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**EVOLUTION OF TRADITIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL VOCAL
PERFORMANCE in XVII CENTURY (ON THE EXAMPLE OF
ACTIVITIES OF BENINGO DE BACII)**

The Article deals with the professional development of a singer's voice, his (her) education, development, implementation of the best traditions of French vocal music culture XVII in it, as an example of which serves the activities of an outstanding teacher Benigno de Basii. An important step in the culture of this period is the appearance of vocational and theoretical understanding and summarizing of the French vocal and pedagogical achievements existing at that time that have been made by Benigno de Basii.

Keywords: singer's voice, singer's schools, bel canto era, and the art of proper singing.

Interest in the early opera is accompanied by a desire both on the part of stage directors, and on the part of the public to hear its sound in stylistically verified and historically authentic vocal space. Opera musical scores of XVII-XVIII centuries with written-off names of performers and frequent indication of their range, textbooks, treatises on vocal art of the relevant time, philosophical and aesthetic debates of XVIII on the fashionable operatic genre, a significant amount of fiction and memoir literature of the era, revealing subtle vocal aesthetics of baroque opera, so unlike a modern one, suggest new solutions in its performance by stage directors and soloists of XX-XXI centuries. The second half of the XX century is marked by steady interest in the music of past centuries. Thus, one of the brightest singers of that time Maria Callas revives opera of Rossini, and romantic melodrama of Bellini, Donizetti, and early Verdi. In the last quarter of XX century on the world opera theater stage with great success there are operas by Handel, Vivaldi, Cavalli, Monteverdi, numerous vocal and instrumental ensembles turning to music of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages.

In addition to the performers' appeal to the music of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, there is also a large number of modern research literature on the voice and the training of singers of past centuries. Among the most significant research work Franz Habeka "Neuter and Their Vocal Art", Peter Giles "Kontrtenor", and many others shall be indicated. This series can be extended by many articles in foreign and domestic journals devoted to this issue, the authors of

which are themselves soloists and members of medieval, renaissance and baroque ensembles, seeking in their performing for activity to achieve authenticity of sound of works of past centuries.

In the professional formation of the singers' voice, its upbringing, development, implementation of the best vocal traditions in it there is an evident principle of historical sequence. Singer's voice of the European tradition reached peak development in colored, coloratura singing - canto figurato, bel canto of baroque opera era, which was the culmination of a long path of professional development that happened at several levels. Among the most important achievements there shall be noted compliance with slim aligned sound and the first rules that prohibited forcing sound and vague diction in the growing range and vocal technical skills of cathedral choristers in the process of the liturgical singing. Another important factor that raises canto figurato, bel canto to a new level of development is the development of Renaissance coloratura features and such laryngeal, which was combined with the expression a "new song", with a new attitude to the word as a pledge of new opera and theatrical expression.

A distinguishing feature of bel canto of XVII-XVIII centuries is an improvised type of coloratura with a large value of different types of decorations and their complex combinations - roulades, arpeggios, scales, trills, tremolo, hrupeto, double grace notes, mordents, chromatic and diatonic scales in a very difficult comparison. Voice brought up on this technique, as in the engineering and technology con parta-mento perfect legato acquired extraordinary plasticity and expressiveness. The very unique vocal tone differed with perfection instrumental precision, flexibility and beauty.

Masters of baroque bel canto created universal vocal school, which has been consistently and logically laid down in theoretical treatises of that period. Fundamental laws of vocal bel canto skills, among which stands out the most important one - in the formulation and gradual development of voice, methodical passing through all stages of the home and compliance with all the rules were fixed in these materials. Thus, the only way of perfect singing education in this school

was in daily hours of methodical training of voice at vocalizes and exercises (ear training/solfeggio).

The aforementioned exercises (ear training/solfeggio) laid a solid foundation of artistic technique and vocal professionalism: taught *con parta-mento*, art to measure voice in its perfectly smooth transfer from sound to sound, and art to take a breath and renew it quietly, without interrupting the vocal long period. It is these exercises that taught vocal possession *chiaroscuro*, expression of infinite shades rich in feelings of solo improvisations, which was perfectly adapted to the structure of the *da capo* aria. In the era of baroque *bel canto* arias *da capo* was to strive for the ideal of classical beauty, to perfection, “abstracted from reality, timeless, eternal” [2, p. 154]. In other words, it required particularly sophisticated technology of nuances, flexible, clean, clear and bright tone, light and sound jeweler and almost magical vibrations of singing. Achievements and important discoveries of *bel canto* school, namely - equal sound introduction that was caused by a perfect *legato*, *con parta-mento*, breath control, steady growth range, high position in singing, technically developed larynx found a strong value of the basis, a school for all future vocal discoveries - especially for new discoveries of expressive and virtuoso singing of the romantic melodrama of Bellini, Donizetti, and early Verdi.

A very reasonable in the context of this problem is thoughts of the Roman writer, philosopher and scientist, author of many specialized encyclopedias and treatises on various areas of science and art, called the “Father of Roman education” - Mark Terentius Varro (116-27), who believed that the root cause of music is natural because it natured us - voice, its foundation, so it can be considered the foundation of the music art. [1] The appointed statement demonstrates the phenomenon of singing voice in the ancient musical art. But in the next centuries until the XVIII century the music history was primarily associated with the history of singing voice as the history of the formation, development and design of the professional vocal and sound production.

It should be emphasized that such outstanding teachers of the school *bel canto* XVII-XVIII centuries, as Francesco Antonio Pistocchi and Antonio Maria Bernakki (Bologna school) or Nicola Antonio Porpora and Leonardo Leo (Neapolitan) or Pierre de Nier, Michel Lambert and Benigno De Basii (Paris), like many others, were primarily empirical. According to their methodology *viva vox docet*, which gave excellent results, it was necessary to “teach live voice”, i.e. studying was carried out by copying the teacher’s voice. Empirical practice has developed dozens, if not hundreds, various receptions for singing in playback mechanism perfectly executed “beautiful” vocal sound. The most talented teachers rightfully asserted how many voices there are, there are so many differences in the structure of the background apparatus, and therefore need as many ways of learning. This opinion was also supported on the threshold of the twentieth century by Camillo Everardi (1825-1899) – a student of the outstanding teacher Francesco Lamperti of the Milan Conservatory (1813-1892), a brilliant singer in his youth, and in later years he became a teacher who trained Pleiades of Russian singers and musicians, including teacher of F. Chaliapin, and famous bass of the Mariinsky Theatre Fyodor Stravinsky. Thus, one could argue that the empirical practice of *bel canto* masters is far ahead of not only theoretical knowledge, scientific thought, and even anatomical knowledge of the functions and physical properties of the vocal tract.

The heterogeneity and diversity of French music art with a great number of performers, vocal genres and need in professional and theoretical understanding and summarizing of the French vocal and pedagogical achievements existing at that time became the reason for the appearance of theoretical synthesis, which was performed by the outstanding teacher Benigno de Basii. The treatise was entitled – “Valuable Comments on the Art of Proper Singing” (“*Remarques curieuses sur l’art de bien chanter*”), and was published in 1668. The author of the treatise Benigno de Basii (1625 - 1690) was a native of Normandy, one of the best students of the famous Pierre de Niyera, author *chansons*, but its main achievements related to the activity of the teacher of singing.

Benigno de Basii believed that “proper singing needs three things, three natural gifts very different from each other: voice, its adherence to singing and hearing or intelligence” [3, p. 201]. Benigno de Basii returned to this opinion throughout his whole treatise, insisting that the quality of voice and setting of those who want to sing, who learns to sing and who sings shall be checked by it. First of all, Benigno de Basii estimates bass timbre, range and power of voice, i.e. its constituents that have not lost their dominant position today in the academic singing. Then he distinguishes good voice (*une belle voix*) and good voice (*une bonne voix*). Even in one take note, in a beautiful voice sound immediately reveals itself through its purity, clarity, softness and natural speed, which is particularly important in common numerous cadence at that time. Good voice, on the contrary, not having natural speed and tenderness, submits strength, durability and resiliency sound (*sa vigueur, sa fermeté*), as well as the ability for singing and communicating emotional states, in which the main task of singing is, that beautiful voices of nature, in its view, are unable [3, p. 202].

The author of the treatise believed that beautiful, pleasant, often with a small range of voices (*jolies voix*) during their prolonged hearing do not give the best impression, may be almost of little interest. Their owners have acute hearing and show some reluctance (Benigno de Basii writes “repugnance” – “immediately”) to accurate articulation. However, very sharp and categorical attitude of Benigno de Basii, in our opinion, is not due to some properties of voice, but due to rather a fairly frequent lack of artistic talent and temperament of the owners of scenic beautiful voice of nature. Today in the XXI century we often meet the owners of the manifestations of nature wonderful views with lack of interesting consistency and full commitment to the profession as during training and in performing further activities. At the same time singers with recognized by all “ugly” or deaf sharp voices of nature, with absolute commitment during training in performance can transform their weaknesses in dignity, and therefore achieve significant artistic results.

Benigno de Basii classifies voices in big and small, strong and weak, brilliant and touching (*touchantes*). The author believes that a negative feature of large voices is their hardness and their lack of some important qualities of sound, namely flexibility and softness. However, in the second half of XVII century on the way of formation of the characteristics of French opera school, including the traditions of opera art of Lully, French singing starts using more dramatized and intense sound. In this context, Benigno de Basii does not deny the possible existence of firm voice and even says that we should not soften their natural strength, because they will lose in sonority and power [3, p. 203]. He, in his characteristic manner, says that the best voices for this type - it is their systematic daily treatment, processing like a piece of iron by hammer and file. Flexible and small voice on a range are well-adapted to the ornamental decorations and, according to Benigno de Basii, distinguishes their owners; especially delicate ear. But they lose in ballet and Assemblies where brilliant and bright sound is necessary [3, p. 202-203].

Benigno de Basii prefers high-pitched voice, paying tribute to the Baroque taste. In France, unlike the Italian castrati singing country which has not accepted it - female soprano, and this demonstrated the great era of great French soprano who distinguished themselves in the chamber music-making, ballet and singing, and singing in church. Benigno de Basii's attitude to basses was quite different; he believed that they most clearly manifest themselves only in terms of anger (Benigno de Basii do not seem to notice majestic bass arias of Lully). Going steady in spite of a negative vote against the false, it protects them, indicating that they succeeds in melismatics, but at the same time, agrees that their voices harsh and shrill, and in addition, they lack accuracy.

It was Mersenne who identified three main qualities of *bien voix*, that is "correct", "good" (professional) singing voice, flexibility, equity and accuracy. The formula "put to vote" of Benigno de Basii (*disposition de la voix*) contains certain ease of implementation of all that relates to manners and singing that takes place in the throat". Benigno de Basii approves: the right put voices are a rare phenomenon.

One larynx confidently cope with all sixteen, but it lacks the strength and power of sound in passages; the other, on the contrary, devoid of soft and flexible tone. That is the main question that is before teachers and performers is - how to buy once and flexibility, and the ease and power of vocal sound. The answer offered by Benigno de Basii is to work only in the daily morning workout voice to find them strength and tenderness sound. And we must first build equality vote, its strength and stability; Keep the tone, not increasing and not weakening it, like the sound accompanying string lute. Accuracy tone is the ability to immediately take it without understating and overstating not requiring hearing good vocal and Benigno de Basii where reasonable declares: "This is the quality, without which neither voice nor its production cost nothing" [3, p. 204-205].

Benigno de Basii equals accurate vocalist hearing to his (her) intelligence, he said that "only vocalist's hearing is able to clean dirty, bad, false voice, to correct its tremolation, to make it gentle in congenital brutality; soft when it loud and too strong" [3, p. 205]. But vocal deficiencies can be corrected by a singing teacher, the choice of which should be approached with the utmost seriousness. But this is, in the opinion of Benigno de Basii was another difficult task. He believed that it was necessary to find a teacher who can teach the whole (tout ensemble), which is the essence beau chant (beautiful singing), that appeared in the pages of the treatise perfect portrait of French singing teacher of XVII century. First of all, according to Benigno de Basii, a business teacher shall teach understanding of words wearing in the poet's opinion; it should teach how to appeal and notify the words of euphony in singing.

Benigno de Basii had every reason to write that teachers are very rare in France. The situation was such that in Paris, and other cities, even in the middle of the XVII century. Professional singing lessons can be obtained mainly in metryzah, i.e. in music boarding schools to train religious singers (e.g. Mulynye and Lambert learned to sing in them). Competent clergy taught not only the future of the cathedral choristers, but - in the presence of a good voice - and soloists.

In addition to the attention to a student and his (her) natural data Benigno de Basii points to the importance of the individuality of a teacher and is included in a lively discussion that existed among the French vocal of XVII century - whether a singing teacher himself (herself) is obliged to have a good voice and sing well. It was still Mersenne who condemned teachers that did not have a proper voice for recitations and decoration; he thought that they had practically nothing to teach their students. Benigno de Basii continues the opinion of Mersenne: "It is a bigger mistake to believe a teacher the person who sings very badly himself (herself), but supposedly shows good. How can he (she) show good if not able to form pure tone of his (her) own voice? How can he (she) inspire accuracy with a fake voice? How can he (she) fix dirty term, if he (she) is singing them dirty? If his (her) larynx is unable to cope with tyratams, how can he (she) teach his (her)subordinated? And if his (her) voice is rough and hard, how can he (she) require singing of tenderness, lightness and delicacy of sound much needed in the art?" [3, p. 206-207].

He is also against the widespread idea that the initial training may be involved and acceptable by an average teacher, much needed in the art argued that it is most a vocalist's future success depends on the primary education, and through a weak during initial teacher's training, and parents, the student shall get 'double punishment' (la double peine). They will have to pay twice: first for the Eradication of stupid habits, study habits then right [3, p. 207].

Summarizing his presentations on the individual teacher, Benigno de Basii gave six rules that shall be met by that person, who seeks to achieve the title of a teacher of singing.

1. A teacher of singing shall have a good singing voice and the correct manner of singing, as singing should be taught not only from books but from the living example, that is, from the show by voice. (Here Benigno de Basii is not alone: Mersenne's thought has already been given. The same was talked about by a Spanish singer Pietro Cherone, stating that modern students are interested not only in what the teacher says, but also the fact what a professional he (she) is in singing or playing an instrument [4, p. 72]).

2. A teacher should have not only a good voice, but a flexible and technically polished voice.

3. It is dangerous to use the lessons of the teacher who sings in the nose himself (herself) or uses the tongue as these shortcomings are transferred to a student first. (A second disadvantage sounds a bit strange to our ears, but it is about it the contemporaries of Benigno de Basii write about, apparently referring to the habit of some (or many) singers rather than an exact vocalization of passages to be performed, singing with the tongue tip and edges of the lips, as of extreme condemnation also wrote Mersenne. Dony in a letter to him remarks as follows: “I often hear you in France trill abuse trembling lips, making unbearable affectation effect”).

4. The first and the most urgent task of a teacher of singing is to form an exact hearing of a student. Benigno de Basii quoted Cherone: “Made singer sings more with ears than with the mouth”. The teacher shall also reckon with the vocal capabilities and voice quality setting of his (her) student at the moment, not to allow him (her) to sing arias, exceeding its capabilities”. (This rule is often neglected by modern, especially young people, teachers).

5. It is necessary that a teacher of singing was a true connoisseur of his (her) native French, so he (she) could feel good number of trains that he was aware of modern French pronunciation.

6. A teacher of singing should know all music disciplines, including art improvisational ornamentation. Benigno de Basii believed that there is nobody equal to Italians in their art to read from the letter and immediately improvise ornaments. He wished the French vocalists could reach the same level in this art [3, p. 207-209].

Thus, musical treatises of Benigno de Basii give some idea of French vocal achievements and aspirations of the second half of XVII century. The court “enlightened’ flavor, brought by rational aesthetics of French classicism with its desire for logic, order and clarity demanded, above all, grace, ease, naturalness from the French singing. The first indicator of vocal perfection in the XVII century

is Virtuoso coloratura technique that extended the vocal tradition of the XVI century. French intelligence gave absolute advantage in singing to clearly spoken words. The same intelligence and taste, requiring intelligent and expressive singing, also revealed that Benigno de Basii for the first time in the history of vocal art divided voices to the “beautiful” and “good”, explaining that the owners are not satisfied with the last innate physical beauty vote (or lack thereof), but serious and hard work are making, above all, higher vocal expression capable of far more emotional impact on the listener than the vague sound of just a beautiful voice. This view of a wonderful French practice will never lose its value.

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