

A Kalmus Classic Edition

Niccolo

VACCAI

PRACTICAL METHOD

for Soprano or Tenor

with Italian and English text

VOCAL SCORE

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PREFACE BY N. VACCAI.

ANYONE who wishes to sing really well should begin by learning how to sing in Italian, not only because the Italian school of vocalisation is acknowledged to be superior to all others, but also on account of the language itself, where the pure and sonorous tone of its many vowel sounds will assist the singer in acquiring a fine voice-production and a clear and distinct enunciation in any language he may have to sing, no matter what may be his nationality.

Experience has shown us that not only in France and England, but also in Germany, and even in Italy, many who are studying as amateurs rebel at the thought of the weary time their professors require them to devote to "Solfeggio." Here they first urge that very trivial plea that, as they have no ambition beyond just singing to please a few friends in the restricted area of their own drawing-rooms, they need not dwell upon all those subtleties of the vocal art which they are ready enough to admit are indispensable for those desirous of commanding a larger and more critical audience from the public stage of the opera or the concert-room. It is to show the absurdity of such an argument, and to win over these faint-hearted ones to the true cause by more gentle means, and as it were, in spite of themselves, that I present this "Method" of mine to the public. They will find it new in design, very practical, very brief—yet very effective—and, as physicians say, "very pleasant to take." The pupil will attain the same goal, and may even beat the record, but he will find the course far less lengthy and laborious, with spaces of contrasted sun and shade to beguile the tedium of the race.

As at first all must find a fresh difficulty in having, as they sing, to pronounce words in a language which is not habitual to them—a difficulty which is not altogether obviated by any amount of study in Solfeggio and Vocalising exercises on the same model,—I have tried to make matters easier by this plan of mine, where I adopt, even on the simple notes of the diatonic scale, words selected from the fine poetry of Metastasio instead of just the mere names of notes or syllables conveying neither meaning nor interest. By these means I trust I have rendered the pupil's task so far less wearisome and thankless that he may even find pleasure in contracting the habit of clear articulation as he sings and, without experiencing any aversion, be led to the study of an indispensable form of exercise. I am of the opinion that not merely amateurs, but also those who think of entering the profession, will find my "Method" useful, for in each individual exercise I have sought to make the music illustrative of a different style of composition and of a distinct emotion, so that the pupil will learn more readily how to interpret later on the spirit of the various composers.

The vocal part of the exercises has been kept within such a restricted compass, not for the greater ease of the greater number of voices, but because of the conviction that at the very beginning it is more advantageous not to strain the vocal organs, and to keep to the medium register exclusively. This is amply sufficient to demonstrate the requisite rules, and, besides, should it be thought expedient, it is always easy to transpose the lesson into a key higher or lower, as the individual capability of the singer may necessitate.

VACCAI was born on March the 15th, 1790, at Tolentino, near Ancona, Italy, whence the family soon removed to Pesaro, where they remained about twelve years, and where Niccolò received his first instruction in music. He was then brought to Rome for the purpose of studying law, to which he remained more or less faithful during some five years; but then, renouncing this profession as distasteful, he devoted himself entirely to music, taking lessons in counterpoint under Jannaconi, and later (1812) studying the art of opera-composition under the guidance of Paisiello, at Naples. While in Naples he wrote two cantatas and other church-music; in 1814 his first opera, *I solitari di Scozia*, was brought out at the *Teatro nuovo* in that city. Shortly after, he repaired to Venice, where he stayed seven years, writing an opera in each, and also several ballets; but none of these ventures succeeded in winning for their author even the evanescent vogue of an Italian opera-composer; he consequently gave over dramatic composition in 1820 and turned his attention to instruction in singing, a vocation in which he was eminently successful in Venice, Trieste and Vienna. Again devoting his energies to composition, he wrote operas for several leading Italian theatres, yet still without success; but few of his dramatic works became known abroad, among them being *La Pastorella*, *Timur Chan*, *Pietro il Gran*, and *Giulietta e Romeo*. The last-named opera is considered his best, and its third act, especially, was so much liked that it has frequently been substituted for the same act of Bellini's opera of like name, not only in Italian theatres, but even in Paris and London. To the former city Vaccai journeyed in 1829, visiting London a few years later, and in both attained to great and deserved popularity as a singing-teacher. Again returning to Italy, he recommenced writing operas, one of this period being *Giovanna Grey*, written for Malibran, in honor of whom he composed, after her decease, in co-operation with Donizetti, Mercadante and others, a

funeral cantata. Most of these operas also met with hardly more than a bare *succès d'estime*. In 1838, however, he was appointed to succeed Basili as head-master and instructor of composition at the Milan Conservatory, which position he held until 1844, when he retired to Pesaro. Here his last opera, *Virginia*, was written for the *Teatro Argentino* at Rome. He died at Pesaro August 5, 1848. Besides sixteen operas, he composed a number of cantatas, church-music of various descriptions, arias, duets and romances.

Although unable to secure a niche among Italy's favorite dramatic composers, Vaccai's lasting renown as a singing-master shows that he was possessed of solid, if not brilliant, artistic attainments. His famous "*Metodo pratico di canto italiano per camera*" is still a standard work in great request, and his "*Dodici ariette per camera per l'insegnamento del belcanto italiano*" are scarcely less popular.

The general plan of the "*Practical Method*" is to render study easy and attractive, without omitting essentials. No exercise exceeds the limit of an octave and a fourth (c'—f', transposable to suit any voice). There are fifteen "*Lessons*," which are not bare solfeggi on single vowels or syllables, but melodious exercises—for scale-practice, for skips of thirds, fourths, etc., up to octaves; on semitones, runs, syncopations, and all graces usually met with—written to smooth Italian verses, with excellent English translations. The extraordinary and undiminished popularity of this method is attested by the numerous editions through which it has run; yet it is not merely *the* method for dilettanti, but can be used profitably in conjunction with any other system of voice-cultivation, being admirably calculated for strengthening and equalizing the medium register, for giving confidence in taking difficult intervals, and for enforcing habits of precise and distinct articulation and phrasing.

HINTS ON PRONUNCIATION.*

ITALIAN.

Vowels:

General rule: The vowels are very open, and never to be pronounced as impure vowels or diphthongs; they are *long* in accented syllables which they terminate,—*short* in unaccented syllables, or in accented ones ending with a consonant.

- a like *ah* or *āh* (never *ă*); e.g., *amare* [pron. āh-mah'-rēh].
- e " *ay* in bay (without the vanish *i*); *ē* in bed; *a* in bare (before *r*).
- i " *ee* in beet; *i* in bit; *i* before a vowel, like *y* (consonant).
- o " *aw*, or *oh* (without the vanish *ū*); *ō* in *opinion*.
- u " *oo* in boot; *u* in bull.

Consonants:

General rule: Even the hard consonants are somewhat softer than in English; the soft consonants are very delicate.

- b, d, f, l, m, n, p, qu, s, t, v, as in English.
- c like *k*, before *a*, *o*, *u*, or another consonant except *t*, as below.
- c " *ch* in chair before *e* or *i*; *cc* like *t-ch* before *e* or *i*.
- g " *g* hard before *a*, *o*, *u*, or another consonant; except before *t* (pronounce *gl* like *l-y* [consonant], e.g. *sugli*, [pron. sool'-yē]), and *n* (pronounce *gn* like *n* in cañon [kan'-yon]).
- g " *z* in azure (or a very soft *j*) before *e* or *i*.
- h is mute.
- j like *y* in you.
- r, pronounce with a roll (tip of tongue against hard palate).

Where a doubled consonant occurs, the first syllable is dwelt upon; e.g., in *ecco* [pronounce ek'-ko, not ek'-o].—Accented syllables take a less explosive stress

* These "hints" are offered as an aid for tyros, and not in the least as an exhaustive set of rules.

than in English, being prolonged and dwelt upon rather than forcibly marked.

- sc like *sh*, before *e* and *i*.
- z " *ds* (very soft *ts*).

GERMAN.

Vowels:

The simple vowels as in Italian; *y* like German *i* or *ü*.

Modified vowels:

- ä like *a* in bare, but broader; *ē* in bed.
- ö has no English equivalent; long *ō* can be pronounced by forming the lips to say *oh*, and then saying *ā* (as in bay) with the lips in the first position; short *ō*, by saying *ē* (as in bed) instead of *ā*. [N.B.—Long *ō* is the French *eu* (in *jeu*)].
- ü has no English equivalent; pronounce long *ū* by forming the lips to say *oo* (as in boot), and then saying *ee* (beet) with the lips in the first position; short *ū*, by saying *i* (as in bit) instead of *ee*. [N.B.—Long *ū* is the French *u*.]

Diphthongs:

- ai and ei like long *i* in bite.
- ae like *ä*.
- au " *ow* in brow.
- eu and äu like *oi* (more exactly *ah'-ū*, closely drawn together).

Consonants:

- f, h, k, l, m, n, p, t, as in English.
- b and d, beginning a word or syllable, as in English; ending a word or syllable, like *p* and *t* respectively.
- c like *k* before *a*, *o*, and *u*; like *ts* before *e*, *i*, and *ä*.
- g usually hard, but like *z* in azure in words from the French and Italian in which *g* is so sounded;—*ang*, *eng*, *ing*, *ong* and *ung* terminate, at the end of a word, with a *k*-sound (e.g., *Be'-bung^k*).

HINTS ON PRONUNCIATION.

- j like y (consonant).
qu " kv.
r either with a roll, or a harsh breathing.
s beginning a word or syllable, and before a vowel, like s (soft); ending a word or syllable, like sharp s; before t and p, beginning a word, usually like sh (e.g. *stumm*, pron. shtüm [u as in bull]); otherwise as in English.
v like f.
w " v (but softer, between v and w).
x " ks (also when beginning a word).
z " ts.

Compound consonants:

- ch is a sibilant without an English equivalent; when beginning a syllable, or after e, i, ä, ö, ü, ai, ei, ae, eu, and au, it is *soft* (set the tongue as if to pronounce d, and breathe an h through it; e.g. *Strich*, pron. shtrid-h); after a, o, u, and au, it is *hard* (a guttural h).
chs like x.
sch " sh.
sp and st, see s, above.
th like t.

Accented syllables have a forcible stress, as in English. In compound words there is always a secondary accent(''), sometimes a tertiary one(''), depending on the number of separate words entering into the composition of the compound word; e.g. *Zwischen-akt's* "musik", *Bo'genham* "merkla-vier". The principal accent is regularly marked (') in this work.

FRENCH.

Vowels:

- a as in Italian, but shorter, often approaching English ä.
A like ah.
e " u in but; e-final is almost silent in polysyllabic words.
é " ay in bay.
è " e in there.
ê " German ä, and always long.

- i or î like ee in beet; short i as in English.
o as in Italian.
u like the German u.

Diphthongs:

- ai like ai in bait; but before l-final, or ll, is pronounced as a diphthong (ah'-ee, drawn closely together).
ai and ei like é.
eu, eü and œu like German ö.
oi like oh'-ä h' (drawn closely together).
ou and œu like oo in boot.

eau like ô long, without the vanish u.

Modified by a following n, m, nd, nt or mt at the end of a syllable, the vowels and diphthongs are nasal (exception,—verbal ending of 3rd pers. plural).

Consonants as in English, with the following exceptions:

- c like s in song before e, é, è, ê, and i.
ch " sh.
g " z in azure before e, é, è, ê, and i.
gn as in Italian.

h is often mute; no extended rule can be given here.

j like z in azure.

ll after i is usually sounded like English y (consonant), and frequently prolongs the i (ee); e.g. *travailler* [träh-väh-yay'], *tranquille* [trähngkee'y].

n nasal, see above; otherwise as in English. [The nasal effect is accurately obtained by sounding n (or m) together with (instead of after) the preceding vowel; but the sound of e is changed to äh, i to ä (in bat), and u to eu.]

m, nasal in certain situations.

r with a roll.

s-final is silent.

t-final is silent.

er, et, es, est, ez, as final syllables, are pronounced like é.

Accentuation. The strong English stress on some one syllable of a polysyllabic word is wanting in French; the general rule is *slightly* to accent the *last syllable*.

Lesson I

The Diatonic Scale

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In this 1st Lesson, Signor Vaccai has not grouped the letters of the Italian syllables according to the correct rules of spelling, but in such a fashion that the pupil may perceive, at the very first glance, how his voice should dwell on the vowels, exclusively, to the extreme value of the note or notes they influence, and how with a swift and immediate articulation of the consonants he should attack the following syllable. This will greatly facilitate him in acquiring what the Italians call the Canto legato (Chant lié) — though, of course, we need hardly say that here the teacher's example and oral explanation is better than all written precept.

Adagio

Voice

Child, tho' your way seems long, Since first we start-ed, Come, learn how

Voce

Ma - nea so - lle - ci - ta più de - ll'ù - sa - to, a - neo - rehè

Adagio

Piano

p

faith and song Keep men brave - heart-ed. While spring re - joic - es, And

s'a - gi - ti co - nlie - ve fia - to, fa - ce che pa - lpi - ta

while yet 'tis day, Out with your voic - es, And march, march a - way.

pre - sso al mo - rir, fa - ce che pa - lpi - ta pre - sso a - l mo - rir.

rf *f* *p*