role of glottal closure’. Stark (ibid.) points out that the ‘covering manoeuvre in male voices is employed for notes above the *passaggio*’. Stark (1999:84; 1995:79) asserts that ‘covered’ singing requires a firm closure of the glottis and a low laryngeal position together with high subglottal pressure. This results in a ‘tilt of the laryngeal cartilages’ that allows the chest voice to be carried beyond its natural limits, therefore maintaining a vocal quality similar to the lower part of the range (Stark 1995:79). He maintains that ‘covered high notes are absolutely necessary for an operatic tenor and are often employed by baritones as well’ (ibid.); this assertion corresponds to the current view of how male voices, especially tenors, should sing their high notes, which Gentili calls the ‘modern’ singing technique associated with heavy registration.

It would be an over-simplification, however, to equate ‘modern’ singing technique with ‘heavy’ registration without further nuance. For example, Miller (1993:41–42) cautions present-day tenors against a too-heavy registration. He asserts that vowel modification (Miller’s preferred term for the technique sometimes referred to as ‘covering’)¹⁸ is ‘especially necessary in the tenor voice because much demanding singing lies in the *zona di passaggio* and above the *secondo passaggio*’ (ibid.). Although it is ‘both an acoustic and [a] physical action, the mechanical changes are much less drastic [...] than in the “heavy and early cover” advocated by some vocal pedagogues’ (Miller 1993:42). Miller (1993:79) maintains that ‘pure “chest voice” should never be

¹⁸ Miller (1993:161) defines vowel modification as ‘gradual adjustment of vowels during the ascent of the scale so as to produce uniform timbre, resulting in an evenly registered voice’.

carried beyond the *primo passaggio*' because this results in a forced sound. Concerning light registration, Miller (ibid.) concurs with Fischer-Dieskau's and Behle's notion of using the head voice for various genres and styles and states the following as a general rule for male voices: 'chest' should be mixed with 'head' even earlier than the *primo passaggio* registration pivotal point'. This will result in a lighter mechanism (or lighter registration), which makes the ascending scale easier for blending registers.

A discussion of the technical mechanism involved in the use of *voix mixte* is apposite at this point. I have cited Fischer-Dieskau's and Behle's reliance on this technique above, and Miller's description of its role in vocal registration will help to ground my argument regarding the implications of the observations on vocal stylistic versatility I have been developing in this chapter. Miller (ibid.) states that the *voix mixte* register (or, to use his term, 'registration timbre') is 'perceived by the singer as much lighter in mechanical action' than chest voice (*voce di petto*) and also that the production of *voix mixte* is 'more efficient than that of *voce di petto* phonation at a high pitch such as F4'. Miller (ibid.) further asserts that

the four lighter registration productions (*voce mista* [which for Miller corresponds to *voix mixte*], *voce finta* ['feigned voice'], *voce piena in testa* ['full voice in head'], and falsetto) result from a lessening of the heavier vocalis action associated with *voce di petto* [chest voice]. (A graduated dynamic muscle relationship [...] permits constant balancing of the resonance factor in all ranges so that uniformity of timbre is achieved).

These 'muscular adjustments' are 'below the level of consciousness' and are 'not locally controllable' (ibid.). Voice scientist Donald G. Miller (2000:60) refers to *voix mixte* as the register named *mezza voce*. Regarding the reduced vocalis action in *voix*

mixte and how it differs from the two primary registers (chest and head), Miller (ibid.) points out that

[*voce mezza*] differs from the full voice, whether this is chest or full head, by reducing to a minimum both the oscillating mass of the vocal folds and the modulation of contact between them. In keeping with the softness of the sound desired, the subglottal pressure is very low, on the order of values occurring in conversational speech. In order to maintain oscillation at this low pressure, the glottal resistance, and thus the adduction of the vocal folds, must also be low, resulting in a glottis that does not fully close. As we have observed, this means a source spectrum with a steep fall-off, and a sharply reduced high-frequency component.

In the light of Stark's (1999) explanation earlier in this section of the acoustic origins of the singer's formant, one can conclude that looser glottal adduction and lower subglottal pressure, which also means a reduced high-frequency component, therefore would result in a less intense singer's formant when the singer uses the *voix mixte*.

The historical changes of registration in the upper range of the tenor voice point towards different possibilities or approaches to singing music from Early Baroque to the mid-19th century. I concur with the argument of Gentili (2021:436) that, in addition to the 'modern' singing technique of elongating the vocal tract by lowering the larynx and raising the soft palate 'which can be applied to the training of any singer, each voice presents a particular potential to be "registered" in specific ways'. This implies that a heavy voice may

yield to a dark colour because the singer consistently resorts to procedures of ‘covering’ [...] or because that is the natural colour of the particular voice, or a combination of the two (Gentili 2021:436).

If such a voice applies ‘less intensive covering, the voice will keep its weight, but will sound brighter’ (ibid.). Light voices likewise can obtain an ‘innate dark colour, a quality which may or may not be enhanced by specific registral choices’ (ibid.). Therefore, I argue that the present-day male voice, and especially the tenor, should be able to apply both these kinds of registration or approaches if he seeks to be a versatile singer.

In present-day productions of 18th-century and earlier repertoire, the HIP approach is often followed by conductors and directors, which implies that the singer should ideally comply with the vocal aesthetics of the style period and/or the genre. Light registration would therefore be preferable for these style periods when performed using an HIP approach. On the other hand, heavy registration and the ‘modern’ singing technique of taking the chest voice quality into the upper range would be called for in productions of late 19th-century and later repertoire. As we have seen, registration practices were changing profoundly throughout the 19th century and tenor voices applied the heavy and light registration approaches to the ascending scale variously at this time; therefore, determining a suitable HIP approach for 19th-century music (including Lied) is no simple matter.¹⁹ In addition, the ‘modern’ technique is associated with the MSP

¹⁹ Studies that compare vocal–technical implications of the opera and Lied genres are rare, and to my knowledge represented only in a limited study by Johnson-Read et al. (2015), which includes only the two vocal idioms of vibrato and the singer’s formant. Following a survey method in one study and two acoustic analyses of professional recordings, the findings elucidate a general difference in sound production of the same singers singing opera and Lied. In Lied, a delayed vibrato onset and a narrower vibrato width was measured, and in addition a relatively lower singer’s formant, which may also contribute to the perception of a pure tone. This correlates with the statements of earlier-mentioned singers who apply less ‘ring’ of the voice in concert singing than in opera and assert that opera singing uses different vibratory patterns (see Keenlyside’s and Graves’s observations in section 2.2.1).

of our own day; therefore, a singer is highly likely to be cast in productions where the heavy registration approach is expected, even for repertoires composed earlier than the documented transition to ‘modern’ singing technique.

The above discussion again confirms the imperative of differentiating one’s vocal delivery according to the expected performance practice of the recital or production, which underscores the stylistic pluralism that has come to characterise Western art music performance in recent decades. This differentiation has a vocal–technical character that has been discussed in some detail by the researchers and singers I have cited in this chapter. Practical perspectives from singers point towards varying degrees of vocal colouration, vocal intensity and registration or resonance (*voix mixte*) in connection with different genres. However, the scholarly literature lacks a deeper discussion of vocal production in which the relationships between most genres and styles of Western vocal art music are explained and, therefore, the implications that expressive singing holds for vocal technique remain underexplored.

2.2.3 Practical implementation of a pragmatic and aesthetic choice: Contribution of the present project

As a singer, I am bound to the professional context and circumstances in which I find myself when working for an opera company or a specific ensemble. For this reason, I must orientate myself to the practice ideals of that company or ensemble. Those ideals could lean towards MSP or HIP in genres of opera and oratorio. During my career I worked under both these streams of practice; however, I never specialised in one type of performance practice. Performing Lied, in my opinion, has fewer restrictions simply because there are fewer roleplayers involved and the matter of choice lies solely with singer and accompanist. Most opera productions are more or less performed in MSP,

based on a 'standard tradition'; however, it is becoming increasingly common for especially 17th- and 18th-century opera to be performed according to an HIP approach. It therefore becomes increasingly beneficial to be informed as a singer, that is, to know how to manoeuvre vocal–technically according to different performance approaches and aesthetics. It is therefore not a matter of principle when I orientate myself towards HIP or MSP but rather a matter of positioning myself as a pragmatic singer to being adjustable to the circumstances and conventions of a specific production. In other words, I orientate myself in the position of a pragmatist equipped for the many possibilities of performance.

Most of the singers, pedagogues and scholars in the discussion above have acknowledged that different types of Western art music call for different approaches to accommodate the relevant aspects of style. However, what these approaches are and to what vocal–technical extent these may be implemented in the major genres and style periods is not clearly argued. Moreover, to differentiate between genres and styles entails a comparison of genres and styles in order to eventually underline the differences and the similarities between them. Having identified this gap allows me to pursue this Ph.D. thesis, which is the culmination of a practical component in the form of five different examination concerts.

As a pragmatic singer with many years of professional experience in all art music genres and most style periods behind me, it would therefore make sense to transfer my practical knowledge to paper. The information from the score, but also the relevant performance practice and secondary sources, obviously plays an important role in the preparation process. Moreover, I believe that singers and instrumentalists should be able (to an extent) to let their knowledge (*Wissen*) inform their choices but, more

importantly, to implement this knowledge in practice. Only then do we arrive at the *Können* (skill or knowhow) that, ideally, is vigorous and contributes to new knowledge. Therefore, I have decided upon a practice-based research project in which the preparation for and performance of my examination concerts are investigated from an internal perspective. Because, as a performer, I am simultaneously the researcher and the research subject, this study is situated within the paradigm of an autoethnographic methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As stated in Chapter 1, having returned to South Africa where I now lecture in singing and regularly perform, I felt the need to share the practical experience of my journey as professional singer – which includes 17 years of singing the music of different style periods and genres in opera houses in Germany – in a scholarly manner. It is this practical body of knowledge or, better stated, ‘knowhow’, that I wanted to share not only with my students in the studio situation, but also more broadly in written form. What came to mind, after reflecting upon 22 years of my singing life, was to write down these experiences and the skills I gathered along the way from a personal perspective. Furthermore, as a performing artist, the obvious choice for a doctoral student at the University of the Free State is an ‘integrated Ph.D. degree’, which consists of a practical component of five public examination concerts that culminate in a thesis. I therefore had to find a research method that incorporates personal reflection on my practical experience and knowhow and also describes the processes at play when performing different repertoires. This knowhow can also translate into learning by doing or ‘knowing in performing’ through which ‘knowledge can be acquired which is implicit in the action itself’ (Huber et al. 2021:18). This ‘knowing in performing’ plays an important role in artistic research, an approach which has emerged since the 1990s and, despite its controversies, has established itself within academia in the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, Canada, Scandinavia and South Africa (Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff, Peters & Pinch 2019; Djahwasi & Saidon 2020; Stolp 2021). Henk Borgdorff (2012:124) reminds us of the ‘articulation of non-propositional knowledge and experience, embodied in art works and creative processes’. This non-propositional

knowledge (also referred to as procedural knowledge) or knowledge of how to do something is generated through artistic practice and enables 'creative practitioners to make significant contributions as researchers in the academy' (Stolp 2021:96).

The integrated Ph.D. programme for which I enrolled at the University of the Free State requires that the practical component (i.e., performances) and the research component (i.e., the dissertation) should be integrated with each other. Artistic research or practice-based research (the more familiar term) is therefore an obvious choice of methodology because this paradigm specifically emphasises the integration of theory and practice.

3.1 Artistic research and practice-based research

Borgdorff (2012:37) identifies three main types of art research: (1) research on the arts 'that has art practice in the broadest sense of the word as its object' and 'drawing valid conclusions about art practice from a theoretical distance' (2012:37); (2) research for the arts in which 'art is not so much the object of investigation, but its objective' (2012:38); and (3) research in the arts or 'artistic research' which 'concerns research that does not assume the separation of the subject and object', but rather 'the artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results' (2012:38). This third approach rests on the notion that there is 'no fundamental separation [...] between theory and practice in the arts', so that 'concepts and theories, experiences and understandings are interwoven with art practices' (2012:38, 39).

According to Borgdorff (2012:39), the most common terminology used in the literature to describe artistic research is practice-based, practice-led or practice as research, of which practice-based research is 'a collective notion that may cover any form of practice-orientated research in the arts'. In the United Kingdom, the terms practice-

based research and practice-led research are generally preferred. Linda Candy (2006:3) distinguishes these two terms from each other and asserts that when ‘a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based’ and ‘if the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-led’.

In recent decades, musical performance has increasingly become the subject of research. According to Tanja Orning (2017:80), this change coincides ‘with the performative turn in the arts, a paradigm shift that took place in the humanities in the 1990s’. Since Taruskin’s *Text and Act* (1995), authors such as Nicholas Cook (in the volume he edited with Mark Everist in 1999 entitled *Rethinking Music* and in his 2013 monograph *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*), Jonathan Dunsby (1995) and John Rink (1995, 2002) contributed to a reorientation from a score-based to a performance-based understanding of music. This implies that in music research the actual performance often became the object of study and this change, in turn, spawned disciplines such as ‘artistic research, performance studies and practice-based research’ (Orning 2017:81). Borgdorff and Michiel Schuijjer (2015:16) describe the distinguishing characteristics of artistic research in music as follows:

It stands apart from other fields of academic research in two ways: (1) musical practice is an integral part of the research; and (2) the research outcomes themselves are, in part, musical practices or musical products, such as performances or compositions – ‘in part’ because some kind of discursive framing of the research is generally required.

The above-mentioned authors refer to different terminology related to artistic research and, according to Mareli Stolp (2012:52), ‘there is no general consensus on the use of

these terms'. Stolp (ibid.) uses the term 'practice-based research' 'as a collective term to describe research where practice forms an essential component of both the research process and result'. With reference to the definitions of Candy (2006), Stolp's approach therefore incorporates both practice-based research and practice-led research into what she refers to as 'practice-based research'. This is also the term I prefer because, in my own study, practice comprises the following: forming part of the research project and the results, the documentation and development of new vocal-technical knowledge, and the implementation of that knowledge in the performances. This notion correlates with the view of Candy and Ernest Edmonds (2018:63) that in practice-based research 'the research and the practice operate as interdependent and complementary processes'. In the academic world, practice 'combines the act of creating something novel with the necessary process and techniques belonging to a given field' (Candy & Edmonds 2018:64). These authors maintain further that in a practice-based Ph.D. the artefacts which emerge from the research process 'are included in the submission' in order that examiners obtain a clearer view of the objective and outcomes (Candy & Edmonds 2018:65). However, the creative works cannot 'speak for themselves' and should be accompanied by a written thesis 'arising from a practice-based research process' which should 'show evidence of original scholarship' and contain publishable material (ibid.).

When I started this project, I also noticed that practice-based research not only allowed me as creative artist to do an integrated Ph.D., but it also offered a methodology for my future research within the university knowledge economy and my role as performing artist and pedagogue. In the past two decades, Ph.D. and other doctoral candidates in artistic research have multiplied at universities worldwide, a tendency

that reflects the urgent need for the arts and humanities to produce scholarship and research (Biggs 2006; Elkins 2009; Wilson & Van Ruiten 2013). On the question of the significance of a doctoral or Ph.D. qualification in the arts, Iain Biggs (2006:2) argues that practical doctoral studies within the paradigm of artistic research 'bring into focus questions about the relationship between art as sensuous knowing and the world of conceptual knowledge privileged by the university as a state-sponsored institution'. Furthermore, when such studies are equally 'hybrid, sensuous and critically reflective', ideally, they are 'a subversive response to a university system that requires that the traditional role of artist/pedagogue be adapted to the new hybrid role of artist/pedagogue/researcher' (ibid.). On the other hand, Borgdorff (2012:70) contends that 'artistic practices are reflective practices, and that is what motivates artistic research in the first place'; the motivation to conduct artistic research is not simply that artists are obliged to 'position and contextualise their work' and to 'justify it to funding bodies and to the public'. He also maintains that artistic research is intrinsically linked to 'the artistic development of the artist as well as the development of the discipline or disciplines in which he or she works' (ibid.). Artistic reflection creates a 'free space to think' which artists need to do 'material thinking' (Borgdorff 2012:117, 118). Furthermore, Borgdorff (2012:118) argues that 'the art world' in general also needs artistic research, for it is in the higher educational system that artistic research can create space for 'artists and trainees' to evolve and therefore 'contribute to the development of the arts'. The tension between academia and artistic research is not necessarily counterproductive. It can result in academia gaining a better 'self-understanding of arts academies and universities, and on our understanding of what academic research is' and, similarly, having a better understanding of 'art creation and what art is' (Borgdorff 2012:118).

Within the paradigm of practice-based research, I decided to follow an autoethnographic approach or methodology because it is experience-based and fits the kind of reflection needed for this study. This approach depends to a great extent on the physical experiences of my singing. I did not carry out my study from within a research laboratory that involves instruments such as a laryngoscope and airflow and subglottal pressure-measuring instruments such as a pneumotachograph and a U-tube manometer which measure parameters such as glottal adduction, airflow rates and subglottal pressure. Rather, I focus on feeling and describing these physical, sensory processes when using the different vocal registrations described in Chapter 2. Examples of these include firm vocal adduction, which influences subglottal pressure and vertical laryngeal position, and loose vocal adduction, which is characterised by a less intense sound. These are the physical processes that I as a singer can sense and experience according to the genre and performance practice of the music. These different vocal registrations together with their varied application to the different styles and genres play an important role in understanding how to differentiate vocal—technically between them. What is therefore of concern here is to describe the specific physical sensations in my body, a focal area for which autoethnography proved to be the best choice.

3.2. Autoethnography

Pace (2012:2) defines autoethnography as a 'qualitative method that combines characteristics of ethnography and autobiography' which allows artists, writers and others to reflect upon their 'personal experiences and their interactions with others as a way of achieving wider cultural, political or social understanding'. Such a study usually takes on the form 'of an evocative narrative written in the first-person' (ibid.).

In the field of music and performance practice, Cook (2013:250) emphasises the 'presence of the social within the musical' and asserts that 'performance is a paradigmatically social activity' and its meaningfulness emanates largely from that 'social dimension'. Cook identifies this broader approach to research with what he identifies as an 'ethnographic turn' in musicology. This ethnographic approach draws on anthropology, interdisciplinary performance studies and ethnomusicology, and enables performers to participate in research that focuses more directly on 'performance as process' instead of rendering the 'musical work and performance style' as a fixed object of study in the more traditional way (ibid.). Moreover, this allows for new research questions 'in contrast to how the page-to-stage approach incorporates performance within an already established disciplinary agenda' (ibid.). One ethnographic approach to performance is autoethnography, where the researcher or informant is also the performer. Typically, these performer-researchers keep 'a performance diary to trace and reflect on the development of an interpretation' that is part of the informing process (Cook 2013:254).

Concerning evocative autoethnography, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000:744) assert that 'story-telling is akin to the novel or biography and therefore fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature [...] the narrative text refuses to abstract and explain'. According to Pace (2012:2), these evocative autoethnographers, although successful publishers, have also been 'criticised for their rejection of traditional analytic goals such as abstraction and generalisation'. Furthermore, Pace (ibid.) points out that the storyteller uses some analytical techniques to interpret their own work and that generalisation is also present but in a manner which differs from that of the more traditional narrative forms.

Leon Anderson (2006:374) raised his concern about the limitations of evocative autoethnography when he asserts:

[T]he impressive success of advocacy for what Ellis (1997, 2004) refers to as 'evocative or emotional autoethnography' may have the unintended consequence of eclipsing other visions of what autoethnography can be and of obscuring the ways in which it may fit productively in other traditions of social inquiry.

Anderson (2006:375) offers an alternative kind of autoethnography to those researchers who prefer a more analytical approach in what he refers to as 'analytical autoethnography'. In this approach he proposes five key features of analytical autoethnography:

- (1) 'the researcher is a complete member in the social world under study' (2006:379);
- (2) analytical reflexivity on the self and of personal experience and sense-making;
- (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self with the researcher as 'a highly social actor within the written text' as opposed to the traditional ethnographer (2006:384);
- (4) dialogue with other informants in the same field or situation to avoid 'the potential for self-absorption' (2006:385, 386); and
- (5) commitment to an analytical agenda and the use of data 'to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data itself' (2006:387).

According to Anderson (2006:388), one of the main characteristics of analytical autoethnography is its 'value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also transcending that world through broader

generalization'. This resonates with the perspective of Mitch Allen (in Ellis et al. 2011:276) when he asserts that

[a]n autoethnography must look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story – and that's nice – but people do that on Oprah [a US-based television program] every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just frame it as 'my story', then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV.

In other words, autoethnographers need to be able to analyse their personal experiences and position them against existing knowledge so as to clarify the contribution made by their research.

Following Anderson and Allen, I prefer to use the model of a more analytical autoethnography because it offers an alternative to researchers like me who wish to use a less emotional, less evocative type of autoethnography. My study as performing artist rests upon the practical element of performing with myself as artist, studying and documenting the process leading to my own performances, contextualised within existing research, eventually incorporating critical self-reflection on the process. As I mention in Chapter 2, vocal idioms such as vocal quality (glottal settings, subglottal pressure, acoustic formants, etc.) and vocal articulation (legato singing, portamento, pitch onset, etc.) described by Stark (1999) influence the assessment of performances. Vocal quality is mainly dependent on glottal settings (the type and strength of vocal closure), which in turn are related to vocal registration. The two kinds

of vocal adduction, loose and firm, as described by Stark (1999) with reference to Garcia, can be construed as light and heavy vocal registration. The different style periods and genres represented in this study call for different approaches to vocal registration according to the kind of performance practice framework in which these performances are set. For example, as I will show below in Chapters 4–8, the HIP approach in the *St. John Passion* affords a generally light vocal registration, the Lied and contemporary art song recitals a mixture of heavy and light registration, and the verismo opera an almost continuous heavy registration. The balancing act of using various degrees of vocal registration and how it is affected by the kind of vocal articulation involves physical processes that are therefore embedded in embodied experiences. My documentation of and reference to a vocal–technical approach to suit the particular performance practice are therefore embedded in embodied experiences. These embodied experiences, from each of the five creative processes of the performances (i.e., the examination concerts), are the focal areas which I aim to describe, analyse and critically reflect upon.

3.3 Studies in autoethnography and practice-based research in music performance

Numerous practice-based research or artistic research studies in the arts and design have been produced during recent decades. However, research from performers, and especially music performers, is still limited. Moreover, research that deals with vocal performance practice from a singer’s perspective is very rare and even studies fewer combine the singer’s perspective with an autoethnographic approach.

In *Arts-based Research, Autoethnography, and Music Education: Singing through a Culture of Marginalization* (2014), Miroslav Manovski tells the personal tale of a singer

and teacher who reflects on his personal experiences of becoming a singer, music teacher and researcher. Focusing more on music education, Manovski combines arts-based research (i.e., practice-based research) with autoethnography in a highly personal account of overcoming the stigmas of gender and marginalisation. Hence, his research methodology falls within the field of emotional or evocative autoethnography, as described by Pace (2012) in section 3.1.

Because my methodology is embedded within a practice-based paradigm, my enquiry rests on my practical experience of five different production or examination periods. As formulated in section 2.1, performance practice has a fairly large bearing on my research in order to differentiate vocal–technically between different style periods and genres. Studies in which performance practice is the focal point in practice-based research are represented in the two Ph.D. studies by Stolp (2012) and Orning (2019). In her thesis, *Contemporary Performance Practice of Arts Music in South Africa: A Practice-based Enquiry* (2012) Stolp positions herself as a performer and pianist and interrogates her personal experiences as practitioner of her art practice. Her research design consists of five performances that were constituted to deal with matters of contemporary art music performance practice and its social function in South Africa. Stolp (2012:2) remarks that ‘the knowledge gained through these performance projects [is] presented together with theoretical work’. Orning’s thesis, *The Polyphonic Performer* (2019) investigates contemporary cello performance practice through the method of artistic research. Similarly to Stolp, her methodology rests on a discussion of and reflection on her artistic processes and the written verbalisation of the tacit knowledge gleaned from practical experience and knowhow. Therefore, her methodology aims to make implicit knowledge explicit. The artistic result of her study

consists of 12 videos of her performances that were recorded during her research period. By means of artistic research methods and specifically practice-based research, these two authors' object of study is performance practice, as is the case in my own study. The tacit knowledge embedded in practice is made explicit by documenting the artistic processes and by self-reflection. The knowledge generated by these methods, however, differs slightly. In contrast to Orning and my own study, which aim to make explicit the tacit knowledge of performance and the technical aspects of it, Stolp's (2012:14) focus is on 'social knowledge, rather than performance knowledge' and refers to 'art music practice and the social construct which is designated as "whiteness"'. Stolp therefore uses artistic practice to answer socio-political questions rather than piano-technical performance matters. Although Orning and Stolp do not explicitly use autoethnography as their methodology or paradigm, their theses display characteristics of it. Orning's personal accounts of her performances and the way she disseminates her data represents characteristics of analytical autoethnography, as is the case in my own study. But Stolp's self-reflection is evocative in character and is rooted in a study that is 'deeply personal and introspective' (Stolp 2012:15). In Stolp's case, embodied knowledge and 'bodily awareness' connected with emotional states has produced insights into socio-political issues. Orning uses embodied knowledge to gain insights into cello-technical aspects of performing contemporary cello music. My intention of finding answers to the vocal-technical matters of performing vocal music correlates with that of Orning's study. However, my investigation differs in that it compares and investigates the different vocal-technical issues of different style periods and vocal genres.

Studies from a singer's perspective which are early examples of autoethnographic writing in music are represented by Järviö (2006) and Belgrano (2011). In *The Life and World of a Singer: Finding my Way* (2006) Järviö focuses on the music of Monteverdi's early operas, which then became the subject of her research. She observes that the literature on performance practice lacks studies by performers aimed at informing other performers. She points out how much more she could contribute to new knowledge regarding vocal performance practice, drawn from her own experience as performer and pedagogue. In her music drama thesis, *'Lasciatemi morire' o faro 'La finta pazza'* (2011), Belgrano aims to explore a way to formulate, in written form, aspects of vocal expression, vocal state-of-being and the implementation of ornamentation represented in performances of Italian and French laments and mad scenes. Through her practice-based enquiry, which is based on and resembles autoethnography, Belgrano shows the practical application of the theoretical studies in a portfolio of performances.

Aszodi's *Voicing Subjectivity: Artistic Research in the Realization of New Vocal Music* (2016) and Gentili's *The Invention of the 'Modern' Voice: Changing Aesthetics of Vocal Registration in Italian Opera Singing 1870–1925* (2018) are more recent Ph.D. studies that have focused on vocal performance aspects from a singer's perspective. Although both these authors use autoethnography as their methodology, Aszodi's thesis is a fine example of the combination of autoethnography and practice-based research. Her choice of methodology is based on self-description of vocal performance matters embedded in subjective experience of five different modern vocal compositions. As also implemented by Stolp (2012) and Orning (2019), this subjective experience greatly depends on the bodily experience and bodily knowledge, which translates into

embodied practice. Autoethnography allows Aszodi's embodied experience to be examined and conveyed in a form that contributes to meaningful discourse. Practice-based research is used to combine embodied knowledge of professional vocal practice with theoretical sources and existing secondary literature. Aszodi's methodology therefore has much in common with my own in the way that we both implement practice-based research and autoethnography in combination to verbalise our bodily experiences and embodied knowledge in order to contribute to new knowledge. However, Aszodi (2016:19) incorporates formal interviews with professional singers to convey information from a singer's perspective and to contextualise her artistic research within 'the broader field of professional practice'. My contextualisation of professional practice from a singer's perspective stems from the published literature and reports from examiners in relation to my experience as a professional singer, as discussed in section 2.1. Moreover, our approaches differ in the sense that Aszodi focuses more on interpretation and vocal expressiveness instead of dealing explicitly with the vocal-technical aspects that are informed by performance practice. To my knowledge, the only Ph.D. study that focuses on the vocal-technical implications of performance practice is Gentili's dissertation, *The Invention of the Modern Voice* (2018).

From the perspective of an opera singer, Gentili applies autoethnography to study early recordings and vocal treatises of the mid- and late-19th century in a self-reflexive approach. Using her experience as professional opera singer and the method of close listening, she bases her enquiry on her expert understanding of vocal technique. This approach, however, differs from my autoethnographic paradigm in the sense that I do not analyse recordings of other singers (as is the case in performance analysis) as

research method to gather information about performance practice, and to interrogate and underline the vocal–technical aspects. Her discussion of the change in vocal registration during the 19th and 20th century is very valuable and relevant to my own enquiry about vocal performance practice and corresponding vocal registration, though. However, my investigation is embedded in practice-based research, which allows me to describe and reflect upon the physical processes at play in vocal registration as it is applied to my own singing.

3.4 Data collection and methods

The methods of data collection and analysis for autoethnography are inclusive of various qualitative methods such as writing personal, reflective journals, videotaping, memorabilia, photos, audio recordings and interviewing (Adams, Ellis & Holman Jones 2015:49; Chang 2016:114; Hughes & Pennington 2018:15). Accordingly, the music-related autoethnographic studies I discussed above applied these types of qualitative method. For example, journal-writing and self-documentation were part of Aszodi's embodied experience of preparing and performing her five concerts, 'writing down what has transpired during a day's artistic practice' (Aszodi 2016:31). Gentili (2018:9) also states that she used personal documentation in the form of 'daily notes' kept in diaries, or 'annotations' she made 'on vocal scores while listening intensively to early recordings'. In my data collection, I have used a journal and/or annotations in the respective scores, and informal audio and video recordings of my rehearsals. I also used the video recording of the examination performances in addition to the examiners' reports as a final phase of critical self-reflection.

3.4.1 Studying the score and consulting secondary sources

This process commenced with learning the music. A preliminary step entailed choosing the suitable score or confirming which edition the production's conductors and directors would use. The learning process incorporated a personal analysis of the score that enabled me to explore the word–note relationship (or word–note–tone relationship, drawing on Stark's concept mentioned in Chapter 2), the matter of orchestration or the kind of accompaniment that points to the vocal approach, and the emotional interpretation – the affect of the music.²⁰ Although I am not a professional pianist, I find that playing through the score on the piano brings me the closest to the music and therefore helps me to familiarise myself intimately with the music and the way it speaks to me. During the process of studying the score, I would also consult secondary sources on performance practice, which included all aspects of style, such as the musical language of the composer, the epochal and period style, and historical information on the singers who first performed the music. I also consulted the relevant vocal treatises or sources that interpret these treatises in a historical context and which form part of secondary performance practice literature. With this background knowledge, I then approached the preparation process of the specific genre and style period in question for each of the five examination performances.

²⁰ The term 'affect' stems from the German, *Affektenlehre* (theory of the affects) and it was first used 'by German musicologists, beginning with Kretzschmar, Goldschmidt and Schering, to describe in Baroque music an aesthetic concept originally derived from Greek and Latin doctrines of rhetoric and oratory. [...] It was from this rhetorical terminology that music theorists, beginning in the late 16th century, but especially during the 17th and 18th centuries, borrowed the terminology along with many other analogies between rhetoric and music. The affects, then, were rationalized emotional states or passions. After 1600 composers sought to express in their vocal music such affects as were related to the texts, for example sadness, anger, hate joy, love and jealousy' (Buelow 2001).

In my own professional career, I came to use the term 'affect' in connection with 17th- and 18th-century music in the sense described by Buelow; however, I find that, by extension, the term can also apply to other eras of music. I find the term a useful short-hand reference to a range of rhetorical and expressive content in music of all epochs.

3.4.2 Physical process

Once I had studied the score, the process of ‘getting the music into the voice’ started.²¹ This part of the preparation process entailed investigating and trying out the suitable vocal approach in accordance with my (informed) interpretation of the composition and my vision for its realisation in performance. When working in a production with a musical and a stage director, I tried to consult them as early as possible to ascertain what kind of orchestra would accompany the singer, the kind of venue for the performance and what their respective performance aesthetics were with regard to performance practice. I was interested to know how vocal idioms of articulation (such as pitch onset, legato, embellishments and portamento) would influence idioms of vocal quality such as glottal adduction, subglottal pressure, and vertical position of the larynx, the singer’s formant, airflow rates and registers (Stark 1999). I relied here on the way I physically experienced the idioms of vocal quality and how it affected the sound I produced.

Long before the rehearsal period of the *St. John Passion* started (roughly seven months), I took masterclasses with director Kobie van Rensburg on the HIP approach of this production, which guided me in a suitable direction for my preparation process. I recorded these masterclasses on video to establish a reference point when writing all the information down in my journal. In addition, I made notes in my score concerning matters of vocal articulation and the appropriate vocal registration. In the months that followed the masterclass, I would watch the video again and consult the notes I made, subsequently singing through the recitatives and experiencing the sensations of

²¹ Admittedly a colloquialism, this phrase derives from professional singers’ manner of speaking when referring to a specific intellectual-cum-somatic process, and I adopt it in this thesis to remain true to my autoethnographic approach.

singing in a light registration as suggested by Van Rensburg. It was important to maintain this kind of registration in order to accommodate the preferred performance practice of this production.

Although the orchestral forces for the opera (*Cavalleria Rusticana*) and operetta (*The Merry Widow*) productions were smaller than those of the usual setting, and although the performance space (seating an audience of 400; also smaller than in most opera theatres) was communicated in an early phase, these aspects did not necessarily indicate that I could sing with less vocal intensity. The role of Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* posed an enormous challenge vocal–technically for my lyric voice and I viewed this production as an opportunity to experiment with heavy vocal registration, investigating how I had to adjust my technique to meet the demands of the music. I experimented in my studio (at the University of the Free State) by singing through the most important parts of the role and made short recordings on my iPhone to then make notes in my journal of how it felt to sing with a firmer glottal adduction and the result of higher subglottal pressures, and if I had a lowered laryngeal position.

Preparing for *The Merry Widow* required less vocal–technical experimentation, because I had sung the role before. I did, however, investigate how the style, which often alternates between legato singing and *parlando* style²² influenced vocal registration. Furthermore, it was of interest to feel how moving and dancing would influence idioms of vocal quality such as glottal adduction, subglottal pressure, air-flow rates and the vertical position of the larynx. This investigation and embodied experiences were noted in my journal. I should add that the physical process which

²² 'In singing, a speech-like style, with one syllable for each note, often used in dialogues in certain kinds of comic opera' (Latham 2011).

started in my studio overlapped with the stage and orchestra-stage rehearsals; in fact, at this stage of my preparation for this role, experimentation during stage rehearsals with the director, conductor and choreographer proved a more prominent part of the process than studying the score in my studio.

In *Winterreise*, the fundamental melancholic emotional state of the protagonist, as expressed in the vocal line and the accompaniment, made me experiment with a fundamental vocal tone production that would express the overall melancholic mood of the cycle. The physical process for this concert also consisted of four early rehearsals with my accompanist and audio recordings on my iPhone.

In the final programme of 20th- and 21st-century art song, I was not only led by the large interpretative scope of the piano and organ accompaniments and the textual subject-matter, but also by a consideration of the vocal approach that the living composers preferred. The physical process for this programme spread over several months, during which I took coaching sessions with composer Hendrik Hofmeyr and also singing lessons with my practical supervisor. During these sessions and lessons, I made audio recordings and also annotations in my scores. In order to practise these physical or embodied experiences of the sessions and lessons, I scheduled early rehearsals with my accompanist, which in this case formed part of the physical process. These rehearsals were also audio recorded on my iPhone. Later, I wrote down in my journal the information I had gathered from the recordings of this phase of the preparation.

3.4.3 Rehearsals with the accompanist or orchestra

Probably the most important phase of the preparation process was the moment when rehearsals started with the other musicians in the production. These other artists

variously included a pianist, a basso continuo group, an organist, an orchestra, a stage director and a conductor. Once these rehearsals commenced, I received feedback from the conductor and/or the director and accompanist, and a dialogue between the other artists involved and me took place. It should be mentioned that the dialogue, in the preparation of the *St. John Passion* and the 20th- and 21st-century recital, started as early as during the physical process and while working with the director and composer respectively. During this rehearsal phase, I could also gauge the progress of my own preparation process. I also began a process of early self-reflection by asking myself if my vocal approach was in line with the desired performance practice, aesthetics and expressive intentions of the production team. The dialogue between the other artists and me provided some of the most important information in my data collection. This phase had its own dynamics for each of the five examination performances and therefore differed slightly according to the artists involved; it is therefore worthwhile describing some of the performances separately.

Bach Oratorio: *St. John Passion* (J.S. Bach, 1685–1750); Soweto, Meadowlands Seventh-day Adventist Church, 27 May 2018

The stage rehearsals of this dramatised production started in May 2018. As mentioned in section 3.4.2, I was fortunate enough to have a masterclass with director and tenor Kobie van Rensburg and harpsichordist Sabine Erdmann from Berlin in October 2017. During the stage rehearsals in 2018, I was led constantly by Van Rensburg, who was not only the director but also had an exact musical performance aesthetic in mind which he communicated with the conductor. During these rehearsals, I made additional notes of the interpretation (and my gestures and action on stage) in my score. The rehearsals with the conductor started roughly two weeks prior to the

premiere (one week after stage rehearsals began) and they added another layer of information to that which I had already gathered. An intensive two weeks of orchestra-stage rehearsals (mostly with basso continuo) gave me ample time to reflect after each rehearsal upon the critique or notes from both the conductor and the director. I wrote down these notes in my journal and score. The final body of data was the final dress rehearsal that was recorded on video. I watched this before my first performance and made additional notes, which gave me another opportunity to reflect upon the rehearsal phase before the performance.

Viennese Operetta: *The Merry Widow* (Franz Lehár, 1870–1948); Bloemfontein, Civic Theatre, 3 August 2018

The learning and preparation of the role of Danilo in *The Merry Widow* came easily and naturally because I had often sung the role in two different productions in Germany and Switzerland. My examination performance of this role took place in a professional production in Bloemfontein.²³ Because I knew the operetta very well, I also helped to edit and adapt the dialogues for our South African production. And, since I am the coordinator of vocal studies at the Odeion School of Music, I was also responsible for coaching the smaller roles and for the musical direction of the chorus, which consisted of vocal students. This whole endeavour therefore enabled a dialogue with the conductor and the director from quite early on in the preparation process. I could make notes in my score and journal and gather information concerning my own role before stage and orchestra-stage rehearsals commenced. As I did in preparation for the other examination performances, I made annotations in my score and kept a journal of the

²³ In this production in Bloemfontein, the dialogues were spoken in English and the musical numbers were sung in German. I have used the English title of this operetta, because the production was advertised as *The Merry Widow*.

rehearsal period, which started for me with stage rehearsals three weeks prior to the premiere. My dialogue with the director informed me how to approach the role in this particular production and indicated whether this director's vision for the role corresponded to my previous experience of playing and singing the role. Once the conductor joined us, this dialogue was extended, and I exchanged my musical ideas with him. I took more notes and kept a journal. The whole rehearsal period, including the final week of orchestra-stage rehearsals, would again provide me with substantial time to reflect upon each day's rehearsals and to experiment with the role both musically and acting-wise.

Verismo Opera: *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Pietro Mascagni, 1863–1945); Bloemfontein, Civic Theatre, 16 July 2017

The role of Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* came as a surprise to me when it was decided by the Free State Symphony Orchestra and the Odeion School of Music that I would be cast in the role. This decision was finalised less than two months before the premiere; therefore, my documentation of the preparation process consists only of my private practice sessions (the physical process) and the stage rehearsals with the conductor. As always, I made notes in the score I used during the rehearsals with the conductor and the director. The stage rehearsals and orchestra-stage rehearsals were all done during a period of two weeks because of the short duration of the opera. It did, however, provide me with ample time for self-reflection and further vocal–technical self-reflection between rehearsals. This was documented in my score and journal. I also made video recordings of the orchestra-stage rehearsal on 13 July 2017 and the final dress rehearsal on 14 July 2017, from which I drew valuable information on my

progress and which vocal–technical aspects needed attention. I then wrote down the information from the recordings in my journal and/or score.

19th-century Lied: *Winterreise* D911 (Franz Schubert, 1797–1828); Bloemfontein, Odeion Hall, 16 July 2019

I started rehearsing the Lied programme with my accompanist and supervisor soon after I had learned the notes. The whole preparation process was relatively short for such a vast work and rehearsals were held weekly. The important dialogue between pianist and singer was therefore already established during the physical process of my preparation and together we could experiment with the interpretation of the song cycle. These recordings were then disseminated and interrogated between rehearsals to see what worked or not, and to experiment with the interpretation of the music and the vocal–technical approach. The process leading to the examination performance differed from the above productions in the sense that my pianist and I were the creative minds in the absence of both conductor or director. It left less room for broader dialogue beyond the two artists, but at the same time the interpretational freedom provided a greater opportunity for self-reflection and experimentation after each rehearsal with the accompanist. All the final rehearsals in the hall where we would perform were audio recorded and disseminated before the next rehearsal took place.

20th- and 21st-century Art Song: *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano Op 12* (Hubert du Plessis, 1922–2011), *Alleenstryd* (Hendrik Hofmeyr, 1957–), *Celebration of Faith: A Hymn-based Song Cycle for Tenor and Organ* (Jacobus Kloppers, 1937–); Bloemfontein, Odeion Hall, 27 November 2021

The final examination concert of 20th- and 21st-century art song again also had its own preparation dynamic. For instance, I performed the premiere of Jacobus Kloppers' song cycle before the examination concert and worked in person with the composer before he completed the whole cycle. This gave me first-hand experience of his style and how he wanted his music to be performed. In email communications, we also discussed matters involving the transposition of certain songs and finding the suitable tempo indications according to the effect of the songs. As stated in section 3.4.2, I also engaged in similar early dialogue with the composer when working with Hendrik Hofmeyr on his song cycle, *Alleenstryd*. In both cases, I could assemble information on the performance practice they favoured and, especially in Hofmeyr's case, discussed the kind of vocal approach suitable to his own performance aesthetics. Following these correspondences and sessions, I then made notes in my score and later transferred these to my journal. The rehearsals with the pianist and with the organist were all audio recorded. After each rehearsal I listened to the recordings and made notes in my score, in addition to documenting the information in my journal.

3.4.4 Analysing examination recording and critical self-reflection on reports

The examination performances were recorded, these being the final products of the processes which I documented. This brought me to the final phase in which I analysed

the product – the examination video recording – by means of close listening.²⁴ This process incorporated the most critical self-reflection on my artefact. Furthermore, I would then compare my findings in each examination with the reports of each external examiner. Although I read these reports directly after I had received my examination results, I decided to put them away and not to read them again until I would consult them for the purpose of reflection and writing this section. I must add that a considerable time passed before I would write the analysis of the video recording and consult the reports, which allowed me to distance myself from my memories of the concert in order to be as self-critical as possible in analysing the examination video recording. Therefore, I separated these two processes, because the analyses of the recording in itself already constituted a critical self-reflection on the outcomes of my preparation process. After I analysed the video recording, I proceeded with another critical self-reflection on the examination reports; this allowed me to correlate my own findings with those of experts in the discipline. I could therefore transcend the social world under study ‘through broader generalization’ and provide additional theoretical illumination on the topic (Anderson 2006:388). Taking the objective views from these reports into account, I could once again revisit the examination recordings and reflect further towards the final conclusions of my study. I found this to be a necessary part of an analytical autoethnography, where at the end one draws conclusions directed not only from the inside out but also from the outside in.

The process of analysing my data started, as mentioned above, by disseminating the somatic experiences as they relate to the vocal idioms that serve to assess vocal

²⁴ For the purposes of assessment, the recordings of the examination performances are made available to the examiners of the thesis with this submission.

performance. These sensory experiences within the singing body would then be analysed according to parameters (which are in fact vocal idioms) that are divided into two main groups, namely, vocal quality and vocal articulation. Vocal quality (in the final product) was analysed according to the degree of heavy or light vocal registration which I had applied. This refers to firm and loose vocal adduction, as described earlier by citing Stark (1999). Moreover, the differences in the degree of the sensory experiences of glottal settings, subglottal pressure, vertical laryngeal position, acoustic formants, breath flow, registers, and vibrato were analysed in this manner in accordance with the kind of vocal articulation which the music/text and production aesthetics dictate, and which includes pitch onset, legato singing, portamento, embellishments and tempo rubato. As described above, during the rehearsal period I went back and forth to reflect upon each rehearsal with the accompanist or orchestra during the various performance programmes. By doing so, I already engaged in analysing the data, which is constituted through my memory, journaling, note-taking in the scores and/or audio recordings. This early analysis took place mostly at home after such rehearsals. However, the final analysis, and the way I came to conclusions, happened through close listening to the final products (video recordings of the performances). In this final analysis I listened, re-experienced and reflected on how the creative outcome correlated with the preparation process. Did I achieve my goals vocal-technically according to the chosen performance practice? As mentioned above, this reflection process also incorporated consulting the examiners' reports of each performance, that is, gauging my own perception of the outcomes in accordance with the outside, objective view of the examiners.

3.5 Conclusion

In the chapters which follow, I discuss the genres and styles according to each examination performance. Then the preparation process leading up to the final performance is documented. Next, the data gathered from each performance is discussed and then analysed, as mentioned above in section 3.4.

In Chapter 4, I document and analyse the rehearsal period and the performance of the part of the Evangelist in Bach's *St. John Passion*. Chapter 5 covers the documentation of my preparation for and performance of the role of Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* – which answers questions pertaining to heavy vocal registration in singing verismo opera. Chapter 6 describes the preparation for and performance of the role of Danilo in Lehár's *The Merry Widow* in which I attempt to shed light on the performance style of Viennese operetta. The preparation for and performance of Schubert's *Winterreise* is documented in Chapter 7, in which I describe how I achieved vocal colouration according to the emotional states of the protagonist. In Chapter 8 I discuss the performance of 20th- and 21st-century art song and how I applied the *canto spianato* style of singing for these works, in which the melody in its entirety plays an important role in conveying the affect of the different texts.

Each of these chapters has a similar layout. First, I commence with a background and style description which considers aspects of the style and performance practice of each genre and/or the style period of the examination performance under discussion. Secondly, I discuss the preparation process, subdivided into the following segments: (a) studying the score in accordance with the secondary sources on the particular chosen performance practice or style; (b) describing the physical process of 'getting the music into the voice' in which I experiment with the suitable vocal approach,

referring to vocal registration in connection with vocal articulation; (c) documenting rehearsals with the orchestra or accompanist in which further experimentation and early analysis takes place. Thirdly, the video recording of the examination performance is discussed by means of critical self-reflection on the outcomes. This is followed by a critical self-reflection on the examination reports from the respective examiners of these performances. Each chapter closes with a concluding assessment of each examination performance.

The final chapter (Chapter 9) of the thesis is a conclusion in which all the findings generated from my examination performances, documented in Chapters 4–8, are compared. The implementation of different kinds of vocal registration according to the performance practice and/or style of the different genres and style periods is therefore compared in order to answer the research question. This comparison records in written verbal form the way in which the modern-day singer of Western art music can manoeuvre vocal–technically through the different performance approaches of different genres and styles to achieve vocal versatility and longevity, which to my knowledge is not available in the current literature. I articulate the knowledge through the artefact (examination performances) which I presented on stage. This thesis serves as an additional way of articulating verbally what the procedural knowledge entails. The contribution of this thesis would therefore enable singers to be more versatile in the main genres and style periods of vocal Western art music and in developing a vocal–technical palette of mechanisms demanded by performance practice.

**Chapter 4: Bach Oratorio: *St. John Passion* (J.S. Bach, 1685–1750); Soweto,
Meadowlands Seventh-day Adventist Church, 27 May 2018**

4.1 Introduction

As I mentioned in section 3.3, my methodology is embedded within a practice-based paradigm and my enquiry rests on the practical experience of five different examination performances. Performance practice has a significant bearing on my research because of its imperative of differentiating between the various style periods and genres. In section 2.2.2, I concluded that, since the inception of the HIP movement, a pluralistic approach to performing vocal music from the early Baroque period to the mid-19th century has prevailed. The different performance practices and possibilities of performing this music are HIP and MSP, or even a combination of the two. When I was approached by Kobie van Rensburg and the UMCULO incubator project to sing the second cast of the Evangelist in a production of the *St. John Passion* in Soweto, I decided to include this performance as one of the five examination performances. I was especially keen on doing so because I knew that this production would be performed within an HIP aesthetic, which would enable me to show the possible vocal–technical adjustments I would have to make to adhere to the preferred performance practice. Although this performance was chronologically the second of the five examination performances, I have chosen to discuss it in the first chapter dealing with the performances. The reason for this choice is that I wanted to start this discussion with a production that followed an HIP approach and to point out the difference between singing in the historically informed idiom and the ‘modern’ singing technique as explained in section 2.2.2.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of Bach performance practice with specific reference to the recitative in section 4.2. Here I consulted secondary sources on performance practice with special attention to the historical vocal treatises of Agricola and Hiller. Section 4.3 describes the preparation process for the role of the Evangelist. In section 4.3.1, I discuss the process of 'getting the music into the voice', which started with masterclasses with Van Rensburg. In section 4.3.2, I continue to document the stage and orchestra-stage rehearsals and document the dialogue between the production team and me. Section 4.4 consists of an analysis of the examination recording and critical self-reflection on the examination reports. I then conclude with my findings and outcomes in section 4.5.

4.2 Bach oratorio performance practice

Vocal performance practice in the Baroque period had a diverse character and scholars maintain that one should keep in mind the 'chronological, national and stylistic distinctions as well as differences of voice type and range' (Harris 1989:97). In this regard, Monteverdi cannot be performed like Bach or Handel, and because of their different composition styles, one cannot simply perform Handel in the same way as Bach, even though they were contemporaries. An enquiry into the way Baroque music was sung is not easily answered; however, the vocal treatises as primary sources do provide a substantial amount of information, although certain questions about vocal-technical matters are not always answered conclusively. The famous treatises of the period – for instance, by Caccini (1602), Tosi (1723) and Hiller (1780) – underline the differences in chronology, nationality and style (Lawson & Stowell 1999:89).

Regarding national distinction and style, J.S. Bach's music and performance has been described as a 'special case' from as early as 1771 by his pupil Johann Philipp

Kirnberger (1721–1783), who asserted that the complex melodic writing of Bach ‘require[s] a very special execution that is exactly suitable to his style’ (Butt 1990:24). According to Christian Wolff (2001), ‘it is impossible to describe Bach’s personal style by means of simple formulae’ since Bach’s music combines Italian style and ‘complex counterpoint, marked by busy interweavings of the inner voices as well as harmonic refinement’ throughout his oeuvre. Moreover, Bach’s style is also identified by a combination of extraordinary compositional technique with ‘instrumental and vocal virtuosity’ which ‘reflect his own prowess as instrumentalist’ (Wolff 2001). In Bach’s time, he was already criticised by Johann Adolf Scheibe (1708–1776) for his complex structures and the demanding technical standards which were very difficult to perform to. Bach had a homogenous approach to his treatment of voice and instruments which is identified by the ‘instrumental idiom’ in which he wrote for the voice (Wolff 2001).

The doctrines of the Lutheran church governed much of Bach’s work, especially after his engagement at the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig. The Lutheran belief in the power of music, especially singing, to convey the word of God, combined with the implementation of the Italian *seconda prattica*, resulted in the successful fulfilment of Lutheran music’s goal to ‘communicate meaning and *Affekt*’ (Butt 1990:10). Hence, rhetoric played an important role in composition and performance and was a ‘fundamental of education and humanist thought’ in Bach’s time (Butt 1990:15). Butt (1990:15) asserts that ‘music and its structures were – at least officially – to be subservient to verbal language and expression’. Subsequently, the articulation of music and text plays an important role in conveying the emotions of the text. In reference to Christoph Bernhard (1628–1692) and the articulation of slurs, Butt (1990:23) clarifies that ‘articulation might be influenced by the *Affekt*: strong passions

such as Joy and Anger would not be especially slurred, but sorrowful and gentle words require a milder, slurred style’.

Vocal technique and aspects of style and performance practice have always been discussed hand in hand in the treatises of the time – or, as Stark (1999:154) puts it, ‘vocal technique was considered inseparable from the matters of musical style’. Since we do not have any source linked directly to Bach’s vocal performance practice, the treatises of his time have to be relied on to provide valuable information. Closely related to Bach’s time and nationality was Agricola, who was a student of Bach’s. In 1757, he published his *Anleitung zur Singkunst*, which was a translation of the famous treatise by Tosi, *Opinioni de’ cantori antichi e moderni* (1723). Agricola’s contribution was not only a mere translation into German; his annotations throughout the treatise are so descriptive and expansive that it became an autonomous work. In 1995, Julianne Baird translated it into English as *Introduction to the Art of Singing by Johan Friedrich Agricola*. Another important German treatise which echoes Agricola’s annotations and reflects the style of German singing at the end of the 18th century is that of Hiller, *Anweisung zum musikalisch-zierlichen Gesang* (1780), translated into English by Suzanne Beicken in 2004 (Hiller 2004). Although Hiller’s treatise was published 30 years after Bach’s death, it is hailed as an important contribution to the historical performance practice of 18th-century vocal music in Germany (Butt 1994; Beicken in Hiller 2004; Seedorf 2019).

Performing the part of the Evangelist in the *St. John Passion* implies that one should look directly at the performance practice of recitative. In general, recitatives in the Baroque period are divided into three kinds according to the performance space they belong to, namely church, theatre and chamber. Agricola (1995:173) asserts that all

kinds of recitative should be performed without strict adherence to the time signature. This means that the singer should strive for a kind of spoken declamation that is 'guided more by the length and shortness of the syllables in common speech'. The tempo and character should depend on the content of the text. In his earlier treatise, *Anweisung zur musikalisch-richtigen Gesange* (1774), Hiller recommends that 'the content of the words should guide the singer whether he declaims in a slow or fast tempo' (own translation from Hiller 1774:203). According to Agricola (1995:172), the church recitative affords even more metrical freedom than the other two kinds. He adds that a 'certain amount of sustaining in places rich in Affect is permitted at times'; however, it should not be as 'extensive or extravagant' as in arias (ibid.). This sustaining usually occurs at final cadences. Hiller (2004:115) notes in addition that the church recitative resembles the old chamber cantata in which the singer 'seemed to feel all that is said'; it requires

a noble sincerity throughout and, in addition to a generally slow tempo, calls, at times, for a longer sustaining of certain notes as well as powerful appoggiaturas in other cases.

The most important characteristics of the performance style of these recitatives, the use of appoggiaturas and their proper implementation have been emphasised by authors such as Tosi, Agricola and Hiller (Seedorf 2019). As simple as they may seem, they do need careful attention because of the 'rhetorical implications these small ornaments can create and the question of the prerogative of notation versus that of extempore performance' (Baird 1995:12).

Agricola (1995:92) advocated that the use of the appoggiatura should be regularised since there was a tendency to use them 'everywhere' and the author found it

necessary at the time of his *Anleitung* 'to invent warning signs where no appoggiatura should be made and stop the appoggiatura madness of the newest Italian singers'. Hiller (2004:72) remarks that 'arbitrary embellishments' (*willkürliche Manieren*) have become 'a necessity' and that 'in the past they were left completely to the discretion of the singer and no one took the trouble to indicate or write them out'. Like Agricola, Hiller (2004:72) proposed certain rules which are based on 'musical and declamatory principles' because not all singers could use the embellishments correctly, in his view. The regulations governing the implementation of the appoggiatura were aimed at the achieving following objectives: (1) connect the melody better; (2) fill in the movement of the melody when it seems somewhat empty; (3) enrich the harmony, rendering it more diverse; and (4) impart more liveliness and brilliance to the melody (ibid.). The appoggiaturas are sung on the pulse of the main note, that is, 'they belong to the time value of the note which they precede and not to the note which they follow' (ibid.). Agricola (1995:93) notes that, for the singer, this implies that 'when a syllable falls on the main note, which itself is notated with an appoggiatura or any other ornament, then it must be pronounced on the appoggiatura'. Agricola (1995:93) and Hiller (2004:75) adopted C.P.E. Bach's terminology regarding what he classified as 'variable' or 'changeable' (*veränderliche*) and 'invariable' or 'unchangeable' (*unveränderliche*) appoggiaturas. The variable appoggiaturas are those that are longer and do 'not always [have] the same value as the notes before which they occur' (Agricola 1995:93). Normally these appoggiaturas 'last half of the time of the main note' and when the main note 'is dotted, the appoggiatura takes the time of the main note, which itself in turn will receive the value of the dot' (Agricola 1995:93, 94). The affect of the text also 'demands occasionally that the appoggiatura be held longer than half the note value' (Agricola 1995:96). Furthermore, all appoggiaturas should be slurred to

the main note, that is, sung in a legato manner. All appoggiaturas should be sung louder than the following main note; they 'either rise or fall, by step or by leap' (Agricola 1995:98). They are sung from above when they do not repeat the preceding note. Those that fill in intervals of a third only connect the melody. Hiller (2004:78) remarks that the appoggiatura 'may also approach the main note from a half step below'; however, because such appoggiaturas are chromatic, they should be used 'carefully and sparingly'.

Concerning recitative in J.S. Bach's music, Seedorf (2019:222) states that there is a traditional opinion among pedagogues that Bach's music should not be embellished freely because 'the composer already notated all the embellishments and therefore incorporated them as an integral component of his works'. However, Bach's vocal music and the written-out embellishments 'indicate no clear picture' in the sense that 'on the one hand, one finds many places where all embellishments are written out' and 'on the other hand, Bach expected that singers were familiar with the traditional conventions of performance practice' so that they could embellish independently (Seedorf 2019:222, 223). Seedorf (2019:223) continues that 'in many cases, Bach does not write out appoggiaturas, although these according to the rules [...] they are called for at these places'.

Before I move on to the preparation process, I would like to raise the topic of vocal registration and how it relates to performance practice. In section 2.2.2 I elaborated on the matter of vocal registration and how the idea of blending the chest and head register differed from the 'modern' singing technique. The technical implications which this holds for the present-day tenor voice should be taken into account when the singer finds themselves in a production that follows an HIP approach. I pointed out in section

2.2.2 that, according to the treatises of Tosi, Agricola and Hiller, the tenor in the 18th century cultivated the head voice (or falsetto) for high notes without carrying the chest voice above its natural limits. As I explained in section 2.2.2., I prefer to use the term 'light registration' for this lighter approach to singing in the upper range of the tenor voice which we nowadays call *zona di passaggio* and above the second *passaggio*. Authors such as Gentili (2018) and Stark (1999) have pointed out that in the 'modern' singing technique, vowel modification and 'covering' is a prerequisite for the male voice (and especially the tenor) when singing in the upper range, and that this allows the chest voice to be carried beyond its natural limits while maintaining a vocal quality similar to the lower part of the range. I prefer to use the term 'heavy registration' for this kind of vocal approach.

In the *St. John Passion*, Bach set the recitatives of the Evangelist in a high tessitura, which mostly lies between D4 and A4. Conversely, the lines of other recitatives start in the middle range and include disjunct leaps to an exposed G4 or A4. The high tessitura and exposed high notes would normally imply that the modern-day lyric tenor should modify or 'cover' the vowels in the upper range to maintain a homogenous vocal quality throughout the range, therefore implicating a heavy registration. I would like to argue that, for any tenor, the role of the Evangelist poses a vocal challenge because of the many long stretches of recitative that frequently move over the second *passaggio* of the voice. This would be even more challenging when the performance aesthetics of the production call for an HIP approach in which the tenor should preferably apply a light registration. Moreover, if the recitatives are sung in a sustained manner or legato to support the sound better, the declamation of the text would arguably be compromised. My personal experience with this role and the production,

which is discussed below, investigates how to meet this challenge of finding a suitable vocal approach.

4.3 Preparation process

4.3.1 Physical process (masterclass)

As in Chapters 5–8, I begin this section with my description of studying the score and consulting secondary sources. In this chapter, however, my documentation will adopt a different order as the preparation process deviated somewhat from the normal procedure. I had sung the *St. John Passion* a couple of times before and therefore knew the score quite well. I was also fortunate to have had a masterclass with the director (Van Rensburg) which gave me the opportunity to revisit the musical score and refresh my memory. This masterclass took place on 19 October 2017 at the Odeion School of Music (OSM) in Bloemfontein. Van Rensburg and Erdmann visited the OSM for the purpose of this masterclass and also to conduct a vocal workshop on the music of J.S. Bach for students; this workshop would also serve as auditions for the chorus and smaller parts for the upcoming Soweto production of the *St. John Passion* to be entitled *Passion*. The opportunity to perform the Evangelist in the production as one of my five Ph.D. examinations was already part of ongoing discussions between Van Rensburg, myself and the Head of Department of the OSM. During his singing career, Van Rensburg's main focus was on the repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries and historically informed performance. Accordingly, he collaborated with conductors such as René Jacobs, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Christopher Hogwood, Christophe Rousset, Jean Claude Malgoire, Ivor Bolton and Bruno Weil. His expertise and experience therefore qualify him as a respected director and producer of HIP opera and oratorio stage productions.

As mentioned above, I had sung the Evangelist in various productions before, but never really in an HIP aesthetic. In fact, my previous experiences with the part were followed MSP, using a large chorus and string section playing on modern instruments. One of these productions even used the Schumann transcription with piano substituting for the harpsichord, and additional bassoons and clarinets augmenting the wind sections, so that I opted to sing the recitatives using a ‘modern’ singing technique. Although I had collaborated with Van Rensburg in several HIP productions in Germany of mainly Monteverdi and Handel operas, we had never worked on any of Bach’s oratorios or *Passions* and therefore this workshop posed a new challenge.

At the beginning of the workshop, I was informed, first of all, that the production would be a staged version²⁵ to be performed in a church in Soweto, Johannesburg. Secondly, it would be performed on A=415 Hz (*Kammerton*) to conform to current HIP norms. Furthermore, while the string players would be using modern instruments with steel strings, the other instrumentalists (e.g., woodwind players) would be using period instruments. The stage setting implied that the role should be memorised. Moreover, the lower pitch would be something completely new to me because I had previously performed the part on A=440Hz. It was decided that we would use the *Bach Neue Ausgabe* from Bärenreiter.

²⁵ The oratorio genre’s ‘normal manner of performance is that of a concert (without scenery, costumes or action)’ (Smither 2001). A staged version of the oratorio therefore resembles a manner of performance that is opera. Although Bach’s Passions were not conceived as operas, there is a growing trend to perform them in a dramatised setting with the intention of transforming these performances into socio-politically relevant events. Bettina Varwig (2014:245) points out that staged versions of Bach’s Passions can interrogate ‘familiarity with these pieces outside their initial liturgical setting’ and ‘confront audiences more immediately with the violent imagery and spiritual demands of the Passions, thereby continually renewing the dialogue between Bach’s works and later audiences’.

We started our first session with the harpsichord tuned to A=415 Hz from the beginning of the *Passion* with No. 2a. This recitative sets the mood for the whole *Passion*. We then continued with all the recitatives in the first part of the *Passion* so that I might familiarise myself with the performance style that Van Rensburg had in mind. From the outset, Van Rensburg highlighted six major aspects of performance practice applicable to the aesthetics of the period and his own idea of this production. These aspects relate to the use of vocal idioms in accordance with vocal articulation and performance practice.

First, Van Rensburg pointed out that the use of appoggiaturas was very important through all the Bach recitatives, with reference in this case to the pedagogical treatises of Agricola and Hiller. Van Rensburg started by identifying the places where the singer should normally insert the appoggiatura, as the accented syllable of a feminine (weak) ending is normally between the notes of a falling third. This correlates with the treatises of Agricola and Hiller, who respectively stated that an appoggiatura should be inserted '[b]efore a note making a strong-beat descending leap of a third, especially if it is followed by a short break expressed by a comma or another punctuation mark' (Agricola 1995:174) and that, also in the case of falling thirds, 'the intervening note can be bound with the following note as an appoggiatura' (Hiller 1774:202). Van Rensburg also made it clear that this rule does not need to be followed slavishly and that in some of these feminine endings the affect of the text justifies the omission of the appoggiatura and a 'blunt ending'.

Secondly, the way the appoggiatura is sung can inadvertently influence the intended affect of the recitative and the phrases. In this regard, we spent quite some time in No. 2a on mm. 12 and 13, where the notes (and appoggiaturas) of the first syllables of

'*Fackeln*' (torches) and '*Waffen*' (weapons) need to be strongly accentuated, the latter ('*Waffen*') being even more strongly accented than the former.²⁶ Van Rensburg wanted to point out that the way it was written (without the appoggiatura) does not sound dangerous enough, especially the word '*Waffen*' (weapons). Adding the appoggiaturas in these two above-mentioned places, sharply accentuating them and singing them in full voice really made a difference to the character of the phrase. Furthermore, Van Rensburg informed me that generally the 'other' kinds of appoggiatura that connect the melody at falling thirds (and which stress the strong syllables) should mainly be sung in a manner that may be described as leaning 'into the appoggiatura' by giving it more weight (Masterclass, Van Rensburg October 2017). Sung in this way, the succeeding note on the weak syllable would naturally sound lighter and unstressed.

Thirdly, Van Rensburg considered the matter of vocal approach. When I sang recitative No. 2a, m. 10 '*und der Hohenpriester und Pharisäer Diener*' (and the high priests and the Pharisees' servants), Van Rensburg promptly stopped me. He criticised the manner in which I approached the tones on '*Hohenpriester*', which is written on the notes F^{#4}, A4, A4, and asserted that he could hear me singing and 'covering' the notes over the *passaggio* excessively with more breath support, more resonance space and darkening of the vowels as if I were singing an aria. He argued that at the lower pitch (A=415 Hz) pitch the Evangelist perhaps does not need this kind of vocal approach with higher breath pressure and vowel modification (or 'covering') as he would need when singing at concert pitch (A=440 Hz). In the latter pitch, the

²⁶ All the translations of the German libretto in this chapter are adapted from Ambrose (2020:680–699).

tenor needs to apply more breath pressure and vowel modification when singing over the *passaggio*. Furthermore, he argued that the lower pitch would allow the Evangelist to adopt a more speechlike approach for the recitatives and therefore a very natural vocal approach that makes the enunciation of the text clearer than in full voice singing.

When we got to recitative No. 8 '*Simon Petrus aber folgete Jesu nach*', Van Rensburg related the vocal approach suggested and described above to vocal registration. He termed his preferred registration a 'soft registration' in which more head voice is applied to the notes in the *passaggio* area of the tenor voice on the notes F4, B^b4, G4, (*Jesu nach*) (Masterclass, Van Rensburg October 2017). This technique corresponds to what I have described as 'light registration' (see sections 2.2.2 and 4.2). Van Rensburg argued that the onset of the F4 and G4 should be from above and rather than below and stated that 'it might feel that you are cheating and that you are singing "off the voice" but I am sure that this is the kind of aesthetic that they used in the baroque period' (Masterclass, Van Rensburg October 2017). He also remarked, concurring with the insights from my literature review above (see section 2.2.2), that, according to the various treatises, there is no suggestion that singers in the 18th century knew how to approach the *passaggio* in the way we do today when singing, for instance, Rossini or Bellini. Van Rensburg maintained that the 'soft registration' is not vocally unhealthy: it only becomes unhealthy when the larynx is not 'in equilibrium'; this occurs when 'the soft palate is not raised enough' or 'when too much air is pushed through the larynx' (Masterclass, Van Rensburg October 2017).

Fourthly, Van Rensburg raised the issue of vibrato and stated that he does not believe that early music should be sung without vibrato. He explained that certain types of music demand a certain intensity of vibrato, as long as it is not the unwanted type that

is identified by a fluctuation in frequency. Moreover, he argues that what is important and applicable in Baroque recitative is that the unstressed syllables should not have vibrato in order to maintain the speech-like, rather than song-like, character of the delivery. The heavy-light vocal treatment of the stressed and unstressed syllables,²⁷ he suggested, should be executed by singing 'into' the strong or stressed syllable, therefore giving the first note more weight than the second on the weak syllable. He indicated that many singers do not do this and then fall into the trap of trying to sing the weak syllable note more softly and 'lift the voice' – which results in lifting the larynx too high. However, by 'singing the strong syllable with more weight, the following weak syllable naturally becomes a lighter tone with a natural release in a comfortable position of the larynx' (Masterclass, Van Rensburg October 2017).²⁸

Fifthly, the vocal idiom of breath flow (rate) was raised. In recitative No. 10, we arrived at the vocally uncomfortable place where the Evangelist begins with the words '*Jesus antwortete ihm*' (Jesus answered him) on A4 (m. 24). Van Rensburg suggested that thinking consciously of breath flow would enable me to sing this particular short phrase more comfortably. The trick was not to build up too much air pressure before the onset of the first A4 but rather to connect it to the preceding phrase that ends with the words, '*seine Lehre*', and 'to think that you are already on the flow of the air of those words'

²⁷ This concept is well established in HIP singing. Martha Elliot (2006:58) confirms that '[e]mphasizing the contrast between stressed and unstressed notes, which were sometimes referred to as "good notes" and "bad notes" is "one of the fundamental principles of Baroque articulation"; for singers, "making decisions about articulation" [is easier than for instrumentalists] because we have a text with built-in syllabic stresses and grammar'.

²⁸ One of the fundamental ideals of the Baroque period was to differentiate between stressed and unstressed notes that should ideally imitate natural speech inflection (Elliot 2006:58; Butt 1990:13). For singers this implies that stressed strong syllables should be sung more loudly and longer than the unstressed, weak syllables, which should sound softer and shorter. Reference to this kind of articulation per example can be found in the treatises of Agricola (1995:102–106) and Hiller (2004:67, 68).

(Masterclass, Van Rensburg October 2017). I tried to follow his advice by connecting these two phrases and keeping the suspension of the body open to let in a small amount of air, but at the same time being mindful that it is one phrase that requires a continuous flow rate of the breath. This approach prevented me from building up too much subglottal pressure which would result in a heavy registration.

The final recitative which we worked on was No. 12. This recitative closes the first half of the *Passion*, and our focus here was to avoid unwanted portamento in the *adagio* section beginning at m. 33 of No. 12a on the words ‘*und weinete bitterlich*’ (and wept bitterly). When I first sang through this section, I was unaware of the portamento I had applied on the descending tritone and to a certain extent also on all the following ascending intervals in mm. 33–38. Van Rensburg immediately pointed out the use of portamento here and commented that it does not suit the style and the performance aesthetics, but also that the affect of ‘weeping’ does not come through effectively when the word is stressed by the added use of portamento. In addition, Van Rensburg questioned the use of *messa di voce* on the tied melismas on the word ‘*weinete*’ in mm. 33, 34, 35 and 36. He suggested that I ‘grow into the legato line and keep the vocal intensity going through these melismas on the word “*weinete*”’. He explained that the affect of the word is already inherent in the music in the way it was composed. Singing a *messa di voce* ‘too soon and on each tied note’ hinders the musical expression inherent in the phrase. He commented that such application of the *messa di voce* ‘in Monteverdi or even Handel [...] would be fine but not in Bach’s music’ (Masterclass, Van Rensburg October 2017).

After Van Rensburg left for Germany, my preparation process continued in the months that followed. Between 19 October and 10 December 2017, I worked sporadically once

a week on the *Passion* because the confirmation of the performance came only in February 2018. This part of the preparation I did by myself in my studio and I focused mostly on the first part of the *Passion* which I had worked on with Van Rensburg. During this period, I made sure of exactly where I should insert appoggiaturas and how they would contribute to the affect of the text. As I mentioned earlier, the music was not new to me because I had already performed it in Germany. However, I still spoke the text aloud on the note values as notated in the score before singing it. This practice would also help me to memorise the text. Furthermore, I experimented with the kind of vocal registration that Van Rensburg preferred for this production, that is, a light registration. For the notes in the *zona di passaggio* and above, I tried to find a mixture of registers that had more head voice than chest register; that is, I was implementing *voix mixte* as I have described it in section 2.2.2. Practising this recitative on the correct pitch of A=415Hz was tricky because my piano was tuned to the normal A=440Hz. However, I first practised it with the piano to make sure that I sang all the correct notes and then transposed the recitative a semitone lower to get the feeling of the preferred pitch of the production. This way of practising was quite revealing in the sense that I could feel the difference between singing the recitative at the higher and the lower (A=415Hz) pitches and also the effect it had on vocal registration. I could physically sense that when singing at A=440Hz I wanted to use a firmer vocal closure with a lowered larynx, which resulted in more ‘ring’ of the voice and higher subglottal pressure. The sensation produced was of a more compressed feeling of air between the diaphragm and the larynx. This kind of registration, which takes the chest register upwards above the second *passaggio* on the notes G⁴, A^{b4} and A⁴, felt a little laboured or too heavy as opposed to the ‘soft registration’ to which Van Rensburg

referred in the masterclass. The moment I transposed the recitatives a semitone lower and approached the high notes from above in the head voice, things changed. I felt less urge to maintain a low laryngeal position and could feel that the air was flowing through the vocal folds and that the subglottal pressure (the compressed feeling of air) was less than when singing on A=440Hz. The 'ring' of the voice, or the singer's formant, was less intense on the high notes; however, the sound that I produced felt free and easier to produce. This was an indication that I was implementing a looser glottal adduction and therefore a lighter vocal registration.

During my practice sessions, I felt that it became easier to follow a natural speech inflection for the recitatives that so often move over the second *passaggio* of the tenor voice. There was no need for a heavy registration, maintaining a low laryngeal position and a high subglottal pressure, which stiffen the movement of the tongue and hinder clear text enunciation.

I started practising the second half of the *Passion* on 1 March 2018 after the date of the Soweto production of *Passion* was confirmed. I should add that the hiatus regarding working on the *St. John Passion* was due to my obligation as Head of the Vocal Department at the OSM and because of other performing engagements. In December 2017, I sang two performances of an Operetta Gala at the Brooklyn Theatre (Pretoria), and I was learning and practising upcoming concerts of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (Schoenberg version) that would take place in June 2018 at the same theatre. I thought it best to let the *Passion* rest while I was practising this repertoire, which mostly demanded a heavier vocal registration.

In the two months before I would start stage rehearsals in Soweto, I approached the second half of the *Passion* in exactly the same manner as described above. I thought

of the articulation of the text and how Van Rensburg had explained it to me, keeping in mind that the insertion or omission of appoggiaturas in strategic places and endings would contribute to the affect of the text. Furthermore, I experimented with the natural speech inflection of the text and tried out different kinds of tactus (basic pulse) according to the affect. I also gave some thought to the use of the vocal idioms, portamento and vibrato, and was careful to avoid using any portamento. I observed that the use of vibrato could be reduced to sustained notes and certain notes in phrases of slow tactus. Although the treatises of authors such as Agricola and Hiller refer to vibrato (*Bebung*) as an ornament, this was not my intention when singing sustained notes or phrases. However, the result could be viewed as such. Agricola asserts that vibrato should not influence the pitch and that it is ‘an ornament that in singing is especially effective on long sustained notes, particularly when applied towards the end of such notes’ (1995:149). Hiller (2004:99) echoes Agricola when he remarks that vibrato (*Bebung*) ‘arises when one does not permit a long-sustained tone to sound firmly, but rather allows it to fluctuate without changing the pitch’. I noticed that breath flow rates increased in the faster-moving phrases and decreased on the more dramatic moments in the recitatives.

4.3.2 Stage and orchestra-stage rehearsals

The setting of *Passion* allowed for the audience to be situated amid the drama, being seated around the orchestra and the space where the action would take place. The *turba* chorus acted the various parts of disciples,²⁹ soldiers and the Jewish crowd and bystanders, while the six chorale choirs were also seated next to the audience and

²⁹ The term ‘*turba*’ is the Latin word for ‘crowd’ and it refers to ‘those words in the Passion spoken by more than one person (e.g., by disciples, the Jews or the soldiers)’ (Von Fischer 2001).

action area. The role of the Evangelist was to act as narrator. The Evangelist, John, would tell the story and observe it simultaneously as a bystander not visible to the actors and singers. By moving with the action and happenings wherever they took place, the Evangelist would draw the audience's attention to the action. This staging enhances the significance of the large body of German biblical text delivered in a multitude of recitatives by the character, John, to his audience, which, for the greater part, would be unfamiliar with the music of Bach.

Van Rensburg's concept for acting the role of the Evangelist was fairly minimalistic, with very few hand gestures and actions. He worked more on where John would steer the focus of his eyes. This implied that I had to be very exact about where my gaze would go – to the other singers and characters on stage or out to the audience. In this sense, staging the piece was not difficult for me because of the minimalistic treatment of movements and gestures. Knowing what to do on which parts of the text and music further helped me to memorise the piece. Memorising the piece meant that I knew all the choruses, chorales and arias between the recitatives, because I had to know exactly when to connect these pieces to the correct recitative. The week of stage rehearsals gave me the opportunity to do so and by the time the conductor arrived I had almost fully memorised the music.

I started my stage rehearsals with Van Rensburg on 8 May 2018 at the Meadowlands Seventh-day Adventist Church, Soweto, accompanied by the harpsichord player who would play in the performances. It was also decided that Van Rensburg would serve as my practical supervisor for this Ph.D. examination and he put great effort into carefully guiding me during the rehearsal period that followed. Because I shared the role with another tenor, my own rehearsal time was limited, and I had seven days to

plot the piece with the director (Van Rensburg). From my perspective, these stage rehearsals were not solely a matter of staging and focusing on acting, but also served as musical rehearsals in which Van Rensburg coached me musically and vocally in a manner similar to the process in the masterclass. This is the way Van Rensburg always works as opera director – he is not merely a stage director, but also supervises the music to be sung, for he believes that the affect of the text and music are embedded in the acting.

I commenced rehearsals in the Soweto venue with the conductor, Felix Bender, and the basso continuo group on 15 May 2018. By this time, I had worked with Van Rensburg on the staging of the *Passion* for a week, during which time we coordinated musical gestures and the different affects of the recitatives with the actions of the Evangelist. We had two musical-stage rehearsals with the conductor during the day, which started at 10:00 and ended at 17:30. These rehearsals started right away with acting on stage in order for the conductor to get an idea of the production and where the singers were positioned on stage, as well as the acting involved. I felt comfortable singing the recitatives from the outset and the conductor was mostly satisfied with my delivery of the music and the text.

The stage rehearsals and orchestra-stage rehearsals had a coherent nature: the director and conductor worked closely together by sharing their information and coordinating it with me.

I now discuss the whole rehearsal period of three weeks with reference to certain recitatives which I consider important to the role of the Evangelist. These chosen recitatives reflect different kinds of vocal articulation in relation to the different affects of the text; therefore, they may serve as illustrations of how to adjust vocal registration

in order to characterise the different texts in line with the performance aesthetics of the production team.

Recitative No. 2

The first line of the recitative creates an atmosphere of calm and is suggestive of motion because of the text that speaks of Jesus who walked with his disciples over the brook Kidron in the garden. Van Rensburg suggested an appoggiatura on the strong syllable of the word 'Kidron' (Kidron) in m. 2 to indicate the flowing motion of the brook; this is in line with the 'rule' of inserting an appoggiatura as an intervening note at falling third intervals. This implies that a new note is inserted and that the first A^b on the word 'Kidron' becomes a B^b. The same applies to the word 'Jüngern' (disciples) with an appoggiatura on the first, strong syllable and where the first C of 'Jüngern' is replaced with a D. The insertion of the two appoggiaturas naturally connects the melody and brings flow into the music. In addition, I had to focus on breath flow from the beginning of the phrase till the end of the sentence in m. 4. When I first sang the phrase in this manner, Van Rensburg commented that it was actually too fast and did not suit the performance practice of church recitative. To accomplish a slower movement of the phrase I was told to stretch the first syllable of the first word 'Jesus' (Jesus) and to think the semiquavers of the words 'über den Bach' (over the brook) in slow measure. In addition, I also tried to 'think' the whole phrase legato, nevertheless maintaining the natural spoken inflection of the text.

In m. 5, Van Rensburg and Bender indicated that they wanted a change in vocal colour and tactus as the affect changes for a short while on the words 'Judas aber, der ihn verriet' (Judas, though, who had betrayed him). This change in vocal colour was explained to me by Bender as indicating 'the snake in paradise'. The conductor also

suggested a forward direction and reciting the text faster in mm. 5 and 6. On the words '*Denn Jesus versammelten sich oft daselbst mit seinen Jüngern*' (for Jesus had often gone there with his disciples), Bender suggested leaning backwards in the tactus because every time the Evangelist refers to Jesus he has a sympathetic attitude towards Jesus; this tempo adjustment implies a more lyrical approach to the text and the melody. When the Evangelist refers to Judas, however, his attitude changes to an unsympathetic and agitated stance, because Judas was the betrayer of Jesus, which betrayal led to his crucifixion. This stance should also be taken when the Evangelist speaks of the high priests ('*Hohenpriester*') and the pharisees ('*Pharisäer*'). My delivery of mm. 9–13 therefore had to change character and be more agitated and almost angry. To accomplish this change in character I implemented more chest register, but still mixed with head voice to sing the high A4's on '*Hohenpriester*' (high priests) without an 'operatic' sound and not too 'covered'. I decided not to insert an appoggiatura at the falling third in m. 11 on '*Pharisäer Diener*' (pharisees' servants), giving these words a blunt ending which I thought was more suitable to John's attitude towards those responsible for Christ's crucifixion. Bender also wanted this section louder, and therefore I mixed chest register into the sound and also used a firmer glottal adduction (resulting in a moderately higher subglottal pressure), which helped me to find the desired vocal colour. This approach was extremely important on the words '*kommt er dahin mit Fackeln, Lampen und mit Waffen*' (he entered there with torches, lanterns and with weapons) in mm. 12 and 13 as this text foreshadows how Jesus would be scorned and tormented later. The appoggiaturas from above on '*Fackeln*' and '*Waffen*' (already suggested in the masterclass) helped to convey the affect. However, these appoggiaturas needed to be sung *marcato* in order to make these words sound dangerous and fit the affect of agitation.

Bender suggested that we insert a little fermata before continuing with the next section in m. 13 on the words '*Als nun Jesus wusste alles, was ihm begegen sollte*' (Since now Jesus knew all that would happen to him). This fermata would allow for the affect to change to a calmer mood and portray Jesus' acceptance of his fate. We also decided to lean backwards in tactus and to allow more line and legato singing on '*ging er hinaus*' (he went outside), sustaining, if only slightly, the word '*hinaus*' on the G4.

The connection to the following Chorus 2b is an example of a link where the Evangelist's text leads into the beginning of a *turba* chorus. It serves as an upbeat for chorus and orchestra; therefore, it needed to be sung in the tempo of the succeeding music and therefore to be coordinated with the conductor. As with all of these connections to *turba* choruses, Bender and I spent a fair amount of time to ensure that I remember the tempo of each *turba* chorus which the Evangelist introduces. Most of them are in a faster tempo than that with which the preceding recitatives end. It demands a new energy and quick articulation of the text in which the tactus is mainly in 2/2 rather than 4/4. These fast articulated connections definitely needed a light vocal registration to allow a natural enunciation of the text. The lighter registration in part has more efficient breath flow because of the lower subglottal pressure associated with light vocal registration.

Recitative No. 2c connects immediately after the *turba* chorus with the words '*Jesus spricht zu ihnen*' (Jesus saith to them), which again asks for a sweet vocal colour.³⁰

Then the affect changes again on the words '*Judas aber, der ihn verriet stund auch*

³⁰ In this thesis, I use metaphorical descriptions of my experience of vocal timbre (such as 'sweet', 'grey', 'translucent', 'pale', 'white' or 'cool') copiously. These qualities emanate from the blend of overtones effected by different vocal onsets. But because this study did not approach vocal sound from an empirical but rather from an autoethnographic perspective, it is authentic to my methodology to describe the timbre using subjective terminology instead of more precise scientific explanation.

bei ihnen' (Judas also, who had betrayed him, stood though amongst them) to an almost angry expression and we accelerated the tactus again for this phrase. To suit the affect, I applied more chest register to contrast this passage with the lyric, sympathetic words of Jesus. For the next sentence in mm. 24 and 25, the affect changes back to a sympathetic nature on the words '*Als nun Jesus zu ihnen sprach: Ich bin's*' (And when Jesus had said to them, I am he). Again, I used a lighter vocal registration with more head voice in the mixture. On the words '*Ich bin's*', which is a repeat of Jesus' words, in accordance with Van Rensburg and Bender, I applied a little more chest register and stretched the vowels so that they could sound like an imitation of the baritone's two notes in m. 23. In addition, I slightly darkened the /i/ vowels on these two words by means of focusing more on the pharynx as resonator, slightly spreading and lengthening the throat.

The connection to Chorus No. 2d again demanded new energy and an *a tempo* on the words '*Sie aber sprachen*' (And they did answer). This needed to be loud but sung in a light vocal registration to propel the voice in a flowing tempo. I must, in this instance, remark that, as in the connection to Chorus No. 2b, there is no chord and impulse for the Evangelist to start the upbeat, and no way to know exactly when to take a breath. Therefore, I needed to have eye contact with Bender, who conducted these impulses. As the rehearsal continued, I began also to feel these 'downbeats' for my upbeats so that I sometimes did not even have to look at the conductor.

Recitative No. 12

This recitative connects with No. 10 and describes the last two times of Peter's renunciation of being a disciple of Jesus. The two instances of '*wärmete sich*' (warming himself) in No. 10 and No. 12 (mm. 4–5) use the same musical motif in referring to

Peter. We agreed that this motif should be sung with the same warm vocal colour as in No. 10, m. 19. In No. 12 it lies a minor third lower and, for my voice, a comfortable range to enhance the chest register and to focus more on the pharynx as resonator than the mouth cavity. As previously in No. 10 I applied vibrato and legato singing that contributed to the warmer, smooth vocal colour.

The connection to Chorus No. 12b needed to pick up the energy and tempo on the words '*da sprachen sie zu ihm*' (they said unto him), counting in larger pulses of 2. In this case the conductor also gave me my downbeat to breathe and start these words. In addition, I switched to a lighter vocal registration with more breath flow so as to be able to lean forward in tactus and to stay in a *piano* dynamic to suit the almost-whispering delivery of the chorus.

Recitative No. 12c succeeds the chorus and it was agreed that I emphasise the words '*Er leugnete aber und sprach*' (But he denied it and said) because it was the second time that Peter denied that he is a follower of Jesus. I did so by putting slightly more 'weight on the voice' by means of more chest register and creating more resonance space by elongating the throat. Elongating the throat, in turn, lowered the position of the larynx, resulting in a sound with more depth.

I followed almost the same procedure on the third and final renouncement by Peter on the words '*Da verleugnete Petrus abermal*' (Peter once again denied it). However, we decided that the word '*abermal*' (once again) should be given more emphasis and sound like an exclamation, and I therefore sang this louder with more chest registration and an elongated throat. Moreover, I took care to avoid using a too-firm glottal adduction with high subglottal pressure as this would cause an undesirably 'operatic' sound. On the words '*und alsobald krähete der Hahn*' (and at once the cock did crow)

Van Rensburg insisted that I should use a vocal colour that depicts the word 'krähete' (did crow). I did so by opening the 'ä' vowel approximating the vowel /ɛ/ and elevating the larynx so that the sound became almost 'ugly' and could sound like the crowing of a rooster. The chord resolution that follows in the basso continuo resembles the crowing of the rooster. Bender communicated that I should wait here till the new chord was struck. This would give me time to make the registration shift that followed.

The section that follows depicts Peter's remorse in remembering Jesus' prophesy and his own evil deed of renouncing him. Bach set the *adagio* of this section as an accompanied recitative which bears the characteristics of an *arioso* with its sustained notes and legato lines on the words 'weinete bitterlich' (wept most bitterly). The conductor indicated that I should prepare the *adagio* already in mm. 31 and 32 by starting to lean backwards in tactus on the words 'Da gedachte Petrus an die Worte Jesu' (Then Peter thinks back to the word of Jesus). The affect and vocal registration also had to change in these measures to portray the sorrowful mood of Peter. I accomplished the change in affect by a very soft, light vocal registration with as much head voice as possible. I could sense the minimal air pressure against the vocal folds which was an indication of a looser glottal adduction and lower subglottal pressure. I experienced the sensation that the sound was resonating only in my head. In addition, I tried to keep the larynx in a comfortable neutral position, being careful that it did not elevate too much, which would result in a thin sound. However, I could also feel that the larynx was not in a deep or low position (as in the 'modern' singing technique). I was now prepared vocal-technically to start singing the *adagio* with exactly the same light vocal registration with which I ended on the word 'hinaus' (outside) in m 33. I remembered what Van Rensburg had told me in the masterclass of October 2017: not

to use any audible portamento in the legato singing of this section in order for the dissonance and the affect of sorrow to come through more strongly. Van Rensburg and Bender also suggested that this section should be sung with a controlled vibrato in order to make the chromatic movement of the bass line and the vocal line transparent and clear. Subsequently, I aimed for a sound that was not too emotionally loaded and focused instead on 'thinking it more instrumentally'. In other words, I imagined my voice as an instrument. The word 'weinete' (wept) is stretched out on the first part of the diphthong and therefore the tenor sings on an /a/ vowel until m. 35 and again in the repeat of the word in mm. 35–36. I tried to sing as clearly and as forwardly placed an /a/ vowel as possible and took care to avoid a too dark or too bright colour. I achieved this by focusing more on the mouth cavity as resonance space. In addition, I thought of keeping the larynx in a neutral position on the /a/ vowel, which gave me better control of the vibrato and allowed me to pitch the intervals clearly without any portamento. Furthermore, Bender wanted these two lines of the *adagio* (mm. 33–38) to 'flow' in a steady pulse towards the word 'bitterlich' (bitterly) and the vocal intensity to be maintained throughout on the word 'weinete'. In order to maintain the intensity of sound, I applied a uniform glottal adduction and a light subglottal pressure that I would intensify (raise) just a little more on the B3 to C4 in m. 34, and again so on the A#3 to G4 in mm. 36–37. The final 'bitterlich' in mm. 37–38 descends into the middle range of the tenor voice and therefore I applied less subglottal pressure in these two measures so that I could keep a light vocal registration. Decreasing the subglottal pressure in the above-mentioned measures also has the effect of a natural *decrescendo* towards the end of the phrase and therefore the end of the *arioso*. In response to my singing the *arioso* in this manner, Van Rensburg and Bender commented that the affect of sorrow came through convincingly.

Recitative No. 18c

In No. 18b the Jews ask Pilate to release Barabbas instead of Jesus. Van Rensburg and Bender both agreed with me that the succeeding recitative (No. 18c) is an emotional outcry from John, and this characterisation is borne out by the manner in which Bach had set it to music. This outcry starts on the note A4 on the word 'Barrabas' (Barabbas) and we agreed that here I could use a fuller, heavier vocal registration (than I used in the preceding recitatives), applying more chest register, firmer glottal adduction with higher subglottal pressure and 'covering' the A4 on 'Barrabas' and the two G4's on the words 'ein Mörder' (a murderer). The firmer glottal adduction necessitated lowering the larynx, elongating the throat and applying higher subglottal pressure. However, I realised that this vocal approach still had to be balanced with a lighter vocal registration in order to articulate the text and the embellished figure in a fast tempo. In the following sentence in mm. 25–28 Bach used word painting to illustrate the scourging of Jesus. Bender and Van Rensburg agreed that I should maintain the moderately heavy vocal registration on the written embellished figures on the word 'geisselte' (scourged). To execute the fast demisemiquavers on the beginning of the 'geisselte' figure, I had to take care not to have too much weight on the voice because it had to move forward in tactus. It helped me to think of bounces or accents on each main note of these figures which would result in a heavy-light motion. The same applied to the following semiquaver triplets on the second half of m. 27 going into m. 28. I also tried not to apply head voice (although a small amount is always present) in the descending line in the second half of m. 27 that goes into the lower-middle register of the tenor voice. By doing so, the scourging character and affect of the text could be maintained and the lower notes could be audible. In addition,

I had to think of a steady rate of breath flow from the beginning of the word 'geisselte' in m. 26 that continued right through to the last word 'ihn' (him) in m. 28, as Bender wanted the phrase sung in one single breath.

The 'moderately heavy' registration I have described above was used only in one other recitative, that of No. 33. The affect of both these recitatives is to represent emotional outcries and both are dramatic in character. Both of these recitatives should therefore be sung with more vocal intensity, which implies a heavier registration than the rest of the recitatives in this *Passion*.

Recitative No. 38

The final recitative of the *Passion* describes the burial of Jesus, and, as with the preceding No. 36, it is fairly long. Van Rensburg indicated that although the mood is sombre and sorrowful, it should have some momentum because it is the end of a long performance and I should keep the intensity going.

I stayed in the affect of grief that reflects the burial of Jesus by using a light vocal registration with as much *voix mixte* as possible even in the middle range of my voice. We inserted an appoggiatura from below in m. 2 on the strong syllable of the word 'Arimathia' (Arimathea) to give significance to the disciple who took the body of Jesus from the cross. Two appoggiaturas were inserted on 'war' (was) in m. 3 and on the strong syllable of 'Jüden' (Jews) in m. 4. I took care not to put too much weight on these appoggiaturas because I wanted the whole section up to m. 4 to sound tender and very lyrical. I therefore stretched the vowel of the strong syllables without giving more breath (subglottal pressure) to the vocal folds. Regarding the text of m. 5 'dass er möchte abnehmen den Leichnam Jesu' (that he might take away the body), which

is marked *forte* in the score, we agreed that this passage should not be too loud and that I should also keep the lyrical, light registration. I therefore started the phrase with more vocal intensity but focused on the *voix mixte* by keeping the larynx in a neutral position and ‘thinking the sound in the head’. I maintained this vocal approach in mm. 6–8. In m. 8, on the words ‘*Jesu herab*’ (Jesus away), a change in registration came naturally because of the descending line of F3, E3, D3 (*appoggiatura*) and C3. Bender indicated that I might use a warmer, sympathetic vocal colour for this descending line and should sing a *diminuendo* at the end of the line. I therefore relaxed the throat, focusing on the pharynx as resonator with as little subglottal pressure as possible.

Van Rensburg asked me to lean forward in *tactus* with new energy from m 9 up to the word ‘*Pfunden*’ (pound) in m. 12. When I first sang this section, Van Rensburg commented that it was too loud and the vocal intensity did not suit the main affect of sorrow. He suggested that I should keep the sound ‘sweet’, which I interpreted as maintaining a light vocal registration. This was especially necessary on the words ‘*und Aloen unter einander bei hundert Pfunden*’ (and aloes about a hundred-pound weight) that lie around G4, A4 and F4. I then approached the section in mm. 15–17, which lies more in the middle to lower-middle range of the tenor voice, with a bit more chest register but kept the head resonance.

The final section of the recitative (mm. 18–24) was initially a challenge vocal–technically because it first ascends in m. 19 into the second *passaggio* around G4 and A4 and then descends into the lower tenor range in the next measure to C3 (m. 20). Van Rensburg wanted the descending line to be highlighted because the downward movement of the melody suggests a burial; therefore, I had to shift registers in m. 20.

I tried to focus on the vibration, or the sensation of it, in the chest once I started singing the words '*Garten ein neu Grab*' (garden had a tomb) to be able to get into the chest registration. This chest registration still had to fit the affect and it had to be *mezzo forte* in dynamics. I had to exercise care in not pushing down on the larynx in order to sing these low notes but rather to keep a neutral position. I also found that the mouth and throat cavities had to be open just a little, closer to normal speech position, so that the sound could stay focused. I felt that the subglottal pressure in these low ranges was fairly low, but the phrases demanded more breath flow, which in part necessitated deeper inhalation.

The final phrase of the recitative lies completely in the lower and lower-middle range. Bender suggested that we slow down the tactus substantially to about $J=45$. This implied that I had to use a small amount of legato singing to connect the notes and maintain good breath management. We agreed that the last words in mm. 23 and 24 – '*diweil das Grab nahe war*' (since the tomb was near) – could be sung with more legato and even slower tactus. Singing it in this manner, I felt that a natural vibrato slipped in on the C of '*Grab*' (tomb), B \natural of '*nahe*' (nearby) and the G of '*war*' (was). Interestingly, Van Rensburg and Bender did not object to the use of vibrato in this case because it happened on the stressed and not the unstressed syllables.

At the conclusion of the rehearsal period, I came to reflect on technical aspects of the vocal approach suited to the chosen performance practice of the production team. I formulated these as objectives for the examination performance. I also realised that the performance aesthetics correlated with my personal interpretation of the role of the Evangelist, which I intended to portray in a sympathetic and emotional way and not as an apathetic narrator of the gospel.

In the many recitatives of Bach's Evangelist, the tessitura often lies over the bridge of the two registers (*zona di passaggio*) and their lines often go to high A4 or A^b4, where the tenor needs to deal with a higher tension on the vocal folds. However, to suit the style, the vocal approach needs a lighter vocal registration and *voix mixte* to bring forth a sweeter and sympathetic sound (mostly when the Evangelist speaks of Jesus). Reference to light vocal registration (or soft registration, as Van Rensburg calls it) is made in the treatises from the 18th century, especially the way to blend the chest and head registers. Tosi (1723) asserts that the student should 'take care that the higher the notes are, the more softly they are produced, in order to prevent shrieking' (in Agricola 1995:65). Similarly, Johann Mattheson (1739:111) advises that 'the higher the singing voice goes, the softer and lighter it becomes' and adds that when 'singing low, the voice becomes fuller and more powerful'. Hiller (2004:53) remarks that the chest and head registers should be blended by means of making the upper notes of the chest voice lighter and those of the head voice stronger. Therefore, the general aesthetic of singing in the higher range was to cultivate the head voice, but most importantly to use very little (or perhaps no) chest voice for the high notes, which comes close to Van Rensburg's view of singing the higher notes of the recitatives in *voix mixte*. In the masterclass of October 2017, Van Rensburg pointed out that before Garcia's treatise of 1840 and the legendary performance of Duprez, tenors did not use 'covered' singing in and above the *zona di passaggio*. Throughout the recitatives (except No. 18c) I avoided 'covering' the sound or audible vowel modification, in this way elongating the vocal tract, which implies lowering the larynx. This implies that I sang with a higher vertical position of the larynx in the *zona di passaggio* and above, as opposed to the low position associated with 'modern' singing technique. In

reflecting on the differences between ‘modern’ singing technique and the HIP singing expected for this production, I was once more reminded that the practices of maintaining a low vertical laryngeal position throughout, supported by vowel modification and ‘covering’, would not allow me to enunciate the text clearly, and that the ‘darkening of the vowel’ (Stark 1999:85) would interfere with the desired affects. On the whole, then, light registration was my vocal–technical point of departure.

However, I realised that for the sections where the Evangelist recites a text that Bach dramatised with the melodic line and exposed high notes, the vocal approach affords a moderately heavy registration. In No. 18c (and No. 33) I decided, in accordance with Van Rensburg and Bender, to use a heavier vocal registration throughout those recitatives to enhance the dramatic affect. Using the moderately heavy registration produced a sound that was closer to operatic singing. Moreover, I tried to maintain a balanced vocal registration that was not too heavy, so that the text could still be clearly enunciated and the notes were clearly articulated, especially the embellished motifs of No. 18c.

Vocal–technically, my aim was therefore to sing the role of the Evangelist mainly with a lesser degree of vocal adduction and therefore lower subglottal air pressure than that of the ‘standard’, ‘modern’ singing technique. My vocal approach ideally could result in a more comfortable and flexible vertical position of the larynx; that is, the larynx is not kept in a low position throughout. This implied that I would use a light vocal registration in most recitatives. I also aimed to use very little legato singing to ensure a clear enunciation of the text and to suit the declamatory style of the recitatives which dominates most of the music of the Evangelist. In this way, I tried to show a different vocal approach suited to Baroque music, especially for recitative singing as

opposed to the ‘modern’ vocal technique a tenor needs for singing Romantic opera. Moreover, with the chosen vocal approach I intended to show the expressive capabilities of my voice to accommodate the many different affects of the text and music.

4.4 Analysing examination recording and critical self-reflection on reports

In this Ph.D. project, I usually analysed the video recording of an examination performance as part of the final process of my documentation. Unfortunately, the recording of this examination performance on 25 May 2018 was damaged and I had to use the video recording of my final dress rehearsal for this purpose. As mentioned in section 3.4.4, this process is a crucial part of critical self-reflection upon my artefact by means of a close listening method. I now discuss the ‘outcomes’ and how they correlate with the preparation process, which includes the information gathered about the chosen performance practice and the rehearsal process. In addition, I compare my findings to those of the examiners’ reports to be able to form a more objective view.

4.4.1 Examination recording

In this section I discuss mainly the recitatives mentioned in section 4.2.2 and point out the use of vocal idioms of vocal quality and vocal articulation in relation to the style and performance practice of Bach’s *St. John Passion*.

Recitative No. 2

In the opening phrase of recitative No. 2a, I observed a slow and flowing motion in mm. 1–4. The two appoggiaturas were executed with heavy-light articulation of the stressed and unstressed syllables. The vocal registration, as aimed for in the rehearsals, was a mixture of chest and head voice, resembling the *voix mixte*. This

was in line with the light vocal registration I was aiming for and which Van Rensburg wanted. The change in vocal registration for the words referring to Judas in m. 5 was audible. I observed a firmer glottal adduction, which was especially audible on the strong syllable of the word 'verriet' on the E4 and the following G4 on the word 'wusste' (mm. 5 and 6). The sound was darker, but it also had more 'ring' on these notes, which is an indication of a higher subglottal pressure and a lower vertical position of the larynx. This correlated with my prerogative in the rehearsal period to apply a (moderately) heavier registration in these measures.

Listening further, I could hear a slight change in vocal registration in mm. 7 and 8 on the words referring to Jesus, which then changed again on the words '*Da nun Judas ...*'. This change in vocal registration was more audible in mm. 9–13, where the text refers to the high priests and servants of Pharisees who came with torches and weapons. The glottal adduction on the word '*Hohenpriester*' leaned more towards a heavy registration, although Van Rensburg and I had aimed for a lighter registration on the A4. This heavier registration continued similarly on the words '*Fackeln*', '*Lampen*' and '*Waffen*' and was in line with our objective. The appoggiaturas from above on '*Fackeln*' and '*Waffen*' were sung in full voice and were well accentuated. I realised that the affect of 'danger' was quite clearly portrayed by means of a firmer glottal adduction (heavier vocal registration) throughout the entire section from mm. 9–13.

The final section of recitative No. 2a was sung with a sweet vocal colour and I could hear the use of *voix mixte* with a lot of head voice on the words '*Jesus wusste alles was ihm begegnen sollte*' and '*ging er hinaus*'. The connection to Chorus No. 2b was sung in a quick tactus in which I maintained the lighter vocal registration. The shift in

vocal registration in No. 2c was also clear and as rehearsed. In reference to Jesus I could hear the lighter registration, which contrasted with the heavier registration in reference to Judas.

To conclude, I observed that recitative No. 2 was sung almost exactly as we had rehearsed it. The recording showed that the differentiation in vocal colour and therefore vocal registration was achieved when referring to the different characters of Jesus, Judas, the high priest and servants of the Pharisees. I identified the lighter vocal registration by its sweeter timbre and the use of *voix mixte* as opposed to the heavier registration that could be identified by a darker colour coupled with more 'ring' in the voice. Furthermore, I observed that in the lighter vocal registration there was a hint of legato singing by connecting the notes just a little more to each other than the way I would normally have sung secco recitative. However, it did not sound like an aria, because the unstressed syllables were shortened. Moreover, a small amount of vibrato was heard on a few of the stressed and stretched, strong syllables on words such as 'Jesus', 'verriet', 'hinaus' and 'ich bin's'. Throughout the recitative I could hear that there was good breath flow, even in the section where heavier vocal registration was used. If this were not the case, there would not have been a natural speech inflection in the delivery of the text.

Recitative No. 12

The '*wärmeten sich*' motif in m. 4 (which originally appears in No. 10) was sung exactly as I had intended it to be sung. It had the same warm and darker vocal colour as before. I could also hear more chest voice because here the motif lies a minor third lower. The sound was full but free, without any pressure, which was an indication that the larynx was in a comfortably 'low' position without being depressed. I could hear

that the 'ä' vowel was round and dark in resonance, which means that the pharynx had enough space to bring out the low partials of the sound.

The third time Peter denies Jesus in mm. 29 and 30 was sung more loudly but with enough *voix mixte* on the G4's of the word '*abermal*' to produce a sound which was light and free. The word '*krähete*' was well depicted with an open /ε/ vowel. I could hear that the sound was produced with a small degree of elevated larynx closer to normal speech level, which correlates with the intentions of Van Rensburg during the rehearsals.

The phrase that leads into the *adagio* in mm. 31–32 had a tender, soft sound and I observed a light vocal registration with a great amount of *voix mixte* as I rehearsed it. The *adagio* worked really well, and the affect of weeping was very clear to me. I observed that the /a/ vowel of the diphthong in '*weinete*' was kept in a stable, neutral position. It sounded more forward, with the mouth cavity perhaps more active than the pharynx as resonator. This resulted in a clean sound which had a controlled vibrato. The first three notes of the '*weinete*' were kept in almost straight tone, with a slight vibrato on the succeeding three notes. The small amount of vibrato on these notes gave emotional depth to the sound without darkening the vowel. The second '*weinete*' that starts in m. 35 was sung in the same manner, but here the vibrato started after the first sustained note, enhancing the affect of sorrow and remorse. The connection of the notes A#3 to G4 in mm. 36–37 was smooth, and I identified no pressure on the G4 of m. 37, which is an indication that I could keep the subglottal pressure low enough to ensure a light vocal registration. Listening again to this line made me realise more that the G4 sounded so comfortable because I enlarged the resonance space by lifting the soft palate a little more.

Recitative No. 18c

The vocal approach we had agreed upon during the rehearsal period was evident in the recording. When I first listened to it, I identified the use of much heavier vocal registration, which for me was in line with the affect of the text and the music. The character of disgust and anger was very clear, almost like a ‘wake-up call’ to the listener. I observed that the opening of mm. 24 and 25 was sung with a heavy vocal registration unequalled up to this point and leaning almost towards ‘modern’ vocal technique. Moreover, I observed that the first A4 on the word ‘Barrabas’ was sustained by doubling the note value and it had a bright and dark sound spectrum. This sound was evident in the following words, ‘*aber war ein Mörder*’, the G4’s in m. 25 having the same quality as the preceding A4. The bright-dark sound also known as *chiaroscuro* was the result of elongating the throat, in this way lowering the larynx, which demands higher subglottal pressure. This was exactly the sound that I aimed for during the rehearsals. What transpired here was that this ‘operatic’ sound was allowed by Van Rensburg and Bender to enhance the dramatic effect. This vocal approach did not strictly follow the ‘rule’ of HIP, which postulates that the high register of the male voice should be sung with a lighter and sweeter character than the chest register, as opposed to the ‘modern’ singing technique in which the chest register is used in the *passaggio*. The succeeding line in mm. 25–28 with the embellished motifs on the word ‘*geisselte*’ also displayed the use of heavy registration, but it was kept light enough with a little less ‘covering’ of the sound to execute the smaller notes accurately. This was possible because, as intended, I used accents on the main notes of each embellished figure to allow a heavy-light effect, which helped to propel the voice forward. I could also hear that the descending line into the middle lower range

maintained a full sound, which indicated that I had used more chest voice mixed with less head voice than in the other recitatives.

Recitative No. 38

During the rehearsal period, we agreed that the affect of sorrow in the burial scene of Jesus was important to maintain throughout the entire recitative. I observed from the recording that the affect was portrayed by means of singing the whole piece with as much *voix mixte* as possible. Another factor that contributed to the affect was the way I sang the appoggiaturas in mm. 2, 3 and 4. These appoggiaturas were slightly more stretched without taking too much from the original note value and sung with only minimal weight on the stressed notes. As a result, the endings of phrases sounded very delicate. The intensity of lines was achieved by a forward leaning in the tactus from mm. 1–13 and also by lower subglottal pressure, which allowed sufficient breath flow.

The register change in mm. 19 and 20 on the words '*und im Garten ein neu Grab*' was accomplished as rehearsed by means of feeling the sensations of resonance in the chest cavity to get into the chest registration within the sudden drop of an octave. I also observed that the sound changed to a darker vocal colour – an indication that I placed more emphasis on the pharynx than the mouth cavity as resonator.

The use of legato was solely heard on the words '*dieweil das Grab nahe war*', which correlates with the decision taken during the rehearsal period. However, I could also hear that the slower tactus of mm. 22–23 had a hint of legato singing in it. Vibrato was used sparingly and lent colour to words such as '*Grab*' in m. 20, '*war*' in m. 21, and, in

the legato line '*dieweil das Grab nahe war*', on the word '*Grab*', the strong syllable of the word '*nahe*' and the stressed note of the appoggiatura on word '*war*'.

4.4.2 Examination reports

Two external examiners submitted their respective examination reports, which were both very positive. In general, they both concluded that my portrayal of the Evangelist was laudable and, moreover, that I had succeeded in my vocal–technical and interpretive objectives.

Examiner 1 (for the purposes of this study they will remain anonymous) offered no negative criticism of the manner in which I handled the performance practice of the production vocal–technically. My objective to deliver the recitatives with a generally light vocal registration to ensure clear enunciation of the text, and to accommodate the different affects of the text and music, was identified in the outcome of the performance. Examiner 1 confirmed this when she stated:

He delivered the lengthy, dramatic and often moving recitative sections with great intent and clarity of tone. Bach's music is almost without fail challenging for singers. He composed for the voice much as he did for instruments, including extended phrases that require excellent breath management, unpredictable melismatic movement, daring leaps and chromatic movement. Mr Engelbrecht skilfully negotiated these challenges turning them into tools of vocal and dramatic expression (Examiner report 1, May 2018).

Examiner 2 also commented positively upon my performance outcome and clear enunciation, but also commented on the differentiation of vocal colour. She observed

that '[a] remarkable aspect of his interpretation was how supple the natural speech rhythm and speech inflection of the text was handled', adding:

He delivered an earnest interpretation of the gospel. Engelbrecht sang the parts where Bach implemented word painting such as in the texts *weinete bitterlich* and *geisselte*, expressively and credibly with melancholic and at times almost brutal tone colour respectively. This was indeed poignant (Examiner report 2, May 2018).³¹

However, there was one aspect of the performance which bothered Examiner 2. She remarked that the heavy-light phrasing of strong and weak syllables at cadences of falling fifths and fourths was done 'too delicately so that the weak syllable was not always audible' (Examiner 2 Report, May 2018). Taking into account her observation regarding the audibility of the weak, unstressed syllables, I went back to the video recording and reflected on this matter.

Listening to the entire recording, I noticed for the first time that some unstressed final syllables at the phrase endings and cadences where there were cadential appoggiaturas were indeed quite soft and short. I identified these endings and cadences, for instance, in No. 2a, m. 16 on '*ihnen*'; No. 12a, m. 3 on '*Kaiphās*'; No. 16e, m. 62 on '*würde*', and No. 25a, m. 7 '*geschrieben*'. The heavy-light articulation was especially noticeable in No. 27, which forms part of the crucifixion scene and, as rehearsed, should portray an affect of sorrow. In No. 27a, m. 5 on '*Rock*'; No. 27c, m. 66 on '*gesaget*', m. 71 on '*knechte*', m. 73 on '*Schwester*' and m. 77 '*sahē*', the weak syllables or resolving main notes of the appoggiaturas were sung so tenderly that they were hardly audible. They were sung not only softer, but

³¹ Translations from this examiner's reports are my own.

also shorter than the written value. On reflection, I realised that I sang it exactly as we rehearsed it with Van Rensburg and Bender, and I had the impression that my articulation was in order with them. The only explanation I can offer for singing the weak syllables too softly (and shortly) is that I was too absorbed with the affect of sorrow and perhaps aimed too strenuously at an extremely delicate vocal delivery of the whole recitative, so that these unstressed notes did not have enough breath support. For some listeners (as is the case with Examiner 2), this delicate delivery of the text might have been unsatisfactory; however, for others, such as Examiner 1 (who did not criticise this kind of phrasing), it probably suited the affect and was understood as being in line with the HIP aesthetics.

In summary, I analysed the outcome of my preparation period by means of close listening to the video recording of my final dress rehearsal. This analysis was mainly done by means of my bodily experiences with reference to the vocal idioms of glottal adduction, subglottal pressure, vertical laryngeal position, singer's formant, air flow rates, registers and vibrato, and the way they relate to the vocal approach suitable to the performance practice of the production team. In addition, I analysed and reflected upon the role of vocal articulation and how it was influenced by the above-mentioned vocal idioms of vocal quality and therefore my vocal approach, or vice versa, the way in which articulation influenced the vocal approach. In this process of reflection, I remembered the masterclass I had with Van Rensburg. I also recalled the rehearsal period on stage and with the conductor and realised that I could confirm that this preparation process was mainly in accordance with the instructions of the production team, namely, director Van Rensburg and conductor Bender. This led me to new insights into ways of adjusting vocal-technically to a specific style and the

performance practice of choice for this production. I was now ready to generalise this knowledge I had gained and to evaluate it comparatively against the secondary sources on performance practice; and, moreover, to evaluate how my performance was perceived by the two the examiners from an external perspective. This final, critical reflection enabled me to formulate the conclusion to this chapter.

4.5 Conclusion

One main aspect that surfaced in the preparation for and performance of the role of the Evangelist in this production is the question of the suitable vocal approach to Bach's recitatives, which resonates with my research question in Chapter 1. Early in the preparation process I was instructed by Van Rensburg to use light vocal registration, because, as he pointed out, I was using too much of the heavier registration in the *zona di passaggio* and above the second *passaggio*. As documented in sections 4.2 and 4.3, I experimented with this lighter vocal registration for all the recitatives (except No 18c and No 33) and concluded that the performance confirmed that I was able to achieve this approach for almost the entire role. I realised that my use of the *voix mixte* for the *zona di passaggio* and high notes was in accordance with the perspectives of professional singers such as Fischer-Dieskau and Behle, who both view the *voix mixte* as a prerequisite for singing different styles, and especially the music of Bach (see section 2.2.1). This was possible within only a light vocal registration which derives from a lesser degree of glottal adduction as opposed to the heavy registration with its firm glottal adduction used mostly in the 'modern' singing technique.

I can therefore confirm that the style and HIP of the Bach recitatives dictate that the tenor should use less of the firm glottal adduction and not sing with a constantly low

laryngeal position. As I explained in section 2.2.2, firm glottal adduction results in higher subglottal pressure, which in turn necessitates a lower position of the larynx to avoid strenuous sound production (Stark 1995). From an HIP perspective, authors such as Potter (1998) and Wistreich (2000) argue that the low laryngeal position not only results in a darker colour, but also enhances the singer's formant. Making a point especially applicable to recitative singing, these authors also argue that maintaining the low laryngeal position at all times results in addition in a stiffness of the laryngeal mechanism, which makes it difficult to execute a declamatory style of singing (see section 2.2.2).

The vast amount of biblical text which the Evangelist narrates in the *Passion* needs to be clearly enunciated because it incorporates the entire gospel of the *Passion*. To ensure clear enunciation of the texts, I came to realise that approaching the recitatives with a light vocal registration helped me to deliver the text with much more ease. Singing in the light registration resulted in a vertical laryngeal position that was neutral or flexible to raise and fall, especially when approaching the upper range of the voice. When singing in the *zona di passaggio* and above, I did not feel that the larynx was in the same low position as when using the 'modern' singing technique. In the masterclass and earlier rehearsals, I noticed that the heavier registration associated with the 'modern' singing technique indeed caused a darkening of vowels already in the *zona di passaggio* (between D4 and G4) and, moreover, the stiffness this caused in the laryngeal mechanism made it difficult to articulate the words and syllables. In addition, I can confirm that the 'ring' of the voice did not have to be as intense as, for example, in singing Romantic opera because the basso continuo accompaniment of the recitatives does not produce a big orchestral sound.

The two vocal idioms of articulation, namely, legato singing and vibrato, were influenced by the vocal approach I chose. The HIP aesthetics of this production allowed a small amount of legato singing and the use of vibrato, but I was instructed to use them sparsely and only in certain cases where the affect allowed for their use. Legato singing generally was coupled with vibrato on sustained notes and especially in the sections marked *adagio*. However, singing the sustained legato lines within the boundaries of a light vocal registration enabled me to use a controlled vibrato with a very small fluctuation in frequency. In my close listening I could not detect an audible pitch fluctuation in my vibrato; however, scholars have found that even a controlled vibrato (in which a pitch fluctuation is not detectable by the human ear) does fluctuate in pitch to a small degree (Stark 1999:138; Miller 1996:183).

Furthermore, the heavy-light articulation of the stressed and unstressed syllables at phrase endings and where appoggiaturas were inserted was easier to achieve with the light vocal registration. I found that 'leaning into' the appoggiaturas and/or the stressed notes on strong syllables required subglottal pressure to be applied flexibly. Heavy vocal registration would not allow an efficient heavy-light articulation because it fosters a higher drive of subglottal pressure which is kept constant and rises as the scale ascends. Therefore, the large proportion of the part of the Evangelist that lies in the *passaggio* and upper range would not be delivered with the desired flexibility of phrasing and differentiation between stressed and unstressed notes if sung with a consistent subglottal pressure.

With regard to the two recitatives, No. 18c and No. 33 (the latter I did not discuss here), which ask for a more dramatic declamation and loaded affect, we did allow a heavier vocal registration, which gave the two numbers a darker vocal colour coupled with

more 'ring' of the voice (singer's formant). I realised, however, that although this registration leaned more towards a consistent, firm glottal adduction, it was still executed to a degree which allowed for clear enunciation of the text and enough agility to articulate the embellished figures in recitative No. 18c. This means that my 'heavier vocal registration' was still produced in the broader context of a generally light vocal registration. This was also the case in those recitatives where I changed the affect with a different vocal colour, applying more chest voice in the mixture of the sound spectrum. I therefore came to the conclusion that singing with a generally light vocal registration allowed me to vary the degrees of glottal adduction – sometimes a little firmer and sometimes less so – which allowed me to portray the different affects of the recitatives and also the sudden changes of affect of successive phrases in a specific recitative.

Chapter 5: Verismo Opera: *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Pietro Mascagni, 1863–1945);

Bloemfontein, Civic Theatre, 16 July 2017

5.1 Introduction

My decision to sing an operatic role that falls under 19th-century opera stems from the idea of choosing a suitable repertoire for my investigation into vocal–technical versatility. Although HIP performances of some 19th-century operatic repertoire have been undertaken and recorded since the second decade of the 21st century,³² to my knowledge, verismo opera is still performed according to MSP without exception. As I mentioned in section 3.4.3, *Cavalleria Rusticana* was a production hosted by the Odeion School of Music (OSM) in collaboration with the Free State Symphony Orchestra (FSSO) in Bloemfontein in 2017. The conductor of the FSSO and the Head of the OSM suggested that I should take on the role of Turiddu. At first, as a lyric tenor, I had my reservations regarding the role, because Turiddu is usually sung by more robust voices. After I had given it some thought and had sung through some of the music, I made the decision to sing the role and to include it as one of my Ph.D. examination performances. I thought that a role in a verismo opera would ideally offer the opportunity to demonstrate the ‘modern’ singing technique which is typically applied to MSP-style performances of Romantic and post-Romantic opera. In other words, this role would give me the opportunity to investigate, through

³² Thomas Hengelbrock conducted Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* on period instruments in 2011 at the *Bayreuther Festspiele*, the mecca for Wagnerians and German Romantic opera. Cecilia Bartoli, known for reviving early vocal repertoire, has ventured into recording Rossini and Bellini operas accompanied by period instruments. The period-style orchestra, *Concerto Köln*, together with conductor Kent Nagano, started a project in 2017 to showcase Wagner’s complete *Ring des Nibelungen* from 2021 and onwards from an HIP perspective.

my practical experience, what a heavy vocal registration would entail in this kind of repertoire, as opposed to the lighter vocal registration exemplified in the Bach *Passion*. In section 2.2.2, I discussed the shift from light vocal registration to heavy registration that began during the 1830s and which was fully developed by the time verismo operas were recorded in the early 20th century. This heavy registration is especially evident when the tenor approaches his upper range. I also discussed how ‘covered’ singing (or vowel modification) in the *zona di passaggio* and above has become a necessity in the ‘modern’ singing technique (Gentili 2021, 2018; Stark 1999; Miller 1993). The decision to sing Turiddu was a bold one which would also be a test of vocal longevity, since this was my first of five examination performances. At the time of production, I was forty-three years old and thought that it was a good age to approach this production as an experiment in exploring my vocal boundaries.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, approaching the tenor’s upper range with a heavy registration was a widespread singing technique by the time verismo operas were first performed and recorded. The ‘birth’ of verismo opera is often dated to 1890, when *Cavalleria Rusticana* was premiered. The term derives from the Italian word *vero* or *verità*, meaning ‘true’ or ‘truth’ (Schoell 2015). Verismo, also called Realism, began as a movement in Italian literature, exemplified by the novels and plays of Giovanni Verga (1840–1922) in the late 19th century; and, in fact, Mascagni’s libretto was based on a short story by this same author. Whereas opera had previously dealt with larger-than-life characters, such as gods and royalty, the verismo opera deals with real men and women (peasants in *Cavalleria*) who portray real, sometimes raw emotions (Schoell 2015). Burton Fisher (2005:9) identifies similar characteristics in the verismo operas after *Cavalleria* as follows:

Conceptually, they advocate an accurate representation of natural or real-life conflicts and tensions, but without idealization; its primary focus was to present reality and therefore it rejected visionary or sentimental subjects.

'Normal' people could now relate to the normal problems (mostly sexual, romantic or violent in nature) of characters who represented mainly 'rural and impoverished society rather than aristocrats' without having a psychological distance between themselves and the characters (ibid.). Fisher (ibid.) maintains that these characters portrayed verismo passions that were

extremely profound, violent, and even savage; in both in action and music, verismo portrayed a heightened emotionalism rather than subtlety, a tendency to blend the sordid with the sensational.

Matteo Sansone (2002:4) argues that the general musical style of verismo and that of the *giovane scuola*³³ was influenced by French and German operas and is characterised by:

[...] a new emotional rhetoric influenced by Massenet and, to a lesser degree by Wagner: passionate tension alternates with sentimental languor, delicacy with violence, especially in the vocal lines; recitatives, solo pieces and ensembles enjoy equal states, textual cohesion being supplied by the use of orchestral motifs; and there is a total absence of bel canto coloratura.

Regarding the musical–dramatic and vocal style of verismo opera, authors Adriana Gaurneri Corazzol and Roger Parker (1993:40) observe the following features:

³³ A term first applied in about 1890 to the generation of Italian opera composers born just after the middle of the 19th century: Alfredo Catalani, Smareglia, Leoncavallo, Puccini, Alberto Franchetti, Mascagni, Giordano and Cilea (Budden 2002).

[...] vocal writing exploiting the high register of each voice type; irregular rhythms and phrases, spoken or shouted utterances, heavily charged melodies; 'physiological' rhythmic ideas, breathless harmonic rhythm, overall tonal stability; a dynamic progress through climaxes of tension, orchestral build-ups and loud, excited vocal climaxes; and recurring themes, mostly identified with the voice.

Richard Taruskin (2005a:660) alludes to the vocal style of the tenor roles in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* when he asserts:

the lyric high points are brief *ariosos* for the *tenore di forza* (the lover in the one, the husband in the other) in the voice's highest register. These powerful explosions of the melody emerge out of ongoing dramatic continuities.

Similarly to Guarnieri Corazzol and Parker above, Taruskin also observes the exploitation of the higher register and emotional outbursts in the vocal line. Moreover, one could also conclude that such roles demand vocal stamina and volume for the continuous dramatic lines.

Kirsten Gibson (2016:236) contends that the verismo ideal of portraying real men and women in real-life conflicting situations brought forth 'a new model for the melodramatic hero'. Gibson (*ibid.*) characterises this new hero by suggesting that his origins lie in 'connections between masculinity, the Mediterranean code of honour and duelling'. This raises the question of how the new tenor leading role differed from 'the Romantic tenor who dies beautifully singing on stage' (Gibson 2016:237). On the matter of 'beautiful' singing in verismo opera, Gentili (2021:426, 427) argues that

at the turn of the twentieth century operatic voices lost the *bel canto* ideal of 'pure' tone quality and took on an irreversibly gendered connotation and an erotically charged expressive force.

She maintains that 'sensual love and brutal violence' cannot 'be expressed either through florid singing or the "pure" tone quality', as exemplified by the 19th-century singers. Gentili (2021:453) concludes that, for tenors, the new kind of masculinity in verismo singing had a significant influence on vocal registration, stating:

An essential driver of this entire process is represented by the appearance on stage of the new *verismo* characters, which with their sheer erotic energy called for gendered, carnal, earthy vocal sound. With their vocal lines centred on the critical area at the junction of the register (the *passaggio*), a strain was put on the singer which evoked that of sexual arousal. The sparse use of top notes and the general avoidance of the most extreme high pitches also favoured systems of heavier registration, bringing the elongation of the vocal tract to its utmost limits.

As discussed in section 2.2.2, Gentili (2018, 2021) has shown that verismo singing gave rise to the 'modern' singing technique in which the blending of registers relies on the chest voice quality to be carried into the upper range of the tenor voice.

5.2 Preparation process

5.2.1 Studying the score

I started studying the score in detail on 23 January 2017 by myself at the piano. The score which was agreed upon by the conductor and me was the Edgardo Sonzogno edition of 1891. I was able to identify the above-mentioned aspects of style regarding verismo opera. For example, Turiddu's first entrance (p. 4), the '*Siciliana*', already

displays a vocal line that begins right on the *passaggio* of the tenor voice and continues with lines centred on F4, G4 and A^b4. Although this song (with harp accompaniment only) has a folksong character, it does exploit the higher range of the tenor and demands sustained singing through the repetitive notes of the lines.

The centrepiece of the opera, the duet between Santuzza and Turiddu, displays most of the features of verismo style. The 'Duetto (a)' (p. 82) portrays moments of delicacy and violence in the music and the text. These are divided respectively between the roles, in which Santuzza has the more delicate lines and Turiddu the more emotionally charged and violent phrases. An orchestral build-up starts clearly in m. 68 (p. 88), in which the vocal lines are doubled in the orchestral accompaniment. Until p. 91 and the 'Stornello (b)' of Lola, both voices have lines that build up from a *piano* dynamic towards *fortissimo* in the *passaggio* and above. Another similar emotional upsurge in the vocal lines and the orchestra occurs from m. 42 onwards (p. 101) in the 'Seguito del Duetto (c)'. The largest emotional build-up that coincides with exploitation of the higher register of the tenor voice starts in m. 58 (p. 103) and reaches a first outburst in m. 69. The ultimate climax, however, happens on p. 108 in m. 8, which is set to a B^b4 in both voices. Mascagni drives the emotions even further after this climax to build them up again, letting the tenor and soprano sing in unison until the end of the number. In m. 109, Mascagni marks the line of Turiddu with *con moltissimo forza* (with great force) and the vocal lines are centred mainly on F4, which clearly indicates a shouted utterance. Furthermore, the duet also displays a declamatory style which alternates with the sustained legato singing parts. The declamation mostly resembles the conversation and arguments between the two characters. For Turiddu, full orchestra chords mostly accompany these parts (except the beginning of the duet). What is

significant in this declamatory style is the tessitura in which Mascagni set them for the tenor voice. Almost all these lines start in the *zona di passaggio* and rarely move into the middle range where one would normally speak. The high tessitura of the declamatory sections would naturally demand a higher degree of vocal intensity, unless it is sung in a *voix mixte* registration.

Turiddu's final scene (pp. 156–163) – the so-called '*Addio alla Mamma*' (Farewell to the mother) – depicts the sorrowful farewell through long, sustained lines in the voice almost entirely in the *zona di passaggio* and above to A^b 4. The vocal lines are doubled in the upper voices of the orchestral accompaniment, which indicates more vocal intensity. After a short recitative section between Turiddu and Lucia, the same musical material starts again to gather in intensity – now with *fortissimo* marking in the orchestra on the A^b 4. The final climax on the words '*s'io non tornassi*' (if I would not return) leaves the tenor exposed on a B^b 4 in a kind of written-out cadenza.³⁴ This line is marked *fortissimo* and indicates a final emotional outcry on the highest note for Turiddu in the opera.

5.2.2 Physical process

I commenced the physical process of 'getting the music into the voice' alone in my singing studio on 17 February 2017. I played through the accompaniment of all the numbers and examined the vocal line to find an indication of the kind of vocal approach I would need for this role. At the same time, I kept in mind the aspects of style and the musical language of verismo opera as described in the sources I had read. Taruskin's reference to *Tenore di forza* as voice type (*Fach*) assigned to this role was still lingering

³⁴ All the English translations of the libretto in this chapter are adapted from *The Opera Libretto Library* (1980:339–361).

in my mind. Translated as 'tenor of force', this terminology for the voice type of Turiddu was misleading. I therefore consulted Miller's book, *Training Tenor Voices* (1993), for another perspective on the matter of the *Fach* applicable to this role. Miller (1993:12) classifies the role of Turiddu under *tenore lirico spinto* and states that this voice type

has all the advantages of the *tenore lirico*, but in addition he has the power and vocal impact to deliver the dramatic aspects of the Verdian and *verismo* repertoires. He combines sheer vocal beauty with dramatic thrust.

I was comforted by the fact that Miller assigns the role to the *spinto* tenor, who still needs to combine beauty of tone with more powerful vocal production. I realised that, according to Miller's categorisation of the role, I could rely on my lyrical qualities but at the same time I had to investigate where the dramatic moments in the music were in order to experiment with a vocal approach that would lend more power to my voice in these moments.

During the period between 17 February and 2 May 2017, I would practise and sing through the part sporadically, sometimes not practising it for a week or two. This was because of my obligations as singing lecturer at the OSM at the University of the Free State and as performing artist, which affected the amount of time I was able to devote to rehearsing the part. As mentioned in section 3.4.3, I was also responsible for coaching three of the other solo roles in the production and also the chorus. My preparation during this time was further interrupted by a production of Handel's *Messiah* in which I sang the tenor solo and also two concerts of mainly Baroque music with organ accompaniment. However, whenever I found the time, I would practise the music Turiddu sings and started first with those solos and ensembles in which I identified heightened dramatic expression. I kept the '*Siciliana*', Turiddu's first

entrance, for last because of the simplistic musical nature of the song and the solo accompaniment with harp. In addition, I read the whole libretto to understand the story, but also to get a better idea of the character, Turiddu, asking myself what kind of person he is and how he acts and reacts emotionally in the context of the story.

For brevity's sake, I have decided to focus the discussion in this section on the centrepiece duet and the final aria, because these two scenes incorporate the essential music–dramatic aspects of the role. Moreover, the musical material these pieces consist of is a clear example of the stylistic aspects and vocal–technical demands of verismo opera.

Duet (Santuzza and Turiddu)

I decided to start practising the centrepiece duet between Santuzza and Turiddu. It is divided in three parts, namely: '*Duetto (a)*', '*Stornello di Lola (b)*' and '*Seguito del Duetto (c)*'. In '*Duetto (a)*', Santuzza accuses Turiddu of still loving Lola. This immediately angers him, and emotions start to escalate. After a recitative-like entrance of both characters, the first indication of heightened emotion occurs on p. 86, m. 47 when Santuzza tells Turiddu that he had been seen at the house of Lola and Alfio. Turiddu's vocal line rises in *forte* dynamics with a tremolo in the orchestration on the words '*Vuoi che m'uccida?*' (Do you want him to kill me?) (mm. 51–52), and on the following phrases the orchestra continues to grow louder. In m. 55, Turiddu's line then starts in the lower-middle range and is marked *forte* with the orchestra doubling the vocal line in octaves. When I sang through these pages, I could sense that the light vocal registration (which has more head voice mixed with chest voice) did not give me enough vocal intensity on the phrases '*lasciami dunque*' (let me then) (mm. 53–54) and '*Invan tenti sopire il giusto sdegno colla tua pietà*' (In vain you try with your pleas

for pity to lessen my scorn) (mm. 55–58). I could also sense that the latter phrase, which starts in the middle lower range and ascends to E4, needed more glottal adduction and elongation of the vocal tract to make the line audible and give it enough intensity to match the intense orchestral accompaniment. As a result, I could sense that I was using more chest voice in the vocal registration than usual, which to me was an indication of heavy vocal registration. This heavy registration became more evident in mm. 72–75 when I sang through the phrases ‘*Bada, Santuzza, schiavo non sono di questa vana tua gelosia*’ (Take care, Santuzza, I am no slave of this mad jealousy of yours). I took care to avoid singing these phrases with too much chest voice and experimented with how much of the light registration (i.e., head voice) I could mix with the chest. My first two attempts at singing these lines with a lighter registration did not meet the demands of the musical score. Mascagni marks them *con forza* (with force), with the orchestral dynamics marked *fortissimo*, and the vocal line is doubled in the bass line of the accompaniment. I sensed that a slender and lyrical approach did not only not suit the intense musical character, but it also could not portray the emotion of outrage that Turiddu should be expressing in these phrases.

Turiddu’s emotions of outrage and being offended continue after Lola has interrupted the scene. Both characters have long, sustained phrases with full orchestral accompaniment as the music builds up to a climax in mm. 94–96. When I sang through the first lines (mm. 56–75), which are mainly in unison with Santuzza, I realised that they all needed a heavier vocal registration because of the *fortissimo* dynamics, large orchestration and intense emotions. In m. 69, Mascagni instructs the singers to sing ‘in a broad style with growing passion’ (*Grandioso con sempre crescente passione*)

and Turiddu's words 'Va! Va! Va!' (Go away! Go away! Go away!) are marked *gridando* ('screaming') (m. 76).

I then sang through these lines again and thought of elongating the throat with a constantly lowered laryngeal position. I could feel that the air pressure was raised under the vocal folds and there was more 'ring' to the voice. The firmer glottal adduction and heavy registration was also necessary when uttering the repeated words 'Va!' 'Va!' 'Va!' (Go away!), which are written on G⁴-A^b4-A⁴ (m. 76). I tried singing these notes with an elongated vocal tract so that I could maintain a healthy vocal production and not literally scream them. However, Turiddu's final line of the duet (mm. 109–112) is marked 'with great force' (*con moltissima forza*) and this was a clear indication that the sound production should be closer to shouting. I sensed that this shouted utterance also needed a very firm glottal adduction and, because it lies around F₄, I had to keep the larynx low enough so that the sound could be loud without hurting my voice. I realised that when the larynx was not kept low enough, the subglottal pressure became too high, pushing the laryngeal mechanism upward, which in turn felt strenuous.

I decided to sing the declamatory sections of the duet with full voice and therefore also a heavier vocal registration, because these lines mostly lie in the *zona di passaggio*, which in turn demands high vocal intensity. I realised that, when I approached them with a lighter vocal registration, it sounded more like Baroque recitative, a sound that did not suit the character of Turiddu. Furthermore, I noticed that the declamatory sections often shift between lyrical sustained lines and short phrases in declamatory style. For example, at the beginning of the duet (mm. 7–8), the line 'Son qui Santuzza?' (Are you here, Santuzza?) is in declamatory style, followed by a lyrical line 'È pasqua

in chiesa non vai? (And Easter and church you are neglecting?), which is then followed by *'Mamma cercavo'* (I seek my mother) in declamatory style. Another example is the line *'Così ricambi l'amor che ti porto'* (This is how you return the love I gave you) (mm. 47–49), which is a lyrical line to be succeeded by the more declamatory section *'Vuoi che m'uccida?'* (Do you wish to kill me?) and *'lasciami dunque'* (Then you must leave me) (mm. 51–54). This is then followed again by a lyrical line, *'invan tenti sospiare il giusto sdegno colla tua pietà'* (In vain do you try to subdue my righteous anger) (mm. 55–58). I sensed that I spontaneously applied more legato singing with more vibrato in the lyrical lines and in the declamatory sections I shortened the weak syllables. Singing the declamatory phrases in a heavy registration resulted in less heavy-light articulation of the strong and weak syllables and there was still some sustained singing that incorporated the use of vibrato.

Practising the duet, I concluded that the entire scene demands a heavy vocal registration with a firm glottal adduction and lowered larynx that would also result in higher subglottal pressure. This kind of registration effected a bigger sound which I felt deeper in the body. The sensation of the resonance tended to be more to the chest cavity than in the head when singing in the middle and upper-middle range, as opposed to singing lyric tenor repertoire or singing according to HIP aesthetics, where the sensation of head voice is more evident in the *zona di passaggio* and above. What also became clear to me was that the role of Turiddu called for a sound that depicts his macho (almost chauvinist) image. He sleeps with two different women and when Santuzza confronts him about his infidelity to her, he reacts in a violent manner and shows his sexual power over women by throwing her to the ground and shouting at her. The gender-charged characteristics of the role are also highlighted by the fact that

Turiddu challenges Alfio to a duel. The heavy vocal registration which takes the chest voice over the *zona di passaggio* and above would therefore fit the masculine character. Furthermore, I sensed that singing in and above the *zona di passaggio* with the heavy registration gave so much weight to my voice that when I reached the highest notes (B^b4), it felt as if I had reached the limit of my vocal range. Singing the B^b4 in this manner, however, gave me the sensation of high physical energy, and for me it suited the intensely dramatic music and emotional climax of the scene. Subsequently, I decided to apply this vocal approach to all the music Turiddu sings and in so doing maintain the emotionally charged features of the character.

Finale and 'Addio alla Mamma'

Once I had studied and practised the duet, I moved on to the final aria of Turiddu, which is a continuation of the dramatic events of the preceding scene. The first half of the aria, which resembles a kind of accompanied recitative, starts delicately in the strings of the orchestra part. However, the score marking for the vocal line states *chiamando*, meaning 'calling'. Therefore, the vocal approach cannot be too delicate in the first word, 'Mamma' (Mother). Furthermore, these lines (mm. 92–137) lie mainly in the *zona di passaggio*. As mentioned above, I decided to approach all of the role with a heavy vocal registration. I therefore started to practise the opening lines of the aria in this manner and found that it suited the character of Turiddu's emotions of remorse after his unwise decision to challenge Alfio to a duel in his drunken state. Singing through the aria, I noticed that the really 'big' singing starts in m. 153 with the long, sustained phrases of 'Voi dovrete fare da madre a Santa' (You will be a mother to Santa). The sensation of a higher subglottal pressure was already present when I started singing this first line and I felt that the whole section needed the same kind of

intensity as these motifs all lie in the *zona di passaggio* and above the second *passaggio* of my voice (mm. 153–162). This intensity was possible to achieve only when I maintained a low laryngeal position by thinking of an elongated throat. I realised that the sound got darker and that the vowels on the notes G^b4, F^b4, G4 and A^b4 spontaneously tended to turn into the ‘covered’ position. However, as I was singing towards the A^b4 in m. 157, I noticed that my voice started to feel very ‘loaded’ and that it was difficult to reach the high note. I stopped for a while and reflected upon what it was that I was doing to cause this discomfort. I realised that I was using too-firm glottal adduction coupled with too-high subglottal pressure, which most probably put excessive strain on the laryngeal mechanism and hindered the flow of air. This happened because the musical phrases build up to the high note with ascending repetitive motifs. The same situation arose in the succeeding phases of mm. 160–162, leading up to another A^b4 on the word ‘*Santa*’.

In order to reduce the strain on the laryngeal mechanism, I practised the aria with looser glottal adduction and lower subglottal pressure; but then I noticed that the sound became very lyrical, with more head voice in the registration. This sound, although without strain, did not suit the affect of the aria according to my taste, because the music is so emotionally loaded by this dramatic point in the opera. Furthermore, the aria is marked *molto sentito* (strongly felt) and the higher notes are instructed to be sung *appassionato* (with passion) and with repeated *rinforzando* (increasing in power) in the first verse. The second verse has the same musical character, but here the orchestra has bigger crescendos that build up to *fortissimo* on the highest notes of the phrases. Therefore, I had to use a heavy vocal registration, but one within my vocal capabilities. I realised that this aria needed to be practised more frequently in order for

me to find the right balance of glottal adduction, subglottal pressure and comfortably low position of the larynx with the right amount of airflow.

5.2.3 Rehearsals with the orchestra

We had five rehearsals with the orchestra for this production, which consisted of one *Sitzprobe* (a sit-down rehearsal without stage action) and four orchestra-stage rehearsals. The *Sitzprobe* took place on 12 July 2017 from 10:00 to 13:00 in the OSM's concert hall with conductor Alex Fokkens and the FSSO. The main goal in this rehearsal was to acquaint the singers with the orchestral sound and accompaniment and for the orchestra to hear the singers sing the parts which they accompany. The *Sitzprobe* was my first opportunity to feel and listen whether I am in line with the performance ideal of the conductor. During this rehearsal, I could therefore get my first real feedback from the conductor and my supervisor regarding my vocal approach and whether it fitted the style of the music. Moreover, it would be an early indication of how and whether I maintained a healthy vocal production for the role.

More important were the four orchestra-stage rehearsals, which also included the final dress rehearsal that took place in the Bloemfontein Civic Theatre, where director Tara Notcutt joined the conductor and the orchestra. These orchestra-stage rehearsals were important because they brought together the aspects of acting and singing on stage, and they served as significant dialogue between the conductor and/or the director and me. This dialogue made it possible to self-reflect on the process of preparing for the performance and to position myself in this experiment.

I now proceed to describe the whole rehearsal period with the orchestra with reference to the respective solo and ensemble scenes which Turiddu sings. The discussion is

therefore an overview of the processes at play during the final phases of my preparation for the role.

'Siciliana'

As I mentioned in section 5.2.2, I was striving for a continuous heavy vocal registration to suit the musical character and the macho image of the Turiddu role. I applied this registration in the 'Siciliana' and sang it in a *mezzo forte* to *forte* dynamic because Turiddu would be positioned at the back of the stage. Because the aria is centred on F4, G4 and A^b4 and therefore in and above the second *passaggio* of my voice, the heavy registration worked well to portray the erotic undertone of the text. I sang almost the entire aria with an elongated throat or lowered larynx and raised soft palate, which darkened the vowels but at the same time gave them 'ring'. I therefore sang most of the aria in the 'covered' voice. Although I could feel that the voice was heavier, the glottal adduction was still balanced with sufficient air flow so that the subglottal pressure was not too high. Sung in this way, I felt that there was not much muscle effort on the laryngeal mechanism. The feedback from the conductor was very positive and he was happy with my sound production during the first rehearsal. In the orchestra-stage rehearsals, I managed to sing the 'Siciliana' in the same manner, bearing in mind that I was placed in the far back stage (though still visible) and therefore had to project my voice well. During these rehearsals, I did, however, feel that the notes above the second *passaggio*, such as those on the line '*biato cui ti dà*' (blessed is he who give you) in m. 15, were on the border of being too heavy and that I lost the focus of the tone on the repeated A^b4's. However, I kept on trying to find the right balance of glottal adduction and subglottal pressure so as not to over-sing these lines.

Duet (Santuzza and Turiddu)

I approached the duet in the same manner as I had practised it previously. Once the full orchestra accompanied us (Turiddu and Santuzza), I could hear and feel that the heavy vocal registration was the only option for singing this music. In the *Sitzprobe*, the sound from the orchestra was thick, loud and almost overwhelming when the voice parts were doubled in the orchestra. I realised that the phrases that lie in the middle voice also needed to be sung with high vocal intensity and that a firm glottal adduction and lowered larynx were needed. Maintaining a firm glottal adduction from the low to high registers of the voice enabled me to sing the phrases that move over the *zona di passaggio* to the A^b4's smoothly, without having to adjust the subglottal pressure too much. The conductor and my supervisor were thrilled with my delivery of the duet after the *Sitzprobe*. One of my colleagues commented that she did not know that I could make such an 'Italianised' sound and that it was so very different from the time she heard me in a production of Handel's *Messiah*. I took this comment as a positive observation of the change in vocal approach that I applied to this role.

In the following rehearsals of the duet on stage, things got more challenging. For the director (Notcutt), the most important thing to depict was what happened in all of the tumultuous relationships between the characters. The emotional world had to be rich and complex, and the set and staging should simply serve as a frame for portraying the emotional drama. Notcutt also wanted me to portray clearly Turiddu's using and dismissing of Santuzza. I noticed that in my passionate acting and singing of this demanding music, I got physically worked up and could not always exercise the control I would have liked to. Furthermore, the orchestra was excessively loud, and it seemed that the conductor could not influence their emotional playing in order to bring the

dynamics down. Indeed, from a rehearsal recording of 13 July 2017, I observed that the orchestra was too loud and that I was not able to ‘carry the voice’ over the orchestra in the phrases which are marked *Grandioso con sempre crescente passione* (mm. 69–73) and *Maestoso* (mm. 100–106). I realised, however, that I was at the limits of my vocal capabilities, and I asked the conductor the next day to try to bring down the orchestra dynamics to *forte* instead of *fortissimo*, which he was happy to do. Aside from those two passages, I was satisfied with my delivery of the declamatory sections. The text was articulated clearly, but the sound was supported enough to produce a heavier vocal registration. In the heavy vocal registration, the declamatory lines were sung more legato and with vibrato on almost every note. I observed that in this declamatory style of singing I used less heavy-light phrasing for the strong and weak syllables than, for example, in the HIP approach. Therefore, the weak syllables were not sung much more softly than the strong syllables; however, to be true to the natural inflection of the Italian language, I shortened some end and weak syllables, especially when they occurred on quaver notes.

‘Brindisi’ and Finale

The ‘*Brindisi*’ scene also went as expected. I noticed that the beginning of each verse line had to be articulated clearly because of the staccato semiquavers in the accompaniment. This implied that I had to start the verse with a not-too-heavy registration and then gradually build it up to the more legato lines moving into the *passaggio*. However, I also realised that I needed to project the voice extremely well because the orchestra was doubling all of the vocal lines in this scene. To accomplish this, I tried to enunciate the text clearly, thinking of the resonance in the middle of the mouth cavity and therefore a more forward sensation of the sound. Furthermore, I tried

to maintain a firm glottal adduction to stay within a heavy vocal registration which would give me more vocal power to project the voice over the orchestra. The conductor was happy with my singing but suggested that I could use more portamento in the sustained lines in order to depict a 'tipsy' character that goes with this drinking song. The recording of the final dress rehearsal indicates that I applied more portamento than in the earlier rehearsals. This was quite evident in connection with the refrain of the verse in mm. 143–144, on the words '*giubilo! Viva*' (jubilate! Long live). I could feel that the portamento which was done with upward connection between D4 and G4 loaded my voice. This was the result of the adjustment of more subglottal pressure when gliding to the G4. I also sang downward glides in mm. 147–148 and mm. 148–149 on the words '*che ci allieta*' (it refreshes) and '*pensiero*' (thoughts). These portamenti were easier to do because of the downward movement in which I simply kept the position of the vowel and connected the notes.

The scene with Alfio at the beginning of the finale that leads into the final aria also proceeded well. It is a quieter scene in an accompanied recitative style typical of declamatory style with an emotional build-up on the words '*resta abbandonata, lei che mis s'e data povera Santa*' (she will be abandoned, my own poor Santa) (mm. 57–61). I kept the heavy vocal registration and darkened the vocal colour in the middle range of the voice to depict the sombre mood of the fight to the death that was announced. The end of this section has a line marked *con impeto* (m. 74) which the conductor wanted me to sing loudly and with force (as indicated). I took the chest voice up into the high register on the A4 in m. 75. Here I could feel that I had to be careful not to use too much of the chest register and high subglottal pressure because in the rehearsal recording I could hear that the note lost its focus and 'ring'. I could also feel

that the high subglottal pressure was pushing the laryngeal mechanism into a high position.

'Addio alla Mamma'

I maintained the heavy registration with a dark vocal colour by focusing on an elongated throat. I was cautious not to sing the sustained lines '*Voi dovrete fare da madre a Santa*' (mm. 153–156) with too much power, saving my voice for the high notes. However, I realised that the sound from the orchestra was already quite big in these phrases. To accommodate the orchestral sound, I had to stay in a firm glottal adduction with a very stable subglottal pressure but also had to maintain enough air flow so that the sound could have a forward motion. In the last section of the aria, I felt the first signs of vocal fatigue on the phrase '*Per me pregate Iddio*' (For me pray to heaven) (mm. 172–174 and 174–176). I knew that I had to be careful not to overload the voice by too much subglottal pressure. I could feel that when the laryngeal mechanism was tired, it could not be kept in a low position while maintaining a high subglottal pressure, causing the larynx to be pushed upwards. I noticed this happening in mm. 175–177 on the line that moves to the A^b 4 on the word '*bacio*' (kiss), sensing that the /a/ vowel tended to 'spread' (i.e., to become unfocused), and I could feel that the larynx moved upwards.

Summarising the rehearsal period with the orchestra, I observed that the conductor and the director were satisfied with my singing and acting. Both demanded that the role be sung and acted in a way that reflects extreme emotional behaviour. I noticed during the orchestra-stage rehearsals that the heavy vocal registration helped me to portray the macho, gender-charged character of Turiddu musically and vocally. However, I also realised that the extreme emotional behaviour and outbursts of the

character had the result that I reached the limits of my vocal capabilities. My main fear was that I would sing too heavily by using too-firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure that could lead to vocal fatigue during the performance. The result would be that the laryngeal mechanism could not sustain the muscle effort and be pushed upwards in a high position by the high subglottal pressure underneath it.

5.3 Analysing examination recording and critical self-reflection on reports

In this section, I discuss the outcomes of my preparation of the role by means of critical self-reflection on the examination video recording. This discussion focuses mainly on the duet and solo parts sung by Turiddu. In addition, I also contextualise the outcomes by referring to the examiners' reports.

5.3.1 Examination recording

'Siciliana'

In the recording, it is evident that I started singing the aria in a heavy vocal registration as rehearsed previously. I observed that the repeated F4's in the beginning of the aria were sung with chest register but the vowels were fairly 'open' and therefore not turned into the 'covered' voice. The lines that move to the A^b4's in m. 15, on the words '*biato cui*' were sung in chest voice; however, I noticed that these notes sounded a bit laboured. For me this was a sign of some strain on the laryngeal mechanism and most probably the result of singing with too much subglottal pressure. I identified a similar strenuous sound production in mm. 15–19 on the words '*si ce muorò accisu E s'iddu muoro e vaju*' (if I am killed there and if I die and go). In these lines the sound was not 'covered' enough on the F4 and G4, which means that the larynx was not in a low enough position; but at the same time there was firm glottal adduction and a high subglottal pressure. These factors of firm glottal adduction and high subglottal

pressure had the effect that the vowels on these notes sounded somewhat 'squeezed'. By the time I reached the A^b4's (mm. 28–29), the sound was almost too heavy to maintain flow phonation, although it conformed to the instruction of the score, which indicates that the line '*E s'iddu muoro e vaju*' should be sung 'strong and heavy' (*stentando*).

Although some of the higher notes sounded somewhat 'squeezed', I could observe that my voice, in general, had the same timbre from the bottom notes to the top. This was an indication that I had extended the chest voice into the upper vocal range as intended and rehearsed. Furthermore, I was content with the general sound production of this number because it suited the characterisation that I was aiming for, namely the macho image of Turiddu and the masculine, erotic undertone of the aria. My sound production was mostly free, with an even vibrato throughout the song. Moreover, I adhered to the instructions of the score to sing the *stentando* in heavy vocal registration and I sang all the *portando* lines with the required use of portamento. The *dolcissimo* at the end of the song was sung with the use of a small degree of *voix mixte*, which contributed to the sweet character of these final phrases.

Duet (Santuzza and Turiddu)

The first section of the duet (mm. 1–71) with its declamatory style was sung as rehearsed and proceeded well. The text was delivered clearly within a heavy vocal registration and the voice had enough 'ring' in those lines where the orchestral accompaniment was louder. I observed that the outcry, '*Santuzza*', in mm. 65–66 sounded strenuous at the end of the sustained A4 and, for me, this was an indication that I again had used too-high subglottal pressure coupled with firm glottal adduction. The larynx could not withstand this force and be kept in a low position.

The *con forza* section, '*Bada Santuzza ...*' (mm. 72–75) had the vocal power that I was aiming for. The voice had enough 'ring' to carry over the full orchestration of the accompaniment and the sound suited the threatening affect of the text. However, I noticed the A4's in these lines were just a little too 'open', which means that the larynx moved a little higher on these notes. I also observed a too-high position of the larynx in the line '*schiaivo non sono di questa vana tua gelosia*' (mm. 41–43). On the G4's in m. 41, the vowels were sung too 'open', which had the additional result that the succeeding A4 sounded strenuous. This A4 also did not carry well over the orchestra in the *fortissimo* dynamics of the music.

In the continuation of the duet after the '*stornello di Lola*' I noticed that the voice did not have enough power to carry over the orchestra while singing in unison with Santuzza. This was evident in mm. 69–73 on the words '*va ti ripetto non tediarmi, pentirsi è vano, dopo l'offesa*' and, for me, this was another indication that the larynx was not maintained in a low position to produce the singer's formant or 'ring' of the voice. I heard from the recording that the sound became thin and was not focused, which was confirmation that the larynx was in too high a position; and this, coupled with firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure, affected the sound. This kind of vocal production became even more apparent in the succeeding mm. 75–76 in which the vowels sounded as though the phonation was 'pressed'. What happened here is that I over-anticipated the ensuing outbursts of '*Va! Va! Va!*', which had to be 'shouted' (*gridando*), according to the instructions of the score.

The B^b4 of the ultimate climax of the duet sounded well placed and had the vocal power I was aiming for; however, the succeeding phrase in mm. 97–98, again displayed a too 'open' sound on the G^b4 of '*tediarmi*'. As I could sense in the orchestra-

stage rehearsals, the larynx was basically pushed upwards by the force of a too-high subglottal pressure against a firm glottal adduction. This inefficient vocal production was also noticeable in the succeeding unison lines with Santuzza in the *Maestoso* section (mm. 100–106). The final declaimed line ‘*dell’ira tua non mu curo!*’ (mm. 109–112) was sung with force as instructed in the score but was not shouted. I could hear that the /u/ vowel of the word ‘*curo*’ lost its focus and sounded ‘spread’.

‘Brindisi’ and Finale

I observed that at the opening of the drinking song, the line that moved to the A4 on the word ‘*bicchiere*’ was produced with an extremely strenuous sound of the /e/ vowel on A4 (mm. 120–122). I realised once again that the laryngeal mechanism was under stress because of too-high subglottal pressure; another explanation could be that the chest register was extended too high. Extending the chest register into the upper range might have caused ‘spreading’ or opening of the voice which, according to Miller (1993:118), hinders efficient vowel modification in and above the *zona di passaggio*. The rest of the song was sung as rehearsed. I noticed that, in general, I used a somewhat lighter vocal registration for the beginning of the verses, which then gradually built up to the more sustained lines in which I applied heavy registration.

The following scene with Alfio in the finale went quite well and as rehearsed, but what is very noteworthy here is a further sign of vocal fatigue and incorrect vocal production at the end of this section. I observed in the *con impeto* line in mm. 74–76 that my voice sounded forced and the A4 was sung with a lot of strain. I realised that the /i/ and /ɔ/ vowels of the word ‘*mio*’ on the A4 lost their focus and that the intonation was impaired. Thinking back to the night of the performance, I could remember that the note felt uncomfortable and excessively ‘in my throat’. My explanation is that the vowel ‘spread’

and lost its focus because of too-high subglottal pressure levels. I remembered also that I felt that the blend of registers was dominated by the chest voice almost to the exclusion of any head resonance. In the succeeding aria, this forced sound was also present and, for me, this was a further indication of having reached the limits of my vocal capabilities.

'Addio alla Mamma'

The incorrect vowel production and signs of vocal fatigue became more evident in Turiddu's final aria. The A^b4's in mm. 149–150 and 157 were intonated slightly under the pitch. In both these cases, the /i/ and /ɔ/ vowels were not 'covered' enough and therefore too 'open'. They were sung with too much subglottal pressure, and I can remember that the laryngeal mechanism felt tired by then. In other words, the larynx could not be kept in a stable low position and withstand the high subglottal levels. The result was that the larynx shifted upwards. I could also hear that these notes had a slower unstable vibrato, which was another indication that the sound was not free. The last section of the aria from m. 72 onwards, revealed that I had reached the limits of my vocal capabilities. The phrase '*per me pregate Iddio*' started with too much subglottal pressure and I could hear that the intonation suffered and was flat. This was especially evident on the G^b4, G4 and A^b4 (mm. 174, 176 and 177). On these notes, the respective vowels /i/, /ɔ/ and /a/ 'spread' and lost their focus and brilliance. Furthermore, there was not enough 'ring' in the voice to carry over the loud orchestra, which was an indication that the larynx was not in a sufficiently low position to produce the singer's formant. I also observed that the final B^b4 was intonated under pitch and

most probably the result of the /a/ vowel that was too ‘open’ and sung with too much chest voice taken above the *passaggio*.

5.3.2 Examination reports

The two external examiners both pronounced their critique of my endeavour and the experiment of singing the role of Turiddu. This critique was based on the argument that the role did not suit my lyrical voice and therefore some performance aspects of vocal quality and intonation were compromised. My experiment – the enquiry into the way a lyric tenor voice could adapt vocal–technically to the demands of verismo music and in the process take the voice to the limits of its capabilities – was met with scepticism. In this regard, Examiner 1 observed that in order to vocalise this music ‘the candidate had to employ extra effort at times and in doing so this affected the intonation and vocal quality especially in the higher register’ (Examiner report 1, May 2017).

Examiner 2 also raised the matter of implementing too much vocal effort and mentioned the negative effect, but was clearer in her observation regarding subglottal pressure when she observed the following:

It was clear throughout the performance that this inherently lyric voice was pushed to the extreme in response to both the emotional demands of the libretto and the vocal demands inherent in the composer’s writing. Trying to overcome these challenges by increasing sub-glottal pressure to such an extent is dangerous and often resulted in clearly audible strain on the vocal mechanism (Examiner report 2, May 2017).

The observations of Examiner 1 regarding intonation problems in the high notes and those of Examiner 2 concerning the use of too-high subglottal pressure correspond to

my critical self-reflection during the final rehearsal period and performance when I sensed that, whenever the sound was strenuous, it was because the subglottal pressure was too high. Miller (1993:127) warns tenors of the *Spinto Fach* against singing with too-firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure when he asserts that

[r]esonance balance cannot be achieved or maintained in the singing voice by excessive vocal-fold occlusion and extreme rate of subglottic pressure.

He adds that singing with ‘a high rate of glottal occlusion that resembles the sphincteral action occasioned by heavy-duty lifting or shoving’ results in vocal production that is ‘marked by unsteadiness of vibrato, pitch problems and timbre distortions’ (ibid.)

Stark (1995:75) refers to the lowering of the larynx to compensate for the high subglottal pressure and firm glottal adduction when he writes:

Since firm phonation requires higher muscular effort to maintain glottal closure against elevated subglottal breath pressure than is required for speech or loose phonation, it also requires the singer to employ certain concomitant vocal maneuvers in order to avoid an overly tense or strained vocal quality. Chief among these is the gesture of keeping the larynx in a low vertical position against the upward pressure of the breath that would otherwise push the larynx too high for good singing. Such laryngeal lowering is often accompanied by a raising of the soft palate to such an extent that the velum seals off the nasal cavities and creates a wide space in the pharynx, which further adds roundness to the tone.

As stated in section 5.2.3, I could feel that the laryngeal mechanism could not withstand the high subglottal pressure, especially in sections of the duet and the final

aria. I could also feel that the larynx was pushed upwards into a too-high position by this high subglottal pressure, which resulted in too 'open' vowels and the loss of 'ring' of the voice. The higher muscular effort needed to maintain firm glottal adduction gradually took its toll and the fact that the larynx could not be maintained in a low position was the result of fatigue of the laryngeal mechanism and that of the muscles pulling down the larynx.

In summary, the desirable vocal approach in accordance with the stylistic aspects of verismo opera was analysed and critically reflected upon. In my close listening to the video recording and re-experiencing the performance night, I was able to gauge whether my vocal–technical approach suited the demands of the musical style. My own analysis of the recording confirmed some of the critique voiced by the examiners. Chief among these findings was that I had to compensate vocal–technically for the extreme emotional demands of libretto and music by taking my voice to its utmost limits. The intensity of the music demanded a kind of heavy vocal registration, which in turn demanded glottal adduction and subglottal pressure levels that were too extreme for my instrument. The result was impaired intonation and timbre distortion. Intonation and timbre suffered mainly in the second *passaggio* on A^b4, A4 and B^b4. The fact that the larynx could not be kept in a stable low position was also a sign of vocal fatigue, especially towards the end of the performance.

5.4 Conclusion

In my preparation process, I gained a deeper understanding of the verismo style of the late 19th century and specifically the demands of the role of Turiddu. This enquiry was conducted by consulting secondary sources and studying the score. I realised early on in the learning process that the way the vocal lines are written (to reflect the

emotionally charged music and libretto) demanded a great amount of vocal power. The vocal lines often move over the *zona di passaggio* of the voice and are often doubled in the orchestra. This is often the case when emotional outbursts appear in the score, marked *forte* to *fortissimo*. In order to accommodate the high dynamic levels of the orchestra and the vocal intensity demanded by the score, heavy vocal registration was a prerequisite for performing this role. Heavy vocal registration comprises singing with a lowered position of the larynx, firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure. This kind of registration conforms to the ideals of the 'modern' singing technique, favouring a stable low position of the larynx, *chiaroscuro* and an even tonal production throughout the vocal range.

For the lyric tenor, the role of Turiddu is certainly a challenge to sing, because it implies that he sings out of his *Fach*, approximating that of the *lirico spinto* (or even the dramatic tenor). Singing out of my voice classification, however, formed the basis of this experiment because it was part of my enquiry into how versatile a singer can be, having to deal with contractual obligations when roles are assigned that do not necessarily suit a singer's voice type. In addition, I wanted to investigate how to maintain vocal longevity when singing with greater vocal power. In the orchestra-stage rehearsals, I generally felt that I was moving to the limits of my vocal capabilities, but I still had the feeling that I did not over-sing or hurt the voice. The feedback from the conductor and my supervisor during these rehearsals was also positive. However, in the analysis of the recording and critical reflection upon the performance and the examiners' reports, I came to important insights into singing such a dramatic role, which demands mainly vocal thrust and less lyrical singing.

In my attempt to accommodate the dramatic music of the verismo style, I used too-high subglottal pressure levels and too-firm glottal adduction. As the performance progressed, it became apparent that my laryngeal mechanism could not sustain the continuous air pressure and vocal fold closure, which in turn necessitate a stable low laryngeal position. The low position of the larynx was difficult to maintain because of the high subglottal pressure, which pushed the larynx in a too-high vertical position. This resulted in pressed phonation and strain on the laryngeal mechanism. Subsequently my intonation in the higher register was impaired. In addition, I was not always audible in the dramatic moments, and this was an indication that I could not produce enough of the singer's formant which ensures that the voice is heard over a large and loud orchestra. The singer's formant could have been present if a stable low larynx would have been maintained.

Reflecting on the above observations, I conclude that this 'experiment' did not go as well as I had hoped. Singing the role of Turiddu demanded too much of my vocal capabilities, although there were no obvious signs of vocal damage (such as hoarseness in the speaking voice or loss of the high register) after two of these performances. Certainly, there are instances in the career of a singer with a lyrical voice when their vocal abilities and versatility will be put to the test in singing heavier operatic roles. However, the outcome of this experiment shows that a verismo role such as that of Turiddu demands too much vocal weight from the lyric tenor voice and I am inclined to think that it also demands too much of the *lirico spinto* tenor. In order to maintain vocal longevity, I would therefore advise young tenors to refrain from taking on this role, and I would suggest that mature lyric tenor voices rather accept dramatic roles which do not fall under the verismo category. There are roles such as Rodolfo in

La Bohème, Duca in *Rigoletto* or Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* which, according to Miller (1993:12), fall under the *lirico spinto Fach* and which may ensure that the lyric tenor stays within healthy vocal boundaries when asked to perform heavier operatic repertoire.

Chapter Six: Viennese Operetta: *The Merry Widow* (Franz Lehár, 1870–1948);

Bloemfontein, Civic Theatre, 3 August 2018

6.1. Introduction

When the OSM and the FSSO decided to produce *The Merry Widow* in 2018 and asked me to sing Danilo, I welcomed the opportunity with open arms. Alex Fokkens, who was also the conductor of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, would again conduct this production. The director was Christine Crouse, who had directed several productions for Cape Town Opera. I immediately thought to include this role as an examination performance because it represents the Viennese operetta genre; the style of the music affords a different vocal approach as opposed to the Bach *Passion* and the verismo opera (and, for that matter, the Lied and art song programmes which would follow). Although I had sung the role many times in Germany and Switzerland, I thought this production would be an ideal situation in which to revisit the role and genre and its influence on vocal approach. Moreover, I was keen to investigate the way the comic character of the text and the music and the many dance-like movements would affect the way I sing this role.

Most opera houses in the German-speaking countries host at least one operetta production annually, implying that a singer under a permanent contract would be cast in such a production. I have concluded from my personal experience that aspiring singers and musicians often underestimate this vocal genre (often viewed as being inferior to opera). Although the word ‘operetta’ is a diminutive of opera, it bears its very own vocal–technical demands for the singer and is by no means less challenging than singing opera.

Grove Music Online defines the genre operetta as

light opera with spoken dialogue, songs and dances. Emphasizing music rich in melody and based on 19th century operatic styles, the form flourished during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th (Lamb 2001).

Richard Traubner (2003:viii) describes the genre with the words '[g]aiety, and lightheartedness, sentiment and *Schmalz* [excessively sentimentality]'. The origins of operetta lie in the *opéra bouffe*, which were light-hearted works in operatic style. The works of Jacques Offenbach contributed to the development of this genre into full-length entertainment evenings as a counterpart to the 'increasingly serious and ambitious pretensions of the *opéra comique* and vaudeville' in Paris during the second half of the 19th century (Lamb 2001). In central Europe, Johann Strauss II

introduced a distinctively Viennese operetta style, with more exotic settings, romantic rather than satirical stories and scores built around dance forms, especially the waltz (Lamb 2001).

Viennese operetta is generally classified into two eras, that of the Golden Age, which includes the operettas by Strauss II and his contemporaries such as Franz Suppé, Carl Millöcker and Carl Zeller, and that of the Silver Age, represented by the operettas of Franz Lehár, Oscar Strauss and Leo Fall. Lisa Feurzeig (2019:37) states that the plot of the Golden Age operetta generally highlighted 'cultural and ethnic differences'. In conjunction with ethnic differences, 'class division was a frequent theme in ironic romantic-comedy plots' in which characters 'from different social stations often fall in love' (ibid.). Feurzeig (2019:37) maintains that

while golden-age operettas challenge societal expectations, they usually do not overtly defy them; instead, the lovers are aided by sudden changes in their identity or fortune.

The Merry Widow by Lehár established the era of the Silver Age of operetta in 1905, also referred to as the birth of the modern operetta. Stefan Frey (1995:41) points out that *Die Lustige Witwe (The Merry Widow)* is an erotic operetta which combines modernity and sensuality, and in this way Hanna and Danilo represent the 'legendary pair of their epoch'. Between these characters there are 'no social obstacles', although they are from different classes (Frey 1995:41). The conflict between these two characters portrays the so-called battle of the sexes, which was typical of the time and suited the sensuous eroticism of the early 20th century. The gentleman who refuses to declare his love to a wealthy lady so that he does not come across as a fortune hunter was something that the audience of 1905 could relate to. This 'free and contemporary portrayal satisfied the need for [self] identification' of the audiences of 1905 and was a 'characteristic which the classical operetta did not permit' (Frey 1995:41). Elsewhere, Frey (2019:89, 90) remarks that 'Viennese operetta was, in the decade before World War I, dominating the repertory of the Western world' and musically the signs of globalisation and modernity are reflected in an amalgamation of 'different musical styles such as folksong, the operatic aria or national dances like the waltz, polka and csárdás' (ibid.). The author maintains that Lehár and his contemporary, Leo Fall,

represented those new conditions in the music world as well as those in the modern Vienna [...] balancing between diversity and assimilation, between light and serious music (Frey 2019:92).

Finding research literature on the performance practice of operetta is challenging, and according to Michael Heinemann (2016:250) a result of not only the 'prejudice toward the genre itself' but also of the fact that the musical text is merely an outline of what the composer intended. Moreover, Heinemann states that in the search for an HIP of operetta, one should also refer to the original artists and the social circumstances of the time. Operetta and its success were closely linked to the singers who sang the very first performances and who worked with the composer to realise his ideas.

Kevin Clarke (2006) investigates the performance practice of operetta by means of performance analysis of original recordings and raises the question of how operetta (especially *The Merry Widow*) originally sounded and what we could learn from the early recordings from an HIP perspective. In his comparison of the 1906 recording which featured the original singers who sang Hanna and Danilo in the premiere (1905), Clarke identifies one crucial difference from that of modern-day recordings. Clarke (2006:30) asserts that in modern-day operetta recordings, the sung text is difficult to understand and that one loses the point of the text and music and, therefore, 'the wit and punch'. The author argues that in modern-day recordings the loss of textual differentiation is the result of evening out the vowels to achieve a homogenous vocal sound (that conforms to the ideals of the 'modern' singing technique) and neglecting consonants; for Clarke, this loss of textual nuance leads to inane performances of this genre that lack eroticism (Clarke 2006:30). He maintains that the singing style of the original Hanna (Mizzi Günther) and Danilo (Louis Treumann) could be an example of how to perform Viennese operetta in a manner that is novel and original. In their portrayal of the roles, it becomes apparent that they did not seek a kind of 'truthfulness' found in modern-day performances, but rather a performance in which 'emotions and

moods are quoted with ironic distance' (Clarke 2006:35, 36). Particularly the singing style of the original Danilo, Treumann, was completely remote from 'the bel canto sound ideal and much closer to the style of Vaudeville, Cabaret and Chanson' in which the text is almost recited with a vocal approach that sounds 'raw, eccentric, unsophisticated and direct' (Clarke 2006:31).

My personal observation of Treumann's sound production is that the voice sounds 'thin and piercing', as also described by Viennese critic Felix Salten in 1906 (in Linhardt 2006:192).³⁵ Moreover, I found that Treumann's tone production indicates a bright, nasal vocal tone (especially in the case of his singing) which does not resemble the *chiaroscuro* tone quality of the 'modern' singing technique. Modern-day vocal pedagogues such as James McKinney (2005:138) would identify this kind of vocal tone as being a faulty vocal production and an undesirable tone quality, described as 'too bright', 'open' or forward. It is highly probable that this 'open', forward-placed tone production is accompanied by a high vertical position of the larynx (close to the position as in normal speaking), minimal space in the pharynx and a stiffness of the pharyngeal walls (McKinney 2005:139). However, with his rather peculiar vocal production (which Salten referred to as 'thin and piercing', indicating that this vocal production was not the norm at the time), Treumann was able to play with the text in the sense that he shortens and lengthens the notes to suit the respective strong and weak syllables, implementing a kind of rubato recitation. In the recording of Treumann's '*O Vaterland*' it is evident that the singer did not even follow the exact pitches of the written notes at all times, so that his delivery resembles a speaking or *parlando* style of singing.

³⁵ The 1906 recording of Louis Treumann and Mizzi Günther is available at: <https://youtu.be/64NZagUMChg>
Listen to the excerpts as follows: *O Vaterland* at 3'00"–5'08"; *O kommet doch, O kommt* at 5'13"–7'22"; *Lippen Schweigen* at 13'12"–15'45"; *Es waren zwei Königskinder* at 15'46"–17'47".

Treumann used this *parlando* style to the extreme in ‘*Es waren zwei Königskinder*’ in which he relies on a kind of *Sprechgesang* and normal speech instead of singing the written notes.³⁶ Furthermore, the use of legato singing is very limited; this is the result of the prominence of the text over the melodic line, evident in numbers such as ‘*O kommet doch, O kommt*’ and ‘*Lippen Schweigen*’.

Other aspects of Viennese operetta performance practice (especially that of the so-called modern operetta) are acting and dancing. Treumann’s creation of the role of Danilo personified not only a unique kind of singing, but also a new kind of principal male character of the modern operetta. The fact that Lehár and his librettist Victor Léon had chosen Treumann for Danilo, who used to sing buffo or comical *Fach* which demanded good acting and dancing abilities, is an indication that they preferred and valued a singer who could act and move well on stage. Marion Linhardt (2006:183) explains that Treumann was first engaged at the *Carltheater* as *Gesangskomiker* (singing comedian) with an emphasis on dancing. It was his acting and especially his dancing abilities that brought him substantial fame, and it was also the incorporation of these abilities in creating the role of Danilo which marked a shift to leading male roles and new engagement at *Theater an der Wien*. Salten (1906) wrote that Treumann’s dancing and movements in a performance of *The Merry Widow* were ‘supple’ and ‘his body seems to dance by itself’ (in Linhardt 2006:191). Linhardt (2006:190) remarks that when Treumann shifted into a new *Fach* of playing leading roles such as Danilo, the singer still relied on his dancing abilities but moved away from the ‘grotesque show pieces toward a medium of sensual dialogue’. Lindhardt

³⁶ Literally translated from German as speech-song, *Sprechgesang* is a vocal technique that combines speech and song. It implies that the singer should ‘speak’ the written pitch but then deviates from it instantaneously by rising or falling in pitch (Griffiths 2001).

(2006:192) maintains that eroticism became a key aspect of the dramaturgy of the modern operetta and points out that Treumann incorporated this aspect in his portrayal of roles such as Danilo.

In the many years I have sung and played operetta roles, especially Danilo, acting and the ability to move well on stage were constantly demanded by directors. In this sense, these aspects of performance practice, evident since the premiere of *The Merry Widow* in 1905, have maintained an important position and should be taken into account when attempting to find a suitable vocal approach for this genre.

6.2 Preparation process

6.2.1 Studying the score

In early communication with the conductor and director, it was clear that this production would be produced in a conventional manner, both musically and regarding staging. This implied that we followed a mainstream or traditional performance practice, one associated with the 'modern' singing technique, which applies heavy vocal registration as described in section 2.2.2. It was agreed that we would use the standard edition of the Doblinger (1906) vocal score, edited by Bernhard Herzmansky. I started to read and sing through the role on 4 June 2018 and continued do so sporadically during the next five weeks before we started the stage rehearsals. During this period, I was also training the chorus and smaller solo roles, which were all sung by students of the OSM. Although I knew that this production would be performed in MSP, I was keen to gather all the knowledge I could regarding the performance style of operetta because I wanted to know where the so-called tradition originated. By consulting sources on the performance practice of operetta, I was aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the style of this genre and how it evolved historically into what

we today regard as the mainstream or established manner of performance. Furthermore, whenever I sang this genre and specifically this role in the past, I realised that the vocal approach felt different from singing Romantic opera composed in the same epoch.

In light of the enquiry of this thesis, I wanted to describe in words what constitutes this vocal–technical difference. I therefore consulted the literature mentioned above in section 6.1, especially Clarke’s article that discusses aspects of vocal performance practice. I had reservations regarding the singing style exemplified by the 1906 recording of Treumann, because it is simply too remote from the ‘modern’ singing technique expected in MSP productions. However, it is not his sound production but the way he treats the text or libretto in a *parlando* style that was refreshing and inspiring to hear. His ability to bring out the light-hearted character and sensual aspects of the text was something that I wanted to incorporate in my own portrayal of the role in this production.

Reading though the score, I realised once again that a great amount of Danilo’s music is written in a style that calls for declamation of the text and is therefore to be sung in a *parlando* style. His first entrance, ‘*O Vaterland*’ (No. 4) is a perfect example of a melodious declamatory style in which the comical and ironic text needs to be enunciated clearly. Other numbers that demand light and clear enunciation of text are the duet, ‘*Dummer Dummer Reitersmann*’ (No. 8), the Septet (No. 9) and ‘*Es waren zwei Königskinder*’ in Finale 2 (No. 12). In all of these above-mentioned numbers, the *parlando* style is often used in contrast to the legato lines which naturally afford more sustained singing. Moreover, I realised that whenever the vocal line is written in a *parlando* style, it is accompanied by a fairly full orchestra in which the vocal line is

often doubled. Therefore, the vocal production and vocal registration cannot be too light (as, for instance, when singing a Bach recitative which is accompanied by only a few continuo instruments).

Revisiting the score and thinking of my past experience with portraying this role, I also gave some thought to how the ironic, sensual and erotic features of the character would influence vocal sound production. For me, the sensuality and eroticism in the text and music naturally impose a warmer, rounder tone colour. The ironic or comical moments often called for a lighter vocal registration and brighter vocal colour. Acting out a number such as '*Es waren zwei Königskinder*' with its different emotions such as anger, indignation or even ironic amusement calls for different vocal colours and at times a deliberate absence of beautiful tone production. The two aspects of movement and dancing are often incorporated in the acting, which require a different body tension and support of the voice, as opposed to singing opera (in which the control over the voice and the optimal quality of sound would be more important).

Considering all the above aspects of musical style (in which legato singing alternates with a *parlando* style) together with acting and dancing, I realised that I could not focus continuously on beautiful tone production and sustained singing. Rather, my objective was to rely on a flexible vocal approach that would accommodate good enunciation of text, sustained singing, a wide palette of vocal colour and physical movement. This flexible approach could be achieved by striving for a pliable combination of light and heavy vocal registration. The vocal registration should not be too light, though, because I had to be heard over the orchestra and to be able to apply dark and bright vocal colours (*chiaroscuro*). Moreover, the vocal registration also could not be too heavy, because I needed to enunciate the text effectively and to sing with a supple

body tension when moving and dancing. If I used only a light registration (especially in the *zona di passaggio*) as described in section 2.2.2, I would sing with a less elongated vocal tract and a somewhat higher position of the larynx as opposed to the heavy registration in which the elongated vocal tract would bring out the low partials and ensure a dark sound quality. In addition, the elongated vocal tract also produces the singer's formant, which would contribute to the brightness or 'ring' of the voice.

'Getting the music into the voice' was different from learning new music, as in the case of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, which had required much experimentation. Rather, in learning *The Merry Widow*, I was revisiting the score and thinking of the way I had sung it before and how I intended it to be for this production.

In this section, I aimed to summarise the style and performance practice aspects of modern Viennese operetta and its effect on my vocal approach. To avoid unnecessary repetition, I have chosen to describe the process of stage rehearsals and orchestra-stage rehearsals in more detail by referring to specific musical numbers of the operetta. These rehearsals were more interesting to describe in detail because they deal directly with the aspects of acting, moving or dancing, and music.

6.2.2 Physical process and stage rehearsals/orchestra-stage rehearsals

We began our stage rehearsals on 9 July 2018 in the Heuwelkruin church hall, Bloemfontein, after which we moved into the Civic Theatre (Bloemfontein) on 16 July. The stage rehearsals stretched over a period of three weeks and were led by the director, Crouse, conductor Fokkens (from 10 July) and choreographer Jasmine Antonie Stockton. I was fortunate to be able to share my ideas concerning the musical aspects during the early rehearsal period and also to discuss the way my interpretation of the music could fit the concept of the director and choreographer. We commenced

the orchestra-stage rehearsals on 30 July 2018. These comprised four rehearsals, including the final dress rehearsal. I now discuss a selection of the respective musical numbers which Danilo sings, which demonstrates the ways in which music, acting and dance were united, and how I adjusted my vocal approach according to the desired performance ideal.

'O Vaterland' (No. 4)

In Danilo's entrance number, the director and I agreed that the character should show a little tipsiness, since he had just come from the nightclub, Maxim's. Furthermore, it was important to establish his frivolous and carefree mentality immediately. The director suggested that there should be movement and some dancing steps in the staging which could convey these characteristics. Because the libretto is spread over many short notes (mostly one word assigned to a semiquaver and/or a quaver) and because it is written in 2/4 time in an *Allegro Moderato*, it opts for fast enunciation of the text in *parlando* style. The director, conductor and I decided on a comfortable, moderate tempo (about $J=70$) that would not be too fast to ensure clear enunciation of the text. I had to make sure that I was audible over the orchestra when singing this number because the vocal line is doubled by the woodwinds and the accompaniment is assigned to the string section. In order to be heard over the orchestra while implementing *parlando* style, I tried to 'think' the lines in a legato style and to connect the words well to each other to ensure that the vocal line could be heard. In addition, I had to ensure that the first five measures, which lie very low for the lyric tenor voice, would be resonant enough to be audible. I noticed that my subglottal pressure levels needed to stay low in the chest register. Too much firm glottal adduction increased the subglottal pressure in the lower register, which in turn had the effect of making the

voice sound forced and not resonant enough. To find the optimal resonance in the lower register, I used the chest register by keeping a comfortably low laryngeal position and focusing on the vibratory sensation in the chest area. The low laryngeal position helped me to obtain enough space in the pharynx, which enhanced the lower partials of the tone. However, I realised that I had to focus also on the mouth cavity as resonator to ensure that the words were clear and that the sound did not become too dark. In general, the vocal line in this song rarely moves over the *zona di passaggio* of the tenor voice and I felt that I could take the chest voice up to the E4, F4 and F#4, and even to G4. I exercised caution to avoid these high notes being too 'open' or 'white' by slightly modifying the vowels such as the /a/ vowels in 'Acten' (m. 33) and 'Abend' (m. 43) in the direction of an /ɔ/ vowel. The result was a homogenous sound that maintained its chest voice character throughout the range. The conductor and director were happy with this sound production, which they described as warm, sensual and almost 'baritonal'. I also applied this vocal approach on the high G4 at the end of the song (m. 79) without 'covering' it too much and yet still remaining in the balanced vocal registration.

The conductor and I agreed that the section which starts with 'Da geh ich zu Maxim' (m. 48) should start slow and broad to emphasise the different character of the text and the vocal line that has a 'yearning' affect. This is also a tradition that most conductors follow, and it gives the singer the chance to apply legato singing for a more cantabile line. We decided that when I sang the names of the dancers from Maxim's (Lolo, Dodo, etc.); we would broaden some of the notes of the first syllables and apply a lyrical sound within a legato line. To produce this lyrical sound, I made sure that I had a good mixture of head and chest voice, in other words, a good balance between a light and

heavy vocal registration. The larynx was kept low, however, maintaining a moderately loose glottal adduction. At the same time, I tried to keep the soft palate high. The result was a *voix mixte* with a dark quality because the low larynx ensured enough space in the pharynx.

Once we had established the tempo and the affect of the piece, I could focus on movement and dance. The director did not insist on a great deal of choreographed dancing, but there had to be elegant movement throughout the number. In the first phrases I suggested a brisk 180° turn on the text '*mir schon genügend Müg und Plag*' ([caused] me already enough effort and annoyance) (mm. 10–12).³⁷ The stage had a large staircase which served as central feature and on which we could act. After the turn, I would go to the stairs and lie down in a nonchalant manner when singing the text '*doch bin ich gleich drauf Anderswo, weil man den ganzen lieben Tag nicht immer im Bureau sein mag*' (but soon I am somewhere else, because a man does not want to stay the whole day in an office) (mm. 9–15). In the following measures, I would get up again to move downstage and address the audience, continuing to describe how I (Danilo) don't do any office chores. When I started the phrase '*Kein wunder wenn man so viel thut dass man am Abend gerne ruht*' (No wonder when a man does so much work, he wants to rest at night), I went to lie down on a sofa at stage left, facing the audience and with my back supported by one of the sofa arms (mm. 40–44). The phrase that starts immediately after that with the phrase '*Da geh ich zu Maxim*' (Then I go to Maxim's) was my cue to get up again and move slowly to stage right. When I then started the *animato* section, we decided that I should perform a lock step dance movement in a sideways motion right across the stage (mm. 64–68). I used one step

³⁷ Free translations from the libretto in this chapter are my own.

per quaver note to finish the movement on the text '*und geht's an's Kosen*' (and starts to caress) and from here on I swiftly moved back up the stairs to start singing the phrase '*Lolo, Dodo, Joujou*' (mm. 72–76) and ending the piece two stairs higher.

The constant elegant movement and dancing that was expected from the staging required a different body tension and support of the voice as opposed to singing opera. In these stage rehearsals, I noticed that in order to maintain stable breath support and subglottal pressure while moving that much I had to keep my upper body in a stable position. This implied that I had to keep my back and neck in a straight line with the sternum in an elevated position throughout. This alignment then also allowed the diaphragm to travel downwards on inhalation. However, I noticed that maintaining stable breath support while singing and dancing or executing suave movements was different from singing in a static position. I realised that the firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure levels which relate to heavy vocal registration were difficult to maintain during movement and dance. The subglottal pressure had to be somewhat lower than, for instance, singing Romantic opera because it became difficult to keep a stable compression of air underneath the larynx while moving continuously. I found this to be especially true in the *animato* section in which I danced in a lock step and was moving quickly up the stairs. Fortunately, this number lies more or less in the middle range of the tenor voice, which means that I did not have to apply very firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure (as would be the case for singing in the *zona di passaggio* and above). In addition, my decision to use a combination of light and heavy vocal registration accommodated the lower subglottal pressure levels because of less firm glottal adduction, making it easier to move and sing and to ensure that the text was clearly enunciated.

The orchestra-stage rehearsals revealed that my vocal approach as described above was ideal for this number. I could feel that the laryngeal mechanism was free with no signs of rigidity, and the conductor and director confirmed that my enunciation of the text was clear. Furthermore, they assured me that my voice travelled over the orchestral accompaniment and that the character of the music came across very well. I sensed that the glottal adduction and subglottal pressure were overall lower than what I had used in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. I could also feel that in my delivery of the *parlando* style my larynx was free to rise and fall, especially in the middle and lower range of the voice. However, the registration I used was still heavier than that used when I sang the part of the Evangelist in Bach's *St. John Passion*.

'Weiber Marsch' (Septet) (No. 9)

The '*Marsch-Septett*' (also often referred to as '*Weiber Marsch*'), was performed in a traditional manner, involving a lot of group choreography which demanded dancing and swift movements. I therefore decided to use a registration that leaned more towards the lighter rather than the heavier registration. This kind of registration would also help to accommodate the text, which is set to fast-moving quavers and semi-quavers. This march resembles a *parlando* style and the conductor asked us to articulate the text very clearly. He also suggested that some of the solo lines could almost be spoken as in *Sprechgesang*, which suited the comical element of the march.

In the trio section (m. 55) I could apply more sustained legato singing. I noticed, however, that in these low lines it was difficult to be on the same dynamic level as the bass-baritone whose line is written in unison with that of Danilo. I first tried a firmer glottal adduction and higher subglottal pressure, but, as before, I noticed that in the low register it was difficult to use higher subglottal pressure. Rather, I had to rely on

resonance space in the pharynx and the mouth cavity (maintaining a comfortably low position of the larynx), which had a better result regarding audibility and not being overpowered by the bass-baritone. The conductor assured me that I was audible in these lines. 'Thinking' these lines legato also helped to produce a sustained sound.

This number demanded the most dancing and movement which, during the stage rehearsals, was really challenging. I sensed that my breath could not always go as low as is needed for good breath support because I was exhausted from dancing. Fortunately, we rehearsed the number many times and this repetition made me fit enough to keep the diaphragm in a stable position during the act of singing and dancing. I sensed that when the subglottal pressure was slightly too high in the lines that move to the upper-middle range, I became breathless. It was simply too much effort to sing with a higher amount of breath pressure and therefore the lighter (moderately light) vocal registration with its slightly looser glottal adduction and lower subglottal pressure was effective.

By the time we rehearsed this number with the orchestra, I was fit enough to sing and do all the choreography without running out of breath. During the orchestra-stage rehearsals, the orchestra was fairly loud in some instances because the orchestration called for woodwinds, strings and snare drum. Fortunately, I noticed that the fitter I was, the more I could use a slightly firmer glottal adduction (with higher subglottal pressure) with a low laryngeal position which intensified my sound. The conductor, director and choreographer were all very satisfied with my performance in this number and the feedback was that the ensemble in general sounded and looked very good.

'Die Ehe ist für mich privat' and 'Es waren zwei Königskinder' (Finale 2) (No.12)

The director and conductor both agreed that this part should not be taken too slowly. Dramatically, the scene should not become too static and not too melodramatic before Danilo loses his composure altogether in the *Königskinder* ballade. The conductor and I agreed on a basic tempo of around $\text{♩}=102$. I also decided with Fokkens that this section could have some rubato in which the orchestra keeps a basic pulse over which the vocal line moves freely. I would approach the first measure without orchestra in a free tempo, and I broadened the quavers of 'Ehe' and 'für' (m.132) to then land on the first beat of m. 133 together with the orchestra. In my early preparation, I had aimed for a cool vocal colour without much *vibrato*. Applying a balanced vocal registration (with less firm glottal adduction and subglottal pressure) and the choice of a flowing tempo helped to achieve this and, in addition, it involved less legato singing and more 'speaking' of the text. However, the conductor and I decided on broadening m.140 on the text '*Ein Zweibund sollte*' (A dual alliance it should be) and apply legato singing. My instinct was to bring more emotion with more depth in the vocal colour because my character is referring to the relationship between himself and Hanna. Therefore, slowing down the tempo by broadening the quavers for that one measure allowed me to apply more legato with a lower position of the larynx (than before) and to obtain a darker vocal colour (more depth in the sound). We immediately returned to the basic tempo in the following measure. The whole section from the beginning of the Mazurka up to m. 155 was sung in a very rubato manner, with the orchestra mainly accompanying in a steady ground tempo. The *Allegro Moderato* (mm. 156–164) would be slightly slower than the Mazurka. I again applied *parlando* singing by not singing

the full note values of the punctuated crochets. We treated the two fermatas on the word '*Dänemark*' as broad accents and not as notes that the voice would hold.

The orchestra-stage rehearsals went as planned and I could easily apply the vocal approach as rehearsed because of the light orchestration in this section. The rubato effect that we had rehearsed before called for some repetition of the piece. This was because the concert master wanted to follow the singer instead of playing in a steady pulse. In this section, I was moving slowly and had moments where I stood still to sing. The more static acting contributed to a stable laryngeal position and breath support and it was easy to concentrate on producing the desired dark vocal colour. It was during these rehearsals that the conductor indicated to me that the portamento I was using fitted the style very well. The fact that I was not even thinking of it was an indication that I had become used to singing the role with portamento. I noticed that I generally used portamento in descending intervals and seldom approached the beginning of phrases from below. For example, in a phrase such as '*Vom europäischen Gleichgewicht*' (From European balance of power) (mm. 148–149) I started the first note from below and used portamento on the descending line. I applied the same technique on the words '*Es gibt Madam zu sehr sich hin der Politik der off'nen Türen!*' (Madam too readily gives in to the politics of open doors!), approaching the first note of the phrase in m. 155 from below (therefore, a portamento upwards), and then applying portamento again to the descending intervals. Using portamento in this manner enhanced the very sarcastic character of the text and made the acting of the part more believable.

In the story-telling section of '*Es waren zwei Königskinder*', the director and conductor agreed with me that in this ballade I should show Danilo's true emotions. These

emotions vary from an emotional outburst (right before the ballade starts) to suppressed indignation and anger, to melancholy and deeply felt sorrow. In order to show these different emotional states, I needed to change the vocal colour and registration, sometimes from one measure to the next. I therefore started the ballade (m. 320) with a melancholic, dark vocal colour and tried not to sing all the notes with vibrato, which would contribute to the feeling of abandonment or loneliness. Singing with less vibrato would also promote the prominence of the text. To underline the sadness of the text here, I aimed at singing the vowels of certain important words with straight tone (to emphasise the meaning): for example, 'glauben' (believe), 'konnten' (could), and '*Der Prinz der blieb aber verschlossen*' (The prince remained silent). In order to achieve a dark, melancholic colour with little vibrato, I sang with a comfortably low larynx and somewhat wider pharynx. I used a less firm glottal adduction so that I could also incorporate some *voix mixte*. The production team were very pleased by this sound and the way it contributed to the character of the music and the dramaturgy.

In the following section (m. 352) that is marked *erregter* (more agitated), I changed the vocal colour to show how Danilo's emotions flare up again. I aimed for a more direct sound by means of a firmer glottal adduction (than in the previous section) and by focusing more on the mouth cavity as resonator. The firmer glottal adduction with its higher subglottal pressure produced a sound that was direct but also more intense. I maintained this vocal approach until '*und das war den Prinzen zu viel*' (And that was too much for the prince), after which I intensified the sound for the next section that starts with '*Du gnädigste Dame Prinzessin*' (You gracious lady princess) (m. 369). To intensify the sound and show the character's anger, I used an even firmer glottal adduction, which caused higher subglottal pressure. With the firmer glottal adduction

I could also stay in the chest register on the F4 on the words '*gnädigste Dame Prinzessin*', which I tried to sing with a very harsh tone. In these two sections I also used as little vibrato as possible so that the text of ballade could be understood clearly and produce a sound that would resemble an outcry. In the succeeding *Valse* section (mm. 385), I refrained from the direct, harsh sound and returned to a *voix mixte* until m. 399. On the words '*Und weiter da sagte der Prinz noch*' (And then the prince continued to say), I again changed to a direct, harsh sound with firm glottal adduction and more chest voice. I eventually shouted the words '*Da nimm ihn, der sei dir vergönnt!*' (So take him, he is granted to you!) (mm. 404–407). I took care to prevent the shouting from hurting my voice by maintaining a firm glottal adduction and low laryngeal position. For the ultimate line of the ballade, I quickly changed back to a dark, melancholic sound (that would depict the character's vulnerable side) by using a low laryngeal position, moderately loose glottal adduction and *voix mixte*.

The vocal approach that I rehearsed worked well in the orchestra-stage rehearsals. The more static acting secured a stable larynx and breath support. Furthermore, I achieved the dark, melancholic vocal sound that I had been rehearsing before, and it contrasted well with the solo violin which imitates the vocal line in a sustained legato line. The conductor and the director were happy with the different vocal colours I used in order to show the emotional state of the character. Moreover, I could sense that there was no strain on the vocal mechanism even in the phrases where I used a very firm glottal adduction. I did not need to force or take the voice to its limits because the ballade lies in the comfortable middle range of my voice, coupled with a softer accompaniment with harp and solo violin.

'Lippen Schweigen' (No. 15)

The director and conductor wanted this popular duet to be the most sensual and heartfelt moment in the operetta. They therefore asked that we act and sing this number in a very earnest way without over-interpreting the music and singing too broad lines – it was important that we sustained the movement of the waltz. To incorporate a sensual (and, in fact, erotic) character in my singing, I relied on my lower register and tried to sing with the warmest vocal colour I could produce. I must add here that, as a lyric tenor, I am fortunate to have a good lower register that easily extends below C3. I therefore sang the first two phrases with a comfortably low larynx and focused on space in the pharynx with a feeling of roundness at the back of the throat. The result was a dark and warm sound that both director and conductor praised because it had the perfect sensual character without sounding heavy and laboured. The reason it did not sound heavy was that I managed to sing these first two phrases with a well-balanced combination of light and heavy registration. The light vocal registration allowed me to mix in enough head register in the middle range of my voice to let the musical phrase flow. The small degree of heavy registration enabled a homogenous sound in the legato lines and therefore I could keep the warm and sensual sound that had characteristics of a 'baritonal' vocal sound.

I then carried the 'baritonal' sound further in the succeeding lines '*Jeder Druck der Hände deutlich mir's beschrieb*' (Every press of the hands clearly described to me). This line starts in the tenor's *zona di passaggio* and because I wanted to maintain the homogenous sound production, I felt that I had to use slightly heavier vocal registration to ensure a homogenous sound. I therefore took the chest register into the *zona di passaggio*.

6.3 Analysing examination recording and critical self-reflection on reports

As in section 5.3, I discuss the analysis of my video recording that was made of the examination performance. This is a process of critical self-reflection upon the outcomes of my preparation process. In addition, I contextualise the outcomes against the reports of the examiners. The musical numbers which I had described in the preparation process are also discussed in this section, namely: ‘*O Vaterland*’ (No. 4), ‘*Weiber Marsch*’ (No. 9), ‘*Die Ehe ist für mich privat*’ and ‘*Es waren zwei Königskinder*’ (No. 12), and ‘*Lippen Schweigen*’ (No. 15).

6.3.1 Examination recording

‘*O Vaterland*’ (No. 4)

Listening critically to the recording, I noticed that the text was clearly enunciated while maintaining some degree of legato singing, which was achieved by connecting each word and each syllable closely to each other. The idea of the legato line helped me to be audible over the orchestra. Although the woodwinds of the orchestra that doubled the vocal line were quite loud, I was mostly audible, the result of good resonance from the lowest to the highest notes. The resonance space I rehearsed was therefore achieved by allowing just enough space in the pharynx and mouth cavity to make my voice sound well focused and not too dark. In addition, I could hear that the chest voice quality of the lower register was present throughout the vocal range. There was therefore a homogenous sound quality throughout the vocal range in which the chest voice was carried up to the *zona di passaggio* of my voice. On the high notes, I could hear some vowel modification or ‘covering’, especially on the G4 of the word ‘Vaterland’ (m. 63) in which the /a/ vowel had the characteristics of an /ɔ/. The fact that I could achieve the *parlando* style and simultaneously sing with a chest voice quality

throughout the range was proof that I had managed to maintain a good combination of heavy and light vocal registration. With the right amount of heavy registration, I could maintain the chest voice quality and a warmer, darker sound. The light registration ensured that the text was delivered in *parlando* style and also supported my singing with a lyrical *voix mixte* sound in the section that started with ‘*Da geh ich zu Maxim*’ (mm. 48–64).

The video recording shows that my movements and dancing were performed elegantly and as rehearsed. Performing the movements and dancing did not affect my singing, however – I observed that I did not run out of breath, nor did the sound production become unstable. Furthermore, I observed that the frivolous and carefree character of this song was delivered convincingly through these dancelike movements. This kind of acting and dancing would not have been possible had I implemented solely heavy vocal registration. On the other hand, a lighter vocal registration would not have given my voice enough vocal intensity to carry over the orchestral accompaniment. Therefore, the combination of heavy and light vocal registration also supported my acting and dancing.

‘Weiber Marsch’ (Septet) (No. 9)

In the opening measures of the septet, I could hear that I was not as audible as I would have liked to have been in the lower register. In close listening, I noticed that in the first three measures my resonance space was not sufficient and the larynx was not in a comfortably low position. I realised that I had tried to compensate for a clear enunciation of the text and vocal intensity by means of a too-firm glottal adduction in the lower register which ‘closed’ the throat slightly. However, I could hear that in the rest of my solo measures that lie more in the upper-middle register my vocal intensity

was enough to be audible and the text was delivered in the desired *parlando* style as rehearsed. Furthermore, the trio section worked well and although I could have been more audible, the ensemble singing sounded balanced.

The video recording is proof that the ensemble singing and group choreography hit their mark: the positive response from the audience could be heard clearly. I was able to maintain a combination of heavy and light registration for clear enunciation of the text and all the dancing movements. Moreover, the essence of this number – which was to portray the carefree and light-hearted character of the text and music – came across very well.

'Die Ehe ist für mich privat' and 'Es waren zwei Königskinder' (Finale 2) (No.12)

I started singing '*Die Ehe ist für mich privat*' with a small amount of vibrato on only the sustained notes. This supported the desolate character which I aimed to project vocally. However, I maintained a combination of heavy and light vocal registration, which prevented a shallow or 'white' sound. Furthermore, I observed that as my singing progressed, I applied more depth in my vocal sound by means of lowering the larynx and creating resonance space in the pharynx. This resonance space in the pharynx was the result of an elongated throat, which implies that the larynx was lowered and the soft palate raised. I intended to implement this darkening of vocal colour as Danilo's emotions gradually intensified. The combination of vocal registration helped me not only to play with vocal colour, but also in the alternation between the legato- and *parlando*-style singing which this section demands.

In my analysis of the video recording, I found that the use of portamento was obvious, but I did not think it was in bad taste. In fact, it was used not only in this section but in

all of the music Danilo sings. In 'O Vaterland' (No. 4) for instance, I used portamento to enhance the tipsy and carefree character of the song, with vocal onsets sometimes from below (mostly by starting a third below the main note) and in falling intervals. In this particular section, I implemented portamento to enhance the irony and melancholy of the music and the character of the text. The sarcastic element of the text and the music of the phrase beginning with '*Vom europäischen Gleichgewicht*' (mm. 148–149) was intensified by an almost exaggerated low onset at the beginning of the phrase. As intended in the rehearsals, I followed the same procedure in the succeeding phrase '*Es gibt Madam zu sehr sich hin der Politik der off'nen Türen!*' (mm. 156–159). I first used a low onset on the first note, followed by portamento on the falling third intervals. Then I used a low onset on 'zu' (m. 156) again, followed by portamento on the falling thirds. Furthermore, I emphasised the word 'Politik' (mm. 157–158) by a slow slide on the falling third between the A and the F#.

In '*Es waren zwei Königskinder*', I observed that in the first two measures I could set the melancholic mood of the ballade by means of a dark vocal colour and not singing all the notes with vibrato. I noticed that the first section of the ballade (up to m. 351) was sung with a high air flow. This was an indication that I was not using a high degree of firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure and that my delivery was in line with my intentions for this section. Together with the use of straight tone on the vowels of the strong syllables in words such as 'glauben' (believe), konnten (could), and '*Der Prinz der blieb aber verschlossen*', this kind of phonation contributed to the melancholic and sad character of the first section of the ballade. Furthermore, I could hear that within the dark vocal colour there was a moderate degree of *voix mixte* which

enhanced the sad character and could be possible only through the combination of heavy and light registration.

In the *erregter* (more agitated) section (m. 352), the change of character and heightened emotions came across very convincingly through the use of a 'direct' sound, which was made possible by (moderately) firmer glottal adduction and higher subglottal pressure. As intended, I retained this kind of vocal approach and intensified it a little more on the section starting with '*Du gnädigste Dame Prinzessin*' (m. 369). The video recording is proof that the sound was 'harsher' in this section and was the result of an even firmer glottal adduction and higher subglottal pressure. I noticed also that this sound had more chest voice quality, which was an indication that the registration leaned more to the heavy side. In addition, I noticed that because of the reduced use of vibrato, the text really became prominent, which contributed to a successful delivery of the affect of the music and text of this section.

The sound production of the *Valse* section (mm. 385–403 and mm. 469–379) was exactly the way I intended it to be. I could hear that the registration changed in the first phrases to a *voix mixte* sound that was heartfelt and marked an effective change from the section before. This approach soon changed into a more agitated emotional state on the words '*Und weiter da sagte der Prinz noch*' in which a firmer glottal adduction and a more direct sound was used. This firmer glottal adduction was reserved for the shouted part '*Da nimm ihn, der sei dir vergönnt!*' (So take him, he is granted to you!), which was very effective, akin to a shock effect that showed how Danilo had lost his composure. As rehearsed, on the final line of the ballade I managed to change back quickly to a lyrical, melancholic sound with a looser glottal adduction and *voix mixte*. The darker quality that the sound maintained was an indication that the larynx was

kept in a comfortably low position and that there was enough pharyngeal space to enhance the lower partials of the sound.

'Lippen Schweigen' (No. 15)

The earnest but sensual sound that I rehearsed was achieved satisfactorily in this love duet. I was able to produce a warm vocal sound that was not heard in all of the previous music. The dark and warm vocal colour suits the final 'moment of truth' in which Danilo affirms his love for Hanna. Listening to the recording, I could hear that the pharynx had the round shape that I had rehearsed before. The chest voice was prominent in the sound production, but it still had some head voice quality and therefore the waltz was not laboured in character. The well-balanced combination of light and heavy registration once again was the key to this duet's success. I employed just enough heavy registration to keep the 'baritonal' sound character also in the higher lines of '*Jeder Druck der Hände deutlich mir's beschrieb*'. For me, this sound was ideal in finally portraying Danilo as a romantic hero.

6.3.2 Examination reports

The reports from the two external examiners were overwhelmingly positive regarding my portrayal of the role and indicated that I had attained nearly all of my objectives. The combination of heavy and light registration, which enabled me to produce different vocal colours to suit the light-heartedness of the operetta and the different emotional states of Danilo, were well noted by Examiner 1. She observed a 'flexible alteration' between 'dramatic, light-hearted and comical singing' and commented, 'with the first aria "O Vaterland" he portrayed the text content convincingly with alternating vocal colours.' Furthermore, she stated that '*Wie die Blumen im Lenze erblüh'n*' was sung lyrically and that the duet '*Lied von der Dummer Reiter*' was delivered in a light and

agile manner (Examiner report 1, August 2018). She commented on the alternation between dynamic levels and tone colour as being remarkable in '*Es waren zwei Königskinder*' and stated that 'up till the end of act two, Engelbrecht did not hesitate to take his voice out of beautiful singing in order to express anger, indignation or entertainment' (Examiner report 1, August 2018).

Both examiners noted the fact that I managed to find the suitable resonance space in the lower-middle range and observed that I could comfortably maintain an even registration from low to high registers (Examiner 2). In this regard, Examiner 2 wrote:

As the tessitura of many of the principal male roles in operetta lies to a great extent in the middle voice, they require a secure, warm quality in that part of the voice range. Therefore they often pose challenges to both tenors and baritones, albeit in different ways. The candidate's voice and vocal abilities did full justice to these requirements. In addition to his resonant middle range, the voice speaks well in the lower range which enables it to be heard above the orchestra, and the higher range is comfortable to the extent that it retains beauty of sound (Examiner report 2, August 2018).

Examiner 2 therefore commented positively on the warm vocal colour which I intended to use in this role, especially in those heartfelt and sensual moments. Examiner 1 also commended my warm vocal colour, about which she wrote:

Engelbrecht's voice is resonant and has a warm quality that together with his appearance, granted credibility to the romantic hero Danilo. The low notes of his vocal range were free, resonant and stable. It lends itself excellently to romantic roles of which Danilo is a good example (Examiner report 1, August 2018).

Moreover, Examiner 1 observed that the *parlando* style which alternated with legato singing was well executed, asserting that the text 'throughout was clear and significant in the dialogue and singing' (Examiner report 1, August 2018).

In addition to vocal colour and registration, both examiners commended my acting and movement in this role. Examiner 1 stated, 'he moves lightly and flexibly and his acting was convincing, which all contributed to an authentic performance of the role' (Examiner report 1, August 2018). Examiner 2 echoed these observations by stating:

His characterisation was admirable: the sensitive Danilo hiding behind a suave veneer and seemingly nonchalant exterior was clear for all to see. He moves effortlessly and confidently on stage, stays in character throughout and there is honest interaction with the other characters on stage (Examiner report 2, August 2018).

From the reports above it is evident that my dancing and movement contributed to the acting of the role and that, together, these aspects ensured a commendable performance of the role of Danilo.

In summary of this section in which I analysed and reflected critically on my performance, and contextualised it against the examiners' reports, I could confirm that my performance met all my objectives of implementing a flexible vocal approach that would accommodate good enunciation of the text, sustained singing, a wide palette of vocal colour, and physical movement. This flexibility was attained through the ideal combination of light and heavy vocal registration. The examiners' reports echoed my findings relating to the performance video, in which I found that the flexible vocal approach accommodates the aspects of musical style, acting and movement or dancing.

6.4 Conclusion

In my preparation process and performance of the role of Danilo I obtained deeper insight into the style aspects of the modern Viennese operetta (also named 'operetta of the Silver Age'), which was established with the premiere of *The Merry Widow* (*Die Lustige Witwe*) in 1905. These insights regarding style informed me about how to find a suitable vocal approach to portray such a role. Recent research on operetta performance practice in reference to *The Merry Widow* highlights two key aspects of modern Viennese operetta style which I found helpful in my preparation process. These two key aspects are clear enunciation of the text in order to underline the light-heartedness of operetta (Clarke 2006) and the sensual, erotic character of the dramaturgy (Linhardt 2006). Clarke and Linhardt both refer to Treumann, the first Danilo, whose performance exemplified these aspects of style.

Treumann's vocal approach, which could be perceived as 'open' singing and indicates a high position of the larynx throughout his registers, was probably unique to him and did not conform to the bel canto aesthetics of beautiful or 'pure' tone quality and even the blending of registers. Nor does it resemble any of the 'modern' techniques that advocate *chiaroscuro* by means of an elongated throat (low laryngeal position and high soft palate). However, I did realise that his *parlando* style of singing could contribute to the light-heartedness of the music and text, and that I could benefit from implementing this style in some way or another. I concluded that this *parlando* style, however, needed a good balance of light and heavy registration in order to be heard over the orchestra.

Considering that the production was performed in a traditional manner (MSP), I was obligated to use a homogenous tone production with an even blending of registers. In

this sense, I followed the 'modern' singing technique that relies on homogenous sound production from the low to the high notes and, especially in the male voice, requires that the chest voice is carried up into the high range. Another characteristic of 'modern' singing technique is the heavy vocal registration which Stark (1999) labels 'heavy emission'. However, the style of modern Viennese operetta dictates a flexible vocal approach if one wishes to portray light-heartedness or a declamatory or *parlando* style, and integrate acting with singing in which one sometimes needs to refrain from beautiful singing or 'pure' tone quality. Furthermore, the stage direction generally demands a lot of movement and dancing. In my experience, it is easier to sing and move with a moderate glottal adduction and subglottal pressure. All these above-mentioned factors suggest that the glottal adduction cannot be as firm as, for example, in verismo roles such as that of Turiddu. As described in section 2.2.2, firm glottal adduction results in high subglottal pressure levels, especially in the *zona di passaggio* and above. To accommodate the air pressure, the larynx must be maintained in a stable, low position, which produces the 'ring' of the voice (the singer's formant). A possible result of maintaining a low laryngeal position is a certain stiffness of the laryngeal mechanism, which hinders agility and good declamatory style. The approach I followed was a combination of heavy and light registration. A moderate degree of heavy registration enabled me to produce the darker, warmer sound and helped the sustained singing of the legato lines. On the other hand, a moderate degree of light registration allowed me to articulate the music and text in the *parlando*-style passages. The combination of light and heavy registration also ensured that when I sang in a *parlando* style, I was heard over the orchestra. In addition, this combination of registration made it easier to move and dance while singing because firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure are hard to maintain during physical activity.

The outcomes as exemplified in the examination performance and the reports from the examiners confirm that my chosen vocal approach did justice to the style of modern Viennese operetta. The performance indicated that I was able to implement a flexible vocal approach in which I could alternate between legato, sustained singing and *parlando* style. This flexible approach also allowed me to alternate between the more dramatic and light-hearted moments in the music by utilising different vocal colours. Moreover, I was able to execute movement and dancing in a convincing manner, which would not have been possible had I not used the combination of heavy and light vocal registration.

Chapter Seven: 19th-century Lied: *Winterreise* D911 (Franz Schubert, 1797–1828); Bloemfontein, Odeion Hall, 16 July 2019

7.1 Introduction

In my opinion, it is an absolute necessity to include Lied in a study concerning the versatility of a classical singer. Almost all singers' tuition involves studying Lied at some stage of their formative years. This is most probably because of the vast and diverse repertoire in this genre with its wide spectrum of levels of difficulty and the fact that most Lieder are available in different versions for high, medium and low voice. Moreover, the expressiveness of Lied, with its manifold possibilities of applying different vocal colours and fine nuances, and its aesthetic value, makes this genre most rewarding to perform.

My personal singing career in Germany was weighted more towards opera because I was contracted at an opera house, and this was the way I earned my living. But there were always interpolated *Liederabende* and recitals, and it was there that I noticed the positive effect singing Lied had on my vocal health. I felt less 'stress' on the vocal mechanism, less urge to produce the 'ring' of the voice at all times; and it offered me the ability to play with different vocal colours and effects without being afraid of not being heard above an orchestra.

When I considered the repertoire in the genre of Lied for a concert as a requirement of a Ph.D. examination, one substantial song cycle came to mind that was most challenging: Franz Schubert's *Winterreise*. This is a monumental work lasting over an hour, a test of physical and mental stamina, if ever there were. One could say that this work represents the culmination of Schubert's craft as a Lied composer. The composer

himself mentioned that these songs were something not heard before, referring to the style of the earlier works and choice of poetry. It is a monodrama in which the narrator lives through different emotional stages, which Schubert depicts with incredibly diverse musical means. What appeals to me the most is the way the singer is expected to negotiate the shift between lyric and dramatic moments vocal–technically, sometimes within one phrase, and the different affects that the wanderer expresses during his sombre journey.

The genesis of German art song has often been claimed to be dated from 19 October 1814: the date of Schubert's Lied, *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, and its revolutionary use of the accompaniment to realise the scene described by the text (Sams 2001; Dittrich 2004; Taruskin 2005b). Marie-Agnes Dittrich (2004:86) points out that Schubert began to treat the piano accompaniment as an equal partner of the vocal line; the piano part was 'no longer structured as a simple, subordinate supplement to a more important vocal line' (ibid.) as in 18th-century songs. Dittrich (ibid.) maintains that the accompaniment often sets 'the entire tone for the Lied', such as the 'motion of the trout in the brook in *Die Forelle*' or the 'rattling chains of the dogs in *Im Dorfe*'. Furthermore, the accompaniment 'symbolizes the poetic self', as in *Die Schöne Müllerin*, where it both reflects and comments on 'the protagonist's ever-shifting feelings' (Dittrich 2004:87) and can even express 'contradiction or scepticism' when the accompaniment 'turns toward minor and thereby reveals the vocal line's major key to be deceptive, as in *Mut (Winterreise, No. 22)*' (Dittrich 2004:88). Taruskin (2005b:143) identifies Schubert's abrupt shifts between minor and major keys in his songs as the use of irony and asserts that Schubert was able 'to express an enormous range of ambiguous feelings'. Susan Wollenberg (2021:177–178) argues that in *Winterreise* these major–

minor juxtapositions '[range] from a brief flash of color [...] to an extended section' and their 'adaptability as emotional signifier' extends from 'bitter resentment' to 'tenderness'. In addition, Wollenberg (2021:178) points out other 'fingerprints' of Schubert's musical language found in *Winterreise*: among these are variation and transformation, especially 'transformation of lyrical into dramatic and violent expression, found among the late instrumental works' and it is 'harnessed to [the poet Wilhelm] Müller's penchant for binary constructions'. Another feature is the use of topical genres such as 'the dirge or funeral march topic, linked with oppressive ostinato patterns and antique style, and evoked in a variety of contexts' (ibid.). Furthermore, the Viennese waltz and lullaby can be observed where the waltz takes on a character of 'unreality' and 'extends to grotesque effect' and the lullaby expresses 'yearning for peace and rest', as in '*Wasserflut*' shifting to 'profound loss' in '*Frühlingstraum*', or takes on a grotesque character in '*Der Leiermann*' (Wollenberg 2021:179).

Considering the vocal performance style of the Schubert Lied, scholars such as Eric Van Tassel (1997) and David Montgomery (1997) have pointed out that even in Schubert's lifetime there were different opinions about how to sing his songs. Both these authors direct their focus towards the declamatory style of operatic baritone Michael Vogl, who performed with Schubert himself, and the writings of Leopold von Sonnleithner, one of the members of Schubert's inner circle. Vogl was a baritone engaged at the Vienna *Hofoper* until 1822, after which he devoted his career to promoting Schubert's Lieder. Walther Dürr (1979:133) observes from Vogl's surviving manuscript songbook that his declamatory style was largely based on rhythmic alterations following the natural speech inflections (especially in strophic songs) and embellishments in the form of non-essential ornaments to enhance the meaning of the

text. However, Vogl's embellishments at cadences 'cannot be explained by the text, but rather follow a fundamental rule known to the theory of embellishment since the sixteenth century (Dürr 1979:133).

Van Tassel (1997:704) points out that the composer did not always agree on these alterations to his written music and that Sonnleithner believed that Schubert's Lieder should be sung with a different approach from that of Vogl's so-called declamatory style. Sonnleithner disliked Vogl's 'distortions of the musical line by spoken word, "sudden outbursts" or a "falsetto note"' (Van Tassel 1997:704).³⁸ Moreover, Sonnleithner insisted that the appropriate way to perform Schubert's Lieder was 'lyric', 'accurate and purely musical' (Sonnleithner in Van Tassel 1997:704). Van Tassel (ibid.) quotes Sonnleithner's view on the performance of Schubert's Lieder in which he also warns singers to 'use "proper vocal timbre", without resorting to "speaking voice"' and to refrain from 'violent expression that might "impede the flow" of the "musical idea in its purity"'. Sonnleithner's advice concerning the performance practice of Schubert's Lieder coincides with the general tendency during this period: a decline in the practice of improvisation and the increasing importance of the score as the standard guideline (Seedorf 2019:332). The vocal performance style of the Schubert Lied therefore began with some controversy, already present in Schubert's lifetime and shortly afterwards with what we probably could describe as two interpretive 'factions'. One might describe the style of the faction following Sonnleithner as pure or lyric and that of Vogl, as declamatory or dramatic.

One of the singers who promoted the songs of Schubert (especially those of *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*) and who belonged to Sonnleithner's faction was the

³⁸ Von Tassel uses quotation marks when he refers to Sonnleithner's own words.

baritone Julius Stockhausen. He is generally hailed as one of the pioneer Lied singers of the 19th century and started to introduce performances of Lied in mixed concert programmes in concert halls in the 1850s. Therefore, the performance of Lied developed from the more intimate soirées or *Schubertiaden* into public concerts. With regard to his performance style, Seedorf (2019:330) asserts that Stockhausen generally rejected an ‘expressive–theatrical’ performance of Lied and preferred the cantabile style of singing as advocated by Sonnleithner. Clara Schumann, who often accompanied Stockhausen, held a similar view on the performance aesthetics of Lied. In her diary entry regarding the performance of Jenny Lind, Clara Schumann praised the singer for her sincere singing that presented ‘no showmanship, no great display of emotion, yet she touches your heart ... If only we could persuade her to sing nothing but good music and to get rid of that rubbish by ... Meyerbeer, Bellini, Donizetti, etc.’ (Elliot 2006:167).

One can conclude that this ‘expressive–theatrical’ style refers to the virtuosic style of Italian opera, and that Stockhausen would perform Lied in the style that Clara Schumann preferred, abstaining from virtuosic embellishments or alterations when singing Schubert’s songs. According to Seedorf (2019:330), another important aspect of Stockhausen’s performance of Lied is that, as a pupil of Garcia II, he

represented the radical change in vocal technique in which the lowering of the larynx was associated with a continuous vibrato, and a dark and voluminous sound ideal.

However, in order to prevent uniformity of sound production, Stockhausen applied ‘a highly differentiated use of the individual vowel colours’ (ibid.). This differentiation of vowel colours resulted in Stockhausen’s becoming known for his good enunciation of

the text. As Sir George Grove noted, the singer's 'greatest claim to distinction' was 'the intelligible way in which the words were given' (in Coffin 2002:37).

Regarding the performance history of the German art song and especially that of Schubert during the 20th century, scholars of performance analysis have identified possible performance style changes according to the early recordings. These changes indicate a continuation of the late 19th-century style into the early 20th century. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson (2005: Chapter 4, paras 23, 40) discerns an emotional approach to Lied, and especially Schubert's songs, by means of expressive devices (or vocal idioms) of tempo rubato and portamento during the first four decades of the 20th century. After that, Fischer-Dieskau began to dominate the genre of Lied from the end of World War II. Leech-Wilkinson (2005: Chapter 4, para. 40) considers that Fischer-Dieskau's interpretations of Schubert Lied reflect a general change in performance style 'away from expressivity through pitch (portamento) and timing (rubato) towards expressivity through declamation and dynamics'. With reference to the performance style of *Winterreise* in particular, Benjamin Binder (2021:373) also identifies a

broader shift in performance style around World War II, when naïve simplicity and directness in Schubert singing gave way to psychological complexity and turbulence.

However, the author maintains that

alongside this general trend, the 'dramatic' and 'lyrical' approaches still competed with one another through the century and continue to inform performances today (ibid.).

In the light of the available information on the performance practice of Schubert Lieder, I had to make certain decisions about how I would perform *Winterreise*. Like most singers, I favoured specific recordings of Lied which most probably influenced my

choices. I identified both a lyrical and a declamatory style of singing among these singers, and I was keen to explore both styles in my performance. Moreover, I did not have the opportunity to use a period instrument or a pianist familiar with a fortepiano, which denied me the experience of adopting an HIP approach. The Odeion hall of the University of the Free State, where I would be performing the cycle together with pianist Anneke Lamont, has a Feurich (Model C) grand piano and two Steinway concert grand pianos (Model D); of these three instruments, we considered the Steinway Model D the piano best suited to our Lied performance. Despite this constraint, though, I wanted to investigate how singing the Lied genre would make use of and depart from the 'modern' singing technique, as in opera performance, taking into account my previous bodily experiences of singing this genre.

As in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I shall now present the record of my preparation process, an analysis of the examination recording and my critical self-reflection upon the examination reports.

7.2. Preparation process

7.2.1 Studying the score

As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, I knew from the outset that I would be singing this cycle accompanied by a concert Steinway. My objective in this performance of *Winterreise* was therefore not to reconstruct a historically 'correct' performance that would resemble the conventions of the period in which the score originated. I did, however, consult the sources on the performance practice of Schubert Lieder and what has been written about the style of singing of Vogl and, later, Stockhausen. I decided not to apply rhythmic alterations for the sake of declamation or embellishments at cadences *à la* Vogl. Fischer-Dieskau was a singer with whom I

grew up in my formative years and whose interpretation I admired. For me, he had the perfect mixture of good textual enunciation and legato singing. His palette of different vocal colours and approaches to suit the affect of the text were rather striking. In my opinion, the performance principles of Stockhausen as described by Seedorf above seemed to fit Fischer-Dieskau's interpretations, but also those of tenors such as Peter Schreier and, more recently, Christoph Prégardien and Daniel Behle. These singers mainly sing with continuous vibrato, which indicates a relatively low laryngeal position; but they also apply different vocal colours to avoid a uniform tone production that would undermine the differentiation of affects in the songs. As I mentioned in section 2.2.1, singers such as Fischer-Dieskau and Behle both believed that to achieve a differentiation of vocal colour the singer should cultivate the *voix mixte*.

The score on which I decided was the Max Friedlaender edition; Friedlaender was a singer and musicologist who studied Schubert's original autographs thoroughly, and his edition was first published by Peters in 1884. The editor himself was a student of voice of Stockhausen's, and one can assume that consensus had been reached between the two of them about the performance of the Schubert Lieder. Friedlaender included Schubert's embellishments (mostly appoggiaturas) but omitted the alterations and suggestions by singers such as Vogl, aiming to provide the most authentic representation of what the composer intended in his edition.

I started my preparation process on 2 May 2019 by studying the score at the piano in my studio at the OSM. I had roughly six weeks to learn the music that was completely new to me before starting rehearsals with my accompanist on 10 June 2019. During these weeks of the learning process, of playing through each song and beginning to sing them (approximately four songs a week), I started to experiment with the vocal

approach. During this process of familiarising myself with the score, it was important to determine the affect of each song and the way the text and the music would determine the idioms of vocal quality and articulation. I must add here that during these six weeks the physical process which I discuss in section 7.2.2 had already begun as I grew more familiar with the music and texts. In other words, during these weeks, I gave some thought to my preferred vocal approach for this cycle.

I came to realise that the text of *Winterreise*, based on poems by Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827), reflects absolute subjectivity in which the introspective nature of the narrator is ever present. Müller's wanderer self-reflects throughout the cycle, asking himself why he feels the way he does and where he belongs in the world. It is an inward journey that depicts an individual tortured by unrequited love and continuously confronted with different emotional stages of despair, irony and sarcasm, longing for affection, disillusionment, and resignation. My aim, therefore, was to portray these different emotional states by varying the idioms of vocal quality to obtain a wide palette of vocal colour. Vocal registration is one of the most important idioms that fall under vocal quality and, as discussed earlier, it can and should be varied according to the demands of the music. It influences idioms such as subglottal pressure, the vertical position of the larynx, a singer's formant, air flow rates, registers and vibrato. These idioms of vocal quality, in turn, are influenced by the idioms of vocal articulation such as pitch onset, legato singing, portamento, embellishments and tempo rubato.

Furthermore, for the greater part of the songs in this cycle, I have identified that the declamatory style is embedded in the melodic line and that this requires a fine balance between singing legato and declamation of the text, which in turn necessitates a vocal mechanism flexible enough to enunciate the text (i.e., a syllable or word per note

value) clearly. I noticed this especially in songs such as ‘*Die Wetterfahne*’, ‘*Irrlicht*’, ‘*Rast*’, ‘*Frühlingstraum*’, ‘*Der greise Kopf*’, ‘*Die Krähe*’, ‘*Im Dorfe*’ and ‘*Der Leiermann*’. However, there are songs, or parts of songs, in the cycle, such as ‘*Auf dem Flusse*’, ‘*Der stürmische Morgen*’ and ‘*Mut*’, that need a dramatic approach and darker vocal colour. These disparate vocal demands may, in my opinion, be met only by implementing a flexible approach to glottal adduction. I have realised that within the lighter vocal registration it is easier to produce lyric sound and *voix mixte*, which, according to singers such as Fischer-Dieskau and Behle, is so important to achieve different shades of vocal colour and which requires minimal air pressure against the vocal folds. The lighter vocal registration would suit the inward emotional journey of the wanderer which for the greater number of songs calls for intimate sound production. Because the piano accompaniment reflects this intimacy, it would not be desirable to produce an operatic sound with a lot of ‘ring’ or singer’s formant, which would be the case when singing with a large orchestra. The songs (or parts of songs) of a more dramatic nature, however, ask for a more intense and darker sound. Their piano accompaniment also indicates this, and I therefore decided to apply a moderately heavy vocal registration which requires a constant low position of the larynx with higher subglottal pressure and which results in a *chiaroscuro* vocal sound production.

As I grew more familiar with the songs and with singing them, I also not only realised that their deeply rooted emotional content determined the kind of vocal registration I should apply but, moreover, I noticed that I started to use portamento spontaneously. In developing my interpretation, I found that I was deeply moved by the text and the music, which manifested in my joining the notes in such a way as to portray deeply felt

emotions. I was also aware that the use of portamento is a delicate matter since it has grown out of custom to perform any vocal music using this technique, except for Romantic opera and operetta. Whereas portamento was hailed as an important expressive device for the singer (and instruments) during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Brown & Sadie 1998; Wistreich 2000; Leech-Wilkinson 2006), there seemed to be an aversion to it after World War II, when the view that it is ‘sentimental and self-indulgent’ (Leech-Wilkinson 2006:234) gained traction. John Potter (2006:547–548) has observed that, although portamento had not ‘entirely disappeared among opera singers’, Lied singing in the 21st century portrays almost ‘no portamento at all’.

In my quest for a suitable vocal approach, I gave some thought to which kind of tone production I could apply to express the fundamental emotional state of this inner psychological world, characterised by the loss of love and the loss of faith in love and humankind. My aim was to find a fundamental tone production that would portray melancholy, longing and sadness, and on which I could build and intensify for the emotional outbursts, or which I could reduce to portray the tender, intimate moments of the music and text. As the first song sums up the whole cycle, I experimented in the opening phrases, trying to find such a ‘baseline’ vocal approach.

7.2.2 Physical process and early rehearsals with my accompanist

In order to describe the physical process of getting the songs ‘into the voice’, I decided to choose six songs from the cycle which represent the different affects of the text and the music. This selection of six songs – ‘*Gute Nacht*’, ‘*Wasserflut*’, ‘*Auf dem Flusse*’, ‘*Frühlingstraum*’, ‘*Der stürmische Morgen*’ and ‘*Der Leiermann*’ – should allow me to discuss the range of vocal–technical challenges to which I had to find solutions without

treating every song in the cycle. I have also incorporated four of the early rehearsals with my accompanist, Anneke Lamont, to describe the process of finding a pianistic tone colour and onset to express the affect of the music and complement the vocal line. This process of establishing the mood and character of the different songs and parts of the songs was an intimate and silent dialogue between us as the rehearsals progressed – silent, because mostly I did not feel the need to communicate verbally every affect and the vocal registration which I aimed to achieve with my accompanist. Lamont is a renowned chamber musician and experienced Lied accompanist who could sense in almost every song how I wanted to express myself vocally. Accordingly, I needed to sing through a song only once for her to know which tone colour she should aim for with her onset. In addition, we used these rehearsals to find the desired tempi for the songs and gave thought to possible *tempo rubato* and agogic accents.

No.1 'Gute Nacht'

The piano introduction sets the sombre mood in d minor with measured, repetitive quavers, resembling the tread of the wanderer, also referred to as 'walking' rhythm, that occurs in different variations throughout the *Winterreise* (Hascher 2021:198). Like a film rolling in the wanderer's mind, this song resembles a prologue and summarises the story of his recent past, where the audience is introduced to the inner psychological world of the narrator. The vocal line of 'Gute Nacht' is characterised by two descending phrases which open all four verses. Singing these phrases, I observed that because they start in the upper-middle range of the lyric tenor voice (F4–E4–D4), it was ideal to begin them with as much head voice as possible in the sound spectrum and, in addition, a low level of firm glottal adduction. I did, however, find that these opening phrases should not be too soft, because the introduction to the cycle would then be

too intimate – a state which I wanted to reserve for the fourth and final verse. Starting these lines in the head voice, I noticed that as I moved down to the lower range of my voice, the chest voice naturally became more and more prominent, although there was still an amount of head voice mixed into the lower registers. I sensed that the kind of vocal registration I was applying in this song was similar to the light vocal registration that I used in Bach's *St. John Passion*. However, I felt that the lower-lying lines in this song called for a more sonorous chest voice than the Bach recitatives. I knew that many of the songs in the rest of the cycle have low-lying phrases around C3 and B3 and that I needed to use the chest register to give the text more gravitas.

The light vocal registration was crucial to achieving the effect I was striving for in the final verse which Schubert set in the 'sad' major key, starting a semitone higher (F#4) than in the previous verses that begin on F4. I applied as much *voix mixte* as possible (more than in the other verses), with the result that the sound character changed to achieve a very intimate and tender portrayal of this verse. The light registration with loose glottal adduction and very little subglottal pressure allowed me to sing the first phrase and the final lines very softly.

After two days of singing this and the following three songs using this approach, I realised that I was aiming for a fundamental tone production that leaned towards a light vocal registration coupled with a low degree of heavy registration which I applied in the lower-middle range of my voice. I noticed that maintaining clear enunciation of the text within a lighter vocal registration did not afford a true continuous vibrato, because Schubert set the text to one word or syllable per quaver.

During the five studio rehearsals which took place with my accompanist between 10 June and 5 July 2019, we practised this song in four of them. First, we had to establish

our tempo in accordance with the affect. I introduced the idea of not viewing the wanderer motif in literal terms, as the plodding steps of the narrator, but rather in cinematic terms, like the movement of a motion picture, a film that rolls in a wanderer's mind. Lamont liked this notion and after trying it a few times, we aimed for a flowing tempo of about $J=55$. We also decided that this tempo should not fluctuate in the first three verses so that we could maintain the rolling motion of a film. We did, however, agree that we could apply an agogic accent on '*Die Liebe*' (love) in the third verse (mm. 26–27). The flowing tempo allowed me to 'speak' the text clearly within a legato line and did not afford much vibrato on the quaver notes. In other words, I was able to maintain the natural speech inflection of the text in which I would lean into the strong syllables and sing the weak ones naturally more softly. During the fourth rehearsal, we both felt that the fourth verse asked for a slight slowing down in tactus to embrace the 'sad' major key that transports the wanderer (and listener) into another reality in which he distances himself from the cruel reality of his grief. Therefore, Lamont played an agogic accent on the first measure of the major key and I broadened the quavers on the text '*Will dich im Traum nicht stören*' (I will not disturb you in your dreaming).³⁹ Slowing down for this verse opening enabled me to prepare for a soft and sweet tone production that relied heavily on the best *voix mixte* I could produce. The verse lines '*schreib im Vorübergehen ans Tor dir: gute Nacht, damit du mögest sehen, an dich hab ich gedacht*' (On the way out I'll write, 'Good Night' on the gate that you may see that I have thought of you) demanded a continuous *voix mixte* character, and avoidance of becoming too loud, because of the lines that build up from the low register

³⁹ Translations of the lyrics in this chapter are my own, adapted from Prawer (1964).

and move to an F[#]4. During this rehearsal I realised that I had consciously to think of light vocal registration in order not to take the chest register up to the F[#]4.

No. 6 'Wasserflut'

In this song, the wanderer expresses his grief and the piano accompaniment with its leaden, punctuated chords evokes a funereal atmosphere, as if the wanderer wants to bury his sorrows in a flood of tears. My aim was to sing the opening of all four stanzas with an intimate sound that would have *voix mixte* in the upper-middle range to the notes on E4 and warmth and depth in the lower range to the notes on B3. It was tempting to apply sustained legato singing in the long phrases, but as I practised these lines, I felt that singing with a 'thick' legato loaded the voice excessively so that it resembled a heavy vocal registration, which I did not think suited the intimate and melancholic character of the song. When singing it in a light vocal registration, I felt that I could still maintain a legato character, but with less use of vibrato. I also found that using a narrow vibrato, singing sustained notes on descriptive words such as 'Trän' (tears) and 'kalten' (cold) (mm. 5 and 9) contributed to a melancholic or cold vocal colour respectively. A moderately low level of heavy vocal registration was applicable in the final phrases of stanzas two and four, which Schubert had marked *stark* (strong). These powerful emotional outpourings begin in the lower-middle range and move over the second *passaggio* to G4 and F[#]4. I decided to keep the larynx in a stable low position as the lines ascend over the second *passaggio* and I sensed that I had applied a firmer glottal adduction and higher subglottal pressure than the moderate levels that I had originally aimed at.

No. 7 'Auf dem Flusse'

The confrontation with the 'self' deepens in this song. The once wild and lively river has become silent and covered with ice. The wanderer engraves his memories on the river's icy surface. The river is a metaphor for his emotional state: cold and silent on the surface, but underneath there is a raging torrent of emotions. The song wonderfully represents an ambivalence in the need to externalise emotions (as in the third and fourth stanzas) and the inward silencing of feelings because of the character's depressed state (as in the first and second stanzas).

The setting of the first two stanzas resembles a declamatory style and I therefore decided to apply a speech-like approach with very little to almost no vibrato in the two phrases marked *sehr leise* (very soft) in mm. 8–12 and 17–21. These phrases portray the coldness and silence on the surface of the wanderer's emotional state. I noticed that I needed to apply the lightest vocal registration possible in order to be very soft. In addition, the light vocal registration would support my search for a cold or desolate vocal colour. By singing these phrases with minimal air pressure against the vocal folds and reducing the pharyngeal resonance space (focusing more on the mouth cavity as resonator), I was able to produce a pale, light tone that would suit the emotional numbness of the narrator.

Looking at the third and fourth stanzas and how the harmony changes to E major with a fuller piano accompaniment, I realised that I could sing this section with a warmer vocal colour and apply more legato singing. I sensed that I applied more space in the pharynx, which resulted in a darker, warmer colour as I sang through these phrases. I also felt a little more subglottal pressure than I had in the opening stanzas, and I could hear the application of a more continuous vibrato. However, to emphasise important

words such as '*grab ich*' (I carved) in m. 24, '*Stein*' (stone) and '*ging*' (left), I decided to lean into these notes and to sing them with almost no vibrato – this was especially the case with the appoggiaturas in mm. 26 and 34. After a few rehearsals, I could feel that even though the colour changed to a warmer tone, I had still maintained a light vocal registration.

The final stanza with its dramatic build-up towards the end of the song was interesting to approach because the vocal lines often move over the second *passaggio* on the text '*ob's wohl auch so reissend schwillt*' (is there also a surging torrent). The vocal line moves over the notes E4–G4–F#4 and in the ultimate phrase extends further to A4, and it is supported by a fuller and louder accompaniment that has octaves in the bass line and tremolo chords in the right hand. These were all indications that I had to sing more dramatically and apply firmer glottal adduction, higher subglottal pressure and eventually more 'ring' to the voice than in the previous stanza. I wanted the colour to become richer with more emotional depth to portray the emotional turmoil of the narrator. I could feel that the larynx had to be kept in a comfortably low position – a position that felt deeper or lower than that which I had held in the previous sections of this song. I also sensed that with this low position of the larynx the subglottal pressure levels were rising significantly and the sensation of the sound was more in my chest than in my head. I therefore applied an increasingly heavy vocal registration towards the end of the song, one approximating the sound production I would use for Romantic operatic singing.

No. 11 '*Frühlingstraum*'

When I studied this song, I realised that Schubert introduces three different musical sections which are identical in each of the two verses. The first section portrays a

melancholic longing for love, the second section displays disillusionment and awakening to the harsh reality of abandonment and the third section depicts the protagonist's drifting away in thoughts and accepting that he is destined to be lonely. My intention was to portray these three different emotional states (or affects) of the song with three different vocal colours and approaches.

When I thought of the dream-like atmosphere of the music and text of the first section, the image of a music box with the typical ballerina turning round and round came into my mind. My aim was to produce a vocal sound that would resemble a lucid colour to suit the dream-like atmosphere of the music. I experimented with a loose glottal adduction to introduce an amount of breathiness in the sound and also practiced blowing air through the vocal folds on words such as '*träumte*' (dreamed), '*Mai*' (May) and '*Vogelgeschrei*' (bird songs). Practising this with Lamont, we tried out a 'moving' tempo of about $J.=65$. This tempo helped to maintain a light vocal registration or loose glottal adduction, allowing breathy sound; and, furthermore, it naturally compelled me to use *voix mixte* in the upper vocal range on the lines that move to E4 and F#4. This vocal approach also enabled sweet-sounding word painting of '*Vogelgeschrei*' (bird songs) (m. 12) and therefore contributed towards the lovely world in which the wanderer once loved and lived.

In the second section, my aim was to portray the harsh awakening from the dream on the text '*Und als die Hähne krächten*' (And as the roosters crowed) with a firm glottal adduction that afforded much more 'ring' to the voice, producing a firm, bright sound. This I alternated with lighter vocal registration in mm. 17–20, to then apply firm, heavy vocal registration and sing the *fortissimo* on the words '*es schriehen die Raben vom Dach*' (the ravens were shrieking from the roof) (mm. 21–22 and 24–26). Singing these

measures, I sensed immediately that the firmer glottal adduction necessitated a low laryngeal position, coupled with higher subglottal pressure, in order not to literally shout, allowing an intense vocal tone produced by means of the singer's formant.

For the third section, which reflects the wanderer's drifting away in thought, I tried to find a vocal colour that would resemble the very core of the narrator's emotional state – that of loneliness. In the first verse, the wanderer acknowledges his alienation from humankind and in the second verse he accepts that he will never hold his beloved in his arms again. I thought of my own past experiences of lost love and I tried singing this heart-rending melody with tenderness and intimacy but also with warmth and depth in the voice. In doing so, I sensed that I was applying a high level of *voix mixte* with minimal subglottal pressure and therefore a light registration. The warmth and depth came from a feeling of roundness in the pharynx. In addition, I felt that the last lines of both verses – '*Ihr lacht wohl über den Träumer*' (you laugh at the dreamer) and '*Wann grünt ihr Blätter am Fenster?*' (When will the leaves on the window turn green?) – called for even more intimacy. Within the legato line I tried to make these lines sound as tender as I could by singing them more softly with very little vibrato and thinking of *voix mixte*.

No. 18 'Der stürmische Morgen'

The two songs in the cycle for which Schubert indicated a powerful expression are 'Der stürmische Morgen' and 'Mut!', which potentially call for heavy registration. In 'Der stürmische Morgen' the vocal line is doubled by octaves in the piano accompaniment and the line starts and ends in the lower register of the tenor voice. I had to be careful not to load the voice too much with the chest voice, which I felt could hinder a swift enunciation in the fairly fast tempo. Because the song lies generally in the middle range of the tenor voice (not moving higher than E4), I did not feel that it needed a very intense subglottal pressure level. In the lower-lying parts of the voice I felt that if I applied too much breath pressure, the sound would lose its focus. I therefore relied on the chest voice and bringing out all the low sound partials by making space in the pharynx and elongating the throat. However, I also noticed that too much emphasis on the pharynx darkened or even muffled the sound too much. In order to maintain a strong character in the sound I also focused on the oral cavity as resonator, bringing the sound forward and ensuring that the vowels were bright enough so that the text could be clearly heard. In other words, I was aiming for a *chiaroscuro* sound production with enough low partials of the sound spectrum to give depth and gravitas and sufficient high partials to produce brightness and a metallic sound. The latter was important in the second half of the song to express the furious (turbulent) affect when the wanderer decides that he is done with dreaming of and longing for the impossible.

When I rehearsed this song with Lamont, we noticed that the *fortissimo* in the piano accompaniment made it necessary to exclaim the vocal line and that the ultimate phrase in mm. 16–18 should be even louder and more powerful. Singing the second part with the piano, I could feel and hear that I applied a high degree of firm glottal

adduction with high subglottal pressure levels and this enabled me to produce the singer's formant, especially on the phrases that move over the *zona di passaggio* between D4 and E4. Furthermore, I realised that I had to use a *martellato* ('hammered') kind of articulation on those notes that are marked with *marcato* accents in the piano part – as in mm. 3–4 and 5–6. This kind of articulation afforded less legato singing and also less vibrato on each note. However, I also noticed that I could not abandon the legato line completely, because I would then lose the intensity of the sound.

No. 24 'Der Leiermann'

In my mind, the hurdy-gurdy man who stands alone, unaffected by the harsh elements of nature, and who keeps on making music while the world goes by is the personification of the wanderer himself. In studying this song, I immediately identified a recitative-like style in which the vocal line has a circling movement above constant, depressive droning chords of open fifths that stay on the tonic. Singing through the song, I realised that if I treated it like a *recitativo secco*, the melody lost its circling character which I associated with the turning motion of the lever of the hurdy-gurdy. After singing through the song several times, I came to realise that this circling motion also reflected the depressive state of the wanderer. Therefore, I tried to sing the melody in a legato manner but to use the natural speech inflections of the text to incorporate a speech-like character. In effect, this was declamatory style mixed with some legato, or lyrical singing. I noticed that I shortened and lengthened the vowels according to the natural speech inflections of the text. While rehearsing with Lamont, we experimented with the basic initial tempo of about $\text{♩}=55$. However, we soon realised that this tempo was too slow because the result was that I was singing protracted vowels, and too legato, which hindered the natural speech-like character of the text.

Consequently, we settled on a more flowing basic tempo of about $\text{♩}=60$. Furthermore, I decided to keep the dynamic level soft throughout the song and to implement a light registration. The result was that I sang the higher-lying lines (that move over E4 and the *zona di passaggio*) naturally in *voix mixte*.

7.2.3 Final rehearsals in the hall with accompanist

My accompanist and I were fortunate to have five rehearsals between 8 and 15 July 2019 in the concert venue. This enabled us to try out the different moods and colours in the eventual performance space and its acoustics and, more importantly, to find the right balance between voice and piano. I must add that the Odeion hall was a very good venue for Lied performance because of its relatively small size and the acoustics, which allowed soft playing and singing to be very audible. From the first of the five rehearsals we tried to run the whole cycle and therefore test my (and my accompanist's) mental and physical stamina. In some of these rehearsals, we had to stop to make tempo adjustments, which influenced the affect of the songs. After each run, we would talk through the cycle and make notes. Each rehearsal was also recorded so that I could make my own notes for the next rehearsal.

I now discuss these five rehearsals as a whole, referring again to the selection of songs I discussed in section 7.2.2, and document how the vocal approach with which I experimented in the physical process was implemented.

No 1. 'Gute Nacht'

Singing and playing through this song in the first of these rehearsals felt comfortable and satisfied my intention. The light vocal registration worked well in the descending opening lines. However, I felt and heard from the recording that the low notes were

sometimes not audible enough. I therefore had to try in the following rehearsals to use the chest register and make somewhat more space in the pharynx. I could accomplish this space by a comfortably low (or relaxed) laryngeal position with a raised soft palate. To achieve this position, I thought of the 'beginning-of-the-yawn position', often described by McKinney (2005) as the ideal position for a comfortably low laryngeal position and raised soft palate.

In the second rehearsal, the chest register sounded better in the low notes, but the basic tempo was slower than we had agreed on, and I felt and heard that the vocal lines were sung with more vibrato because the notes became broader and the vowel duration longer. I noticed that speaking the text within a legato line was difficult and that the text did not sound the way I wanted it: there was too much sustained singing, which, for me, disturbed the natural speech rhythm of the text. Furthermore, this slower tempo disturbed the effect we wanted when changing the affect with the key-change in the final stanza. This final verse needed to slow down and the vocal registration had to change very light and sweet – but the effect was not achieved. I also felt that in this sustained singing the vocal registration tended to become heavier than the light registration I had intended to use.

In the succeeding rehearsals, we fixed the tempo problem and got it to about $\text{♩}=55$, which had a very positive influence on the articulation of the text and the light vocal registration. The faster tempo allowed the change of affect in the final stanza to be performed as planned and I achieved the *voix mixte* sound production in mm. 71–79. We also agreed on the way we would execute the final '*an dich hab ich gedacht*' (I thought of you), marked *un poco ritardando* (mm. 97–99). Here I sang the quavers

more broadly and took time on the F4 on '*hab*', singing it in *voix mixte* with a narrow vibrato.

No. 6 '*Wasserflut*

I felt comfortable with this song from the first rehearsal in the hall. I could feel that the light registration and the narrow, limited vibrato was achieved as I had practised it before. The phrases marked *stark* (strong) in which I had to sing louder and use a moderately heavy registration also felt mostly comfortable. I realised that I had to be careful not to load the voice with too much chest register in the endings of the stanzas in which the vocal line moves over the *passaggio* to the G4 (mm. 28 and 56). When these lines became too heavy, or were sung with a too-heavy registration, the G4 did not sound free and the vibrato got too wide – which had the effect that the intonation on the G4 was flat. These are emotional outpourings in which I intended to maintain a melancholic character; I did not wish these passages to sound like emotional outbursts, such as those that occur in verismo style or Romantic opera. Therefore, I used these rehearsals to find the right balance of a moderately heavy registration coupled with a low level of light registration to produce a line that sounded full and strong but free.

It was during these rehearsals that Lamont raised the use of vocal portamento. For her, there was too much of a 'scoop' on some intervals in some of the songs. It was especially audible on the intervals involving falling thirds and fourths. The portamento I was implementing arose spontaneously at some places where I connected very deeply with my own emotions. It was not an idiom that I wanted to apply consciously at a given place, but, rather, I wished portamento to become another vehicle of expressiveness, especially when singing legato lines. In songs such as '*Wasserflut*

(and others, such as '*Gefrorne Tränen*', '*Der Lindenbaum*' or '*Die Krähe*') the portamento was too audible according to Lamont and not in good taste. I therefore had to listen to myself in the recordings to make sure that when I did the portamento, it was executed fast and almost inaudibly.

No. 7 '*Auf dem Flusse*'

The rehearsals for this song went as planned, especially the declamatory style of the first two stanzas that I had practised before. Here I noticed that I spontaneously started to use a low pitch onset on some of the words like '*rauschtest*', '*heller*' and '*harter, starrer Rinde*' (mm. 6–7 and 14–15). This implies that I approached the note from below by about a third with a short or fast glide to the main note. I was comfortable with the low-pitch onset, because in my opinion it contributed to the declamatory style I was aiming for in which I followed the natural speech inflections of the text. I managed to sing the *sehr leise* (very soft) sections with very light vocal registration in which I also controlled the vibrato so that it was almost inaudible (mm. 8–12 and 16–20). In the third and fourth stanzas I used more legato singing in which a natural, narrow vibrato occurred. I should add here that I gave the appoggiatura in m. 26 on '*Stein*' (stone) and m. 34 on '*ging*' (left), half the note value of the main note and I leaned into the first note to release it naturally on the second. This had a heavy-light effect in which I was phrasing 'up'. I experienced this heavy-light phrasing as a sigh motif (*Seufzer*) and for me it suited the affect of the music in this section. I also noticed that in using this kind of phrasing, the first stressed note or appoggiatura had no vibrato.

During these rehearsals, the vocal–technical challenges of the final stanza became apparent. I could feel that the shift in vocal registration was not so easy to achieve after singing with a light registration in the first half of the song. The lines that move

over the *passaggio* to the G4 in mm. 52–54 and 66–68 felt laboured and this was most probably the result of a too-firm glottal adduction, coupled with too-high subglottal pressure and taking the chest register too high over its natural borders. It was difficult to find the right amount of heavy registration because I felt emotionally so involved with the music and the text, wanting to make these lines sound like emotional outpourings. Only in the final rehearsal did I feel more comfortable with these lines; I sensed that I should relax the larynx and sing with an elongated throat to ensure that the pharynx provided the optimal resonance space.

No. 11 'Frühlingstraum'

In all of these rehearsals I was happy with the way we portrayed the three different sections of the song. In the opening section, the tempo we had agreed upon allowed the music to flow and I could apply a light vocal registration and lucid vocal colour to enhance the dream-like atmosphere. In the first rehearsal I used a breathy sound that I had practised before and which kept the dynamics soft. However, after listening to it, I noticed that it did not have enough breath support and that the sound was not carrying enough. In the following rehearsals I tried to sing with less breathy sound and apply a firmer glottal adduction, yet still maintain the light vocal registration. The result was a clearer, more translucent colour which Lamont and I liked very much.

During these rehearsals, the shift in vocal registration for the second section '*Und als die Hähne krähten*' (And as the roosters crowed) felt comfortable and enabled the timbre for which I had aimed. I could feel that the larynx was in a comfortable low position and that subglottal pressure was rising as these lines ascended to '*es schriegen die Raben vom Dach*' (the ravens were shrieking from the roof). During the five rehearsals I also thought of colouring the /ɛ/ vowel in the word '*krähten*' (crowed)

in such a way that it would resemble the rooster's crow; I accomplished this by bringing the sound forward and focusing on the oral cavity as resonator. The result was a bright, almost metallic sound, and I could feel that the firmer glottal adduction contributed to this sound production. I could also produce this bright, metallic sound on '*es schrieen die Raben from Dach*', therefore depicting the shouting of the ravens. To avoid literally shouting, I maintained a comfortable low larynx in these lines as I practised them. The recording of these rehearsals, and especially that of the final one, revealed that I had produced a good amount of 'ring' on these lines. During the rehearsals in the hall, I found the exact vocal colour which I had tried to find in the physical process for the intimate and tender third section. As mentioned before, the acoustics of the Odeion hall enabled intimate and soft singing and from the recording of these rehearsals I could hear that we achieved this shift in atmosphere. I could feel the sensation of the sound more in the head, which indicated that the *voix mixte* functioned well with minimal subglottal pressure.

In the ultimate phrases of both verses – '*Ihr lacht wohl über den Träumer*' (you laugh at the dreamer) and '*Wann grünt ihr Blätter am Fenster?*' (When will the leaves on the window turn green?) – I was able to reduce the subglottal pressure even more to intensify the intimate atmosphere that portrays the loneliness of the wanderer. It was necessary to use *voix mixte* in singing these phrases this softly and intimately, especially when the lines move over the *zona di passaggio* between C4 and F4. Listening to the recordings of these rehearsals, I realised that in these heartfelt sections in which I connected to my personal emotions, I started to use portamento at certain intervals, connecting the notes on words such as '*scheiben*' (m. 30), '*Blätter da*' (mm. 31–32) or '*wieder*' (m. 73) and '*Herz so warm*' (mm. 75–76). As I stated

before, I had not explicitly intended to use portamento in my performance of this cycle. However, I seemed to apply it spontaneously when the music and text spoke directly to my personal emotional world.

No. 18 'Der stürmische Morgen'

The challenge during these rehearsals was to sing with heavy vocal registration in the middle and upper-middle range of my voice, and simultaneously to maintain clear enunciation of the text. In the first two rehearsals I felt that my vocal registration was becoming too heavy in the second part from mm. 10–18. The phrases '*es ist nichts als der Winter*' were sung with so much chest voice and with such high subglottal pressure levels that it felt as if I was almost shouting these lines. The recordings also confirmed this sensation, and I could hear that the sound production was almost distorted and that the notes were not clearly on pitch. The pitch also suffered on '*Feuerflammen*' (fiery red flames) (m. 10), which, for me, was an indication that the sound was forced and the resonators could not enhance the high partials of the sound. In my preparation for the third rehearsal, I tried to maintain an elongated throat and to think these phrases a little lighter – in other words, with less chest register in the higher notes to allow head resonance. The result in the third and succeeding rehearsals was that I sang on pitch and could still maintain the powerful voice production that had a mixture of moderately heavy and light registration. This particular blend, however, inclined more towards a heavy registration.

No. 24 'Der Leiermann'

During the rehearsals of this song, we were able to realise our aesthetic intentions as planned. I noticed that I used a moderately light vocal registration, which made it

physically easier to sing at this point – more than an hour into the cycle. The light registration also allowed easy access to *voix mixte*, where the vocal line moves into the upper-middle range of the voice. As this song matured during the preparation process, I noticed that, similarly to the way I sang the opening of ‘*Auf dem Flusse*’, I here, too, used a low pitch onset for specific words when starting the note. This was not a calculated action: there was no specific intention to start a note (for instance) a third below the main pitch; rather, this delivery came naturally as I was aiming to follow the natural inflections of the text, that is, to practise declamation of the text within a legato line.

7.3 Analysing examination recording and critical self-reflection on reports

As with the previous chapters, in this section I discuss both my analysis of the examination recording and the examiners’ reports. This process entails a critical self-reflection on the examination recording and the outcomes of the preparation process. In this section, I continue to discuss the songs I described in the preparation process, namely: No.1 ‘*Gute Nacht*’, No. 6 ‘*Wasserflut*’, No. 7 ‘*Auf dem Flusse*’, No. 11 ‘*Frühlingstraum*’, No. 18 ‘*Der stürmische Morgen*’ and No. 24 ‘*Der Leiermann*’.

7.3.1 Examination recording

No.1 ‘*Gute Nacht*’

Listening to the opening phrases of the cycle, I observed that my accompanist and I were able to capture the affect of this song which sets the mood for the complete song cycle. I could hear that we were able to portray the melancholy, sadness and longing for love which reflects the inner psychological world of the protagonist. My chosen fundamental vocal registration which leaned towards a moderate level of light registration coupled with a low level of heavy registration functioned well in this song,

which sums up the entire cycle. I could hear from the video recording that I had started the first three stanzas not too intimately, but at the same time I used *voix mixte* in these descending lines with a comfortable blending of the chest register as the vocal line descends into the lower-middle range. The middle and lower-middle sounded free and sonorous as I intended it to be. For me, this sound production contributed to the melancholic character I was aiming to achieve during the preparation process.

Furthermore, I observed that the tempo choice of about $J=55$ was accurately achieved. In this flowing tempo, I could maintain clear enunciation of the text within a legato line. I could hear that I sang with a controlled vibrato and that I did not use it on every note. As I stated in section 7.2.3, a slower tempo resulted in longer vowel durations and more sustained singing, which, to my own taste, disturbed the natural speech rhythm of the text. I realised that I had also succeeded in my aim to lean into the strong syllables of most words and to sing the weak syllables more softly. This would not have been possible had I used a continuous vibrato throughout every phrase.

The transition into the final, fourth stanza also functioned as rehearsed previously. I was able to produce the softer, sweeter sound in mm. 71–79 with light vocal registration. Listening to this part, I remembered that the sound felt as if it was produced in the head voice with a looser glottal adduction than I had used in the first three stanzas. The agogic accent in m. 71 and the slower tactus allowed this kind of light vocal registration in which I found a vocal colour that represented a feeling of longing for love and of sadness, because the doors to a happy life with the beloved had finally been closed. In the recording it was evident that a high level of light vocal registration and *voix mixte* worked convincingly in the last phrase '*damit du mögest sehen, an dich hab ich gedacht*'. I managed to sing the ultimate '*an dich hab ich*

gedacht with an intimate, tender vocal colour that was made possible only by resorting to *voix mixte* within a light vocal registration.

No. 6 'Wasserflut'

Listening to this song, I could hear that the opening of all four stanzas had an intimate sound with *voix mixte* in the upper-middle range and warmth and depth in the lower range – as I had prepared it. I also noticed that my vibrato generally was narrow and on some of the notes it was barely audible. In other words, I did not apply a 'thick' sustained and legato singing as I would have, for instance, in verismo opera. However, in the *stark* (strong) phrases such as that in mm. 28–29, I identified more sustained legato singing in which the vocal approach turned towards a moderate level of heavy registration characterised by a firmer glottal adduction and higher subglottal pressure as the phrase ascended. In the line that moves over the E4 and G4 on words such as 'weiche' (m. 28) and 'meiner' (m. 56) I realised that the G4's were not as free as I would have liked them to be, and that the vowel was overly darkened. The result was that the phrase sounded laboured, which I attributed to taking the chest voice too high up in the *zona di passaggio* and above and also to the moderate level of heavy registration not having functioned as I had intended in these phrases. In my opinion, the /a/ vowel was too heavily 'covered'; this may have been the result of a depressed larynx – too great a vertical elongation of the throat. However, my overall impression of the recording was that I could portray the affect of despair and maintain a sad and melancholic character with a mainly light vocal registration.

No. 7 'Auf dem Flusse'

The speech-like approach that I aimed for particularly in the first two stanzas during my preparation was clearly audible in the examination recording. The intelligibility of the text was well achieved by shortening and lengthening the vowels and the use of low pitch onset on certain words according to the natural speech inflections, as described in section 7.2.3. I could hear that I had used a narrow to almost no vibrato in a soft declamation of the text. The cold and desolate (pale) vocal colour that I practised in the two phrases marked *sehr leise* (very soft) was well achieved. I could hear that I had applied a very light vocal registration in these passages and that the sound production was forward in the mouth – that is, I focused more on the oral cavity as resonator. This kind of very soft sound production could be possible only with minimal subglottal pressure and *voix mixte*.

Listening to the third and fourth stanzas, I could identify the warmer vocal colour within more sustained legato singing. These phrases had a more continuous vibrato than I had applied in the opening of the song – straight tone was used only on some descriptive words on appoggiaturas such as '*grab ich*' (m. 24), '*Stein*' (m. 26) and '*ging*' (m. 34), leaning into the first note to produce the effect of a musical sigh (*Seufzer*).

The dramatic build-up in the final stanza functioned as well as when we had rehearsed it in the preparation process and I was able to express the protagonist's externalised emotions. After starting the opening lines of '*Mein Herz in diesem Bache*' softly and in a light registration, I gradually shifted to a heavier registration from mm. 48–54 to then shift back to a light, soft registration on mm. 54–60. From m. 61 I sang with firmer glottal adduction, more subglottal pressure and more vibrato in what I would describe as a high level of heavy registration. I could hear from the recording that the singer's

formant was present in this section, which was an indication that the larynx was in a low position, coupled with a high degree of subglottal pressure. However, the G4's in mm. 65, 67 and 69 sounded somewhat laboured, which was probably the result of taking the chest voice too high over its natural range and applying too much subglottal pressure.

No. 11 'Frühlingstraum'

The recording indicates that this song proceeded exactly as we had rehearsed it. I was very happy with the way I was able to portray the three different sections and their respective affects with change in vocal colour and registration. I could identify the translucent colour in the opening section that was sung with a light vocal registration and *voix mixte* in a flowing tempo of about ♩. =65.

I also observed that I shifted to firmer glottal adduction and therefore heavier vocal registration in the opening of the second section, '*Und als die Hähne krähten*'. Here I heard more chest voice in the sound spectrum but also more of the 'ring' of the voice than in the first section – a sound that resembled *chiaroscuro*. In this recording also, I could hear the metallic timbre described in section 7.2.3 which depicted the shouting of the ravens on the words '*es schriehen die Raben vom Dach*'. I could hear that the sound intensified, it was fuller, darker and brighter, which, to me, was an indication that a moderate level of heavy registration was used in which the larynx was kept in a stable, low position, the soft palate was raised and the subglottal pressure levels were optimal, producing the metallic vocal colour.

I was pleased with the way in which we achieved the sad, melancholic character I had intended in the third section of this song in the examination performance. I noticed that

I was able to sing this part with tenderness and intimacy, warmth and depth in both stanzas. I could hear that throughout this section I continuously applied *voix mixte* with minimal subglottal pressure and therefore I was singing with a high level of light registration. The final verse lines ‘*Ihr lacht wohl über den Träumer*’ and ‘*Wann grünt ihr Blätter am Fenster?*’ were sung even more intimately, and I could sense from the recording that I had used a looser glottal adduction and therefore a lighter registration than in the beginning of this section.

No. 18 ‘*Der stürmische Morgen*’

In this song I found that, in the main, I achieved all that I had aimed for in the preparation process. I could hear that I had applied heavy vocal registration in the middle and upper-middle range of the voice, which was characterised by the presence of a strong chest voice with a small degree of head voice mixture. In my view, this vocal approach came close to Schubert’s markings of *kräftig* (powerful).

I found that I would have preferred the opening of the first phrase (mm. 3–4) to have sounded louder and to have had more ‘ring’ than it had here in the upper-middle range. This was most probably the result of starting with insufficiently firm glottal adduction or because the subglottal pressure level was too high in the lower range. Alternatively, I might subconsciously have been trying not to start ‘too heavy’ so that the voice would not be too loaded with chest voice in the second half of the song. However, in mm. 6–8, where the vocal line also descends into the lower range, these notes sounded firmer and fuller. I remembered from the preparation process that these interval jumps into the lower register demanded a fast adjustment of subglottal pressure – higher for the high notes and lower for the low notes. Furthermore, I could hear in the *fortissimo* section ‘*Und rote Feuerflammen*’, that the vocal quality became more powerful and

resembled *chiaroscuro*. The heavy vocal registration therefore functioned well in this section, and I think that this sound production came close to the kind of vocal approach I would use for Romantic opera. I should add that I identified good vocal agility in the fast enunciation of the text and in singing through the melismatic parts, which indicated that I must have had enough head voice mixture within the heavy registration.

No. 24 'Der Leiermann'

My portrayal of the final song of the cycle was in accordance with my preparation. I could hear that I had used a moderate to high level of light vocal registration, which gave me easy access to the *voix mixte*. Within this registration I observed that I was able to maintain a declamatory or speech-like character while also singing a legato line and therefore enhance the melodic line. The declamatory character was achieved by lengthening and shortening certain vowels. Moreover, I noticed that the text was always intelligible, thanks in part to a low pitch onset on certain words. The low pitch onset, in my opinion, therefore enhanced the meaning of the text and ensured a natural declamation of the text that followed the natural speech inflections.

7.3.2 Examination reports

For this examination, there were three reports from the three external examiners. Examiners 1 and 2 both remarked that my accompanist and I were able to portray the emotional character of the text and music throughout the cycle. Examiner 1 reported that a 'powerful emotive thread was woven from the first to the last song, laying bare the traveller's despair and deteriorating mental state' (Examiner report 1, July 2019) and commended my accompanist and me for displaying the interpretive abilities needed to keep the audience attentive throughout the whole cycle. Examiner 2 applauded a 'well thought-out' performance and wrote that I was able to show 'insight

into the protagonist's emotional world and life journey' (Examiner report 2, July 2019). All three examiners reported positively on the good ensemble between my accompanist and me. These positive remarks therefore indicated that I had attained my objective of portraying the protagonist's different emotional states by adhering to the affect of the text and the music.

My objective in portraying these different emotional states by varying degrees of vocal quality and in obtaining a wide palette of vocal colour mainly by means of vocal registration and vocal articulation was commended by Examiner 2, who stated:

Engelbrecht's voice is colourful, which is remarkably free and resonant in the lower range. His voice is capable of loud, powerful sound production which he utilised interpretatively effective in songs like 'Die Wetterfahne', 'Wasserflut', 'Rast' and 'Der stürmische Morgen' (Examiner report 2, July 2019).

Examiner 2 furthermore appreciated my *piano* and *pianissimo* singing that contributed to the melancholic sound production in contrast to louder, heavier registration, commenting as follows:

'Gefrorne Tränen' was sung emotionally with a soft, melancholic tone which was contrasted by the intense last verse line. Supple control over the low dynamic levels was the determining factor in the emotional interpretation of songs such as 'Frühlingstraum', 'Im Dorfe' (in which resignation and despondence are invoked), 'Täuschung', 'Das Wirtshaus' and 'Die Nebensonne' (Examiner report 2, July 2019).

However, the manner in which I sometimes treated my legato lines and the articulation of the text was criticised by Examiners 2 and 3. Examiner 2 remarked that the long legato phrasing was

less effective where crescendo-diminuendo-effects were used too often on the first syllables of words with the result that the near lying syllables were inaudible. Subsequently, the legato line and the intelligibility of the text suffered (Examiner report 2, July 2019).

Examiner 3 commented that she would have liked more legato singing in the melismas of '*Gute Nacht*' and '*Die Wetterfahne*', the triplets in '*Wasserflut*' and dotted rhythms in '*Auf dem Flusse*'.

My use of low pitch onset was commented on only by Examiner 2, who stated that 'often tones were approached from below resulting in a "scoop". Provided that portamento is used sparingly, it may contribute to interpretation' (Examiner report 2, July 2019).

Furthermore, there were some vocal-technical aspects that raised concerns regarding the higher register and what I would interpret as issues with heavy vocal registration. Examiner 1 dealt with 'vocal weight' when she stated:

there is noticeable increase in tonal tension as excess vocal weight is taken into the higher range. This results in a tense, pressed and often 'spread' tone in the high register with resulting loss of timbre (Examiner report 1, July 2019).

Examiner 3 did not refer to vocal weight, but pointed to issues with resonance when she remarked that I was singing with an 'unfortunate *Knödel*', which was the result of

tongue root tension and incorrect space in the pharyngeal cavity. Furthermore, singing within the *zona di passaggio* often led to intonation problems, resulting in uneven vocal production through the voice (Examiner report 3, July 2019).

The reports from the examiners were not all positive and I therefore decided to revisit my examination recording in order once more to reflect self-critically on the vocal–technical and interpretative issues commented on by the respective examiners. I was most troubled by the issues of ‘vocal weight’ which led to a tense and/or unfocused tone production in the higher register, and the intonation problems in the *passaggio*. In addition, the matter of incorrect pharyngeal space made me think about resonance, as this was the first time it was pointed to explicitly since my first examination performance. Furthermore, I had to reflect on the issues of the *passaggio* (*zona di passaggio* and *secondo passaggio*) and vowel modification that were mentioned by Examiner 3 (she did not, however, elaborate on them in detail). I listened to the entire examination recording again, trying to identify these vocal–technical issues. Examiner 3 listed several of the songs in her report, giving me an indication of which of the songs had resonance and *passaggio* problems.

I could identify the vocal–technical and interpretative issues pointed to above in songs such as ‘*Wasserflut*’ and ‘*Auf dem Flusse*’, ‘*Erstarrung*’, ‘*Die Post*’ and ‘*Die Nebensonne*’ for example. In ‘*Wasserflut*’, I heard that in the line ‘*durstig ein das heisse Weh*’ (mm. 11–12) the word ‘*Weh*’ on the E4 and F#4 could have had more ‘ring’. Examiner 3 often referred to vowel modification, or ‘turning the vowel’, as she called it. I realised that the /e/ vowel here could have been modified towards an /i/ vowel. Miller (1993:42) asserts that when in an ascending scale the sound is ‘spread or open, particularly in the *zona di passaggio* region, then greater closure toward the lateral

vowel is required'. By turning the vowel to a brighter /i/ vowel, I could therefore have attained a better resonance space and more 'ring' to the sound, which could have influenced the flat intonation positively. In the above-mentioned phrase it was therefore not a question of a too-heavy vocal registration but rather one of an insufficiently firm glottal adduction which caused the tones on the word 'Weh' to 'spread' or lose focus.

Concerning heavy vocal registration in the same song, and as stated in section 7.3.1, I found that the line which moves over the E4 and G4 on words such as 'weiche' (m. 28) and 'meiner' (m. 56) sounded laboured, which was probably the result of taking the chest voice too high up into the *zona di passaggio*. This correlates with the observation of Examiner 1, who cautioned against excess vocal weight in the higher register that caused vocal tension with subsequent loss of timbre.

In 'Auf dem Flusse' I could again identify excess vocal weight in the high register in mm. 52–54 and 64–70 where the vocal line moves over G4 and A4. As mentioned earlier in my first analysis of the preceding examination (section 7.3.1), these final lines sounded somewhat laboured. Regarding what Examiner 3 wrote about 'turning the vowel' or vowel modification, I concluded that these lines, such as those in 'Wasserflut', lacked the optimal resonance space because the vowels were not modified gradually. What happened here was most probably the effect of what Miller (1993:42) refers to as 'heavy covering' in the *passaggio* when he states (ibid.):

Although vowel modification is both an acoustic and [a] physical action, the mechanical changes are much less drastic in the *copertura* technique than in the 'heavy and early cover' advocated by some vocal pedagogies [...]. When a clearly defined vowel is modified, the resonance factor known as

the singer's formant must still be present if the vocal scale is to exhibit timbre uniformity.

The laboured sound that I identified was the result of heavy vocal registration and high subglottal levels but with inadequate resonance space in the high register, which caused the tone to 'spread' and become too dark. I realised that what could have been improved here was the modification of all the back vowels towards the frontal or lateral ones for the purpose of obtaining a brighter, more focused tone.

Concerning resonance space and consulting again the report from Examiner 3, I observed that in '*Die Post*' a similar problem with vowel modification occurred. Here it was not coupled with heavy registration but rather a registration that was too light to accommodate the high lines moving over F4 to A^b4 – for example, mm. 43–45 and 101–102. Here the /ε/ vowel of the word '*Herz*' was too 'open', 'spread' and unfocused. What could have been improved here was to modify the vowel to an /e/ and as a result to sing with firmer glottal adduction.

I also reflected again on the interpretive matter of not enough legato singing or 'a legato line that suffered' because of the heavy-light articulation of the text. It became apparent to me that in some instances throughout the cycle the diminution of sound on the weak syllables was too great, causing them to sound much softer than the strong syllables. I could hear the text in the recording, but I realised that this may not have been the case for the audience or for the examiner. The weak syllables were too soft to be audible to anyone sitting at some distance from me. I concluded that I could have applied more legato singing in the songs that are less declamatory in character, such as '*Gute Nacht*', '*Gefronen Tränen*', '*Wasserflut*', '*Die Krähe*' and '*Im Dorfe*' in which the weak syllables at phrase endings were so soft that they might have been

inaudible to the audience. From the perspective of a lyric approach, Miller (1996:107) disapproves of the heavy-light articulation of stressed and unstressed syllables when he asserts that the 'decreasing of each syllable as it approaches the next produces a kind of "rock-a-bye-baby" vocal effect' which hinders the flow of the vocal line. Finally, I realised that this was the challenge – to find that fine balance of singing through all the notes, namely, legato singing, and incorporating declamation of the text.

I also reflected on the topic of 'scooping' or low pitch onset. I could hear in the songs that are declamatory in character that the low pitch onset was audible and the approach from below just a little too slow. I could have improved this by a much faster glide from the 'interval' below the main tone. I must add that the more I listened to these songs, the more I realised that I could have applied a 'cleaner' onset for more of the notes, avoiding the 'scooping' effect that seemed to draw too much attention to itself in my performance.

7.4 Conclusion

In my preparation process for this performance I gathered information regarding the performance style of German Lied and, more specifically, those of Schubert. This was done by studying the score and consulting secondary sources. These secondary sources indicate that since Schubert's lifetime, two approaches to performance style exist, namely, lyric and declamatory. My personal impression when studying the score of *Winterreise* is that the many emotional states of the protagonist, depicted in the vocal line – and further complemented by the accompaniment – accommodate both lyric singing and declamation. Some songs demand more declamation as opposed to certain others that ask for more lyric, cantabile singing. Yet I realised that many songs

have a mixture of these approaches where the declamatory style is embedded in the lyric vocal line. Vocal–technically, the challenge was to find a balance between singing legato lines while also declaiming the text.

Furthermore, it was important to me that I portray the inward journey in which the protagonist’s various emotional states are depicted with varying degrees of vocal quality in order to produce a wide palette of vocal colour. To vary the degrees of vocal quality, I have resorted to different degrees of vocal adduction in what I call heavy and light registration respectively. In light vocal registration I could comfortably produce a lyric sound and *voix mixte*, which allowed me to achieve the different shades of vocal colour. The light registration worked well to portray the intimate character of the text and the music in many of the songs or parts of songs, and I realised that it did not always afford a strong singer’s formant with a lot of ‘ring’ of the voice. Moreover, I noticed that I used a narrow vibrato when singing in the light registration and at times almost none in those parts which lean more to the declamatory style. ‘Pure’ legato singing as found in Romantic opera singing, in which vibrato plays an expressive role, was not always present in my singing. The legato line was influenced by the way in which I declaimed the text and how intimate the music was in character. On the other hand, I used heavy registration for the dramatic songs, and I observed that it demanded a constant low position of the larynx and higher subglottal pressure levels, which resulted in *chiaroscuro*. However, in this kind of registration, glottal adduction and subglottal pressure levels did not feel as firm and high as when singing verismo or Romantic opera. I therefore implemented a fundamental vocal registration which generally leaned towards a light registration.

In my quest to find a good balance between the lyric and the declamatory style of singing Schubert's *Winterreise*, I must admit that in certain songs I focused too much on the enunciation of the text. This resulted in the heavy-light articulation, or crescendo-diminuendo effect, which prevented me from singing flowing legato lines, as commented on by Examiners 2 and 3. With hindsight, I also think that my years of singing Baroque music in an HIP approach could have influenced my articulation of the text in this manner. Furthermore, I realised that, regardless of utilising a wide palette of vocal colours, I could have applied more of the 'modern' singing technique, evening out the registers to achieve a more homogenous vocal colour. Although such an even colour might have detracted from the timbral aspects of my interpretation, it could have helped me to sort out the problem areas in the *zona di passaggio* mentioned above. It was evident in both my own and the examiners' observations that when singing in a heavy registration for the more dramatic phrases and songs, the vocal tract was not always adjusted properly, causing the sound to be laboured and unfocused. Related to this, when singing in a light vocal registration over the *zona di passaggio*, I could have had more efficient glottal adduction and better vowel modification in order to maintain a focused sound production.

In conclusion, I found that I achieved my aim of portraying the protagonist's emotional journey and the different emotional states by means of vocal coloration and fine nuancing of the phrases. The colouration of the voice and fine nuancing was made possible only by applying different degrees of heavy and light vocal registration. In the light registration I very often used the *voix mixte*, which I found was a prerequisite for achieving intimate and melancholic vocal timbre and for singing finely nuanced phrases. However, I also realised that I should in future caution myself against

applying such a wide palette of sound so as not to impair a healthy sound production, especially in the upper range of the voice. This examination performance and the reports by the examiners made me think about the core of my vocal technique and what to do about it if I wanted to maintain vocal health and longevity. It was definitely time to revisit the basic idea of a 'stabilized timbre of the voice throughout all registers with a full complement of spectral colour' before my preparation for the next art song recital (Miller 1996:38).

Chapter Eight: 20th- and 21st-century Art Song: *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano* Op.12 (Hubert du Plessis, 1922–2011), *Alleenstryd* (Hendrik Hofmeyr, 1957–), *Celebration of Faith: A Hymn-based Song Cycle for Tenor and Organ* (Jacobus Kloppers, 1937–); Bloemfontein, Odeion Hall, 27 November 2021

8.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 7, I concluded in my previous performance of German Lied that the expressiveness of this particular genre with its vast and diverse repertoire affords manifold possibilities for applying different vocal colours and fine nuances. Art song is therefore a necessity in a study concerning the versatility of a classical singer. Having sung Schubert's *Winterreise* as part of my Ph.D. examination performances gave me the opportunity to explore the 19th-century German Lied. My fondness for singing art song stems from its positive effect on vocal health, especially as it enables one to vary one's vocal approach through Lied recitals alternating with singing opera repertoire, as I have explained at the beginning of Chapter 7.

My affinity for Lied and how it is represented by composers of the 20th and 21st centuries formed the basic framework for considering the repertoire for my final Ph.D. examination. I was also keen to approach the genre from outside its 19th-century German tradition and to explore an alternative combination to the conventional ensemble of piano and voice. In addition, I was aiming to work with living composers and to gather first-hand knowledge of how they would like their works to be performed, since performance practice has a bearing on my Ph.D. project.

In 2017, the Canadian-South African composer Jacobus Kloppers dedicated his hymn-based art song cycle, *Celebration of Faith: A Hymn-based Song Cycle for Tenor and*

Organ, to Jan Beukes and me and soon after getting to know the work I decided to include it as a central work in a Ph.D. examination recital. To balance the Kloppers composition, I turned to another South African contemporary composer with whose work I am familiar and who had mentored me as a young singer during my student years. Hendrik Hofmeyr's song cycle *Alleenstryd* appealed to me both as vocal-technically challenging and as songs of a very high musical standard. I therefore chose two song cycles composed by two composers who are from the country of my birth and who for various reasons worked and lived abroad.

To complete the substantial examination programme, I gave some thought to a short cycle which differs in style and language from the two larger works and which was composed specifically for the lyric tenor voice. In this regard and considering the fact that I already had two South African composers in the programme, the idea of turning the recital into an all-South African contemporary art song programme appealed to me. For this reason, Hubert du Plessis's *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano* Op. 12, which forms part of the composer's so-called London period, stood out as the obvious choice.

Exploring these songs, their texts and their essential context, I found an overarching theme that connects all three works. Consequently, I chose the title *Liberation*, because each of these works deals with humankind's struggle with life and its darker side in distinct ways. Du Plessis's *Five Invocations* invoke different views of finding peace in death and the afterlife; Hofmeyr's *Alleenstryd* depicts man's fall from grace and victorious ascent through recognising self-worth, and Kloppers' *Celebration of Faith* celebrates belief in a higher power and liberation from earthly struggles through eternal life.

Hubert du Plessis and *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano Op. 12*

Hubert du Plessis can be described as a conservative 20th-century composer who composed in a neo-Romantic idiom (Van der Mescht 1987:370). The two composers who greatly influenced his vocal compositional style were Hugo Wolf and Benjamin Britten (Thom Wium 2011:6, 7). Britten's influence can be identified in many of Du Plessis's songs. Matildie Thom Wium (ibid.) points out that most songs are

through-composed in the harmonic idiom of the early twentieth century [...] with a wandering tonality that is often achieved by harmonising melody tones with surprising functions, and 'arbitrary' colouristic chords constructed by adding semitones to major or minor chords.

Du Plessis himself acknowledged that *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano* in particular is influenced by Benjamin Britten, referring to the tritone-effect in the melody and his particular use of triads and the sharp fourth degree of the scale (Van der Mescht 2006:228).

Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano Op. 12 was composed in 1953 during a period in London when Du Plessis furthered his studies at the Royal Academy of Music from 1951 until 1954. The composition was published by Novello in 1954. Du Plessis mostly composed his songs for a specific singer and the *Invocations* were composed with the British tenor, Peter Pears (1910–1986), in mind. Unfortunately, Pears never performed the work (Van der Mescht 1987, 2006).

Du Plessis's choice of poems initially derives from the anthology, *English Lyric Poetry: 1500–1700*, from which two poems by John Fletcher ('Invocation to sleep' and 'Song to Bacchus') and two by John Webster ('Hark now, Everything is still' and 'A Dirge')

were chosen. An additional fifth poem by Fletcher, 'The River-god's Song', was added to complete the set. Edward Aitchison (1987:36) states that Du Plessis 'emphatically distinguishes between a *song cycle* and a *set of songs*'. It is interesting to note that although Du Plessis chose 'poems with an invocational nature, therefore obtaining a collective central idea and title', he chose to refer to the *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano* as a set of songs and not a song cycle (Aitchison 1987:40).⁴⁰ Heinrich van der Mescht (2006:226) states that the composer chose the title *Invocations* because, to him, each poem 'invokes something ... It is an invocation'. Another point of interest is that the first and last songs, both dirges, complement each other in their sombre, macabre stanzas, and harmonically the set has a palindromic key structure B–C–D–C–B. Aitchison (1987:40) remarks that 'the juxtaposition of Webster and Fletcher [poems] is an interesting feature of the *Invocations*' and he asserts that as contemporaries of the Jacobean era, their poetry differed in the sense that 'Webster was essentially a "poet of death" [...] whereas Fletcher was essentially a "poet of life"'.⁴¹

A main feature of his compositional style is the use of a compact form that derives directly from the form of the poem, and the structure of his songs indicates mostly short piano introductions and somewhat longer postludes (Van der Mescht 1987:371). The voice part is mostly difficult and generally the composer uses a wide vocal range

⁴⁰ It is not exactly clear why Du Plessis preferred the term 'set of songs' to 'song cycle'. In this regard, Van der Mescht (2006:232) notes that a song cycle consists of a series of songs which portray a definite story line. I infer that the composer therefore did not choose to see it as song cycle because the poems derive from different plays and the set of songs therefore does not display a coherent story line.

⁴¹ John Fletcher and John Webster were both exponents of Jacobean tragedy. Authors observe that Webster's tragedies such as *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil* indeed portray his preoccupation with violence, death and the afterlife (Marche 2004:79, 92; Culpeper et al. 2018:209). Fletcher, on the other hand, wrote 'mixed tragedy or tragedy with a happy ending' like *The Faithful Shepherdess*, which 'avoided the ugliness of death' (Farley-Hills 1988:173).

and wide interval leaps appear quite often in his songs (ibid.). Du Plessis views the voice part as carrier of the word and therefore the melodic element is very important (Van der Mescht 1987:372). The piano part is mostly challenging in the sense that it incorporates large stretches and it is often used for special effect and to highlight the text. Sudden sustained chords, single-note motion, fanfares and dramatic pauses and embellishments or grace notes often occur in the accompaniment (ibid.). Moreover, Du Plessis mostly uses the whole range of the piano in his accompaniments and uses arpeggio chords of the same material in both hands and in parallel movement (ibid.). Some tonal keys are of symbolic significance to Du Plessis: E-flat minor associated with death; D major with life; E-flat major with acceptance of death. The C major chord is often used at climaxes, but also to highlight a positive lighter emotion. The alteration of dissonance and consonance in the harmony is of great importance to the composer and is carefully planned to suit the text. Major sevenths and minor ninths are often used (ibid.).

Du Plessis notes that his metronome markings were revised later because his personal metronome was defective during the 1950s (Van der Mescht 1987:375). In an interview with Van der Mescht, the composer points out that specifically the song, 'God Lyaeus' could be sung more slowly than indicated in the score (Van der Mescht 2006:227).

Hendrik Hofmeyr and *Alleenstryd*

When I asked Hendrik Hofmeyr to describe the musical language which he used in the song cycle *Alleenstryd*, he replied that he had

employed extended tonality, freely mixing different and hybrid tonal scales with advanced chromaticism, modal materials, interval cycles, added-note chords and quartal harmony (e-mail correspondence, October 2021).

Indeed, it has been stated elsewhere that Hofmeyr generally renounces atonality and many of the modernist traits and the tonal scales he often uses in most of his works are the hexatonic and octatonic scales (Cupido 2009:24; Carter 2018:24). Moreover, added-note chords are often 'contaminated' triads (the composer's term), with one added note that provides an unusual character of sound (e-mail correspondence, October 2021).

Hofmeyr credits especially late-Romantic composers such as Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924), Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937) and Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924) as having exerted the strongest influence on his music (Carter 2018:12). Furthermore, Hofmeyr has a close connection with the melodic style and harmonic language of South African composers Arnold van Wyk (1916–1983) and Hubert du Plessis. Regarding Du Plessis and the *Five Invocations*, Hofmeyr stated that at the time *Alleenstryd* was written, he had not had much exposure to Du Plessis's work. However, as he later performed the piano part of several of Du Plessis's song cycles, he found a great deal of common ground. Hofmeyr remarks that

the term 'extended tonality' (mentioned above) could be applied equally to his [Du Plessis's] music. The attention which he pays to the piano part and his ability to convey the spirit of the poem in striking and memorable musical motifs represent ideals which I always strive for in my own songs (e-mail correspondence, October 2021).

The choice of poems for this song cycle derives from Sydney Vernon Petersen's (1914–1987) anthology, *Alleenstryd*, and was composed in 1997 for the South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO) Masterclasses with Deon van der Walt and Brenda Rein. Hofmeyr chose the poems in such a manner that they form an interdependency and therefore constitute a cohesive song cycle. Although Petersen, as a person classified 'coloured' during apartheid, suffered great discrimination, Hofmeyr has stated that he never considered his choice of poems to be politically influenced or to make a politically correct statement. In his programme notes to *Alleenstryd*, Hofmeyr (1997:i) states that his choice of the Petersen poems reflects

the poet's inner struggle against – and, ultimately his triumph over – his painful position as an outcast, both within his country and community, as well as within the white literary fraternity of the time.

Moreover, the universality of the message behind the texts addresses the 'ostracized and the oppressed in all ages and in every walk of life' (ibid.).

Jacobus Kloppers and *Celebration of Faith: A Hymn-based Song Cycle for Tenor and Organ*

The South African-born composer, musicologist, organ pedagogue and performer, Jacobus Kloppers, emigrated from South Africa to Edmonton, Canada in 1976 after a successful career as full professor at the University of the Orange Free State. During his years at the University of the Orange Free State, Kloppers did not shy away from publicly criticising the apartheid regime of South Africa, because his 'Christian understanding of justice for an oppressed and suffering people made it impossible for him to disregard implications of apartheid for his moral conscience' (Du Plooy & Viljoen 2020:103). His 'liberal' political views led to a clash with the South African Security

Police, who tried to suppress any resistance (Viljoen 2020:8). The result of these confrontations was a self-imposed exile and emigration. Canada became his new home and he subsequently became one of the faculty founders and chair of the Music Department of King's College in Edmonton.

Compositions for organ largely dominate Kloppers' oeuvre. With regard to his organ works, Viljoen et al. (2020:254) argue that the 'irreducibility of these works defies any straightforward "programmatic" or "autobiographical" meaning'; however, 'in their compositional "fabric" they do suggest identifiable geographic, cultural, artistic and religious influences.' Not only Kloppers' years of study in Germany and intensive schooling in the music of Bach and Lutheran liturgy, but also his emigration to Canada and his familiarisation with French-Canadian culture and the influence of the Anglican Church had significant influences on his compositional style. Three different stylistic influences are traceable in Kloppers' oeuvre: (1) a German style that points towards neo-tonality with added-note chords and disciplined structure; (2) a French liturgical organ style that focuses on the effect of colouration; and (3) an English tradition characterised by 'a sense of grandeur and ceremony' (Viljoen et al. 2020:253).

The hymn-based art song cycle, *Celebration of Faith*, is one of a few art song compositions by Kloppers. It is his first song cycle for organ and solo voice and it was completed in December 2017. The composer intended to create a collection of hymns in which more than one language is used and he therefore chose six hymns with Afrikaans (the composer's mother tongue), English and German texts. All of the above-mentioned style influences are to some extent represented in this song cycle because they stem from the composer's existing chorale preludes for organ and also

newly composed music. On the question of his song cycle's style, Kloppers (e-mail correspondence, October 2021) notes that

the question of complexity is not so much one of an earlier or later style but is based on the *nature of the original hymn/chorale*. For me a chorale prelude is like an exegesis of the hymn – its essential message(s) and its intrinsic style.

This statement correlates with the notion that music serves the text to portray the affect and spiritual message of the hymn or chorale and is in line with the doctrine of the passions promoted in Lutheran liturgy and best exemplified in the music of Bach. The song cycle can be viewed as a liturgical composition and, like many in Kloppers' oeuvre, is 'grounded within a deep, lifelong Christian commitment of faith' (Viljoen & Viljoen 2021:81).

8.2 Preparation process

8.2.1 Studying the score

I started my preparation process for this recital, my final examination performance, on 19 April 2021 by studying the scores of Hofmeyr's *Alleenstryd* and Du Plessis's *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano*, which were both unfamiliar to me. I had performed Kloppers' *Celebration of Faith* earlier, in 2019, and therefore this work did not demand the same amount of attention as the first two during the early stages of my preparation. In the following five weeks, I applied intensive study of both texts and music by myself at the piano in my studio at the OSM. The added-note chords, the juxtaposition of different harmonies and the hybrid tonal scales with advanced chromaticism in the piano accompaniment demanded extremely careful study of the vocal line. The complex harmonic structure was sometimes confusing when heard against the vocal line. I therefore made sure that I practised the vocal line first by focusing on the correct

intervals within the phrases and then by playing the chords under the vocal line. I soon realised that these two works, and especially *Alleenstryd*, required me to practise the vocal line with the accompaniment as early as possible. I therefore scheduled 'reading rehearsals' with my accompanist, Anneke Lamont, for 25 May 2021, and 8 and 16 June 2021 in order to familiarise myself more thoroughly with the accompaniment and harmonic structure, and to focus on the vocal lines. Moreover, both my accompanist and I had to get used to the complex rhythmic material of *Alleenstryd* in particular. Furthermore, these rehearsals enhanced my studying of the affect of each song and the style of each work, which helped me with early considerations regarding vocal registration and what kind of vocal approach these works call for.

Du Plessis's *Five Invocations* contains dramatic, heroic songs coupled with sweet and tender moments and sombre dark moods in the first and last songs. The tessitura is also higher than that of Hofmeyr's dramatic *Alleenstryd* and Kloppers' *Celebration of Faith*. The lines in *Five Invocations*, which often move over the second *passaggio* (often to A^b4 and A4) of the tenor voice, mostly indicated that they need to be sung in full voice because of the *forte* dynamics, except for the G4 in the fourth song, which evokes a tender mood. To accommodate these shifts in affect, I realised that I would need to adjust between a heavier and a lighter vocal registration to portray the different styles of the songs. The balancing effect of knowing what kind of mixture of chest and head voice (heavy and light registration) is needed is a question of what the music demands and also what the composer prefers. Working with living composers such as Hofmeyr and Kloppers would therefore be very fruitful as a source of information about their preferred vocal approach.

Hofmeyr's *Alleenstryd* (version for high voice) has a generally lower tessitura that lies more or less in the middle voice for the tenor (only rarely does it ascend at climaxes to G4). Although the cycle was also published in a 'higher voice' version (commissioned by a soprano) which was also orchestrated by the composer himself, I decided to sing the 'high voice' version, which was originally meant for tenor voice. This provided the opportunity for good text enunciation because the tenor does not need to 'cover' or modify vowels in lines that lie below the second *passaggio*. However, the dramatic songs of the cycle indicate the possibility of utilising more chest voice, or heavy registration, as many of the songs lie in the lower-middle tenor voice with sonorous piano accompaniment, so that they cannot be sung in a light lyric manner. On the other hand, the two intimate songs that refer to innocence and childhood invite a lighter registration with the use of *voix mixte*. It should be added that Hofmeyr has a very clear ideal of the vocal approach to his songs in general. Consistent legato singing with a stable laryngeal position is important to Hofmeyr, as the entire vocal phrase should transport the musical affect (Hofmeyr, personal conversation, May 2021). With this in mind, and with the aim of gleaning first-hand information about interpretive matters of this cycle, I thought it best to visit Hofmeyr in Cape Town for coaching sessions. I discuss these rehearsals as part of the physical process in section 8.2.2.

The Kloppers song cycle was obviously composed with my own voice quality in mind, having been dedicated to Jan Beukes and me. The cycle portrays hymns which vary from the contemplative to the celebratory or emotionally charged pieces. The different styles of the hymn settings and the treatment of the vocal lines in low, middle and higher tessitura demand a versatile approach to vocal registration. Kloppers first composed the last hymn of the cycle, '*Verdwyn is nou die Daglig*' before it was

expanded into the full cycle. When I first worked with Kloppers in 2017, it became apparent that, for him, the text and its affect, supported by his organ accompaniment, are of cardinal importance. I realised that the songs in a higher tessitura should therefore be sung with much clarity of text and that care should be taken that the voice is not too 'covered' in the *zona di passaggio*.

8.2.2 Physical process

The physical process took up the most time in the preparation for this recital because it became a journey of redefining and rethinking my vocal technique and interpretive capabilities. As I stated in my conclusion to Chapter 7, on reflecting upon my *Winterreise* recital, I had identified vocal–technical issues such as unfocused tone production and too-heavy vocal registration. On the other hand, my legato singing was impaired because I tried to use an overly broad palette of colour and placed excessive emphasis on the enunciation of the text with reference to stressed and unstressed syllables. Therefore, I decided to revisit the basic idea of a homogeneous vocal sound production throughout all vocal registers before singing my final examination performance. This journey started with rehearsals with Hofmeyr from 17 to 19 June 2021. These sessions turned out to be not only coaching on interpretative matters, but also a way of honing vocal–technical aspects of my singing. The rehearsals with Hofmeyr were followed by vocal lessons with my practical supervisor, Magdalena Oosthuizen, which started on 18 September 2021 in Stellenbosch. The rehearsals and lessons were interspersed with rehearsals with my accompanist in order to apply both the vocal–technical and the interpretive aspects included in the coaching sessions and lessons.

In order to keep this section as concise as possible, I decided to discuss only two different songs of each song cycle or set which vary in affect and style. I do not discuss the rehearsals with the accompanist in detail, because she was present in four lessons with Oosthuizen during which the three of us were in conversation with one another regarding interpretative matters. All of the repertoire presented in this recital was covered in each lesson block with Oosthuizen. From *Alleenstryd* I chose '*Kinderland*' and '*Gier van die Bose*' for discussion. The songs chosen from *Five Invocations* are 'Hark now Everything is still' and 'Care-charming Sleep'. The two songs from *Celebration of Faith* are 'Be Thou my Vision' and '*Verdwyn is nou die Daglig*'.

Alleenstryd: 'Kinderland'

When I started my first session with Hofmeyr on 17 June 2021, we commenced with the first song of the cycle, '*Kinders van Kain*'. When I sang the first phrases of this song, Hofmeyr immediately drew to my attention the fundamental tone production that he prefers and which results in a smooth legato line. For Hofmeyr (personal conversation, June 2021)

the *canto spianato* revered by the Italian bel canto is the ideal medium for conveying poetic meaning and affect and should never be compromised by the changing vocal position used to emphasise individual words, since the entire range of colours is already at the disposal of a perfectly placed voice.

Furthermore, he always emphasises his preference for all tones to originate from a highly focused and intense onset that should start from the head voice placement, which can then blossom instantaneously into louder singing.

The fourth song of the cycle, '*Kinderland*', is situated between the two dramatic songs, '*Weeklag van die Gewonde*' and '*Die Gier van die Bose*'. It is a 'nostalgic evocation of a lost state of innocence' and it 'provides a momentary oasis of wistful calm in the midst of agitation and anguish' (Hofmeyr 1997:i). In the first half of the song, the vocal line is echoed with canonical entries of the piano accompaniment. This echo of the vocal line by the piano contributes to the affect of a distant memory of a lost childhood. In addition, the vocal line is marked *sognante* (dreamy, wistful) and I was therefore looking for a vocal colour and vocal approach that could suit the nostalgic, wistful character and state of innocence evoked by the text and music. Hofmeyr helped me find this colour by first telling me to find the focus of the sound in each vowel that derives from a high placement in the head voice. This was difficult to find at first because the vocal line starts in the lower-middle range of the tenor voice on the notes E3, F#3, G3 and A3. To obtain this focus point, I first spoke the text at a high pitch. Then I would sing the opening phrase on an /u/ vowel, because, similarly to the /i/ vowel, it brings focus to the voice but also provides sufficient resonance space. This exercise was followed by singing on the text, and I simultaneously tried to sing with *voix mixte* as low as possible in the middle register.

Furthermore, the affect of the text is already inherent in the entire vocal line, and singing it legato was important to Hofmeyr. We therefore made sure that all the vocal lines in this song were sung with an extremely smooth legato in which vowels should be sung with their absolute full length and the end consonants placed as late as possible. Beginning consonants had to be placed on the beat and not before, which was different from what I was used to when singing German Lied. Hofmeyr made sure that the unstressed syllables of each word were also supported and sung with

sufficient energy to sound – even if they were sung more softly than the stressed syllables. For example, the unstressed syllable of the word ‘*wonderwêreld*’ (world of wonder) in m. 5 had to be sung with a new impulse and with its full crochet note value, because the line had to continue and finish in m. 8.

I should add here that Hofmeyr’s setting of the text in this song allows mainly the unstressed syllables to lie a tone, semi-tone, a fourth, etc. below the note of the stressed syllable. This has the effect of rendering the unstressed notes as sounding naturally lighter or softer when singing legato through all notes of the contour of a phrase.

The dreamy character of the music in the first half of the song (first three stanzas up to m. 23) necessitated an intimate vocal tone production and I therefore approached the line that moves to C4, D4 and E4 in mm. 6–7 with *voix mixte*. In the second stanza the vocal line is marked with a *poco crescendo* in mm. 13–14 that reaches its climax in m. 14 on the word ‘*gêles*’ (yellow ones), and here we agreed that I should try to maintain the *voix mixte* approach and intensify only the articulation of the text and the resonance space, coupled with a forward motion in the tactus. Then Hofmeyr suggested that I quickly change the vocal colour and lean backwards in tactus on the words ‘*nou nog in my kinderland?*’ (Still there in my childhood’s land?), in this way enhancing the nostalgic affect of the text.⁴²

The third stanza, which builds up to a climax and *fortissimo* in m. 23, had to start in a *mezzo forte* dynamic. However, the nostalgic affect had to be maintained and I was

⁴² The English translations of the Afrikaans texts in *Alleenstryd* are my own, adapted partly from the lyric English text in the score and in part from Conroy Cupido’s translation in his doctoral dissertation (2009).

cautious not to put weight on the voice by taking the chest register into a too-high range on the pitches E4 and F[#]4. The first time I sang this phrase we noticed that the E4 on the word 'oop' (open) (m. 22) was sung literally too open, and here Hofmeyr suggested that I think the vowel more closed but focused, in this way naturally modifying it without putting much weight on the voice. The marking *crescendo ed accelerando poco a poco* in mm. 21–23 helped me to gain momentum to reach the sustained F[#]4 in m. 23. This momentum would be conducive to avoiding 'loading' the voice with a great deal of chest register, allowing me to reach the high note in m. 23 with ease.

The second part of the song (mm. 27–53) has a pensive and forsaken affect. When I started singing this part, I used a 'grey', translucent colour, which for me resembled the pensive character. However, Hofmeyr cautioned that I should still sing this with more emotional involvement and told me that the danger of singing soft and in this 'pensive' vocal colour is that one might not support the sound enough. Supporting the sound was even more difficult in the ending of the song on the line 'ver van huis en kinderland' (far from home and childhood's land), which lies in the lower-middle register and is marked *perdendosi*. I had to make sure that I maintained a high placement in the head, even while singing in this lower register, in order to sing softly and then to let the sound fade away.

The *canto spianato* which Hofmeyr referred to and which he preferred as the ideal approach to his songs called for a stable low larynx that should not change position to stress certain words or syllables. This approach therefore conformed to the general perspective of MSP which would rely on macro phrasing (legato singing) and a homogenous sound production from the low to the high register – all of this would

translate into singing with heavy registration as described in section 2.2.2. As I mentioned above, I was also aiming for light registration to allow *voix mixte* for vocal colouration in intimate, tender and melancholic moments. Negotiating the *zona di passaggio* and above in light registration would therefore differ from the heavy registration by my not keeping the larynx in a constant low position, with firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure. I realised during the sessions with Hofmeyr (and the successive lessons with Oosthuizen) that the challenge in this recital would be how to reconcile the prerequisite of a constant vocal timbre throughout the vocal range with the rhetorical requirements of the music.

On 18 September 2021 I had my first block of four lessons with Magdalena Oosthuizen. During our second lesson we worked on '*Kinderland*'. Similarly to Hofmeyr's remark, she immediately told me that I was trying to sing too intimately and also trying too hard to make every note too 'precious'. The idea was that I should continue maintaining an intimate character but should remember that the performance was intended for a hall as the venue. In the second stanza, the E4 on the word '*géles*' (m. 14) was not free enough and Oosthuizen suggested that I must have more head resonance at this point. The problem here was that the /e/ vowel of '*géles*' 'spread' and lost focus. To correct this, I thought of singing a vowel which resembled an /i/ to obtain a more focused sound, which had a positive outcome. A similar case where the vowel was unfocused occurred on the next E4 in m. 22 on the word '*oop*' (open). As mentioned by Hofmeyr previously, this vowel was too 'open' and Oosthuizen suggested that I think of an /u/ vowel to obtain more focus and head resonance in the sound. This, too, placed the vowel in a comfortable position with focus and 'ring' to it. As the phrase proceeded to the sustained F[#]4 on the word '*hemelrand*' (sky) (m. 23),

Oosthuizen noticed that the /a/ vowel started in the correct position but then lost its focus and sounded too far back in the throat. She then advised me to lift the cheek muscles and form the vowel with the corners of the mouth in a slightly inward position. Singing the note in this manner felt really comfortable and it sounded free and focused. With the corners of the mouth drawn inwards, the /a/ vowel slightly modified towards /ə/.

Oosthuizen also commented on the interpretation of the line of the third stanza '*Geur dit nog van peperbossies en renoster[bos]*' (Still smells of pepperbushes and rhinoceros [bush]). She suggested that the vocal delivery should sound like the olfactory enjoyment of the aroma of pepper and rhinoceros bushes. After I sang this a few times, I realised that this phrase had to start in a focused placement, using a light registration in which *voix mixte* was present. After singing the complete phrase up to m. 23, I realised that the crescendo was well achieved without feeling an increase in subglottal pressure underneath the larynx. I also noticed that it was suddenly easier to sing with full voice in the *zona di passaggio* without feeling any strain on the vocal mechanism.

Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr both raised the matter of a homogenous sound production coupled with legato singing, and with an even vibrato throughout the phrase. Within the legato line the laryngeal mechanism had to stay in a stable, low position and preferably not deviate from it in order to accentuate certain words or syllables. Furthermore, both argued that it was crucial to start each note in the high, focused placement of the vowel before any colour or weight should be added. Oosthuizen's approach to blending vocal registers was to work with head resonance and to approach the notes from above. The head resonance should then be brought down

as low as possible in order to connect the chest register with the head register of the tenor voice.

During the two weeks after my first block of lessons with her, I practised blending the registers by vocalising on a bright /i/ vowel and practising five-note scales downward from the dominant to the tonic and back. After that I substituted the /i/ vowel with /u/, /e/ and /a/.

When I returned to Oosthuizen for the second block of lessons on 4 October 2021 and sang this song, she noted that it was going very well. I could hear from my own recording that it had definitely improved, especially regarding the notes such as E4 and F[#]4 in the *zona di passaggio*. I could also feel that there was no strain on the vocal mechanism in the higher register. Moreover, I felt a sensation of the sound more in my head than in the chest, and for a moment I did not think of any vocal adduction and subglottal pressure. However, I did have the sensation that the larynx was comfortably low, but always flexible and never kept in one fixed low position. My focus now was on maintaining the optimal head resonance for each note and on producing a well-focused tone from the lowest to the highest note.

On 5 and 6 November 2021 my accompanist and I went for the third block of lessons with Oosthuizen on my whole programme (including the Kloppers cycle, which was accompanied on piano by Lamont (rather than by Beukes on organ) for these rehearsals for convenience' sake). We worked through '*Kinderland*' first. Oosthuizen was once again satisfied with the progress I had made with the song. When I sang it on 5 November, we found that the ground tempo was a little too slow. For the next session on 6 November, we took it a little faster and I tried to sing it in a more flowing manner. We then 'ran' the entire programme.

Alleenstryd: 'Die Gier van die Bose'

On 18 June 2021 I worked on the sixth song of the Hofmeyr cycle, which is dark and dramatic in character. The inspiration for the entire song is drawn from the poetic line '*houe wat brul, wat rumoer soos 'n ritmiese hel wat op loop is*' (bellowing blows that resound like a rhythmic inferno run riot). According to Hofmeyr, the idea was

to forge the sonic events described in the line (hammering, roaring, tumult) into a *perpetuum mobile*, a relentless musical juggernaut that would suggest 'a rhythmical inferno run riot' as well as illustrating the nightmarish imagery and underscoring the dark vehemence of the poem as a whole (e-mail correspondence, October 2021).

When I first sang the song for Hofmeyr, he remarked that my body enjoyed the momentum and propulsion of the musical character of the song. We both realised that this song is animated and energised by accenting every strong beat and every note of the important text '*houe wat brul, wat rumoer soos 'n ritmiese hel wat op loop is*' (mm. 33–40). These accents were necessary in order to ensure that the hammering, roaring tumult described in the text resembled the *martellato* articulation described by Garcia (1975). In this kind of vocal articulation, the singer can stress certain sounds without detaching them, and it was important to Hofmeyr that I maintain a legato singing style throughout the song, using this marked vocalising. In addition, I spontaneously applied a dark vocal colour throughout the song. The dark vehemence and the dramatic accompaniment that portrayed the effect of roaring or tumult, and the overall *forte* dynamics on the vocal line, made me sing with a spontaneously heavy registration. I could feel that the lines that started or moved over the *zona di passaggio* had more chest register than head register. The use of accents definitely helped to prevent a heaviness which would impede the forward movement of the lines or prevent any

feeling of strain on the vocal mechanism. However, the vocal line seldom exceeds E4 (except for the final phrase and climax) and therefore this song was vocal–technically unproblematic regarding the high register.

On 18 September 2021 I sang this song for the first time for Oosthuizen. She was generally convinced by my portrayal but suggested that I could still pay more attention to the articulation of the text and practise first speaking the words and then singing them. Furthermore, I myself noticed that, because we were working on a high placement of the vowels and taking head resonance into the middle register earlier, my vocal colour was brighter and the heavy vocal registration that I had applied in the session with Hofmeyr in June 2021 now felt lighter. We realised that this happened because I was careful not to sing the low notes (of which there are many and which lie around C3) with too much chest register and tried to mix them with head register. Oosthuizen advised me to sing them the way I used to and not to think too much of head resonance in the lower register – I had only to be careful not to over-round them and over-darken the vowels, which could result in the text becoming unclear. I went back to my studio in Bloemfontein and in practising this song and rehearsing with my accompanist, I experimented with a darker sound to suit the affect of the text and the music. I realised that it was important to maintain the idea of *chiaroscuro*. Brightness in the sound was important because the piano accompaniment uses the lower register of the piano in *forte* dynamics. Clustered tritones are used in a recurring, rapid arpeggio motif. This motif appears three times in the introduction and is then later again repeated (in modulated form), underlining certain references to words signifying evil such as ‘*Goddelose*’ (ungodly), ‘*mensloënaar*’ (backstabbing friend), ‘*Bose*’ (evil) and ‘*gevaartes*’ (monsters). The roaring effect of this recurring motif resulted in an

abundant sound from the piano over which the voice needed to carry. In addition, the vocal line and the alternating octave motif in the right-hand part of the piano accompaniment are in dialogue with each other from mm. 23–32, 41–51 and 78–90. I noticed that if my vocal sound was too dark, this dialogue between the two parts would not ‘speak’ enough and the voice would otherwise simply become submerged in the accompaniment.

In my lessons with Oosthuizen on 5 and 6 October and again on 5 and 6 November 2021, I noticed that this song was growing in character and that I was able to find the right balance between a bright and dark vocal colour which I could maintain through the whole vocal range, from the beginning to the end of the song. In contrast to the preceding ‘*Kinderland*’, I observed that I used a heavy registration in which strong glottal adduction was always present. I could feel subglottal pressure rise only at the climax of the song on the G4 and F#4 of ‘*los die leeus*’ (free the lions) in mm. 87 and 88.

Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano: ‘Hark, now everything is still’

When I first studied this song, I observed that it calls for *sotto voce* singing that invites the use of *voix mixte* for the opening and ending. The short piano introduction sets the eerie mood for this song with short intervals of silence followed by a sustained C-sharp octave in the right hand, preparing for the desolate first entry of the voice on the words ‘Hark, now everything is still’ (mm. 5–8). In studying and singing through the music, I approached the opening with an intense stage whisper in a *sotto voce* sound that was, basically, singing in *voix mixte* and letting breath escape through the vocal folds. When I sang this in the first rehearsal with my accompanist, we both agreed that this vocal colour indeed set the eerie mood of the song. I decided to use the same vocal

approach and colour as in the opening of the song. All of this was sung in a light registration which allowed *voix mixte*.

From mm. 24–35 the vocal line constantly ascends from the middle voice to A[#]4 and A4, and the tessitura is mostly centred on F[#]4 and G[#]4. In addition, these lines are all marked *forte*, which indicates that this entire section should be sung with full voice. Singing through the middle part, which is accompanied by large stretches and intervals in the piano that depicts the gravity of a disturbed mind, I realised that the A^b4 on ‘vain’ and ‘Sin’ felt uncomfortable; most probably, this was the result of taking too much chest voice into the upper register, as the line starts *forte* in the middle register and ascends through C4 to F4 and then A^b4. I had a similar issue with the line ‘Strew your hair with powders sweet’ (mm. 32 and 33) in which I sensed that the voice felt too heavy and that there was too much pressure on the larynx. When I tried to reduce the subglottal pressure and to refrain from consciously keeping the larynx in a low position, I noticed that the sound became unstable and it felt as if my voice was about to crack. It was definitely necessary to take the set of songs to Oosthuizen, who could help me to work vocal–technically on this song.

On 17 and 18 September 2021 I worked on the *Five Invocations* with Oosthuizen. Before we commenced with the song itself, Oosthuizen let me vocalise and sing simple ascending and descending five-note scales on an /i/ vowel. It was important that I keep the vowel bright and light and not exert any pressure on or feel any pressure beneath the larynx. In addition, I had to be mindful of maintaining a ‘friendly’ face which activated the cheek muscles. Oosthuizen also remarked that I had to let the breath flow more while singing the five notes. We then changed the vowel to an /a/ and /u/

and placed it in the /i/ position, as far as possible, and started the five-note scale from the upper note, taking the brightness of the sound into the lower register.

We then started the song, and I did not experience problems singing the opening in a light registration. The middle part (mm. 24–35), however, needed attention. I was singing this part as I had done earlier, with too much chest voice taken into the high register. Oosthuizen suggested that I ‘think’ these passages ‘lighter’ and maintain head resonance with a high placement of the vowels. Thanks to this approach, the line that starts on ‘Sin’ was now much more comfortable, as I thought the /i/ vowel brighter than I had done earlier; I felt that I could sing the line up to m. 27 with less pressure. The next difficult line for me was ‘Strew your hair with powders sweet’ (mm. 32 and 33); and here, specifically, Oosthuizen told me that I could not take the weight of the lower G^{#3} to the higher octave G^{#4}. She suggested that I make a little *decrescendo* on the lower note and give it more head resonance, and then approach the higher octave with the same head resonance. Maintaining the head resonance and singing the whole middle part with less chest voice was a matter of practising, which I did after the first block of lessons with Oosthuizen.

I returned to Bloemfontein and practised these phrases, trying to feel and think of more head resonance. I would also first warm up for at least 15 minutes, doing simple five-note scales on an /i/ vowel to find the high placement of the vowels in the head voice. In a rehearsal with my accompanist on 30 September 2021, for the first time I felt comfortable singing this song, and especially so when negotiating the middle section. I had the sensation that the sound was more focused and that head resonance and the ‘ring’ of the voice was present in all the notes. It felt stable from the lowest to the highest notes. I did feel that approaching the high notes in the second *passaggio*

involved a greater compression of air between the larynx and the diaphragm than in the middle register, which was an indication of higher subglottal pressure levels. However, I did not sense that I ‘pushed’ the voice or that the subglottal pressure was too high, causing excessive pressure against the vocal mechanism. When I sang the song in the second block of lessons with Oosthuizen on 4 and 5 October 2021, I noticed that I could maintain more head resonance in the middle part of the song, and she immediately remarked that I had made great progress with the song. In the third block of lessons on 5 and 6 November 2021, I still managed to sing the song with the same intentions and could maintain the same head resonance in the middle part, although I noticed that I had to be conscious of not taking up too much chest voice in the *passaggio* to the A^b4 or F[#]4, G4 and G[#]4.

Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano: ‘Care-charming Sleep’

The vocal line enters softly and peacefully in a whole-tone motif over five notes which symbolises openness or eternity. This setting uses C major triads, the key that the composer associates with positive emotions and light (Van der Mescht 1987:374). The rocking rhythmic motif now also begins to emerge in the vocal line that sings the ‘prince’ to his eternal sleep. The ‘eternal light’ of afterlife (‘Easy light’) is set on the G4 in the tenor’s second *passaggio* and is marked *piano*, which naturally characterises the sweetness and welcoming of death (m. 21). Throughout the song, the piano accompaniment resembles a transcendent character upon which the tenor voice ‘floats’ in its upper-middle range. I decided early on in my preparation that the entire song should definitely be sung with a light registration and with as much *voix mixte* as possible. While practising ‘Care-charming Sleep’ on my own and with the accompanist, I realised that the challenge here would be to shift from the heroic

character of the preceding 'God Lyaeus', which needed to be sung with heavy registration in *forte* dynamics throughout the song. At first it was difficult to find the *voix mixte* and the focused light sound, especially in the lines that move to F4 on the words 'sweetly thyself' (mm. 9 and 10) or on 'painful to his slumber' (mm. 17 and 18). What was even more difficult was to sing the *dolcissimo* line on 'Easy light, and as a purpling stream', which needed to be soft and have a sweet vocal colour (mm. 21–23). I noticed that because I was singing in the heavy registration immediately before this song, the voice still felt too heavy, and so it was almost impossible to switch to a lighter registration in the second *passaggio* on F[#]4 and G4.

The above-mentioned difficulties of singing more lightly in the *zona di passaggio* (and above) and utilising the *voix mixte* eased only when I worked with Oosthuizen for the first time on the set of songs. As I have already mentioned in this section, Oosthuizen insisted on utilising the head resonance and focused, high placement of the vowels, whether I sang in a heavy or a light registration. The 'trick' of singing this song in a light registration was to approach 'God Lyaeus' in the same manner as for the middle part of 'Hark, now everything is still', maintaining a high placement of the vowel to ensure head resonance (i.e., approaching the notes in the middle and upper-middle register from above), using the cheek muscles and ensuring that I did not take the vocal weight from the chest voice up into the upper register on notes such as F[#]4, G4, G[#]4 and A4. Only when I managed to sing 'God Lyaeus' with more head resonance and what I would describe as a moderate level of heavy registration did the next song become easier to sing in a light vocal registration. This approach required much practice, which I did when I returned to Bloemfontein.

In the second block of lessons with Oosthuizen on 4 October 2021 I sang 'Care-charming sleep' again after we had worked on 'God Lyaeus'. After we made progress with the latter song, approaching the high notes from above and not taking the chest voice up into the high register, I felt that I could sing the *piano* lines of 'Care-charming sleep' better than during the lessons which took place in September 2021. However, I still could not quite obtain the light *voix mixte* sound I was aiming for. On 5 October 2021, we worked again on the *Five Invocations* and I could feel that the high notes in the heroic 'God Lyaeus' were lighter and brighter and that the sensation of the sound was more in the head. The result of this was that the piece that followed, 'Care-charming sleep', also felt more comfortable; I felt that I had almost perfected the sweet *voix mixte* colour I had had in mind over the legato lines. Back in Bloemfontein, I rehearsed the *Invocations* with Lamont on 12 October 2021 and for the first time I was quite satisfied with my rendition of this song. Lamont and I achieved the exact atmosphere we had intended and I was able to produce the sweet vocal colour in an overall *piano* dynamic.

In the third block of lessons with Oosthuizen on 5 and 6 November 2021, we were satisfied with 'Care-charming Sleep' in the sense that I could portray the affect of the music and text in a vocal colour which resembled a sweet and soft approach and could sing smooth legato lines with a constant flow of air. There was only one note that I thought could feel more comfortable: the G4 of 'Easy, light' in m. 21. Oosthuizen recommended that I should not approach the G4 too softly and that I should sing more 'on the breath' and in this way control the breath better. After this lesson, I practised it again and found that this improved breath control helped me to find the head

resonance and to relax the larynx, especially if I lifted the cheek muscles and brought the corners of the mouth slightly inward in the /i/ and /ɪ/ vowels.

Celebration of Faith: 'Be Thou my Vision'

Although I had corresponded with Jacobus Kloppers regarding his hymn-based song cycle, and although he was present when I first sang '*Verdwyn is nou die Daglig*' in 2017, he did not indicate a preferred vocal approach for this cycle. As mentioned previously, the 'songs' in this cycle are based on his chorale preludes and some newly composed works. The portrayal of the essential message and intrinsic style of the hymns on which the cycle is based, and therefore the affect and spiritual message, was important to Kloppers. In email correspondence while he was composing the entire cycle, we would share ideas about tempo markings and the use of specific keys that were sometimes too low for the tenor voice. Kloppers is known to be very particular with his metronome markings, and I felt in some cases that the tactus was just too fast or too slow for me to achieve the desired affect. Regarding the vocal approach to this work in my final examination performance, I decided to follow the vocal-technical guidance of Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen, who both advised me that I should first strive to use the entire legato line for expressive meaning in which certain words could be stressed and articulated according to the affect. This should not, however, be performed in such a way that one sings straight tones (without any vibrato) or neglects weak syllables.

The first stanza has a stately chorale setting in which Kloppers uses the standard harmonisation of the hymn tune, which serves as a kind of introduction to the following stanzas. It is characterised by a warm sound palette with an organ registration of Flute 8' and Salicional 8'. I decided to sing this stanza in a formal, dignified manner and to

use my lower register to complement the warm tonal colour of the organ. The lines that ascend to the G4 in m. 13, 'Thou my best thought by day and by night', had no dynamic indication and I thought it best to sing this line with full voice in a *mezzo forte* dynamic and end the stanza with a diminuendo on the text 'Thy presence, my light'. I was cautious not to use such a heavy registration in which the lines over the *passaggio* would sound heroic. The second stanza was newly composed and has a slow reflective, meditative character. Here the vocal line is in dialogue with the flowing quaver melody in the upper voice of the right-hand part of the organ, which arguably serves as a contemplative subtext to the words. For this stanza I decided to use a light vocal registration in which I could sing *mezzo piano* to accommodate the organ's continuous soft dynamics. In addition, the meditative mood invites the use of *voix mixte*, especially when the vocal line ascends to an E4 and D4 as in mm. 25–28 or to E4 and G4 as in mm. 29 and 30. I also used the *ritardando* on the text 'I Thy true Son' to sing with the sweetest colour I could produce on the word 'Son', on the notes E3 to D4. Here I made a *diminuendo* on the D4 and sang this note with sufficient *voix mixte* that I could end in *pianissimo* dynamics.

For the third stanza I needed to apply a registration that was heavy enough to accommodate the brighter accompaniment of the organ, which deploys Trumpet 8' in the Swell, and to suit the combative character of the music and the text. Here the vocal line starts in *forte* dynamics and should be sung *marked well*, as indicated in the score in the first stanza line. The *marcato* effect is then alternated with a *legato* marking in mm. 45–50; it then shifts again to *marcato* in mm. 51–52, followed by a *legato* marking in mm. 53–54. What was challenging in this stanza was the use of the chest voice in the first line in such a manner that it had enough power but was not too heavy, so that

I could switch immediately in m. 45 to a lighter registration for the *legato* phrases. A lighter registration with enough head resonance was necessary to enable singing without pushing the voice in the phrase ‘Thou my soul’s shelter’, which moves over the second *passaggio* to G4. In mm. 51–52, the vocal line descends from D4 to E3 and is marked with a *crescendo* which calls for more chest voice and a heavy registration. However, I felt that ‘loading’ the voice too much in the lower register resulted in a heavy registration for the final phrase (mm. 53–56), which felt laboured and impaired the intonation on the final G4.

The fourth stanza had almost the same vocal challenges as the third. Here the opening line should be even louder (*fortissimo*) and ascends to a G4 on the word ‘victory’ (m. 59). Because there are no other markings than *fortissimo*, the complete stanza should be sung with a heavy vocal registration and enough ‘ring’ of the voice to carry above the sound of the organ, with its fuller registration of Flute 8’, 4’, Principal 2’ and Trumpet 8’ in the Swell, and Flute 16’, 8’, Principal 8’ in the Pedal. Singing the whole stanza in heavy registration was tiring and moving up to the final two G4’s (mm. 70 and 71) also felt too heavy and laboured, with slightly flat intonation.

In my second block of lessons with Oosthuizen on 5 October 2021 we worked intensively on this song. Regarding phrases that begin in the middle range and then move upwards into the *zona di passaggio*, she advised me to plan these passages so that the head resonance I would need for the higher notes would already be present in the lower-lying portion of the phrase – for example, ‘naught be all else to me’ (m. 8). Incorporating head resonance in the middle range was therefore important in order to prepare for lighter registration in the phrase ‘Thou my best thought by day or by night’, which moves over the second *passaggio* to G4. In order to sing the /ε/ vowel of ‘best’

with optimal resonance, Oosthuizen suggested that I should sing with an oval shape of the mouth opening. The result was that the throat felt more relaxed and I could hear that the G4 sounded rounder. When I kept the sound lighter and focused on a high placement of the vowels, moving over this line felt more comfortable and I felt almost no pressure against the vocal mechanism. This approach also helped me to sing a smooth legato line until the end of the stanza. I sang the second stanza as prepared and Oosthuizen was satisfied with most of it, specifically the way I used the *voix mixte* almost throughout the stanza. I noticed that it was easier to sing the line ‘Thou my great Father’, which ascends over the second *passaggio*, because I was already in a light registration in the preceding phrases.

Working on the third stanza, both Oosthuizen and I observed that because of the combative affect and *marcato* character of the music, I started singing this stanza too heavily and with a vocal colour that was too dark. She suggested that I should approach the notes from above and be mindful that I still had head resonance also in the low register, so that I could then shift quickly to a lighter registration on ‘Be Thou my dignity, Thou my delight’ (mm. 45–47). This should feel lighter than the opening, which required the application of more head resonance. The result was that I experienced the sensation that I sang this phrase in full voice with a great deal of head resonance or ‘ring’, without feeling that there was much chest voice in the mixture. This approach also made it easier to then sing ‘Thou my soul’s shelter’ with more ease – here Oosthuizen insisted on more legato singing and less of the ‘majestic’ effect, which translated into singing with less chest voice and more head resonance when I started the phrase on the E4 (mm. 49–52). The final phrase, which had felt laboured when singing this before my lessons with Oosthuizen, now also felt easier, especially

the final G4 on 'power'. When I sang the phrase 'Raise Thou me heavenward, o power of my power', the /a/ vowel of 'power' on the A3 (m. 55) had to be approached with sufficient head resonance to prepare me for the final G4. This approach definitely helped me to sing the final note with more ease, and I experienced the sensation of using more head voice and less chest voice.

In the fourth stanza, I followed the same approach as in the previous stanza because they are similar in their affect and vocal approach. After I sang this twice with Oosthuizen, we were both convinced that the voice now sounded freer and that it had the optimal 'ring' for the *fortissimo* dynamics. In the third block of lessons on 5 and 6 October 2021 I could again achieve this approach of singing with full voice and optimal head resonance so that the final phrases in both the third and the fourth stanzas felt comfortable.

Celebration of Faith: 'Verdwyn is nou die Daglig'

The first stanza is set in a tranquil mood with soothing parallel sixths in the left-hand accompaniment, which rests on a B-flat pedal point in the introduction. The tessitura of the vocal line lies generally between D4 and G4 and therefore in the *zona di passaggio* of the tenor voice, with dynamic markings that vary mostly between *mezzo piano* and *mezzo forte*. My intention, therefore, was to sing this stanza with a continuous light vocal registration. The second stanza has an eminently serene mood set to a soft organ registration utilising Flute stops exclusively. The vocal dynamic markings here are mostly soft and therefore require even more continuous use of *voix mixte*. The third stanza contains new material, stemming from the original chorale prelude and resembling man's struggle with the darker side of life – the entrapment in 'night of sin'. The first half is set in the minor key to suit the darker affect of the text.

Kloppers exploits the tenor voice on the line '*'n mensdom diep, diep verkleuster in sondenag verkneg'* (a humanity shackled, enslaved in deep sinister power of sin)⁴³ with a leap from F4 to B^b 4 (mm. 39–41) that reinforces the meaning of the text and serves almost as an outcry to God. I intended to sing the opening lines with a different darker colour that would suit the affect of the text and the minor key. However, I noticed that I used too much chest voice and heavy registration in the beginning, with the result that the following phrase started too heavily and the B^b 4's felt laboured. The final stanza is set as a kind of nocturne. The vocal line is based on a variation of the chorale melody; its soft, sustained material indicated to me that the tenor voice should have a floating character and therefore required the greatest degree of *voix mixte* and light registration. The use of the *Tremulant* with soft flute registration in the organ part supports the calm, almost slumbering character of the vocal line.

When Oosthuizen and I worked on this song in my second block of lessons on 4 October 2021, she suggested that for this piece I should allow my voice to be lyrical and should not try to make it bigger or heavier than it is. She maintained that the intonation issues (when certain tones were sometimes flat) were the result of a lack of optimal resonance. Furthermore, she told me that if I could hear in my inner ear the lightness and brilliance of the sound, the voice would 'sit' well in the *zona di passaggio*. Moreover, she instructed me to achieve breath flow from the first note of the phrase. The result after singing this stanza again was an absolute legato line in which each word was well articulated. When I sang the second stanza, I noticed that the G4 in the line '*na dagarbeid die lafenis'* (a refreshment after daily labour) did not feel free and

⁴³ The English translations of the lyrics in this song cycle have been taken from the composer's programme notes to the score.

did not resonate enough (mm. 22–27). Oosthuizen suggested that I think the beginning of the phrase and the D4 in the resonance space of the G4 and that I maintain a ‘radiant or enthusiastic’ facial expression. I tried this by approaching the D4 from above, keeping the sound light and focused, feeling that my cheek muscles were active. I felt the sensation of the sound more in the head than when I had sung it earlier. Approaching the notes from above and maintaining head resonance proved to be essential in singing the other stanzas in this manner too. I achieved the darker colour I aimed for in the opening of the third stanza by slightly rounding the mouth opening on all vowels and I could feel that the mouth cavity and pharynx had slightly more roundness (mm. 34–38). I could also feel that there was slightly more chest voice (and therefore a moderate level of heavy registration) in the mixture of head and chest voice than there had been in the preceding stanzas. However, Oosthuizen cautioned against utilising chest voice to the extent that the voice became too heavy and unable to reach the B^b 4’s when I needed to sing higher in mm. 39–43. To approach the B^b 4’s, Oosthuizen let me start the F4’s on ‘*n mensdom diep [verkluister]*’ thinking of a high placement with head resonance and to attack the high notes directly and by no means from below or with chest voice mixture. The result was that I sang the high notes on pitch and without much effort. Although these notes had head resonance, they were loud and ringing and not sung in *voix mixte* – the sensation of the sound felt more in the head, although there was a low level of heavy registration in the mixture of the sound. In the fourth stanza, Oosthuizen suggested that I should ‘speak’ the text on pitch, that is, I should not add more vocal colour to the line than what is already written into the music. We decided that I would sing almost all of the stanza in ‘half voice’, implying *voix mixte*, which would suit the affect and the nocturnal character of the text

and the music. It was important to Oosthuizen that I kept the sound light and focused and maintained an open ribcage for proper breath support in the long phrases, especially those that have a sustained G4 in m. 60.

The conclusion of my preparation process, and what I had learned from my coaching, and from the lessons with Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen, made me realise that I could improve on the problems that had arisen in my previous examination performances. Legato singing, or *canto spianato* or 'broad style' as first described by Garcia (1975:186), was the preferred vocal approach for Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen in singing all these works. According to Garcia (1975:188),

one of the main characteristics of this style is that the vocal line should be constantly even and connected, which obliges that the passage from one tone to another be without breaking, jerking or dryness.

Of equal importance is 'that changes in register be performed rather capably in order to remain unnoticed' (ibid.). In other words, I had to ensure that I sing legato throughout the vocal range with smooth blending of registers. I realised during these sessions that the onset of all my phrases (in this repertoire) needed to come from a focused tone and that I should use less chest voice in heavy registration in the *zona di passaggio* and above, always maintaining head resonance. I realised also that when head resonance was already present in the middle range below the *zona di passaggio*, it was easier to sing over the second *passaggio*. Related to this, mixing head voice in the full tone (i.e., focusing on utilising head resonance not only for *voix mixte* but also when singing in full voice) resulted in a more homogenous sound production. The heavy and light vocal registration which I described earlier now became more like one mixed registration which leaned towards the lighter side, with the exception of those

loud lower notes where the music demands heavy registration. Only in a few instances where I had to sing loudly and with a heroic character did I feel that the registration leaned more towards a moderate level of heavy registration, but there was always an amount of light registration present. In addition, there was no conscious positioning of the larynx or the buccopharyngeal cavities when thinking of resonance, and I believe that the lifting of the cheek muscles in this sense had a positive effect. According to Miller (2008:46), slightly lifting the cheeks may lift the soft palate, 'enhancing the shape of the buccopharyngeal resonator tube'. The lifting of the cheek or the zygomatic muscles is observed among many professional singers 'who adhere to the international school of resonance balance' (Miller 2004:93). Because I was focusing so much on head resonance and the fact that my timbre was more equalised, I might seldom have been aware of high subglottal pressure, except when singing loud phrases between F₄ and B^b₄. In reference to the resonance of the tenor voice, Miller (1993:79) confirms most of my observations when he asserts that (as also quoted in section 2.2.2), generally, the chest voice 'should be mixed with the "head" even earlier than the *primo passaggio*' and that tenors describe 'registration unity over the complete range of the voice by bringing "head voice" sensations downward through an entire descending scale'. Again, during my lessons with Oosthuizen, I felt that Miller's (1993:70) contention that both *voce mista* (*voix mixte*) and the legitimate head voice (*voce di piena in testa*) are perceived as 'much lighter in mechanical action' than the chest voice or the *voce di petto* held true. I realised through physical experience that I had to approach the higher range (*passaggio* and above) with more head resonance and a lighter mechanism (or lighter vocal registration) than I was used to even when the music was loud and heroic in character. With the help of these lessons,

I re-established the technique to sing using what Miller refers to as the ‘legitimate head voice’.

8.2.3 Final rehearsals with accompanists

In this section, I provide a brief summary rather than a detailed discussion of the above-mentioned songs of the final rehearsals in the Odeion hall (OSM) with pianist Anneke Lamont and organist Jan Beukes. The main reason for this reporting approach is that my pianist played in the last block of lessons with Oosthuizen and much of the ensemble work and balance issues had already been communicated and rehearsed during those lessons. I had three rehearsals with the piano and four rehearsals with the organ in the Odeion hall between 22 and 25 November 2021. Although I recorded all of these rehearsals, I asked Leana Lötter, my colleague and a fellow vocal pedagogue, who knew the two works with piano, to give me some feedback on balance, articulation, intonation, etc. I also asked Lamont, my accompanist, to listen to the Kloppers cycle, because she had played it for me in my lessons with Oosthuizen and knew what was expected vocally of me.

During the rehearsals of the *Invocations* and *Alleenstryd*, it was clear that we were becoming more and more comfortable in our performance of these cycles. Tempi proceeded as we had agreed before and the affect of each song was clearly discernible. In both works my vocal approach was mainly well achieved as it had been rehearsed and dealt with in the lessons. In *Alleenstryd* the lower register was sonorous without sounding ‘pushed’ and in the *Invocations* I felt that the lines moving over the second *passaggio* had become freer. The only significant vocal–technical issue was one unfocused vowel on the word ‘wave’ on a F[#]4 in the second song of the *Invocations* and which I should have modified more to a lateral /i/ vowel.

The rehearsals of *Celebration of Faith* needed more attention because we had not performed it for a long time. Matters which arose during these final rehearsals included the forward movement of the legato line – the stalling of the momentum seemed to be the result of the organist and singer waiting for each other. The ‘trick’ here was that the organ should not wait for me during phrases but rather maintain the basic tactus. On the other hand, I had to think that my vocal line should always have direction and move to the end of phrases. Related to this, I sensed that more breath flow was necessary to help the forward motion of the phrases. In a few songs we had to consult the score again for the correct tempi of the individual stanzas of certain songs, which influenced the affect. My vocal approach in this work was mostly as I had practised it, but I noticed in a few songs and phrases that I could have had a more focused sound and head resonance. This occurred mostly in the majestic or heroic parts where the sound production felt too heavy.

8.3 Analysing the examination recording and critical self-reflection on reports

Similarly to Chapters 4–7, I describe in this section the process of critically analysing my examination video recording, which is followed by a critical self-reflection on the reports of the examiners. I then continue with the songs discussed in the preparation process in the order in which they appeared in the programme. These are, ‘Hark, now everything is still’, ‘Care-charming Sleep’, ‘*Kinderland*’, ‘*Die Gier van die Bose*’, ‘Be Thou my Vision’ and ‘*Verdwyn is nou die Daglig*’.

8.3.1 Examination recording

Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano: ‘Hark, now everything is still’

In the opening of this song my accompanist and I managed to set the eerie mood of the song, with me singing *sotto voce*. I could hear that I let the breath flow from the

first onset of 'Hark' and that I was singing in *voix mixte*. I also observed that as the second phrase (mm. 9–10) descended to D[#]3, I darkened the colour by simply letting the chest voice take over more resonance. I was mostly satisfied with the middle section of the song (mm. 24–35) that had always been challenging to sing in the preparation process – I could hear that the notes on the second *passaggio* and above (F[#]4, G4, A^b4 and A4) all had a high singer's formant and that they had a *chiaroscuro* tone quality. Moreover, I observed that the heavy registration in this dramatic section sounded like Romantic opera singing. From a critical perspective, I would say that the A^b4 on 'Sin' (m. 27) and the G[#]4 on 'powders' (m. 33) sounded a little strenuous to me and that I did not have enough head resonance and focused vowels, which might have been the result of approaching these notes too heavily. In other words, the heavy registration led to too much presence of the chest voice and not enough of the head resonance. Fortunately, my intonation was not impaired in this section and I was able to express the graveness of the disturbed mind with enough intensity in the sound in the *forte* dynamics. Besides these two notes that sounded uncomfortable to me, my overall impression of the song was that I achieved what I had prepared vocal-technically, namely, to go from *voix mixte* in an intimate section to full voice in the dramatic section without impairing my intonation or 'pushing' the voice in the high notes, and moving back again to *voix mixte* in the last section. Moreover, I noticed that I was singing legato in all the phrases and I could hear that the important words were stressed without losing the audibility of the weak syllables.

Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano: 'Care-charming Sleep'

Thanks to my avoiding a too-heavy registration in the preceding heroic 'God Lyaeus', I was able to perform 'Care-charming Sleep' satisfactorily and convincingly, using a

light registration which I could achieve comfortably. The mood was perfectly set in the piano introduction and I started singing softly, adhering to the *piano* dynamics and utilising a good *voix mixte*, which I could maintain below the *zona di passaggio*. I also thought that the challenging G4 on 'Easy light' (m. 21) was placed very subtly, although not as softly as I had intended it to be; but it did prepare for the *dolcissimo* which the composer indicated for this phrase. In the *a tempo* (m. 32) I was able to start the phrase more softly and, as the line ascended, I sang with a sweet, softer *voix mixte* which almost changed to *voce finta* for the last measures (mm. 35–37). I observed that I was able to maintain a well-focused onset, which originated from a high placement in the head voice. In the video recording I also observed that I was slightly lifting my cheek muscles while singing and this must also have contributed to the well-placed head resonance.

Alleenstryd: 'Kinderland'

While listening to the opening line of this song, I observed that I had achieved the nostalgic affect of the text within the legato vocal line. I noticed that I had sung the unstressed syllables in the word '*wonderwêreld*' (m. 5) or '*opdraand*' (uphill) (m. 7) more softly but still with sufficient breath support that a smooth legato line was audible. In this legato line I sang with an even vibrato rate and I noticed that the phrase sounded 'alive' and was moving forward in tactus. However, upon listening to the recording, I felt that I could have sung the line '*soms nog kinders kaalvoet klouter*' (sometimes be children scrambling barefoot) (mm. 6–7) more intimately with a softer *voix mixte*. The *poco crescendo* functioned well with not much weight, but with radiant colour on the E4 on '*gêles*' (m. 14), enhancing the meaning of the word 'yellow'. I was also able to then change the vocal colour instantaneously on the words '*nou nog in my kinderland*'

as Hofmeyr had suggested. I observed that I had slightly darkened the sound by dropping the cheek muscles and the jaw and rounding the vowels of these words. Furthermore, I sang the line '*Geur dit nog van peperbossies en renoster-*' as advised by Oosthuizen with an intense and intimate articulation of the text (within the legato line) so that I sensed the idea of smelling the aroma of these bushes. The ascending line that gradually got louder in building to the climax (mm. 20–24) was quite convincing and the sustained F[#]4 sounded free and produced a high level of head voice resonance and a low level of chest voice resonance.

In the second half of the song, I observed that the translucent colour I was aiming for was well achieved and that it enhanced the pensive affect. I could hear that I had used a well-balanced mixture of chest and head voice in which head resonance was always present. The *voix mixte* on '*deur die verre strate*' (through the distant streets) (mm. 30–31) was well sung to adhere to the *senza crescendo*. I also noticed that I had slightly modified the /e/ vowel on the word '*eensaam*' (lonely) on the F4 (m. 39) to an /ø/ vowel, which had the effect of keeping the note within the contour of the larger phrase. I ended the song, as rehearsed, by approaching the notes on the word '*kinderland*' from above with an intensely focused onset, which in turn allowed me to sing very softly and to execute the *perdendosi* (mm. 42–43).

Alleenstryd: 'Die Gier van die Bose'

The hammering, roaring and tumultuous character of this song was achieved overall and I was able generally to maintain the *chiaroscuro* sound production which I had aimed for in my preparation process. *Chiaroscuro* and therefore also the presence of the singer's formant ensured that my voice carried over the 'roaring' piano accompaniment. I noticed that this song was unquestionably sung in a heavy vocal

registration as opposed to the light registration in the preceding '*Kinderland*' and that I could achieve this shift easily. Furthermore, I could identify the *martellato* articulation that I had worked on in my coaching sessions with Hofmeyr and which helped me to enunciate the text clearly without impairing the legato line.

In a more critical reflection, I identified one issue regarding the heavy vocal registration which I applied until the final note of the song. I observed that in the ending of the song (mm. 87–94), the sound was 'loaded' with slightly too much chest voice over the second *passaggio* on the G4 and the F[#]4 of '*laat los die leeus van 'n god!*' (let loose the lions of a god) (mm. 88–90). The result was that the /u/ vowel of the diphthong in '*leeus*' did not have enough head resonance and did not sound free.

Celebration of Faith: 'Be Thou my vision'

In this song I was able to portray the affect of each stanza with the light and the heavy registration or a mixture of both. As in my preparation process, I sang the first stanza in a mixture that leaned more towards a light registration in which the head voice was always present – even in my lower register. This registration contributed to a free and resonant sound production in the phrases that move over the *zona di passaggio* (mm. 13–16). In the meditative second stanza I was able to shift to a light registration which allowed *voix mixte* in my middle range also and which suited the contemplative affect. The *voix mixte* functioned especially well in 'Thou with me Lord', where I sang the D4 on 'Lord' almost entirely in head voice (m. 28). Similarly, I succeeded in singing 'I Thy true Son' (mm. 31–32) with a *diminuendo* from *mezzo piano* to *pianissimo* –also shifting into the head voice here. From the light registration I was able to shift to a heavy registration for the third and fourth stanzas. The recording revealed that I had sung with *chiaroscuro* throughout the entire stanza, which allowed the voice to carry

over the heavier and brighter organ registration. The heavy vocal registration which I used here, coupled with a high singer's formant, sounded remarkably close, if not identical, to a Romantic operatic sound. However, from a more critical point of view, I realised that the final phrase in the third and fourth stanzas respectively could have had more 'ring' to the voice, which was the result of not mixing enough head voice into the sound and taking too much chest voice into the second *passaggio* – this was more evident in the fourth stanza. This was unfortunate because I had sung these final phrases better in my rehearsals.

Celebration of Faith: 'Verdwyn is nou die Daglig'

Listening to this song, I observed that the affect of each stanza was well portrayed. In the first stanza I sang with just the right mixture of head and chest voice in a light registration so that the lines which lie in the *zona di passaggio* sounded free and resonant. I also noticed that although I had sung a *crescendo* in the line that moves over the G4 on '*sonneglans, eens magtig*' (the [once] powerful radiant glitter of the sun) (mm. 6–7), the passage was still sung in a light registration. I also could maintain the same vocal approach in the second stanza. However, I noticed that I had sung these phrases with more legato than in the first stanza, which contributed to the serene affect of the text. I concluded that, had I started this stanza with more *piano* dynamics, this might have enhanced the affect. Furthermore, I observed that the lines moving over the second *passaggio* – such as '*in diepe slaap gemeensaam*' ([together] in deep slumber) (mm. 19–20) and '*na dagarbeid die lafenis*' (a refreshment after daily labour) (mm. 25–27) – sounded free and displayed a smooth legato thanks to the homogenous sound production. In these lines, I heard that the vowels on the G4's had been respectively modified to a slightly darker, rounded vowel.

The recording revealed that I had started the third stanza in a heavier registration than the first two as I had intended to do, which had enabled me to sing with a darker vocal colour to suit the darker mood of the affect of the text '*Maar ook weerspieël die duister*' (Yet the darkness also reminds us of the gloom). The lines that move to the B^b4's (mm. 39–43) functioned as I had rehearsed them, although I noticed that I had not maintained enough head resonance for the ending of the phrase on '*verkluister*' (mm. 41–43), which resulted in flat intonation. Furthermore, I could hear that shifting to a light registration in the succeeding *meno mosso* was not entirely as successful as I would have wanted it to be. I noticed that the line '*herstel, versterk en rig ons*' (restore, strengthen and guide us) (mm. 48–50) should have had more head resonance and was not approached sufficiently 'from above'. I had, however, managed to shift to a light registration for the fourth stanza which I started in *piano* dynamics as indicated. I noticed that I had sung these lines very legato with a small amount of portamento in the sigh motif on '*sluimer*'/'*sterwe*' (slumber/die) (mm. 56 and 57) and on '*oor my*' (over me) (mm. 64 and 65). The portamento had not been intended but it was probably the result of emotionally connecting to the nostalgic meaning of the text, '*Heer, laat my sorgloos sluimer onder die nag se sluier, U vleuels hou oor my wag*' (Lord, let me slumber carefree under the veil of night with Your wings keeping watch over me) (mm.55–65). I was satisfied with the *voix mixte* production in the entire stanza, which ensured that the vocal line could 'float' upon the 'nocturnal' accompaniment of the organ with its soft flute and *Tremulant* registration.

8.3.2 Examination reports

Four reports were available for this examination from three external examiners and one internal examiner. The overall feedback from all examiners was much more

positive than in the previous Lied performance concerning interpretive and vocal–technical aspects. My vocal–technical procedure of finding a stabilised tone production throughout the vocal range as a first priority, and subsequently to apply different vocal colours (to suit the affect) by means of heavy and light vocal registration, was applauded by three of the examiners. In the light of this, Examiner 1 commented that the ‘vocal production was executed with a uniform colour throughout the range’ and that I had ‘successfully used timbre and energy levels to differentiate between the textual (music and words) character of the songs’ and ‘registration equalisation was significantly improved since the previous performance’ (Examiner report 1, November 2021). Similarly, Examiner 2 stated that I ‘succeeded in general to maintain an even colour through the shift of registers’ and that ‘the singer managed in achieving his purpose showing the technical demands of adapting his vocal technique and colouring shifting between registers’ (Examiner report 2, November 2021). Examiner 3 confirmed that ‘the heavy and light registration was well demonstrated’ in the *Five Invocations* and that ‘the singer remained in good voice’ in *Alleenstryd*, ‘demonstrating aptly the answers he is finding to his research question [...] through his practice’ (Examiner report 3, November 2021). In addition to a stable homogenous tone production, the presence of good singer’s formant was noted by Examiners 1 and 2, who stated respectively that ‘the “ring” of the voice created the sense of relaxed vocal production without over singing or darkening the voice’ (Examiner report 2, November 2021) and that ‘phonation throughout displayed a clear, resonant and connected tone’ (Examiner report 1, November 2021).

There were minor issues regarding registration (which was considered to be too heavy) and vowel modification. Examiner 3 mentioned a few instances of heavy

registration in the song 'Hark, now everything is still' that led to a laboured sound production; and Examiner 2 referred to inadequate vowel modification in the 'upper *passaggio*' in which certain notes were not 'as free as [in the] lower transitions' (Examiner report 2, November 2021). The observations of these two examiners are in line with my own analyses above, especially in 'Hark, now everything is still', where I found that the A^b4 on 'Sin' (m. 27) and G[#]4 on 'powders' (m. 33) sounded a little strenuous and not sufficiently focused. For me, the heavy registration had too much chest voice and not enough head resonance. Although Examiner 2 did not elaborate on the way vowel modification in the second *passaggio* could contribute to a freer sound, I would interpret her comment as a matter of adjusting the vowels in such a manner that more head resonance would be present.

Examiner 4 also raised the topic of vowel modification, but, unlike Examiner 2, referred to its application in the *zona di passaggio* and suggested that the vowels could have been better modified or 'turned more' to avoid intonation problems. In my analysis of the recording of the above-mentioned songs, I also identified a few instances of flat intonation and/or a tone that could have had more 'ring' within the *zona di passaggio*. These instances were in Hofmeyr's '*Die Gier van die Bose*' – the F[#]4 on '*leeus*' could have had more 'ring' – and in Kloppers' third stanza of '*Verdwyn is nou die Daglig*' flat intonation occurred in the line on '*verkluister*' (mm. 41–43) and also in the line '*herstel, versterk en rig ons*' (mm. 48–50). In *Alleenstryd* certain /o/ vowels could have been modified to /o/ to become more compact and focused, as in '*Die Gier van die Bose*'. In *Celebration of Faith* an /ø/ vowel on F4 in the third stanza of '*Net soos 'n herf*' was flat and should have had more head resonance (m. 41); in '*In dulci jubilo*' the /a/ vowels in mm. 44–45 and 47–48 could have had more head resonance and been more

'turned'. Reflecting on Examiner 4's comments on flat intonation within the *zona di passaggio*, I infer that the examiner would have preferred more overtones in my sound production. Arguably, the need for more overtones in a tenor's sound production is a matter of taste, considering that none of the other examiners raised the matter of vowel modification or flat intonation in this part of my vocal range.

In summary of this section, I found that my personal reflection on the examination performance and the feedback from the examiners were consistent overall. My own findings and those of the examiners showed that I had established a stabilised sound production and a good blending of registers throughout the entire vocal range. Furthermore, I was able to alternate between heavy and light registration, which enabled me to apply different vocal colours to suit the affect and to differentiate between dramatic and lyrical, intimate singing. The reports confirm that all of the examiners were convinced of the quality of my interpretation of the music and the vocal approach used to suit the style of these compositions. However, the reports from the examiners and my own analysis revealed minor issues of too-heavy registration in dramatic moments, albeit only in a few songs from the entire performance. These issues were mostly described as a sound production on certain notes above the second *passaggio* that was either not 'free' enough or 'slightly laboured' (Examiners 2 and 3), but which did not necessarily impair my intonation.

8.4 Conclusion

My choice for this final examination performance arose from my desire to explore the art song genre outside its Romantic German tradition and the greater scope of interpretative possibilities it offered. In my preparation process for this programme, I acquired a deeper understanding of the musical style of the chosen works by means

of studying the score, consulting secondary sources and working with two of the composers. Working with these composers proved to be fruitful regarding the performance style which they prefer for the chosen works. Both Hofmeyr and Kloppers referred to the importance of the melody (and therefore the vocal line) as the carrier of the text and its meaning (indeed, this aspect was also important to Du Plessis; see section 8.2). Very few of these songs have a declamatory character, and where the music does employ declamation, it leans more towards a lyrical declamatory style. Therefore, it is important that the vocal line should be viewed in its entirety and for the singer to approach these works from a 'lyrical' perspective, cautioning against colouring too many individual words, which could destroy the musical phrase. Consistent legato singing was therefore crucial to portraying the entire melodic phrase, which in itself serves the poetic meaning.

During the physical process described in section 8.2.2, my sessions with Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen guided me to revisit the *canto spianato* style, which rests on the notion of singing an even legato line and the smooth blending of vocal registers. However, Garcia (1975:187) also determined that this style requires the ability to articulate clearly, to differentiate between various timbres and to achieve various degrees of loud and soft singing and emotional expression. One of my main vocal–technical objectives was to acquire a more even blending of registers, especially in the higher register. Whether singing with a heavy or light registration, I realised that I had to ensure that the onset of every tone had to be intensely focused and start from the head voice placement, from which I could then immediately sing louder. I realised once again that approaching the tones from above and the use of head resonance is one and the same concept, which implies that head resonance should be present in the entire vocal

range. This approach was the key to solving the problems I had had in the previous examination performances of singing with too much vocal weight in the *zona di passaggio* and above, which resulted in intonation problems and/or unclear text intelligibility. I realised that when singing in a heavy registration I still had to approach the *passaggio* and above with more head resonance and a lighter vocal registration than I was used to when singing in the 'modern' singing technique, only utilising a low level of chest voice.

The even blending of registers and singing legato resulted in a homogenous sound production. However, I observed that I was still able to change vocal timbre by utilising *voix mixte* and darkening or brightening vowels through vowel modification without consciously trying to alter the laryngeal or buccopharyngeal position. I was aware that the position of the larynx sometimes felt deeper in the neck when singing in a heavy registration, but I mostly had the sensation that it was in a comfortable, low position, as at the beginning of a yawn. Furthermore, I was aware of higher subglottal pressure levels only when singing loud and dramatic passages above the second *passaggio* and sometimes in the *zona di passaggio*.

To conclude, I achieved my aim of adhering to the intentions of the composers and the different styles of this programme. My findings were in accordance with those of the examiners, who concurred that I had achieved good registration equalisation. Moreover, they observed that, through my legato singing, I could colour and shape the phrases of the songs to achieve a musical whole. Furthermore, I must admit that revisiting the *canto spianato* style of singing definitely made it possible for me to sing this challenging programme, which offered a greater scope of heroic, dramatic and sombre material than any other art song performance I have ever undertaken. I sensed

that within the heavy registration I applied the laryngeal position was not as low and glottal adduction not as firm as when singing verismo opera. This programme challenged my facility to transition from a dramatic or heroic vocal approach to a light, lyrical approach due to the order of the songs in the cycles. These shifts in vocal approach, or varying degrees of vocal registration, were executed without sacrificing the legato line and an even blending of registers in which the chest voice was connected with the head voice throughout the vocal range. Although this programme was performed within an MSP approach, the composers with whom I worked (along with my practical supervisor) were content with the colouration I applied to the different affects of the music. I therefore overcame the challenge of singing with an MSP approach while adhering to the rhetorical or affective requirements of the text and the music.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

This autoethnographic enquiry has explored the concept of vocal versatility as exemplified by and described in the preparation and performance of programmes that showcased five different vocal styles and genres. The background for undertaking this study derives from my personal experience as opera and concert singer, a career which spans a period of 22 years, of which the greater part consisted of contractual appointments in opera houses in Germany. The years spent in Germany in particular drove home to me that it is extremely beneficial for a singer to be vocal–technically adaptable to the demands of various performance situations or practices in the opera and concert landscape. Few singers (and especially young singers) have the opportunity to specialise in only one genre such as opera, Lied or oratorio, and in many opera houses singers often find themselves singing across different style periods in order to maintain their permanent contracts. The general literature on vocal performance and specifically, on how the modern-day singer can adapt to different styles and genres, is inconclusive on important questions within the field of vocal pedagogy and vocal performance. This thesis attempts to answer the question: ‘How might a singer develop the necessary vocal–technical versatility to meet the demands of performing diverse vocal genres and styles?’ My project focuses on ways of differentiating vocal–technically between styles and genres with the aim of ensuring that these styles and genres do not sound identical and, while doing so, maintaining vocal longevity. In this chapter, I reflect upon my journey, describing the physical processes at play during my preparation and performances and the conclusions I reached. These physical processes are best described within the methodology of

practice-based research in which procedural knowledge of 'how to do something' is generated. Within the paradigm of practice-based research, I followed an autoethnographic approach which allowed me to reflect on the physical, sensory experiences of the vocal–technical adjustments which I used and applied to the different styles and genres. This adjustment resides mainly in the implementation of different vocal registrations in accordance with the desired performance aesthetics of the various programmes.

9.1 Vocal registration

In sections 2.1.3 and 2.2.2 I drew on scholarship by Stark, Wistreich, Potter and Gentili to explain the fundamental differences between the 'pre-Romantic' vocal technique practised by professional singers until the 19th century and the 'modern' singing technique. My use of this term 'modern' is grounded in Gentili's thesis entitled '*The Invention of the Modern Voice*' (2018) as well as in the arguments of the other above-mentioned authors, who have described the tenets of this broad technique as the preference for a lowered larynx and an elongated vocal tract, which facilitate the production of the singer's formant. These aspects form the basis of present-day professional classical singing except in productions that explicitly follow an HIP aesthetic, where, in turn, the vocal–technical aspects of 'pre-Romantic' vocal technique as described, for example, by Wistreich and Potter, are expected.

In my own study, I have found that this difference in technique is strongly related to vocal registration, which depends on glottal adduction and vertical laryngeal position. These aspects, then, may be adjusted in order to match a given performance aesthetic. I have identified two kinds of registration, namely, light and heavy; these two form the basis of two ways in which tenors may negotiate the *zona di passaggio* and

above vocal–technically, and the difference between them is at the heart of the distinction between ‘pre-Romantic’ and ‘modern’ singing technique (see again Gentili’s findings as cited in section 2.2.2). From a historical perspective, light registration refers to the cultivation of the head voice for singing in the upper range and it was used from the early Baroque period until the mid-19th century. Vocal–technically, this kind of registration refers to a relatively loose glottal adduction and a comfortable neutral position of the larynx which results in a smooth blending of head and chest voice in the *zona di passaggio* and in a lighter, brighter and less intense sound in the upper range of the male voice. Light registration allows *voix mixte*, which versatile modern-day singers, including me, find imperative to vocal colouration. Light vocal registration can be beneficial, if not necessary, when the singer sings pre-Romantic music following an HIP approach.

Heavy registration, on the other hand, points directly to firm glottal adduction and a constant low laryngeal position when singing over the *zona di passaggio* and above, which ensures a homogenous chest voice quality from the lowest to the highest notes. This elongation of the vocal tract has the effect of darkening the sound because the pharyngeal space is enlarged, leading to the lowering of the high formants. Singing with a firm glottal adduction also causes subglottal pressure levels to rise and contributes to higher vocal intensity. The elongated vocal tract in conjunction with higher subglottal pressure also ensures that certain high partials of the sound are amplified, which is often referred to as the ‘ring’ of the voice, also called the singer’s formant. The singer’s formant is known to make the voice carry easily over the orchestral sound because of the presence of a cluster of frequencies that are higher than those of the orchestra. The bright-dark voice quality, *chiaroscuro*, which results

from heavy registration, is the ideal which most contemporary classical singers strive towards, and therefore it applies to mainstream singing.

9.2 Performance practice and vocal style

In this section I describe the vocal challenges of each of the five examination performances against the backdrop of the above-mentioned perspectives on vocal registration and the performance aesthetics chosen in each case.

These challenges are seated within idioms of vocal articulation such as declamation, legato-singing and portamento, and the colouration of the voice according to the affect of the text and the music.

9.2.1 Bach Oratorio: *St. John Passion* (J.S. Bach, 1685–1750); Soweto, Meadowlands Seventh-day Adventist Church, 27 May 2018

Singing the Evangelist in J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion* holds some challenges for the lyric tenor voice. The greatest challenge lies in the high tessitura that is centred mostly on the *zona di passaggio* and above the second *passaggio* (D4–A4). An additional challenge in singing this role is the declamatory style of the recitatives in which the intelligibility of the text is very important and which preferably should be sung in such a way that the affect of the text is conveyed clearly. As explained in section 2.2.2, the 'modern' singing technique generally requires that the tenor modify or 'cover' the vowels gradually in the *zona di passaggio* and above the second *passaggio*. These adjustments enable the blending of chest register with the head register and as a result singing with a homogenous timbre throughout the vocal range. However, although this technique allows the singer's formant to be enhanced, it tends to darken the vowels and causes a stiffness of the laryngeal mechanism which makes it difficult to declaim the text clearly. This technique is associated with heavy registration.

Early in my preparation process, director and tenor Kobie van Rensburg identified the use of heavy registration in the upper range as I first sang some of the recitatives. I was therefore using the heavy registration of the 'modern' technique in which the vowels were modified or 'covered' in and above the *zona di passaggio*. According to Van Rensburg, this heavy registration did not suit the HIP approach which this production followed and he therefore suggested that I rather use a light registration which would be in line with the historical treatises and their advice on blending registers and singing high notes. This implied that I had to adjust the way I approach the upper range of the voice to suit the performance aesthetics of a production and ensure clear enunciation of the text. This adjustment entailed that I sing the recitatives with a relatively loose glottal adduction and a neutral, flexible position of the larynx as opposed to maintaining a constant low position throughout the vocal range. I also sensed that subglottal pressure levels were generally lower and that the singer's formant was less intense than when singing Romantic opera; however, it did not make the performance less satisfactory because the voice still carried over the small ensemble of accompanying instruments. Moreover, I realised that I mostly used *voix mixte* in the *zona di passaggio* and above, which was possible only when singing in a light registration. The sweet and empathetic timbre which *voix mixte* gave to the colouration of the voice suited the empathetic character I strove for in conveying the disciple John's narration. The different affects of the recitatives sometimes called for a warmer colour in the middle or low range and I achieved this by altering the resonance space and utilising the chest voice to give more depth to the sound. In addition, I used a moderately heavy vocal registration in the two dramatic recitatives (No. 18c and No. 33) to intensify the sound and give an overall darker timbre and to suit the affect of the text. However, although this 'heavier' registration felt close to

singing Romantic opera, I kept it within the spectrum of a light registration to ensure good enunciation and clear articulation of the embellished lines (No. 18c).

Concerning vocal articulation, the HIP approach of the production implied that I had to use legato singing and vibrato sparsely. When legato singing was asked for (especially in the *adagio* sections), I noticed that when singing in a light vocal registration I used a controlled vibrato which had a rather small fluctuation in frequency. Furthermore, the production team focused largely on the articulation of the stressed and unstressed syllables of the text and the application of appoggiaturas and the way to sing them within the conventions of HIP. Giving more weight to the stressed syllables and less to the unstressed ones was a prerequisite which I achieved by intensifying and reducing subglottal pressure. I noticed that heavy registration did not allow for good heavy-light articulation because of the higher subglottal pressure levels that arise from a constant low laryngeal position, which increase in the ascending scale. Therefore, light registration which affords a flexible position of the larynx and in turn allows subglottal pressure to be varied easily helped with executing the heavy-light articulation. Although I was criticised by one of the two external examiners for not always rendering the unstressed syllables sufficiently audibly, the production team was satisfied with this kind of articulation. In my critical self-reflection I did, however, think that I could have sung the unstressed syllables with more support by 'leaning' more into the strong syllable so that the following weak syllable would sound softer but still be 'on the breath' and therefore be more audible.

The outcomes of this examination concert confirmed that using light registration enabled me to conform to the HIP aesthetics of the production, that is, to adjust my singing technique from MSP or 'modern' to 'pre-Romantic' or HIP.

9.2.2 Verismo opera: *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Pietro Mascagni, 1863–1945); Bloemfontein, Civic Theatre, 16 July 2017

As I stated in section 5.1, my objective was to demonstrate the ‘modern’ singing technique typically applied to Romantic opera and at the same time to experiment by exploring my vocal limits. Studying the score and informing myself about the style of verismo opera pointed out one of the main characteristics of this genre, namely, the gendered and erotically charged nature of the role with its extreme emotional upsurges and climaxes in loud dynamic levels and full orchestral accompaniment. The challenge of this role for me as lyric tenor singing a role not traditionally associated with this *Fach* was therefore to achieve powerful vocal production. This kind of vocal production demanded high vocal intensity, which could be obtained by firm glottal adduction, singing with a constant low laryngeal position and high subglottal pressure, and enhancing the singer’s formant. In other words, this role demanded an almost consistently heavy vocal registration.

The heavy vocal registration with its firm glottal adduction and high subglottal pressure was difficult to maintain, though. During the orchestra-stage rehearsals I already felt that I was reaching my vocal limits and I could also sense some vocal fatigue. The analysis of the examination recording and my critical self-reflection, plus the feedback from the examiners, revealed that I had sung with a too-firm glottal adduction and subglottal pressure levels that were too high to maintain throughout the performance. It was evident that I could not keep the larynx constantly in a low position because of the persistent high subglottal pressure levels. The result of this high subglottal pressure was that it pushed the larynx up to a higher position, because the laryngeal mechanism was not strong enough to resist the force of air pressure. The higher

position of the larynx and high subglottal pressure in turn led to pressed phonation on certain high notes. A further result was some impaired intonation in the *zona di passaggio* and second *passaggio* and at times an unfocused sound that did not have enough singer's formant and therefore could not carry easily over the orchestra. My 'experiment' therefore did not quite yield the vocal and aesthetic results I had intended; however, I withstood the test in vocal longevity, because after the first performance I did not feel any signs of hoarseness in the speaking voice or loss of the high register. I concluded that the role of Turiddu demands too much vocal power (vocal weight) from a lyric tenor voice (indeed, its demands are perhaps even too much for many *lyrico spinto* tenors). Consequently, I would want to suggest that lyric tenors who might find themselves in contractual obligations to sing more dramatic roles should therefore refrain from singing verismo roles such as Turiddu and rather try out the typical *lyrico spinto* roles.

9.2.3 Viennese operetta: *The Merry Widow* (Franz Lehár, 1870–1948); Bloemfontein, Civic Theatre, 3 August 2018

I stated in section 6.1 that the reason for including an operetta role such as Danilo was to discuss the vocal style of this genre and its correlating vocal approach, since it is often part of the repertoire of opera houses in the German-speaking countries. In my many years of singing operetta, I found that the vocal approach I applied felt different from that used in singing Romantic opera. This enquiry gave me the opportunity to describe this particular vocal–technical approach in words. The main characteristics of the Viennese (Silver Age) operetta style which I observed in *The Merry Widow* were light-heartedness and sensuous eroticism combined with dancing. Concerning the role of Danilo, I identified a *parlando* style that often alternates with legato singing to portray

his different emotional states, which range from comical light-heartedness (joy) to sensuousness (passion), anger and indignation.

The fact that this production followed an MSP approach implied that I was actually obligated to sing in the 'modern' singing technique in which the chest voice quality is prominent from the low to the high notes. Heavy registration for the entire role would therefore suit the performance aesthetics of such a production. The challenge was to apply a suitable vocal registration within the boundaries of this MSP approach that would conform to the style aspects and different emotional states inherent in the role of Danilo. Utilising light registration would ensure clear enunciation of the text in the *parlando* sections and help to portray the ironic or comical moments. However, this light registration could not be as light as when singing Bach recitatives because of the larger, fuller orchestral sound in which the vocal line is often doubled in the accompaniment. With regard to the sensual and also the dramatic moments, I felt that heavy registration would give more depth and warmth to the sound; the way in which I applied heavy registration in these moments, however, was not as heavy as the sound required for verismo opera. Moreover, the aspects of dancing and moving while singing posed an additional challenge to registration. Therefore, I experimented with a flexible vocal approach that would ensure good enunciation of the text, sustained singing and a wide palette of timbre, and which would also allow for dancing while singing. This flexible approach was seated in an apt combination of light and heavy vocal registration.

I observed that the *parlando* style sections, which are composed in the middle to lower-middle range of the tenor voice, needed a sonorous sound production. I also noticed that glottal adduction should not be too firm and subglottal pressure needed to be kept

moderately low to ensure that the voice resonated sufficiently. Focusing on the sensation of vibration in the chest area helped me to utilise the chest voice for the optimal resonance in the lower register. On the other hand, I focused on the mouth cavity as resonator in order to bring the sound forward and enunciate the words clearly. In addition, I tried to 'think' these sections in a legato manner by connecting successive vowels and ensuring that the consonants did not break the line while 'speaking' the text clearly. In the lyrical sections – which called for even more sustained singing – I used a kind of heavy registration but in such a way that *voix mixte* was still possible to achieve and to colour the voice according to either a melancholic or a sensuous character. On the few high notes (G4) I used a heavy registration in which the chest voice quality was present in and above the *zona di passaggio*. However, I sensed that it was not as high a degree of heavy registration as in verismo opera. The flexible approach of light and heavy registration (loose and firm glottal adduction) therefore allowed the use of *voix mixte* to apply different colours, but it also enabled me to intensify the sound for the dramatic sections in '*Es waren zwei Königskinder*'. Here I sang with a moderately firm glottal adduction and moderately high subglottal pressure which I then raised as the anger of the character increased. In addition to legato singing and declamation (*parlando* style), I also used portamento frequently throughout the role, sometimes with an onset a third below the notes and often between falling intervals. I did so to enhance the care-free and light-hearted, ironic or even sarcastic character of the text and music. The examiners' reports revealed that they did not find the use of portamento disturbing or in bad taste for this genre.

Regarding the dancing movements, I noticed that, when dancing and singing simultaneously, it was uncomfortable to maintain high subglottal pressure (as, e.g.,

when singing Romantic opera), because dancing made it difficult to keep a stable compression of air underneath the larynx. Fortunately, the numbers which required dancing while singing were mostly in *parlando* style and therefore required a combination of light and heavy registration associated with moderate glottal adduction and moderate subglottal pressure levels.

The positive reports from the examiners reiterated that the flexible vocal approach, in which I could alternate between legato singing and *parlando* style, convinced the audience and conveyed a light-hearted character. It also contributed to my application of different vocal colours and ensured that I could sing comfortably while dancing and moving on stage.

9.2.4 19th-century Lied: *Winterreise* D911 (Franz Schubert, 1797–1828); Bloemfontein, Odeion Hall, 16 July 2019

The manifold expressive possibilities of the Lied genre as well as my experience of its positive effect on my vocal health, was the main reason for incorporating it in my study. The challenge in Schubert's *Winterreise* was to point out how the singer can vocal-technically negotiate the shift between lyric and declamatory styles within the music. Furthermore, I endeavoured to explain how to differentiate between the different affects of the text and music by means of vocal colouration. Although the cycle was performed in an MSP approach, I felt that 19th-century Lied offered possibilities for a different application of 'modern' vocal technique than was the case in verismo opera: My sense was that 19th-century Lied allowed me to vary the degrees of heavy registration in a supple manner, rather than maintaining a continuous heavy registration as required in verismo opera. I experimented with a fundamental tone production that would portray melancholy, longing and sadness, which I then could

intensify for the dramatic songs and parts of songs or reduce for the intimate moments. I realised that within the 'modern' singing technique I had to use different degrees of glottal adduction, which implied the use of a combination of light and heavy registration. The use of light registration was of cardinal importance when singing in *voix mixte*, which I used frequently for vocal colouration, especially to portray intimacy and for delicate nuancing. Whenever I sang in *voix mixte* I noticed that it functioned best in the *zona di passaggio* and that I could obtain it by a moderate loose glottal adduction with minimal subglottal pressure. *Voix mixte* in this kind of light registration was an approach which I did not use in verismo opera, and it also did not feel the same as the light registration when singing operetta. It did, however, resemble the light registration of the Bach recitatives, except that Schubert's songs demand a more sonorous chest register.

Furthermore, this light registration had the effect that the singer's formant was less enhanced, vibrato was narrow and sometimes controlled to the extent of an almost non-existent vibrato for the declamatory moments. The declamation of the text had the effect that I did not always sing a 'pure' legato line. Conversely, I applied heavy registration in the dramatic songs and emotional outpourings. In songs where I applied the 'heaviest' registration, I noticed that the sound resembled that of Romantic opera. Nevertheless, I noticed that a too-heavy registration with a constant low larynx and high subglottal pressure did not allow for fast enunciation of the dramatic declamatory style, especially in songs such as '*Der stürmische Morgen*' and '*Mut*'.

The reports from the examiners revealed some criticism concerning the idioms of vocal articulation and vocal quality. Firstly, the use of portamento in this cycle and my practice of 'scooping' upwards to certain main notes was considered inappropriate. As

mentioned earlier in section 7.2.1, I did not use portamento intentionally, but found that it rather manifested from deeply felt emotions. Secondly, it was said that my legato lines were impaired because of an exaggerated heavy-light articulation of stressed and unstressed syllables. This I found to be true in some instances but not generally true for the complete cycle. Thirdly, some issues of vocal quality were raised. Examiner 1 found that there was too much vocal weight on the high notes which caused an unfocused tone. Related to this, Examiner 3 noted that vowels did not always have adequate pharyngeal space in my vocal delivery, and that I should have modified vowels more frequently in the *zona di passaggio*.

Based on the examiners' feedback, my conclusion was that my vocal approach for this performance was unconsciously influenced by the HIP style aspects of Baroque music, such as the heavy-light articulation of the text and singing with a less elongated vocal tract. This higher position of the larynx was not always consciously altered to the lower position and subsequently did not always allow a smooth blending of registers when I wanted to use heavy registration. I realised from this conclusion that when singing in an MSP approach, I had to make sure that these aspects of the 'modern' singing technique were firmly in place or, stated differently, become second nature. Therefore, I had to reconsider how to reconcile the desideratum of consistent vocal timbre throughout all registers with the rhetorical or effective requirements of the music, which in turn implied differentiated vocal colouration.

9.2.5 20th- and 21st-century Art Song: *Five Invocations for Tenor and Piano* Op. 12 (Hubert du Plessis, 1922–2011), *Alleenstryd* (Hendrik Hofmeyr, 1957–), *Celebration of Faith: A Hymn-based Song Cycle for Tenor and Organ* (Jacobus Kloppers, 1937–); Bloemfontein, Odeion Hall, 27 November 2021

In my final examination performance, I explored the art song genre outside its German tradition. I realised that all three works of the respective composers depicted, in the broader sense, a neo-Romantic style. When I first worked with Hendrik Hofmeyr, he reminded me that he preferred the *canto spianato* style of singing as the ideal technique with which to convey poetic meaning. We know from Garcia's description that this technique demands constant smooth legato singing and even the blending of registers. Moreover, Hofmeyr stated that this style of singing should never be adjusted by a shifting position of the larynx 'to emphasise individual words, since the entire range of colour is already at the disposal of a perfectly placed voice' (see section 8.2.2). Furthermore, he (and the two other composers) stressed the importance of the melody in its entirety as the carrier of the affect of the text. During the sessions with Hofmeyr, it became apparent that within smooth legato singing and a constant, comfortably low laryngeal position, all vowels should be sung in their full length and the tones of unstressed syllables should be supported so that they do not interrupt the legato line. All these vocal–technical aspects of the *canto spianato* were reiterated in my vocal lessons with Magdalena Oosthuizen and I became newly aware that this was the style of singing I had first learnt in my formative years and which I applied to most of the repertoire I had sung in my career until I encountered HIP. Following Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen's vocal–technical approaches (which equate broadly to MSP singing practice), this recital offered me an opportunity to revisit the basic idea of a homogenous vocal sound production throughout all vocal registers. The music of this

recital contained a broad spectrum of affects to portray, ranging from intimate, soft singing to highly dramatic, loud singing. Throughout the programme I used *voix mixte* for soft singing and also to achieve different vocal colours, which would not have been possible had I not resorted to light registration. As my documentation in Chapter 8 shows, I used light and heavy registration, which became a mixture of both. My application of the MSP approach in this recital implied the use not only of constant legato, but also of a continuous vibrato throughout the musical phrase: this was in contrast to HIP singing (where heavy-light articulation for stressed and unstressed syllables is a central tenet) in the style preferred by Hofmeyr and Oosthuizen where unstressed syllables should not be neglected and the use of straight tone to emphasise certain words should be avoided. The mixture of heavy and light vocal registration, which leaned more towards the light registration, was especially evident in the way I negotiated the *zona di passaggio* and above. All onsets always had to come from a focused tone with head resonance and using a moderate-to-low amount of chest voice when I sang in heavy registration. Furthermore, when the head voice was present in the middle range it was easier to sing in the *zona di passaggio* and above. The fact that I worked frequently on head resonance in my preparation process had the result that I did not consciously position the larynx. However, I did feel that the larynx was mostly resting in a comfortably low position resembling the onset of a yawn. In addition, I was not consciously aware of high subglottal pressure levels except in the dramatic passages in the upper range, which indicated that I sang with a moderate glottal resistance and glottal adduction. The outcomes and reports from the examiners were extremely positive and revealed that I could successfully blend the chest and head voice (registers) within a mixed vocal registration that still had a moderately low degree of chest voice quality in the upper range but mixed with head voice. I therefore

posit that I negotiated the *zona di passaggio* and above with the use of what Miller calls the 'legitimate head voice'.

The *canto spianato* style, which reverts to the bel canto style of the 19th century and which is closely related to the 'modern' singing technique with its emphasis on a stable low position of the larynx, was the preferred vocal approach for this programme. I welcomed the opportunity to re-establish and reconsider my application of MSP when singing art songs. I realised that, while the principles of 'modern' singing technique (including a low laryngeal position) apply to this approach, the laryngeal position could in fact not be quite as low as in 'pure' heavy registration (as it pertains to verismo opera performance, for example). Furthermore, some flexibility of the larynx was needed in performing these art songs to facilitate clear articulation, the differentiation of timbres and various degrees of loud and soft singing.

9.3 Meta-reflection

Reflecting upon the five examination performances, I formulated answers about how to apply a versatile vocal approach to match the aesthetic choices for each production, emanating from considerations about each of the five different style periods and genres. The style periods and genres represented were: (1) Bach oratorio; (2) verismo opera; (3) Viennese operetta; (4) 19th-century Lied; and (5) 20th- and 21st-century art song. The Bach oratorio was performed in an HIP approach and the other genres were performed in MSP.

My enquiry showed that vocal–technically the main difference between HIP and MSP was the position of the larynx, coupled with glottal adduction and the way this combination influenced singing in the *zona di passaggio* and above. The HIP approach required that the larynx should be flexible and not be kept in a constant low position in

the ascending scale. The flexible position of the larynx (which implied that, sometimes, it felt higher than in MSP singing) allowed the head-voice quality to be dominant in the upper range and therefore to match current HIP aesthetic conventions. The flexible laryngeal position also implied that glottal adduction was kept moderately loose, which resulted in lower subglottal pressure levels owing to there being less resistance from the vocal folds to the air beneath them. (Moderately loose glottal adduction corresponds to what I had called light vocal registration in section 2.2.2.) The heavy-light vocal articulation of stressed and unstressed syllables (and therefore appoggiaturas and the resolving notes), an established vocal convention in the HIP style (see section 4.3.1), was best achieved within a light registration in which the unstressed tones would sound naturally lighter than the stressed ones. Light registration also gave me easy access to the *voix mixte*, which contributed to vocal colouration that is important to the portrayal of the different affects of the text. Within the spectrum of this light registration, I used a moderate degree of heavy registration, which allowed for a darker colour when singing the two dramatic recitatives.

The light registration of the HIP production was in many ways diametrically opposed to the almost constant heavy registration I used in the verismo opera. I concluded after singing the role of Turiddu that the heavy registration required a low laryngeal position and firm glottal adduction almost throughout, with the chest voice dominant in the *zona di passaggio* and above. (Heavy registration is a practice that was established around the turn of the 20th century in conjunction with the rise of verismo opera and it corresponds to what scholars term a 'modern' singing technique, as I have explained in sections 2.1.3 and 2.2.2.) Furthermore, I experienced heavy registration to be at its highest level in verismo opera. The comfort with which I could sing the Evangelist in

the *St. John Passion* after performing a verismo opera was a sign that I could adapt vocal–technically to a markedly different performance aesthetic. However, the shift to a light registration might have been facilitated by the three months’ adjustment period I had had before my masterclass with Van Rensburg on the *Passion*.

Adapting to the third examination performance of Viennese operetta was easy to achieve because I had already experienced both heavy and light registration. I was then able to differentiate between a light registration preferred for the Bach *Passion* and a slightly ‘heavier’ light registration suited to the *parlando* style in Lehár, which would still allow the voice to carry over the fuller orchestra. The same was true for heavy registration, which I felt could not be as heavy as when singing verismo opera because of the light-hearted character of the opera and also the dancing movements. Subsequently, I arrived at an aptly balanced combination of moderately light and heavy registration. This combined registration and the ability to alternate between degrees of light and heavy registration were important for the later art song performances. The many different moods and vocal colours that Lied and contemporary art song afford implied that I had either to shift between the two kinds of vocal registration or to use them in combination. Similarly to the Bach performance, I frequently applied *voix mixte* for the colouration of the voice and to portray the intimacy so often encountered in Lied or contemporary art song. Although the operetta and art song genres were performed with an MSP approach which implied singing with a comfortably low larynx, I sensed that the combination of heavy and light registration did not keep the larynx in as low a position as in verismo opera.

My reflection on my somatic experiences of singing in HIP and MSP revealed to me that I was able to shift between these different kinds of registration only by means of

conscious actions. There are certain vocal–technical aspects which need to be second nature (or unconscious actions) when singing in either one of these performance practices. Good posture and breath support for both styles are a given. However, in the ‘modern’ singing technique, the vocal mechanism should be conditioned in such a way that the larynx is kept in a stable, comfortably low position, especially in an ascending scale; this practice should become an unconscious action. This laryngeal position will allow the chest voice quality to be present in the *zona di passaggio* and above and will also ensure that the singer’s formant is enhanced. It also results in an even, continuous vibrato. Conversely, when singing in an HIP approach, it should become second nature that the larynx be allowed to be in a flexible position that feels higher than in the MSP approach. This flexible position allows the head voice to be more prominent in the ascending scale and will give it a lighter character with less of the singer’s formant amplification.

The conscious actions are those mainly related to vocal articulation: legato singing, declamation and portamento. In the various applications of ‘modern’ singing technique as I have described them in this thesis, smooth legato singing (with its consistent tonal colour) is a prerequisite for lyrical music and influences the articulation of the text – any emphasis on certain words should not hinder the legato line. When declaiming the text, a moderately high degree of heavy registration should be present and the singer should ensure that end syllables are always audible. Conversely, in HIP singing, the heavy-light articulation of the text in which unstressed syllables should sound softer is a prerequisite. Regarding portamento, different opinions and tastes apply to the present-day performance of the styles and genres included in my project, as is evident

from my discussions in the preceding chapters. This forces the singer to make conscious decisions about their application of this practice throughout.

9.4 Recommendations for further research and pedagogy

In this project I attempted to highlight the importance of being versatile as a professional lyric tenor, because I physically experienced the challenges of singing in different genres and style periods. This experience made me grow as a singer and opened many performance opportunities for me which I would not have had were I not versatile as a singer.

In order to be versatile, though, I recommend that singers should learn to sing in both the HIP approach and the 'modern' singing technique. The 'modern' singing technique, at the heart of MSP for singers, is more generally applied to most of the repertoire a classical singer is likely to encounter. This technique might take longer to master because the laryngeal mechanism needs to be trained against its natural tendency of rising when singing an ascending scale. Furthermore, I posit that it remains possible for singers trained exclusively in MSP, and those singing mostly Romantic opera, to adopt an HIP approach. Singing in the HIP approach means that a moderate to moderately high degree of light registration should be applied to accomplish a flexible position of the larynx, especially in approaching the *zona di passaggio* and above. Assuming a somewhat higher position of the larynx in the upper range and taking care not to elongate the throat too much (as in the 'modern' singing technique) will help with singing with more head voice quality. This position of the larynx would not darken the sound by means of vowel modification or even by means of heavy 'cover' systems. Blending the head voice with the chest voice, a technique in which the head voice quality is more prominent, allows *voix mixte*. To accomplish *voix mixte*, singers should

try to use the loosest glottal adduction possible with minimal air pressure underneath the vocal folds. It would also help to think that these notes should be approached from above – from the head voice placement. If ‘mainstream’ singers were able to master these adjustments, they would gain access to a larger palette of vocal colour, which might also benefit their performances within the MSP approach.

On the other hand, singers who are mainly at home in Baroque genres and accustomed to HIP could adapt to a more vigorous or heroic tone production when they desire or are required to sing Romantic opera, operetta or Lied. In order to do so, I recommend that they train the laryngeal mechanism to remain in a comfortably low position when singing an ascending scale. Furthermore, they could focus on the chest voice quality and as the scale ascends the entire vocal tract should be elongated, which might feel like an expansion of the pharynx and a high soft palate. It will also help to modify the vowels consciously in the *zona di passaggio*. This implies that, in general, the back vowels shift to a more forward position and the frontal vowels shift backwards to the neutral vowel position. Generally, all vowels will progressively adopt the phonetic character of an /ə/ vowel as the scale ascends above the second *passaggio*.

Singers should keep in mind that when, for example, they are schooled in the ‘modern’ singing technique, some technical aspects that had become second nature should be consciously altered in order to sing in the HIP style. And vice versa, the singer schooled in HIP should shift consciously towards heavier registration(s) in general. Vocal versatility therefore requires an oscillation between different degrees of light and heavy registration. Subsequently, I recommend that singers should practise heavy and light registration and their combination by using the exercise of the *messa di voce*. In

this exercise, the singer starts the sustained tone in *pianissimo* dynamics using as much head voice as possible and gradually makes a crescendo towards a *forte* or a *fortissimo*, shifting smoothly into heavy registration. The *forte* or *fortissimo* should then be taken back in a decrescendo to end in a *pianissimo* dynamic and therefore shift back from heavy to light registration. Finally, I maintain that when singers have mastered the shift between heavy and light registration they will be able to adjust their vocal approach fairly quickly. In practice, the shift between performances of Baroque opera or oratorio and Romantic opera or operetta, and even Lied, could happen within a period of a week and, in an extreme case, within consecutive days. However, I suggest that, coming from a high level of heavy registration as in Romantic opera with high vocal power, singers should take time to adjust to lighter registration, which could take more than a month. It is generally easier to adjust more quickly from light to heavier registration. In my professional experience, I found it less than ideal to shift between styles and genres within consecutive days and so I recommend that these situations should, therefore, be avoided as far as possible.

Concerning further research, I would like to see more enquiries from singers such as myself who investigate vocal versatility and the ways in which they physically experienced adapting to these different vocal approaches. Furthermore, such enquiries could benefit from scientific evidence regarding the position of the larynx and vocal adduction when singing in these styles and genres. Although studies which measure parameters such as glottal adduction, vertical position of the larynx, subglottal pressure and the singer's formant have been conducted, the results were limited because the singers sang only a few notes within a small range; it is possible,

then, that future studies may benefit from technological innovation that facilitates the comfort of more extended empirical observations of vocal technique.

In conclusion, I believe that it is possible for singers to learn to approach the different performance practices and styles applicable to the genres I have discussed in this thesis in a versatile manner. It is possible provided that they are willing to adapt their singing technique, drawing on heavy and light registration in various combinations according to the aesthetic requirements relevant to a particular performance. I am now in a position to claim an enriched learning process, not only as a performer, but also as vocal pedagogue. And I hope that other singers and vocal pedagogues will gain new insights into the vocal versatility within the Western art music vocal repertoire through this study.

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